

**All Things Visible and Invisible: Photography, Filmmaking, and
American Christian Missions in Modern China**

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Jimmy Nanhsiung Ho and Patricia Fuhwei Ho, to my beloved wife and best friend, Jing Fan, and to our children, Jane and James. It is also given in memory of Liu Ju (劉舉), Sophie Henke, Ray Heer, and Clara Bickford Heer, dear friends who did not live to see its completion. May light perpetual shine upon them.

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Abstract

All Things Visible and Invisible is a transnational history of visual practices situated in Sino-US cultural and religious encounters across the Republican era and the early PRC. This study examines photography and filmmaking as visual world-making – a collective culture of vernacular visual practices and image-based knowledge production. I investigate the ways in which American Protestant and Catholic missionaries imaged their experiences in China while developing a visual “missionary modernity” (ways of seeing shaped by modern cross-cultural and religious perceptions) against the backdrop of local and national Chinese histories. I take into close account the specific imaging technologies – variations in image-making processes and equipment – that structured these practices and their historical afterlives. As mobile material artifacts, still images and films also circulated representations of on-the-ground experiences across transnational cultural networks, visually bridging China and the world. These visual practices ultimately escaped their missionary mold and entered greater trans-Pacific cultural imaginations, uniquely mediating Chinese and American identities while shaping modern visions of a global East Asia.

Drawing from a large body of previously unexamined photographs, films, and private and institutional documents, I map the history of American missionary visual practices onto a larger trans-regional history of Republican China (and after 1949, the early People’s Republic of China) between 1921 and 1951. I begin by tracing American Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries’ first visual encounters with interwar China, and then continuing into connections

between photographic experience and religious conversion; vernacular filmmaking and translations of time and local community; and missionary visual practices as shaped by the contingencies of the Second Sino-Japanese War. I conclude with links between visual imagination and nostalgia surrounding the American missionary enterprise's postwar decline and the competing rise of the People's Republic. In sum, *All Things Visible and Invisible* argues that visual practices were central to American missionaries' ways of envisioning modern China and Chinese communities' representation in transnational cultural and religious institutions – even as the world itself radically reshaped those behind and in front of the lens.

Introduction: All Things Visible and Invisible

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker both of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
– Nicene Creed, 1909 Anglican translation¹

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium. – Nicene Creed, 1920 Roman Missal (*Missale Romanum Reimpressio Editionis XXVIII*)²

我信獨一天主全能的父，是創造天地的，並造有形無形的萬物。– 尼吉亞信經, 1928 Order of Daily Morning Prayer (早禱文), 中華聖公會³

All photographs are *memento mori*. – Susan Sontag⁴

On a tree-lined side street not far from the main campus of Wuhan University (武汉大学) in central China, there stands a nondescript concrete apartment building.⁵ Like many others along the street, it houses faculty and graduate students at the university. Cars and motorcycles coasting by the concrete walls are few, a small comfort to the elderly woman residing on the second floor, in a room facing away from the street and toward the tall, cicada-inhabited trees covering the rolling hills on which the school and the neighborhood was built. It is here that the former nurse, Liu Ju (劉舉), spends most of her days now. The room's furnishings are simple but

¹ The dissertation and introduction title is derived from the English translation of the Nicene Creed commonly shared by both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches: “we believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker both of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.” This translation appears in a commentary by the Rev. Andrew Ewbank Burn; see A.E. Burn, *The Nicene Creed* (New York: Edwin S. Gorham Inc., 1909), 2-3.

² “Ordo Missae,” *Missale Roman Ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini Reimpressio Editionis XXVIII*, 275.

³ *The Order for Daily Morning Prayer* (早禱文 1928 年), (台灣聖公會 [Episcopal Church in Taiwan], 1964), 2.

⁴ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1978), 15.

⁵ When possible, key Chinese terms (geographic locations, names, major historical events) throughout this study are rendered in characters appropriate to their time. In general, post-1949 terms are rendered in Simplified characters (简化字) and pre-1949 terms in Traditional characters (正體字), corresponding directly to their historical usage. Similarly, in romanizing terms, *Hanyu pinyin* (汉语拼音) is generally used throughout the study, but when possible, the original missionary-phoneticized, Wade-Giles, and Chinese Postal romanization forms are retained when quoting from primary sources. This is used when introducing terms (e.g. names of Chinese individuals described in English-only accounts) for which original Chinese characters are not separately available.

life-sustaining. A second bed near the open window, spread with neatly folded sheets, awaits sleepless nights spent by Liu's son, daughter, and caretaker. A dented, well-used oxygen tank stands near the foot of the bed for her use. A small television on a dresser table broadcasts programs from China Central Television, dramas and news programs punctuated by incessant commercials. Aged 94, Liu sleeps for long hours during the day, physically frail and struggling to retain memory through the growing haze of dementia.

A few things in the room represent Liu's religious identity and her past. A pocket-sized Bible sits on a nightstand next to the bed, its gold-rimmed pages worn from devoted perusal. Liu, a Protestant Christian, reads it whenever possible. A decidedly more technical object resides close to the sacred text, imbued with another kind of materiality and a personal connection not to religious imagination but to worldly vision. A wooden drawer underneath her bed contains an old folding camera, a German-made 6x9cm Kodak Vollenda 620 from the mid-1930s. Its leather bellows have long since succumbed to Wuhan's pervasive heat and humidity, and its lens and shutter assembly are missing. This, however, is not a sign of misuse. The owner of the camera, Liu's husband, Li Qinghai (李慶海) used it extensively, and like the Bible on the nightstand, it shows signs of personal care. The Kodak's folding metal viewfinder snapped off sometime during its lifetime, and Li, a leading professor of surveying at the Wuhan Institute of Cartography (武汉测量制图学院), neatly crafted a homemade cardboard peep sight to replace it.⁶ Next to the camera are several bound albums of photographs. Two of them are older than the rest, their covers worn from age and repeated handling, containing black and white prints dating back to Liu's youth. One of these photographs, made in 1948, shows her as a 30-year-old

⁶ Liu Ju (劉舉), personal interview by the author in Wuchang, China, 22 May 2011. The meeting with Liu was made possible by a chain of contacts via Li Weilai (李維來, Liu's son) and Richard P. Henke.

standing in front of a brick house next to two foreigners, a neatly-dressed man and a woman – the woman next to Liu wearing a Chinese-styled silk jacket (*Image 1*). It is clearly a special occasion. Liu stands intimately close to the woman in the photograph, seeming to lean against her as they smile warmly. In another photograph pasted next to the first in the album, Liu has disappeared, leaving only the man and woman standing together, smiling as before. Yet, no captions indicate the identity of the man and woman, or the occasion for the pictures. With the camera and photographs stored away under Liu’s bed, it seems that they only hold importance for the elderly woman, visual traces of a distant past.⁷



Image 1 (Liu Ju, Jessie Mae Henke, and Harold Henke in Beiping, c.1948; Li-Liu Family Collection)

Seven thousand miles east of Liu’s apartment, a one-story house stands on a steep rise overlooking the Los Angeles basin to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. When the haze vanishes on a hot day, it is possible to see the sprawling city in miniature in the valley below, and west to the peaks of Santa Catalina Island rising out of the sea – a dramatic backdrop for ships passing along the coast. Another woman in the later years of her life resided in one of the rooms on this seaward side, in this house belonging to her second son, Richard. Standing in the room with the window open and seeing the cresting waves below, it is not difficult to picture the

⁷ Ibid.

elderly Jessie Mae Henke, also a former nurse, remembering and reimagining the China of her past in her final days. Like Liu, her memories were aided and shaped by images, a collection of black and white prints she and her physician husband, Harold Eugene Henke, made over half a century prior. There were films as well, 16mm black and white and Kodachrome reels that passed through a now dormant spring-wound Cine-Kodak Model B movie camera displayed in an adjoining study. While in better physical shape than its lens-less still counterpart in Wuhan, the Henkes' Cine-Kodak nonetheless bears the marks of heavy use –chrome parts now covered with a brownish patina and swirling cleaning marks on the 25mm f/1.9 Kodak Anastigmat lens.⁸ Stored nearby is a large album that Jessie Mae assembled. It is a massive volume bound in faded blue cloth emblazoned with the words “*Chicago Tribune Scrap Book*,” the subtitle reading, “The World’s Greatest Newspaper.”⁹ This album, held together by two thick, slightly rusted metal screws, contains an American Protestant missionary’s visual assemblage. One of the persons “inhabiting” the album sits together with her fellow Chinese nursing students in a small square photographic print appearing midway through the volume, a group photograph made with a Rolleiflex camera in the city of Shunde (順德) in North China.¹⁰ A caption here, written by Jessie Mae shortly after the photograph was pasted into the album, simply states: “Student Nurses” (*Image 2*). But a closer look reveals something else about the image. The woman staring stoically into the camera’s lens, sitting at the far left of the first row of students with gray uniforms and stiff white caps, is none other than Liu Ju, then a 20-year-old nurse-in-training who

⁸ Harold Eugene Henke (恒祺) and Jessie Mae Henke (恒者慈) Family Collection (hereafter Henke Family Collection). Cine-Kodak Model B 16mm movie camera; Richard P. Henke, interview by the author, 2 May 2010.

⁹ For more on scrapbooking as a larger American 19th and 20th century cultural practice and its connections to private perception, visual materiality, and gendered visual production, see Susan Tucker, Katherine Ott, and Patricia Buckler, eds. *The Scrapbook in American Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Identified in parallel research in the Lewis Family Collection as Ralph Charles Lewis (劉瑞夫), a medical missionary colleague and family friend of the Henkes, using a German-made Rolleiflex Old Standard (c.1932-1933) 6x6cm twin-lens-reflex camera with a Carl Zeiss Tessar 75mm f/3.8 lens.

enrolled in the school in the fall of 1937, after fleeing the Japanese invasion that swept through North China and her hometown of Shijiazhuang (石家莊) earlier that summer.¹¹



Image 2 (*Chicago Tribune* album page and detail “Student Nurses,” c.1938-1939; Henke Family Collection)

Seven thousand miles west and nearly 74 years later, Liu sits on her bed in her apartment with the window open, looking at her own albums. The humming of the cicadas reaches a slight crescendo outside. Her son paces back and forth at the far end of the room, deep in thought, and her daughter sits on a plastic stool next to the bed, waiting for a response. Liu lifts a finger to point at the black-and-white photograph showing her and the two foreigners standing together – a picture that her husband took after their wedding reception in 1948, held in the house of the couple smiling at the camera. She pauses, remembering, and looks up. “Mrs. Henke and Dr. Henke” (恒太太，恒醫師), she says, “they were like family to me.”¹²

Views: Backgrounds, Trajectories, and Targets

As I sat in that room, looking back at Liu and looking at the Henkes in the photographs, I struggled to make sense of the historical trajectories and visual frames I was encountering. Liu’s

¹¹ “Chicago Tribune Scrap Book,” Henke Family Collection.

¹² Liu Ju (劉舉) personal interview by the author in Wuchang, China, 22 May 2011.

reference to “family” was an apt one. She was a member of a global spiritual community, a person whose identity was defined not only by her individual religious beliefs, but also by her associations past and present with Christian institutions. This identity, in both highly and historically contingent ways, was embodied in familial images. These were images of family (her own and that of her religious and cultural community) that were themselves part of a family of images – assemblages of experiences, imaginations, and visual practices.

But like fading memories of long-lost relations, this history of once-visible peoples and things now resides in comparative invisibility, overshadowed by grander historical scales and ever-shifting distances of time and space. An old hymn, well-known to Chinese Christians and missionaries at the time the aforementioned albums were first assembled, offers a more poetic rendering: “time, like an ever-rolling stream / bears all its sons away / they fly, forgotten, as a dream / dies at the opening day.”¹³ Liu Ju and Jessie Mae Henke’s images are now located on opposite sides of the Pacific. Nearly all the individuals depicted in them are no longer living; the communities with which they were once familiar no longer exist in the same identifiable forms. There are the cameras, stored underneath a bed in present-day China, displayed on a dusty shelf in Los Angeles, or more often lost or divorced from their earlier historical contexts – the paradoxical fate of photographic equipment, always rendered invisible in the visual materials that out-live them. Only fragments – of images, imaging technologies, and personal interactions – now remain, traces of the Christian missionary enterprise in 20th century China.

What follows is an attempt to pull together many of these fragments. Many disparate trajectories made possible the visual practices that shaped and documented these historical

¹³ Robert C. Miller and Ellen M. Studley, “Peiping Religious Workers’ Retreat, June 3-4, 1949,” “Opening Worship lead by Bishop Chang; Hymn – O God Our Help in Ages Past,” Henke Family Collection. Isaac Watts (1719), “O God, our help in ages past,” No. 289, *The Hymnal of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1943).

experiences as well as the experiences that shaped visual afterlives. This study focuses on visual practices embedded in – and products of – longer histories of American Christian mission in the world (and American empire, religious and secular, in East Asia), global histories of photographic and filmic practice, and modern Chinese history in all its complexity. At the same time, missionary imaging practices and the visual materials they produced do not neatly represent any single one of the historical trajectories that enabled their creation, but rather reflect all of them in various degrees. On the one hand, I examine missionary images as evidence of cultural practices that could not be neatly archived as texts; the photographs and films represent the traces of fuller visual practices and perceptions past. On the other, I interrogate imaging *as* experience, as highly localized ways of encountering and perceiving the world.

Traces of these experiences reside in visual materials and the recoverable personal histories that surrounded them, but there is more than meets the eye, so to speak. Visual practices created bonds between people and ways of imagining these bonds after the fact, mediating the experiences of image-makers and image-subjects. The camera physically “scripted” behaviors, enabled visibilities while framing modern experience in the act of photography and its visual products.¹⁴ Imaging also replicated a key sensory experience – that of sight and vision – that translated historical realities in substantially different ways compared to text. And in all of this, visual practices were the engines for a collective culture of seeing and being seen in photographic images, of visual world-making by missionaries and Chinese Christians that variously expressed utopian religious visions, local and national identities, and visual responses to historical change.

¹⁴ Robin Bernstein, “Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race,” *Social Text* 101, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 69-70; 86-89.

Between the turn of the 20th century and its midpoint, nearly 10,000 American Christian missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, traveled to and resided in China.¹⁵ The projects that these individuals undertook, while broadly motivated by Christian religious calling and interests in indigenous conversion, varied widely in practice.¹⁶ Humanitarian projects combined with evangelistic ideals drove the parallel growth of churches and religious fellowships as well as medical and educational institutions. In the process of putting “Christian service” and evangelism into practice, many missionaries developed complicated relationships with the Chinese people and state, themselves wrestling with questions of identity (cultural, religious, and national) that roughly coalesced around popular movements such as the Boxer Uprising of 1900, the 1911 Revolution, the May Fourth Movement of 1919, and the Anti-Christian Movement of the 1920s.¹⁷ With the violent upheavals of the long (1927-1950) Chinese Civil War and the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), many missionaries shifted their primary religious projects to provide humanitarian responses to the physical needs of Chinese civilians whose lives had been uprooted by both domestic conflict and foreign invasion.¹⁸ After the end of the war in 1945, missionaries who returned to their hospitals, schools, and mission stations across the country quickly found themselves swept up in the renewed Civil War between Communist and Nationalist forces. This conflict ultimately ended in a radical regime change – the founding of the PRC and Nationalist government’s retreat to Taiwan – and the official cessation of foreign missions that ignited contested relationships between organized religion and the Chinese state

¹⁵ Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 72, 94, 114-115.

¹⁶ Bays, 92-124. For a historical view closer to that of Protestant missionaries’ interwar perspectives, see also Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929).

¹⁷ Daniel H. Bays, “Foreign Missions and Indigenous Protestant Leaders in China, 1920-1955: Identity and Loyalty in an Age of Powerful Nationalism,” in *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 144-147.

¹⁸ Ka-che Yip, “China and Christianity, Perspectives on Missions, Nationalism, and the State in the Republican Period, 1912-1949,” in *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 132-140.

existing to this day.¹⁹ At various moments in this half-century, Americans in China and Chinese communities were caught up in the chaotic uncertainties of this time, a period that embodied widespread suffering and contestations over national identity, spiritual belonging, and political allegiances.²⁰ During the dramatic historical changes that took place around them, American Christian missionaries interacted with local Chinese and other foreigners in various cultural contexts. They made friends and colleagues, struggled with both indigenous and foreign pressures, and (in Protestant denominations) raised families. Almost all developed varying degrees of knowledge of Chinese language and culture, gained through basic language training followed by long periods of daily experience in the field.²¹ Many of them carried cameras.

Photography by foreign missionaries in China arguably dates back to the early 1850s, when missionary Fr. Claude Gotteland, S.J., began producing daguerreotypes at the French Catholic mission in Xujiahui (徐家匯) in Shanghai, part of an educational and scientific mission inaugurated in 1842.²² Vernacular photography on a wide scale by missionaries and other foreigners in China, however, did not take off until the late 19th century, when developments in popular imaging technologies (e.g. the commercialization of dry plates, flexible rollfilm, mass-produced consumer cameras, etc.) and international commercial empires – spearheaded in part by American companies like Eastman Kodak – made such visual practices possible.²³ Many late

¹⁹ Bays, 158-164; Yip, 140-143.

²⁰ Timothy Brook, “Toward Independence: Christianity in China under the Japanese Occupation, 1937-1945,” in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 317-337.

²¹ Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker, “The Many Faces of the Missionary Enterprise at Home,” in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home*, ed. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 1-3.

²² Ma Yunzeng [馬運增], *Zhongguo sheyingshi, 1840-1937* (History of photography in China, 1840-1937), 中國攝影史, 1840-1937] (Beijing: Zhongguo Sheying Chubanshe, 1987), 16; Jean-Paul Wiest, “Understanding Mission and the Jesuits’ Shifting Approaches Toward China,” in *Missionary Approaches and Linguistics in Mainland China and Taiwan*, ed. Ku Wei-ying (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation, Leuven University Press, 2001), 45-47.

²³ Helmut Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography* (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 23-24; Mona Domash, *American Commodities in an Age of Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 28-29.

19th and early 20th century American missionaries carried Kodak Autographic and Brownie “snapshot” cameras with them to China, while intrepid others lugged bulky large-format cameras (derived from relatively immobile 19th century studio cameras) to produce finely detailed images on glass plates or sheet film.²⁴ Over the next half century, their successors employed much smaller medium-format and 35mm “miniature” cameras allowing for greater image-making flexibility on portable, high-capacity rollfilm. As motion picture technology became more economical and widespread in the late 1920s, missionaries also employed consumer movie cameras to create a sizeable corpus of narrative films (*Image 3*).²⁵



Image 3 (Cine-Kodak Model B 16mm movie camera; Henke Family Collection, author’s photograph)²⁶

The resulting images, still or moving, were often produced with limited technological expertise under less-than-ideal physical conditions. Such vernacular photographs and films produced by

²⁴ An excellent description of the technical challenges that photographers around the world faced before the invention of the dry plate – the age of the daguerreotype and wet-plate processes – is included in Martha Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 126-128.

²⁵ No history linking these specific imaging technologies and practices to missionary activity exists at this date, so I draw these references from oral history interviews, advertisements and technical manuals, and close observations of photographic equipment preserved in family collections or appears in images or texts produced by individual missionaries. For a general history of Western photographic practices in China prior to this period, see Terry Bennett, *History of Photography in China: Western Photographers, 1861-1879* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 2010). For a classic work on photography’s technological genealogy grounded in the field of art history, see Beaumont Newhall’s *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1982).

²⁶ The original Cine-Kodak Model B 16mm movie camera used by Harold and Jessie Mae Henke in China, as the author photographed it on July 30, 2013 in Richard P. Henke’s home, Rolling Hills, California.

these missionaries had multifaceted meanings and functions. Prints were inserted into family albums, shared with other people as mementos, or reproduced in church publications. Still and moving images alike were used as illustrations or visual aids for lectures and sermons on both sides of the Pacific. Furthermore, personal photographs taken by missionaries served as performative artifacts of their relationships with friends and colleagues. Preserved in family albums, scrapbooks, and slide projector trays, these images “reenact” lived relationships and experiences through a multisensory combination of visual and material display.²⁷ In a number of cases, the photographic practices of American missionaries developed in parallel with the photographic practices of Chinese nationals whose work or religious beliefs brought them into direct contact with missionaries.

The central argument of my study is to demonstrate that visual practices were a vital part of American missionary experience in modern China, producing images and framing identities. To a surprising extent, cameras, photographs, and films radically *mediated* and visualized various missionary and Chinese Christian experiences in every aspect of their sojourns. In documenting modern China and their presence in it, American missionaries developed a *missionary modernity* that encapsulated both foreign missions and Chinese Christianity on multiple historical registers. By mediation, I want to suggest something more complex than a narrow view of modern photography as a secular, imperialistic surveillance of “the other” or enacting hegemonic “social dislocation” – approaches well developed by the works of Emily Rosenberg and Laura Wexler.²⁸ Histories of empire after the “cultural turn” rightly give serious

²⁷ Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs Objects Histories: on the Materiality of Images* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 11-12.

²⁸ Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1982), 31.

attention to visual practices in colonial or imperial contexts (e.g. Laura Wexler's *Tender Violence* and Christopher Pinney's *Photography's Other Histories*). At the same time, most – if not all – of these studies privilege commercial photographers or those otherwise affiliated with secular institutions (e.g. diplomats, travelers, and businesspeople), while overlooking the differences in ethos and experience between them and missionary photographers. Major cultural histories on imperialism have broadly conflated missionary identity and activities with hegemonic power, reducing missionaries to one-dimensional colonial agents instead of examining their working ideologies and experiences.²⁹ This produces a set of parallel erasures. First, the conflation of missionary imaging with those of secular groups flattens critical differences in visual practices and subjectivities, particularly in East Asia. Secondly, nuances in modern cross-cultural encounters, alignments in ideology, and personal relationships in community and belief – such as those experienced by Liu and Henke discussed in the introduction – are rendered irrelevant, as are activities that run against the grain of hegemonic power (e.g. foreign missionary alliances with anti-imperial or pro-national movements, the development of “self-supporting” indigenous religious communities, etc.). While some missionaries were ideologically aligned with imperial power and employed visual practices to directly reinforce it, my goal is to expand the connections between imaging and identity beyond such approaches. Just as missionaries debated issues of cultural and religious sensitivity over the course of the 20th century, so too did their imaging practices evolve to incorporate different kinds of self-reflexivity and relationality to visual subjects. On the one hand, these changing visual practices are reflections of (and to a certain extent, responses to) what Ann Stoler refers to as “epistemic anxieties” – the missionaries’ grappling with uncertainties in what they knew or did

²⁹ Rosenberg, 8; 28-31.

not know individually and communally.³⁰ On the other, photography and filmmaking were forms of visual and cultural mediation, reflecting missionaries' complicated identities in China as actors always in-between (but also embedded in) nations and peoples, imperial powers, global religious institutions, and local communities.³¹

The second major goal of this study is to bridge significant gaps in conventional historical scholarship on modern China, Sino-US encounters, and visual practices in East Asia. While I trace American missionary imaging alongside changing historical landscapes in modern China – multiple backdrops including the tumultuous larger histories of US presence in East Asia, Chinese Christianity, and Republican China and the early PRC themselves – the goal is to look under the surface of these changes, to illuminate visual narratives “hidden in plain sight.” Nearly all existing histories of American missionary activity in China (and other places in contemporary East Asia) completely overlook the role of visual practices in foreign missionary and indigenous experience. Even seminal studies that place strong emphasis on cross-cultural encounters in the missionary enterprise make little or no mention of visual practices, although as this study will show, such practices were widespread in modern China.³² Other pioneering studies on the early history of photography in China, while touching on the foreign missionary presence and highlighting specific missionary-photographers, largely overlook *vernacular* imaging and photography or filmmaking by missionaries as a cultural phenomenon. Such studies, including quite prominently the Getty Research Institute's *Brush and Shutter: Early*

³⁰ Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 19-20.

³¹ William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 4-5; 44-45.

³² Daniel Bays and Grant Wacker, *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010); Derek Chang, *Citizens of a Christian Nation: Evangelical Missions and the Problem of Race in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Katherine Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo, eds. *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

Photography in China, prioritize a more formal, art-historical view of foreign imaging practices in China while neglecting to specifically examine missionary photography as a category of its own or its longer historical trajectories beyond the 19th century.³³

Furthermore, images by American missionaries, when reproduced in texts on modern Chinese history or Sino-US contacts, are almost never directly investigated as products (as opposed to representations) of historical experience, missionary or otherwise. Such images largely appear as illustrations, almost always lacking important discussions about production processes, circulation, or image authorship and visual meanings.³⁴ I argue, by contrast, that these questions about visibility and visual production are not only important to interrogate, but central to the experiences I examine in this study.³⁵ In overlooking missionary photography and filmmaking, scholarship on modern China and US history in the world has effectively erased a major form of transnational experience, as well as ignoring the existence of one of the largest groups of people who could (and did) visualize China from their uniquely “embedded” perspectives. In my view, the massive quantities of missionary images are simply too significant

³³ Jeffery W. Cody and Frances Terpak, “Through a Foreign Glass: The Art and Science of Photography in Late Qing China,” in *Brush and Shutter: Early Photography in China*, ed. Jeffrey W. Cody and Frances Terpak (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 41-42, 53.

³⁴ Graphic images produced by missionaries and other foreigners in China during the Nanjing Massacre (the Rape of Nanking) are good examples of such uses in secondary historical texts. Most of these leverage the visually illustrative content and (often shocking) indexical power of images, but neglect – for reasons of topical focus or methodology – to discuss the contemporary processes, uses, and meanings that the images carried for their producers and subjects. The most widely-read description of missionary filmmaking in occupied Nanjing appears in Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 156-157. The same episode, involving the Rev. John Magee and his 16mm movie camera, is discussed in the fourth chapter of this study, but with a different focus on visual practices.

³⁵ My thoughts here parallel those of Martha Sandweiss, who writes in her own introduction, “the meaning of photographs, or pictures in general, is rarely self-evident, and the cavalier use of historical images as illustrations in historical texts...frequently undercuts the careful logic and attention to rules of evidence with which the literary argument has been built. A lingering bias in historical training teaches would-be historians to value the literary over the visual or material...while leaving them which few analytical skills for the interpretation of visual records....I argue here, however, that photographs can, indeed, be rich primary source documents; they deserve and reward the careful sort of historical attention more often lavished on literary texts.” Sandweiss, 7.

– and too resonant with historical meaning – to be put aside as incidental, or left unexamined in the broader histories of modern China and Sino-US encounters.

A single photograph from the Henkes’ scrapbook album demonstrates many unexamined possibilities (*Image 4*). In June 1936, an overcast day in Hebei, North China, a small group of American Presbyterian missionaries gathered for a photograph. Some smiled, while a few others stood with serious looks; a Labrador dog curled up at the feet of the group turned to stare intently. All are aware of the photographer, whose momentary presence behind the camera – visible to the subjects but invisible to the viewers – made this photograph possible.



Image 4 (Presbyterian mission meeting group photograph, June 1936; Henke Family Collection)

A closer look at the image reveals something else – the material traces of visual technologies. A rectangular camera case, its leather strap looped lazily on the ground, sits at the right side of the frame. A spectacled man at the center of the group casually dangles a compact 8mm or 16mm movie camera from its carrying handle, while the man next to him cradles an unfolded bellows camera, its waist-level viewfinder reflecting a tiny bright spot of open sky back to the camera making the photograph. Finally, a man standing at right side of the group holds a Rolleiflex twin-lens reflex camera upside down, its viewing hood open and pointing downward (*Image 4*

enlargement, red arrows for clarity). This display of photographic equipment and image-making potential – easily overlooked by most viewers not specifically looking for traces of the photographic – references countless other images in the rolls of film that passed through the cameras in the hands of the missionaries visible here, and likely many others across modern China before and after this moment. This image, a single print in one family album, is a representative window onto multifaceted missionary visual practices.

In a parallel way, this study is the first to examine the results of this massive global visual undertaking. While working with a limited set of religious and secular institutional archives, I came across many thousands of images made in China by American missionaries during the 19th and 20th centuries, a fraction of millions currently extant in North America, Europe, and East Asia as a whole. While increasing numbers of these have been digitized, bringing the images into worlds – wholly unimagined by their original subjects and creators – of web-based circulation and metadata, many more collections, for reasons of funding, institutional trajectories, and private ownership remain inaccessible to wider publics.³⁶ Terry Bennett, an independent historian of Chinese photography, notes this in his conclusion to *History of Photography in China*, making particular mention of images produced by missionaries: “missionary archives contain much of photographic interest, but the sheer volume of material can deter any but the most determined of photo-historians. Transcriptions and digitisation...are necessary before such material can be more widely disseminated. This requires time and funds. The [I]nternet is

³⁶ See Joanna Sassoon, “Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction,” in *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (New York: Routledge, 2004), 186-202. For examples of current digital collections, see Robert Bickers’ *Visualising China* at the University of Bristol and the *Sidney D. Gamble Photographs Collection* at Duke University are two groundbreaking examples of such digital collections; the latter being specifically related to the photography of a single American Protestant missionary in early Republican China.

powerless in this area.”³⁷ While the concluding statement on the Internet’s limited reach has now been addressed by online collections such as the *International Missionary Photography Archive* based at the University of Southern California – even such projects point to far more visual material and contextual documents related to imaging that remain largely unexamined in archives and private collections across North America.³⁸ Missionary filmmaking in China, also explored for the first time at serious length in this study, is even more underrepresented in the historical record due to exponentially greater difficulties associated with stabilizing, storing, and sharing film materials. One major goal of this study, then, is to participate in the recovery of these materials – not only examining them for their historical meanings, but also to raise productive questions about their afterlives, preservation and accessibility, and future explorations with other approaches.

Frames: Methodologies and Approaches

The missionary visual practices discussed in this study are interwoven with photographic indexicality, cultural and religious imaginations, and material movement (as photographs and films circulated across spaces and times). Missionaries leveraged photographic and filmic images’ abilities to engage viewers’ perceptions and imaginations, drawing a visual characteristic that Roland Barthes described in *Camera Lucida* as the *punctum*, a “wounding” or

³⁷ Terry Bennett, *History of Photography in China: Western Photographers, 1861-1879* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 2010), 314.

³⁸ *International Missionary Photography Archive*, USC Digital Library, University of Southern California <<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll123>>; the website’s extended introduction states, “most missionary societies, or the libraries that hold their archives, have accumulations of pictures in various formats, ranging from a few musty, uncatalogued boxes or albums at one end of the scale to carefully preserved, well organized, and professionally cataloged collections numbering in the hundreds of thousands of images at the other. How many photographs exist is unknown, but in the aggregate there are certainly millions, representing an important potential scholarly resource. We have not undertaken to catalog and digitize that mass of photographs in anything like its entirety.” “About,” <<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/about/collection/p15799coll123>>

“attractive” element.³⁹ I argue that it was precisely this photographic “animation” of viewers and their connections to a modern, increasingly visual world that drew missionaries to widespread investment in image-making. Equally important, and directly connected to meanings embedded in visual materials, are the historical technological processes that mediated experiences, spaces, and imaginations. I map the evolution of imagining technologies onto parallel changes in missionary culture and religious practice in China, looking at the ways in which specific image-making technologies shaped missionaries’ interactions with and visualizations of the world around them. In doing so, I illuminate relationships between image-makers and image subjects while also highlighting important material differences between specific technological processes and visual products. The ways in which a camera is used, an image is produced, interpreted, and circulated, and the interconnections between visual perception and experience are all key to the approaches taken in this study. Echoing Jonathan Crary’s analysis in *Techniques of the Observer*, I look at missionary visual practices at the nexus of imagination, technology, and experience – as “points of intersection[,] where philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic discourses overlap with mechanical techniques, institutional requirements, and socioeconomic forces...embedded in a much larger assemblage of events and powers.”⁴⁰ At the same time, this study broadly critiques Walter Benjamin’s classic argument on the processes of “mechanical reproduction” erasing or destroying the organic or non-mechanical “aura” of a visualized object, person, or scene that he sees as inherent in “the work of art.”⁴¹ I believe that many historians have taken Benjamin’s argument at face value, without critically evaluating differences in vernacular visual practices

³⁹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang; Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981), 40.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 8-9.

⁴¹ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1968), 224-225.

and “mechanical reproduction” itself (which I argue is still experiential and agential, requiring specific human interactions with specific technologies) as ascribing other forms of “aura” and meaning onto imaging experiences and resulting visual materials.

In relation to this, my study investigates the circulation of visual materials in the modern missionary enterprise, with meaning-making linked to specific visualized times and spaces as well as material archives of images – both public and private – formed over time. I track the movement of photographs and films via individuals and groups in Asia and the United States, distributed in mission compounds, published for American mission organizations and congregations, and at times appearing in secular arenas. To make sense of the complexities inherent to these multiple flows, I read this particular historical framing in terms of an “imagined photo-essay,” defined in part by W.J.T. Mitchell as “[an] emphasis on a private ‘point of view,’ memory and autobiography, and photography’s...status as a kind of materialized memory trace imbedded in the context of personal associations and private ‘perspectives.’”⁴² I also employ insights from Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff’s scholarship in *The Social Life of Things*, examining the mutable “cultural biographies” of visual materials. This takes into consideration not only the afterlives of images beyond their moments of creation, but also the technologies and materials that went into the making of photographs and films “on the ground.”⁴³ Tracking the movement of photographic commodities (e.g. camera equipment, film, chemicals) from the United States to China and their transformation into artifacts (from commodities to “ex-commodities”) imbued with personal or institutional meaning is a key part of this investigation,

⁴² W.J.T. Mitchell, “The Photographic Essay: Four Case Studies,” in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 289.

⁴³ Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things,” in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 66-67.

and allows me to show how missionary photography was materially linked to both global commercial networks and broader image-making practices.⁴⁴

The “afterlives” of photographs, as materials physically embodying real and imagined relationships, are an important part of the study. Jessie Mae Henke’s *Chicago Tribune* scrapbook and Liu Ju’s albums referenced earlier are representative examples of these visual-material afterlives. As Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart write in *Photographs, Objects, Histories*, “albums in particular have performative qualities. Not only do they narrativise photographs, such as in family or travel albums...but their materiality dictates the embodied conditions of viewing, literally performing the images in certain ways.”⁴⁵ In the case of this album, it lends itself to physical touch and tactile engagement – performing relationality through *display* – merely by virtue of its impressive size and weight. To access the images within, the viewer needs to place the album on a table or some other support, grasping the edges of the cover and heavy pages to turn them over and reveal its contents. Seeing and handling the photographs in this way also physically links the viewer to an imagined sense of past time; it is difficult to ignore the material signs and marks of aging. On touching dog-eared corners of the page, noticing creases or smudges where viewers’ fingers traced details on photograph surfaces, or even catching the slightly mildewed scent of the cardboard, the viewer easily imagines himself or herself in the place of the other viewers who looked through the volume in the past.⁴⁶ The album dimensions also “perform” the photographs socially when displayed and looked at in a collective setting; “large presentation albums,” Edwards and Hart note, “viewed by two or more seated persons

⁴⁴ Appadurai, 15-16.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs, Objects, Histories: on the Materiality of Images* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 11.

⁴⁶ Edwards and Hart, 12.

with the object spread across their knees, would link the group to one another physically determining the social relations of viewing.”⁴⁷

Finally, this study references the connections between transnational religious belief and imagination that shaped missionary visual practices and collective experience. For this, I draw from works of cultural anthropologists Thomas Tweed and J. Lorand Matory. Tweed argues that religion is more than a monolithic cultural construct or social structure, defining religions broadly as “*confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries* [italics in the original].”⁴⁸ I find Tweed’s categorization of religion as fluid “confluences...drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries” important in understanding how religion embodies transnationality, and how images that exist (or are produced, circulated, interpreted, etc.) within such religious projects reflect their transnational characteristics. Viewed in this way, religious belief is closely linked to ideas of belonging and identification beyond the territorial, an extension of Benedict Anderson’s nation-centered “imagined community.”⁴⁹ While the concept of “home” and “boundary” may be political, social, and cultural (sometimes all at once), Tweed points out that religion allows for movement within and beyond these frameworks. Transnationality and transcendence are inextricably linked and expressed in shifting cultural categories and movement within cultural spheres. As Tweed suggests, “religious flows – and the traces they leave – move through time and space. They are horizontal, vertical, and transversal movements...[They also] move across varied ‘glocalities,’ simultaneously local and global

⁴⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁸ Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 54.

⁴⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (New York: Verso, 1991), 5-7.

spaces, as for example when missionaries carry their faith from one land to another.”⁵⁰ Instead of approaching religion as part and parcel of secular culture, Tweed’s fluid definition of religious movement carefully differentiates between religion as cultural flows and religion in its institutional form.⁵¹ It also opens the door to examining spaces in the missionary enterprise (in and between cultural flows, institutional forms, and personal lived experiences) where images and visual practices as cultural experiences took concrete historical form.

Matory’s approaches to religious imagination provide useful ways to look at lived experience in conjunction with Tweed’s expanded definitions of religious identity. In an essay entitled “The Many Who Dance in Me,” Matory defines religion as the ways in which historical figures imagine spiritual or supernatural identities across and beyond physical space. This is connected to the idea that “all religion is transnational;” as Matory points out, “religions are among the most widespread and institutionalized ways in which people employ the image and reality of faraway places and times as models of underlying, ideal, or super-powered realities.”⁵² In this definition, religion is characterized by the *imagining* and *association* of multiple physical and spiritual identities in one place at one time. This multidimensionality is important in understanding the perceptions of American missionaries in China and those of Chinese converts and colleagues. After all, the ways in which missionaries perceived their presence in China, whether for religious or humanitarian projects, were mediated and shaped by their Catholic or Protestant Christian worldviews. Likewise, Chinese participants in the missionary project saw themselves as part of similar frameworks of belief that shaped their spiritual and socio-cultural

⁵⁰ Ibid., 63-64.

⁵¹ Tweed, 68.

⁵² J. Lorand Matory, “The Many Who Dance in Me: Afro-Atlantic Ontology and the Problem with ‘Transnationalism,’” in *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization*, ed. Thomas J. Csordas (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 238, 257.

identities. Generally speaking, the historical agency of missionaries and converts alike must be defined by their identity as Christians operating in perceptions of a divinely mandated missiological “calling” – a worldview that necessitated believers’ imagining themselves as other than “only” Americans or Chinese.⁵³ This includes but also complicates national frameworks, given that these historical actors’ religious affiliations and imaginations were a very real part of their distinctly transnational, transcendent identities.

These approaches map directly onto visual processes and materials that mediate space and time, both real and imagined. Images produced by (and depicting) transnational individuals and communities were imbued with these multiple forms of modernity, Christianity in China, Sino-US encounters, and so forth. They are in some senses mirrors that reflect and lenses that refract their subjects’ and makers’ multiple identities, visualizing “layered” cultural experiences alongside religious imaginations of “the image and reality of faraway places and times,” as Matory suggests.⁵⁴ Visual processes – much like processes of religious conversion, and in this case, enacted by individuals directly involved in religious projects – shaped and reshaped interactions between subjects and image-makers, image-makers and image-viewers. Photographic and filmic materials, in both their raw (e.g. negatives and chemicals) and “used” forms (e.g. prints, slides, and albums), moved along global missionary networks and in larger trans-Pacific media channels between China and the United States – paralleling the kinds of “religious flows” that Tweed and Matory describe. And as historical shifts took place in and around the missionary enterprises, so too did visual practices and meanings attached to images

⁵³ Bays and Wacker, 1-3; see also Xi Lian, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 7; and Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 1-14.

⁵⁴ Matory, 238.

change alongside them. This study therefore narrates frames within frames, literal and figurative, visual and experiential.

Images and Identities: Participants and Chapter Structures

I begin *in medias res*, looking first at the arrival of American Protestant and Catholic missionaries in interwar Republican China. The opening chapter, “Modern Visions and New Optics” traces the experiences of American Presbyterian (美國長老會) medical missionaries Harold Eugene Henke, Jessie Mae Henke, and Ralph Charles Lewis as they first arrived in interwar North China (華北) between 1927 and 1933, tracing their visual practices alongside cross-cultural encounters and formative experiences stepping into the Protestant mission enterprise. I explore what it meant and felt to be an uninitiated modern American missionary entering China with camera in hand. I look at foundational visual practices alongside these broader experiences, while also tracing the influence of photographic technologies on everyday missionary activities and contemporary relationships to Chinese Christianity. Technological influences and visual practices *as* modern cultural encounters are introduced for the first time in this chapter – themes that are carried throughout the rest of the study. The parallel second chapter, “Cameras and Conversions,” shifts the view from Protestant to Catholic missionary visual practices in the same decade, albeit in a different region of China and focusing on images’ local and trans-Pacific framings. This chapter examines the roles of photography and media technologies in shaping American Catholic missionary identity, relationships to American Protestants and Chinese Catholic community in rural West Hunan (湘西) between 1921 and 1929, and transnational connections between these communities and supporting groups in the United States. This chapter takes a closer look at the challenges of local visual production and

trans-Pacific circulation, as missionaries of the Passionist order (苦難會) wrestled with issues of geographic distances and isolation, environmental contingency, misinterpretation of images by US recipients, and visualized imaginations of missionary deaths (“martyrdom”) in warlord-era Central China (*Image 5*).



Image 5 (Fr. Constantine Leech, C.P., and mass server in West Hunan, 1928; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)⁵⁵

The third chapter, “The Cine-Kodak at Shunde,” looks at vernacular missionary filmmaking during the Nanjing Decade, returning to the Henkes in North China and the unanticipated gift of a Cine-Kodak 16mm movie camera from a New York church in 1931. After providing a broadly exploratory history of missionary filmic activities across greater 20th century East Asia, the chapter focuses in on the Henkes’ filmmaking experimentation – their production of films with not much more than previous cinema viewing experiences and slim camera instruction manuals to guide them – and the resulting films’ representations of Chinese Protestant activities and local

⁵⁵ Fr. Constantine Leech, C.P., photograph verso annotation, “My ‘fu-missa’ [輔彌撒] (mass server) Angelo, right at attention[,] 1928.” File 800.01_038.021, Passionist China Collection Photo Archive, University of Scranton.

communities in Hebei. I also then explore contemporary transnational existences of the Henkes' films, as they used the Cine-Kodak to produce images in interwar China for American audiences and counter-images in the Depression-era United States for Chinese audiences.

The fourth and fifth chapters further develop the themes of missionary visual practices and modern experience, looking at the ways in which they overlapped with national and global histories of war and revolution in China. Some of the characters from the earlier chapters – the Henkes and Lewis families, for example, re-enter these later sections, while new ones from both Protestant and Catholic groups are introduced. These chapters track the shifting production and meanings of American missionary images as the nation was first beset by the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the post-1945 Chinese Civil War – all times characterized by national upheaval and political polarizations, unprecedented violence, and severe disruptions of missionary activities that prefigured the ultimate end of the foreign missionary enterprise, soon after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. This is many ways a fragmentary history of invisibilities and silences, but also brings to light connections between missionaries as “embedded” figures – their fates intertwined with that of mid-century Republican China – and their images in mediating global Sino-US relationships in the wartime and postwar eras. In the fourth chapter, “Framing Chaos,” I discuss the reconfiguration of missionary visual practices *as* documentary practices, looking at previously unexplored overlaps between missionary imaging and major wartime events such as the Nanjing Massacre, the Nationalist exodus and formation of “Free China” in the interior, and the Japanese occupation of North China between 1937 and 1943. This analysis forces a rereading of the foreign missionary experience in wartime China in specifically visual terms, while also illuminating moments in which their images dramatically escaped the American missionary mold and became part of national wartime experience. The

fifth chapter, “Memento Mori,” parallels the decline of the missionary enterprise and explores visual material as symbols of fading hope, loss, and nostalgia as mission institutions collapsed, personnel were expelled from the country by the new Communist government, and the future of Christianity in China was radically changed by global Cold War realignments. I approach this period from the dual perspectives of California Jesuit missionary filmmakers (one an “external” visitor from California, one an “internal” participant in Yangzhou) attempting to grapple with religious, historical, and political declension, collectively producing and narrating two 16mm color films while the longstanding Jesuit mission in China was simultaneously phased out during the rise of the People’s Republic. This is mirrored by a final return to some of the Presbyterian families as they produced their last vernacular movies in China and scrapbook albums in their return to the United States, commemorating their disrupted missionary activities and relationships to other American and Chinese individuals before the upheavals of 1949-1950.

These chapters are followed by an epilogue that traces the afterlives of missionary images in archival and personal senses, looking at what happened to these visual materials – and the people who made and appear in them – after the end of the mission enterprise in mid-20th century China. Episodes of loss, recovery, and preservation are discussed, with special attention paid to the some of these images’ afterlives (and new circulation) in a 21st century world, and the present-day “return” of missionary images to the Chinese environments and communities of their production. In this light, I should here briefly jump to the end of the study – and momentary bridging of a single photograph, a single life, and an afterlife in this multilayered history.

The interview with Liu Ju was mentally and physically draining, I am sure as much or more so for her than it was for me and her family members in the room. But in a moment of sudden clarity as we wrapped up our conversation, Liu took my hand and said that I ought to

visit again. I gave her a small bag of fresh fruit (a kind that I no longer recall) I brought as a gift. Next time, she said with a smile, we would have a meal together – noodles, perhaps – and talk further. Her son handed me her two precious albums. I was to take them back to my residence in Wuhan and make copy-photographs of them before I left China for the United States – for research and the family’s use, we agreed. I walked out of the apartment carrying the albums in a worn plastic bag, an improvised protection against the spring rain now cutting through the heat, and on reaching the bottom of the stairs, unexpectedly burst into tears. A few months after the meeting, I was back in Northern California making similar photographic copies of the Henkes’ scrapbook, also on loan from the family. It was then that I came across the photograph, made by Jessie Mae and Harold’s medical missionary colleague in China, Ralph Charles Lewis, depicting Liu and her nursing colleagues at Shunde shortly after the Japanese invasion of 1937. Since I had not seen any images like it in Liu’s existing albums, I made a digital copy and emailed it to her son, Li Weilai, who printed it out for his mother to look at.⁵⁶ Sixteen days later, he replied again:

I am sorry to tell you that my mother Liu Ju passed away at 03:10 pm, on last Sunday, August 21, 2011. She expired in peace at home, after lunch, but her life quality had been not good since 2009, [due to] asthma, diminished mental state and shingles.

She had lived in this world for 94 years 2 months and 23 days, and she was a very good mother of us. We now finished her burial, and still feel sad. She [was born] in a Christian family, now she was called to be with the [Lord]. Fortunately, she saw the photo took in 1937 in Shundefu [順德府] when she was 20 that [you] sent me, and she still remembered almost all names of her classmates.⁵⁷

Not long afterward, Weilai sent me by email a photograph of his mother’s room shortly after she passed away. At her bedside now lay an enlarged and framed copy of the photograph that Ralph Lewis made, Harold Henke and Jessie Mae collected in their scrapbook, and that I had sent to

⁵⁶ Author’s email to Li Weilai (李維來), 13 August 2011.

⁵⁷ Li Weilai (李維來), email to the author, 29 August 2011.

Liu and her son, not knowing at all what she would make of it. It was an image within an image – embodying an entire era of historical complexities, interwoven relationships and encounters, and a single life now passed, but undoubtedly well-lived – that I will not soon forget. It is with this ending, this looking back, that I now turn to this story of “things visible and invisible.”

Chapter 1 – Modern Visions and New Optics: Missionary Modernity and Visual Practices in Interwar Republican China

Pedestrians and vehicles pass quickly through the junction of South Xinhua Road and Xinxi Street, two streets in the city of Xingtai – located some 280 miles south of Beijing. Many are headed to and from the city’s commercial center and railway station several blocks to the north. Scruffy trees struggle to shade the roads, their foliage a dirty brownish-green in the hot, pollutant-choked summer air of southern Hebei. The area near the junction is largely residential, populated by generic concrete apartment blocks standing a modest five to seven stories above ground. The residents here live in a sea of sounds. Cars, motorcycles, and freight trucks passing along Xinhua Road fill the dusty air with engine noise and oily exhaust fumes. The grinding echoes of jackhammers and metal falling on metal join the general cacophony; more new apartments are being built a few blocks to the east.⁵⁸

However, there is a space of relative quiet in this sonic whirlwind. Turning the northwest corner onto Xinxi Street and passing through a metal gate, there is a courtyard where the sounds seem to vanish, at least to the temporarily overwhelmed ear. This yard is bounded on one side by a two-story concrete meeting hall, on the other side by a plain church with a squat central bell tower (*Image 6*). In comparison to the concrete apartments that crowd it on all sides, the church,

⁵⁸ The descriptions and photographs in this introduction are drawn from the author’s visit to Xingtai on June 7, 2011, accompanied by Jing Fan (范晶), who provided vital translation assistance with the regional dialect. This visit was made possible by contact with Dou Languang (窦岚光), a member of the Xingtai Grace Memorial Church of Christ, facilitated by Clara Bickford Heer of Pasadena, California. Clara’s parents, the Rev. John Bickford and Margaret Millar Bickford, were evangelists to the church in the interwar years.

with its roughly cruciform floorplan, arched stained glass windows, and walls of dark gray brick, looks as though it does not belong at all on this unassuming street corner in this unassuming city.



Image 6 (Grace Memorial Church of Christ entrance, Xingtai, 2011; author's photograph)⁵⁹

It is not the only structure that appears out of place. A few hundred feet behind the church, the enthusiastically named Great Wall Gourmet Restaurant shares an overly large parking lot with the Xingtai Military Guesthouse (*Image 7*). The restaurant, frequented by locals and guesthouse residents, is also housed in a two-story structure of distinctly early 20th century Western design. The entranceway is framed by adjoining verandas with stately arches, most now completely sealed off with retrofitted glass windows or concrete. While the part of the building facing the parking lot is covered in glossy tan tiling, a reflective surface that blinds entering

⁵⁹ This image requires a technical note for photographically-inclined readers. The strong vignetting seen here and in Image E is due to the misuse of an ultra wide-angle zoom lens, a Tokina AT-X SD 12-24mm f/4, designed for use on APS-C “crop” sensor cameras, on a full-frame Canon 5D Mark I digital single-lens-reflex camera for which it was not originally designed. I was standing on the second floor of the meeting hall directly across from the church entrance, and so had to use the lens’s widest setting (12mm) to get both wings of the church façade and bell tower in the frame – at the expense of the significant mechanical vignette caused by the internal rear element housing.

guests when the sun is high and bright, the unmodified rear of the restaurant exposes hand-laid brickwork – much of it the same shade of aged, ashen gray as the nearby church.



Image 7 (Great Wall Gourmet Restaurant, Xingtai, 2011) and Image 8 (PLA Veterans' Meeting House, Xingtai, 2011; author's photographs)

Behind the guesthouse, in an L-shaped alleyway leading away from the church, is a gabled house of “upright and wing” construction, closely resembling those found in rural communities across the American Midwest in the mid-19th through the early 20th centuries (*Image 8*).⁶⁰ Like the church, the house is hidden away behind an apartment building and a concrete wall, which fences in a small exercise yard in front of the gabled façade. Its exterior brick walls painted a strikingly bright yellow, the house is a currently a meeting place for veteran soldiers of the People's Liberation Army.⁶¹ When the front screen door is open, the blare of a television at full volume echoes from the inside, filling the otherwise silent exercise yard with commercial jingles interspersed with China Central Television broadcasts.

Following the alleyway to the left and down a long stretch of apartments on both sides, an abandoned two-story building fills the view, built with the same brick as the house and the

⁶⁰ John A. Jackle, *Common Houses in America's Small Towns: The Atlantic Seaboard to the Mississippi Valley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 157-162.

⁶¹ Dou Languang (窦岚光), personal interview by the author in Xingtai, China, 7 June 2011.

restaurant and also clearly of late 19th or early 20th century design. This building, imposing in shape and size, sits directly between the tall flanking apartments as if it had suddenly fallen from the sky – from a faraway time and place – to block the alleyway (*Images 9 and 10*). Despite its ruined, incongruous state, Xingtai’s city planners and local builders strangely left it as it was. The building’s inconvenient size and location allows only passers-by on foot or bicycles to pass around it with difficulty. The residents’ indifference to the building is visible in the scraps of trash accumulated around it. Cigarette butts, broken beer bottles, and discarded ads ring the building – a halo of everyday detritus. The exterior walls exhibit peeling posters and spray-painted phone numbers for local businesses. While the windows on the first story were sealed with thick metal bars, now coated with a generous layer of flaking rust, the ones on the second are protected by nothing more than their sliding wooden frames. One precariously holds a lone shard of the original glass, seconds or years away from self-destruction; the rest are empty, shattered by harsh weather and neglect.



Images 9 (abandoned building exterior, Xingtai, 2011 and Image 10 (abandoned building interior, Xingtai, 2011; both author’s photographs)⁶²

⁶² This photograph was obtained by setting the wide-angle zoom lens at its widest setting (12mm) and slipping the camera through a small, jagged hole in the building’s front door for the exposure. Bright afternoon daylight coming through the broken transom above the doorframe provided the sole source of illumination.

The southwestern corner of the structure has collapsed into a dusty pile of brick and broken timbers; the gaping cavity exposes weatherworn doorframes and dangling electrical wires. A strained peek through a jagged hole in the front entrance door reveals an interior hallway piled high with discarded cardboard boxes and Styrofoam packing material. The metal bars on the front windows have clearly failed in their duty. One wonders what else the building was used for before its current state as a dumping ground. Its origin is made more tantalizing by a strangely appropriate political slogan painted on the front façade sometime in the past, with oversized blue-black characters now nearly invisible against the ashen brick. When one looks at the building from the far end of the alleyway, it is possible to make out the Maoist revolutionary slogan “实事求是” – “seek truth from facts.”⁶³

Another kind of fact-seeking is taking place in the church courtyard. A series of glass-and-metal cabinets have been installed facing the sanctuary entrance, placed in such a way that people can easily see them as they exit and enter the building. The cabinets’ horizontal layout mirrors the congregants’ physical movement as they walk down the steps from the entrance and to the right of the church to leave the courtyard. However, instead of congregational announcements, the cabinets are mostly filled with enlarged black-and-white photographs, many printed on copy-paper by a consumer inkjet printer. Every Sunday morning, when the

⁶³ Li Gucheng (李谷城), ed. *A Glossary of Political Terms of the People’s Republic of China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1995), 412-413. According to Li, this expression “originated from the book *Han History* written by Ban Gu during the Eastern Han Dynasty; in this book, Liu De was praised as someone who ‘would seek truth from facts when studying and reviewing history.’” Mao Zedong later reinterpreted “seek truth from facts” in a Chinese Marxist context; in a May 1941 report entitled, “Reform Our Study,” he stated, “we Chinese Communists have been seeking this arrow because we want to hit the target of the Chinese revolution and of the revolution of the East. To take such an attitude is to seek truth from facts. ‘Facts’ are all the things that exist objectively, ‘truth’ means their internal relations, that is, the laws governing them, and ‘to seek’ means to study. We should proceed from the actual conditions inside and outside the country, the province, county or district, and derive from them... laws which are inherent in them and not imaginary; that is, we should find the internal relations of the events occurring around us.” Mao Zedong, *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Volume III* (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1953).

congregation streams outside after the service, they literally come face-to-face with the church's visual history – which is physically emplaced in such a way as to remind viewers of the community's past. It is a past at once familiar and foreign. The older black-and-white photographs mostly depict groups of Chinese people, women and men, gathered together with foreigners (*Image 11*). After all, what is now the Xingtai Grace Memorial Church of Christ was once a mission chapel operated by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PC-USA) between 1903 and about 1947.⁶⁴ During this time, the city was referred to as Shunde (順德) or Shundefu (順德府), a name that predated the Republican era but persisted through it.⁶⁵



Image 11 (Photograph display, Grace Memorial Church of Christ, Xingtai, 2011; author's photograph)

While the city's name and physical landscape has radically changed since 1947, traces of the former Presbyterian mission remain hidden in plain sight. Each of the four buildings

⁶⁴ Dou, personal interview, June 7, 2011; *Statistical Atlas of Christian Missions: Containing a Directory of Missionary, A Classified Summary of Statistics, An Index of Mission Stations, and a Series of Specially Prepared Maps of Mission Fields* (Edinburgh: The World Missionary Conference; Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1910), 121. The atlas identifies the mission as having been founded in 1888 by the China Inland Mission (CIM) and staffed by “2 men, 1 wife.” The small CIM mission was transferred in 1903 to the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PC-USA), also known as the “Northern Presbyterians” indicated by the “PN” abbreviation in the atlas. In 1903, the Presbyterian mission staff consisted of “3 men, 3 wives, 2 other women (1 doctor, woman).” I place 1946-1947 as the ending date of the mission based on letters by Harold Eugene Henke, a medical missionary active in the station between 1929 and 1940. Henke, personal letters to family, March 3 and October 6, 1946.

⁶⁵ *Statistical Atlas*, 121. See also, *A Pen Picture of Shuntehfu Station, Presbyterian Mission, North China* (New York: PC-USA Board of Foreign Missions, 1934).

previously mentioned, now wholly repurposed or abandoned apart from the church, are the last structures remaining from the Republican-era mission compound. The brick-and-stone church was one of the first buildings on the site, appearing in documents from 1903.⁶⁶ Guests at the Great Wall Gourmet restaurant now dine in spaces formerly occupied by the wards of the Hugh O’Neill Memorial Hospital for Men, the “upright and wing” PLA clubhouse was a residence for mission families, and the abandoned building between the apartments originally housed the Presbyterian Girls’ Boarding School, built in 1915.⁶⁷ These structures and others that no longer exist were designed by American architects, built with local labor, funded by benefactors in China and the US, and staffed by missionaries and Chinese Protestants (*Images 12 and 13*).⁶⁸



Image 12 (Hugh O’Neill Hospital for Men, c. 1929; Henke Family Collection)

⁶⁶ Wang Ye (王焯) and An Wei (安慰) eds., *The Commemorative Photo Album of the 100th Anniversary of the Xingtai City Christian Church* [邢台市基督教堂一百周年纪念影集] (Xingtai: Xingtai Christian Council, 2003), 8.

⁶⁷ *The Seventy-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York: PC-USA Board of Foreign Missions, 1916), 146-147. This report states that the Girls’ Boarding School at Shunde “rejoices in a new building well furnished with modern steel desks and patent blackboards, and is expected to complete the equipment with the erection of a dormitory.” Interestingly, the publication also quotes a report from the mission station, of “one of the leading employees in the city [Shunde] book store...[who was] received into the church” and “was first led to consider the claims of Christ by a conversation with a Christian photographer whom he met on the train, and is convinced that his mission lies in similar personal work.” Sadly, I have not found other sources to shed light on this incident or the unknown “Christian photographer.”

⁶⁸ Jessie Mae and Harold Eugene Henke, “Shuntehfu Hospital Bulletin,” 17 December 1934. See also Paul P. Wiant, *The Long Way Home* (Fuzhou: Bing Ung Press, 1930).



Image 13 (“Home of Dr. & Mrs. R.C. Lewis, Shunteh, Hopei, after Oct. 1935”; Lewis Family Collection)

In Xingtai today, this historical connection still exists in the memories of a few nonagenarian church members – most of whom were young children when the Presbyterian mission was active in the 1920s and 1930s – and the documents and photographs contained within the display cabinets, a local history project spearheaded by the church’s current minister, the Rev. Wang Ye.⁶⁹ With the rapid urban development underway in the city, it is difficult to predict how much longer these physical traces of the missionary enterprise and the church’s early history will be visible. One enterprising contractor, property transaction, or ambitious public works project may be all that is necessary to permanently sweep away the remaining mission buildings that have stood for over a century. In this changing environment, the developments of China today are quickly and quietly sweeping away a radically different modern world from a China past.

This former existence was a modern mission world embedded in Republican China. It was also a world of images and cameras, producing visual and material traces that now extend beyond the boundaries of the church courtyard, the city, and East Asia. Most of the photographs

⁶⁹ Wang Ye (王烨), personal email to the author, 10 August 1 2013. Rev. Wang indicated that the display cabinets and publications using the photographs – which he had requested as digital copies from the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia and individual missionary families – were constructed for the church’s 100th anniversary of its founding in 2003 (using the 1903 affiliation with the PC-USA). The church also celebrated its 110th anniversary on 10-12 October 2013, accompanied by the publication of a new church history compiled in part by Rev. Wang.

displayed in the metal cabinets represent small fragments of larger visual collections numbering in the thousands of images that were produced by American missionaries who lived, worked, and worshipped in the former mission compound in Shunde in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷⁰ Some of these people, their faces and bodies rendered in the reprinted black-and-white images, now silently look back at present-day viewers passing through the courtyard, itself a space that the photographed figures once inhabited. The few remaining buildings from their time also appear in some of the photographs in a newer form, as backdrops or as primary subjects. Now the missionaries' presence remains in the present-day space in disembodied and incompletely contextualized visual form, surrounded by the reappropriated fragments of their former communal spaces, a striking example of the Barthesian "has been."⁷¹ The missionaries' larger body of photographic work, from which individual images were drawn for display at Xingtai, now resides in closets, attics, and institutional archives in the United States – far from the places and times of their creation. The present scattered nature of these visual collections, with private materials inaccessible beyond the families to which they belong (often thought of by their caretakers as "family photos" or "old China pictures,") masks the multiple historical contexts that enabled their production.

As this chapter introduces, these images are products and representations of a transnational history of visual practices in China. American Protestant missionaries of the 1920s and 1930s produced photographs and film in mapping their encounters with modern physical,

⁷⁰ I base this estimation on the three private Presbyterian collections – those of the Henke, Lewis, and Bickford families – that I have worked on as part of this dissertation. Collectively, the visual materials produced and collected by all three families in a single decade number well over 1500 extant still photographs, not including family films and images reprinted in published documents. Since several other contemporary missionaries and affiliated staff at Shunde also owned cameras (visible in group photographs found in the aforementioned collections), as well as employing local Chinese studio photographers for higher-quality "official" photographs, the total number of images related to this mission's four decades of operation is easily several times this estimate.

⁷¹ Barthes, 76-77. "In Photography, I can never deny that *the thing has been there* [emphasis in the original]. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past."

spiritual, and cultural landscapes. This was driven by convergent developments in missionary identity and visual technologies, both of which foregrounded new mediations in culture and vision. Modern Christian worldviews placed greater emphasis on mediatory, relational approaches to religious conversion and institution building, while global technologies influenced new mobile photographic practices and image circulation. Furthermore, images produced by interwar missionaries reflected close encounters with Chinese Christians simultaneously engaged in their own modern identity formation. This bridging of former boundaries in religious worldviews, imaging practices, and the cross-cultural ways of seeing all shaped the interwar world of missionary visual practices. To better understand these convergences, it is first necessary to discuss the historical contexts from which they arose.

Worldviews and Viewfinders

The missionary modernity of the 1920s and 1930s was a worldview that existed between the larger histories of American presence in East Asia and competing national identities in Republican China. It was not the secular political identities envisioned by Nationalist and Communist leaders or the cosmopolitan life such as seen in the wealth and cultural glamour of urban Shanghai.⁷² Nor was it the national moral regeneration embodied in the Nationalist “New Life Movement,” though some Chinese Christians and missionaries saw Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mei-ling, professing Protestants, as emblems of Christian nationalism in China.⁷³ Rather,

⁷² Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China Under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) 140-180; Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 183-187; Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1-36.

⁷³ James C. Thomson, Jr., *While China Faced West: American Reformers in Nationalist China, 1928-1937* (Harvard University Press, 1969), 40. Soong Mei-ling, *General Chiang Kai-shek and The Communist Crisis* (Shanghai: China Weekly Review Press, 1935), 55-73. This movement originated as a regional anti-Communist campaign in Jiangxi and was later promulgated to the rest of China. See Han-ming Chen (pseudonym “C.W.H. Young”), *New Life for Kiangsi* (Shanghai: China Publishing Company, 1935). For the later nationwide attempted promulgation of New

missionary modernity was both a way of thinking and believing grounded in a modern Christian view of a cross-cultural world, as distinct from older worldviews that privileged religious conversion of “heathen” peoples while riding roughshod over issues of cultural difference and indigenous cooperation.⁷⁴ In practice, it was a way of deploying modern medical and educational methods in parallel with religious conversion and Christian world-making.

This modernity was shaped in part by clashes over missionary practice and identity abroad. Protestant missionaries embarking on work in interwar China did so against a background of doctrinal battles fought by American church leaders in the “Modernist-Fundamentalist” controversy, with both sides often using Christian missions in Asia as testing grounds and targets for their critiques.⁷⁵ One historian described the missionaries’ frustrating position as “a classic ‘no-win situation,’” entangled between contradictory and often intrusive external viewpoints.⁷⁶ Rather, missionaries were arrayed along a more complementary spectrum of Christian belief and modern humanitarianism; religious evangelism and charitable activities

Life ideology through Chinese Protestant networks, see Soong Mei-ling, “Christians and the New Life Movement,” *The Chinese Recorder*, May 1937, 279-280; in the same issue, George W. Shepherd, “Church and New Life Movement,” “Co-operation with New Life Movement,” 280-282; 286-290; R.Y. Lo, “Christians! Support the New Life Movement!” 283-286; Ralph A. Felton, “Rural Church New Life Movement,” 290-293; and H.A. Wittenbach, “The Necessity of Social Justice” (from a “Sermon at Union Service, Canton, Feb. 28, 1937”), 296-298.

⁷⁴ Daniel Fleming, *Wither Bound Missions?* (New York: Association Press, 1925), 86-87. A former missionary to India and professor of theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York, Fleming criticized conservative missionary rhetoric as loaded with militant and racist terminology, which he saw as out of place with “democratic” sentiments following the First World War. “Such expressions,” he wrote, “as ‘great battle fields of Christianity’ ... ‘battle line on the foreign field,’ ‘trenches in heathen lands,’ no longer sound appropriate... In days when the best Christian sentiment is striving for the outlawry of war, we [should] recoil even from metaphors which seem to make the presentation of the Christian message appear as an aggressive and military attack. Such analogies are offensive to [the peoples] among whom we go and do not embody the spirit of [God] our Master.”

⁷⁵ William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 139-140. Regarding this position, Hutchison writes, “If, recognizing the dangers and counterproductive effects of imposing their cultural forms, [missionaries abroad] resolved to preach “Christ only,” they would be criticized for ignoring the need for material and social amelioration... And if, as happened repeatedly, they therefore turned from proselytizing to social amelioration coupled with personal witness; they were then criticized as... unsanctified promoters of Western technology and ideology. If, finally, they tried to ignore criticism and go about their business for Christ, they were rewarded with a reputation for insular thinking.” See also Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 106-107; 121-123.

⁷⁶ Hutchison, 13.

were often institutionally intertwined and physically co-existent, as in the cases of missionary schools and hospitals that occupied the same grounds as churches and seminaries.⁷⁷ The nature of modern missions as embodying service to both “God and man” was the ideological common ground for the vast majority of American missionaries in interwar China, who often chafed under conservative and liberal criticism from church leadership abroad. Their position was well-represented by a 1929 article in *The Chinese Recorder*, a generally ecumenical Protestant magazine published in Shanghai. Entitled the “Modern Significance of the Missionary,” the article compared modern missionaries to their “primitive predecessors,” claiming that:

Primitive missionaries worked always and only under one government...The modern missionary is under all kinds of governments and works as a political alien...not only a herald of the kingdom of God but a demonstrator of a citizenship higher than any from which he comes or to which he goes...Modern missionaries [are]...not only the sharers of a religious experience but the agents, also, of international Christian sharing and colleagues with the Chinese Christians in a search for a new and wider culture... permeated by the spirit of Christ.⁷⁸

At the core of this “international Christian sharing” was a reconfiguration of missionary identity as embedded mediators, working in collaboration with Chinese Christians to build modern religious community. In contrast to previous approaches that privileged a hierarchical, disengaged position in regard to the Chinese population, “[the modern missionary] cannot be thought of only as one who induces a few to accept his message and then passes on elsewhere...[he or she is] the medium of this permanent interchange of Christian fellowship and resources and a permanent essential of the modern demonstration that Christianity sets up enduring international relationships.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ralph C. Lewis, letter to parents from Hengzhou, 1 November 1934. See also Hutchison, 11-14.

⁷⁸ Anonymous, “Modern Significance of the Missionary,” *The Chinese Recorder*, July 1929, Vol. LX, No. 7, p. 412.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The historical shifts in and around Christian missions in 1920s and 1930s China were, of course, just as physical as they were ideological and doctrinal. American missionaries experienced both local conflicts between the military forces of regional warlords, Nationalists, and Communists, in the years leading up to the Japanese invasion of North China that sparked the Second Sino-Japanese War. Shunde for example, one of the towns along the major Jinghan Railway (京漢鐵路) line running north-south between Beijing and Hankou in Central China, was at various points occupied or in territories nominally under control by each of these forces.⁸⁰ In-between regional conflicts, missionaries often occupied the same spaces as other foreigners and Chinese nationals (often also foreign-educated) involved in secular modernization projects.⁸¹ At times, their paths crossed with civil engineers working on railways and bridges, educational reformers and academics, government and military officials of various ranks, and medical personnel not formally affiliated with church-sponsored organizations.⁸² Such encounters in the interwar social and political milieu – combined with the desire to engage relationally with the local environment or otherwise work around contingencies in it – pushed missionaries to see themselves, the Chinese people, and shifting political powers as part of a new modern landscape in which they were collectively bound.

The interwar period was also a period of increased regional mobility and global communications in China. These developments were due in part to infrastructure stabilization across Northern and Eastern China during the Nanjing Decade.⁸³ Between major domestic conflicts and through the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937, American

⁸⁰ He Hanwei (何漢威), *A Brief History of the Early Beijing-Hankou Railway* [京漢鐵路初期史略] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1979), 33; Zarrow, 305-306.

⁸¹ Thomson, Jr., 21-42.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Eastman, 244-245.

missionaries benefitted from relatively reliable national transportation and goods exchange systems. They employed national railways to travel to and from major regional cities, namely Beijing and Tianjin, with greater speed and efficiency. Medical supplies, evangelistic and educational materials, and personal goods – not to mention film, camera equipment, and developing chemicals – used by mission stations in the interior flowed along the same transportation lines from commercial markets on the Eastern coast. The Chinese postal system carried missionaries' private correspondence, publications, and visual materials through its national networks; textual and visual information traveled to and from the major coastal cities, and across the Pacific to international mail routes and the United States Postal Service.⁸⁴ Photographs, particularly small prints and cut negatives, lent themselves particularly well to sharing and mailing; in this form, attached to letters or stuffed into individual envelopes, private images made the journey across China and the Pacific.

Missionary journals of the period also featured images on covers and inserts. The *Chinese Recorder* printed each issue with a glossy illustrated frontispiece and a photographic insert midway through, often featuring images contributed by missionaries and other photographers from various parts of China and East Asia.⁸⁵ In 1937 – the year of the Japanese invasion – for example, the *Recorder* contained images from contributors in Shanghai, Beijing (then Beiping), Nanjing, and various locations in Suzhou, Hunan, Shandong, Sichuan, and Guangdong.⁸⁶ In turn, the *Recorder* was mailed to subscribers across the country and abroad; these images were likely widely seen by readers strongly invested in following institutional developments in the

⁸⁴ Lane Jeremy Harris, "The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China, 1896-1949" (doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012), 270.

⁸⁵ Kathleen L. Lodwick, ed. *The Chinese Recorder Index: A Guide to Christian Missions in Asia, 1867-1941* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1986), xiii-xiv.

⁸⁶ Frank J. Rawlinson and Alexander Baxter, eds. *The Chinese Recorder*, Vol. 68 (Thomas Chu and Sons, 1937).

missionary enterprise and its engagement with current affairs in China.⁸⁷ In addition to images, the interwar *Recorder* often featured advertisements for photographic equipment, marketing to an audience that was increasingly interested in modern technological engagement. Alongside promotional material for Chinese language manuals and American household products as varied as Bakerite kitchen ingredients and the more suspiciously-titled Valentine's Meat-Juice (a nutritional supplement for children suffering from "Diarrhoea, Dysentery and Cholera Infantum" as it claimed), readers of the *Recorder* encountered ads for consumer cameras and movie projectors aimed at missionaries on a tight budget (*Images 14 and 15*).⁸⁸



Images 14 and 15 (left, Zeiss advertisement, *The Chinese Recorder*, 1929; right, Kodak advertisement, *The Chinese Recorder*, 1941; Graduate Theological Union Library, University of California, Berkeley)

There was a good reason for this marketing strategy. American missionaries, like their counterparts in the Chinese urban elite, as well as middle- and upper-middle class consumers in

⁸⁷ Lodwick, xii, xvi-xvii. Unfortunately, study of any original images submitted to the *Recorder* in this period – aside from those printed in the final publication – is practically impossible unless previously unknown source material is discovered. As Lodwick reports in her introduction, “the history of the publication is unclear, except from the *Chinese Recorder* itself, since it ceased publication in December 1941 following the entrance of the United States into the Second World War. The editor or staff destroyed the records at the *Chinese Recorder*’s offices at the Presbyterian Mission Press in Shanghai to keep them from falling into the hands of the Japanese.” Lodwick, xii.

⁸⁸ Rawlinson, ed. *The Chinese Recorder*, May 1929, Vol. 60 (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1929), xvii; Alexander Baxter, ed. *The Chinese Recorder and Educational Review*, May 1941, Vol. 72 (Shanghai: Thomas Chu and Sons), i, iv.

the US, were drawn to cameras and other technological devices representative of modern experience.⁸⁹ This interest was perhaps accentuated by missionaries' typical periods of isolation from Chinese urban centers where such technology was more commonplace. As the son of a medical missionary at Shunde noted, "the missionaries were very interested in gadgets."⁹⁰ One of the "gadgets" that his father, Dr. Ralph Charles Lewis, was particularly fond of was a portable Victor phonograph, purchased with funds from the congregation of Calvary Presbyterian Church in San Francisco before the family left for China in 1933. Lewis, whose photography will be examined in the sections to follow, mentioned the phonograph multiple times in letters to written to family and supporters in the United States after arriving in China. One such letter written a few months after arrival read:

The phonograph that we purchased just before we sailed with some of the money that the church gave us is surely giving us a great deal of pleasure. It is a very fine instrument and it makes us feel that the person or orchestra is right in the room with us. In the years to come it will help us to keep up our spirits a great deal. It does seem funny to be in a land where there are so few radios or concerts of any kind. Our phonograph is a constant reminder of Calvary Church and we just want to thank you again...⁹¹

At times, "keep[ing] up spirits" with the phonograph meant that some missionaries – particularly younger ones well-versed in contemporary American popular culture – privately took part in "secular" leisure activities such as dancing, often frowned upon by older, more conservative colleagues. Jim and Carl Scovel, the eldest two sons of Frederick and Myra Scovel, a Presbyterian medical missionary couple in prewar Shandong, remembered their parents as

⁸⁹ Wu Hung, *Zooming In: Histories of Photography in China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 146-153. See also Sherman Cochran, ed. *Inventing Nanjing Road: Commercial Culture in Shanghai, 1900-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Program, 1999).

⁹⁰ Harry Lewis, personal interview with the author in Sacramento, California, 23 July 2013. Coincidentally, in corresponding about photography with another, unrelated missionary child, Margaret Sullivan (daughter of Dr. Gerald Winfield, a Presbyterian missionary and professor of public health at Cheeloo University in Shandong), Sullivan said nearly the same thing; "my father loved gadgets and playing with them." Margaret Sullivan, personal email to the author, 8 October 2014.

⁹¹ Ralph C. Lewis, 4 November 1933 letter from Peiping to Dr. E.A. Van Nuys, pastor of Calvary Presbyterian Church, San Francisco.

“excellent dancers;” they would at times “post Jim at the back door and [Carl] at the front door [of the mission residence], roll up the rug in the living room, put on...dance records like ‘Three O’Clock in the Morning,’ ‘When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin [Along]’...and dance – and our point was to warn them if another missionary was coming!”⁹² For those missionaries funded by more affluent US churches managing to weather the Depression, radios joined phonographs in mission station homes, mirroring the experiences of middle- and upper-class Americans.⁹³ In addition to national and foreign radio broadcasts, Christians in China tuning in after December 1935 would also have picked up hymns and sermons transmitted “free from advertising” by the North China Christian Broadcasting Station.⁹⁴ Toward the end of the 1920s, motion picture technology became more affordable; by the mid-1930s, consumer movie projectors appeared in missions across China for both entertainment and educational purposes. The following chapter discusses Protestant missionary filmmaking at greater length.

Missionary visual practices of the period were similarly influenced by broader developments in imaging technologies and photographic ways of seeing. The decade between approximately 1924 and 1934 saw a significant rise in the global marketing and use of

⁹² Jim and Carl Scovel, personal interview by the author in Walnut Creek, California, 18 July 2014.

⁹³ While this chapter’s primary focus is on American Presbyterians, other Protestant denominations with less funding available during the Depression were unable to supply their missionaries with additional funds for these consumer devices. Jim Bard, whose parents were Assemblies of God missionaries (known for their independence from more well-financed mainline mission boards such as those of the Presbyterians and Methodists) in Hebei, reported that his family did not have many photographs other than occasional studio portraits – for the very reason that they could not afford to purchase a camera and film on their extremely limited budget. Jim Bard, personal interview with the author in Sacramento, California, 14 August 2011. See also Ruth J. Bard, *In the Service of the King of Kings: My Testimony of God’s Miraculous Grace and Power* (Erzhausen: Leuchter-Verlag, 1963).

⁹⁴ Rawlinson, ed. “Radio Evangelism,” in “Work and Workers,” *The Chinese Recorder*, Vol. 67 (6), June 1937, 400. “The North China Christian Broadcasting Station was started in December 1935...It desires to broadcast ‘an evangelistic message as broad and deep as the rich and varied experiences of mankind.’ Numerous types of broadcast fitting into this desire have been given...The programs are free from advertising. To meet the needs of Christians having to work Sunday mornings religious broadcasts are given at Sunday noon. An increasing number tune in on the Sunday evening worship often inviting their friends to listen in. Rural workers, apprentices, hospital staffs and many others listen in. It is hoped to enlarge the program as soon as...personnel and funds permit.” See also Michael A. Krysko, *American Radio in China: International Encounters with Technology and Communications, 1919-1941* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

“miniature cameras,” a movement dominated first by German commercial exports such as the Leica and Rolleiflex and later by more economical American products.⁹⁵ These cameras offered much smaller film sizes, measured in terms of millimeters (e.g. 35mm) rather than centimeters or inches, and deemed “miniature” in comparison to the wider, larger film formats then commonplace.⁹⁶ These camera formats allowed for a higher ratio of numbers of photographic frames possible per roll, cutting costs for Depression-era photographers seeking to cut back on financial outlays while maintaining their photographic production.⁹⁷ Moreover, advertising literature touted miniature camera users’ ability to produce – at smaller expense and equipment size – photographic enlargements potentially rivaling those of much larger cameras.⁹⁸ This was only partially true, as contemporary technical manuals described the difficulties of securing acceptable enlargements from small negatives, foregrounding the need for photographers to precisely control every step of the image-making process, beginning with high quality equipment to ensure sharp negatives to begin with.⁹⁹

While not all missionaries employed or could afford miniature cameras, parallel innovations in film chemistry allowed those among them with less advanced equipment to engage in more flexible imaging practices. Development in consumer films that were more sensitive to all bands of the color spectrum – which technical literature dubbed “panchromatic”

⁹⁵ Erich Stenger, *Die Geschichte der Kleinbildkamera bis zur Leica* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 49-56; 63-65. Richard L. Simon, *Miniature Photography From One Amateur to Another* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1937), 16. See also Fritz Vith, *Leica Handbuch* (Technische-Pädagogischer Verlag, 1932); Werner Wurst, *Exakta Kleinbild-Fotografie* (W. Knapp, 1956); and Walther Heering, trans. by John L. Baring, *The Rolleiflex-Book* (New York: Burleigh Brooks, 1935), 12.

⁹⁶ Simon, 13, 148. A standard 36 exposures were possible per roll of 35mm film used by the Leica, Contax, and Exakta; for the Rolleiflex using the Kodak 120 film size or the VP [Vest Pocket] Exakta and 127 film, 12 frames in 6x6cm and 4x4cm size, respectively, were possible.

⁹⁷ Simon, 17. The author states, “it seems to me that the lure of cheap films popularized these cameras enormously. Here was a chance to make negatives at a penny a shot instead of a nickel or a dime.”

⁹⁸ Stenger, 64-65.

⁹⁹ Simon, 12, 65-66.

film in comparison to the earlier “orthochromatic” emulsions – spearheaded trends increasing light sensitivity. Writing a decade after the first commercial panchromatic films went on the market for motion picture use, C.E. Kenneth Mees, Director of Research and Development at Kodak, called “these *supersensitive* [emphasis in the original] panchromatic materials...the beginning of a new era in photographic history.”¹⁰⁰ By the early 1930s, a missionary photographer could load his or her camera with these emulsions, even if it did not have an advanced wide-aperture lens, and create usable photographs in diverse lighting conditions.¹⁰¹ Photographers could create photographs in dimmer light without the consistent use of a tripod; even in conditions that required camera support, shutter speeds were significantly reduced.¹⁰² In brighter daylight, the photographer could select faster shutter speeds, capable of freezing subject motion with far less or no blur while hand-holding the camera. As such, more useably sharp images were possible, even under adverse conditions. This was particularly important for missionary photographers, who, like their secular contemporaries producing travel photographs or documentary reportage, often could not retake photographs after the moment had passed or the image maker or subject had moved on. Advertisements for film in the *Chinese Recorder* played to these anxieties in marketing to missionary readers. The Eastman Kodak branch in Shanghai issued advertisements in the journal touting the advantages of more sensitive film, couched in breathless arguments for photography’s increasing mobility and speed.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ C.E. Kenneth Mees, *Photography* (The MacMillan Company, 1937), 35.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 33-35. Mees writes, “In 1931, the development of new sensitizing dyes made it possible to prepare panchromatic materials of improved quality which had higher general sensitivity than the basic emulsions from which they were made...At the present time, practically all motion-picture camera film is panchromatic, and a very large proportion of the materials used by professional photographers is now panchromatic. The only stronghold of the older type of material is in the field of amateur photography, which is in transition.”

¹⁰² Ibid., 57. “Cameras without fast lenses, such as box cameras, but loaded with panchromatic film, may be used [in generally dim light]...by setting the camera on a table or tripod and giving an exposure of about one second.”

¹⁰³ [Advertisement section], *The Chinese Recorder*, Vol. 68 (12), December 1937, i. “The snapshots you’ll want Tomorrow – *you must take TODAY*...Make those snapshots now that are going to mean so much to you later. And don’t take chances – load your camera with Kodak Verichrome Film. This double-coated film gets the picture where

These technological developments all translated into distinctly mobile visual practices that were more rapid and less obtrusive than previous eras – practices that simultaneously gave rise to new genres of documentary photography and photo-reportage.¹⁰⁴ While not generally included in these categories due to their “amateur” status, interwar missionary photographers nonetheless benefitted from the same technologies and were exposed, to a certain extent, to documentary imaging trends via globally-circulated pictorial magazines. In practice, interwar missionary photographers could carry small cameras without taking up much additional weight, and deploy it quickly when needed. More sensitive film freed them from setting up a tripod for long exposures, a practice that not only involved additional time and hassle, but also often drew public attention to the highly conspicuous imaging apparatus and the user behind it. Optical focusing aids such as the rangefinder and reflex ground-glass screen shortened the time needed to focus and frame an image, particularly while making photographs on the move. Photographers using small reflex cameras like the Rolleiflex or simpler Kodak Autographics also benefitted from an additional characteristic. Unlike tripod-mounted large format cameras and many 35mm rangefinder cameras, which all involved looking straight through the camera viewfinder *at* the scene to be photographed, the reflex design required that the photographer bend forward at a right angle to look *down* at the focusing screen. The photographer would have physically appeared bowing to the subject of his or her image, simultaneously presenting a non-threatening profile and avoiding a direct gaze (*Images 16, 17 and 18*).

ordinary films fail. Your snapshots come out clearer, truer, more lifelike. Any camera is a better camera, loaded with Verichrome – use it always.”

¹⁰⁴ See William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1973).



Images 16, 17, and 18 (left, Ralph C. Lewis using Rolleiflex at Beidaihe, 1934; Lewis Family Collection; center, Old Standard Rolleiflex twin-lens-reflex; right, No.3A Autographic Kodak instruction pages, 1920)¹⁰⁵

These viewfinders and the worldviews of missionaries behind them combined to create specifically modern visualizations of interwar China. The following sections will discuss the role of the camera in shaping distinct forms of mission experience on the ground, beginning with photographic encounters on entering China for the first time, moving through photography and medical missionary activity, and concluding with visions of independent Chinese Christianity.

Arriving in China: Imaging Cross-Cultural Encounters

It was a Sunday afternoon when Harold Henke sat down at his desk and loaded a piece of paper into the typewriter sitting in front of him.¹⁰⁶ A few turns of the advance knob brought the page under the roller into position, revealing the neatly preprinted letterhead at the upper left margin: “NORTH CHINA UNION LANGUAGE SCHOOL – PEKING, CHINA.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ (Far left) Roberta Taylor Lewis, untitled photographic print, flipbook album, Lewis Family Collection. Ralph C. Lewis using his Rolleiflex twin-lens-reflex at Beidaihe (北戴河) in the summer of 1934. This photograph was made by Roberta Lewis’s own camera, a simpler folding or box model producing 6x9cm negatives. (Far right) *Picture taking with the No. 3A Autographic Kodak* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Company, 1920), 18-19.

¹⁰⁶ A preliminary version of this section was published as “‘In Our Image,’ Visual Perspectives and American Protestant Missions in Interwar China,” *UCLA Historical Journal*, 23 (1), 2012.

¹⁰⁷ Harold E. Henke, personal letter to friends, Ethel and Harlan Palmer, October 27, 1927. The street is currently known as Inner Chaoyangmen Street, with the remaining buildings of the North China Union Language School

Preempting the letter's lengthiness, Henke wasted no space. His keystrokes embedded the date in the paper almost immediately below the "CHINA" in the letterhead, leaving half a line's space in between. It was October 23, 1927, and Henke was writing from a room belonging to him and wife Jessie Mae in the school's dormitory, located on Hatamen Street (哈德門大街) in Beijing.¹⁰⁸ It was only the couple's third week in China, and Henke found it prudent to draft a letter to be mailed back to American friends and family awaiting details of their arrival "abroad." Included with the letter were photographs, produced by the Henkes during their transpacific journey and in their first days in China. Like the typewriter and its mechanical structuring of text, these images and the photographic activities that produced them structured the missionaries' new encounters with foreignness.

In his writings, Henke described the "dandy trip across the Pacific" on the SS *President Pierce* with another Presbyterian missionary, a "Dr. Turner, who with his wife and 3 months [sic] old baby is studying the [Chinese] language here with us" and brief touristic jaunts in Japan as they transferred to the *Chozo Maru*, a Japanese coastal steamer that carried them from Kobe to Tianjin.¹⁰⁹ What is of note in the letter is that the Henkes' account of travel from the United States to China was formed not only in what they *did*, but what they *saw*. In fact, a number of the

located at No. 81; the property is now owned by the Beijing Diocese of the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (中国天主教爱国会北京教区). The buildings, with their abandoned, architecturally incongruous design, have gained a reputation as a "haunted house" among local youth culture in Beijing. This has even spawned a commercial horror film directed by Yip Wai-man and released on July 18, 2014, entitled *The House that Never Dies*. See Amy Qin, "Dilapidated Mansion Has Had Many Occupants, Maybe Even a Ghost," *New York Times Asia Pacific*, September 24, 2013 and "Film Has Crowds Swarming to Beijing House, Haunted or Not," *New York Times Sinosphere: Dispatches from China*, July 22, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Henke Family Collection, "Street Scene, Pailou[s]."

¹⁰⁹ Henke Family Collection, "Photographs" album, "Crossing from Japan to China on the Chozo Marie [sic], 10-2-27 with Dr. & Mrs. Turner;" Harold E. Henke, personal letter to Ethel and Harlan Palmer, October 27, 1927.

Henke's description of the time in Japan is marked by cultural and visual contrasts, including a visit to "the largest buddha [sic] in Japan in a pretty little park," "constantly changing views of Japanese village and country life...[e]verybit [sic] of land...under cultivation much of it in rice with the necessary means of irrigation," and a brief mention that "we walked thru the streets of Yokohama[,] in all of which there are still evidences [sic] of the earthquake and everywhere building was in progress." This is a reference to the massive devastation wrought just over four years before by the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake (關東大震災).

descriptions combine images and imagination in a strikingly vivid manner, as in the Henke's account of travel across the Inland Sea of Japan: "[seeing] more fish of all shapes, sizes, color, and amounts than ever before...[the sea] quite beautiful all the way along, smooth as glass, and flanked by high mountainous shores in every nook of which was a little village."¹¹⁰ Although no mention of photography is made in the letter, the nods to visuality indicate that Henke recalled specific instances in which *sight* made an impression on him, much like a photographer recalling striking image-taking moments. In fact, eight photographs of the voyage survive in an album that the Henkes put together sometime during their first year in China; two of these black and white prints, depicting "a fishing junk sailing at full speed" and an island in the Inland Sea, strongly support the possibility that photographic picture-taking "imprinted" certain visual images in Henke's imagination, which were then articulated in the letter as he drew on memory to share with "dear folks" in the US.¹¹¹

This links between image and imagination appear more clearly in Henke's description of "our first view of China." In the letter, the reliance on visual memory is almost palpable, as the third paragraph begins with

Sunday morning October 2nd we awoake [sic] to our first view of China, the bay, harbor, and shore at Tagu [大沽]. There the view is one of a low, flat, barren coast line with piles everywhere of the brown salt and the windmills and necessary apparatus for pumping the sea water into the drying vats... We entered the mouth of the Haiho [海河] river and steamed slowly up it 6 miles to land at Tangu [塘沽]. The shore of the river was dotted with frequent fishing villages made of low, mud houses built tight together in regular formation. Fishing boats of every size and shape, nets, barges...and Chinese were everywhere.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Harold E. Henke, personal letter to friends, Ethel and Harlan Palmer, October 27, 1927.

¹¹¹ Henke Family Collection, album "Photographs," "In the Inland Sea, a fishing junk sail-ing at full speed, 9-'27," "In the Inland Sea, typical fishing junk."

¹¹² Harold E. Henke, personal letter to friends, Ethel and Harlan Palmer, October 27, 1927.

Henke's typo in the first sentence is telling. The letter shows that he first typed "we awake," as if reliving the experience, and then retyped a bold "o" over the "a" to change the word from present to past tense – evidence for the image quality of the recollection temporarily taking over the textual retelling. Moreover, the description almost identically mirrors the first two photographs that the Henkes made in China, which survive as 3¼ x 4¼-inch black and white prints depicting the "shore of the river" mentioned in the letter and the wharf at the port of Tangu as the *Chozo Maru* slowly approaches shore (*Images 19 and 20*).¹¹³ Given the specificity of the letter description, Henke recalled not only what he saw as a casual observer on board the docking ship, but also more specifically what framed by his folding camera's viewfinder in the moments before releasing the shutter.¹¹⁴ Most importantly, the letter demonstrated that images informed Henke's memory just as significantly as he and his wife found it necessary to "capture" the moment of their first encounter with China.



Image 19 (River shore, North China, 1927) and Image 20 ("Landing at Tanghu, Tianjin, 1927; both Henke Family Collection)

The importance of the occasion was evidently great enough for the two photographs to be later reprinted repeatedly, appearing together no less than three times in albums and loose folders

¹¹³ Henke Family Collection, "Landing at Tanghu [sic]."

¹¹⁴ The original still cameras used by the Henkes in China are no longer in the extant family collection, and are presumed lost. The description of the cameras given here and elsewhere in the study is an informed conjecture, based on careful analysis of the existing photographs' printed format.

in the existing family archive. In a way, these prints represent both an elevation of the moment through photographic production and dissemination as well as embodying the experience of “sight” as an emotional climax. The latter conclusion is based on the idea that images mediate and subsume complex emotions, in this case, anxiety caused by uncertainty and a fear of the unknown. While the language school letter of October 27 and Jessie Mae Henke’s memoirs recounted the trip as “enjoyable” (she and her husband were reportedly “the youngest first class passengers” and “won most of the tournaments in deck games”) it is clear that at one point while underway, the Henkes were unsure of where they would land in China – a change in plan transmitted from their denomination’s US mission headquarters via trans-Pacific telegraphy, another global technological dimension in the modern mission experience.¹¹⁵ During the voyage from Seattle to Japan, “a cablegram, received enroute [sic],” the couple that the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in New York had changed their original mission posting from “Yueng [sic] Kong, South China” to “Shuntehfu, North China,” a distance of several thousand miles.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the message contained “instructions to get off in Japan, transfer to a small Japanese liner, cross the Inland [S]ea to the port of Tangk[u] [sic], thence by rail to Tientsin and Peking,” no small task for two Americans with no prior training in Asian languages.¹¹⁷ The dramatic change in travel arrangements likely unsettled the Henkes, and seeing their disembarkation port for the first time on the morning of October 2, 1927, over a month since they left the United States, might well have allayed these fears: a sight that was “memorialized” in the photographic images. The images also represent the Henkes’ first forays into cultural encounters in China mediated by visual practices.

¹¹⁵ Jessie Mae Henke, *Family History*, 11.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11. The former location is Yeungkong, now referred to as Yangjiang (陽江) in Guangdong Province.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

The caption on the back of the second photograph, written in Jessie Mae Henke's handwriting, reads quite simply, "The wharf where we landed at Tanghu [sic], China...October 2, 1927."¹¹⁸ The photograph itself depicts a striking immediacy; the ship is a few hundred yards away from shore, but the figures watching the vessel approach are clearly visible in an enlargement of the negative. They represent a visual microcosm of the world that the Henkes were about to enter. Six foreign men dressed in full suits and fedoras stand with hands in pockets at the part of the dock closest to the approaching ship, one of them leaning rakishly on a bamboo cane as he watches intently. Behind them, a group of working-class Chinese men converse, seemingly uninterested in the spectacle. Other Chinese individuals with different kinds of clothing – ranging from Western suits to *changshan* [長衫] jackets – stand about at various distances on the dock, all watching the arrival. The camera has also frozen a dockworker in motion, waving a striped signal flag to guide the ship's pilot to shore; the bright sun enabled Henke to select a sufficiently high shutter speed to freeze even the flag in mid-sweep.

Of course, while the photograph embodies the presence of individuals "gazing" back at the camera, it is only the extension of the Henkes' perception so far as the immediate visual scene before them. The image, seen in context with the Henkes' subsequent observations, was a specific representation of a physical "moment." As Jessie Mae Henke later noted, as she and her husband gathered their belongings prior to disembarkation, they came face to face with the unfamiliar environment that they were now entering. Henke herself was "terrified at the yelling that was going on, on shore," and peered out of the porthole to "see half a dozen Chinese men with a rope they seemed to be wrapping around one of them."¹¹⁹ Frightened by the unintelligible

¹¹⁸ Henke Family Collection, "General Scenes," "Landing at Tanghu [sic]."

¹¹⁹ Jessie Mae Henke, "My Talk," 1.

language and the strange behavior of the men, she believed she was witnessing “a hanging.”¹²⁰ More than simply figures seen from a distance, the formerly photographed Chinese laborers were suddenly very much a part of the Henkes’ physical space and cultural “radar.” Yet, even though the photograph does not fully capture the feelings and observations articulated in the text (as much as the text, unlike the photograph, does not show the viewer what the laborers looked like and how they were arranged in relation to the environment), the image speaks *with* other forms of perception. This image was made from a distance, embodying both a physical as well as a cultural disconnection from the Chinese landscape that the Henkes first encountered. But others produced during the Henkes’ language school period indicated that photography was among the driving forces behind the couple’s growing associations with the environment and the people, as they familiarized themselves with what they later termed “the land of our adoption.”

In order to prepare themselves for the intensive medical missionary activity at the American Presbyterian missions outside of Beijing, the Henkes spent late 1927 to 1929 studying written and spoken Mandarin Chinese at the North China Union Language School (華文學校 – later renamed the College of Chinese Studies).¹²¹ This school, as Harold Henke typed in his letter to the United States, “was a fin [sic] place to start life in China;” Jessie Mae later recalled that the school campus consisted of “dormitories, [a] dining room, classrooms, [an] auditorium, tennis and paddle tennis courts. Married couples were assigned two rooms, with common bathrooms and showers.”¹²² This was a space of familiar people and culture, with the Henkes studying alongside nine other American nationals; all of their instructors were Chinese nationals

¹²⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹²¹ Jessie Mae Henke, *Family History*, 11.

¹²² Harold E. Henke, personal letter to friends, Ethel and Harlan Palmer, October 27, 1927; Jessie Mae Henke, 11.

and given occasional lectures by visiting academics and diplomats.¹²³ The familiar, however, could be isolating. The letter of October 27 bears out the school's separation from the outside world, with Harold Henke stating that "inside the wall, we can hardly realize that this is China, and were it not for the occasional sounds, music of a weird variety, from a passing funeral or wedding outside, or from the flocks of doves that soar around every morning, we would almost think that we were in [sic] at home."¹²⁴ While these statements appear to represent an environment removed from the broader cultural context, this was not a wholly "foreign" space. Rather, the school represented a starting point for the Henkes' acclimation to life in China, shaped by daily interactions with Chinese nationals and structured in part by visual practices.

Students at the Language School spent each day in intensive study in "Chinese language, geography, history, and culture" from 9AM until 2 to 4PM, with Chinese instructors who were not permitted to speak or use English in any way; the Henkes' letters contain multiple references to "learning our Chinese vocabulary and characters," priding themselves on learning "300 words" by the end of November and a body of 1000 more, written and spoken, by the end of the academic year.¹²⁵ It is likely that the environment of the small foreign community in the school, combined with the daily exposure to Chinese language, influenced the Henkes' decision to produce photographs in their spare time – in a literal sense, developing a collection of "sights"

¹²³ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letter to friends, November 14, 1927. In reference to the affinity shared with the other foreign students of the Language School, Henke mentions that "to my amazement, I found that of the 9 [students], four had either studied at 'Colorado Aggies' Ft. Collins [Colorado State University], or had had relatives there!"

¹²⁴ Harold E. Henke, personal letter to friends, Ethel and Harlan Palmer, October 27, 1927. This separation is still striking today. On a research trip to China in June 2011, I located the existing buildings of the North China Union Language School near what is now Beijing's Central Business District (CBD). The abandoned remains of the school, including a single dormitory building (possibly the structure that housed the Henkes in 1927-1928, based on the orientation of windows described by Harold Henke's letters), is still separated from the street by a high, glass-studded concrete wall and metal gate. The site is guarded by plainclothes security personnel, one of whom was kind enough to open the gate and allow me to take my own photographs after my then-fiancée and I persuaded him that we were there for historical research, not "profit."

¹²⁵ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letters to friends, November 14, 1927; December 4, 1927.

from outside the school as they progressed in language study and familiarity with the land. The extant photographs from this year and a half in Beijing focus on images of traditional Chinese architecture, “daily life,” with a heavy emphasis on street scenes and depictions of individuals at work, and distinctly Chinese cultural practices.¹²⁶ Yet, as much as these images depicted ways of life very different compared to what the couple was accustomed to as Americans, they also represented interconnected relationships between visual practices and the environment – the act of mobile photography not only enabling visual representations of space and place, but forcing close encounters with the people and cultures in it.

After describing the cloistered campus life in his October 27 letter, Harold Henke expressed a kind of relief at experiencing the outside, pointing out that “Peking is always interesting when we see it from the street.”¹²⁷ He then listed a number of sights that he witnessed “this morning as I went to the American School [Peking American School or PAS, a boarding institution] where I today took a class of high school seniors in the Sunday school,” recounting in particular, “a camel caravan which had just arrived...vehicles of many shapes...[and] several carpenter shops where men were sawing great logs into planks by the system of one man above and one man beneath pulling a saw back and forth by hand.”¹²⁸ While Henke does not explicitly mention having a camera as he witnessed these sights, several images from this period closely mirror the descriptions contained in the letter. The main difference between the observations recorded in text and the photographs was that the text required the Henkes’ audience in the United States to mentally translate the textual imagery to visual imagination. The photographs took this process one step further, allowing others to see what Henke himself saw and participate

¹²⁶ Henke Family Collection, “General Scenes.”

¹²⁷ Harold E. Henke, personal letter to friends, Ethel and Harlan Palmer, October 27, 1927.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, October 27, 1927.

in a mediated form of experience. It is thus easy to imagine that Henke carried his folding camera with him as he went out on walks, snapping photographs as a passing observer; the camel trains, the Chinese carts, and the sawmill all appear in the archive (*Images 21 and 22*). His photographs of street life exhibit a quickly-photographed quality, visible in a few images by a tilted horizon (*Image 21*), indicating that he was looking down into the small reflex viewfinder and focusing on tripping the shutter at the right moment rather than leveling the horizon.

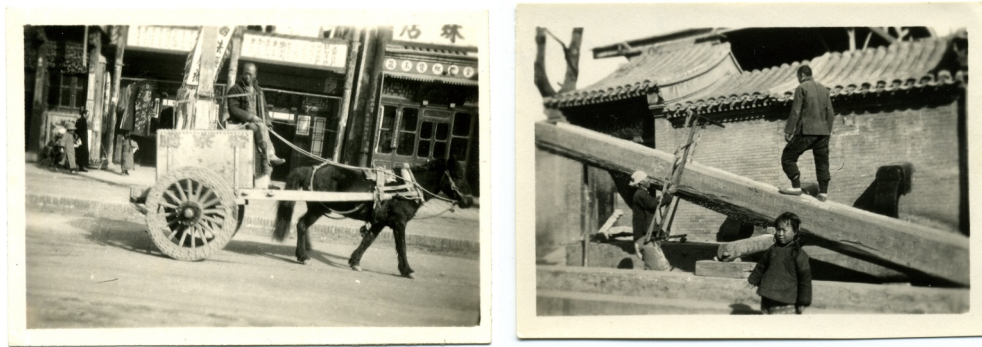


Image 21 (Cart and street scene, Beijing, 1927) and Image 22 (Sawing wood, Beijing, 1927; both Henke Family Collection)

While visiting notable landmarks in Beijing soon after settling in to the language school, the Henkes photographed the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven complex, and the former Imperial gardens at Beihai. While the resulting images visually resemble “tourist” photographs, taken to record the missionaries’ visits to these monuments to former dynasties, their captions show that the Henkes recognized photography’s mediation of their visual perceptions. In this case, the observations were not so much about what could be seen in the image, but about what could *not* be reproduced due to photography’s technical limitations. On the back of one black-and-white photograph of the Temple of Heaven, Jessie Mae noted that “the roof & decorations are a vivid blue” (*Images 23 and 24*).¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Henke Family Collection, “General Scenes,” “Temple of Heaven, 1927.”



The temple of Heaven
The roof + decorations
are a vivid blue
1927



The famous dragon screen
in the Pei Hai It is
of porcelain + the dragons
are in brilliant blue,
brown, green + red.

Image 23 (Temple of Heaven, Beijing, 1927) and 24 (Nine-Dragon Screen, Beijing, 1927; both Henke Family Collection)

Similarly, another photograph of the Nine-Dragon Screen (九龍壁) taken at Beihai and captioned by Harold Henke, describes the massive Qing-dynasty decorative wall as “[made] of porcelain & the dragons are in brilliant blue, brown, green, and red.”¹³⁰ These two prints indicate that the Henkes were well aware that their present photographic technology, rendering images in black-and-white rather than color, was not capable of reproducing scenes as seen by the naked eye. Their recording of these details indicated that they were also concerned about passing on a more “full” visual experience to the audiences of their photographs. By noting color descriptions, the Henkes provided viewers of their photographs with cues to better imagine subjects as they

¹³⁰ Harold and Jessie Mae Henke, photographic prints, c.1927-1928; Henke Family Collection.

appeared in reality. To address the color limitations of their photographs, the Henkes also purchased hand-tinted prints at a major photographic business in Beijing, Hartung's Photo Shop, while having some of their own images tinted there as well (*Image 25*).¹³¹



Image 25 (Wheelbarrow and pullers, colorized print, Beijing, c.1927-1928; Henke Family Collection)

While engaging in these more conventionally touristic visual practices – photographing well-known historical monuments, purchasing commercial postcards and prints to supplement their own images – the missionaries began to merge their developing awareness of the local environment with visual practices. Their photographic activities in the city, combined with their developing linguistic skills and knowledge of the landscape they would inhabit for years to come (as opposed to a temporary visit), all translated into ways of mapping language, space, and culture onto images.¹³²

¹³¹ Hedda Morrison, *A Photographer in Old Peking* (Oxford University Press, 1986), 1. Situated in the Legation Quarter, a few blocks south of the language school, Hartung's was staffed by German managers and Chinese darkroom technicians, who developed negatives, made contact prints and enlargements, and undertook other more specialized tasks, such as hand-tinting and mass-producing photographic postcards. As the Henkes did not mention developing or printing their own photographs, it is likely that they had all of their processing done at Hartung's or other local shops. Morrison (née Hammer) was a German art photographer and an interwar graduate of the Bavarian State School of Photography (*Bayerische Staatslehranstalt für Lichtbildwesen*) who managed Hartung's Photo Shop between 1933 and 1938; her life in China and visual practices bear further scholarly investigation. I previously discussed her work in "Images of Nation: Western Photographers in Wartime China," *Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal*, Vol. 39, 2009.

¹³² Harold and Jessie Mae Henke, photographic print, c.1928, Henke Family Collection.



Taken at main cross streets 2 ½ blocks from here + called SS u Pailou - (The 4 pailou) 2 of which can be seen - all alike. Our postoffice is at right. All people are Chinese. 2 policeman in the right center, a soldier on either side, 2 men + a lady in rickshaws. Looking north. Language school is north 2 blocks + east to your right - 2 blocks. Hatamen St.

Image 26 (Cross streets and “Ssu-Pailou,” Beijing, c.1928; Henke Family Collection)

One photograph taken later in that same year and prominently featuring an ornamental archway (牌樓) over a busy city street, represents this image-based mapping of spatial imaginations. The caption, written on the back of the print in Harold Henke’s handwriting, reads:

Taken at the main cross streets 2 ½ blocks from here & called SSu-Pailou (the 4 pailous) 2 of which can be seen – all alike. Our postoffice is at right. All people are Chinese. 2 policemen in the right center, a soldier on either side, 2 men & a lady in rickshaws. Looking north. Language school is north 2 blocks and east to your right – 2 blocks. Hatamen St.¹³³

Henke emphasizes the romanization of the Chinese place name first and then attempts to translate it into English, exhibiting an elementary attempt at translanguaging practice. Moreover, Henke’s caption seems to describe the photograph to an unseen audience that is nonetheless somewhat familiar with the photographer’s environment; the scene is described as being taken a known number of blocks “from here,” using the language school as a reference point. There is a particularly self-referential tone to the caption, as if Harold Henke were giving directions to himself (“[l]anguage school is north 2 blocks and east to your right – 2 blocks”) while also reinforcing his own foreignness in the environment (“all people are Chinese.”) Given that the Henkes were in the process of honing their language skills and movement within the new environment, the image and its caption emphasized a nascent familiarity with specific urban

¹³³ Ibid., reverse.

locations as well as the photographer's ability to identify these places and architectural elements by their Chinese designations. Henke also demonstrated the ability to differentiate between city policemen and soldiers, both equipped with very similar military-patterned uniforms. This was no idle observation, as the Henkes had arrived in China toward the end of the Northern Expedition (國民革命軍北伐) spearheaded by a roughly unified Communist-Nationalist front under Chiang Kai-shek; the campaign to eradicate warlord powers included anti-imperialist actions by leftist and Communist participants in the Expedition, resulting in the looting of churches, the killing of several foreigners in Nanjing (南京事件), and the large-scale evacuation of thousands of missionaries from inland locations in early 1927.¹³⁴ With these events fresh in the historical background, it was not surprising that Henke made sure to identify soldiers (who were widely recognized as having targeted foreigners in Nanjing) and ostensibly more neutral policemen (who, in an emergency, might have provided a higher chance of security).

Indeed, the Henkes themselves encountered visible repercussions of the Northern Expedition's final push in the spring and early summer of 1928, while as foreign noncombatants, they occupied a kind of "fly on the wall" position in relation to the conflict. While on short excursion near Nankou (南口) outside Beijing on March 10, 1928, the couple met a squad of warlord troops, part of Zhang's advanced Fengtian Army (奉天軍) conducting target practice in an open field. The Henkes apparently communicated with them with their rudimentary Mandarin and photographed the drills, noting in their image caption that the troops were "very courteous" (*Image 27*).¹³⁵ These soldiers were later thrown into bloody (and ultimately futile) battles against

¹³⁴ Bays, 112.

¹³⁵ Harold and Jessie Mae Henke, photographic print, Henke Family Collection. Harold Henke had formerly served as a machine gunner in the US Marine Corps during the First World War (taking part in the US occupation of the Rhineland in 1919). His very close proximity to the troops in the photograph – Henke appears to have been kneeling

the approaching Nationalists, which resulted in the collapse of Zhang's political control over North China by the early summer of 1928.¹³⁶ This was not the last time the Henkes witnessed and produced images of military activities surrounding major regime changes in China.¹³⁷



Image 27 (Fengtian troops at target practice, Nankou, March 1928; Henke Family Collection)

In a more indirect encounter with the Northern Expedition, Jessie Mae Henke noted that while she was hospitalized with typhus at the Peking Union Medical College in the summer of 1928, “a political turn over in Peking took place. One night we were under Chang Tso-lin’s rule. The next morning I awoke...and looked out the window at a change of flags on the street. I was told that [pro-Nationalist warlords] were now in control and Chang[’s]...train, retreating to Manchuria, had been dynamited. He was killed.”¹³⁸ Nationalist forces attacking northward forced the retreat of warlord Zhang Zuolin (張作霖) from his seat in Beijing, after which his son, Zhang Xueliang, declared allegiance to the Nationalist government under Chiang – “the political turn over” that

low to the ground in making the photograph, mirroring the position of a drilling infantryman – and his comment on their attitudes was possibly due to this veteran background.

¹³⁶ Hsi-Sheng Ch’i, *Warlord Politics in China, 1916-1928* (Stanford University Press, 1976), 226.

¹³⁷ Twenty years later, the Henkes produced color film footage depicting Nationalist soldiers marching at a distance on the outskirts of Beiping (Beijing), during the post-1945 Chinese Civil War. This film’s relationship to the waning missionary enterprise in the Republic of China is discussed in the fifth chapter of this study.

¹³⁸ Jessie Mae Henke, *Family History*, 12. See also Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China’s Turning Point, 1924-1925* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 263.

led to the “change of flags” that Jessie Mae spotted from her hospital room.¹³⁹ This particular incident made a strong impression on the missionaries’ collective consciousness, as evidenced by a commercially photograph (also a Hartung’s product) that appeared in another family archive of evangelists at the Henkes’ later North China mission station, depicting the Zhang’s destroyed railway car after the assassination and surrounded by spectators (*Image 28*). What the Americans did not know then was that Japanese forces in North China had secretly orchestrated the assassination to create a pretext for the military occupation of Manchuria – a grim foreshadowing of the larger war between the two nations in the following decade, in which the missionaries themselves would be more directly caught up.¹⁴⁰



Image 28 (“The car General Chang rode in,” Huanggutun, June 1928; Bickford Family Collection)

Incidentally, this moment also took place at a time in which the Henkes began their transition from individual cultural acclimation to long-term work in the rural mission field. In January 1929, the Henkes moved to the city of Baoding and spent approximately one month assisting with medical work there, after which they were transferred to their permanent assignment at the American Presbyterian mission at Shunde.¹⁴¹ At the station directly outside

¹³⁹ Ch’i, 226.

¹⁴⁰ Bickford Collection, “1929-1931 Chinese,” “The car General Chang rode in.”

¹⁴¹ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letter, January 20, 1929.

Shunde's western city wall, the Henkes settled in to begin their medical missionary activities alongside a mixed group of Presbyterian staff – doctors, nurses, teachers, and evangelists both American and Chinese. Here, the Henkes' visual practices took on different meanings, tracing the development of medical activities and connecting the local mission to communities abroad.

Entering the Mission: Photography, Medicine, and Supporting Networks

At the American Presbyterian mission directly outside Shunde's western city wall, the Henkes settled in to begin their medical activities. A published report from 1931, written in part by the Henkes, states that “our patients come to us from an area of about 14000 square miles in which it is estimated that there are living three million people...the nearest hospital to us is 80 miles away either in a north or south direction or three days by mule cart either to the east or the west.”¹⁴² The medical facilities were centered on two primary buildings, the Grace Talcott Memorial Hospital and the Hugh O'Neill Memorial Hospital, named after US Presbyterian benefactors.¹⁴³ The Chinese community referred to the entire compound as the “Gospel Hospital” (福音醫院), a term that the missionaries used interchangeably as well. It was at this “only modern hospital” that Harold Henke took up a position as the co-superintendent, working alongside Dr. Chang En Ch'eng, a Chinese doctor trained at the Peking Union Medical College.¹⁴⁴ Jessie Mae Henke began her tenure as an operating room nurse, before taking on a position as the superintendent of the Nurses Training School, teaching courses in nursing techniques, medical theory, and hygiene in a large brick classroom building on the grounds of

¹⁴² Henke Family Collection, “China Records and Notes,” *Report of Medical Work at Shuntehfu, Hopei, North China – American Presbyterian Mission*, 1931, 22.

¹⁴³ James E. Homans, ed., “Talcott, James,” *The Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York: Press Association Compilers, Inc., 1918), 164; *The Eighty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York: PC-USA Board of Foreign Missions, 1920), 148-150.

¹⁴⁴ Henke Family Collection, 1931 *Report*, 1.

the mission compound.¹⁴⁵ As simple as this transition sounds, however, running a missionary hospital in North China was no easy task.

The Henkes and their Chinese coworkers faced many challenges, which they attributed to anti-foreign politics and generally unhygienic conditions. Jessie Mae noted that “fear of foreigners was rampant due to [repercussions of the Northern Expedition] of 1926-1927. Those ‘foreign devils’ [洋鬼子] ‘cut out eyes and hearts of the Chinese and ground them up for medicine!’ they said.”¹⁴⁶ Even more pressing than regional xenophobia was the poor state of the mission’s neglected medical facilities. As the Henkes were taking over for missionary personnel who had left Shunde during the upheavals of 1926-1927, they arrived to find the compound in a state of disarray; “all wells – 8 in the compound – were contaminated with typhoid bacillus,” requiring that the water be boiled before use (“[often] not hot enough”), and that medical serums “had to be hung in baskets down the wells,” possibly the same wells contaminated with typhus, “the only cool place to keep them from spoiling.”¹⁴⁷ The only working medical equipment available was “an old pill machine” and the limited medical staff consisted of “several male ‘nurses,’” a Chinese female nurse, and a single overworked American nurse, Minnie C. Witmer, who had been at Shunde since 1921 and had not evacuated with the rest of the missionaries.¹⁴⁸ With these conditions in mind, the Henkes began their medical work by requesting support from congregations in the United States, sending reports back to the mission board. Despite the Stock Market Crash of 1929, funds began to flow back to Shunde; subsequent reports recorded the arrival of a cystoscope and an incubator for the laboratory, as well as the “installation of the new

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 1., Jessie Mae Henke, 16mm film narration.

¹⁴⁶ Jessie Mae Henke, “My Talk,” 3.

¹⁴⁷ Jessie Mae Henke, “Our Life in China in Early Years, 1927-1940.”

¹⁴⁸ Jessie Mae Henke, “My Talk,” 3. Henke Family Collection, “China Records and Notes,” 1931 *Report*, 1. “Our Missionaries in North and Central China, Kiangnan, Shantung,” *Women’s Work: A Foreign Missions Magazine*. Vol. 35, No. 3. August 1920 (New York: Women’s Foreign Missionary Societies of the Presbyterian Church).

heating plant in the in-patient building,” but added, with some anxiously, that “our needs are an Xray [sic] and a larger in-patient building.”¹⁴⁹ Given the transitional state of the compound, it is not surprising that the only images included in the first report sent to the US in 1931 are that of the two main hospital buildings at Shunde and a poorly reproduced group photograph of the medical staff on the steps of the Talcott Hospital (*Images 29 and 30*).¹⁵⁰

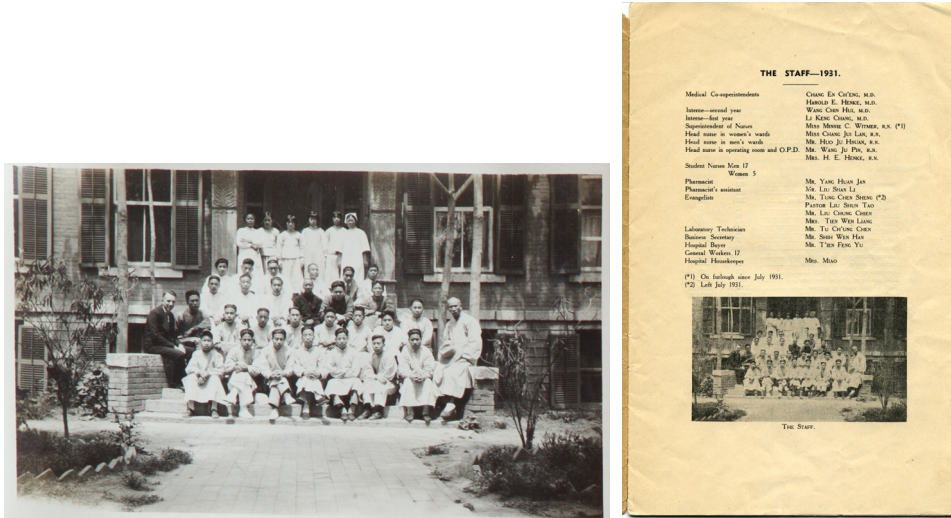


Image 29 (Hospital staff, Shunde, c.1930-1931) and Image 30 (1931 *Report of Medical Work* page with photo reproduction; both Henke Family Collection)¹⁵¹

The dearth of photographs in the early reports does not mean, however, that no meaningful images were produced during this time. Rather, the 1930s was an eventful decade for the Henkes, in medical work as well as visual production. The photographic activities produced during this time can be separated into two categories – photographs taken to record improvements in the medical facilities and photographs taken to document diseases and patient healing, presumably for medical research. Both categories of photographs were either kept for later viewing or reprinted in subsequent reports sent home.

¹⁴⁹ Henke Family Collection, “China Records and Notes,” 1931 *Report*, 22.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1931 *Report*, 1; Jessie Mae Henke, 16mm film narration.

¹⁵¹ The image at right is from the medical report; the photograph at left, from a family album, is the image from which the report’s photograph was reproduced.

The first category of images parallels improvements in medical facilities and staff training at Shunde. It appears that one of the first tasks the Henkes completed once the hospital complex was sufficiently prepared for use was to photograph the buildings and mail the prints back to a receiving contact in the United States, who then forwarded them to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in New York. Some of these were marked with a filing number and an office address neatly written on the back to facilitate more efficient handling once they were received.¹⁵² All three photographs depict the Grace Talcott Memorial Hospital, two of the photographs representing exterior views of the building and one of them an image of Harold Henke shaking hands with another missionary at the doorway to the hospital. Henke, who generally appeared cheery in many of the photographs taken of him at Shunde, grins comically at the other more stoic missionary, perhaps out of jest at the image's clearly posed nature (*Image 31*).¹⁵³ Other photographs made by the Henkes directly address the problems that Jessie Mae noted; two prints from 1935 depict a man-powered drilling rig at work in the compound.¹⁵⁴ The images, each made from two different angles, are entitled "Drilling for water at Shuntehfu, China [,] May 1935" and "The apparatus for drilling the well[,] May 1935." The typhus-contaminated wells that troubled Henke so much when she and her husband first arrived were finally being dealt with (*Images 32 and 33*).

¹⁵² Henke Family Collection, "Medical Facilities – Shuntehfu." The address penciled on the backs of these photographs read: "570-10451 Atterbury Butler Hall 400 W. 19th NY 10027." The first numbers may be a filing code used by the person or office that received them, ranging from 10451 for the first photograph of Dr. Henke and his colleague to 10453 for the third building photograph.

¹⁵³ Henke Family Collection, "Medical Facilities – Shuntehfu," "Grace Talcott Hospital."

¹⁵⁴ Henke Family Collection, "General Scenes," "Drilling for water at Shuntehfu, China May 1935," "The apparatus for drilling the well May 1935."



Image 31(Harold Henke on steps of Grace Talcott Hospital, Shunde), Image 32 (“Drilling for water at Shuntehfu, China May 1935”) and Image 33 (“The apparatus for drilling the well May 1935”; all Henke Family Collection)

The initial lack of trained nurses was also alleviated within the next two years, with photographs progressively tracking the staff’s growth and development over time. When the Henkes arrived at Shunde in 1929, they met and photographed Chang Jui Lan, the single Chinese female nurse in residence at the time; a print from that year shows Chang standing by herself, squinting into the sun and looking rather forlorn (*Image 34*).¹⁵⁵ A slightly blurry photograph later that year shows six Chinese men and three women sitting on the same steps, one of the women in

¹⁵⁵ Henke Family Collection, “Medical Staff – Shuntehfu.”

the front row grinning shyly as the camera has captured her in the process of adjusting her hair (*Image 35*). The caption, written in Harold Henke's hand, simply reads "The students."¹⁵⁶

Tracing the images through 1931, the original class of nine young students has grown to a group of fourteen men and six women, gathered on near their classroom for a photograph made by a Chinese studio photographer (*Image 36*). The occasion was the departure of Minnie C. Witmer, the American nurse who preceded the Henkes; after a decade of work in China, she was to be replaced as Superintendent of Nurses by Jessie Mae Henke.¹⁵⁷ The group's formal dress, the high quality print, and scripted caption indicates that this was an opportunity to display the group's size and professional development.¹⁵⁸ It is also interesting to note that the mission staff chose to hire a commercial photographer rather than to photograph the group themselves, with the presence of the large format imaging apparatus and additional cost of production highlighting the event's importance. Nurse Chang, wearing a colored dress (perhaps to designate her seniority or otherwise differentiate herself from the rest of the group), stands to Witmer's left in the group photograph, surrounded by new colleagues and students.



Image 34 (Chang Jui Lan, Shunde, c. 1929-1930) and Image 35 (The students," Shunde, c. 1929-1930; both Henke Family Collection)

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., "The Students."

¹⁵⁷ Henke Family Collection, 1931 *Report*, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., "Medical Staff – Shuntehfu." The Chinese caption reads: "Hebei Shunde Fuying Yiyuan fushi fusheng quanti huansong Wei fushizhang fanguo jinian;" "Hebei, Shunde Gospel Hospital Class of Nurses and Nursing Students, Seeing Off Nursing Superintendent Wei [Witmer] on Her Departure to Her Hometown," [Summer 1931].



Image 36 (“Shunde Gospel Hospital Class of Nurses and Nursing Students,” 1931; Henke Family Collection)

The goal of medical missions at Shunde was not only to build facilities and train Chinese staff, but to engage in medical treatment of local patients in and alongside both. In the process, the missionaries recorded their medical work in informational reports sent back to supporting congregations in the United States.¹⁵⁹ These publications, professionally printed and bound with thick, illustrated paper covers, indicated that the missionaries at Shunde took the responsibility of sharing medical conditions with home congregations and the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions very seriously. The audience was twofold: the reports were intended on the one hand to encourage supporters in the United States that their financial and material contributions were effectively used; on the other, they embodied modern medical-statistical methods, producing data for collective body of medical missionary knowledge. Extensive records of diseases treated, patient statistics, laboratory examinations, and surgical operations were collected and presumably made available to other missionary personnel in China through the Board. A “Notes” section from a 1931 medical report for Shunde appears to have been written explicitly for this purpose, with advice ranging from the successful treatment of anthrax cases with newly

¹⁵⁹ Henke Family Collection, “China Records and Notes.”

developed drugs to recommendations that “all small hospitals [should] prepare their hypodermic medicines in ampoules...all of ours are now so prepared...we find the method safe as to dosage, convenient [sic], money saving, and simple in preparation.”¹⁶⁰

While these reports presented an orderly, professional record of medical missionary activities, they were also by nature impersonal and sanitized; diseases, injuries, and treatments were reduced to numbers on a page. The Henkes turned to photographs to present a more “human” face to their medical work. Some of the photographs documented successes in medical treatment and evangelistic outreach, for the encouragement of support congregations at home. Compared to the sparsely illustrated 1931 medical report, the 1939 report features a section entitled “The Fruits of Labour,” containing short reports of successes in connected evangelistic and medical work as well as photographs depicting recovered patients. One such report reads:

Imagine the joy of being able to eat solid food after nine years being on a diet of liquids which could pass between the teeth! Such was the experience of a lad of fifteen who came to us for healing. As a small child, he had had an ulcer which [had] formed in his cheek, destroying much of the jaw...in the healing processes of nature, scar tissues and muscle contractions had resulted, so that he was not able to open his mouth. An operation was performed which relieved this condition and he was indeed happy to be able to talk and eat like other boys.¹⁶¹

The effectiveness of this report, however, was not only in its urging readers to “imagine” the prior condition and recovery of the boy; they could see for themselves. In the accompanying section with captioned images, a photograph shows the boy and his father outside the hospital, smiling. Harold Henke, dressed in a lab coat to identify himself as a doctor, grins at the boy instead of the camera, indicating a personal familiarity with his patient (*Image 37*).

¹⁶⁰ Henke Family Collection, 1931 *Report*, 5.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1939 *Report*, 8-9.

cure. Picture below shows the boy who was unable to open mouth for 9 years. His story is in ‘Fruits of Labour’.



Image 37 (Recovered hospital patient, family, and Harold Henke, Shunde; Henke Family Collection)

The largest collection of medical photographs taken by Henke, however, were not published in the reports at the time. Almost all of the photographs in the 1939 report depict patients were either under treatment or in various stages of recovery, with the only sign of clearly unusual disease seen in the “before” photograph of a man with a large growth on his back – which was successfully removed, based on the cheery “after” image (*Image 38*).¹⁶² While the medical missionaries selected these images to share their successes with supporters in the US, they refrained from showing other more graphic photographs of untreatable diseases. In addition to the need to present an optimistic view of their medical abilities, it is possible that the Henkes and their colleagues also did not wish to casually present images of Chinese bodies that would play into the spectacle-like fascination with the “grotesque” that would have been familiar to audiences in the US.¹⁶³

¹⁶²Ibid., 12.

¹⁶³ See Larissa N. Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body Between China and the West* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

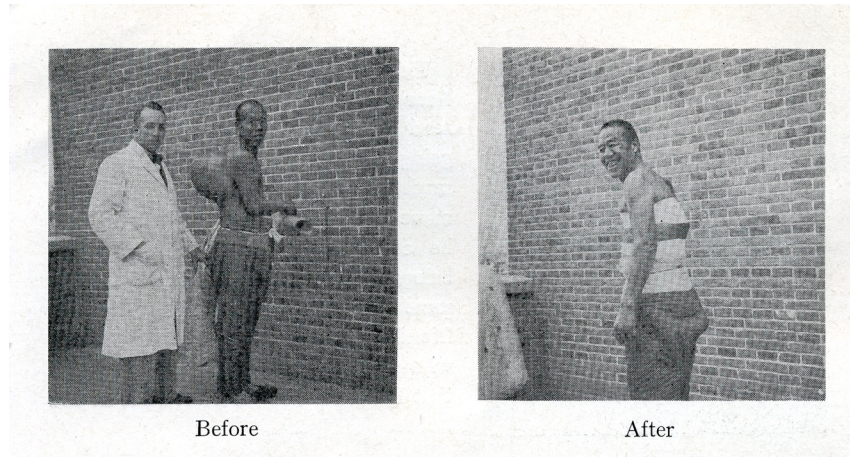


Image 38 (Before and after images of surgery patient with Harold Henke, Shunde; Henke Family Collection)

Henkes' larger body medical photographs presents a graver view of medical problems faced by the medical staff at Shunde. Unlike the aforementioned personal or published images, many of the medical photographs lack annotations; combined with their more "clinical" composition, this indicates that they were likely intended for medical research purposes. They also play a dualistic role. On the one hand, they are "clinical" documents of severe medical conditions in more advanced stages than those found in the United States; referring to documentation for medical uses, Jessie Mae Henke stated that "[of certain diseases] not seen in our own country, we took more pictures...because we didn't see them; it was rare."¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, the photographs are evidence that treating such diseases was difficult and often unsuccessful. Several of the photographs in the "Medical Practice" section show close-ups of what appear to be advanced carcinomas, graphically depicted in close-ups (*Images 39 and 40*).¹⁶⁵ The existing notions, where they appear, are often rigidly clinical, as if Harold Henke (in whose handwriting most of the captions appear) was attempting to place some distance between himself from the suffering

¹⁶⁴ Jessie Mae Henke, 16mm film narration.

¹⁶⁵ Henke Family Collection, "Medical Practice," "Child Ear Growth." The author would like to express his sincere thanks to Dr. Elliot Ho (Olive View-UCLA Medical Center) and Dr. Corinne M. Lieu (Phoenix Children's Hospital) for their assistance in identifying the medical conditions depicted in these photographs.

individuals he photographed. An image of a patient lying in the inpatient ward, his back and neck covered with tumors, reads simply, “Von Recklinghausen’s disease. Note...ulcerated tumor on back” (*Image 41*).¹⁶⁶

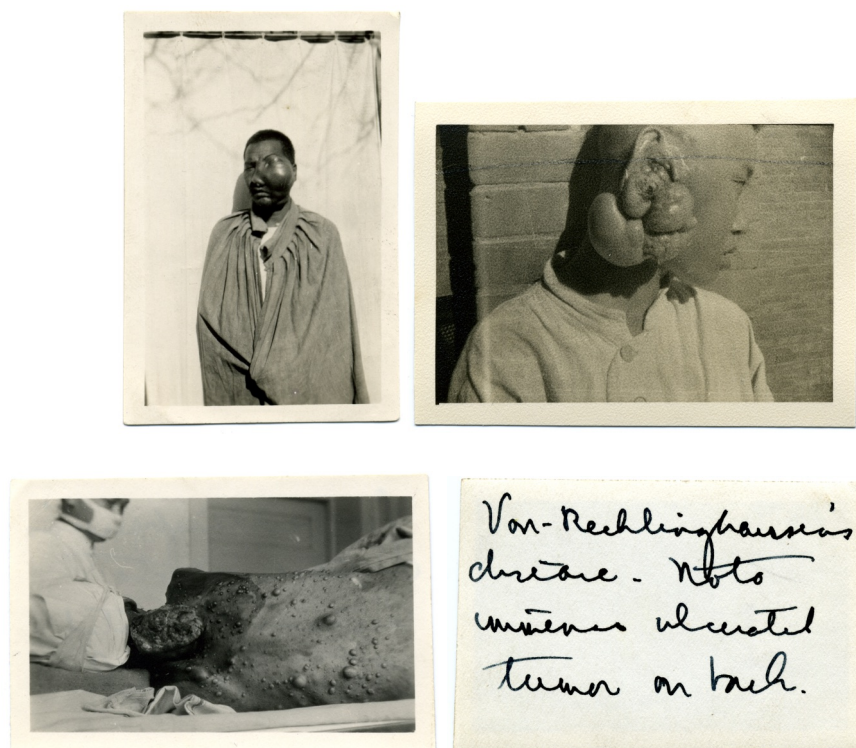


Image 39 (Man with facial tumor, Shunde), Image 40 (Man with ear tumor, Shunde), and Image 41 “(Von Recklinghausen’s disease” patient, Shunde; all Henke Family Collection)

But there were limits to these successes, particularly in working with diseases that were beyond medical capabilities to treat them, both then and now. Another patient photograph, this time a young child with a tumor covering most of his or her right eye, carries the following note, “Is this a tumor of the retina ?? Babe died 1½ days after of meningitis.”¹⁶⁷ The double question marks and the note that the child died of complications, comments not seen in other captions, are

¹⁶⁶ Henke Family Collection, “Medical Practice,” “Von Recklinghausen.” Drs. Ho and Lieu pointed out that “Von Recklinghausen,” now termed neurofibromatosis type 1 (NF1), causes extensive tumorous growths and is an incurable disease even with present-day medical procedures.

¹⁶⁷ Henke Family Collection, “Medical Practice,” “Is this a tumor of the retina??”

evidence of the frustration and disappointment experienced by the medical missionaries; there were clear limits to their medical capabilities, and some patients were tragically beyond saving. Perhaps the primary consolation in such images of trauma was that if patients' bodies could not be saved, perhaps their souls could be. In this modern mission, the latter task was not limited to Western evangelists but to a growing community of Chinese Christians, both lay and ordained. With this, we now turn from the physical to the spiritual – indigenous Christianity framed by the same missionary cameras that documented medical practices.

Joining Communities: Modern Visions of Chinese Christianity

Dr. Ralph Charles Lewis, his wife, Roberta Taylor Lewis, and their four-year-old son, Harry, arrived in Shunde five years after the Henkes, near the end of September 1935.¹⁶⁸ Hailing from Santa Ana, California, and a graduate of Occidental College and Stanford Medical School, Lewis had applied to be a medical missionary to China at 24 years of age.¹⁶⁹ Lewis also brought along a secondhand Rolleiflex Standard twin-lens-reflex equipped with an advanced 75mm f/3.8 Carl Zeiss Tessar lens, capable of producing twelve 2¼ x 2¼-inch square photos on medium format film.¹⁷⁰ It was one of the highest quality “miniature” reflex cameras available at the time, and its owner proudly recalled in his memoirs, “I had purchased a good camera before going out [to China, and] I wanted to learn as much as I could about photography.”¹⁷¹ While other missionaries like the Henkes sent their negatives out for commercial developing at photographic

¹⁶⁸ Ralph C. Lewis, *China Years: His Story of those Years in the Life of Ralph Charles Lewis (Growing up and his life in China through the war years)*. (Unpublished personal memoirs), 123.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 6, 61, 75.

¹⁷⁰ Harry, Cecile, Charles, and Wendy Lewis, personal interview by the author at Mt. Hermon, California, 4 July 2011. Harry, the oldest child, remembered his father's film development and printing in his house at Shunde and later, the Lewis residence in the Presbyterian compound in Beijing. As a young boy, he recalled his father saying, “don't come in when the red light goes on,” alluding to this home darkroom work.

¹⁷¹ Lewis, 95.

shops like Hartung's, Lewis insisted on developing and printing his own images, despite having limited time in-between language study and other preparations for mission responsibilities.¹⁷²

This personal interest and expanded technical expertise in photography allowed Lewis to produce a wider range of vernacular images beyond casual snapshots – including, as we will see, documentary visualizations of Chinese Christian practices that privileged indigeneity rather than missionary oversight.

After arriving in China in the fall of 1933, while undergoing language training at the same College of Chinese Studies as the Henkes, Ralph Lewis accompanied Sam Dean, a veteran educational missionary to a small church in a village beyond the city outskirts, at “the foot of the west hills.”¹⁷³ This congregation was established by the Chinese Christian students of an engineering school (北平華北工程學校) that Dean founded under the auspices of the American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, but the church itself was “entirely self-supporting” – a description that was not merely missionary wishful thinking.¹⁷⁴ In addition to their formal training in engineering and architecture, over a period of three years, the Chinese students from Dean's school independently built a primary school and church building from a set of ruined foundations in the village, staffing it “with a Pastor who is paid by the congregation. The boys from [the school in Beiping] go out alternately on Sundays to help in the services and do some street preaching.”¹⁷⁵ The Chinese congregants, in turn, received training and equipment from the engineering students “to weave good cloth...getting along very well with it and [now] have more

¹⁷² Ralph Lewis, personal letter to parents, 18 October 1933. I am doing my own developing, but for the most part I cannot afford to make my own prints as it costs more for me to do it than to have them done outside. They are 2c Mex or just of ¾c gold a print. Any way I do not have a great deal of spare time. I must say the prints that I make myself are better than I can get done at the most expensive place in Peking. I do not trust them to do my developing as they occasionally spoil a roll.

¹⁷³ Ralph Lewis to parents, 17 December 1933, Lewis Family Collection.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

orders than they can fill.”¹⁷⁶ On this December 17 visit, Lewis took his Rolleiflex camera along as he, Dean, another American Presbyterian missionary (John Hayes), and several Chinese students drove an old Dodge truck into the village. After arriving, the students unloaded and began “singing hymns to Chinese tunes,” drawing a sizeable crowd to which they then preached and shared personal religious testimonies. Afterward, the Chinese Christians in the village and the students gathered in the little church to sing more hymns (accompanied by an organ purchased by a church member, “a retired merchant,” and played by one of the engineering students), listen to the pastor preach a sermon, witness the baptism of seven new congregation members, and partake in a Communion service together.¹⁷⁷



Image 42 (New members received into self-supporting church, December 1933; Lewis Family Collection)

As the service unfolded, Lewis removed his Rolleiflex from its leather case and made a single photograph (*Image 42*). An un-posed moment before the lens, the image emphasizes not the agency of foreign missionaries, but the religious work and experiences of the Chinese Christians who take center stage. The Chinese pastor presides over the seven new members being received into the church. Behind the group, handmade posters display phrases written in

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

the manner of traditional matching couplets: “The Temple of God,” “The Heavens Declare the Glory of the Lord,” “Peace on Earth Be to All Men.”¹⁷⁸ The community in the image has assembled their own style of collective worship, appropriating translations of Biblical scripture as signposts for their Christian identity (the room is not merely another village building, but “The Temple of God”) and they are enacting their belief in the moment and space framed by the photograph. The congregation’s bowed heads and the pastor’s closed eyes indicate that they were in prayer or reflection at the moment the photograph was made, communing with God both individually and as a congregation.

The angle from which the image was made indicates that Lewis was sitting at the far end of the church, likely on a bench or stool similar to those visible in the frame. The interior light was rather dim, so he would have needed to brace his Rolleiflex against his body and his seat to hold it steady during the longer exposure; the sharpness of the image indicates that this was successful. Technically, the Rolleiflex’s comparatively wide lens aperture (f/3.8) and light-sensitive film enabled Lewis to make the handheld image without having to resort to an obtrusive tripod or to elect not to make the image at all. Moreover, the camera’s particular design required that Lewis stare down and into a reflex viewfinder to frame and focus – effectively curling himself into a ball while sitting on the bench. Lewis’s huddled position, his spot at the far end of the church (instead of moving to the front and disrupting the service to make the image), and even the near-silent ‘snick’ of the leaf shutter firing all physically minimized the

¹⁷⁸ In the image: 上帝聖殿, 天上榮光歸主名, 地上平安歸于人; not all of the verses are visible in their entirety, but an enlargement of the photograph (reflecting Lewis’s successful photographic technique and the sharpness of the Zeiss Tessar lens) enables the opening characters to be read, and the rest inferred. These passages were likely drawn from the Chinese Union Version Bible (和合本), specifically Habakkuk 2:20 (“The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him), Psalm 19:1 (“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork), and Luke 2:14 (“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased”), respectively; English translations here from the Revised Version (RV).

photographer's presence in the space, at least at the moment of exposure. As such, the image itself represented the service in progress from the individual perspective of a congregation member – sitting quietly among other Chinese Christians, taking part in collective prayer and liturgical practices. The visual practices behind this photograph thus referenced the missionary-photographer's presence as an unobtrusive participant rather than an oppressive intruder. Photography, in this sense, mirrored more closely a relational, modern missionary perspective on Chinese Christianity than it reinforced a sense of difference and foreignness.

The photograph that Lewis made after the service show the new members of the village church and the Chinese pastor standing in front of the building, dressed in formal clothing and looking proudly into the lens while holding Bibles: the symbols of their new spiritual and cultural identities as Protestant Christians.¹⁷⁹ And while this image was posed, unlike the service photograph, it nonetheless presented a visual parallel to the indigenous church's "self-supporting" mission (*Image 43*). Dean, Lewis, and Hayes – the foreign missionaries who accompanied the Chinese congregation that day, are wholly absent from the photographs – although they (and in particular Dean, given his existing close association with the congregation) could easily have elected to be present in the group images. The visible emphasis is on the agency and demonstrative presence of Chinese Christians as opposed to the American missionaries, with the missionary "invisibility" foregrounding the local church's religious work and community on its own terms. The only indication of foreign presence was the sign behind the group of new converts, which read 美國基督教長老會 (American Christian Presbyterian Church) – even so, the characters for "美國" (American) were scripted much smaller than "基督

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. As Sam Dean explained to the linguistically challenged Lewis, "the minister was in Peiping for several years [and] is considered a very fine man...one [of the new members] was the village pharmacist...there were a few more [congregants] than usual [at the service, and] seemed be of moderate means mostly...[and] come from all professions."

教” (Christian) and “長老會” (Presbyterian), foregrounding quite literally the Christian and Presbyterian identity of the church rather than the national affiliation. It was a character that Lewis recognized even before he developed his photographs; over dinner later that evening, Dean noted that “this work of his receives no support from home[;] it is entirely Chinese. The [congregants and students] don’t feel that they are getting any foreign aid as it is practically all done by them. Sam just goes along occasionally.”¹⁸⁰



Image 43 (New members outside self-supporting church, December 1933; Lewis Family Collection)¹⁸¹

As such, the experience and the images were not a one-directional imposition of a foreign missionary ideal onto a Chinese Protestant community. Rather, it was a visualization of Chinese Christianity with its own spiritual, cultural, and communal agency, and one that reshaped Lewis’s worldview – especially as a newly-arrived missionary – in relation to Christianity in interwar China as a collaborative institution, not solely a foreign project. And even Lewis’s photography was not characterized by an authoritative “seeing as knowing,” but more of a “visualizing and participating” – perhaps even a step in the cross-cultural “conversion” of

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ (Left) Ralph Lewis, untitled photographic print, flipbook album, Lewis Family Collection. Lewis’s photograph of the seven new members of the church, taken after the conclusion of the service. (Right) Roberta Taylor Lewis, untitled photographic print, flipbook album, Lewis Family Collection. Ralph Lewis using his Rolleiflex twin-lens-reflex to make a photograph of the ocean at Beidaihe (北戴河) in the summer of 1934; photograph by Roberta Lewis, using her own camera, a simpler folding or box model producing 6x9cm negatives.

missionaries to broader perspectives beyond their original American Protestant backgrounds.¹⁸²

Writing about his experience in the village church, Lewis noted that “it was a very impressive service even though I could understand very little of the spoken words. [The Christians] were all so devout and sincere.” And in later reference to other Chinese Christian worship services in which he and his family participated in North China, Lewis was at first perplexed and alarmed by the congregations’ demonstrative worship styles, including public confession and requests for immediate prayer with the pastoral staff, alongside congregational invocations that often culminated in “everyone...seemingly shouting to the Lord.”¹⁸³ But in time, these forms of worship, which initially “[were] something new for us and...hard to understand,” became a common part of Lewis’s religious life and perspectives on Chinese Christianity; “we became accustomed to [the style of the services],” he wrote later, “and learned to appreciate it very much.”¹⁸⁴ And although he did not know it then, these churches and forms of worship would largely continue to exist even after Lewis, his family, and the camera were no longer present with them in the tumultuous years to come.

In the fall of 1934, almost exactly one year after Lewis arrived in China, he brought his Rolleiflex into the mission church at Hengzhou, his first formal mission posting after language school in Beijing. The photograph that he made there demonstrates not only the kinds of independent agency that he visualized in his earlier experience with the “self-supporting” church, but also Chinese Christian imaginations of a transnational Christian community (*Image 44*). At first glance, it seems a strange image to do this, as there are no living people present within the

¹⁸² An extensive study of the historical, cultural, and religious shifts in American missionary experience in modern China (a topic that overlaps with but is itself beyond the scope of visual culture and imaging) is found in Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

¹⁸³ Lewis, 123.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

frame. Rather, the church altar and three large overhanging wooden panels dominate the scene; painted on them in Chinese is the tripartite proclamation from the thirteenth chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians, featuring the key words “Faith” (信), “Hope” (望), and “Love,” (愛).¹⁸⁵ Paired beneath each word are central Christian articles of faith rendered in Chinese; “Hope” is paired with the Lord’s Prayer, “Faith” heads a transliteration of the Apostles’ Creed, and “Love” – “the greatest of these” and the largest panel of the three – hangs over a simplified translation of the Ten Commandments.¹⁸⁶ Perhaps as an aniconic response to local religious practices, there are no religious images beyond the scriptural text rendered in Chinese; even the cross, the most prominent of Christian traditional symbols, is absent. Yet, the articles and architectures of Protestant faith are not the sole focus of the photograph; it is an image with the image. A photographic portrait framed with a faintly visible Chinese caption and draped with white cloth atop the altar, surrounded by flowers. Lewis’s caption, typed underneath the photograph in a small notebook album, reads: “the Hengchow Pres. Church after the memorial service for Dr. C.F. Brown who was fatally injured in [an] auto accident Sept. 23, 1934 in Oklahoma.”¹⁸⁷



Image 44 (Hengzhou Presbyterian Church memorial altar display, Hunan, 1934; Lewis Family Collection)

¹⁸⁵ 1 Cor 13:13 (RV), “But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

¹⁸⁶ Ralph Lewis pocket album, “the Hengchow Pres. Church after the memorial service for Dr. C.F. Brown who was fatally injured in auto accident Sept. 23, 1934 in Oklahoma,” Lewis Family Collection.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

The memorial's essence is contingent on the presence of a photographic image as a stand-in for the person of Dr. Brown. It is a dualistic visual frame, contrasting Brown's photograph, taken when he was alive, with the congregation's knowledge, memory, and belief that he was now physically deceased but belonging to a transcendent, spiritual space. In a way, the photograph on the altar represents the paradox of Protestant views on images in worship. On the one hand, the church represents a space of anti-image, embodying the focus on "faith [as] the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen."¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, Christian imagination here hinges on the association of Brown's photographic image with a sacred environment and a sense of "otherworldliness," connecting the memory of his Brown's earthly existence with the continuation of his existence in the afterlife. As such, Lewis's photograph brings viewers into a shared experience of imagining Brown as a formerly living, now memorialized being with spiritual and cultural resonance in the space of a Christian church in China.

Moreover, this particular photograph, though completely devoid of live people, gestures at transnational imaginations shared by both the missionaries and the Chinese Christians who participated in the memorial. Much of this imagination took place outside of the image frame, but is worth mentioning in its historical context. Lewis's memoirs reveal how the missionaries received news of the doctor's accident during an administrative meeting, mixing medical details with striking imagery of death that the recipients of the news mentally "pictured" at the time:

A servant came in with a telegram. Mr. Birkel read it, and then asked that we all be quiet as he read it out loud. It was announcing the death of Dr. Chauncey Brown. He had been in an auto accident in [Oklahoma]. His wife was thrown from the car into the middle of the highway, causing a fracture of the cervical vertebra with paralysis from the neck down. He had tried to lift her heavy body off the road and developed a severe hernia as a result. Later, following surgery for the hernia, he suddenly died, probably of a pulmonary

¹⁸⁸ Heb. 11:1 (RV).

embolism. (Mrs. Brown lived for several more months before going to join her husband.) This was a shock to all of us.¹⁸⁹

The shock, perhaps, was not simply that Brown had passed away, but that his death as a missionary on a temporary furlough in the United States, intending to return to the mission in China, removed him permanently from the community – at least physically.¹⁹⁰ This dimension is visible in the local Chinese congregation’s response to Brown’s death; Lewis noted that since

Dr. Brown had served at our hospital for many years...the local community highly respected him for his services. Several days later the city and the Christians held a big memorial service for him which we all attended. It was a very moving and emotional experience for us especially, as we saw how the local people respected Dr. and Mrs. Brown as Christians and as their physician.¹⁹¹

The description of the Chinese congregation by their faith and not their race or culture, as “the city and the Christians,” situates them a religious identity beyond secular classification; in one sense, this seems to neatly enclose the Chinese within a Christian cultural construct. But at the same time, this also points to independent Chinese Christian agency in the global Protestant community. First, there is the transnational imagination inherent in a commemoration planned by Chinese Christians of a man who died in thousands of miles away in Oklahoma, a place that most of the local community members likely never saw – and that the American missionaries also had to imagine in their mind’s eye as they sat in the church during the memorial. Moreover, the Chinese memorial was a space of cultural amalgamation, as Lewis’s photograph shows; Brown’s portrait is draped in white cloth, the traditional symbol of death used in non-Christian Chinese funeral rites, and there is a lengthy phrase (unfortunately illegible in the existing print) written in Chinese above the portrait, possibly a farewell message or an appropriate passage from

¹⁸⁹ Lewis, 99, 111.

¹⁹⁰ Lewis, 99.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 112.

Scripture.¹⁹² These symbols, combined with the total lack of English inscriptions anywhere within the image frame, emphasize the artifacts of Chinese cultural construction in the memorial; in a sense, Brown, in his death, was not simply commemorated as a deceased Christian in a larger body of believers, but also “made Chinese” in collective ritual imagining and practice.

Coincidentally, the same meeting that was interrupted by news of Brown’s death was one in which the missionaries were negotiating issues of doctrinal identification with the American Presbyterian leadership in charge of foreign missions. When the telegram arrived, Lewis and the other missionaries – both evangelists and medical staff – at the station at dinner with a visiting “well known minister from the eastern part of the U.S.A., a known ‘fundamentalist,’ who [was] visiting our various mission stations to see if [‘modernist’] heresy existed among our missionaries.”¹⁹³ The “well-known minister,” not named in Lewis’s memoirs but referenced directly in his letters to the United States, was the Rev. Donald Barnhouse of the conservative Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.¹⁹⁴ Barnhouse’s visit was occasioned by the doctrinal debates mentioned earlier in this chapter and part of an intensive “inspection tour” through “China, Japan, India, and Persia,” in which he attempted to “visit all of the Presbyterian Mission stations and meet as many of the missionaries as he [could].”¹⁹⁵ Lewis noted that Barnhouse, while “not in favor of [J. Gresham Machen’s conservative and later schismatic] Independent Board...is anxious to find out how the missionaries stand in their religious conviction.”¹⁹⁶ Lewis

¹⁹² Evelyn S. Rawski and James L. Watson, eds. *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 12; see also a parallel account of Sun Yat-sen’s hybrid Christian funeral rites that mentions an association with the photographic portrait of the deceased leader, though the visual aspects of the image are not discussed. Frederic Wakeman, Jr., “Mao’s Remains,” in *ibid.*, 257.

¹⁹³ Lewis, 111.

¹⁹⁴ Ralph Lewis to parents, November 1, 1934, Lewis Family Collection.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* Other private letters by Lewis to his family members indicated that he was opposed to schismatic groups from the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) that claimed exclusive “orthodoxy” or fundamentalist beliefs, e.g. those headed by J. Gresham Machen and Carl Curtis McIntire, Jr. At the same time, he

noted that “our special guest began asking each missionary very personal questions about his belief and what he had been doing to further the Kingdom of God. It was very hard for us all, as we knew that we were under investigation by one of the important men in our denomination.”¹⁹⁷

Writing to his parents, Lewis also reflected other tensions between Barnhouse on the one hand and missionaries and Chinese Christians on the other:

[After Barnhouse visited the mission hospital], we had tea for him at which there were about thirty Chinese men and...a few women who could speak english [sic]. He gave a very fine address to them on the subject that to be a Christian one had to be and believe the whole way, that Christianity is not a system of ethics...I hope that the majority could understand him well enough to take it all in. Then in the evening we had a station dinner at Lucinda Gerhardt’s house. We had a good chance to get acquainted with him then. Our impressions were that [Barnhouse] is a very conceited man, but a very fine Christian and Bible student. After dinner he began by asking us what we are doing to earn the three thousand dollars that it costs the church at home to support each one of us.

It was also at this same moment of “interrogation” that the telegram containing news of Chauncey Brown’s death arrived.¹⁹⁸ The conflicted relationships between missionaries aligned with the Chinese Christian community in Hengzhou and this visiting, intrusive American church leader – who was incongruously concerned about abstract defenses of Christian doctrine alongside the more worldly results of “[what] it costs the church at home to support [foreign missions and the Chinese church]” – could not have been more strongly visible in this moment. In any case, Brown’s memorial service, as organized by the Chinese Christians and attended by the missionaries and city community “put an end to [the missionaries] being questioned by [the] VIP guest,” as Lewis wrote, and Barnhouse left the next morning for Chenzhou (郴州) en route to Canton (廣州).¹⁹⁹ It is perhaps unsurprising that Lewis decided not to photograph (or at least,

also expressed admiration for theologians and church leaders within the PCUSA who espoused orthodox Protestant beliefs without either endorsing divisions or promoting modernist relativism.

¹⁹⁷ Lewis, 111.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 111-112.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 112.

preserve any photographs he did make) from Barnhouse's visit to the mission at the same time as the memorial service – deciding instead to visually document the Chinese community's effort to memorialize a missionary as “one of their own” rather than even this “important [man] in our denomination” who was a “fine Christian and Bible student.” Lewis's rendering Barnhouse invisible in the photographic record and his critical view of his leadership was perhaps a small act of rebellion – an indication of deeper personal alignment with Chinese Christians (rather than the impositions of foreign church leadership) than met the eye.

Chapter 2 – Cameras and Conversions: American Catholic Missionary Photography and Mediated Identities in West Hunan, 1921-1929

On the morning of February 15, 1922, George Tootell, medical director at the American Presbyterian mission station in Changde (常德), Hunan, awoke and prepared for his daily activities.²⁰⁰ This day, however, proved to be a little different.²⁰¹ Instead of his usual rounds at the Kuangteh Hospital (廣德醫院), Tootell, accompanied by a nurse, walked down the hill to the Roman Catholic mission compound that occupied the space directly below and across from his own. After gaining entrance to the buildings, Tootell was received by two priests, Frs. Raphael Vance and Agatho Purtill, C.P., members of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, otherwise known as the Passionists. They were also Americans, but very new arrivals to the area, having arrived in West Hunan (湘西) from West Hoboken, New Jersey only eight days before. On this morning, Vance and Purtill – along with four other Passionist missionaries, one religious brother and five priests altogether – awaited directions from Bishop Pellegrino Luigi Mondaini, O.F.M., the Italian Apostolic Vicar of Changsha, before they could continue to Chenzhou (辰州), the group’s final “base area” in the interior.²⁰² Tootell’s appearance was perhaps only a

²⁰⁰ Earlier iterations of this chapter were published as “Cameras and Conversions: Crossing Boundaries in American Missionary Experience and Photography in Modern China,” *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Spring 2016 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016) 93-120.

²⁰¹ For an oral history of Dr. George Tootell’s day-to-day experiences and medical missions in Hunan, see *China Missionaries Oral History Project: George T. Tootell* (Claremont: Claremont Graduate School Oral History Program, 1971). Interviewed nearly 50 years after the incident recorded below, he briefly mentions the presence of Catholic missionary institutions in Hunan, but does not recall any specific personal contacts. See Tootell, 25-26.

²⁰² Frs. Raphael Vance and Agatho Purtill, C.P., “Diary of Frs. Agatho and Raphael, C.P. (First Band of American C.P. Missionaries to China), Dec. 11, 1921 to March 9, 1922,” 9 February 1922, 28, File 505.02_007, Missionary Administrative Correspondence, Passionist China Collection (hereafter PCC). “According to the Bishops [sic] instructions we are to let him know when we arrive at this city and then he will come to see us or we to see him. We

partial surprise to the two priests, who had had over a week to view the Protestant mission above them from the windows of their temporary residence, writing about its size and features with no little envy.²⁰³ Yet, this morning visit was neither official nor strictly ecumenical. Tootell had come to take photographs. The Catholic mission church's tower afforded a high vantage point and wide view of the area inaccessible from ground-level, and the two Protestant visitors were intent on climbing it to photograph their own mission compound with their still cameras. Frs. Vance and Purtill obligingly "made ourselves known to them," and Tootell and the nurse "told us all about the election of the new pope, [and later] sent us over some Hankow [漢口] papers and also two copies of the Literary Digest. They also invited us over to see them and have tea."²⁰⁴ Two weeks later, on Ash Wednesday, March 1, the two priests took Tootell up on his offer and "visited the American Hospital," noting that "it is quite an up to date place" with "their own electric system...and 50 resident patients."²⁰⁵ It is not clear if the Passionists took their own cameras with them when they ventured up the hill to the Presbyterian mission, it is possible that they did. After all, they were also no strangers to photography. A diary entry from the day after

sent a telegram announcing our arrival and are now waiting for an answer." The bishop is not named in the Passionist diary, but is likely Mondaini, according to his biographic chronology and presence in this part of China at the time. See David M. Cheney, "Archbishop Giovanni Pellegrino Luigi Mondaini, O.F.M.," *Catholic-Hierarchy.org*, 22 August 2015, <<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bmonda.html>>.

²⁰³ Vance and Purtill diary, 7 February 1922, 28. One relevant passage reads, "there are many protestants [sic] in this city. They have a hospital and school and needless to mention a church. But while they have the money and the fine buildings, they have not the success which [Spanish Augustinian] Fr. Vincent [Avedilla] has with all his poverty." More on this competitive view later.

²⁰⁴ Vance and Purtill diary, 15 February 1922, 30. The travel diary's entry for January 22 noted simply, "the Pope [Benedict XV] died to day at 6 A.M." In any case, the Passionists and other Roman Catholics in China were not the only ones with an eye on major news from the Vatican, as Tootell and the nurse – and doubtlessly their Protestant colleagues at the Changde mission and elsewhere – were reading "all about the election of the new pope [Pius XI]. This successor to the papacy would create the position of Apostolic Delegate to China in the same year and oversee a decade of church indigenization sparked by Benedict XV's *Maximum Illud* of 1919, spearheaded on the ground in China by individual missionaries such as Fr. Frédéric-Vincent Lebbe, and culminating in Pius XI's consecration of the first six Chinese Catholic bishops in 1926. See Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 113-114. Also Ernest P. Young, *Ecclesiastical Colony: China's Catholic Church and the French Religious Protectorate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 121-147, 171-232.

²⁰⁵ Vance and Purtill diary, 1 March 1922, 31.

the hospital visit records Fr. Purtil and another priest, Fr. Timothy McDermott, C.P., taking their own photographs of the boat “that is to take [the first group of Passionists] to the city of Shenchowfu.”²⁰⁶ By the end of the week, the Passionist missionaries were on their way out of Changde on the Yuan River (沅江), leaving Tootell and the Presbyterian mission behind them.²⁰⁷

Though this chance meeting may well be considered a footnote in the broader history of foreign missions and Christianity in China, it is noteworthy in that it was facilitated in part by the act of photography. While Tootell, the yet-unidentified nurse, and the Passionists may well have met under different circumstances, given the physical proximity of their residences in Changde, the encounter itself was shaped by visual practices.²⁰⁸ Tootell and the nurse needed a vantage point for their cameras and the wide-angle image they desired, and the architecture of the Catholic mission provided just that. Furthermore, the act of obtaining access for this photography opened an avenue for personal contact between American missionaries of different, often contested Christian faith and culture, if only for a few brief days. This was a time in modern China during which Catholic and Protestant Christian institutions were generally at odds with each other (paralleled on local and global scales) and religious ecumenism was effectively nonexistent.²⁰⁹ Yet, the presence of the camera alongside other forms of shared American culture, in the specific case of Tootell and the Passionists, offered a common modern experience that temporarily transcended religious boundaries and presented a particular point of

²⁰⁶ Vance and Purtil diary, 2 March 1922, 31.

²⁰⁷ Vance and Purtil diary, 3 March 1922, 32.

²⁰⁸ George Tootell, coincidentally, was a close colleague and personal friend of another American Presbyterian medical missionary and skilled photographer, Dr. Ralph Charles Lewis. The latter worked in Hunan along with Tootell in the mid-1930s and features prominently in the dissertation. It was not until I looked at Passionist sources that I found that Tootell had contact with Catholic missions in his area and over photography, no less. Lewis does not record such Hunan-based contacts with Catholic institutions in his own detailed memoirs, though his mission post, Hengzhou (衡州), was only 130 km northwest of the Passionists’ initial destination Chenzhou (辰州).

²⁰⁹ Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 113-115. For an in-depth study of earlier clashes between Chinese Protestants and Catholics on a local level, along with national and international repercussions, see also Young, *Ecclesiastical Colony*, 98-109; 145-146.

conversation. Even if Protestant and Catholic missionary ideologies and practices were at odds with each other, the two groups employed similar or even identical visual technologies to document their experiences in the same period of time.

The goal of this chapter, however, is not simply to outline these parallels and differences. Rather, it will focus on photography's role in shaping overlapping "conversion experiences" and the creation of a Catholic mission media identity in China, drawing from the visual practices of a single American Catholic order in West Hunan between 1921 and 1929. In this case, the concept of conversion is interpreted in several registers – not strictly limited to the religious sense, and including both the makers of the images as well as their subjects. While such an approach may well be applied to missionary imaging across the larger history of modern China, focusing on the Passionists allows for a clearer rendering of these complicated, often historically invisible experiences. The chapter approaches conversion in the American Catholic missionary creation of a visual "media identity," framed in part by the Passionists' contentious relationship to Protestantism in China, the photographic visualization of religious and cultural conversion efforts in the local Catholic community, and transnational image circulation between West Hunan and the United States. This approach situates religious conversion as an important part – but neither the whole sum nor a self-evident, singular subject – of Passionist missionaries' visual practices. The emphasis here is on photographic mediation and visual practices *as* conversions, embodying the transformation of space, time, and meaning. Familiarity and foreignness, technological links and imagined community – and shifts in these categories – all shaped the Passionists' experience. Photography mediated Passionist missionary conceptions of self and other (the "other" here including Chinese and Western Protestants as well as indigenous populations) alongside their perceptions of local and global Catholicism, while also shaping (and

complicating) connections between their geographically isolated missions and American Catholic audiences.

“Go Forth” – Technology, Contingency, and the Creation of a Passionist Media Identity²¹⁰

Even as the first group of six Passionist missionaries traveled across the United States en route to Hunan in 1921, they were already undergoing a process of conversion in experience and media, though they may not have known it at the time. This was related in part to the missionaries’ imaginations of media technologies, visual and otherwise, that they could use to record and transmit their experiences to come. This was driven by in part by competition with Protestant missions, though it would be several more weeks and thousands of miles before the Passionists came face to face with these institutions. Rather, they encountered traces of Protestant missions in China even before they left the United States – via the radio. During a stopover in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, no less than four days after their celebratory December 11 departure from West Hoboken, “some of the [Passionist] Fathers were allowed to ‘listen in’ on a concert on the wireless telephone, the concert taking place many miles away.”²¹¹ Recalling the experience in a letter typed aboard the train to Seattle, their trans-Pacific embarkation point, Fr. Vance noted that “this invention has limitless possibilities” and immediately compared Protestant media for their missions in China with the lack of equivalent technologies in the Catholic institution:

On Sunday the sermons in the different Protestant churches are listened to by thousands through this medium. One good benefactor of the Passionist Foreign Mission heard the

²¹⁰ The chapter subtitles are derived from English translations of the Tridentine Roman Catholic Missal, the Mass form most familiar to the Passionist missionaries discussed here. In this case, the Latin original is “Ite, Missa est,” from “De Benedictione in fine Missæ, et Evangelio S. Joannis,” *Missale Roman Ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini Reimpressio Editionis XXVIII* (hereafter “Tridentine Roman Missal 1920”), 75.

²¹¹ Fr. Raphael Vance, C.P., report typed on the “*Oriental Limited*, Chicago to Seattle,” 20-22 December 1921, 5, File 505.01_007.009, PCC.

minister on the previous Sunday thanking the people for their generous contribution to the Chinese Protestant works in the Far East. [The minister] declared that no time in the history of the Chinese nation was the field more ready for Protestant effort. Would that our American Catholics could be made to realize this. How much greater would be their effort to save these children of paganism from the clutches of the non-catholic missionary[?]²¹²

It is clear from the priests' keen "listening in" and Vance's imagination of radio's generative effects on American church audiences that the Passionists were thinking about media connections between China and the US at this early stage in their mission experience – taking cues from technologies employed by "non-catholic missionar[ies]." Moreover, this interest was couched in competition along religious lines. By leveraging the power of mass media – which for the Passionists was relegated to photographic and print forms, as will be discussed later – Catholic missionaries could more effectively combat Protestantism in China. The battle for the souls of "these children of paganism" was thus in part a battle for media advantages.

The Passionists' fascination with the radio continued on board the S.S. *Wenatchee*, the Pacific Steamship Company liner transporting the group from Seattle to East Asia. As the ship made its way across the Pacific, the Passionist missionaries took turns celebrating daily Mass – with the noise of the ship's machinery occasionally threatening to distract them from the liturgy – and also examined the onboard radio system on several occasions.²¹³ Vance and Purtill reported that after "Mass etc. as usual... we went to the very top deck and took particular notice of the arrangement of the wireless."²¹⁴ The missionaries also encountered others on board the ship who were interested in parallel forms of media technology. Among the handful of fellow passengers specifically mentioned by name in the Passionists' trans-Pacific account were "Mr. [Loo] Zeu-lien[,] who is interested in movies [and] had in his employ a certain Mr. Harry Grogin

²¹² Vance report, 5

²¹³ Vance and Purtill diary, 24-25 December 1921, 8-9; 6 January 1922, 14.

²¹⁴ Vance and Purtill diary, 27 December 1921, 9.

of N.Y.C.[,] an expert photographer. They both were on their way to China to take movies. Mr. Loo is a chinaman and a graduate of Columbia [University].”²¹⁵ While no further mention is made of this filmmaking duo in the Passionist travel account, the unrecorded conversations that took place between them and the missionaries may well have further galvanized the priests’ imaginations about the possibilities of mass media.²¹⁶ Photography, of course, also played a primary role in the trans-Pacific experience. Vance and Purtill, for example, noted that between Mass, games of dominos, and walks around the ship, “we took...pictures of one another.”²¹⁷ The ample free time during the voyage provided an opportunity to not only produce images to send back to family and friends, but to practice photography in an environment and among people comparatively less “foreign” than that of the country they were to enter. In any case, practicing photography *en route* was part of the missionary’s experiential initiation into their new life in East Asia – a kind of widely shared unofficial tradition for other camera-equipped missionaries, Catholic and Protestant, as well as for future Passionists.²¹⁸ It should be noted that the second group of Passionists, following in 1924, drew the ire of crewmembers on board the *S.S.*

²¹⁵ Vance and Purtill diary, 31 December 1921, 10. It is necessary here to comment briefly about the Passionist missionaries’ use of racist language to describe Chinese individuals. “Chinaman,” “Chink,” and other such descriptions are used repeatedly in the early travel accounts, likely on account of racial perceptions the missionaries held as convention. These descriptions faded from the written record after the priests had spent more time in China, perhaps due to closer contact with Chinese communities and a rethinking or internalization of their previous perceptions. While specifics about Loo Zeu-lien’s life and work remain practically unknown, Harry Grogin later claimed to have been “the first man to make motion pictures in China,” a blatant exaggeration, though he certainly arrived in China when its commercial film industry was still in its nascent stages. Grogin’s greater claim to fame, however, was as the assistant art editor for the *New York Evening Graphic* tabloid after returning to the United States (presumably after his and Loo’s attempts at producing commercial films in China failed), where he produced salacious composite photographs or “composographs” via darkroom manipulation. See “Chinamen May Kiss,” in “Sidelights of New York,” *The Gettysburg Times*, 14 September 1931, 3; Lester Cohen, *The New York Graphic: the World’s Zaniest Newspaper* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1964), 97; Mia Fineman, *Faking It: Manipulated Photography before Photoshop* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), 47-48.

²¹⁶ Vance and Purtill diary, 31 December 1921, 10; the diarists reported on this, the “Last day of the year, [with the] ocean most peaceful,” “as nothing special happened we must note a few things about the passengers.” In addition to having “on board a party of fifteen experts and diplomats, advisory to the Chinese delegation to the disarmament conference at Washington...in charge of P.Y. Wu[,] official treasurer of the Chinese mission at Washington,” and the two filmmakers, Vance and Purtill wrote that “we played various games...and spoke at length with them.”

²¹⁷ Vance and Purtill diary, 3 January 1922, 11.

²¹⁸ Ralph C. Lewis, letter from Shanghai to mother-in-law Taylor in California, 16 September 1933.

President Wilson as a consequence of their visual practices; photographers among them accidentally set off the ship's fire alarm when they overheated windowless bathrooms while developing film inside.²¹⁹

Comedic contingencies aside, the missionaries' personal visual practices and encounters with radio and film paralleled their imagined connections to the people and places they left behind.²²⁰ They also heightened the sense of cultural encounter and alienation in regard to their growing proximity to China. After one "usual visit to the front of the boat to watch the waves wash the decks" and a trip to the radio room, a few of the Passionists "spied some coffins with chinese [sic] inscriptions," leading the diarists to comment that "it is the opinion of the chinese [sic] that the spirit of the deceased cannot rest until the body is buried in China."²²¹ The parallels to their own uprooted nature as Americans abroad and the need for cultural belonging, even after death, were likely not lost on the missionaries. After observing the coffins, as the diary noted somewhat tellingly, the priests went back to the "wireless room and made inquiries about our position," presumably to compare how far they were from both China and the United States.²²² After taking photographs of each other, a few of the priests "[visited] the chinese [sic] children in the steerage...[and] brought them a lot of candy and cake. They flocked around us and seemed so happy to think that we thought of them...we were also very happy to see these kiddies enjoying their sweets."²²³ Despite their admitted inability to speak or understand the children's language, the missionaries attempted to make some kind of connection with the Chinese "other,"

²¹⁹ Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., *Hunan Harvest* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1946), 6.

²²⁰ Multiple mentions are made of the group sending telegrams to family and supporters in the United States. See Vance and Purtill diary, 27 December 1921, 9. Vance and Purtill also carried at least two binoculars or "glasses," which they shared with the other missionaries and ship passengers, looking – sometimes in vain – for other vessels at sea and landmarks they passed, including the Aleutian Islands and the coast of Japan. See Vance and Purtill diary, 29 December 1921, 10; 5 January 1922, 11-12, File 505.02_007, PCC.

²²¹ Vance and Purtill diary, 27 December 1921, 9.

²²² Vance and Purtill diary, 27 December 1921, 9.

²²³ Vance and Purtill diary, 10 January 1922, 17.

even if only in a culturally limited, paternalistic sense.²²⁴ In this case, the sequence of events – group photography followed by a visit to the Chinese passengers on board – embodied the missionaries’ sense of their own communal bonds (reinforced by the act of self-imagining) as well as their missionary identity and foreignness in relation to China and its people. Together, routine Catholic liturgy performed in new spaces (connections to God across space), encounters with the coffins and Chinese passengers (cultural-religious “others”), and attention to communications technology (connections to familiar communities) all shaped the Passionists’ perceptions of shifting cultural and geographic distance, as well as the desire to bridge them.

By the time the six missionaries arrived in Shanghai on January 10, 1922, nearly a month to the day after they waved goodbye to their families and supporters in New Jersey, they had undergone shifts in their cultural worldviews and media imaginations.²²⁵ They were also fully aware that they were a tiny minority in the vastly larger numbers of well-established non-American Catholic missionaries in East Asia – a fact that likely strengthened their communal identity as well as the desire to publicize their experiences. During a travel pause in Japan, they were wined and dined by a prominent Japanese Catholic benefactor (a “Mr. Susuki [鈴木]” affiliated with the rapidly expanding interwar shipbuilding industry); hosted by various European Marist and Jesuit clergy in Shanghai; lodged with the Irish Fathers in Hanyang (漢陽), Hubei; and were greeted by Spanish Augustinians when they finally arrived at Changde and Chenzhou (郴州) for their Hunan mission assignments, singing their post-debarkation *Te Deum* in the church (the same that George Tootell and the American nurse climbed for their photographs)

²²⁴ It is not surprising that the missionaries, while noting that the steerage passengers were segregated by gender (“in very close quarters, by happy...the men were in one compartment and women and children in another”), did not attempt to communicate with the adults among them. The sweets and cakes, and their primary focus on the Chinese children – who were clearly less guarded in their approaches to the visiting foreigners – were intended to quickly circumvent the culture and language barriers. See Vance and Purtill diary, 26 December 1921, 9.

²²⁵ Vance and Purtill diary, 11 December 1921, 1; 10 January 1922, 17.

constructed by the Augustinians and Chinese Catholic converts in 1919.²²⁶ They were aware that Chinese locals perceived them almost universally as “European,” and that the few American clergymen they encountered in Eastern and Central China were a small number in the larger Catholic foreign mission enterprise.²²⁷ Moreover, the first group of Passionists were themselves primarily considered assistants to the Spanish Augustinians, a response to that order’s “[appeal] to Rome for aid;” though the 6 men did not know it at the time, the Spanish missionaries, “undermanned and with many of their personnel ill,” were soon to withdraw from Hunan, “leaving the newly arrived missionaries with sixteen thousand square miles of Northwestern Hunan.”²²⁸ As such, the six missionaries resorted to small displays of “Americanness,” alternating with communal promotion. They affixed a small US flag to the riverboat that carried them to the Hunan interior, for example, and enthusiastically recorded in the travel diary that while in Changde, “we [had] the FIRST baptism and the first funeral by a passionist [sic] father in China. Father Agatho [Purtill] Baptised two little girls that were left at the gate within the first couple of days. The first baby was called Gabriella in honor of Saint Gabriel and the other Justina in honor of Fr. Provincial [Justin Carey, C.P.]”²²⁹ Paula, another infant christened a few days before by the resident Augustinians in honor of the Passionists’ founder, St. Paul of the Cross, died soon after these two were baptized, already weakened by exposure or illness common in cases of attempted female infanticide.²³⁰ This was “the first funeral” that the group presided over, with Agatho Purtill laying Paula to rest, and the first of many such encounters

²²⁶ Vance and Purtill diary, 7-8 January 1922, 15-17; 10 January 1922, 18-19; 13 January 1922, 20;

²²⁷ Vance and Purtill diary, 22 January 1922, 23; 24 January 1922, 23-24.

²²⁸ Maguire, *Hunan Harvest*, 18.

²²⁹ Vance and Purtill diary, 14 February 1922, 30. Fr. Provincial Carey was a prominent Passionist institutional organizer in the United States, and oversaw the establishment of the order’s missions to Hunan in 1921 as well as *The Sign* magazine. See “Father Justin Carey, C.P., St. Paul of the Cross Province (1868-1947),” Passionist Historical Archives, <<http://www.cpprovince.org/archives/bios/1/1-17b.php>>, accessed 10 March 2016.

²³⁰ Vance and Purtill diary, 14 February 1922, 30.

with abandoned or dying infants, mentioned repeatedly in the Passionists' later writings.²³¹

Though far from an uncommon incident in the local community – and one to which the Spanish Augustinians were no strangers – it was a rather momentous occasion for the newly-arrived Americans. The Passionists had claimed their first souls in Hunan.

Along with their first forays into religious conversion, the group continued their photography, building up a body of images for sharing with the “outside world.” While the first group of Passionists had neither access to radio nor film in China, they and subsequent missionaries from the order did have their own media tools: their still cameras. Many were consumer Kodak Autographic rollfilm models that folded flat for easier storage and transport, making them relatively well suited for the missionaries' mobile use in rural Hunan. Rollfilm carried from the United States (with later stocks purchased from suppliers in Hankou), was far more rugged compared to the sheet film or glass negatives used by contemporary professional photographers and allowed for 10-12 exposures every time the camera was loaded.²³² With this equipment, the Passionists set out to document their experiences and surroundings, converting themselves and the people and places they saw into visual subjects. Fr. Timothy McDermott, C.P., a member of the first group, jotted down self-reflective notes about his visual practices on the backs of his printed images, some of which point to the missionaries' photography as an act of visual conversion.

²³¹ Vance and Purtill diary, 14 February 1922, 30. See also David E. Mungello, *Drowning Girls in China: Female Infanticide since 1650* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008); and for a case study of Chinese female infanticide in a global Catholic context, see Henrietta Harrison, “A penny for the little Chinese: The French Holy Childhood Association in China, 1843-1951,” in *American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 72-92.

²³² The aforementioned professional or large format cameras using sheet film or glass plates only allowed two photographs at a time (at most) and required that the user pre-load wooden film holders in a light-tight space and carry them before and after the photographs were made. This kind of equipment added weight, bulk, and hassle, all of which were highly unsuited to the missionaries' working environment, budget, and technical expertise.

In regard to self-imaging, among the camera equipment McDermott brought to China was a clockwork device that tripped the shutter after a delay and allowed him to appear in some of his own photographs. This timer seemed to have worked properly for the most part, making possible photographs that were extremely difficult or impossible to make. One such image depicts McDermott, fellow Passionist Fr. Flavian Mullins, and a Chinese man, sitting together in the bow of a small boat headed to Changde, with no one else to operate the camera other than the self-timer (*Image 45*).²³³ While the priests could well have asked the Chinese man to assist with operating the camera (thus placing him behind the apparatus and erasing him from the image), his visual presence and the group's relaxed pose signaled an attempt to bond with a Chinese Catholic individual, albeit one categorized in terms of his position in missionary hierarchy (the caption describes him as "Padre Gregor's boy") and whose name was unrecorded, for reasons of linguistic or cultural barriers. "This is the front of our boat," wrote McDermott, who continued with some pride at describing the technology that assisted him, "I took this picture by means of my automatic self-timer."²³⁴

²³³ Fr. Timothy McDermott, C.P. Scrapbook, "Sun. Feb 5, 1922," caption on print verso, File 800.08_004.003, PCC. The caption reads, "Sun. Feb 5, 1922. This is the front of our boat. I took this picture by means of my automatic self-timer. The Chinese is Padre Gregor's boy. The boat in front of us is Fr. Agatho's and Raphael's. Don't we look sweet." The caption written on the scrapbook page below the front of the print omits any mention of photographic technique and reads simply, "Yuanchow River 1922-2-5. 'Front of boat.'" Nearly 7 years later, in October 1928, Mullins was reprimanded by the Passionist provincial consultor, Fr. Sebastian Ochsenreiter, C.P. for reportedly allowing one of his servants to extort money from other hired men, as well as for a sexual affair with a female catechist in his parish, reported by young Hunanese Catholics who were disturbed by Mullins' activities. "I beg you," wrote Ochsenreiter, "for God's sake and your own soul's sake, to put aside this damnable face [sic], and do your duty as you know God wants it done. You will realize that it is for your own good as well as for the good of this good woman's name, and I hope you will see the thing as it is in the eyes of others. One the boys also said, you were giving the man catechist 1000 dollars a year to keep him quiet. Dont [sic] forget Fr. Flavian, when there is smoke, there is a fire somewhere, and not one thing you are doing in your mission, but is being watched and observed by someone, who will afterwards talk and spread the dirty filth of his own suspicions." Mullins' response to this indictment and further reports on the incidents, if any, have yet to be found. Oschenreiter, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Flavian Mullins, C.P., 28 October 1928, 1-2, File 505.08_002.003a-003b, PCC. See also "Father Sebastian Ochsenreiter, C.P., St. Paul of the Cross Province (1876-1943)," Passionist Historical Archives, <<http://www.cpprovince.org/archives/bios/4/4-14c.php>>, accessed 10 March 2016.

²³⁴ McDermott photograph annotation, verso, File 800.08_004.003, PCC.



Image 45 (Self-timer photograph on boat, February 1922; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)²³⁵

At other times, the timer ran inconsistently or too quickly, leading to unexpected results. One such malfunction (or misjudgment, on McDermott's part) led him to write the following caption on the back of one of the first photographs he made in China:

Changteh. Feb 7, 1922. This is almost one picture that I almost got in. Third from the left you can see my ghost. I was using an automatic timer but did not give it enough time. I just got there & was turning around as the camera snapped. Owing to the fact that I am supposed to be the photographer I do not get on many pictures.²³⁶

In the photograph, McDermott's "ghost" is visible as a blurred head and black biretta behind a group of Passionist and Spanish missionaries as the priest runs unsuccessfully to his anticipated position before the shutter trips (*Image 46*). While this image may be looked at a simple technical accident, it is also possible to take a broader view and see it as an unanticipated transformation of the visual subject due to photographic contingencies. The "flawed" visual product (perhaps more so than more technically "normal" images) draws attention to the camera as a mediating device, converting everything in front of the lens into visualized elements via the photographic process. McDermott certainly recognized this fact; his pointing out the error in the

²³⁵ Image 800.08_004.003, Passionist China Collection, Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, University of San Francisco, California (hereafter PCC).

²³⁶ McDermott scrapbook, "Changteh. Feb 7, 1922," caption on print verso, File 800.08_004.004, PCC.

final image allows viewers to imagine the act of making the photograph as well as the problem he encountered in doing so. It is not difficult to imagine McDermott setting up his camera on a tripod in the courtyard of the Changde mission, positioning the group and the imaging apparatus such that all the priests would be well-lit and in the frame, and then running from the tripod to the group as the self-timer counted down – too soon for him to arrive at his spot.²³⁷ It comes as no surprise that a second photograph, taken of the same group from a lower angle (consistent with a photographer in a kneeling position), appears in the next page of scrapbook, except this time without McDermott in the frame (*Image 47*). To prevent the same mistake from happening again and wasting another frame of precious film, McDermott likely sacrificed his own visibility in the image to ensure that he produced an acceptable image of his compatriots.



Image 46 (Self-timer photograph with missionary group, February 1922) and Image 47 (Re-taken non-self-timer photograph with missionary group, February 1922; both Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)²³⁸

²³⁷ Incidentally, McDermott’s tripod was rendered unusable between the time this photograph was made and the time the Passionists arrived in Chenzhou (辰州). In a personal letter to his family dated 9 March 1922, McDermott reports, “I shall now have to close with love as I have to get up early to say Mass tomorrow, the first since last Friday...By the way I wish you would get me a screw for my tripod. I think you will be able to get it I lost mine. If you recall the little screw attachment for the camera, well that is fastened to the plate on which the camera rests, by another small screw or bolt, it is that screw which I lost not the one that fits in the camera but the one which fastens the camera screw to the silver plate...also send me along a [shutter release] cable or two for my small camera. The parcel Post is safe, the limit I believe is twelve pounds, merely see that it is well packed.” The additional reference to “my small camera” implies that McDermott was carrying at least two cameras of different formats with him, along with the tripod, self-timer attachment, film stock, and processing materials. The implied range of equipment further supports his comment in the aforementioned caption that “I am supposed to be the photographer.”

²³⁸ Image 800.08_004.004 (left); Image 800.08_004.005 (right), PCC.

Such mechanical contingencies were not the only experiential “ruptures” in the photographic conversion process. There were many other limiting factors, negotiations with visual practices, and environmental factors required to “successfully” convert subjects to images. The environment shaped the missionaries’ photography by imposing technical contingencies. Film, photographic paper, and developing chemicals, all sensitive to temperature and humidity, spoiled quickly in the humid Hunanese climate; deterioration was often not detected until the negatives or prints were developed, sometimes well after the opportunity to re-take the original images passed.²³⁹ One such photograph of “the class [of Chinese converts] baptized on Feast of [the] Holy Founder [St. Paul of the Cross],” produced by McDermott in the summer of 1925 carried a handwritten annotation: “picture not very clear as my paper and chemicals are both several years old.”²⁴⁰ While the priest was still impressively able to produce visible images with the expired developing material, the results were poor; McDermott added at the end, “to C.P. [Passionist editor], retouch spots” (*Image 48*). And so they were.



Image 48 (Retouched photograph with Chinese Catholic group, West Hunan, 1925; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)

²³⁹ Fr. Clement Seybold, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Silvan Latour, C.P., 13 February 1928, File 505.08b_009.001, PCC. In his letter to Latour, the editor of the Passionist *Sign Magazine* in New Jersey, Seybold stated that “I am sorry that I haven’t had any pictures to send with this letter but I know from your letter that you understand [sic] why this is. . . I have no pictures for the very good reason that I have no material either for taking or printing pictures. Films and chemicals deteriorate so rapidly in this damp climate and its [sic] so difficult to get them sent up to use from down river. It takes a year or more for the stuff to arrive so that it is often spoiled before reaching here.”

²⁴⁰ McDermott photograph annotation, verso, Image 800.02_074.005, PCC.

Two photographs made by Raphael Vance, depicting the interior of the Baojing (保靖) mission chapel that he administered, exhibit extreme lens flare from the building windows, the main sources of light for the dim interior (*Images 49 and 50*).²⁴¹ Beyond the usual effects produced by an unclean and uncoated lens, these were possible signs that the constant high humidity in West Hunan – which also caused mold to sprout all over the Passionists’ “books and leather goods” – was also etching itself onto their photographic equipment and film.²⁴²



Image 49 (Church interior front, photograph with flare and light leaks) and Image 50 (Church interior rear, photograph with flare and light leaks; both Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)

When possible, Passionists in the interior sent undeveloped film to Hankou, where administrators at the order’s procuration developed the rolls themselves or handed them over to commercial

²⁴¹ Vance photographs, Files 800.02_018.015; 800.02_018.17, PCC. Vance’s handwriting on the back of the first photograph reads, “Paotsing Church upper front. Note the windows.” The second reads, “Paotsing Church rear.”

²⁴² Maguire, *Hunan Harvest*, 77. For a Protestant missionary’s shared experience with Hunanese mold and its adverse effects on photographic materials, see Edward V. Gulick, *Teaching in Wartime China: A Photo-Memoir, 1937-1939* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 5. It would be nearly two more decades before anti-reflection lens coatings were commercially available. For a technical discussion of lens flare and its relationship to developments in anti-reflection coating, see Sidney F. Ray, *The Photographic Lens* (Oxford: Focal Press, 1992), 30-31. For a more contemporary discussion of climatic effects on photographic equipment produced by a Kodak Research Laboratories staff member, see Walter Clark, “Cameras and Climates,” in *Popular Photography*, June 1946, 56-57, 170-180. Clark writes, “There are many troubles characteristic of the moist tropics. One of the first which is recognized is the growth of fungus on cameras and other equipment, lenses, developed negatives and prints. Negatives and prints may show brown-stained areas after they have been made for a time...Leather, canvas, and paper may disintegrate.” “Missionaries,” incidentally, are among the photographers Clark listed “[who] will find their [environmental] problems numerous and varied.” Clark 56, 174.

processors. But even this carried risks. The process typically took over a month altogether and shipments were often lost or delayed in the 550 kilometers that separated Hankou from West Hunan.²⁴³ Fr. (later Bishop) Cuthbert O’Gara, C.P., for example, noted that “[while] I have been able to get some fairly good pictures...at present I am out of paper; some was on its way from Han[k]ow [sic], but is held up like all other packages and supplies.”²⁴⁴ Other unexpected problems included bandits’ theft of Fr. Clement Seybold’s camera equipment – neither the last nor most prosaic time the priest would personally encounter bandits – as well as one incident in which a traveling photographer defrauded other Passionist missionaries in Chenxi (辰溪), producing photographic prints that faded to invisibility after he took payment and left the area.²⁴⁵ As such, it is highly likely that the missionaries were constantly aware of their photography’s contingency-laden character. Not knowing whether a photograph, perhaps of scenes or people who could not be re-photographed, would appear acceptable after development with spoiled chemicals; if films sent out for processing would arrive in Hankou or return successfully to Hunan; if prints and negatives mailed to the Passionist office in New Jersey or relatives would be lost in the Chinese or trans-Pacific postal services – all of these experiences caused no little anxiety about visual practices, while adding further importance to the images that did “make it.”

A photograph taken some time after each of the six missionaries reached their individual mission postings across West Hunan, visually frames these connections and isolations.

²⁴³ Fr. Kevin Murray, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., 27 May 1923, File 505.03_015.006, PCC. Murray reports that “it is extremely difficult to have good developing done here in Central China. It is necessary to send the films to Hankow, which requires a loss of a full month before pictures are returned to Yuanchow.”

²⁴⁴ Fr. Cuthbert O’Gara, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Provincial Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., 26 December 1924, File 505.04_021.005c, PCC.

²⁴⁵ Fr. Clement Seybold, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Silvan Latour, C.P., 13 February 1928, File 505.08b_009.001a, PCC. Seybold notes, “my best camera was stolen from me in Hungkiang [洪江] about two years ago by bandit soldiers. I sent a brief account of this to Fr. Provincial but it never appeared in THE SIGN. Perhaps he never received it or did not hand it over...” The traveling photographer incident is mentioned in Fr. Arthur Benson, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Provincial Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., 25 August 1927, File 505.06_008.005a, PCC.

Produced by Raphael Vance after he settled at his mission in Baojing, the photograph displays the Passionist compound – a single building identifiable by a white cross crudely painted on its roof – nestled in a lush valley surrounded by steeply mountainous terrain. Vance likely climbed up one of these slopes, perhaps doing so on a sunny day to ensure sufficient bright light for the exposure, in order to “fit” the mission and some of its surroundings into his folding camera’s viewfinder. As he walked, Vance attempted not only to keep the mission compound in clear view but also to situate it within the local landscape, as a visitor departing or coming over the neighboring hills in person would have seen it. Later, on the back of the printed photograph, Vance wrote, “The Paotsing mission – white cross on roof – How do you like the mountains? Telegraph connections have been completed between Paotsing and Shenchow [Chenzhou]. The poles can be seen on the lower row of hills, just outside the city walls.”²⁴⁶ Vance leads the viewer of his photograph to imagine the various connections between the mission and the “outside world;” a compression of distances in the mission compound’s visible presence in the landscape, as well as the emphasis on telegraphic links between the city and the broader region. As with the combined fascination with the wireless and liturgical familiarities that came to the fore during the Passionists’ journey to China, Vance’s identification of communications links and the “outpost” point to the missionaries’ imagining Catholic mission spaces beyond the edges of the photographic frame (*Image 51*)

²⁴⁶ Vance photograph annotation, verso, File 800.02_016.006, PCC.



Image 51 (Baojing landscape with mission marked by white cross, West Hunan; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)²⁴⁷

At the same time, there are multiple “frames” in Vance’s image, each emphasizing the mission’s isolation. The houses in the village physically fence in the mission building, its identity as an “outpost” defined as much by its close proximity to the other structures as the visible foreignness of its religious symbol. The mission may be at the center of the photographic frame, but whether or not its influence extended beyond the small number of Chinese Catholic adherents in Baojing is certainly ambiguous. Visually, the white cross appears so small in the photograph that Vance must point out to reinforce its significance for the viewer. His “How do you like the mountains?” comment gestures at the looming slopes that visibly threaten to swallow up the mission and its foreign inhabitants, already dwarfing the lone building near the center of the image. In this place, even the telegraph, whose poles appear as visually shrunken thread-like vertical marks in the printed photograph (and which, as with the tiny white cross, must also be textually identified for clarity), seems a fragile link that could be – and sometimes was, by nature or human agency – all too easily severed. Such tenuous communication, compounded by the geographic remoteness, severe weather, and local language difficulties, was

²⁴⁷ Vance photograph “Paotsing,” File 800.02_016.006, PCC.

referenced by later arrivals to the area, sometimes with a crippling psychological element. Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., one of 13 Passionists who arrived in 1925 and who was assigned to the village of Yongsui as the lone resident mission priest among the Miao ethnic minority group, dramatically reported his feelings of isolation in this way:

To the monotonous, unending beat of the rain the typewriter clicks off belated replies to Hunan addresses, to Hankow, Shanghai, Philadelphia, New York. The pile of unanswered mail drops lower and lower – vanishes...I study, eat and sleep between Mass, Divine Office, and devotions...Out come my Chinese grammar, dictionary, and doctrine books...Intricate Chinese characters are stared at until they blur. They run together mockingly...Day crawls laggingly after day. And always – always the ears report, the bones complain, the mind repeats: ‘It is still raining! It has not stopped! This may go on and on. No mail, no word from the missions; and still it rains!’²⁴⁸

Yet, this was a distance that was already shifting and shrinking for Vance, Maguire, and the other Passionists in Hunan, with both visual and religious practices mediating the changes.

“And Dwelt Among Us” – Religious Conversion and Photography in West Hunan²⁴⁹

As the Passionist missionaries familiarized themselves with the local environment and worked on their language skills, photography offered unique opportunities to interact with the people and places around them – closing the distance, in a way. When possible, the missionaries left their compounds and walked the streets of the towns in which they resided, carrying their cameras and taking photographs along the way.²⁵⁰ This inevitably required the missionaries to be visually and spatially aware of their movements, the location of their mission buildings and other

²⁴⁸ Maguire, *Hunan Harvest*, 76. For an in-depth of the Miao minority’s relationship to early modern China in the same region of Hunan (focusing on contentious political relations with the Qing dynasty), see Donald S. Sutton, “Ethnicity and the Miao Frontier in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, eds. Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, Donald S. Sutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 190-228.

²⁴⁹ The full phrase is, “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,” from “Et Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit en nobis,” Tridentine Roman Missal 1920, “Canon Missæ, Joann. 1, 1-14,” 348.

²⁵⁰ Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Silvan Latour, C.P., 26 December 1924, File 505.04_021.005c, PCC. Maguire writes, “On our walks in and around Shenchow [Chenzhou] I have been able to get some fairly good pictures.”

“known” landmarks, and also to practice their Chinese speaking and reading knowledge while navigating the local community. Images from such walks display slightly or largely out-of-focus areas, as well as accidental lens obstructions (sometimes identifiable as errant fingers, robe sleeves, etc.); they indicate efforts at candid photography, which required rapid judgment of focusing distance and attempts to obscure the camera apparatus – a challenge even for photographers well-accustomed to their imaging environment.²⁵¹ While this street photography was intended as a leisure activity, paralleling the *flâneur*-like attitude that Susan Sontag articulated half-a-century later, it did not neatly constitute the “armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno...adept of the joys of watching.”²⁵² Rather, photography often embodied complicated cross-cultural encounters, bringing the Passionists literally face-to-face with the Chinese people. Moreover, the act of using the camera presented the missionaries as unexpected sources for local fascination and perceptions of foreignness. Fr. Cuthbert O’Gara, C.P., writing from Chenzhou in 1925, described such an experience with noticeable frustration:

I shall see what I can do about pictures in spite of very real difficulties. To get the types which you want will not be easy. The interesting case does not always come at the opportune moment, nor is it easy to take pictures of Chinese. The colossal [sic] curiosity of the race is never more patent than when a camera comes in sight. It is next to impossible to get the really characteristic scenes and poses. Always someone crowds the scene if he does not actually peek into the lens. Stop a moment to adjust a camera and before it can be snapped a crowd has gathered.²⁵³

²⁵¹ See Files 800.01_098.008, 800.01_098.009, PCC. These particular photographs were taken in Hankou, with the specific photographer and date unidentified. The second of the two, however, is annotated on the verso, “Hankow, left to right: an...boy, a...and a very astounded and angry little girl.” Most of the scene in the latter photograph, other than the far left of the image closest to the photographer, is out of focus. This indicates that the photographer set a focusing distance on the lens that was much closer than the majority of the main subject. The latter image, of a man standing outside a shop, is also out of focus, but also includes part of a robe or dark piece of clothing in the scene, perhaps used to obscure the camera. The consumer folding and box cameras employed by the majority of Passionist missionaries in the 1920s and early 1930s either did not have facilities for focus through the lens, or were not set up to do so during most street photography (this would have required the camera to be fixed on a tripod and focus and composition adjusted via a ground glass screen, in place of the film). As such, focusing distances for street photography were most often set by guesswork, causing such technical issues.

²⁵² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 55.

²⁵³ Fr. Cuthbert O’Gara, C.P., letter to Fr. Stephen Sweeney, C.P., 28 June 1925, File 505.05_020.002b, PCC.

These “very real difficulties” revolved around contingencies in space, time, and framing; moreover, missing “interesting case[s]” and “really characteristic scenes and poses,” as well as undue attention from people who “crowd the scene,” were all elements beyond the control of the missionaries behind the camera. O’Gara’s account, however, points to more than irritation over encroachment on the missionary-photographer’s personal space. Despite their exasperated attempts at control, the Passionists quickly learned that photography was not a sterile, distanced practice; the camera was not an impenetrable barrier between the imager and the imaged. Visual practices and their mediatory qualities necessitated personal interactions with local subjects in front of the lens, as well as a constant awareness – a kind of forced cultural humbling – that the missionaries’ life and photography in Hunan was neither defined by “characteristic scenes and poses” nor full control over their visual or cultural encounters. Rather than distanced observers “find[ing] the world ‘picturesque’” in their photography, the Passionists’ experiences were inextricably bound up with the people and places they visualized in their mission work.²⁵⁴

Despite these contingencies and cultural barriers, the Passionist photography visualized particular perceptions of the Chinese Catholic communities in which the missionaries were embedded. Here, visual conversions in photography crossed directly with religious ones. In multiple ways, Passionist imaging and images reflected an embodied Catholic identity in both a spiritual as well as cultural sense. Just as the bodies of Chinese Catholics processed through the Passionists’ Hunan churches, knelt and crossed themselves, and engaged in physical-spiritual connection with the Eucharist, their presence in photographs reflects conversions as religious and visual subjects. Photographic indexicality played a role in the merging of spiritual (invisible) and the physical (visible) existences, mirroring key theological perceptions in the religious

²⁵⁴ Sontag, 55.

imaginings of the missionary photographers, Chinese Catholic, and American recipients of the images. As the priests and indigenous catechists explained the mysteries of Christ's "real presence" in the Eucharistic elements (聖餐) to inquirers, Passionist photographs displayed visible Catholic conversion as another kind of "real presence" – as visible bread and wine were transformed into the spiritual Body and Blood of Christ, so too were visible Chinese converts transformed in photographic images into members of the invisible global Catholic church.²⁵⁵

In some images, the visible signs of participation in the Catholic community were defined against the unseen possibilities of individual and collective religious growth. In group photographs, for example, the photographic frame simultaneously encapsulates the people within it, giving a sense of the Chinese Catholic community's "togetherness" while also gesturing at other local populations, Catholic and non-Catholic (but with the potential of conversion), beyond the frame. The caption for one representative image made by Fr. Vance, depicting three Passionist priests sitting among a large group of Chinese Catholics in front of the mission church in Baojing, leverages the frame's limitations to indicate other un-photographed community members. On the back of the print, Vance noted that the image depicted "not all the Xtians [Christians], just the inmates of the Mission;" in a similar way, another photograph he made in

²⁵⁵ Charles G. Herbermann, ed., "Transubstantiation," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia: an International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 5 (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1914), 579. See also in the same volume, "Real Presence in the Eucharist," 573. For a broad contemporary description of the same Catholic doctrines contrasted against Protestant theologies, see "Lord's Supper," *Encyclopedia Americana* (New York: The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1919), 658-660. Theophane Maguire, writing in the late 1940s, recalled this religious experience in more poetic terms. "Through the lad, Lin Pao [a young altar server, 'whose family was pagan,' working with Maguire], the villagers asked a great many questions about religion...[The next day,] at the very poor home of Theophane [a Miao Catholic living in the village of "Ya Pa Ch'i"], I set up my Mass kit and celebrated the Holy Sacrifice. The floor was simply hard-packed earth, but it was swept clean. Water dripped through breaks in the roof. A chilling wind blew freely through this room. It was our Eucharistic Lord's first visit to this part of the great world which He created, and it might have reminded Him of the poverty of Bethlehem...Beyond all words is the joy and gratitude of a missionary at such a moment. To stand on some spot that has never known the visit of a Christian and say there for the first time since creation, 'Blessed be God!' is an experience that cannot be described. To pronounce the words of Consecration that bring Christ to a tiny corner of the earth until then un-visited by him, is worth the hardships and sacrifices of a lifetime!" Maguire, *Hunan Harvest*, 68.

September 1923 is captioned, “with some of the Xtians at Paotsing.”²⁵⁶ The emphasis is not necessarily on specific numbers of people included or excluded, but rather on visual community as a portion of the greater whole. The photographic frame is not so much a hard boundary as a permeable visual mediator. It is simultaneously a signpost for religious conversions among the Chinese population that taking place outside of the frame while also unifying the individuals within the image. When the image was later published for *The Sign*, a Passionist editor drew lines in pencil on the original print to further reduce free space around the group, heightening the framing effect and underscoring the community’s visual unity (*Image 52*).



Image 52 (Baojing mission group, photograph with pencil crop marks, West Hunan; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)²⁵⁷

Other outward signs of conversion, mediated by the camera, included photographs of Chinese orphans taken in by the Passionist missions, wearing liturgical dress and present in sacred spaces. Sometime around Christmas 1924, Fr. Vance asked five of the altar servers who assisted with Mass at his mission in Baojing to stand in front of the altar rail and hold still for his

²⁵⁶ Fr. Raphael Vance, C.P., “Paotsing Mission. On a visit from the prefect – also Frs. Theophane and Basil came on for the occasion. This is not all the Xtians, just the inmates of the Mission. Raphael [undated],” “With some of the Xtians at Paotsing Sept, 1923,” captions on print verso, File 800.02_016.009, PCC.

²⁵⁷ Image 800.02_016.009, PCC. The lines drawn in pencil on the photographic print were presumably done after it was received at the Passionist headquarters in New Jersey, after which it was reproduced for publication in *The Sign* magazine. Such cropping marks and some cases of photographic manipulation with paints (not discussed in this article but examined in my dissertation) were relatively common. *The Sign* magazine and some of its connections to the missionaries’ photographs will be discussed shortly.

camera.²⁵⁸ The relatively long exposure necessitated by the dim natural light in the church and the insensitive film emulsion (perhaps further desensitized by environmental damage) caused the boys' bodies to be blurred slightly in the final image, even as they attempted not to move. Vance, estimating the distance between him and the boys, also mis-focused the lens slightly, causing further image deterioration in the contact print (*Image 53*).²⁵⁹ Despite the blurriness, the boys are recognizable as altar servers by their black cassocks, white surplices, and for three of the five, small crucifixes worn on chains from their necks. Along with their dress, the boys' position in front of the altar rail, a space that they occupied and traversed during Mass, indicates their conversion from "mere" orphan boys to key participants in the Catholic liturgy. These visual signs – and even the boys' slight movements inadvertently highlighted by the long exposure – heighten the fact that they were living, moving members of the religious community.

Catholicism had radically changed their environment and their bodily presentation. This reshaped identity is further strengthened, in a linguistic sense, by the photograph's handwritten caption, which notes "My Altar Boys...left to right, 'Tsang John' 'Ho Joseph' 'Fu Paul' 'Lu Gabriel' & 'Su Patrick'."²⁶⁰ In listing each boy by his Christian name, Vance indicates that all of them were members of the Catholic Church by baptism. Moreover, the choice to include family names in addition to baptismal names indicated to viewers that each boy represented a broader Chinese family (Tsang, Ho, Fu, Lu, and Su) connected to the Catholic community by relational

²⁵⁸ Fr. Raphael Vance, C.P., "My Altar Boys – Paotsing – left to right, 'Tsang John' 'Ho Joseph' 'Fu Paul' 'Lu Gabriel' & 'Su Patrick' The Chinese always put family name first. Fr. Raphael," Image 800.02_016.016, PCC. Although this image is not dated, a close-up photograph of a nativity scene with nearly identical lighting, focus errors, and developing flaws included in Vance's file is dated "Xmas 1924." As such, it is the author's guess that these photographs were taken around the same time, and perhaps even on the same day.

²⁵⁹ Most of the Passionists' cameras were simple box cameras or folding types that did not allow the photographer to view through the lens for focusing nor had built-in precision focusing aids such as an optical rangefinder. As such, photographs taken at wide apertures, such as in the dim church interior, often appeared slightly or significantly out of focus, depending on the photographer's skill and luck.

²⁶⁰ Image 800.02_016.016, PCC. The author had to do a double take upon encountering "Ho, Joseph" scrawled in Vance's handwriting on the back of the photographic print, a kind of archival déjà vu.

ties. It is also worth noting that Vance, now two years into his missionary activities in China, was also attempting to demonstrate some familiarity with Chinese linguistic custom, in formatting the names in this way and then making a note to viewers of the image that “the Chinese always put family name first.” It is not clear if this comment was intended to emphasize the “otherness” of Chinese naming traditions, but regardless of original intent, the complete caption leads viewers to imagine the photographed altar boys as simultaneously Chinese and Catholic. They are paternalistically connected to Vance (“My Altar Boys”) in the liturgical hierarchy; to the Catholic Church in their baptismal names and dress presentation; and to local Chinese families by virtue of their recorded surnames.²⁶¹



Image 53 (Altar boys at Baojing, West Hunan, c.1924; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)²⁶²

Beyond visualizing Catholic community in these ways, the Passionist missionaries also included the act of photography in key liturgical or demonstrative moments in religious

²⁶¹ Four of the five boys in this photograph later added their names to a letter – likely written by Raphael Vance on their behalf – dated September 26, 1925 and printed in the January 1926 issue of *The Sign*. Addressed to the Provincial, the letter read in part, “We now number five Postulants. Daily besides our regular prayers and spiritual exercises we hope to be able to go to America to make our Novitiate, and become real Passionists. Then in several years, when by the grace of the God of Heaven [天主], we are priests, we will return to own China to preach Christ Crucified and save countless souls from that devil. Please pray for us, that we may be worthy of the grace of the God of Heaven. Your loving sons in the Passion of Christ. (Signed) PAUL FU, PATRICK SU, JOHN TSANG, JOSEPH HO, VINCENT LEE.” The printed page was bordered by slogans encouraging reader support for the postulants. One read, “THE GREATEST NEED OF ALL FOREIGN MISSIONS IS NATIVE VOCATIONS,” and another suggested: “PATRICK SU SOUNDS GOOD. LET’S HELP TO MAKE HIM FATHER PATRICK.” “Father Raphael Vance, C.P., and His Passionist (Chinese) Postulants,” *The Sign*, Vol. 5, No. 6, January 1926, 261, PCC.

²⁶² Image 800.02_016.016, PCC.

conversion. One instance is recorded in a June 4, 1922 letter that Fr. McDermott wrote from Yuanzhou (沅州) to his father and sisters in the United States. This was one of many letters detailing his cross-cultural experiences in Hunan alongside attempts at keeping up with photography. “I can say the Ave Maria in Chinese now,” he wrote in an earlier message, “I shall send you a copy of it sometime, so you can hear what it sounds like to pray in Chinese...I have been fairly busy of late, developing and printing pictures...I know you shall be disappointed of not getting more of myself. But I shall try to do better later – when my beard gets more prominent?? [sic]”²⁶³ The June 4 letter, however, was a little different. Instead mentioning his religious activities, cross-acculturation, and photography in separate categories, McDermott reported a far more integrated event – photography in the literal service of religious conversion.

Yesterday morning I said Mass shortly after five. Then the Ceremonies began when Padre H. [Hipolito Martinez, O.S.A.] baptized 18 new Christians of whom I enclose a picture. Immediately after the Baptism we had Mass at which they all received. Later after they made their Thanksgiving I took their pictures. It was a lot of work.²⁶⁴

The “lot of work” was likely not an overstatement. In addition to rising early to say Mass and perhaps assisting directly in the baptism of the “18 new Christians” and the subsequent Mass, McDermott had to prepare his camera and film to make photographs of the new members of the Church (*Image 54*). As there were 18 individuals, this would have involved using up two rolls of film (either in one camera, reloaded after all 10 or 12 exposures on the first roll were used up, or in two separate cameras). McDermott would have had to recall not only the liturgical practices and words essential to his pastoral duties as a missionary priest, but also the necessary technical information and visual practices as the event photographer. Taking the “work” comment further, it is not difficult to imagine the mental gymnastics needed to move from prayers, chants, and

²⁶³ Fr. Timothy McDermott, C.P., personal letter to “Dad and Girls,” 24 February 1922, File 602.290_004.012, PCC.

²⁶⁴ Fr. Timothy McDermott, C.P., personal letter to “Dad and Girls,” 4 June 1922, File 602.290_005.007, PCC.

scriptural readings to calculating exposure, focusing distance, and composition, while making sure to avoid technical errors like his earlier self-timer accident. McDermott likely also used some of his rudimentary spoken Chinese, perhaps with the help of a catechist, to communicate with the people he photographed. Switching linguistic gears between Latin, English, and Chinese, “in thought, word, and deed,” to borrow a liturgical phrase, would not have been easy, especially as McDermott had only been in Hunan less than four months at the time.²⁶⁵



Image 54 (“A recent baptism class at Yuanchow, 1922,” West Hunan; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)²⁶⁶

Yet, despite these challenges, the McDermott recognized that photography was more than simply a way to document the Passionists’ evangelistic work for family and institutional viewers;

²⁶⁵ McDermott later became one of better speakers of Hunanese dialect among the Passionists. In a letter written to Fr. Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., McDermott’s coworker at Yuanzhou, Fr. Kevin Murray, C.P., reported that “I wish your Reverence could hear Tim [McDermott] hand out the Chinese. It is evident at once that he has the linguistic abilities. While I was en route to Yuanchow, we had to stop at Kienyang [黔陽], one of our missions. Father Timothy heard the confessions of all the christians [sic] and delivered his first sermon in Chinese. He is a wonder. If there ever was an apostle, Tim is surely one. He is a model missionary for the Chinese.” In regard to his own linguistic abilities, Murray wrote, “if I can do half as well as my companion in the same length of time I won’t hesitate to pat myself on the back. In the case of some Missionaries it is several years before they can speak or even understand the Chinese tongue.” Murray personal letter, 27 May 1923, File 505.03_015.006, PCC. The referenced liturgical phrase, borrowed from the Tridentine Penitential Rite, is “Confiteor Deo omnipotenti...quia peccavi nimis cogitatione, verbo, et opere.”

²⁶⁶ Image 800.02_073.003, PCC. The caption handwritten on the back reads, “a recent baptism class at Yuanchow, 1922 with my predecessor [Fr. Hipolito Martinez, O.S.A.] in the centre.” It is not yet clear whether or not this was the photograph that McDermott is referring to in his letter (as more than 18 individuals are visible), but the date, mission location, and presence of Fr. Martinez all point to this as the referenced image, or at least a previous photograph taken of the group of converts during their catechism class, of whom 18 were then baptized.

it was also a way to provide the converts a visual and material symbol of their new identity as a Catholic. He continued:

But I thought it would not be too much to develop & print [the images] immediately. I gave them each a copy. Undoubtedly it is the biggest day in their lives. So I set to work & developed the pictures immediately, hurrying them as much as I could. & by 1:00 P.M. they were ready to be printed. I worked until about five P.M. printing & washing them & gave them each one this morning.²⁶⁷

Although the reactions of the newly baptized Chinese Catholics to their photographic portraits is not recorded, this is among the few documented instances of missionaries – Catholic or Protestant – producing photographs in close conjunction with religious conversion. While missionaries in China may have engaged in this practice on an individual basis, highly dependent on personal choice and the availability of photographic materials to produce multiple image, this was not a common practice. In many cases, including the Passionists’ own imaging experiences in Hunan, photographs were produced as visual “evidence” of missionary activity and circulated among church organizations, and not routinely shared with converts.²⁶⁸ McDermott’s decision, however, points to the importance he placed on photography as a reproducible visual medium that (in this case) connected the image-maker and the subject, particularly on what the missionary interpreted as “the biggest day in their lives.” This is clear in the urgent need to produce prints for the baptized Catholics (presumably before some or all of them departed the Yuanzhou mission compound for their own residences in surrounding villages), which required “hurrying” the negatives’ chemical development and the four hours spent “printing & washing”

²⁶⁷ McDermott personal letter, 4 June 1922.

²⁶⁸ Two elderly Chinese Christians interviewed for the dissertation, one Presbyterian and one Catholic, reported being photographed by missionaries around the time they joined their respective churches in 1937, but did not receive (or did not maintain, if they did receive them) the resulting images. Liu Ju (劉與), interview by the author in Wuchang, China, 22 May 2011; Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Ti-Kang (狄剛), interview by the author in Keelung, Taiwan, 9 June 2012.

before the sun went down and prevented further work.²⁶⁹ The final photographs thus represented a material tie to the Church, along the lines of a baptismal certificate, while also embodying the missionary-photographer's participation and serving as a visually "life-like" reminder of the religious ceremony to each of the recipients. Although it is not known what happened to the photographs after the converts took them home, or if any of these specific prints still survive in their descendants' possession, it is not difficult to imagine the images kept as iconographic representations of the converts' Catholic faith or at the very least displayed as curiosities.

In any case, McDermott's baptism photography points to both these local connections and the global "afterlives" of images directly connected with conversion. On the same day the group baptism of 18 Catholics took place, McDermott "also Baptized my first Baby;" directly addressing this part of the letter to his sister, Julia McDermott, he went on to say that

It was one we received at the Mission the day before. It is a rather cute youngster. As per agreement I called it Julia and took its picture. The picture was pretty good, but somehow or other I sliced off the top of their heads. The woman holding the Baby is it's God-Mother – her name is Marie & the others a party to her mother – Salome – The Daughter & wife respectively of the Catechist here. I enclose the picture so you can see what your namesake looks like Jule. I took another picture today, but have not yet developed it, if it is great I'll send you one.²⁷⁰

Although McDermott does not explicitly state that he gave a photograph of the child to the family supporters of her baptism (though, in context with the group baptisms, he may well have done so), this incident neatly points to the global networks through which these images of

²⁶⁹ Given the total lack of electricity in rural Hunan and no mention of electrically-powered printing or enlarging equipment in any of McDermott's prior correspondence (and such equipment would not have been widely used "in the field" at the time), it is safe to assume that he was using a solar contact printing box. This typically required the photographer to place the negative on top of a sheet of light-sensitive paper about the same size in the negative, with the negative-paper combination held flat by a clear piece of glass in a wooden frame. This frame was then exposed to sunlight for a certain amount of time and then returned to the darkroom for the print to be chemically processed to reveal the latent image. McDermott would have had to run test prints to determine the appropriate length of time needed to expose the paper for an acceptable print, and if any mistakes were made along the way, he had to throw away the ruined paper and restart the process. Repeated at least 18 times for each photographed convert, this would easily have taken several hours, as McDermott noted.

²⁷⁰ McDermott personal letter, 4 June 1922.

conversion traveled. In addition to visual-religious conversions “on the ground” (McDermott closely relates christening the baby and taking her photograph in the same sentence; he also points out a framing error with the camera’s viewfinder that caused him to “[slice] off the top of their heads”), images sent by the Passionists and other missionaries connected supporters abroad to works in China, by sight and by imagination. The photographs here work as a visual bridge, connecting Julia McDermott to the Chinese baby bearing her Christian name. Though not explicitly stated here, the image allowed McDermott’s family to see across time and space, in a visually mediated way, and imaginatively encounter a child and family that they were supporting spiritually and perhaps also financially.²⁷¹ While such a connection was one of many made privately, McDermott was far from alone in the Passionists’ use of photography to transmit images of conversion to American communities and publics supporting their religious activities.

“Visible and Invisible” – Competition, Print Media, and the Limits of Visual Conversion²⁷²

Circling back to the Passionist missionaries’ early encounters with transnational media, the order’s primary outlet for their images and writings from China was *The Sign*, a magazine published at their mission headquarters in New Jersey. Shortly after the first group of Passionists departed for Hunan, the publication began featuring a section in each monthly issue entitled “With the Passionists in China,” which shared information on the missionaries’ activities with

²⁷¹ For more on the connections between American congregations and support for orphans in Hunan, see the work of Associate Professor Margaret Kuo in the Department of History at California State University, Long Beach. Kuo is currently working on a project that examines the meanings and uses of Chinese orphans’ images in Passionist missionary support networks. She presented a paper entitled “Saving ‘Pagan Babies’: Missionary Photography and American Views of China in the 1920s” at “Towards the Ends of the Earth: Exploring the Global History of American Evangelicalism, 1840-2010,” a conference at the University of Southampton, England on 24 April 2014.

²⁷² From the Nicene Creed, “I believe in one God; the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible;” “Credo in unum Deum; Patrem omnipotentem, factorem cœli et terræ, visibílium ómnium et in visibílium,” “Ordo Missæ,” Tridentine Roman Missal 1920, 275.

readers in the United States, with the goal of soliciting both funds and spiritual support.²⁷³

Appeals for these forms of support were often closely linked; pragmatism and prayer alike were not lost on the missionaries as they considered the competitive presence of Protestant missions in their own area. As McDermott wrote in a personal letter that mixed distaste with a somewhat exaggerated view of the Passionists' spiritual "adversaries,"

The Protestants surely have been way ahead of us here in Shenchow [辰州]. They have money galore and that is everything with them. They have schools, colleges, hospitals, play grounds, tennis courts, etc. etc. We shall have to go some to catch up to them. Both with it all they have only a few hangers on outside of them who are procuring an education from them. Singularly enough the Chinese have little or no respect for them, (they are called "Fu In Tang" [福音堂]). While the Chinese have the greatest respect for the T'ien Shu Tang [天主堂] or Catholic Church. Just wait till we get our Orphanage running and our Dispensary. Then we shall set ourselves to start our School for Boys – then girls – and if possible a hospital later. It is a big work [that] we have ahead of us. All uphill, but please God we shall go ahead with it and quickly.²⁷⁴

The "little or no respect" for the Protestants expressed here – McDermott was presumably taking this opinion from Chinese Catholics – was part wishful thinking and part a matter of local communal identity in opposition to encroachment by this "other" Christianity. Another Passionist in Chenzhou later reported that local Catholics ("our Christians") who visited the Protestant hospital for treatment frequently "complain[ed] that they are annoyed while there by proselytizers."²⁷⁵ Of course, the reason the Chinese Catholics were needed to visit the Protestant hospital in the first place was because the Passionists lacked a medical facility of their own, though discussions were underway to open one in 1925 (plans that reportedly disturbed the

²⁷³ Fr. Robert E. Carbonneau, C.P., "The Sign," *The Encyclopedia of American Catholic History*. Michael Glazier and Thomas Shelley, eds. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 1297.

²⁷⁴ McDermott, personal letter to family, "Palm Sunday," 9 April 1922. Either out of spite or by accident, McDermott did not translate the Chinese name for the Protestants (福音堂), which equates to "Gospel Church." By translating the indigenous name for the Catholic Church and leaving the Protestants' term well alone (and of course incomprehensible to American readers of his letter), McDermott subtly implied the illegitimacy of the latter group.

²⁷⁵ Fr. Cuthbert O'Gara, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Stephen Sweeney, C.P., 28 June 1925, File 505.05_020.002a-002e, PCC. The referenced "proselytizers" are presumably Chinese Protestant evangelists or medical staff who took the opportunity to speak about their faith to locals awaiting or undergoing treatment.

Protestant hospital administrators, who were “very much concerned about our opening a second hospital...[and] even made the proposition that we do not open a hospital at all but for efficiency’s sake unite forces with them.”²⁷⁶ In any case, the Passionists were strongly concerned about funding for their mission work, not unlike the Protestants at the other end of their heated criticisms. Even in more rural parts of West Hunan, where there were no established Protestant institutions to directly contend with, both the resident missionary priests in their mission “outposts” and the Chinese catechists who worked alongside them – who were admittedly in a greater position of influence due to their native linguistic fluency and their liaison duties – needed to be maintained with funds and supplies. The “uphill work,” as such, required this dual support from American Catholic communities; without funds, Passionist mission work could not move forward, and without continued mission work, the Protestants would continue to develop their own religious and humanitarian presence in the region. Here, *The Sign* and its media connection between West Hunan and the United States came into play. While the magazine’s historical development, production, and cultural and religious effects (on its domestic readership and as a supporting organ for American Catholic missions) remain to be explored in detail, the Passionists’ published photographs from China will be discussed here as an example of the transnational image interpretation and the struggles over visual conversion and control in missionary media.

Images collected by the magazine’s editor, Fr. Silvan Latour, C.P., were reproduced alongside anecdotes or reports written by missionaries in China or their supporters in the United States, and then circulated among subscribers.²⁷⁷ In the months and years after the Passionists

²⁷⁶ O’Gara personal letter, 28 June 1925, 3. File 505.05_020.002a-002e, PCC.

²⁷⁷ “Fr. Silvan Latour, C.P., St. Paul of the Cross Province (1891-1933) [September 2, 1933],” Passionist Historical Archives, <<http://www.cpprovince.org/archives/bios/9/9-2c.php>>, accessed 26 October 2015.

began their work in West Hunan, letters passing between their mission sites and New Jersey negotiated not only the ways in which local reports were used in the official publication, but also the interpretation of images alongside the text. One such letter, written in the fall of 1924 by Fr. Theophane Maguire to Latour “[by] the light of an old time lamp and from a typewriter that is stiff with the chills,” preserves such an exchange.²⁷⁸ In addition to reporting that the missionaries had been solicited for “an article” to assist Monsignor William David O’Brien in Chicago to “make an appeal [in the Catholic Church Extension Society] for thirteen Mass kits,” Maguire shared that he was enclosing additional photographs that had been “incidentally delayed” due to work on the article, and hoped that “the [first set of photographs he] sent from Hankow reached you.”²⁷⁹ He went on to state that “on the back of each [print] I have written a few lines. If you want any clue to placing them in the trip you may find it in the accounts the others have sent, or in the lines from my ‘Changteh to Shenchow’ dairy [sic], part of which Anthony has in the long story he is sending to the provincial.”²⁸⁰ This focus on the text denoted Maguire’s desire for Latour to interpret the images – and to pass this interpretation on *The Sign*’s readers – in a way that most closely paralleled the missionaries’ own experiences in the local contexts. This included statements that more forcefully drove home the missionaries’ thoughts behind the images. Maguire instructed Latour that “there is one picture I want you to look at twice: the wreck [of a boat] on the Yuan [River]” (*Image 55*).

²⁷⁸ Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., letter to Fr. Silvan Latour, C.P., 19 October 1924, 1, File 505.04_021.002, PCC.

²⁷⁹ Maguire personal letter, 19 October 1924, 1.

²⁸⁰ Maguire personal letter, 19 October 1924, 1.

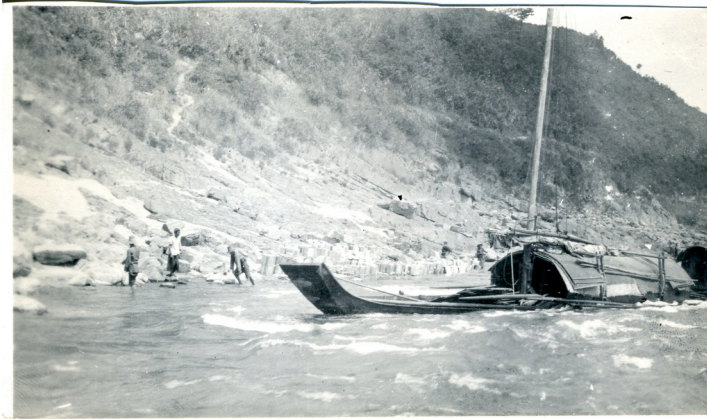


Image 55 (“The wreck of a boat on the Yuan [River],” West Hunan, c.1924; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)²⁸¹

This photograph of the foundering vessel, made by Maguire or another Passionist photographer during his own passage to the interior, represented on the one hand the hazards of the missionaries’ journey inland, spiritually mitigated by “the myriad prayers that were offered for our safety in almost every part of the homeland, [after which] God’s response was graciously and generously given.”²⁸² On the other hand, the photograph provided visual support for supplies lost in transportation accidents, materials which American supporters of Passionist foreign missions had funded (“the picture and its story will bring home...why for every dollar sent to the missions a result cannot be set up in readable balance against it... [and also] prompt some to give more generously of those ‘stringless’ gifts, less advertised before men, but very vital to the mission’s success.”)²⁸³ For unknown reasons, the letter containing Maguire’s commentary on the

²⁸¹ Image 800.08_003.056, PCC.

²⁸² Maguire personal letter, 19 October 1924. The quote reads: “Silvan, there is one picture I want you to look at twice: the wreck [of a boat] on the Yuan [River]. As I have implied from recalling the trips of the other bands, this last lap of the journey is one of many hazards. How then did we come through so gloriously? I can sincerely say that I attribute it in great part to the myriad prayers that were offered for our safety in almost every part of the homeland. God’s response was graciously and generously given. And so I ask you, either in separate notice, or in someone’s account to give expression to our heartfelt gratitude to God, and our appreciation to our friends. This is the thought to take with you from our first glance at the wreck (we passed more than one).”

²⁸³ Maguire personal letter, 19 October 1924. The full paragraph reads: “And here is a little thought for the second glance: Recently two junk loads – one of food supplies, another of building materials, went ‘up country’ to our men on the missions. I mean they went part of the way, then they struck the rocks and the supplies were lost. Soon after we reached here Father Raphael [Vance] received word of a shipment of oil meeting a like fate. I don’t know how it

photographs was itself “lost” in the Passionists’ New Jersey offices, separated from the images that it attempted to narrate. Someone (perhaps an editor or Maguire himself, later on) wrote forcefully in pencil across the letterhead that it was “Never used.” This misinterpretation – or “incorrect” conversion – of images to messages in *The Sign* was not lost on the missionaries in Hunan, who received copies of the finished magazine after they circulated back to China, typically one or two months after they were printed in the United States.

The error was still felt more than a half year after the January 1925 issue in which Maguire’s photographs appeared. Fr. Cuthbert O’Gara, C.P., formerly a staff member at *The Sign* before joining the Hunan missionaries and who was on board the boat when the original photograph was made, wrote angrily in June that

There is much dissatisfaction on this side. The best pictures are not published...Every time the Sign arrives...there is a meeting of mild indignation. Why some of the pictures have been printed is beyond me when so many better ones have been submitted. Then some of the most significant ones have been emasculated in the magazine. Whoever writes the captions! A description of the scene is always carefully written out *by the sender* [handwritten marginal notation].²⁸⁴

In voicing his frustrations about the disjuncture between images and text, O’Gara implied not only the contingencies in sending photographs across the Pacific to *The Sign* but also the loss of control over their interpretation when they reached the publication and its publics on the “other side.” Not only were “the best pictures...not published,” but the texts used to frame printed images also “emasculated” them, isolating them from meanings and significances that the

feels, but I imagine [American Catholic supporters’] dreams are troubled with a long line of necessary by elusive dollar bills, and at the end of the list is a question mark. Now I am not going to ask you to send out a dodger asking people to contribute \$500 or more or less to be sent in money order that we may drop it on receipt with full ceremony in the treacherous Yuan. But the picture and its story will bring home to all who have yet failed to grasp it why for every dollar sent to the missions a result cannot be set up in readable balance against it. And at the same time it might prompt some to give more generously of those ‘stringless’ gifts, less advertised before men, but very vital to the mission’s success.”

²⁸⁴ Fr. Cuthbert O’Gara, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Stephen Sweeney, C.P., 28 June 1925, 2, File 505.05_020.002, PCC. The first page of this letter is stamped in purple ink, “RETURN TO FR. SILVAN.”

missionary-photographers wished to emphasize. In a way, O’Gara uncovered the malleability of visual meaning; that images may also be “converted” or re-interpreted in ways not originally intended by their makers. To drive home this point, O’Gara referred to the photograph of the wrecked boat, now circulated back to the Passionist missionaries in Hunan in *The Sign*’s printed version. Evidently, Maguire’s written instructions for Latour and the magazine’s editorial staff to “look at [the photograph] twice” did not have their intended effect:

[The] January [issue of *The Sign*] was more flagrant. ‘Sanpan [sic] on the Yuan River[,]’ nothing more. Now this was one of the very best pictures taken during the entire trip. It was snapped as we passed by. It shows a large sampan wrecked on the rocks, the rapids swirling around. It is sunk to the gunwale. Part of the cargo of oil has been salvaged and can be seen on the beach. The woman is obviously the captain’s wife. The coolies are tugging the next boat in line. This as one of the many we passed and graphically showed the perils of travel on the river as at any time a similar fate might have befallen either of our two boats. This picture helps to indicate in a convincing manner why it takes so long for goods to reach us and how it comes about that having got so far[,] everything is lost in a few moments. Yet not a word about the wreck or what the picture signified.²⁸⁵

The problem was not merely that the banal caption did not match the image content, but that the meanings the Passionist missionaries hoped to convey to their supporters with the image – in particular the risk of losing much-needed, American-funded supplies during hazardous river transport – were lost. The irony was that this was a double loss: the sampan’s cargo in the Yuan River as well as the illustrative power of the image as both visual documentary and warning sign.

O’Gara continued by addressing other potential issues with the image reproduction in *The Sign*, this time focusing not on context but on image quality – and in direct comparison with another other American Catholic missionary group:

Better pictures have been sent to the States. Again the prints are very poor. The screen being used is so coarse that the best proofs would be ruined. Some pictures, those among the best, in which there is much detail, we have not forwarded because it would be useless. The fine points are lost in the printing. Please don’t think I am holding a grudge in against anybody, but you mentioned pictures and I want you to know just how we stand. I believe

²⁸⁵ O’Gara personal letter, 28 June 1925, 3. File 505.05_020.002a-002e, PCC.

it would pay to improve the screen. Maryknoll pictures are always clear and distinct. Perhaps you will be able to drop a hint in the right quarter.²⁸⁶

The brief reference to “Maryknoll pictures” indicates that O’Gara and the Passionists were keenly aware that their media identity was defined both in comparison with Protestants as well as the only other American Catholic mission organization in China. The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers had started work in Yeungkong (陽江) in Guangdong Province, a mere three years ahead of the Passionists in Hunan.²⁸⁷ The Maryknollers, as they were known, were supported by the newly-inaugurated Catholic Foreign Missions Society of America and *The Field Afar*, the first mission magazine by an individual American Catholic order to be widely circulated after the First World War.²⁸⁸ The umbrella Society for the Propagation of the Faith (*Propagandum Fidei*), overseeing multiple global Catholic mission enterprises, also published its own English-language magazine entitled *Catholic Missions* (an offshoot of the French-founded *Les Missions Catholiques*) – itself a glossy volume richly illustrated with full-page paintings and enlarged photographs.²⁸⁹ As such, the Passionists were playing catch-up in their own media production. O’Gara, who was perhaps taking lessons from secular print media in addition to those of religious competitors, recognized the connections between “clear and distinct” photographic reproductions – mediated technically by the halftone screen – and the mass interests of American

²⁸⁶ O’Gara personal letter, 28 June 1925, 3. File 505.05_020.002a-002e, PCC.

²⁸⁷ Glenn D. Kittler, *The Maryknoll Fathers* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1961), 107-126. Yeungkong was the same city where Harold and Jessie Mae Henke were originally slated to join a Presbyterian mission before being diverted to North China by the mission board. Jessie Mae Henke, *Family History*, 11.

²⁸⁸ Kittler, 55-57; 78-79. Kittler also reports that photography was a key part of Maryknoll media identity at the very beginning of *The Field Afar*’s existence, with the first group of Maryknoll missionaries – including their founder Fr. James A. Walsh – photographed “in flash pictures” as they departed for China in 1919. Kittler, 114.

²⁸⁹ Edward J. Hickey, “The Society for the Propagation of the Faith: Its Foundation, Organization, and Success (1822-1922),” (PhD dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1922), 156-157. For a contemporary example of the US-based magazine, see *Catholic Missions*, Vol. 2, No. 12, December 1925 (New York: Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 1925); this issue included articles discussing both Maryknoll and Passionist missions, as well as American Benedictine (OSB) and Society of the Divine Word (SVD) projects in China. The article on the SVD references that order’s media efforts, stating that “at Techny, Ill., the [SVD] Mission Press is publishing 150,000 copies of magazines each month, 100,000 calendars and almanacs each year besides thousands of leaflets and pamphlets.” Rev. W.A. Ross, SVD, “Fifty Years for the Divine Word,” *Catholic Missions*, December 1925, 10.

Catholic readership.²⁹⁰ The priest served as an unofficial field editor for the Passionists, organizing local photography through the 1920s for contribution to the magazine's image repository; it was he who commented earlier that "to get the types [of photographs] which you want will not be easy" – a statement made in response to a member of *The Sign's* editorial staff, Fr. Stephen Sweeney, C.P.²⁹¹ These efforts likely drew the attention of Passionist superiors to O'Gara's abilities as a missionary administrator, resulting in a promotion to apostolic prefect of Chenzhou in the spring of 1930 and his later consecration as Bishop of Yuanling (沅陵教區) on October 28, 1934. The latter event, accompanied by mass processions in Hankou, was also visually recorded in a short 16mm motion picture film, perhaps at O'Gara's request (*Image 56*).



Image 56 (16mm film still, public Eucharistic procession, Hankou, October 1934; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)²⁹²

²⁹⁰ For a discussion of photomechanical reproduction (revolving around the halftone process) as it relates to American mass culture, print and news media, and textual-visual meaning-making, see Neil Harris, "Iconography and Intellectual History: The Halftone Effect," in *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 304-317.

²⁹¹ Fr. Cuthbert O'Gara, C.P., letter to Fr. Stephen Sweeney, C.P., 28 June 1925, File 505.05_020.002b, PCC.

²⁹² "Eucharistic Procession after the Consecration of Bishop Cuthbert O'Gara in Hankow [October 28] 1934," 16mm film, PCC. This is a still frame taken 2:27 minutes into the film, which was shot on a 100-foot reel of Kodak safety film (a standard load) running 4:02 minutes in total. The filmmaker is unknown, but the film largely takes place in the Hankou (漢口) foreign concession area. O'Gara is the mitred individual at the far left of the procession, toward the lower left corner of the frame, with glasses and folded hands. The assisting priest holding open O'Gara's liturgical cope's left sleeve (the right side in the image) is Fr. Jeremiah McNamara, C.P, also a missionary in Hunan from 1925-1945. See "Father Jeremiah McNamara, C.P., St. Paul of the Cross Province (1898-1971)," Passionist Historical Archives, <<http://www.cpprovince.org/archives/bios/6/6-3a.php>>, accessed 14 March 2016.

In any case, the dissatisfaction that O’Gara expressed with the magazine’s misuse of images was strong enough – and sufficiently shared by his fellow priests – that it dampened the group’s interest in photography for documentary purposes. O’Gara concluded his criticisms by noting sarcastically that, “I confess to having experienced a distinct cooling of enthusiasm in the matter of Sign photography after this.”²⁹³ But the incident with the wreck photograph was not the only one – nor the least problematic, from the missionaries’ point of view.

Less than a year later, a sharper epistolary exchange took place over an article in *The Sign*. In this case, the Passionist missionaries’ lack of control over visual reproduction and interpretation sparked more heated responses than a mere “cooling of enthusiasm.” The last page of *The Sign*’s January 1926 issue featured a vertically-framed photograph of Raphael Vance standing next to a Chinese man and his son, their threadbare clothing uncovered to expose emaciated ribcages out below sunken, staring faces. The boy, seated on a table to raise him to the adults’ waist-level, held out a bowl at an angle to the camera. It was white, a stark contrast against the figures’ skin-and-bones bodies and the blackness of Vance’s Passionist robes, both darkened further by the halftone reproduction. More importantly, the bowl was empty. Famine, a result of recurring droughts and floods, compounded by regional poverty and lack of

²⁹³ O’Gara personal letter, 28 June 1925, 3. File 505.05_020.002a-002e, PCC.

compensatory infrastructure, had struck West Hunan yet again.²⁹⁴ The article’s title, hovering over their heads, shouted “YIAO FAN[;] A Cry of Distress” (*Images 57 and 58*)²⁹⁵

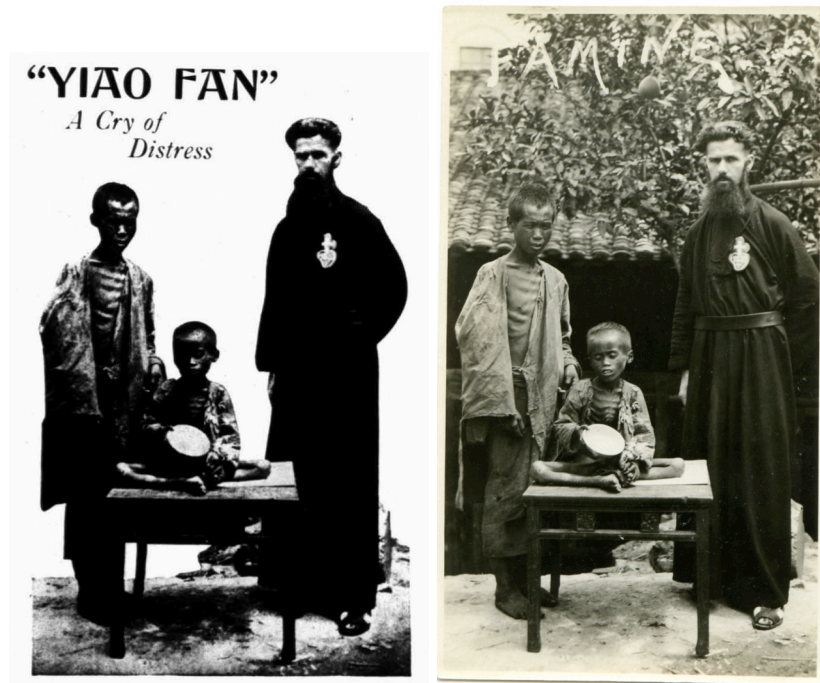


Image 57 (“YAO FAN,” reproduced photograph in *The Sign*, January 1926) and Image 58 (Original photograph by Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., c.1925; both Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)²⁹⁶

One of the first lines of the article declaimed: “Look at the picture! A mere child reduced to a living skeleton; a poor man rapidly wasting away and so poverty-stricken that he has scarcely rags enough to cover his nakedness; a Passionist Missionary, once young and vigorous, now

²⁹⁴ Walter H. Mallory, *China: Land of Famine* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1928), 42-43, 56. This detailed contemporary study, taking into account natural and man-made famine conditions, indicates that Hunan suffered at least 28 major recorded droughts and over 26 floods between the Tang Dynasty and the late Qing – with one of the worst floods occurring in 1924, at the same time the Passionists were there. The study’s conclusions were drawn from data put forth by Chinese, British, and American researchers, including research published by Dr. Co-Ching Chu (竺可楨), a meteorologist at the National Southeastern University (國立東南大學) in Nanjing (later Nanjing University). Chu, a graduate of the University of Illinois and Harvard, served as the director of the Chinese Institute of Meteorology in the interwar Academia Sinica (中央研究院) and was elected to the vice presidency of the PRC’s Chinese Academy of Sciences (中央科學院) in 1949. See Zuoyue Wang, “Zhu Kezhen,” *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 402-405.

²⁹⁵ “YAO FAN; A Cry of Distress,” *The Sign*, Vol. 5, No. 6, January 1926. The phonetically rendered title (要飯) literally means “need rice,” and was used colloquially by beggars seeking alms.

²⁹⁶ Left, print reproduction of photograph from “YAO FAN; A Cry of Distress,” *The Sign*, Vol. 5, No. 6, January 1926; right, original photograph by Fr. Theophane Maguire C.P., Image 800.02_016.021, PCC.

grown old, careworn and famished midst the ravages of absolute want, starvation and wretchedness.”²⁹⁷ The text continued by stating that while “tens of thousands [of Hunanese inhabitants] are dying along the roadsides,” Vance himself “who appears in the picture, has lived for days at a time without food. He has lived or weeks at a time on a daily ration of oats. How can a man who for sheer love of Christ and his fellow man has sacrificed his whole life – how can such a man eat when others are dying of starvation at his very doors!” Whether that statement was meant as praise or an unintended indictment of the missionaries’ advantageous position was not as problematic as *The Sign*’s “creative license” with the image and text. The article claimed that Vance annotated the photograph with:

... a message which we pass on to the reader: “Here is an instance of what famine means to us in China. Here are pictured a father and son, both victims of the famine. Little Ambrose died two days after this picture was taken. This is just a sample of the sad sights and heart-rending scenes confronting us over here. I cannot describe the misery around me. No camera could possibly picture it.”²⁹⁸

Vance’s handwritten caption on the original print, however, reads: “Father & son. Victims of famine. Baptized the boy Ambrose who died two days later. August 30, 1925.”²⁹⁹ By poetically padding the description and referring to indescribable, un-photographable situations that presumably confronted the Passionists, the article fabricated a reality out of proportion to that on the ground, compounded by the photograph’s indexicality and viewers’ imaginations of un-visualized “heart-rending scenes.” This fabrication extended to the reproduced image as well. The original photographic print that Vance sent to the magazine also included parts of the mission compound in the background. The retouching oils not only covered up “distracting” buildings and created free space for the dramatic headline, but also removed a tree with a plump,

²⁹⁷ “YAO FAN; A Cry of Distress,” *The Sign*, Vol. 5, No. 6, January 1926.

²⁹⁸ “YAO FAN; A Cry of Distress,” *The Sign*, Vol. 5, No. 6, January 1926.

²⁹⁹ Image 800.02_016.021, PCC.

persimmon-like fruit dangling incongruously above the subjects' heads – a plainly visible food source that would have lessened the impact of the empty bowl and emaciated figures (*Image 59*). While eliminating these visual elements, the editor also shaved off the right hem of Vance's robe and sharpened the Chinese man's cheeks, making the figures appear slimmer (and more starved) than they were in the original image. *The Sign's* textual and visual manipulations, however, were not lost on the missionaries in Hunan.

Almost as soon as copies of *The Sign* bearing the “YIAO FAN” article arrived in China, Passionists there began sending irate messages to *The Sign's* editorial office and apologetic ones to their religious superiors. Theophane Maguire, who produced the photograph, composed a long letter to the Passionist Provincial, Fr. Stanislaus Grennan, likely hammering away at the same “stiff” typewriter used earlier to narrate the wreck photograph:

First let me say that I was deeply grieved at the publication and preaching of so much propaganda about Father Raphael [Vance] going for days without food and living on oats... This is all ABSOLUTELY FALSE. I have been in this territory, of which Raphael has charge, for nigh to a year and he or I or Anthony [Maloney, C.P.] have never been in this dire want... God has been very good in taking care of us... So when the Sign came out with the picture of the star[v]ing boy (that is true for I brought him in to the Paotzing mission and took the picture) and said that Raphael was in want; and when I heard that your Paternity was preaching this same matter (as at St. John's in Brooklyn), I was simply dumbfounded!³⁰⁰

While confirming the famine's severity – he noted that “daily I have been giving rice to about a thousand at [Baojing]” and that “those [American supporters] would be happy for their sacrifices could they see this crowd of blind, lame, crippled, the aged, children, mothers and their babes really hungry” – Maguire was deeply disturbed that *The Sign* staff was exaggerating images and information from China while reassuring perplexed supporters (in this case, “Father Raphael's people”) that “this was needed for propaganda.” Citing the fact that “much of the description of

³⁰⁰ Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Provincial Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., 19 March 1926, File 505.06_021.007a-007b, PCC.

the famine has been taken from that of several years ago, and... it is not true at present that ‘tens of thousands are dying along the roadsides,’” the priest reminded the Provincial that Passionist supporters regularly received letters from the missionaries alongside copies of *The Sign*. Stark discrepancies between the magazine and the private accounts, Maguire felt, would lead to confusion (“will they believe our letters of assurance when our official publication perseveres in printing these comments?”) unnecessary anxiety (“truly if God sends us sickness or suffering or death our dear ones most bear it...[b]ut there is no need, is there, to torture them without reason?”) and ultimately destructive misgivings among supporters in the United States.³⁰¹ While claiming “a little experience in Sign work and in begging,” Maguire concluded that the magazine’s actions bordered on sinful deceit. “The general opinion,” he wrote, “is that in great measure our support is from those none too well off in this world’s goods. And when I think of the value Our Divine Lord [Christ] set on the widow’s mite, I cannot but feel FEAR lest we be guilty in His sight for receiving it under a false plea.”³⁰²

Other Passionists were concerned not only with spiritual repercussions and problematic reception by American supporters, but also the magazine’s risk of damaging their public image in the eyes of other Catholic missionaries in China – individuals on the ground who were also in a position to accurately judge facts against fabrication. Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., writing separately to Grennan from Yongshunfu (永順府), pointed out that “not one of us have [sic] written the terrible things the Sign is printing about the famine” and warned that

³⁰¹ Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Provincial Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., 19 March 1926, File 505.06_021.007a-007b, PCC.

³⁰² Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Provincial Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., 19 March 1926, File 505.06_021.007a-007b, PCC. The Biblical reference here is to the Lesson of the Widow’s Mite found in the Gospel of Mark (as well as the Gospel of Luke), which reads: “And Jesus sitting over against the treasury, beheld how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And calling his disciples together, he saith to them: Amen I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living.” Mark 12:41-44 (DRA).

The Sign is read by the other missionaries in China and they must think we are gone crazy at what they read. They know conditions and we have to make light of The Sign when our men have to speak about it. I don't think there is any place in China that is as bad off as the Sign pictures. The reason why many of the men are unwilling to write to the Sign is because they disfigure and stick in things that the missionaries are unwilling to put their names to. A little touching up in the English no one condemns, but the adding of new paragraphs and leaving out important things, that is what sours the missionary in his writing.³⁰³

While Bauer did not specify what he meant in regard to no “place in China that is as bad off as the Sign pictures,” his reference to the “disfiguring and stick[ing] in things” and “the adding of new paragraphs and leaving out important things” pointed to the missionaries’ lack of full control over the publication process and also the inherent slipperiness of photographic meaning.³⁰⁴ The Passionist editors embodied the power to reinterpret and reshape visual material sent from China, for better or for worse, in ways that the missionaries could not. Even when acting in what they perceived to be the missionaries’ best interests (e.g. soliciting funds with dramatic but less-than-factual articles), the editorial staff could – and evidently, still did – end up “disfiguring” the missionaries’ experiences, as related through their visual material. The anger and apprehension with which O’Gara, Maguire, and Bauer responded to these episodes was of course undergirded by the distance and time delay between themselves and *The Sign’s* publication source. The magazine reached American audiences long before it did its contributors in China, and the imaginations it aroused – rightly or wrongly – were as impossible for the missionaries to control as the Hunanese climate and the churning rivers through which their

³⁰³ Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Provincial Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., 11 February 1926, File 505.06_005.002b-002c, PCC.

³⁰⁴ See also Neil Harris, “Pictorial Perils: The Rise of American Illustration,” in *Cultural Excursions*, 337-348. The episode here echoes Harris’s broader argument on the rise of pictorial mass culture that “Pictures were subversive, most of all, because they presented a new and apparently uncontrollable set of sources to the larger public...Control of the word remained in the hands of writers, publishers, editors, and teachers who were remarkably effective in demarcating the boundaries separating the acceptable and the unacceptable...[But] painters, photographers, caricaturists, filmmakers, and commercial printers had agendas of their own and pursued dreams different than those of the traditional establishment...[The values of most American illustrators of the 19th century] may well have been as traditional as those of the authors they illustrated, but they were part of a larger movement which assumed a direction they could not control, or always understand.” Harris, 348.

photographic materials passed. The missionaries in Hunan were starkly reminded in these and other similar episodes that the transnational circulation of photographs did not equate to a self-evident transmission of the meanings (“what the picture[s] signified”) that the producers attached to the images. Yet, in spite of these struggles over “what the picture[s] signified,” the poor technical quality of visual reproduction, Passionist missionaries continued to produce photographs across the next two decades – many of which continued to be published in *The Sign*. Many more likely did not appear in the final printed product. One wonders how many more original images did not survive the trans-Pacific journey, were wholly misrepresented in the absence of their makers and subjects’ perspectives, or were quite literally “left on the cutting room floor” – both in improvised Hunan darkrooms or at *The Sign*’s New Jersey offices. When it came to *The Sign*, control over a transnational Passionist media identity on the missionaries’ terms was also largely out of their grasp.

“The Living and the Dead” – Image Afterlives, Passionist Martyrdom, and the Unknown³⁰⁵

The tensions between seeing and knowing (or more specifically, the visualized and the imagined) were constantly present, as much for the Passionist missionaries in Hunan as they were for the editors and readers of *The Sign*. In some cases the photographic image was more a sign of what was unknown to the missionaries than it was a representation of the known. Echoing Ann Stoler’s examination of “epistemic anxieties” among colonial administrators in the Dutch East Indies, the images surrounding the Passionist missionaries’ lives and deaths represented similar kinds of angst, mediated by the limits of photographic vision rather than

³⁰⁵ From the Nicene Creed, “From thence He [Christ] shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end;” “Et iterum venturus est cum glória judicáre vivos et mórtuos: cujus regni non erit finis,” Tridentine Roman Missal 1920, 275.

textual documentation.³⁰⁶ Religious conversion, and specifically continued devotion to the Catholic Church, was far more complicated to frame than the baptism of infants and gathering groups for images. In some ways, it was just as difficult to control as the missionaries' transnational media production. Apart from hands-on attempts to provide religious training for young postulants like Vance's five altar boys, the laity the Passionists ministered to and photographed presumably fell short of desired devotional standards – at least from some missionaries' points of view. One of them, Fr. Arthur Benson, C.P., lamented in 1926 that

From what I have seen of the Christians I would prefer our Holy Founders [sic] advice 'few but good', but it would take a saint to pick the 'few'. I have not met one single Chinese Christian whom I would call 100 percent. I have met some very devout ones but they have been either working for the Mission, or profiting from it in some material way. I never saw it fail that if they are discharged, or fail to gain their own personal advantage, they quit coming to the Church, or at least, they remain away, except on...big feasts: Easter, The Assumption, and Xmas. The greater the number that enter the Church, the greater the Missionarie's [sic] joy and consolation, but if I could only save one soul that I thought was sincere I would glad[l]y [sic] spend my whole life here.³⁰⁷

His statement echoed the Passionists' underlying anxieties, and in broader ways, the whole of the missionary enterprise in China. Religious conversions were not easily categorized in terms of clear-cut "success" or long-term stability. As Benson reported, a "very devout" Catholic could also well be a spiritual or material profiteer, with the implication that not all of the people photographed by the Passionists as those who had "enter[ed] the Church" could be measured as "100 percent" by virtue of their image. The relationship between visible representations of conversion and "true" changes in spiritual identity was never as clear as the missionaries wanted it to be. Photographs, in this light, were permanent representations of momentary missionary perceptions of religious conversion; whether or not these conversions were "sincere" or a lasting

³⁰⁶ Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 1-3.

³⁰⁷ Fr. Arthur Benson, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Provincial Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., 25 August 1927, File 505.06_008.005a, PCC.

“joy and consolation” were beyond the indexicality of the visible image. On the one hand, images could represent success in religious conversion, but on the other, they could just as well represent embody the missionaries’ uncertainty and anxiety. In a way, while the Passionist missionaries possessed the technical ability to produce photographs and leveraged some control over visual presentation of Chinese Catholicism, the converts themselves were the final arbiters of their own religious identity. *The Sign*’s embellishment of Vance’s photographic caption is more applicable here in describing the limits in imaging conversion; when it came to providing visible “proof” of spiritual identities below the surface, “no camera could possibly picture it.”³⁰⁸

In other cases, photographs embodied unseen threats to the Passionist missions and Chinese Catholic communities. Bandits and warlord forces – sometimes one and the same – routinely crossed paths with the Passionists, and their violence, real or perceived, was often referenced in *The Sign* as well as the missionaries’ personal accounts.³⁰⁹ While the specific reasons behind criminal activity were not always known, the effects appeared in the missionaries’ images. On one occasion, a group of bandits who visited the Passionist mission in Luxi (瀘溪) “insisted that [the resident missionary] take their photograph.”³¹⁰ The group lined up in a sunny courtyard and the missionary made the photograph from an oblique angle, perhaps unwilling to stand directly in front of the men, two of whom were brandishing automatic

³⁰⁸ “YAO FAN; A Cry of Distress,” *The Sign*, Vol. 5, No. 6, January 1926.

³⁰⁹ O’Gara, writing in a *Sign* article published in the summer of 1925, reported that “the missionary’s freedom to carry on his apostolic work is habitually hampered by the peregrinations and depredations of rival armies and the ever-present menace of predatory, brutal bandits. The resident missionaries in two central missions have been virtual prisoners for twelve month within the mission compounds; their houses have been attacked; their lives have been sought. Since this article was begun... the City of Kienyang was plundered by an evacuating army and then fired upon with the consequent killing of many civilians; the resident missionary in the latter city while acting in the capacity of peacemaker between the contending parties narrowly escaped with his life; Father Dominic [Langenbacher, C.P.], the Prefect and his companion, while travelling under military guard through the mountains in the north were encountered by bandits; in the subsequent engagement, one soldier was killed and another badly wounded.” Fr. Cuthbert O’Gara, C.P., “Shenchowfu: The Passionist Prefecture in Hunan, China,” *The Sign*, September 1925, 54. For a broader work on this subject, see also Phil Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

³¹⁰ Photograph annotation, verso, File 800.01_039.004, PCC.

pistols.³¹¹ Multiple prints were made, with at least copy marked with a black “X” in ink hovering over the head of one man “recently executed shortly afterwards [sic]” (*Image 59*)³¹²



Image 59 (Bandit group at Luxi mission, West Hunan; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)³¹³

In other cases, violence was more clearly referenced in image captions, as with a group photograph of orphan boys, all wearing Western Scout-styled clothing, holding bugles and flanked by American and Chinese national flags (*Image 60*). The verso was inscribed, “the boy at R[aphael Vance]’s side (holding the flag) is Fu Paulo – one of the postulants. His Father was recently murdered by bandits. A few days’ later one of our boys from Se-wan-chu was cut to pieces by bandits. Can you find Pat and John and Joseph – the other postulants – on the picture?”³¹⁴ The “known” visual group, which included the five altar boys previously photographed by Vance in the mission chapel, takes on another dimension in relation to the regional violence mentioned in the caption. The national flags, the presence of the American priests, and the boys’ clothing represent a kind of symbolic, albeit tenuous protection. The specific reference to “Fu Paulo,” orphaned as a result of bandit activities, represented the perceived need for the Passionists to offer this communal protection in their mission work – and

³¹¹ File 800.01_039.004, PCC.

³¹² Photograph annotation, verso, File 800.01_039.004, PCC

³¹³ File 800.01_039.004, PCC. The white “K”s inked above and on both sides of the group are intended crop marks.

³¹⁴ File 800.02_016.022, PCC.

not merely as a short-term project, or in this case, a recreational activity.³¹⁵ But this visible display of the boys' connection to the Chinese Catholic community (and by extension, foreign and global Catholicism) is shadowed by the invisible violence that was present in their lives and the collective consciousness of the Passionist priests who reported it. The unknown and unseen was far more threatening.



Image 60 (Orphans with flags and instruments, West Hunan; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)³¹⁶

The missionaries' own encounters with death are visualized in another photographic scrapbook assembled sometime after 1929. Composed of photographs made by various Passionists, including all of the individuals mentioned thus far, the scrapbook opens with a seemingly idyllic cross-section of the missionaries' visualized life in Hunan: pages of local landscapes and buildings, group gatherings, Chinese adults and children, "Wangtsun, China. The Feast of the Assumption," "lovely Wuki on a Sunday morning," and so on.³¹⁷ Then, on turning to a page near the middle of the scrapbook, a different photograph appears. Five Chinese soldiers standing together in a slightly slouching line – all with military caps, slacks, and puttees; three with Sam Browne belts; one armed with an ammunition belt and holstered pistol – stare stoically

³¹⁵ It is important to note that this was not the last time Paul Fu ("Fu Paulo") appeared in a Passionist photograph. He apparently maintained a personal connection with the Baojing mission beyond his time as a postulant, and was photographed again over a decade later, on his wedding day in June 1939. See File 800.01_022.014, PCC.

³¹⁶ File 800.02_016.022, PCC.

³¹⁷ Passionist scrapbook, File 800.08_002, PCC.

at the camera and its Passionist photographer. The visible caption, penned in blue ink along the print's lower white border, reads "HUNAN SOLDIERS 1929." Removing and turning over the photograph reveals a different annotation: "Some of our boy friends. The soldiers of China. They may be bandits next time you see them."³¹⁸ While the soldiers' shifting political allegiances were far from uncommon, and certainly not unknown to the missionaries, the difficulty of visually identifying one's ally ("our boy friends...the soldiers of China") or enemy ("bandits next") was strongly salient for the photographs' annotator and viewers, for specific reasons seared in their minds as they looked at the images (*Image 61*).³¹⁹



Image 61 ("Hunan soldiers," West Hunan, c.1929; Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)³²⁰

Immediately following this scrapbook page, the visual narration takes a darker turn. The next image, a photograph taken from across a rice paddy framing village buildings in the background, reads on the verso: "where the murdered Fathers took their last dinner 'on earth' near Hwa Chiao [花橋], Hunan, April 23, 1929."³²¹ This is followed by a group image of 17 Passionist

³¹⁸ Photograph annotation, verso, File 800.08_002.028, PCC.

³¹⁹ Frs. Raphael Vance and Timothy McDermott, C.P., "With the Passionists in China," *The Sign*, October 1922, 44-45. Vance writes, "the whole country is overrun with soldiers who are poorly paid or not at all. The result is that when a soldier wants anything he simply takes it. The ordinary people fear them and make little or no resistance. Thus the terms 'soldier' and 'robber' have become synonymous in China." McDermott continues, "Some of these [bandit] chieftains have thousands of men under command in regular military fashion. Very often when the leaders make peace with the [provincial] government, their men are all made regular soldiers."

³²⁰ Image 800.08_002.028, PCC.

³²¹ Photograph annotation, verso, File 800.08_002.020, PCC.

missionaries sitting together and squinting into the bright sun behind the camera, a moment of rest at a religious retreat in Chenzhou a week prior; above three of the men’s heads, black marks in ink reference their fate. They did not live to see the photograph printed. Then several more images appear: four newly-finished coffins, their black lacquer finish still bright, lying together in front of the Gothic high altar in the same church where the missionaries had recently undertaken their retreat. Three belonged to Passionists who, on the way back from the retreat, spent the night of April 23 in the village of Huaqiao; en route to their individual missions the next day, they were ambushed by bandits, stripped, and shot to death.³²² One of them, whose battered body now lay decaying in a Chinese coffin, photographed by his living colleagues, was Fr. Clement Seybold – ironically the same missionary who reported “his best camera” stolen by other Hunanese bandits a few years before (*Images 62 and 63*).³²³



Image 62 (Fr. Clement Seybold, C.P., with box camera in China) and Image 63 (Four Passionist priests lying in state in Chenzhou, West Hunan, 1929; both Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)³²⁴

³²² Fr. Robert E. Carbonneau, “Life, Death, and Memory: Three Passionists in Hunan, China and the shaping of an American mission perspective in the 1920s” (PhD dissertation, Georgetown University, 1992), 228-233. The three murdered missionaries were Frs. Walter Coveyou, Godfrey Holbein, and Clement Seybold, C.P. The fourth coffin held the body of Fr. Constantine Leech, C.P., who had died of typhoid fever at nearly the same time. His death – attributed not only to the disease but also to overwork – was included with the three others as a sign of martyrdom.

³²³ Seybold personal letter, 13 February 1928, 1.

³²⁴ (Left) Fr. Clement Seybold, C.P. with box camera, Image 800.01_068.017, PCC; (right) Four Passionist priests lying in state in Chenzhou, Image 800.08_002.033, PCC.

While the specific reasons behind the missionaries' murders were highly contested and remain open for further study, this was an experience for the Passionists, the Chinese Catholic community in West Hunan, and their American supporters that brought to a head the real and the imagined, the known and unknown. Photographs surrounding the event contrasted life and death, the visible and the invisible. At the same time, they also symbolized multiple temporalities, distances, and belongings, with the images embedded in Christian approaches to religious community and martyrdom. For the Passionists (and other Catholic and Protestant missionaries in China) photography not only "documented" visible reality, but also leveraged the image to reference alternative, invisible realities. As Roland Barthes expressed it:

In Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: a reality and of the past... What I intentionalize in a photograph... is neither Art nor Communication, it is Reference, which is the founding order of Photography. The name of Photograph's *noeme* will therefore be: 'That-has-been,' or again: the Intractable. In Latin... this would doubtless be said: *interfuit*: what I see has been there, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject... it has been here and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred.³²⁵

Huaqiao village, in actuality a few buildings and a rice paddy framed in the scrapbook photograph, was thus transformed – by indexical image and text – into a spiritual space in which the deceased Passionists "took their last dinner 'on earth.'"³²⁶ Although the village was not where the men died, and their bodies and murder location were not photographed (as far as the archival record shows), the image is colored by the imaginations of the violence that followed; the missionaries' one-time existence in that visualized space echoes Barthes' broader reading of the photograph's subject as "here and yet immediately separated... irrefutably present, and yet already deferred."³²⁷ The reference conflated the missionaries' temporal and physical existence

³²⁵ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 76-77.

³²⁶ Photograph annotation, verso, File 800.08_002.020, PCC.

³²⁷ Barthes, 77.

with their unforeseen deaths and spiritual afterlives, as well as linking their experience to the Last Supper – itself a pivotal (and of course, famously visualized) event preceding Christ’s own death that was imbued with religious meanings not confined to time or space.³²⁸ Similarly, the photograph of the coffins lying in state before the Chenzhou high altar would have been received by Catholic viewers as the four Passionists coming together in death with Christ’s presence in the “sacrifice of the Mass” – reinforced by the sacred space in which their bodies and the Eucharistic elements were displayed.³²⁹ Again, while the image is grounded in a specific time and space, it also references a collective spiritual experience that was altogether invisible and non-temporal – and which presumably included the Passionist photographers and viewers as well as the Chinese Catholic communities in which the photographs were made. Finally, the subsequent scrapbook images (several taken in very rapid sequence, with the photographs almost mirroring still frames from a film) of the funeral procession visually linked the Passionists – both living and dead – to the Hunanese people. In these photographs, the coffins are carried in veiled catafalques resembling those traditionally used for funeral rites of the elite, led by men exploding strings of firecrackers, and accompanied by massed groups of Chinese Catholics and foreign missionaries wearing white mourning robes. This signaled the transformation of the murdered priests, as not only members of the American and global Catholic communities in life, but as imagined elements of the Chinese people and landscape in death (*Images 64, 65, and 66*).

³²⁸ For a Catholic theological-historical study, see Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), specifically “The Eucharistic Kingdom of God,” 444-512.

³²⁹ Herbermann, ed., “Sacrifice of the Mass,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia 1914*, Vol. 10, 6.



Image 64 (“Scrolls leading funeral,” West Hunan, 1929), Image 65 (Funeral procession for Passionist priests, West Hunan, 1929), and Image 66 (“Fr. Clement’s Casket,” West Hunan, 1929; all Passionist China Collection Photo Archive)³³⁰

Across the Pacific, this cultural-spiritual convergence was embodied in eulogical texts subsequently published in *The Sign*. Two months after the three priests were killed, the magazine released an issue largely dedicated to their martyrdom. In an article by Silvan Latour entitled “At the Rainbow’s End,” Coveyou, Holbein, and Seybold’s portrait photographs – taken in a commercial studio before their departure to China and showing them wearing their simple Passionist vestments – were enlarged to such an extent that they took up nearly half of the printed page (*Images 67, 68, and 69*). The typed text reporting their life and death, and extolling their sacrifices as martyrs, wrapped around each image, leading the readers to repeatedly scan across the portraits as they read each page from top to bottom. Phrases emphasized the priests’

³³⁰ (Top to bottom) Images 800.08_002.035, 800.08_002.038, 800.08_002.040, PCC. These images and the ones in-between – not reproduced here, but one per page in the scrapbook – were made in roughly chronological sequence. The photographer likely advanced the film very rapidly between shots (possible only if rollfilm, and not sheet film, was used) and running in front of the procession to be in place when the coffins passed by. The end result is a flipbook-style impression of movement in still images, or a photo-essay beginning with the coffins in the church and ending with their burial in front of a large crowd of Chinese Catholics and foreign missionaries at the cemetery.

purported good spirits immediately prior to the event (“[they] were happy, almost gay,” Latour wrote, “not a care filled their hearts”), the violence of their deaths (“the priests were shamelessly stripped and one by one shot down in cold blood”), and their spiritual re-interpretation as martyrs. One statement, quoted from Fr. James A. Walsh of the Maryknollers – the Passionists’ mission competitors and colleagues – proclaimed “today we witness the blood of Americans flowing into the soil of China, and, recalling that ‘the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians,’ we cannot help feeling that the mission effort of American Catholics will be greatly benefitted by this libation.”³³¹ Of course, none of the American readers were (or could have been) physically present at the funeral rites in West Hunan, but their imaginations and religious beliefs, reinforced by photographs, made them “witnesses” by proxy. These photographs of deceased Passionists confronted readers of *The Sign* as “realistic” images of persons at once living and dead, when viewed through the lens of Catholic martyrdom.



Images 67 (Coveyou portrait, *The Sign*), Image 68 (Holbein portrait, *The Sign*), and Image 69 (Seybold portrait, *The Sign*; all Passionist China Collection)³³²

³³¹ Fr. Silvan Latour, C.P., “At the Rainbow’s End,” *The Sign*, June 1929, 4. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith took a more moderate approach following the murders, with the editor of *Catholic Missions* writing in July 1929 that “details are lacking as to the circumstances of [the three Passionists’] death and it may never be possible to prove them martyrs in the technical sense of the word, as having died for the Faith. Whatever the occasion may have been, we know, however, that these priests had the martyrs’ spirit...” The article appeared under the more dramatic heading, “AMERICAN MISSIONS RECEIVE BAPTISM OF BLOOD.” Rev. H.A. Campo, ed., *Catholic Missions*, Vol. 6, No. 7, July 1929 (New York: Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 1929), 195.

³³² Fr. Silvan Latour, C.P., “At the Rainbow’s End,” *The Sign*, Vol. 8, No. 11, June 1929, 672A, PCC.

Whether the editor intended it or not, this presentation emphasized the photographs as embodiments of the “that-has-been,” an idea theorized by philosopher Roland Barthes in relation to his own meditations on photographic encounters in the context of loss and longing.³³³ The three priests “looked” out of the page at readers who knew that they were physically deceased, but also believed that they had not only died for the Passionist missionary enterprise, but also were spiritually alive as martyrs (and in a uniquely Catholic sense, potential spiritual intercessors for the living) in heaven.³³⁴ It was presumably these same photographic portraits or enlarged copies that were displayed in the Passionist seminary in Chicago for years after Coveyou, Holbein, and Seybold died, reminding viewers of their martyrdom and even disturbing a few with their simultaneous life-likeness and embodiment of the deceased.³³⁵ At least one viewer with a like fate, Fr. Carl Schmitz, C.P., “the first American Catholic priest to die a violent death in the Philippines...interviewed for the Passionist seminary [at age fourteen] in 1931 in the Chicago seminary where the picture of the three priests in China hung on the wall;” the future missionary was noticeably “impressed but frightened by these three black-clothed men wearing the Passionist heart.”³³⁶ Perhaps this fearful awe at encountering the photograph played a role in Schmitz’s motivation to pursue his own spiritual vocation. The connections, if any, between the image and the young seminarian’s perceptions of martyrdom will likely remain unknown; but it appears the images effected some kind of experiential shift – not far from Barthes’ *punctum* – for Schmitz and the Passionist biographers writing about his life after he died.³³⁷

³³³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: MacMillan, 1981), 99-100.

³³⁴ Fr. Francis Flaherty, C.P., “For Christ in China!” in *Eyes East: On Chinese Pathways with the Passionist Missionaries* (Union City: Passionist Fathers, n.d.), 72.

³³⁵ Carbonneau dissertation, 377; see footnote 133.

³³⁶ Carbonneau dissertation, 377; see footnote 133, with the reference to Schmitz’s encounter with the photograph drawn from a biographical account by Roger Mercurio, C.P., and Rian Clancy, C.P., *Fr. Carl – Passionist* (Chicago: Passionist Missions, 1990), 2.

³³⁷ Barthes, 96.

In a way, the Passionists in West Hunan lived in and photographed a world of their own. Their visual, cultural, and spiritual conversions (among themselves as well as the Chinese people) were in many ways shaped by two distinct registers – the local, in the development of Catholic community in West Hunan – and the trans-Pacific or global, in constructing their media identity through image and text. While contending with bandit and warlord activity, famine, disease, and complicated relationships with Chinese Catholics, their experiences and visual practices were not (and perhaps, taking into account hindsight and the limits of individual perspective, could not be) focused on the larger historical changes taking place elsewhere in the province. That is not to say that the group was blind to the repercussions of regional conflicts and political shifts. As warlord and bandit activity gave way to Chinese Civil War of 1927 onward, the Passionists made careful note of growing anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiments among the communities in which they were embedded, changes that they – and their American superiors – routinely ascribed to the lurking presence of “Bolshevism.”³³⁸ More astute members of the order, including Timothy McDermott (who, perhaps not surprisingly, was the best speaker of Hunanese dialect among the Passionists), sympathized with local iterations of Chinese national identity and attempted to distance themselves from a staunchly American identity. While decrying the presence of “Bolshevist Propaganda rampant among the Student Class in the coastal cities,” McDermott insisted during local anti-foreign demonstrations that

The foreigner is not wanted in China – much less so today than he was three years ago – and you can’t blame the Chinese...there is no doubt about it – this Big Brother Talk of the [Western] Powers is not to help China but to further their own commercial interests. The Foreigner is making his future at the expense of the Chinese and doing much by his materialistic [and] even pagan morals to discountenance all foreigners. Thus untold harm is done to the spread of Religion. Some of our own men are quite proud of their nationality – it is America this, America that, we do this in America, we do that in America – and they make sure that “Mei Kwo” [美國] is printed on their name cards as tho[ugh] that were

³³⁸ Rev. H.A. Campo, ed., “The Mission Intention,” *Catholic Missions*, Vol. 6, No. 7, July 1929, 195.

something infinitely better than “Tien Chu T’ang Sen Fu” [天主堂神父] – “Priest of the Catholic Church.” For my part, I banish the words America and American from my vocabulary. I want to be known only as a Priest of Holy Mother Church. My citizenship is no advantage.³³⁹

This is on the one hand, a strong example of the “conversion of missionaries,” an alignment with Chinese nationalism (not least evidenced by linguistic attachment) and liberal ideologies that were not part of McDermott’s worldview when he first arrived in China. At the same time, his sympathy toward anti-foreign grievances and claimed alienation from American nationality was ultimately entrenched, for better or for worse, in his personal identity as a missionary priest. As representatives of the “Holy Mother Church,” McDermott and his fellow Passionists were embedded in the local environment, but simultaneously connected to a religious institution that existed far beyond China, the United States, and even the world as a whole. Their vocational attentions, cultural worldviews, and visual practices were both defined by what they saw immediately around them, while their religious imaginations and approaches to conversion were shaped by their Catholic belonging. They were representatives of Catholicism in a Chinese context and visualized both mission and conversion to American audiences. But they were not representatives of *China*. Others were taking on that role – and not too far away, either. Unbeknownst to the Passionists, shortly before the first 6 missionaries arrived in West Hunan and as subsequent others settled, proselytized, and died in the area, another group of individuals in the same province were thinking about their own communal and national identities along somewhat parallel, albeit secular lines.

As Frs. Vance and Purtill opened the door of the mission to allow George Tootell to climb the church steeple for his photographs of the American Presbyterian mission; as

³³⁹ Fr. Timothy McDermott, C.P., personal letter to Fr. Provincial Stanislaus Grennan, C.P., 19 May 1925, File 505.05_016.005a-005b, PCC.

McDermott fiddled with his temperamental self-timer; and as Maguire mailed his print of the “wreck on the Yuan” to Passionist editorial staff in New Jersey – another group of men in the city of Changsha (長沙), merely 150km southeast of the Passionists’ mission area, were also moving ahead with their own conceptions of communal transformation. They were Hunanese political activists, inheritors of a longer tradition of grassroots reform movements in the “backwater” province (at least from the perspective of the imperial and Republican governments), as well as the proponents of an identity that was linked, like the Passionists and the Chinese Catholics in Hunan, to foreign ideologies.³⁴⁰ The group was defined not by Catholic Christian but by an unlikely convergence of liberal American thought and Russian Marxism – the actual progenitors of the “Bolshevism” that the Passionists encountered.³⁴¹ In the early 1920s, after an extended political clash with Tan Yankai (譚延闓), the presiding governor of Hunan, these men publicly announced their plans for the province take on its own self-governing entity, apart from the greater Republic of China – a constitutional “Republic of Hunan.”³⁴²

The reformers were organized in part by an individual, who, unlike the American missionaries who labored over their religious charges and visual practices, was in the process of forging a historical legacy that would broadly outlast that of the Passionists in China. Also engaged in media dissemination, the former student and then-young principal at the elite First Normal School (湖南省立第一師範學校) published a 1920 essay proclaiming the “Republic of Hunan” in the Changsha newspaper – the *Da Gong Bao* (大公報) – and was heavily at work promoting nascent Chinese Communist principles among Hunanese laborers and peasants while

³⁴⁰ Stephen R. Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 141-142, 194-199.

³⁴¹ Platt, 197-198.

³⁴² Platt, 206-207.

Passionist missionaries baptized infants, celebrated Mass, and produced photographs at their mission outposts.³⁴³ None of them (or the man himself) could foresee that over two tumultuous decades later, he would be proclaiming a different republic – one that extended beyond the rugged Hunan landscape that *The Sign* proclaimed stained with “blood of Americans” – and would ultimately sound the death knell for the foreign missionary enterprise in China.³⁴⁴ His name was Mao Zedong.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ Platt 183-184, 199-200; Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth Century World: A Concise History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 18-31.

³⁴⁴ Daniel Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 149-151; 158-160.

³⁴⁵ Platt, “Mao and the Hunan Self-Government Movement,” 184-215. In yet another strange twist of fate, Mao was later interviewed in person by an American Passionist missionary-reporter, Fr. Cormac Shanahan, C.P., who traveled from Chongqing (重慶) to Yan’an (延安) in May 1944 with a delegation of Chinese and foreign correspondents who wished to cover the Communists’ wartime activities. Shanahan, who also began his missionary tenure in Hunan in the mid-1920s, was of course writing for *The Sign*. This is another story in itself. See also “Father Cormac Shanahan, C.P., St. Paul of the Cross Province (1899-1987),” Passionist Historical Archives, <<http://www.cprovince.org/archives/bios/12/12-21a.php>>, accessed 10 March 2016.

Chapter 3 – The Cine-Kodak at Shunde: Vernacular Missionary Filmmaking in North China, 1931-1936

National Geographic subscribers who perused the commercial sections of their magazines in 1931 would have encountered an advertisement for 16mm Cine-Kodak movie cameras, Kodak's contribution to the field of consumer filmmaking. Touted as "camera[s] that understand amateurs" the Cine-Kodak was aimed at well-heeled potential travelers and their armchair compatriots, urging them to consider the possibilities of "bringing back" "Rome[,] Timbuctoo[, and] Main Street."³⁴⁶ But none of these three locations appeared in the two photographs illustrating the ad. One depicted a stylish Western woman holding a Cine-Kodak Model BB, its lens pointed at the other photograph, a camel train traversing a dusty road in front of the city walls in Beijing, China (*Image 70*).



Image 70 (“Rome, Timbuctoo, Main Street” Cine-Kodak advertisement, 1931; Eastman Kodak Company, author’s collection)

³⁴⁶ “Rome, Timbuctoo, Main Street” Cine-Kodak advertisement (Eastman Kodak Company, 1931).

As the advertisement circulated around the world in *National Geographic* magazines, 27-year-old Jessie Mae Henke, a nurse at the American Presbyterian Mission in the city of Shunde, 250 miles south of Beijing, penned a personal letter to “Dear Folks in Hollywood.”³⁴⁷ The March 15, 1931 letter was written for relatives in California who regularly corresponded with her and her 33-year-old husband, Harold Eugene Henke, and contained an eclectic range of topics.³⁴⁸ These were intended to update the families on the Henkes’ life and ongoing missionary activities in China, as well as to acknowledge the receipt of supporting funds. Jessie Mae opened the letter by thanking the families in the United States for their Christmas gifts. One, sent by Ethel Palmer, was a money order that was exchanged for “\$36 plus” and later used to fund a shopping “spree” during a six-week temporary residence in Beijing.³⁴⁹ While in the city, the couple took part in medical training activities at the Peking Union Medical College, mere blocks from the city walls featured in the Kodak advertisement and within sight of the camel trains that regularly passed along the streets. Harold attended a “special eye course...under an Austria [sic] doctor from one of the famous Vienna Clinics,” and Jessie Mae “did some work in the Bacteriology and Parasitology laboratories...[getting] acquainted with a few cysts and ova that are so common in China and so scarce in the States.”³⁵⁰ Near the end of the letter, Henke referenced the ongoing

³⁴⁷ Jessie Mae Henke, letter to Palmer and White families in California, 15 March 1931, 1; Jessie Mae Henke, film narration.

³⁴⁸ Jessie Mae Henke, film narration.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 1. Ethelyn Palmer was the wife of Harlan G. Palmer, founder and editor of the *Hollywood Citizen News*; the Henkes’ children knew them best as “Uncle Harlan and Aunt Ethel.” Author interview with Richard P. Henke in Rolling Hills, California, 28 July, 2013. The newspaper managed the weather the early Depression years unscathed, even absorbing one struggling competitor, the *Hollywood News*, in 1930; its profits allowed the Palmers to support the Henkes with comparatively generous funds despite the global financial downturn. See also *Walker’s Directory of Northern California Directors and Corporations* (Los Angeles: Walker Manual Incorporated, 1931), 187.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 3. Originally a joint venture between American Presbyterian, Methodist, and London Missionary Society medical branches and later supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, PUMC was the largest, best-funded Western hospital in China. The hospital provided research facilities, advanced medical care to patients ranging from government officials to street laborers, and training courses to both foreign and Chinese medical staff. As historian Mary Brown Bullock described it, “in 1930, [PUMC] contained 346 beds, treated 5,071 in-patients and 134,312 out-patients. Four special clinics were held for out-patients...heart, tuberculosis, kala-azar, and an all-inclusive one for employees. An elaborate system assigned each patient to a resident who filled out a complete medical history and

exchange of photographs that had been sent along with previous letters. “We are anxious for pictures,” she wrote, before acknowledging the arrival of other images from Hollywood: “the pictures of the Palmer family were so good.”³⁵¹ She then subtly broached some exciting news, scribbling it into the middle of the penultimate paragraph.

“We...are getting a movie camera this summer, a gift from the church at Rye, New York,” she wrote, “of course we can hardly wait, both to take pictures and to get them sent home to let our folks know and see what this place we are living in is like.”³⁵² The movie camera was none other than a Cine-Kodak Model B, yet another form of support for missionary activities in China provided by the Rye Presbyterian Church, which since 1928 had contributed financial aid to fund the operation of the Shunde hospital and the education of Chinese medical staff there.³⁵³ While the Henkes were not the wealthy tourists for whom the Kodak advertisement was intended, their supporters at Rye may well have been among the readers who encountered the ad and contributed funds toward purchasing the camera for a religious and humanitarian cause rather than touristic filmmaking. Nonetheless, even before receiving the Cine-Kodak, Jessie Mae was already thinking along the lines of the advertisement’s opening statement: “How wonderful it is – that you can bring home your trip...a day-by-day record of all that you see. Think of having a travel diary made up of living pages to look back on at will!”³⁵⁴ Just as the camera was to be shipped westward across the Pacific, Jessie Mae envisioned the international circulation of finished film through familial and institutional networks, its products being sent eastward to audiences in the United States. “Our folks” included not only the Palmer family, but also a larger

reported the case to the chief resident. Ultimately the visiting staff, consisting of the clinical faculty of the College, toured the wards.” See Mary Brown Bullock, *An American Transplant: The Rockefeller Foundation and Peking Union Medical College* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 81-82.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁵² Jessie Mae Henke, letter to Palmer and White families in California, 15 March 1931, 4.

³⁵³ Jessie Mae Henke, letter to “Dear Friends in the Homeland,” 19 September 1933.

³⁵⁴ Cine-Kodak advertisement, 1931.

religious family – the members of the Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches in the Midwest and East Coast that collectively supported the Henkes’ work in China through financial contributions and prayer.

The multiple filmmaking sites and multiple audiences gestured at Jessie Mae Henke’s letter were central to the Henkes’ experiences during their mission activities in China. The content of their films was a mix of private and public, with sites of production and reception both local and transnational. Moreover, the films produced by the Henkes were not only moving images within the literal physical film frame, but mobile artifacts in visual narration and physical circulation. As film historian Patricia Zimmermann writes:

A historiographic theory of amateur film must map localized microhistories rather than nationalized, phantasmatic representations...national allegories and separations collapse into a range of differences, eruptions, discontinuities. These films suggest that microhistories are pluralized and discordant. Amateur film inscribes family life, minoritized cultural practices, fantasies, the quotidian...[it] insist[s] on the importance of everyday people within different communities and nations. Amateur film represents psychic tracings of diaries and dreams.³⁵⁵

As microhistorical visual artifacts, the Henke films are well situated within the multilayered histories of missionary experience and visual practice in China; they were made in and are representations of the “family life, minoritized cultural practices, fantasies, [and] the quotidian” elements that made up the experiences and perceptions of American Protestant missionaries in the interwar period. Produced in local spaces for public and private audiences located in both the US and China, the Henke films tell multilayered stories within and outside the frame; as Zimmermann notes, “amateur cinema can be redefined as a plurality of practices: home movies, surveillance, narratives, experimental works, travelogues, documentaries...hobbies, sites for

³⁵⁵ Patricia R. Zimmermann, “Morphing History into Histories: From Amateur Film to the Archive of the Future,” in Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann, eds., *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 275-276.

emergent subjectivities.”³⁵⁶ Yet, while the Henke films embody multiple meanings and visual practices, they are also isolated from the broader extant body of missionary filmmaking; at face value, they are visual artifacts produced by one American Protestant missionary family fortunate enough to receive a movie camera from well-funded supporters, at a time when vernacular consumer filmmaking was still in its infancy. Unlike the history of missionary still photography in China, with its extremely long “paper trail” of extant materials, textual references to specific visual practices, and reproduction of still images in various contexts, Protestant missionary filmmaking in China is difficult to examine in its own right as part of a broader visual genre. This is partially due to the technological limitations on filmic visibility in the historical contexts and afterlives. While most still photographs need no additional apparatus for viewing, all films required (and still require) a working projector or editing viewer and an operator with sufficient technical knowledge. In addition to the required screening equipment, film reels’ larger size and bulk compared to most still photographic materials and greater susceptibility of film stock to environmental degradation over time, both leading to storage difficulties, mean that vernacular missionary films are generally “invisible” in the historical record. Many produced in China prior to 1949 may already be lost forever for these very reasons. Moreover, as the Henke films were produced and owned by the family, meant that viewership was restricted primarily to relatives and friends for whom the Henkes could present these films (*Image 71*).³⁵⁷ As such, much more

³⁵⁶ Zimmermann, “Morphing History into Histories,” 275.

³⁵⁷ I count myself very fortunate to be among these viewers. My first encounters with the complete set of original Henke 16mm films (as opposed to a shorter portion that had been transferred to VHS in the 1990s, which I viewed on a previous research visit) took place on July 29, 2013 when Richard Henke, Jesse Mae and Harold Henke’s second son, projected them for me in his dining room in Rolling Hills, California using a postwar Kodascope 16mm projector. In hindsight, this may have caused more physical damage to the films, which had been stored in less-than-ideal environmental conditions and were suffering from vinegar syndrome, but afforded me a rare firsthand opportunity to see the films, complete with the projector’s oil fumes and metallic rattling, as viewers in the 1930s and 1940s would have experienced them.

scholarly work remains to be done on the history of missionary filmmaking in China, so long as materials like those produced by the Henkes and others can be located.³⁵⁸



Image 71 (Richard P. Henke screening 16mm family film from China, July 2013; author's photograph)³⁵⁹

Nonetheless, American Protestant churches of the 1930s were no strangers to film, and certainly not to the use of film alongside other visual materials in missionary presentations.

³⁵⁸ Since writing this section, I have discovered contemporary films produced by two other American families in China – those belonging to a Standard Oil employee, James Monroe Avett, and others produced by Muriel Webb Lockwood, a Methodist missionary in South China. None of these films have been digitized or deposited in archival holdings, although I was able to manually view the Avett films, thanks to the generosity of Avett's daughter, Mayna Avett Nance, and am currently working with film preservationists in San Francisco to digitize them. I am in discussions with the Lockwood family to view their films, but none of us – including Lockwood's daughter, Anne Lockwood Romasco – have any idea yet what is on the reels. I am aware that much more film material exists in archives belonging to universities and church institutions, but have not yet explored them due to the difficulty of locating requisite viewing equipment (even the University of Michigan no longer maintains film projectors or viewers) and archival protocol that often divorces contextual documents from original film materials. The Henke films, with papers, still photographs, and oral histories in close “proximity,” provide an ideal situation for this scholarship. In any case, I am hoping this chapter, which is decidedly not an exhaustive study of the Henke material, will provide a starting point for much future research on the subject.

³⁵⁹ Richard Henke prepares the 16mm film for screening by threading the film leader from the feed spool, through the projector gate and rollers, and onto the take-up spool. The projector's electrical cable was frayed in many places and crudely taped up – at times the projector would abruptly shut off as the power flagged – we did not touch the cable while it was plugged in, lest it give us a shock. Richard had not used the projector in a while, and it was my first time ever encountering a working 16mm film projector, so it took some time to properly screen the films; two single frames of film were unfortunately destroyed when the take-up reel jammed, causing the heat from the projection bulb to melt the film still stuck in the gate. Though alarming both of us, these lost frames were thankfully few, and do not detract from the general viewing experience even when the films were digitized. I later collected the films from Richard and hand-carried them to San Francisco, where Jennifer Miko of Movette Film Transfer hand-cleaned and digitized them in 1080p “archival” resolution (by 2014 standards). I am thankful for extensive technical advice on historical film provided by Jennifer and her husband, Lawrence Bito.

Though the relationship between secular commercial cinema and American Christian culture was marked by long-term struggles over content and control, film's narrative format, its inherent ability to be viewed by a mass audience, and its visual spectacle (part of a longer lineage connected to 19th century lantern slides and earlier "phantasmagoria") all lent itself well to church use and congregational consumption.³⁶⁰ As early as 1909, films were employed in conference events for Protestant mission societies. An article entitled "Missionaries and Moving Pictures" published in the first issue of the film trade magazine, *The Nickelodeon*, in January of that year reported that while "a considerable portion of the opposition to moving picture theaters has come from clergymen and other church people...these same people hold nothing against the moving picture itself, however, and...they fully appreciate its scope and value in all kinds of work[,] shown by the increased use of films for depicting biblical scenes, missionary work, etc."³⁶¹ Giving an example of films presented to support missionary work, the writer noted that

Aided by more than 150 stereopticon slides and half a dozen moving picture films projected on a screen by a large double lantern...President [Archibald] McLean, head of the Foreign Christian Missions Society, closed the annual foreign missionary rally of the Christian [Disciples of Christ] churches of Indianapolis, Indiana...The audience which [sic] listened to the talk was the largest which has ever attended a missions meeting in the church. The subject of [the] talk was the Christian foreign missions, and [McLean] drew from the entire field in his pictures...[After displaying pictures of kindergartens led by American teachers in Japan] he turned from Japan to China, and pictures of the missions [sic] hospitals were thrown upon the screens. In his discussion of these hospitals, which he claimed have done more to aid the missionary cause than any other one thing, the audience was shown some of the maimed patients treated and cured by the missions [sic] physicians. A moving picture film gave the details of an operation which restored the sight for a little blind child.

Though the textual evidence remains to be found, it is possible that Harold and Jessie Mae Henke, who were young children in Indiana and Illinois at this time, may have witnessed lantern

³⁶⁰ Robert Sklar, *A World History of Film* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), 16, 28. See also Terry Lindvall, *The Silents of God: Selected Issues and Documents in Silent American Film and Religion, 1908-1925* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2001), ix-xiii.

³⁶¹ "Missionaries and Moving Pictures," *The Nickelodeon* 1:1 (January 1909), 16. See also Lindvall, 4.

slides and early missionary films projected in church settings – certainly other American missionaries in China were deeply influenced by visual presentations.³⁶² While *The Nickelodeon* did not report the sources of the films and lantern slides at the Disciples of Christ mission conference, the denomination’s missionaries abroad likely contributed their still photographs to the lantern slide presentation, and members of the audience could have identified particular missionaries whom they knew personally or supported as part of an affiliated congregation. For those not already in contact with missionary subjects, such presentations were intended to arouse the interest of conference attendees through visual and technological spectacle, leveraging photographic visibility to highlight domestic relationships to foreign missions (not least the financial support for missionary salaries and costs of medical aid and evangelistic work in indigenous communities), as well as to invite them to consider the personal possibilities of becoming a missionary. The “conversion” in experiencing these dramatic visual presentations in a mass audience environment, charged with religious and emotional fervor, may have mirrored the leading Chinese revolutionary writer Lu Xun’s (魯迅) own “Damascene moment,” who gave up a medical career after attending the screening of a graphic anti-Chinese film or lantern slide

³⁶² Jessie Mae Henke, *Family History*; Rev. Joseph Henkels, SVD, *My China Memoirs, 1928-1951* (Techny: Divine Word College, 1988), 1. The following chapter will discuss Fr. Henkels’ experiences and photography in wartime Henan, but his account supports the existence of other connections between visual presentations and the recruitment of young people from the American Midwest for both Protestant and Catholic missions abroad. Fr. Henkels wrote, “My interest in the foreign missions began when I was in grade school at Holy Trinity Parish, Luxemburg, Iowa. When I was in the fifth or sixth grade a Divine Word Missionary from Shantung (山東)...Fr. Joseph Koesters, gave us a slide lecture on his mission in South Shantung, China. He told us about the martyrdom of two of his confreres, Frs. Francis Nies and Richard Henle, who had been murdered by the Red Spear [sic] bandits some years previously [this event, known as the Juye Incident (巨野教案), took place on November 1, 1897, though Henkels conflated the historical attackers, the Big Sword Society (大刀會) with another self-defense movement, the Red Spears (紅槍會) active during his own time in 1930s China]. One of the slides showed the holes in the garments of the two missionaries made by the spears. These slides made a deep impression on us children and every year we would collect our pennies for the rescue of pagan babies in order to have them baptized. It was there, too, in seventh grade that I realized that I had a vocation to the priesthood.” See also Anthony E. Clark, *China’s Saints: Catholic Martyrdom during the Qing, 1644-1911* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 52.

presentation while a student in Japan during the Russo-Japanese War.³⁶³ While such conversion experiences were motivated by many more factors than the visual encounter itself, and were likely the exception rather than the rule (as with parallel experiences in China, discussed below), the experiential connections between visual presentation, religious spectacle, and church recruitment for missionary callings remain open to further exploration.

Turning from domestic reception of missionary films to films carried by missionaries to places abroad, a little over a decade later, a brief June 1920 article in the *New York Times* noted that eighty-six American Methodist missionaries departed for “their posts in Africa, China, India, and Malaysia...equipped with moving-picture films and have been specially trained for their work.”³⁶⁴ The title of the article, “Taking Films to Heathens,” reflected contemporary secular attitudes that American missionaries and their films, by extension, were spearheading moral uplift among “primitive” indigenous groups; the secular perspective is important to note, as contemporary religious perspectives were already in flux as part of the radical shifts in modern missionary identity, as discussed in the previous chapters. The *New York Times* article and others by film trade writers emphasized the perceived evangelistic power of film presentation in missionary enterprises, at least in a cultural rather than a spiritual sense. One author claimed in

³⁶³ Julia Lovell, “Introduction,” in Lu Xun, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, trans. Julia Lovell (New York: Penguin Classics, 2009), 5. See also Lu Xun, “Preface to the First Collection of Short Stories, ‘Call to Arms,’” in *Selected Stories of Lu Xun*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 2. “If the [biology] lecture ended early,” Lu wrote, “the instructor might show slides...of news to fill up the time. This was during the Russo-Japanese War, so there were many war films, and I had to join in the clapping and cheering in the lecture hall along with the other students. It was a long time since I had seen any of my compatriots, but one day I saw a film showing some Chinese, one of whom was bound, while many others stood around him. They were all strong fellows but appeared completely apathetic. According to the commentary, the one with his hands bound [was a Russian spy]...who was to have his head cut off by the Japanese military as a warning to others, while the Chinese beside him had come to enjoy the spectacle...[A]fter this film I felt that medical science was not so important after all. The people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy...can only serve to be made examples of, or to witness such futile spectacles...The most important thing, therefore, was to change their spirit, and...to this end, I determined to promote a literary movement.”

³⁶⁴ “Taking Films to Heathens: Eighty-six Methodist Missionaries to Sail This Week,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1920, 21.

Motion Picture Education that “[in] the Philippines...the motion picture has succeeded in preaching, among other important things, the gospel of sanitation, [and]...when ‘Quo Vadis?’ was shown in Japan under the auspices of the Protestant Episcopal Board of Missions, it was seen by many distinguished folks, including members of noble families, rich merchants and people of the court who cannot be persuaded to attend church.”³⁶⁵ While the novelty of film presentation undoubtedly attracted local audiences for whom missionaries screened their motion pictures, it is unclear whether the films described in the reports did in fact directly persuade “distinguished folks” – or people of any kind – “to attend church.” Rather, the cause-and-effect in such cases may have been overstated by trade writers conflating presentation efforts with religious results (which were also one-dimensionally conflated with cultural uplift) in their efforts to close the gap between the developing US film industry and American religious institutions, then actively engaged in condemning commercial films on charges of moral corruption.³⁶⁶ Even the article’s author concluded that the Japanese response to such missionary film presentation was a feeling of “indirect influence,” and not-so-subtly suggested that missionaries refrain from screening American commercial films to indigenous groups, lest genres like “slapstick comedies” cause the target audiences to “[become] so unruly that the missionary [will have] great difficulty in continuing the performance.”³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ Ernest A. Dench, “XXXI Missionary Work by Motion Pictures,” in *Motion Picture Education* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1917), 154.

³⁶⁶ Lindvall, 5-7; also William Ernest Hocking, ed. *Re-Thinking Missions: A Layman’s Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932), 190. The Hocking committee, writing about radio and film in missionary activities as a small subsection near the end of a chapter entitled, “Christian Literature,” stated, “It is frequently observed that the radio and moving pictures are almost exclusively used for purposes unrelated to religion and that in some respects their influence is distinctly antagonistic to the ideals for which Christianity and the other great religions stand.”

³⁶⁷ Dench, 154-155. Dench illustrated this point by describing a possibly apocryphal incident of a missionary “in the wilds of Africa” whose purchase of commercial film equipment and reels from a “stranded American” entrepreneur led to “the natives” first “worshipping” the film images, then “literally laughing themselves to death” at commercial comedies, and ultimately turning to anger when they realized “they had been deceived” by the moving images and “attacked the tent when the missionary was absent and completely wrecked everything, including the projection machine. They used the strips of film as articles of jewelry.” This description, written in a comedic style and taking

Moreover, the eighty-six “film-equipped” Methodist missionaries seem to have been the only concerted effort by an American mission organization to systematically use film as an evangelistic tool overseas. For the most part, at least as far as current research has uncovered, most missionaries in the 1920s through the 1940s practiced film presentation on an individual basis. This was heavily dependent on available supplementary funding to purchase films and screening equipment in addition to prioritized goods like medical supplies and educational materials, the crippling lack of electricity to run projectors in rural areas (ironically, the same isolated places where the “heathens” were located, according to the film trade publications), and pressing mission responsibilities that often de-prioritized public film screening.³⁶⁸ Given these circumstances, isolated Protestant missionaries screening films in China often did so more for the crowd-drawing spectacle (湊熱鬧) – which then provided opportunities for American and Chinese evangelists to directly address or build relationships with the gathered audience.³⁶⁹ One representative experience published in *The Chinese Recorder* almost exactly twenty years after the *New York Times* article, gives a more accurate picture of the “on the ground” film spectacle,

up nearly all of the article’s remainder, did not so much promote the efficacy of film presentation in missionary efforts, but rather emphasized the stereotype of primitive non-white audiences and their ignorance of “the civilized world.” That said, it is important to note Dench’s position as a film industry writer and not as a missionary, as well as the differences between this stereotypical view and the contemporary debates in indigenous Christianity taking place in the same decade.

³⁶⁸ *Re-Thinking Missions*, 191. While the Hocking committee concluded that, “we have been able to discover little effective use of either [radio or film] in the interest of religion on the mission field up to this time,” and “it is questionable whether funds should be diverted from the publication of books for this purpose,” it admitted that “experimentation in the use of both the radio and the moving pictures [by missionaries] should be encouraged.”

³⁶⁹ In a way, these film presentations by individual missionaries prefigured the mass rural film screenings enacted by the Chinese Communist government in the 1960s, a nationwide effort by thousands of mobile film projection teams that traveled through rural areas projecting state-selected propaganda films and discussing political ideologies as part of the presentation. According to Alan P.L. Liu, “a mobile film projection team was made up of two or three persons, often young girls. A team was typically equipped with a generator, a 16mm projector, a gramophone, and slide-making facilities...in order to facilitate peasants’ comprehension of films, projection teams were required to use oral explanations, which in some cases had to be in local dialects. A single show involved three steps: pre-show propaganda, impromptu explanation during the show, and after-show collection of opinions;” of course, “when films were shown, attendance was good, and reportedly the local peasants thoroughly enjoyed most of them, viewing them as a major entertainment despite their high political content.” See Alan P. L. Liu, *Communications and National Integration in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 165-166.

along with its use in the service of Christian community building. The account, written by American missionaries in an unnamed “Occupied City” under Japanese military control in 1940 and not without its own idealistic veneer, is worth quoting in its entirety:

One of the [American educational] missionaries has a movie camera. She took pictures of the women and their children. They had never seen a picture nor a camera so they had no idea when their pictures were being taken. Thus, the pictures were most natural. One afternoon they were told to come early. After the baths, they were brought into a room and shown the movie of their children and themselves. They screamed with delight. Then they were given tea and cakes, they played a few games and went home.

The women and children were now our friends. But every woman has a husband, and what about the men? These ricksha pullers, load bearers and carriers work from dawn till dark seven days a week. How can we give them the Gospel message? These missionaries are high-school teachers. Said they, “We stumble along feeling our way...No, God is leading us, all the way. We felt to do something for the men, beginning small, with not too many people.”

So they said, “Let’s show these pictures to the men folk – the men who are too tired for anything except gambling, and too tired for that.” One day they gave tickets to the women who came to give their husbands. The men came – My! How they came! Three times the pictures were shown to three crowds. There was the Monday crowd, the Wednesday crowd and the Friday crowd. The only trouble was that some men sneaked in three times.

And out of that grew the men’s club. ‘We did not know how to handle men, but it was laid on our hearts. We broached the matter to the Chinese Christians and two men came to help us. We had our school buildings and our gym. So we went to one of our seven valley villages. “Here we called from house to house,” said the missionary. “We told the men. Tonight when the bell rings, *you* are invited to come to the school...”

Forty men came. There were 20 minutes of singing; 20 minutes of games; three deep, musical chairs, passing the basketball, running. Then followed 20 minutes of elementary geography and hygiene: “The world we live in.” “The people of the word we live in,” “Our bodies.” ...The story of the Good Samaritan was told and the men dramatized it. A talk was made explaining why the missionaries are here.³⁷⁰

In this case, the camera and film screening – the latter drawing from commercial practices, complete with tickets and controlled screening times – served primarily as an entertaining spectacle that formed the starting point for networked community-building. Actual evangelism was facilitated first by the cooperation of local women who established tentative relationships

³⁷⁰ “Work in an Occupied City (excerpted from *The China Christian Advocate*, November 1940)” *The Chinese Recorder*, January 1941, 72 (1), 50-51.

with the missionaries (“they were told to come early”), followed by their own outreach to male members in their families who then attended the film screenings (again, seemingly more out of a desire for entertainment rather than spiritual uplift), and the partnership between missionaries and Chinese Christians to provide a fellowship for local men mobilized as such by the women. The film itself certainly did not effect spiritual conversation; it appears to have had no religious content and was a vernacular representation of the audience members as filmic subjects. And even the screening’s successes at gathering local men, women, and children for socio-religious outreach did not translate into an audience miraculously receptive to the Christian message. As such, it is no accident that the missionaries and Chinese Christians decided to conclude the men’s outreach event with “the story of the Good Samaritan...[and] a talk explaining why the missionaries are here.” But it is safe to say that film presentation, a smaller-scale “mission field” counterpart to the previously mentioned uses in mission conferences and congregational settings across the Pacific, provided a catalytic experience – or at least a space for such experiences – that could be used for other kinds of missionary activity.

Shifting from film presentation to filmmaking, the 1940 account also gestures at a few tantalizing and previously unexamined assumptions: one of the American missionaries had a portable movie camera, was familiar with its use, and processed the film quickly enough to screen the finished products for the intended local audience. Clearly, the technologies, visual practices, and commercial networks necessary for this vernacular filmmaking to easily take place were well established by the time the educational missionary in the “occupied city” of 1940 made her film of the women and children. This was certainly not the case even for the Methodist missionaries traveling to Asia with their projectors and ready-made film reels in 1920.³⁷¹

³⁷¹ Patricia R. Zimmerman, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 29-31. The Bell & Howell Filmo, the first commercially produced spring-wound, self-contained 16mm

Returning backward in time to the Henkes and summer of 1931, this is an early documented instance of an American church supplying its missionaries to China with the equipment and materials necessary to *produce* film on their own. The remainder of the chapter will discuss both the circumstances of the Henkes' visual production and the contents of their films as shaped by interwar missionary experience – though in many ways this eclectic and experimental filmmaking is coincidentally well characterized by the later missionaries' comment on their own work: “we stumble along, feeling our way...No, God is leading us, all the way.”³⁷²

Harold and Jessie Mae Henke were at the forefront of this kind of vernacular filmmaking, though they may not have realized it themselves. At almost exactly the same time the couple started producing films in Shunde, the International Institute of Educational Cinematography in Rome published an article emphasizing contributions that missionary filmmaking could potentially provide for broader documentary and educational film genres.³⁷³ Entitled “Missionaries and the Cinema,” the July 1932 article stated with an air of triumphalism that

The cinema has not entirely taken the place of the photographic camera as a means of visual documentation for missionaries any more than it has for other people, but...the missionaries have given us numerous films, which are all the more interesting inasmuch as the missionary cinematographer does not go to more or less unexplored countries merely to make films according to his taste and judgment, but as a result of long residence in one country has the time to observe and choose those objects and events which are worthiest of being registered.³⁷⁴

Most notably, the article emphasized missionary proximity to their living environments and local subjects as the primary interest, an intimacy that excluded most professional filmmakers and commercial travelers with movie cameras, who might go abroad to produce films for a limited

movie camera for consumers was not released until 1923, with Kodak following closely behind with its Cine-Kodak 16mm movie camera that same year.

³⁷² “Work in an Occupied City,” 50-51.

³⁷³ “Missionaries and the Cinema,” *The International Review of Educational Cinematography*, July 1932, 557.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 557.

amount of time while lacking any prior relationships to the cultures and peoples in front of their lenses. Providing examples of Catholic missionary filmmakers in North Africa and Alaska who were producing ethnographic and scientific documentaries in places not ordinarily looked at by “other [secular] operators,” the article concluded that “the documentary cinema is already in debt of the missionaries for some notable pictures.”³⁷⁵ Granted, the missionaries referenced in the article were certainly more adventurous than most. An American Jesuit priest to Alaska, Father Bernard R. Hubbard was noted as “cover[ing] over 4000 miles by airplane and over 1500 on sleighs, the greater part of the time alone, in order to visit the Jesuit missions on the banks of the Yukon...also cover[ing] some 300 miles on foot, carrying over 100 pounds of baggage on his back.”³⁷⁶ These dramatic ventures in documentary filmmaking secured Fr. Hubbard’s place as an ethnographic filmmaker bridging both secular and religious institutions in the film industry.³⁷⁷ Clearly, not all American missionaries engaged in such physically demanding filmmaking practices, and neither did most of them possess – nor have the means to acquire – the film industry contacts and professional equipment (by interwar standards) leveraged by these individuals; the article apparently alludes to missionary films that received exposure in public, commercial spheres rather than the private, vernacular filmmaking that is the focus of this chapter. However, alluding to broader possibilities in missionary filmmaking driven by developments in consumer film, the writer noted that “more may be expected of [other missionaries;] the improvements in cinema technique have placed at their disposal a magnificent

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 557.

³⁷⁶ “Missionaries and the Cinema,” *The International Review of Educational Cinematography*, July 1932, 557-558.

³⁷⁷ See also Bernard R. Hubbard, *Alaskan Odyssey* (London: Robert Hale, 1952). This is not the only time Fr. Hubbard will appear in this dissertation. In a following chapter on postwar missionary visual practices, I will discuss at length his production of a feature-length documentary film for California Jesuit priests working in postwar Yangzhou, China, as well as films of Jesuit missions in the cities of Shanghai, Nanjing, and Beijing (Beijing).

instrument, which in some countries can only be used by persons acting under the impulse of a powerful ideal, faith or science or maybe both.”³⁷⁸

In this light, it is important to note that the “magnificent instrument” the Henkes received in 1931, Cine-Kodak Model B movie camera, was a product of cutting-edge consumer technology as well as a luxury commodity by early 1930s American standards. The church’s “gift” was certainly not inexpensive for photographic equipment purchased at the height of the Great Depression; a 1927 Kodak magazine advertisement lists the camera’s pre-crash US price as a hefty \$150, lowered only slightly to \$140 in the *National Geographic* ad four years later.³⁷⁹ The Henkes themselves certainly could not have afforded the camera on their own budget.³⁸⁰ Despite the heavy financial outlay, the members of the Rye church – located in a wealthy New York suburb – made a generous and technologically prudent choice in selecting this particular model to send to the Henkes in China.³⁸¹ The first complete amateur movie camera system marketed by Eastman Kodak, the Cine-Kodak was first introduced in 1923 as a solely hand-cranked model paired with an electrically-driven Kodoscope projector; both used the new 16mm film format as a physically smaller, more economical format compared to the 35mm stock then in widespread use by professional cinematographers (*Images 72 and 73*).³⁸²

³⁷⁸ “Missionaries and the Cinema,” 558.

³⁷⁹ Frank R. Fraprie and E.J. Wall, eds. “The American Annual of Photography 1927,” vol. XLI (American Photographic Publishing Co., 1926), advertisement #63; Cine-Kodak advertisement, 1931. \$150 in 1927 was equivalent to \$2,100.03 in 2017 dollars, and \$140 in 1930 was equivalent to \$2042.18, both figures according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation scale.

³⁸⁰ Harold Eugene Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones at Home,” 15 January 1932. Even a few weeks after New Year’s 1932, Harold wrote that “we here in the Shuntehfu station have voted to take a ten percent cut in our monthly salaries for the next six months because of the very strenuous effort being made by the Board to make ends meet this year[,] in spite of the decreased receipts from the churches at home. Of course this is due to the bad times there...[at the mission], there will undoubtedly be a cut in all the work budgets for next year [and] will mean a very distinct need for cutting down the amount of charity work and saving elsewhere wherever we can.”

³⁸¹ See Ellen Cotton McKay, *A History of the Rye Presbyterian Church* (Rye: Presbyterian Church, 1957).

³⁸² Zimmerman, *Reel Families*, 29-30.



Image 72 (Cine-Kodak Model B 16mm movie camera, front, July 2013) and Image 73 (Cine-Kodak Model B 16mm movie camera, rear, July 2013; both Henke Family Collection, author’s photographs)³⁸³

By the time the Henkes received their Model B in 1931, the basic camera had been upgraded to feature an internal spring-driven motor for ease of use; the user need only wind a small crank – which folded ergonomically back into the camera body after winding – a few times to tension the spring sufficiently to expose 15 to 20 feet of film before rewinding.³⁸⁴ Other elements of the Cine-Kodak were also tailored for non-professional consumers like the Henkes, who were more familiar with the operations of contemporary still cameras; a *Scientific American* review of the Cine-Kodak system described it as “as simple in operation as the usual Kodak,” while the Cine-Kodak’s supplementary manual claimed that users would “find [it] an indispensable traveling companion to supplement their Kodak still pictures.”³⁸⁵ In addition to a glass peep sight viewfinder that could be folded away when not in use, the Cine-Kodak featured a second waist-level “Reflecting Finder” permanently built into the camera body, nearly identical in design to

³⁸³ The original Cine-Kodak Model B used by Harold and Jessie Mae Henke in China, as I photographed it on July 30, 2013 in Richard Henke’s home. In recent years, the Cine-Kodak was displayed on a shelf in Richard’s office. While dusty and well-worn – the leather is cracking in several places, the black paint on some operating surfaces is worn down to the metal, and the lens housing is heavily oxidized with the optics hazed over and sporting traces of fungus – the camera still runs without hesitation when the 84-year-old spring motor is wound up.

³⁸⁴ “Operating,” *Instructions for use of the Cine-Kodak Model B f/1.9 Lens* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Company, 1927), 19-20. When the spring-wound Model B was introduced, the original Cine-Kodak was designated the Model A. The Model B was commercially sold from 1925 until it was discontinued in 1931.

³⁸⁵ “The Latest Motion Picture Outfit for Amateurs,” *Scientific American*, August 1923, 111. *Making the Most of your Cine-Kodak Model B f/1.9* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Company, 1928), 39.

the viewfinders of box and folding cameras produced by Kodak and other manufacturers. This second finder allowed the Cine-Kodak user to hold the camera at waist level while filming, as he or she would a similarly configured still folding camera (*Images 74, 75, and 76*).³⁸⁶

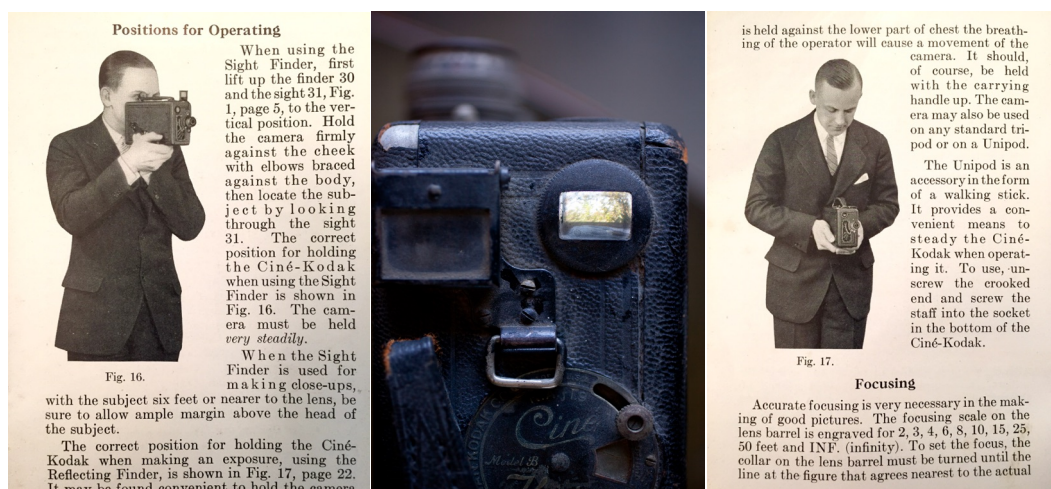


Image 74 (“Positions for Operating,” Cine-Kodak instructions, 1927), Image 75 (Cine-Kodak Model B 16mm movie camera, finder, July 2013), and Image 76 (“Positions for Operating,” Cine-Kodak instructions, 1927; Eastman Kodak Company, author’s collection; center, Henke Family Collection; author’s photograph)³⁸⁷

In order to enhance ease of use and maintain the consumer-corporation continuity that was already a major part of Kodak’s global presence, the company opened “Finishing Stations” across the US and in major cities around the world to process and edit consumer movie film. Cine-Kodak users in China were encouraged to send their film for processing at the company’s office in Shanghai, which opened at 64 Kiangse Road (江西路) in 1927; with Japan a major transit point for trans-Pacific travel in East Asia, another branch specifically named “Cine-Kodak Service Japan, Inc.” was located in Osaka’s commercial district.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ “Positions for Operating,” *Instructions for use of the Cine-Kodak Model B, f/1.9 Lens*, 21-22.

³⁸⁷ The center image is a photograph of the Henkes’ Cine-Kodak’s taken from the waist-level viewing position, with the lens pointing toward the subject to be filmed. Despite several decades of use and several more in an exposed storage environment (note the dust, broken strap, and cracked leather), the viewfinder remains bright and useable.

³⁸⁸ *Making the Most of your Cine-Kodak*, 42. See also Mona Domosh, *American Commodities in an Age of Empire* (Routledge, 2006), 26, 28-30.

Beyond these technical similarities and corporate networks, vernacular filmmaking was radically different compared to vernacular still photography. While the Henkes had undoubtedly been on the “receiving end” as consumers of American cinema prior to coming to China, they had absolutely no experience in filmmaking before they received the Cine-Kodak. After opening the black-and-red packaging box and removing the new camera from its protective cardboard inserts, the Henkes found two pocket-sized manuals supplied by the Eastman Kodak Company.³⁸⁹ This commercial literature was all the textual instruction they had in filmmaking techniques. The first was a technical instruction manual on operating the camera (e.g. loading and unloading film, charging the spring motor, focusing guidelines, basic exposure, etc.) and the second was a supplementary guide entitled *Making the most of your Cine-Kodak Model B f/1.9*. As the Cine-Kodak’s supplementary guide concluded, “you are undoubtedly beginning to appreciate that amateur cinematography is an almost unexplored field – opportunities await you everywhere and the fascination of the hobby becomes more gripping every day.”³⁹⁰ At the most fundamental level, the Henkes had to be aware of subject motion within the frame and the movement of the camera as well as the production of moving images spanning an extended amount of time, rather than a momentary exposure. To this end, the instruction manual advised:

Experience has shown that usually twelve seconds or about five feet of film are sufficient for most scenes in which the action is continuous but not changing in character: For example, a waterfall; a street with the usual traffic; close-ups of people who are not acting, etc. Some beginners make the mistake of using too much film in taking one scene with the result that, when the film is projected, the picture becomes tiresome before the scene changes.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ These materials were inevitably discarded and are no longer present with the original camera, which itself is now displayed on a shelf in Richard Henke’s family home in Rolling Hills, California. I was able to locate a nearly identical working Cine-Kodak B from the same model year that included nearly all of the original shipping material and instruction manuals from the early 1930s, from which I am drawing this and the following analysis.

³⁹⁰ *Making the Most of your Cine-Kodak*, 39.

³⁹¹ *Instructions for use of the Cine-Kodak*, 25.

The first subheading on the first page of the supplementary guide, was titled in bold and larger font, “Hold the Camera Steady,” followed by the stern opening statement, “A fundamental principle of all cinematography is camera *steadiness*. We can not too often repeat or too firmly emphasize the importance of *holding the Cine-Kodak steady* [emphases in the original].”³⁹² And in case the point was lost on the user, the word “steady” was mentioned no less than 10 times in the slim 36-page instruction manual. Even when moving the camera to track a subject, an operation that the guide termed “panoraming,” the user was warned that “if you deliberately swing the camera more or less violently from side to side, spraying it about like a garden hose, your pictures will be absolute failures.”³⁹³

While the Henkes had basic instructions for camera operation, filmmaking was another story. Imaging time and motion combined with the possibilities of narrative filmmaking meant that the Henkes had to think of their vernacular visual practices in radically new, experimental ways. In terms of instructions, the couple had little to go on. While the supplementary guide provided several pages of guidance for “Planning Your Motion Pictures,” including “scenarios for children,” an outline screenplay, and basic directions for acting, none of the information offered much in the way of explicit advice on documentary or street filmmaking – the genres that the Henke films from this period most closely resemble.³⁹⁴ In fact, reading through the supplementary guide in the Shunde mission compound may have been a culturally jarring experience. The suggested filmmaking subjects were written with wealthy domestic American consumers in mind, with elaborate costume dramas, games of golf, “men sit[ting] around on the porch engaged in a keen business argument,” “ladies...examining a rose bush or pansy bed,” and

³⁹² *Making the Most of your Cine-Kodak*, 1.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 5. “Panning” is the now-established technical term for this kind of camera movement, directly derived from the “panoraming” described in the manual.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-38.

“the new coupe to display” all suggesting a culture and economic class far removed from the those of the missionaries in North China (*Image 77*).³⁹⁵



The Garden Tableau for Movies

Image 77 (“The Garden Tableau for Movies,” Cine-Kodak supplement, 1928; Eastman Kodak Company, author’s collection)³⁹⁶

Kodak’s suggestions for visual subjects were couched in a particularly American domestic subjectivity, an approach that was to define amateur filmmaking, at least from a commercial and popular culture perspective, through the postwar years. Patricia Zimmermann, writing about the consumer filmmaking experience between the late 1920s and the 1950s, defined this subjectivity in terms of an “[emphasis on] the beauty and harmony of Hollywood-style pictorial composition as well as control over narrative continuity” in the 1930s that evolved into a “isolation [of amateur film] within the bourgeois nuclear family” in the 1950s, in which “filmmaking became the visual equivalent of gardening: an activity in the family home rather than on the streets.”³⁹⁷

While elements of the Henke films exhibit these visual themes, their filmmaking approaches cannot be described as wholly reflecting either “Hollywood-style” narrative control or insulated

³⁹⁵ *Making the Most of your Cine-Kodak*, 26.

³⁹⁶ “The Garden Tableau for Movies,” *Making the Most of your Cine-Kodak*, 29.

³⁹⁷ Zimmermann, “Morphing History into Histories,” 279-280.

American domesticity. Instead, the Henkes engaged in eclectic and experimental filmmaking practices, shaped in part by the couple's desire to record family life in the mission station, in part by missionary embeddedness in local and global Protestant Christian communities, and technically informed by their previous still photography in China.

Inspiration for the Henkes' filmmaking also came from another somewhat unexpected source. Jessie Mae and Harold visited a commercial movie theater at least once while in Beijing during their six week residence, possibly one of over twenty in the city owned by Luo Mingyou (羅明佑), an entrepreneur who founded the North China Film Company (華北電影公司) in 1927, the same year the Henkes arrived in the country.³⁹⁸ In that theater, the couple watched "our first 'talkie,' [*With*] *Byrd at the South Pole* and thought it very nice. We had seen the pictures in the [National] Geographic but of course, real moving ones were much more thrilling."³⁹⁹ This event was mentioned in the same letter that included the news of the movie camera, and it is possible that the Henkes were revisiting their experience in the theater as they contemplated their own filmmaking possibilities. *With Byrd at the South Pole* was a commercial documentary film released by Paramount Pictures in the summer of 1930; comprised of footage shot by cameramen Willard Van der Veer and Joseph T. Rucker during Byrd's 1928-1930 Antarctic expedition, the film took the prize for Best Cinematography at the 3rd Academy Awards in November 1930.⁴⁰⁰ Almost exactly one month before the award ceremony in Los Angeles, the film's Chinese

³⁹⁸ Tan Ye and Yun Zhu, *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Cinema* (Latham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 108. Luo, incidentally, went on to become the founder of China's first studio system modeled after the Hollywood templates, with the North China Film Company "controlling all aspects of the production, distribution, and exhibition of its films," from studio to theater. See also Laikwan Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema: The Chinese Left-Wing Cinema Movement, 1932-1937* (Latham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 24.

³⁹⁹ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letter to Palmer and White families in California, 15 March 1931, 4.

⁴⁰⁰ Frank Miller, "With Byrd at the South Pole," Turner Classic Movies <<http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/466486%7C465796/With-Byrd-at-the-South-Pole.html>> accessed 14 April 2015. See also Raimund E. Goerler, ed. *To The Pole: the Diary and Notebook of Richard E. Byrd, 1925-1927* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 121-124.

premiere took place at Paramount's luxurious Capitol Theater (光陸大戲院) in Shanghai on Saturday, September 27, 1930; a reviewer for *The China Press* praised it as "A Great Story Beyond Human Imagination."⁴⁰¹ On opening day, the newspaper published another enthusiastic article highlighting the film's dramatic and documentary qualities while somewhat exaggerating the "straightforwardness" of the supposedly "non-fiction" production:

Never before has such a colorful pictorial record been spread on the screen. More than 30 miles of film [captured by the Paramount cameramen] were required to perfect it... 'With Byrd at the South Pole'... is not fiction. It wasn't made in any studio. There are no actors in it. It is the true, blood-and-bone romance of daring courage and high adventure, actually lived by the men you see on the screen.⁴⁰²

By the time the Henkes viewed it in Beijing, *With Byrd at the South Pole* had been in circulation in Chinese theaters for over five months.⁴⁰³ While Jessie Mae described the film as a "talkie," it was in fact a film with no diegetic sound, similar in presentation to silent films, save that the music, sound effects, and narration – in this case, provided by former war correspondent and radio announcer Floyd Gibbons – was pre-recorded and played in synchronization rather than performed live with the screening.⁴⁰⁴ Incidentally, *The China Press* reviewer explained this fact away by gushing about the film's focus on visual drama heightened by the lack of "live" sound:

It is in perfectly artistic accord with all dramatic unities that this record is silent. Any attempt to synchronize speech with the abysmal silences and solitudes of the southern polar regions would savor of profanity. The producers, with the unerring instinct of true artists have presented a sublime and awful record to audiences, so affected by the amazing magnitude of these unique scenes that subconsciously they also support the dramatic action

⁴⁰¹ "Big Film 'With Byrd at the South Pole,' A Great Story Beyond Human Imagination To Be Shown Here Starting On Saturday," *The China Press*, September 25, 1930, 8

⁴⁰² "With Byrd at the South Pole,' Paramount Super Picture Opens Today At The Capitol," *The China Press*, September 27, 1930, 10. For more on the Capitol Theatre building, which still stands in Shanghai today, see Michelle Qiao, "Capitol Theatre an Art Deco treasure," Shanghai Daily.com (上海日报) <<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/Feature/art-and-culture/Capitol-Theatre-an-Art-Deco-treasure/shdaily.shtml>> accessed 14 April 2015.

⁴⁰³ *With Byrd at the South Pole* also played as a second-run feature at the Embassy Theatre in Shanghai on March 1, 1931, with *The China Press* carrying both an advertisement for the theater that headlined the film and a brief synopsis. "Embassy Theatre," *The China Press*, March 1, 1931, 6; and "'With Byrd at the South Pole Tuesday at the Embassy,'" *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁰⁴ Frank Miller, "With Byrd at the South Pole," accessed 14 April 2015.

with a silence in the darkened auditorium that becomes almost tangible...It is very probable that this Paramount release is the most educational and interesting film ever displayed in the Orient.⁴⁰⁵

The presentation format and documentary cinematography featured in *With Byrd at the South Pole* likely played a role in shaping the Henkes' early vernacular filmmaking, or at the very least their filmmaking aspirations. While the couple's daily life and medical missionary work in rural Hebei did not always embody the "daring courage and high adventure" that the Paramount film so dramatically presented, their encounter with documentary film as a reflection or interpretation of experiences "actually lived by the men you see on the screen" influenced the couple in thinking about filmic possibilities for recording in narrative visual motion those parts of their life and work in China they thought most important. They and their missionary colleagues could be the actors, producers, camera operators, and editors of their own films. Moreover, as Jessie Mae mentioned that "seen the [still Antarctic] pictures in the [National] Geographic," prior to witnessing *With Byrd at the South Pole*, she and Harold were likely also considering the relationships between still and moving images, using these comparisons to evaluate how they might translate their experiences producing still photographs into the new film medium. From a technical perspective, since the Henkes lacked the technology to record live sound along with their films, they intended their finished film products as accompanied by non-diegetic narration to be performed while the films were screened for private and congregational audiences, a setup that was validated in a way by the lack of sound in the Paramount documentary. After all, if documentary "realism" could be supported by silence "in perfectly artistic accord" in the Paramount film, surely this could lend itself well to their own vernacular filmmaking. Visually speaking, the Henkes' 16mm films mirrored documentary tropes encountered in the Beijing

⁴⁰⁵ "With Byrd at the South Pole," *The China Press*, September 27, 1930, 14.

theater and prior viewing experiences in American cinema; close-ups, multiple camera angles, and later the inclusion of commercially produced intertitles and local individuals deployed as documentary “guides” are evidence of this visual appropriation. Finally, all of this reflected the Henkes’ awareness of film’s mass reception, in which screening – enlargement by projection paired with personal narration – was intended for group audiences both public and private.

In testing the Cine-Kodak and producing their very first films, the Henkes began with family subjects, shot primarily within the mission compound at Shunde. These lent themselves well to the kind of domestic filmmaking espoused by the Kodak instruction manuals and were relatively convenient to produce, given the controlled physical space and people with whom the Henkes were most familiar. Filmmaking was still a new experience for the couple and they wanted to limit their early experimentation to comfortable, “known” places and people. The first reel of film that passed through the Cine-Kodak was used primarily to image Harold and Jessie Mae’s first son, Robert, who was born in October 1931, very shortly after the camera arrived.⁴⁰⁶ Harold, writing to his father-in-law and brother Sam, noted that “I showed them [an audience of Presbyterian missionaries] all the movies we have from here and they especially enjoyed Bobby and his life. We should get this roll of film off to you sometime this week and hope it gives you some idea of our life that you haven’t had before and that you can see something of us until we are there ourselves.”⁴⁰⁷ The short film depicting “Bobby and his life,” was 100 feet long, exactly the capacity of a single film load in the Cine-Kodak, and spooled neatly onto a metal projection reel about 3.5 inches in diameter. The reel’s compact size and light weight made it convenient for mailing to the United States and circulation among family members there. Jessie Mae referenced this exchange in a letter written when Robert was six months old, following a detailed

⁴⁰⁶ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letter to cousins in Hollywood, 20 March 1932.

⁴⁰⁷ Harold Henke, personal letter to Paddock and Henke families, 20 December 1931, 1.

description confirming her son's physical health, including that his "round face, well shaped head, 'double eyelids,' and ready smile never fail to draw approving comments from the Chinese and of course our prestige (since he is a son) has increased tremendously!"⁴⁰⁸ Figuring that the recipients of the letter would be interested in "seeing" Robert in addition to reading about his latest successes in meeting the ideal Chinese infant body image, she added, "perhaps Father & Mother Henke can send you the 100 foot film we sent them of Bob, our dogs, home etc. They enjoyed it so much."⁴⁰⁹ This particular film, which was later spliced into a longer 400-foot reel depicting Robert as an older infant and family activities during the Henkes 1932 furlough in the United States, opens with a handmade typed subtitle reading "A 'China Doll' goes into action at three weeks of age." Jessie Mae, sitting in a chair on the Henkes' mission house porch, smiles as a Chinese nurse in hospital uniform hands Robert to her; shortly thereafter, Harold leaves the camera running on the tripod to jump into the background for a few seconds before rushing back behind the camera (jostling it slightly), causing both Jessie Mae and the nurse to break into laughter. The same nurse appears several times more in the succeeding scenes, giving an unclothed Robert sunbaths for vitamin D exposure, helping hold him while Jessie Mae ran the camera to include Harold, and playing with one of the family's pet dogs.

All of the scenes take place in front of or in the vicinity of the mission residence, and with the principal actors being the Henkes, the Chinese nurse, and a group of Chinese servants with their children; at one point, one of the single female evangelists at Shunde, Marjorie Judson, appears and speaks to one of the toddlers – the son of the cook – in Chinese, shaking his hand. In the shot made immediately after, the boy sits bemusedly on the front steps of the house while

⁴⁰⁸ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letter to cousins in Hollywood, 20 March 1932, 2.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Harold entertains him by having the dogs perform tricks.⁴¹⁰ Up to this point, it appears that the Henkes' early filmmaking subjects were limited to scenes little different from those produced by hobbyists in the United States, with the exception of the Chinese servants, who had a constant presence in the Henkes' day-to-day lives and likely included in the film due to their personal proximity to the family.⁴¹¹ The comfortable-to-produce domestic tropes – the new baby, the pet dogs, the house – are all described in Jessie Mae's letter and remained visual touchstones for the family even as their filmmaking practices developed (*Image 78*). However, as she continued, this was not the whole picture. After all, the Rye church had not gifted the Cine-Kodak for the Henkes to engage in family filmmaking alone.



Image 78 (Henke family, Cine-Kodak in background and detail, January 1936; Lewis Family Collection)⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ Jessie Mae Henke, film narration. According to Jessie Mae, the dogs also served a more ambassadorial function in addition to keeping the family company. In narrating the film, she mentions that, “the dogs were a big help when we had people come to call on us, that we couldn’t understand, we could always have the dogs perform their tricks and they helped with the entertainment. [Laughter] They could turn over, “gun” (滾), they could stand up, and “bai bai” (拜拜), shake their little paws together.”

⁴¹¹ Jessie Mae Henke, film narration. As with many other Protestant missionary families in China, the Chinese servants provided cooking and childcare assistance for the Henkes; for missionary children like Robert, Richard, and Lois Henke, servants and their own children were among the Chinese individuals with whom they were the most intimate. When the shot of the servants appears on screen, Jessie Mae says, “here are the servants who took care of us at that time, with their wives,” after which Robert asks Jessie Mae, “was she the ‘a ma’ (阿媽)?” To which she replies, “Yes, she was the ‘a ma’ who helped with [unintelligible].”

⁴¹² From left to right, Harold, Robert, Richard (who first showed these films to me), and Jessie Mae Henke outside their mission residence in Shunde, January 1936. Photograph taken by Ralph Lewis with his Rolleiflex and bound in

After mentioning the 100-foot reel of domestic life, Jessie Mae wrote, “we now have about 1300 feet of film of Chinese arts and crafts as well as of our work[,] and we are anticipating showing them to you while we are home. We have had rather good success for amateurs we think and our results are improving as we have more experience and see where our mistakes are.”⁴¹³ It was now almost exactly one year to the date on which she penned the first letter mentioning the Cine-Kodak. It is clear from Jessie Mae’s description that during this time, the Henkes obtained sufficient film stock to load the Cine-Kodak at least thirteen times – 100 feet of film at a time – and sent out the negatives for commercial processing, most likely at Kodak’s Shanghai branch. After receiving the developed raw footage, the Henkes viewed the short reels on their Kodascope projector on evenings when there was sufficient free time, indoor darkness, and electricity in the mission compound to power the equipment.⁴¹⁴ After taking stock of their “improving results” and “mistakes” (which included accidentally setting the lens to the wrong distance, resulting in out-of-focus shots visible in the reel of “Bobby’s life”), Harold and Jessie Mae decided what footage to keep and what to edit as they sat in front of the chattering projector in their living room, with baby Robert sleeping in the upstairs bedroom.

The Henkes also presented the films to other members of their regional missionary community, both for information and entertainment. In fact, one of the first non-family audiences

flipbook album, print numbered 544 on verso and labeled in handwriting, “Gene, Bobby, Ricky, Jessie Mae Henke[,] Jan. 1936”. The Cine-Kodak, with its lens facing away from Lewis’s camera and a vertical slip of paper – possibly a printed or handwritten quick-reference guide to exposure settings – attached to its back, rests on the brick ledge immediately behind the family.

⁴¹³ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letter to cousins in Hollywood, 20 March 1932, 2.

⁴¹⁴ As with many mission compounds in interwar China, electricity needed to power mission hospital equipment and residences was supplied by local city generating plants, which were often under-equipped in developing provinces, supplied inconsistent wattage due to substandard equipment, and usually only ran in the evenings when the city lights were needed. After arriving at Shunde in 1935, Ralph Lewis noted that “the lack of daylight electricity was difficult for me at first, though later I became used to it. When we had to have fluoroscopic exams or X-rays made on patients we would have them wait until just about dark, when the city electricity came on; then we would rush to the X-ray room and do either fluoroscopic examination or take films.” Lewis, 122.

to watch the Henkes' films of their son Robert and domestic scenes was a regional meeting of Presbyterian missionaries at the city of Baoding, some 135 miles north of Shunde; the Sunday before writing the letter, he and John Bickford, the evangelist at Shunde "took the express and got to Paotingfu (保定府) on Monday. Had committee meetings all day and nights too[,] tho[ugh] I showed them all the movies we have from here and they especially enjoyed Bobby and his life."⁴¹⁵ Given that the Kodascope projector's storage box doubled as a transport case, it is not difficult to imagine it accompanying Harold on his trip, bulky though no heavier than a rigid traveling case of that period, or that they borrowed a projector belonging to another missionary at that city (*Image 80*).⁴¹⁶ At these and other mission meetings in North China, Harold and Jessie Mae also employed the Cine-Kodak to transform other missionaries and Chinese Christians who viewed the films into filmic subjects themselves (*Image 79*).



Image 79 (Mission meeting group, Henke and Cine-Kodak detail, c.1932-1934; Henke Family Collection)⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ Harold Henke, personal letter to Paddock and Henke families, December 20, 1931, 1.

⁴¹⁶ C.E. Kenneth Mees, *Photography* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937), 144-145. In regard to projectors, Mees notes, "the instruments used for the projection of small-size pictures [amateur films] are more convenient and, on the whole, more satisfactory than those for theatrical motion pictures. They are invariably motor-driven and are characterized by extreme reliability."

⁴¹⁷ This photograph (digital enlargement of scan at right), a loose print in the Henkes' collection measuring about 3x4 inches, was taken during a mission meeting in Hebei sometime between 1932 and 1934. Harold Henke is carrying the Cine-Kodak by its leather carrying strap in his left hand, at the far right of the photograph; Jessie Mae



Image 80 (Postwar Kodascope carrying case from Kodak manual, c.1952; Eastman Kodak Company, Henke Family Collection)⁴¹⁸

This filmmaking took on a particular format, repeated on multiple occasions and visible in later films. The missionaries and Chinese Christian leaders present at the meetings were asked to file out of a building as Harold or Jessie Mae ran the Cine-Kodak, held stationary by hand or fixed on a tripod. This setup, which involved very minimal camerawork beyond framing the general view and running the Cine-Kodak continuously, echoed early documentary cinematography by the French brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière, in particular the pioneering “actuality” films *La Sortie de l’Usine Lumière à Lyon (Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory)* and *Le Débarquement du Congrès de Photographie à Lyon (Debarcation of Photographic Congress Members at Lyon)*.⁴¹⁹ In these cases, the mass subjects’ movement into the perspective of an immobile

stands to his immediate right. John Bickford sits at Harold’s feet, and Margaret Bickford and her son Thomas stand directly in front of Jessie Mae. The verso annotation, written by Jessie Mae in blue ink after the family returned to the US in the 1950s, reads, “Here’s an old picture I found around the house!” Incidentally, enlargement of the photo reveals a poster taped or pasted to the window of the building, immediately over the left shoulder of Marjorie Judson, who stands at the far left of the group. At least three black-and-white photographic prints are visible on the poster. There is not enough resolution in the already finely-detailed print to tell what the photographs depict, but their presence provides further evidence that missionaries used such meetings to present visual materials from their own work to others in the community.

⁴¹⁸ This image was scanned from the instruction manual of the Kodascope Sixteen-10 projector purchased by the Henkes in the 1950s, after their final return to the United States. This particular projector, which Richard Henke was setting up in the author’s 2013 photograph was a postwar model with a coated lens. The prewar model used by the Henkes in North China was a very similar projector, with a carrying and storage case of roughly comparable size.

⁴¹⁹ Sklar, 26-27, 29. See also Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis, Third Edition* (London: Starword, 2009), 39.

camera displayed both their numbers and their membership in a community (or an industry) beyond the frame. While in the Lumière films, the factory workers and members of the Photographic Congress were unaccustomed to the new filmmaking apparatus, the groups who passed in front of the Cine-Kodak were fully aware that they were to be viewed as filmic subjects by audiences elsewhere. One by one, the people present – some smiling at the camera and waving, others chatting with each other or strolling on their own – appear at the doorway and walk out into an open space, often brightly lit by midday sunlight for easier film exposure and sufficient depth of focus.⁴²⁰ In a few cases, camera-shy individuals attempted to hide in the entrance but were eventually coaxed out by people behind them, visibly amused. Other setups that did not involve the subjects moving took the form of gathering people as if to take a still photograph, and then panning the Cine-Kodak horizontally across the group to image each person individually; this was done presumably if there was not enough time or space to gather everyone in one place and have them walk toward the camera, but also had the effect of creating a moving group panorama, emphasizing both individual expressions and communal collectivity.

Eventually, the Henkes spliced together just over 427 feet of film from the first attempts as a single reel running exactly 11 minutes and 52 seconds, which the couple entitled the “Occupational” film; the total lack of commercially printed subtitles (which appear in some of the films produced later) and somewhat crude splicing indicates that this was done by either Harold or Jessie Mae before they left China for their first furlough in the late summer of 1932.⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ While the Henkes’s Cine-Kodak was equipped with one of the few high-speed cine lenses available at the time – a 25mm f/1.9 Wollensak Anastigmat made in New York, and was certainly capable of producing films in lower light than other still or moving consumer cameras, the Henkes mostly used it in sunlight or bright shade – only sometimes indoors. As filming in dim light required very precise focusing and exposure calculation, and there was a greater chance of wasting film if the prints came back out-of-focus or improperly exposed. As such, the Henkes stuck with lighting conditions that were easier to work with and ensured higher chances of good-quality results.

⁴²¹ Frame-by-frame examination of the archivally digitized “Occupational” film and its duplicate reveal that some of the editing were done “in-camera;” that is, the Henkes filmed part of a scene, switched off the camera, and repositioned it before continuing with a different angle from the first scene (sometimes a close-up) or a different

At least one duplicate reel was made for circulation among family members and supporting congregations, which doubtlessly included the Rye church; the image quality of the duplicate reel was somewhat lower than the original, and mottling from liquid damage and scratches on the duplicate indicate that it was likely passed through multiple projectors, multiple times.⁴²² The audiences who watched the “Occupational” reel in 1932 encountered an eclectic mix of local people and scenes, photographed by the Henkes in and around Shunde. The film’s flâneur-like quality is evident in the scene selection, echoing the Henkes’ earlier attempts at producing still photographs while walking the streets of Beijing.

The film begins abruptly with a bright sunlit shot of laborers attempting to get heavily-laden wheelbarrows going along a sunken road just outside the compound, assisted by donkeys hitched to long ropes and overseen by a Chinese man dressed in Western-style rolled-up slacks, shirt, and cap. A few street vendors immediately behind the wheelbarrows stare curiously at the scene, while a soldier wearing an officer’s cap (possibly a member of the regional warlord or Nationalist forces) walks casually down the road in the background with his coat thrown casually over one shoulder, trying to keep cool in the midday heat. As the soldier turns to look back at the camera, slowing his gait, the camera is awkwardly shifted to the right on the horizontal axis, as if the cameraperson were adjusting his or her grip on the body before stopping the motor. The subsequent scenes begin with various local businesses – street vendors engaging in shoe repair, tailoring, noodle making, and crafting papier-mâché grave goods (紙紮), as well as women

scene entirely. Other splices were performed after the raw footage was processed and returned to the Henkes; in this case, either Harold or Jessie Mae used scissors and paste to produce the splices. These are visible as rough-cut film edges smeared with hand-applied paste.

⁴²² *Instructions*, 36. According to the Cine-Kodak instruction manual, “if you want duplicates of any film which you make, send it to us as promptly as possible, and before the original has had an opportunity to become damaged from any cause. The best way to order duplicates is to send the original film to us together with your order for duplicates immediately after you have projected it the first time.” Duplicates produced by Kodak branches cost “\$5.00 per hundred feet, or \$3.50 for fifty feet,” in terms of prices set in 1927.

manufacturing thread with hand-cranked spindles – and are followed by a one-man acrobatic performance with musical accompaniment, laborers winching water up from a well, students in Western dress threshing wheat at an agricultural school (possibly one established by Y.C. James Yen’s rural reconstruction movement in Hebei), and blacksmiths installing horseshoes on a water buffalo.⁴²³ These scenes culminate in the visual centerpiece of the film, a packed market day in the sunken roads next to the mission station featuring hundreds of men, women, and children engaged in buying and selling local goods alongside public games and food vendors; the film transitions from solely medium angle shots to wide panoramas of the massive crowd as well as close-up shots of individual groups engaging in various market activities. The scenes exhibit various camera movements, as the Henkes practiced filming with the handheld Cine-Kodak on the street. Some of the shots exhibit a jerky back-and-forth movement, as various elements in the changing scene caught the cameraperson’s eye (this movement seems to mirror either Harold or Jessie Mae’s own first-person gaze), while in others, the camera is held relatively still or panned smoothly. The Henkes were clearly trying to follow the manual’s guidelines to “hold the camera steady,” but tracking action in quickly changing environments, attempting not to intrude too much into the subjects’ personal space, and being confronted by curious passerby inevitably led to some “spraying [the camera] about like a garden hose” that the supplementary guide derided.⁴²⁴ At the same time, the shaky, uneven panning lends an unintentional human presence to the frame, reminding audiences of the running Cine-Kodak physically in the hands of either

⁴²³ Y.C. James Yen [晏陽初], *The Ting Hsien Experiment* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press; Chinese National Association of the Mass Education Movement, 1934), 20-21. Yen writes, “Most of our agricultural schools and colleges, especially in North China, emphasize teaching, and little if any attention is given to questions of practical application...owing to a lack of personnel and funds, our researches in agriculture have been confined to two major lines, namely agronomy and animal husbandry[;]...besides research in cotton, we are also conduction regional tests in millet, wheat, kaoliang, and corn. For these studies we are cooperating with Nanking University.”

⁴²⁴ *Making the Most of your Cine-Kodak*, 5.

Jessie Mae or Harold and echoing the difference between still and motion pictures that Roland Barthes described as “the *having-been-there* giv[ing] way before a *being-there* of the thing.”⁴²⁵

The handheld camera movements and proximity to the filmed subjects also indicate that the Henkes were physically moving through the environment around the mission and engaging with the local population as a characteristic part of their filmmaking. When either Jessie Mae or Harold was engrossed in filming a scene, the other stood off to one side, speaking with subjects in the frame and attempting to use his or her non-native Beijing Mandarin to communicate with the local speakers of Hebei dialect (石濟片).⁴²⁶ In a few scenes, a Chinese staff member from the Presbyterian mission appears in the frame, sometimes standing among the groups being filmed and at other times talking casually with individuals, either assisting the Henkes with the regional dialect or engaging in his own discussions. In this way, the Henkes’ filmmaking practices were a source of casual entertainment for local people, and in some cases an avenue for the couple and Chinese Christians at the Shunde mission to make connections (if only tentative) with the filmed subjects, for building relationships and the possibility of evangelistic opportunities. This presence registers in the various reactions of local people who appear in the “Occupational” film. Some of the men and women smile and laugh at the camera while talking amongst themselves; one man, standing in the extreme foreground of a wide shot on the market day pantomimes the posture of aiming the Cine-Kodak at eye level, a gesture possibly unnoticed by the Henkes until the film was processed. Vendors go about displaying their wares and handiwork as they would

⁴²⁵ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (Macmillan, 1978), 45.

⁴²⁶ I encountered a similar situation when visiting the former mission station site in Xingtai (then Shunde). Although my heritage Mandarin was intelligible to the people with whom I conversed, and I could understand them quite clearly when they spoke in the standardized Beijing-derived Mandarin (普通話), it was extremely difficult to understand the local Hebei dialect, especially when spoken quickly. While I was only in the area for a very short time, the experience allowed me to imagine the difficulties the Henkes likely had when transferring from their language school experience in Beijing to Shunde for the first time; I could just as easily imagine that they picked up elements of local vocabulary and pronunciation from coworkers and neighborhood residents after remaining in the area for several years.

have to the general public; the noodle-maker in the first minute of the film, for example, gazes proudly into the lens as he swings and twirls a thick strand of dough – part of the culinary process and as well as a performative attraction for potential customers.⁴²⁷ In other cases, the spectacle generated by the street filmmaking was a source of temporary social disruption. Some of the passersby stare sternly at the camera with bemused, possibly suspicious expressions. One woman, engaged in furious bargaining with a vendor selling metal cooking ware, becomes visibly irritated by a large crowd of jostling children drawn to the camera and its operator, and in a subsequent shot, stands up angrily to wave the group off or to leave the scene. The camera quickly pans to the vendor whose sale was disrupted, who also rises to his feet with a resigned look before the motor is abruptly shut off, an indication that Harold or Jessie Mae became aware of the disruption they had caused.⁴²⁸

For the most part, however, the people visible in the film scenes take ambivalent notice of the Cine-Kodak and the Henkes, and the film serves as a visual indicator that the filmic subjects regarded them as part of the *mélange* of figures, Chinese and non-Chinese, that passed through the environment. This is borne out well by 40 seconds of the same market day footage, in which the Henkes attempted to get a wide shot of the sunken road in which much of the buying and selling is taking place. A large group of bystanders in the background laugh and stare, while a mass of people in the foreground, climbing up a set of steps toward the camera, jostle and shove one another – and the camera operator – as they move in front of the lens. The

⁴²⁷ Eugene N. Anderson, *The Foods of China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 144. Anderson writes, “special noodles are made by holding the dough in both hands and swinging it around so that it stretches in the air.”

⁴²⁸ When viewing the films with me, Richard Henke pointed out this scene with a mix of mild amusement and embarrassment, implying that the social disruption caused by his parents filmmaking in this particular instance remained in the Henkes’ collective memory and was probably revisited with similar feelings when the films were later screened in family settings. Viewing the digitized film frame by frame showed that the abrupt cut was made “in-camera” (that is, the Cine-Kodak was shut off and turned back on later to continue filming) rather than a new film segment physically spliced in.

cameraperson attempts to continue filming over the moving heads of men and women that threaten to block the lens, but the frame is particularly shaky; it is easy to imagine the bodies of people brushing against those of Harold or Jessie Mae as they pass around the running camera, bumping it in the process. The scene cuts and the camera position shifts completely to a more stable location on the opposite side of the street, while still in view of the crowds. It is then that the first vantage point is revealed. The crowd moving around and in front of the Cine-Kodak was in fact composed of church attendees entering the gate leading into the mission compound. A small group gathered on the compound steps look back at the camera as it continues to run. It is a Sunday morning, and the service will start soon.

In the letter describing the first “1300 feet of film,” Jessie Mae reminded readers at home that the family planned to return to the United States in the late summer of 1932, having earlier booked a July 8 passage on the Dollar Lines’ *SS President Wilson* from Shanghai to San Francisco; this followed the couple’s decision to reject a westward European trip via the Trans-Siberian Railway as being too physically strenuous for 10-month-old Robert.⁴²⁹ At the same time, the couple held some uncertainties about the opening portion of the trip. As Jessie Mae penned the letter in mid-March, Chinese and Japanese military forces in Shanghai were still firing at each other in a bloody three-month-long conflict later termed the “Shanghai Incident” or the “January 28 Incident” (一二八事變) in Chinese sources, after the date of the opening battle, while the League of Nations and the Nationalist government scrambled to negotiate a

⁴²⁹ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letter to cousins in Hollywood, 20 March 1932, 2-3; in regard to the cancelled trans-Siberian trip, Henke writes, “As you see, all of our Siberian plans have ‘fallen thru’ principally because of the sudden illness of our traveling companion and guide [undoubtedly George Akchurin (also spelled ‘Acchoorin’), a Russian fur buyer and family friend], which necessitated his immediate return to the States. I think it wise too for Bob’s sake as reports on the trip, while fine for grownups, are not very encouraging for wee babes and I think with a wee wiggle of ten months, boat travel will have trials enough! I am such a rotten sailor, I’m doing my best to get things planned so that Gene [Harold] can do the honors if I’m ‘down.’ I’m pestering mothers for miles around for suggestions so it won’t be too much of a nightmare all around.” For earlier plans to depart through Shanghai – prior to the Shanghai Incident – see Harold Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones at Home,” 15 January 1932.

ceasefire.⁴³⁰ Because of this instability, the Henkes ultimately decided to leave China through Tianjin instead of Shanghai; they took an indirect route through Kobe, Japan on board the Nippon Yusen Kabushiki (NYK) liner, *Yokohama Maru* (横濱丸), and transferred to the Dollar Lines' *S.S. President Coolidge* for the remaining trans-Pacific leg of the voyage to San Francisco.⁴³¹ The Cine-Kodak, loaded with a fresh roll of film, accompanied the Henkes on board the *Yokohama Maru* in Tianjin, but was not switched on until the ship was underway down the Grand Canal toward the open sea, accompanied by a pilot boat flying the Republic of China civil ensign.⁴³² After passing a number of river flatboats and fishing junks, one ferrying partially-uniformed, possibly demobilized Chinese soldiers, the *Yokohama Maru* set a northeasterly course across the sea "smooth as glass" the Henkes had first photographed on their way to China five years earlier, this time visualized in movie film.⁴³³

While filming scenes typical of tourist movies – ship passengers disembarking and embarking, local attractions in Kobe, candid encounters between Robert and Japanese children on the street, and so forth – the Henkes honed their filmmaking techniques shot by shot. People waiting for the arrival of the *President Coolidge* were utilized as foreground silhouettes framing the ship docking in the harbor, gangways and alleyways became compositional leading lines, and shipboard cranes loading cargo as well as smaller watercraft passing the ship while underway provided Harold and Jessie further practice in following moving objects. Steadier close-ups, juxtaposition (as in the case of a long shot of a Japanese sailing vessel passing behind the docking *President Coolidge*, visually contrasting old and new transportation technologies as well

⁴³⁰ See Donald Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire: The Shanghai War of 1932* (University of Michigan Press, 2001).

⁴³¹ "16mm films," typed description found in Brumberger metal film storage box 1, Henke Family Collection, 2. "[Reel] VI. fall 1932

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴³³ Harold E. Henke, personal letter to friends, Ethel and Harlan Palmer, October 27, 1927.

as emblems of East and West), and a temporally linear narrative style all made their way into the single Cine-Kodak reel produced during the eastward voyage. By the time the Henkes arrived in San Francisco – an event visually heralded by an American flag fluttering in the sea breeze while a trans-Bay ferry passes in the background – they had developed set visual practices that would characterize their future filmmaking activities in China.⁴³⁴ It was also at this time that the Henkes began to think about not only what it meant to carry film from China to audiences in the United States, but also the possibilities of doing the reverse for their Chinese colleagues.

The Henkes continued to produce films soon after arriving in the United States, traveling first from San Francisco to Los Angeles, where the family reunited with the Palmers, the senders of the money order and family photographs that Jessie Mae described in her first letter on the movie camera. In the same way that they filmed members of mission meetings who watched the results of their early filmmaking attempts in North China, the Henkes filmed the same families and friends in the United States who had supported them in China, and for whom they screened their eclectic “Occupational Film” of “Chinese arts and crafts...[and] our work.” Even half a year before leaving China, the Henkes had in mind that their plans on arriving in the United States would include screening films; a letter written in February included a note on the back of one of the pages that “we plan now to spend up to a week there [in Los Angeles]. There are

⁴³⁴ *Crowley No. 16*, a steam launch filmed by the Henkes alongside the *President Coolidge* while the ship was taking on a pilot outside San Francisco Bay, had its own moment of commercial film fame just over 20 years earlier. In February 1912, the launch appeared alongside the Hamburg-America liner *SS Cleveland* as an early form of film product placement organized by its owner, “Launch King” Tom Crowley, who “learned that the Hamburg America line...had signed a contract with a moving picture concern whose films...were to be given wide publicity.” Crowley “gave orders that one of his largest launches should run alongside the *Cleveland* when the liner pulled out and should remain between the *Cleveland* and the moving picture machine, which was on the army tug *Slocum*...When the films were placed on exhibition Crowley was in the front row and he is smiling yet at thoughts of the picture showing the *Cleveland*’s departure. For the background, the big liner, the Hamburg-American line paid a handsome figure. The foreground of the picture is a big launch bearing a sign ‘Crowley No. 16’ in letters a foot long, and all it cost him was a little thought and gasoline.” “Crowley Gets in Picture Sans Pay,” *San Francisco Call*, Vol. 111, No. 75, 9 February 1912. Incidentally, the “moving picture concern” that filmed the *Cleveland* was the Miles Brothers Company, better known for their 13-minute-long 1906 film, *A Trip Down Market Street*.

many relatives and friends and all the people here have families or friends there who wish to see the movies.”⁴³⁵ The setup in China with groups exiting a building into the view of the camera was repeated in Los Angeles, with Ethelyn Palmer and several other yet-unidentified men and women walking out of the home of a Dr. Starr into a bright Southern California afternoon, squinting into the strong sunlight directly behind the camera operator.⁴³⁶ Some of these individuals may have been the family members or friends of other missionaries still in China, as referenced in the aforementioned letter. They were undoubtedly filmed so that the Henkes could screen their images after returning to China post-furlough, a two-way visual bridge between missionaries the Henkes previously filmed and their relations in the United States. This kind of group filmmaking also took place when the Henkes arrived in the Midwest, where their extended family members were filmed chatting and gesturing while getting into position for still photographs.⁴³⁷ While much of the filmmaking there was devoted to recording leisure activities

⁴³⁵ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letter to family, February 1932. This quotation is from a longer handwritten outline of the Henkes’ travel plans. The complete excerpt reads, “We arrive in Los Angeles 2 P.M. July 29th. We plan now to spend up to a week there. There are many relatives and friends and all the people here have families or friends there who wish to see the movies. BESIDES the finals of the Olympics are on just at that time and we would like very much to see a bit of them. Address us 926 Orlando Ave. Hollywood, Calif. Care of Mr. H.G. Palmer[.]”

⁴³⁶ James R. Oswald, “Proper Movie Lighting,” *Popular Photography*, Vol. 14, No. 6, June 1944, 64-65. While published over a decade later, this article explains common vernacular filmmaking practices, one of which was to keep bright sunlight “over the left shoulder” of the camera operator – a practice that originated in instructions for amateur still photographic practices several decades earlier, when insensitive film required the maximum amount of sunlight for proper exposure – but which no doubt resulted in many of the squinting expressions seen in the Henke films. Oswald writes, “Shadows...should be controlled as much as possible when apt to be distracting to the composition of the picture...In distant views, it is necessary to move the camera so that shadows fall unnoticed behind the subject matter of the picture. This means that the sun is behind the camera. Now we see why the golden rule advises beginners to keep the sun over their left shoulder!”

⁴³⁷ Starr, whose first name has not yet been determined but appears on a small wooden sign near the doorway in the film clip, is mentioned in the typed box 1 description as follows: “Hollywood, Anne Crane, Ethelyn [Palmer], Dr. Starr from Wywega”. “Wywega” may be an abbreviation of Weyauwega, Wisconsin, about 71 miles northeast of Baraboo, where Harold Henke grew up. It is possible that this connection persisted after Starr moved to California, and thus provided a place for the Henkes to meet during their Southern California detour en route to the Midwest. As for the filmmaking during communal “photo ops” in the Midwest, a few individuals are seen carrying folding cameras, with at least one man in the foreground of one shot adjusting the exposure and focus controls on a Vest Pocket Kodak strut folding camera.

such as swimming and hiking in the mountains around Baraboo, Wisconsin, a single reel filmed sometime in 1932 features a strange set of subjects with an unlikely connection to China.⁴³⁸

Opening with a shot of two workmen driving a McCormick-Deering combine and continuing abruptly on to wide shots of a massive “Marion Type 5600” power shovel digging a mine trench for the “United Electric Coal Company” (words emblazoned on its body), the specific meaning of this eight-minute-long film would have been a complete mystery had Jessie Mae and her son Robert not sat down in front of a tape recorder some 60 years later.⁴³⁹ As the film played and the tape recorder rolled, Jessie Mae said:

Now, these pictures were back in Illinois. They are some pictures we took to take back to China[,] to show them some of the huge machinery that was used in our farming here in the States. They were absolutely amazed; they couldn't believe that such equipment was necessary[,] because their farms averaged about five acres apiece and ours of course averaged about a hundred-and-sixty acres... And this is a strip mining operation in Southern Illinois, we also wanted them to see this huge crane that pulled up the dirt and stripped the whole top off of the... field so it got down to the coal there. It was such a big operation we wanted the Chinese to see it too... [The] Chinese looked on these films with absolute amazement; they couldn't believe it. Nor had they ever seen four horses pulling a plow – that was an amazement to them too – they did it, all of their farming, by hand, sometimes an animal helped them pull, or maybe their wife helping them pull, but never any horses like this. It would be a little donkey or a cow.

On the one hand, it is apparent that the Henkes produced this film with an eye to present scenes that emphasized the differences between the two countries, visible in the emblems of modernity: mechanized farming techniques and large-scale mining machinery that were literally reshaping the American Midwest, and had done so for nearly one hundred years – encompassing the

⁴³⁸ One of the geological features used to identify the location of the swimming and hiking portions of the film was a 1 minute, 16 second long series of shots with the Henkes and a few friends ascending Devil's Doorway, a rock formation near the shore of Devil's Lake (visible in the distant background). See D.R. Lacey, “Dalles of the Wisconsin,” *The Wisconsin County Magazine*, Vol. 13, No. 8, May 1920, 337.

⁴³⁹ See R. Dawson Hall, “America's Largest Shovel and Biggest Strip Mine,” *Coal Age*, Vol. 34, No. 12, December 1929, 729-730. According to the article and Jessie Mae's narration, this particular mine was located in “Duquoin, Ill.,...the largest coal stripping mine in the United States and the most powerful and largest of all stripping shovels...the 15-yrd. shovel, a Marion 5600.”

lifetimes of both Harold and Jessie Mae.⁴⁴⁰ This technological embeddedness in the landscape would have been unfamiliar to the rural Chinese audiences for which this film was screened; the “absolutely amazed” reactions recalled by Jessie Mae were perhaps those of local viewers who had spent most of their lifetimes up to that point in the countryside surrounding Shunde, where farming techniques were informed most strongly by traditional practices and primary encounters with modern mechanization would have been with the Pinghan railway that passed through the town (*Image 81*).⁴⁴¹ At the same time, the film attempts to draw parallels between the North China landscape with which the Chinese audience was intimately familiar and recognizable visual analogues in the United States. Viewing the Henkes’ first films shot in Shunde alongside the reel shot in the Illinois and Wisconsin reveals several key similarities in content and framing. The Henkes explicitly avoided including long shots of urban landscapes in the furlough film, although they had plenty of opportunities to include footage shot during their travel back to the Midwest via San Francisco and Los Angeles. The panning footage of workmen running the combine and the four-horse-plow directly mirror, in composition and distance to subjects, shots

⁴⁴⁰ Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: a Contribution to Anonymous History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 141-142, 162-168. Relevant excerpts from Giedion’s study of Western mechanization, echoed in Jessie Mae’s recollections, include, “Other great plains had been brought under the plow. But the opening of the Russian plains and of the vast tracts of China extended over centuries. Compared to these the development of the Middle West took place within a few decades, almost by elimination of the time factor[;]” and, “One-hundred-sixty acres was the area of the farm with which we became acquainted. This is no accidental number. One-hundred-sixty acres, according to the provisions of the Homestead Act, signed by Abraham Lincoln, were to be made over on request to any citizen of the United States or any person who had applied for citizenship.”

⁴⁴¹ Lewis, 110. Writing about his experiences in rural Hunan, Ralph Lewis recorded in his memoirs that he saw many injuries related to the railway, arising from farmers and laborers being struck by oncoming trains. As he noted, “Automobiles came to Hunan just a few years before we arrived [in 1933] and they only traveled on very few open roadways; but they were more easily controlled and could be stopped in a shorter distance than the heavy locomotive. Still there were numerous casualties as farmers didn’t realize their speed and were run over...[moreover,] the men who were carrying rock and soil from the diggings (to make the rails level and smooth) were not able to judge distance and speed of the locomotives, and within a short time casualties were coming to the hospital. The engineers running the locomotive would see someone walking toward the rails ahead, and would let out several loud whistles, but the coolies, not wanting to slow down their pace...as they were paid by the number of loads made in a day, they walked on at the same speed. Then the locomotive engineer would brake as soon as possible...[The medical staff] had to complete many amputations of legs and arms at that time. In spite of word being spread around that anyone approaching the railroad tracks must stop and wait for the approaching locomotive to pass, there continued to be many such accidents.”

taken in the Shunde countryside of laborers pumping water for irrigation and farmers threshing grain aided by horse-drawn machines. The parallels between the two rural areas serving as the backdrop for these films – though marked by differences in mechanization – would have provided an immediate visual touchstone for Chinese audiences.

While it is not clear that the Henkes were thinking in terms of cinematic tropes, Chinese melodramatic films of the time also represented the countryside as “the essence of China...[with] life in the unspoiled rural area [as] simple and pure.”⁴⁴² One popular contemporary film, *Peach Blossom Weeps Tears of Blood* (桃花泣血記), produced by the Lianhua Film Company in 1931, explicitly pitted rural purity against the “spiritual pollution” of the urban areas, which historian Paul Pickowicz defines as “corrupt, evil, and un-Chinese...the symbol[s] of an aggressive Western presence in China[;] the village embodies the sacred past, [but] the city exemplifies an uncertain and immoral present.”⁴⁴³ At the same time, *Peach Blossom Weeps Tears of Blood* and other films that followed it in the same mold, according to Pickowicz, “badly distorts the nature of China’s encounter with the West and misrepresents the condition of China’s rural sector in the early Republican period[;] director Bu Wancang offers no fresh vision of the future. Instead [the film] makes a superficial and sentimental appeal for the restoration of a vaguely defined traditional morality.”⁴⁴⁴ While the Henke film clearly lacks the defined cinematic genre, production scale, and wide intended viewership of Chinese commercial films, it provides some of this “fresh vision for the future” in the shots of the modern American countryside – a landscape in which both modern machinery and rural labor existed simultaneously, but without

⁴⁴² Paul G. Pickowicz, *China on Film: A Century of Exploration, Confrontation, and Controversy* (Latham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 46.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

the explicit urban cultural influences that may have antagonized local audiences (at least in regard to the tropes of Western “spiritual pollution”).⁴⁴⁵

This may have appealed to some of the audience members who watched the furlough film at Shunde, which included medical staff and Christian leaders whose work and educational backgrounds enabled them to visit urban centers where commercial melodramas were screened, and were familiar with prevailing popular culture tropes. Moreover, as individuals moving between urban and rural communities and embodying both Chinese and Western modernities, these viewers may well have recognized the possibilities (as well as disruptions of traditional order) represented by the furlough film. Nurse Liu Ju, who began her medical training at Shunde shortly after the Japanese invasion of North China in 1937 and whose friendship with the Henke family extended into the 21st century, remembered the experience of watching these films as “eye-opening.”⁴⁴⁶ Her contemporaries were also aware of widely publicized rural reconstruction projects headed by James Y. C. Yen in Hebei province’s Ding County (定縣), who advocated “practical training for farmers in scientific agriculture and in rural economics,” alongside an comprehensive social welfare program modeled on Western institutions, which included

⁴⁴⁵ Giedion, 165-166. While critical of the agricultural commercialization (“It was no longer a matter of disenfranchised peasant masses, as in the time of the Reformation, but of free farmers, gathered in various political and organization struggles against the dictatorship of the great corporations and the middle-men”), Giedion subscribes to a middle ground, albeit couched in deterministic language, between the “relief” provided by mechanization and an established “purity” of agrarian culture. “For the first time since it has been tilled by man, the soil no longer exacts sweat and unceasing tenacity. Mechanisms perform the work...if mechanization has ever worked to relieve man of drudgery, it has here...[But] the wonderful multiplicity of labors remains as always: contact with the great natural forces, with the changing seasons, with wind and sun, with the animal and the soil.”

⁴⁴⁶ Liu Ju (劉與), interview with the author in Wuchang, China, 22 May 2011. Liu enrolled in the nurses training school at Shunde in the fall of 1937, after fleeing the Japanese military invasion of North China and her hometown of Shijiazhuang earlier that summer. Unfortunately, Liu was suffering from dementia when I interviewed her, and was unable to recall the specific contents of the films that she saw while at Shunde, though she clearly recalled viewing films that the Henkes had made. However, given that Jessie Mae Henke specifically indicates that this was a film produced for Chinese audiences, and that the Henkes did not produce any new films of American scenes until their next furlough in July 1940, this reel was among likely those that Liu watched while at the mission.

experimental public health and medical divisions.⁴⁴⁷ On a national scale, even at the same moment the Henkes were on their US furlough, Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Soong Mei-ling) was organizing tentative efforts between the Nationalist government and missionary representatives from the Methodist and Episcopal churches for Christian-led rural reconstruction in the provinces of Jiangxi (江西) and Fujian (福建); the movement targeted areas recaptured from Communist forces after a concerted Nationalist military campaign, partially using Yen's work in North China as a model.⁴⁴⁸ As such, the furlough film represents a hybrid space that would have resonated in part with Chinese Protestant reform sentiments, with the American countryside presented as a place of both modern technologies and rural simplicity. The film thus embodies the Henkes' attempts to show Chinese audiences a kind of landscape to which they could relate, as well as ways that modernity was reshaping the American landscape and the potential that it could also reshape the Chinese one.

While skirting the cultural complexities of urban space, national symbols also featured prominently in the furlough film. These were featured in almost exactly four and a half minutes of film, produced in the early spring of 1933 and included immediately after the rural scenes, that the Henkes produced while visiting Jessie Mae's sister Lois and brother-in-law in the Washington, D.C. area, part of a trip that included visits to supporting congregations on the East Coast, during which the "Occupational Film" was screened for the Rye church and others.⁴⁴⁹ It is clear that the Henkes wanted to give a sense of US culture in terms of both scale and spectacle,

⁴⁴⁷ Liu interview, 22 May 2011. See also Yen, 5-7, 20-22, 27-32. Dingxian, where Yen's experimental community was located, is less than 200 kilometers north of Shunde. The Henkes and many of their Chinese colleagues would likely have passed by it on their way to and from the city of Baoding, where there was another major Presbyterian mission station and hospital, and where regional mission meetings were sometimes held.

⁴⁴⁸ James C. Thomson Jr., *While China Faced West: American Reformers in Nationalist China, 1928-1937* (Harvard University Press, 1969), 61-63. For a contemporary account of the movement's later results, see Han-ming Chen (pseudonym "C.W.H. Young"), *New Life for Kiangsi* (Shanghai: China Publishing Company, 1935).

⁴⁴⁹ Jessie Mae Henke film narration. Jessie Mae mentions that her sister, Lois, and brother-in-law, Dick, lived in Takoma Park, Washington D.C.

drawing from visual tropes that they felt would best represent “American-ness,” but that were also within the limits of the couple’s filmmaking capabilities and travel. These included a brief wide shot of the Washington Monument, followed by a view of the same monument in the distance framed by the pillars of the Lincoln Memorial (as well as Jessie Mae and a friend dressed in warm coats and gloves in the close foreground), and concluding with a panning shot of Mt. Vernon on a sunny day, complete with tourists strolling along the grassy lawn facing the Potomac River. After this sequence, several wide shots of Niagara Falls appear – the rushing water dramatically filling the frame – before the film concludes with an extended sequence of a Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Were it not for the intended Chinese audience, these were for the most part scenes common to 20th century American touristic films and could well have been part of countless other generic family travelogues. But as with the opening rural scenes, the Henkes likely took into account visual tropes that would theoretically interest local audiences. Perhaps influenced by their early personal encounters with and still photography of monuments in Beijing that stood in for China’s traditional cultural essence, the Henkes sought out the closest available American equivalents: the Washington Monument and Mt. Vernon. Chinese viewers mindful of contemporary national identity-making spearheaded by the Nationalist government would have drawn parallels between these American monuments to George Washington with the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum (中山陵) near the then-capital Nanjing, completed a mere four years prior to the film as a grand memorial to China’s “father of the nation” (國父).⁴⁵⁰ Sun, a devout Protestant, was strongly involved in

⁴⁵⁰ Frederic Wakeman, Jr., “Mao’s Remains,” in Evelyn S. Rawski and James L. Watson, eds. *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 257-258.

American missionary and Chinese Christian networks during his politically formative years and claimed inspiration from Abraham Lincoln for key parts of his nationalist ideologies.⁴⁵¹

Moreover, the inclusion of Niagara Falls and the Barnum and Bailey Circus provided Chinese audiences a visual taste of American natural and cultural spectacle that the Henkes considered representative, and which they were most familiar with from their youth.⁴⁵² This is particularly evident in the circus footage, which runs several minutes, beginning with roustabouts guiding animals off rail cars and ending with an unfortunately underexposed but still recognizable long shot of the opening parade taking place under the big top. The spectacle presented by the circus visually mirrors that of the market day footage shot in Shunde, both representative of communal activities and local iterations of mass culture. The circus sequence in Baraboo is comprised of spectacular shots of animals (an elephant close to the camera looms large enough for its head to fill the frame, for example) mixed with the crowds of spectators milling and jostling, actions that parallel those of the Chinese crowds that passed in front of the Cine-Kodak lens outside the mission compound. As with Niagara Falls, the long shots of circus animals passing through the crowd represents a large scale spectacle (in this case, a commercial as opposed to a natural one) that was somewhat familiar to North China audiences accustomed to annual festival gatherings, but also simultaneously foreign, with the presence of “exotic” animals and mechanized circus equipment (the long string of circus railroad cars idles in the background, and a motorized circus cannon resembling an armored car lumbers by in one shot). Ironically, as the Henkes filmed the parade inside the Barnum and Bailey big top, for a fleeting six seconds, a

⁴⁵¹ Marie Claire-Bergère, trans. by Janet Lloyd, *Sun Yat-sen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 26-27, 31-32; Lyon Sharman, *Sun Yat-sen: His Life and its Meaning* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 271.

⁴⁵² Jessie Mae Henke, film narration. “Now this is watching the circus unload. Gene [Harold Henke] had been brought up in Baraboo when Ringling Bros was still housed in Baraboo, that was their base of operations, and every time he that heard the circus was going on anywhere nearby, he wanted to go and watch them. So this is one morning we got up very early and took Bobby [Robert Henke] down to see the circus unload [Robert laughs]...He [Harold] lived right in the same block with [the Ringling family], he went to school with all the Ringling boys.”

barely-recognizable procession of clowns dressed in “oriental” costume with exaggerated pigtailed, silken banners, and an oversized ricksha march across the darkly underexposed foreground, performing American stereotypes of East Asian culture for both the present audience and a belated one in front of a projection screen thousands of miles away. One wonders what the Chinese audience thought of this, if they caught this scene at all in the longer sequence. It is unclear whether or not the Henkes mentioned it in their film narration when back in China, and Jessie Mae in her later narration did not point out any details in the scene other than to briefly state that “these pictures are taken under...the big top;” reactions to the brief stereotypical performance from either the Henkes or the Chinese audience remain a mystery.⁴⁵³

Spectacular settings aside, both the American circus and the North China market sequences share similar subject responses to the filmmaker; in each, there are parallel instances of guarded gazes, bemused reactions, and jocular or familiar responses – all visualized with the same camera and taking place in local, communal settings. The furlough film thus serves as a visual bridge for Chinese viewers to “look into” American culture, and to draw parallels and differences between their communities and the Western “others” who gazed back at them through the Cine-Kodak’s film. Perhaps the “absolute amazement” that Jessie Mae Henke vividly remembered so many years later, and registered in Liu Ju’s “eye-opening” comment, was not only with the visible machines – both the imaging apparatus and its mechanized subjects in the United States – but also at the parallel ways in which American communities appeared on screen, in their gazes, actions, and ways of engaging with the camera. “Amazement” and “eye-opening” are of course ambiguous terms. It is impossible to know if the audiences at Shunde encountered the film with feelings of surprise, awe, anxiety, or even horror – or perhaps several

⁴⁵³ Jessie Mae Henke, film narration. Referencing the film’s underexposure in the dim light, she notes, “these pictures are taken under...the big top. They don’t show up very well, but this is the way the circus used to be.”

such reactions at once. Though these firsthand responses are no longer recoverable, as is sadly the case with so many other vernacular films, the Henkes' furlough film as a "window" onto contemporary American life, its specifically intended audience in China, and the film's transnational contexts of production and reception all embody the cross-cultural imaginations behind vernacular filmmaking in missionary experience. The furlough film is itself a visualized, materialized form of cross-cultural perception on a vernacular level, with the makers and audiences each bringing to the film their own ways of seeing and interpreting.

After their yearlong furlough, the Henkes returned to their medical work at Shunde with a renewed vigor and plenty of need for it.⁴⁵⁴ "Dr. Henke is hard at work trying to pick up the loose ends in the hospital," Jessie Mae wrote one month after returning to Hebei, "we found our staff seriously crippled with the necessary dismissal of our best Chinese doctor a few months ago...the hospital is well filled for this time of year with young and old, rich and poor. A glance through the wards at the young chap with the huge sarcoma of the leg; at the man next to him with an ugly tumor of the lower jaw...at poor Mrs. Li, who for almost a year now has been in bed here with tuberculosis of the back, and who in spite of it all, is a living witness to the other patients of His Sustaining Grace...at the eye cases, gunshot wounds, and other perhaps less interesting diseases, makes us glad and grateful that God has opened the way for us to go on with our service for Him in China."⁴⁵⁵ The medical responsibilities and large numbers of patients also proved to be ready subjects for the Henkes' simultaneous return to filmmaking in China. As they screened the reels of "home life" in Illinois and other US scenes for Chinese audiences at

⁴⁵⁴ The final short sequence in the furlough film, not discussed here for lack of space, is taken from the deck of the ship taking the Henkes from San Francisco back to China. The ship and the running Cine-Kodak passes by a number of US Navy vessels, including the first American aircraft carrier, the *USS Langley*.

⁴⁵⁵ Jessie Mae Henke, personal letter to "Dear Friends in the Homeland" from the American Presbyterian Mission, Shuntehfu, China, 19 September 1933.

Shunde, the Henkes began to consider producing more visually advanced narrative films on their life and work in China, filmic “tours” of religious and medical work at the mission. Perhaps taking cues from the reactions of local Chinese audiences encountering landscapes and communities in the United States through their films, the Henkes decided to use the Cine-Kodak to literally take the place of American audiences’ eyes and bodies. Instead of the eclectically spliced-together *mélange* of “local scenes” produced in the environment around the mission, the camera and the editing process would now present a more structured visual narration of space and place, in which Chinese Christians affiliated with the mission – “living witness[es]” like Mrs. Li – performed as guiding actors.

Between the winter of 1933 and the following fall of 1935, the Henkes shot several hundred more feet of 16mm film in the mission compound, rural medical clinics, and countryside fellowships organized by Chinese elders from the Shunde church.⁴⁵⁶ The new footage was spliced together with portions of the first 1300 feet of film made in 1931-1932 and spooled onto three 400-foot reels running exactly 1020 feet, which when projected back-to-back, ran 28 minutes and 20 seconds. Two of these were marked on the reels as the “Hospital” or “Hospital Comp[ound],” and the third, the “Church” or “Church Tour” (*Images 81, 82, and 83*).



Image 81 (“Hospital” 1), Image 82 (“Hospital” 2), and Image 83 (“Church”); all Henke Family Collection)

⁴⁵⁶ Harold Henke, “Shuntehfu Hospital Bulletin,” copy mailed to the “Whites, Palmer[s], & the Haskins,” December 21, 1935.

With a pause needed to change reels and re-spool the Kodascope projector, the actual viewing time would have approached 30-35 minutes, enough to be the primary focus of an hour-long congregational presentation.⁴⁵⁷ Unlike the Henkes' first films in China and those produced during their furlough, the couple opted to include intertitles professionally made by Kodak as part of the hospital film. According to the instructions supplied with the Cine-Kodak, this involved writing out a list of titles, mailing a copy to the nearest processing facility, after which “[Kodak technicians] will make them and send you the proper amount of film with the title printed on it, which you can then splice into your film in the proper place...the title is made with a special typewriter and photographed on 16mm Safety Film.”⁴⁵⁸ The Henkes did just that. Printed in white letters and framed in stylized flower-print borders, the film's opening title – the first of 18 intertitles spliced into the two reels documenting medical activities – proclaimed, “A CONDUCTED TOUR THRU THE HOSPITAL COMPOUND AT SHUNTEHFU, HOPEI, CHINA.” The “guided” nature of the tour was highlighted by the title immediately following it, which read, “MEET THE CONDUCTOR – DR. EN CHENG CHANG” (*Images 84 and 85*).

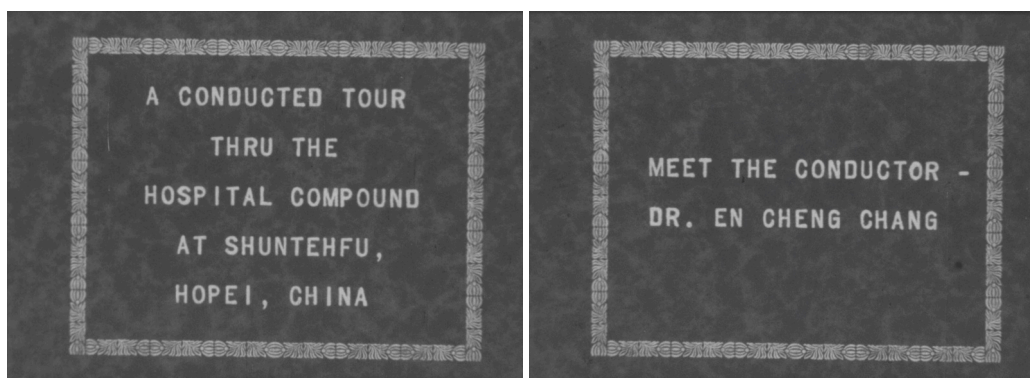


Image 84 (“Hospital” film 1 title) and Image 85 (“Hospital” film 1 intertitle; Henke Family Collection)

⁴⁵⁷ These film lengths were drawn from the three existing 16mm 400-foot capacity projection reels in the Henkes' collection today, which are held by Robert Henke in Wittier, California. I used an online film footage tabulator to determine approximate projection times, using the standardized 24 frames-per-second running times provided by preservationist Jennifer Miko of Movette Film Transfer in San Francisco during the film digitization process. As most electrically-driven consumer film projectors from the 1930s onward were equipped with a knob (usually labeled only with “Fast” and “Slow” turning directions) to vary projection speed, these times are general estimates.

⁴⁵⁸ *Instructions*, 34.

After this introduction, the camera cuts to a medium distance shot of the mission hospital gate, with an inset door open to the camera. Dr. Chang, dressed in a *changshan* and wearing a fedora, emerges from the shadows on the other side of gate and into the bright afternoon sunlight, kicking up a puff of dust from the ground. Bowing and doffing his hat to the invisible audience, Chang turns around with an outstretched hand, a sweeping motion that is cut off by the next intertitle placing the scene and providing a necessary translation: “FU YIN YI YUAN – THE GOSPEL HOSPITAL.” To emphasize the point, Chang points to the Chinese characters (福音醫院) carved above the gate and then to a wooden placard hung to the right of the door; the camera pans up and to the side both times, taking the place of an actual visitor following the doctor’s gesture. With another sweeping motion and without looking back at the camera, Chang then turns and walks back through the gate. In the final moments before the Cine-Kodak was shut off, a woman abruptly appears at the frame’s far right side as an unexpected participant in the film. Harold or Jessie Mae likely did not intend to include her in the frame, but the Cine-Kodak’s inexact viewfinder resulted in her accidental inclusion. It is clear that the woman was watching most, if not all, of the action; she grins broadly at the disappearing doctor and then at the camera, amused by the strange performance.

There are, of course, several forms of translation taking place in the film’s first 20 seconds, which set the tenor of the “Conducted Tour” as a whole. Most importantly, the opening features Dr. Chang as the primary tour guide or “conductor” when either of the Henkes or another American colleague could just as easily have done the job. This reflects a conscious decision to emphasize the local Chinese-led nature of the mission hospital, implicitly responding to critiques of missionary dominance and answering Daniel Fleming’s call half a decade earlier for missionaries working in medical, evangelistic, and educational projects “to be willing to

serve under the nationals to whom he goes [emphasis in the original],” as “in the brotherly, democratic, and Christian relationship...with our co-workers abroad, reciprocity is essential.”⁴⁵⁹ Even the choice to phoneticize the Chinese name of the hospital first, when a simple “Gospel Hospital” translation would be sufficient for American audiences, represents an effort to indigenize the missionary project in filmic presentation; after all, as Chang literally pointed out, gesturing with dramatic emphasis at the hospital sign, the English title for the mission hospital compound would not have mattered much to the vast majority of patients the facility received or even the staff working within it. But the Chinese name – emphasized in the opening scene and the intertitle – certainly did. In this way, the film made a subtle argument bridging the Modernist-Fundamentalist divide, reiterating to the American Protestant audiences the combined goals of the mission hospital, as a Christian institution dedicated to both spiritual and physical salvation. Jessie Mae Henke, writing in the mission’s 1934 “Pen Picture” publicity report, describes this ideology in this way: “in every contact which the patient may have with our institution, whether it be with the doctors, nurses, pharmacist, business manager, or servants, we know that our Gospel is being weighed, and how we long not to be found wanting!”⁴⁶⁰ Chinese patients physically entering the gate, as the film audience was about to do in an imagined way, were reminded that the hospital existed because of (or in less theological terms, in some abstract connection with) the Gospel, and specifically that of Protestant Christianity.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Daniel J. Fleming, *Wither Bound in Missions* (Association Press, 1925), 169.

⁴⁶⁰ Jessie Mae Henke, in *A Pen Picture of Shuntehfu Station, Presbyterian Mission, North China*, 1934, 11.

⁴⁶¹ The Archbishop Emeritus of Taipei, Fr. Joseph Ti-Kang (狄剛), described this differentiation as part of his childhood experience in Xiuwu (修武), Henan. As a boy of about 7 or 8, he routinely passed by both the Roman Catholic and Anglican mission churches while walking his younger sister to and from a government school in his town – the churches were very close to each other in the neighborhood. The Catholic church was referred to as the 天主堂 (lit. “Lord of Heaven Hall”) and the Anglican church as the 福音堂 (lit. “Gospel Hall”). When the Japanese military occupied the area in 1937, the Anglican church closed down presumably because the missionaries staffing it were recalled or departed on their own volition, so the majority of refugees – including Ti’s mother and siblings – took shelter in the Catholic church, along with over a thousand others. When asked during the interview what he

Furthermore, the film visually translates the multiple spaces of the mission compound, allowing the audience to follow some of the patients' footsteps. With each new scene, the camera and Chang move progressively deeper into the hospital complex, the doctor's figure walking away from the camera leads the eye further into the frame. This mirrored Jessie Mae's description of the patient care process, also recorded in the "Pen Picture," as one of movement into and through a transformative space:

Day by day the clinic presents a busy scene as patients are first gathered in to the waiting room where the evangelist, in song and story, tells them of the Great Physician. They are then ushered by the nurses through what to them must be a maze of bewildering performances. The doctor first sees and talks with them, often taking minutes of patient questioning to elicit perhaps the simple fact that they have had a pain in their foot for a few weeks which has been treated by having needles stuck into it, and has now become a first class infection. A subsequent dressing is applied in the dressing room, and then a visit is made to the pharmacy for some pills to allay the accompanying pain, and finally they are led to the door with a last smile and admonition not to disturb the bandages and to return on the following day.⁴⁶²

The Cine-Kodak was hand-held for the majority of these scenes, sacrificing steadiness for ease of movement between scenes. The first shot immediately following the introduction at the gate shows Chang walking past the reception booth with the Hugh O'Neill hospital building visible in the far background; an intertitle mirrors the voice of the receptionist, notifying that visiting patients must pay "1/2 CENT FOR A TICKET, PLEASE!!" – a nominal fee for medical treatments subsidized in part by American congregations.⁴⁶³ The receptionist, prepared for his brief role, peeks furtively out of the booth's side window and quickly hands Chang a ticket, which the doctor flips in his hand, emphasizing it for the camera, before walking further into the

thought of the relationship between the two churches in his neighborhood, the Archbishop admitted humorously that as a child he believed that they were of completely different religions, on account of their differing names.

⁴⁶² Jessie Mae Henke, in *A Pen Picture*, 10.

⁴⁶³ 1931 *Report of Medical Work at Shuntehfu, Hopei, North China, American Presbyterian Mission*, 21. According to the Shunde hospital's financial report for 1931, the expenses for the entire facility and staff were \$26,910.21, while the hospital's income, including appropriations from American mission boards, charities, gifts and "sundry," as well as inpatient hospital fees, was \$34,804.78. Figures are in US dollars.

hospital yard. An older woman carrying a child with a bandaged head walks quickly past the camera toward the front gate, while a teenage boy holding the hand of a younger boy at the far right side of the frame glance repeatedly back and forth between the camera and the walking doctor. They are among the last few bystanders clearly visible in the first three minutes of the film; the rest of the walking tour shows a rather deserted compound, with no one present except for the doctor and the Henkes running the Cine-Kodak – it is likely that the couple decided to shoot these parts of the film during uneventful days with sufficiently good weather, with the free time allowing them and Chang to work together on these shots. Chang continues past the hospital (a spliced-in close-up shot panning up to the “O’Neill Memorial” sign allows the building to serve as its own intertitle), his own family residence, a classroom building for nurses, the Grace Talcott Hospital housing “fourth-class wards” for inpatients (“COST 2 ½ CENTS PER ROOM”), and pointing briefly at the hospital’s steam generating plant before the camera cuts to an entirely different set of scenes altogether.⁴⁶⁴ In between scenes, Chang’s outfit changes inexplicably from the fedora and *changshan* to a thicker fur cap and padded cotton robes to ward off the cold, while the foliage on the trees in the compound suddenly disappears; the accidental “jump cut” indicates that the Henkes likely shot the walking scenes over a period of several weeks or even months in the fall or early winter before splicing them together.

The dearth of human figures in the film’s first three minutes is suddenly broken by an intertitle proclaiming “DR. CHANG’S FAMILY.” The camera cuts to Chang’s family members – his wife, teenage daughter and two sons, and one bespectacled young adult son wearing a bow tie, dress shirt, and overcoat standing in a row in the bright sunlit porch of the family home. Parts

⁴⁶⁴ Jessie Mae Henke, film narration; “he’s taking you on to the building that we were using as a classroom for student nurses; it had originally been built for a kindergarten, but its usefulness for that area had somehow dissipated and so we were using it for a classroom...”

of this film are obscured by bright white streaks of light, indicating that the scene was originally shot at the start of a new 100-foot roll of film, which was partially exposed to light while being loaded into the Cine-Kodak. While perhaps viewed as a technical “accident” from the audience’s standpoint, this may indicate that the Henkes felt that the scene was important enough to warrant a fresh reel of film in the camera before starting, to prevent being accidentally cut off mid-shot by a partially exposed reel running out.⁴⁶⁵ The adult son adjusts his glasses, while the wife and daughter exchange amused smiles. Chang stands at the group’s far right, looking first at them and then the camera, before proceeding to go down the line, pointing at each person. The family starts to laugh at the mild absurdity of the action before an intertitle cuts off the scene, reading “OH -- ONE MISSING.” When the filmic action continues, Chang rushes into the house behind his family to lead out another son, a toddler who stumbles toward the camera; holding his hand, his father pushes gently on his back to prompt him to bow toward the lens. The Cine-Kodak stops and starts again in time for a grinning Chang to appear carrying the youngest member of his family in his arms, a little girl bundled against the cold air in a miniature fur shawl and an oversized beret. The incorrect intertitle – the daughter not “counted,” as there were two additional children in sequence rather than one – was an accident in editing that unintentionally served as a subtle nod to patriarchal preference for male children (重男輕女) in traditional Chinese families.⁴⁶⁶ Yet, the daughter’s fashionable dress and Chang’s visible pride at carrying out his young daughter, along with the prominent place of his wife and teenage daughter (wearing a Western turtleneck sweater, mid-length skirt, and leather shoes) in the center of the

⁴⁶⁵ I worked as a cinematographer with 16mm film and Arriflex 16 cameras on a few occasions during my undergraduate years, collaborating with friend and documentary filmmaker Michael E. Tang at the University of California, San Diego; Tang is now a producer at Iwerks & Co. film productions in Los Angeles. The opening lengths of film, or the film leader, were sometimes discarded in the editing process because of light leakage incurred while loading camera magazines in less-than-total darkness.

⁴⁶⁶ Jessie Mae Henke, film narration; “Oh! Here comes a little girl, but of course she didn’t count [mild laughter].”

family group gestures toward a modern, progressive sensibility that was antithetical to older, more patriarchal traditions. In this way, the filmic performance of Chang's family makes them culturally "recognizable" to American audiences – the home setting, the Western dress, and even the simple play acting with intertitles all shape this presentation.

In a similar way, the scenes immediately following Chang's family also emphasized leisure activities familiar to audiences in the United States, foregrounding the staff's participation in a modern Western lifestyle. With an intertitle proclaiming "ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES JACK _____" – leaving the audience to mentally fill in the blank in the adage – the film cuts to two wide shots; the first showing an afternoon volleyball game in progress, played by young Chinese male nurses wearing dress shirts, slacks, and sweaters, and the second a double tennis match also played by four Chinese men.⁴⁶⁷ Most remarkably, one of the tennis players moving quickly toward the net is a man with a missing limb replaced by a wooden peg leg; he was Tu Ch'ung Chen, the hospital's laboratory technician (*Image 85*). Whether or not his inclusion in the film was intentional, he was an important member of the hospital staff and a good friend to the Henkes; the likely couple pointed him out by name while screening the films to American audiences.⁴⁶⁸ Tu was also known by his Christian name, Stephen, and his responsibilities at the hospital involved running microbiological tests on blood, urine, stool, and sputum samples from patients, collecting data that was subsequently sent back to the US in official reports and may also have been included in medical databases at the Peking Union Medical College.⁴⁶⁹ Robert and Richard Henke, who knew Tu personally while they were

⁴⁶⁷ Jessie Mae Henke, film narration; "we encouraged the student nurses, most of them were male, we encouraged them to exercise and here we have a good game of volleyball."

⁴⁶⁸ Richard Henke, personal interview with the author, Rolling Hills, California, 29 July 2013.

⁴⁶⁹ 1931 *Report of Medical Work at Shuntehfu, Hopei, North China, American Presbyterian Mission*, 1, 5, 17. See also Mary Brown Bullock, *An American Transplant: The Rockefeller Foundation and the Peking Union Medical College* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

young children at the mission compound, later recalled Tu's agility and tennis skills with great admiration, as did Ralph Lewis in his memoirs:

Stephen Tu was our lab man. He became my good friend over the next few years [between 1935 and 1941]. He was a middle school graduate and had received his training in our hospital over the years. As a boy he had been in an accident, which resulted in the amputation of his left leg below the hip. He used a crutch, and I mean he used that crutch just like a leg. He rode a bicycle out to [rural clinics], and later I learned that he could play an excellent game of tennis using that crutch...I did go to the pastor or Mr. Tu now and then for help [in Chinese, as they could speak some English].⁴⁷⁰

As Lewis reported, the tennis match and volleyball game in the afternoon – along with the time to film them – were a usual part of the medical staff's routine after a busy morning of operations and clinics, made necessary by technological limitations.

Every afternoon after the clinic was over Gene [Henke] and I would come back home and get our wives and go out for a game of tennis. Roberta [Lewis] had played tennis in high school, but I had never had the opportunity to play before...both Gene and Jessie Mae were very good, which helped us to try to improve our game. Often when in the midst of a set a servant would come from the hospital and tell us that the electricity was on. That was the end of tennis for that day. Then both of us would rush back and go to the X-ray room to take pictures or take the patient under fluoroscopy for examination. We had no electricity during the daytime, and when it was turned on we had to hurry before people in the city would turn on their lights[,] making the current too low for taking pictures. Our X-ray work was only done when a patient came needing it, and we would have that patient wait until late afternoon when an examination could be made.

Up until this point in the film, all of the people visible are Chinese, with foreign affiliations limited solely to Western dress and the benefactors' names emblazoned on the hospital buildings; apart from the Henkes behind the camera, the emphasis on the indigenous medical staff as the prime occupiers of the mission hospital space. The subject matter is rather benign – beside the hospital buildings, there is little to indicate the medical mission's specific works, and the domestic scenes of Chang's family and nursing students at play seem to indicate an idyllic slice of modern life in the hinterland. There is a dramatic shift in narrative as the film

⁴⁷⁰ Robert and Richard P. Henke, interview with the author in Pasadena, California, 29 June 2012; Lewis, 124.

starts to show patients coming to the hospital from surrounding rural area on sedan chairs, wheelbarrows, and litters, often accompanied by family members or assisting members from their village communities; modes of transportation that one intertitle describes as “Chinese ambulances.” While one intertitle – “THE SONMOBILE” – attempts to inject some dry humor preceding a shot of an elderly woman sitting on a wheelbarrow pushed by her son to the compound gates, the film from this point on resembles a documentary on medical practices rather than an introduction to the hospital’s space and staff. The audience has been brought “into” the compound, and with scene after scene of Chinese patients arriving, they are exposed to the kind of work that confronted the Henkes and the Chinese staff on a regular basis. It is also here that cooperative work between foreign and Chinese medical staff is featured. As the woman on the wheelbarrow nears the hospital gate, Harold Henke walks briskly down the steps from the left side of the frame in an overcoat and fedora. He greets the woman – she mouths a quick response – and places his hand on her shoulder before briefly examining her eyes for traces of infection. In the background, a Chinese staff member who appeared several times in the beginning of the “Occupational” reel strolls by, smiling at the man and his mother. Then the camera is pulled back to a wider angle across the street, encompassing the hospital gate; the wheelbarrow and patient are pushed inside, with the translator lending a helping hand in pulling.⁴⁷¹ In the scenes that follow, shot over a period of several months (with foliage on the trees changing in the process), various patients are brought into the hospital compound; Henke is

⁴⁷¹ While there are no specific dates visibly shown in any of the films discussed, this scene is one of the few that contains an unintentional indication of its production date. As the camera pans up to follow the wheelbarrow into the hospital gate, it happens to include a vertical calendar comprised of moveable wooden boards on the right side of the church gate, giving the month, day, and week in Chinese characters. In this case, the footage was made on November 17; the sign reads 十一月十七日 禮拜二. This signage appears again in other shots of the church gate, and was visible to the general public passing the church on the street, serving as a community calendar. For the author, it conveniently serves as a “clapboard” for the specific season in which the film segments were shot.

replaced by Chang in all of these scenes, accompanying patients from the front gate into the courtyard, sometimes wearing a white surgical cap and gown and speaking with visibly-concerned family members accompanying the sick person. The impression given is that while the foreign medical staff is operating invisibly in the background – both behind the lens and within the buildings, quite literally – modern medical care is primarily given for Chinese, by Chinese.

After the patients are brought into the hospital compound, the camera moves progressively closer to the Chinese patients treated there, until the audience is brought face-to-face with specific patients and their illnesses. Much like the Henkes' still medical photographs, these parts of the film document medical successes and challenges at Shunde by visualizing disease and healing on patients' bodies; unlike the photographs, however, the action inherent in film provides a broader perspective on specific interactions between medical staff and patients. In a segment preceded by the intertitle "A GROUP OF KALA AZAR PATIENTS," Harold Henke moves down a line of young male patients, prompting each one to stand up and expose their distended midsections to the camera, the result of a swollen liver and spleen due to parasitic infection transmitted by sandfly bites.⁴⁷² Henke's expression alternates between the cheery and energetic gestures displayed to reassure the boys and a concerned look he gives the person behind the Cine-Kodak, possibly Jessie Mae, as he glances up to make eye contact with the lens tracking with him across the group. Following one in-camera cut while filming the same scene, Henke says something to one of the boys he has examined, prompting a smile in response. These actions are almost identically mirrored in a following scene by a Chinese female doctor, Lucy

⁴⁷² George C. Kohn, *Encyclopedia of Plague and Pestilence: From Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 459. See also Robert J. Dicke, *Epidemiology of Kala Azar in China* (Washington DC: Navy Department Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, 1946). Kala-azar causing the symptoms seen in the Henke hospital film is now known as visceral leishmaniosis. My sincere thanks to Dr. Corinne M. Lieu (Phoenix Children's Hospital, Arizona), and Rachel Bian and Brian K. Chang (University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor) for their generous assistance in describing the disease in current medical practice.

Gao, surrounded by Chinese nurses, examining even smaller toddlers while they sit on a hospital porch ledge.⁴⁷³ An American female medical missionary is briefly visible watching the scene at the edge of the frame, but the camera's primary focus is on the Chinese staff and the children, some of whom begin to cry in response to unfamiliar activities around them, but are reassured by the nurses standing around them. The visual parallel was likely intentional – the approaches to treatment and patient-doctor interactions cut across racial, gender, and cultural lines, with American and Chinese men and women equally involved in the medical missionary project.

While these scenes present an encouraging, intimate perspective on American-Chinese medical cooperation and successful patient results, the film moves on to darker issues. Here, the film presents both the limitations of medical treatment as well as the traces of regional violence beyond the mission and Shunde's city walls, physically visible on the bodies of Chinese patients. An intertitle reading, "AN INNOCENT VICTIM OF WAR. HE FOUND A BOMB" suddenly cuts off the images of the smiling nurses and fidgeting toddlers. A young boy standing in front of the hospital's door accompanied by an older Chinese man and woman, presumably his relatives, stares blankly at the camera as the man slowly removes two cloth bags covering the boy's hands. This action makes visible the boy's bandaged hands; the thumb, index, and middle fingers – or what may remain of them – are wrapped up completely, with the rest of the fingers showing below, clenched tightly in a fist. The camera pans up briefly to include the older man and woman, both of whom look fatigued; the man stares into the lens with an open-mouthed, resigned look. In a close-up taken immediately after, the man removes the boy's head covering to expose a heavily bandaged skull. The boy continues to stare.

⁴⁷³ Jessie Mae Henke, film narration; Lucy Gao (Kao) is also listed in several publications as officially affiliated with China Inland Mission (CIM) hospitals in Henan; see Mrs. Howard Taylor (Geraldine Taylor), *Guinness of Honan* (London: China Inland Mission Press, 1930), 317, and *Chung-hua I Hsüeh Tsa Chih Wai Wen Pan* [China Medical Journal] (Shanghai: Foreign Languages Press, 1923), Vol. 37, 1032.

He was not the only one to be treated for such wounds while the Henkes were in Shunde. In July 1931, the city came under “the direct line of fire in the war between the troops of Shih Yu San and Nanking,” a regional conflict fought between North China warlord Shi Yousan (石友三) and Nationalist forces from the south (Nanjing) commanded by Chiang Kai-shek and supported by Zhang Xueliang’s (張學良) allied northern troops.⁴⁷⁴ “For ten days,” the mission report read, “we lived in the midst of a Hell made by undisciplined soldiery and constant shell and rifle fire...the almost daily bombing of the city and railway had filled us all with terror and fear, tho[ugh] the difference in attitude between death of the Christian and non-Christian was marked...Thru the grace of God and His care of us not a single refugee, patient, or worker among us was injured.”⁴⁷⁵ Others outside the compound’s safety were not so fortunate. The hospital record for that year designated a separate category for “Wounds – gun shot and bomb,” and received 161 inpatients and 301 outpatients from such injuries alone.⁴⁷⁶ While no single author is designated for these parts of the mission report, Harold Henke, who oversaw the hospital’s medical data collection and had also served in a US Marine machine gun company during the 1919 occupation of the Rhineland, likely contributed to the wording of the report and prompted the wounded boy’s inclusion in the film.⁴⁷⁷ While it is unclear if the explosives that maimed the boy were left behind from this particular conflict, or related to later smaller-scale violence perpetrated by criminals or local paramilitary forces that the missionaries and the Chinese generally referenced as “bandits” (土匪), his appearance provided a brief but harrowing

⁴⁷⁴ 1931 *Report of Medical Work at Shuntehfu, Hopei, North China, American Presbyterian Mission*, 4. See also “WAR THREAT IN THE NORTH,” *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette (1870-1941)* May 5, 1931, 148; “WANG LEAVES FOR TSANGCHOW; CHANG COMPLETES PLANS,” *The China Press (1925-1938)*, July 21, 1931, 1. “CHINA NATIONALISTS CRUSH REBEL ARMY,” *The Washington Post (1923-1954)*, August 4, 1931, 3.

⁴⁷⁵ 1931 *Report of Medical Work at Shuntehfu, Hopei, North China, American Presbyterian Mission*, 4.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁷⁷ Richard Henke, personal interview with the author,

representation of frequent regional violence, physically marked on his body.⁴⁷⁸ Even as the Henkes wrote about their post-furlough work in 1933, they referred to gunshot wounds as part of “less interesting diseases” – not necessarily due to indifference, but rather because they witnessed such cases all too frequently.

Cases that were not frequently seen were classified under the next and final category of patients to appear in the film: “HOPELESS CASES.” These were primarily close-ups of patients with large tumors or skin growths that presumably could not be treated with conventional surgical methods. As with the couple’s medical still photographs, the film staging for these shots departed from more casual, free-form settings to a more clinical mode; extreme close-ups and a white cloth backdrop or sunlit hospital wall are employed to emphasize the shape and severity of the tumors. This style of filmmaking was a clear extension of the Henkes’ medical photographs discussed in the previous chapter, and situated in a century-long legacy described by Larissa Heinrich in her work on the complexities of Chinese-Western medical imaging.⁴⁷⁹ The difference between the still images and the moving ones was primarily the latter’s ability to capture multiple angles of the subject in one take – seen in several shots as the patients are asked to move or turn their bodies while the camera is running – as well as to place the patient in some relationship to his surroundings, in showing not an isolated body in a still frame, but a living, moving person reacting to the medical staff on hand. In one sequence, Chang and an assistant in surgical gown slowly flex the arm of a boy with a webbed skin growth, and in another, a young medical assistant (*Image 86*), Richard Frey (known to the Henkes as Richard Stein, and who worked at Shunde in the 1930s before becoming a prominent military doctor for Communist

⁴⁷⁸ Phil Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 150-153, 193-196.

⁴⁷⁹ Larissa N. Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body between China and the West* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 10-14.

guerilla forces in Northwest China), is filmed positioning a patient with a large abdominal growth in front of a white hospital curtain; Frey himself holds an unfolded folding camera in his left hand as he guides the patient with his right.⁴⁸⁰



Image 86 (Hospital staff group with Stephen Tu and Richard Frey, Shunde, c.1936-1937; Henke Family Collection)⁴⁸¹

These sequences skirt the line between clinical documentation and medical voyeurism, and no more than 45 seconds of these scenes are shown. The expressions on the patients and medical staff are visibly pained, and it is conceivable that the audience viewing this sequence also

⁴⁸⁰ M. Avrum Ehrlich, *The Jewish-Chinese Nexus: A Meeting of Civilizations* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 29-30; see also Li Liming [李立明], *Guoji gongchan zhuyi zhanshi fu lai* [國際共產主義戰士傅萊] (Beijing: China Union Medical College Press, 2009). After joining the Yan'an Communists, Frey (傅萊) became a CCP member in 1944 and a Chinese citizen in 1955. He lived and worked in China until his death in 2004 in Beijing, after which a monument was raised at his tomb in the North China Military Martyrs Cemetery (華北軍區烈士陵園) in Shijiazhuang (石家莊), Hebei.

⁴⁸¹ This photograph, taken by Ralph Lewis with his Rolleiflex sometime in 1936 or 1937 and found in one of the Henkes' two *Chicago Tribune* scrapbooks, shows Frey (aka Stein) at the far right, Stephen Tu in the middle of the group, and Harold Henke at the left. Frey also left his mark on the Lewis family correspondence. He inserted a humorous personal message at the end of a typewritten letter by Roberta Lewis to her mother on New Year's Eve 1939, in which he writes: "Sehr geehrte gnaedige Frau, Sie werden sich jetzt sicher fragen was diese deutschen Worte ploetzlich bedeuten sollen, zumal Sie doch wissen, dass niemand hier in Shunteh deutsch spricht. Aber es hat sich in der Zwischenzeit ein Wiener in diese Einoede verirrt. Und der moechte Ihnen jetzt bei dieser Gelegenheit unbekannterweise die besten Glueckwuensche zum Neuen Jahr entbieten." Frey (Stein) then continues in English, "You must not think that I have not got any idee [sic] about English, even if I write you some german sentenses [sic]. But Mrs. Lewis thought that it would be very nice for you to hear a few friendly words 'auf Deutsch.' I guess Mrs. Lewis wished you already a good night and so will I do...Hochachtungsvoll, Stein."

experienced discomfort; discomfort that was intended to draw attention to the physical suffering of these patients and the limits of the existing mission hospital in addressing their ailments. At the same time, the clinical documentation and other sequences of rural diseases was considered important enough that the Henkes screened this film for Chinese doctors with whom they worked over a decade later, when they and their children were living in postwar Beijing.⁴⁸²

Some hope for these “hopeless cases,” however, is found in two places, which take up most of the remaining film. These – a new hospital wing and rural clinics – expand the possibilities of medical treatment both within and beyond the walls of the mission. No intertitle introduces the new hospital wing, but the sudden shift from ailing individuals to a young Chinese man, dressed in Western clothes, walking across a yard filled with building materials visually signals a shift in narrative from “hopeless” patients to new possibilities. As the Henkes wrote in a hospital bulletin dated December 17, 1934,

Since July we have each day been watching the growth of the addition to our in-patient building, Grace Talcott Hospital. Each step in the construction work has been full of interest to us. Much of it has been done in such a different way than it would have been done at home. All of it has been done using the very least amount of machinery, a very expensive item out here, and using instead...man power. All excavating was done by hand. Dirt was carried away by long strings of men, each two with a pole on their shoulders carrying a basket slung on a pole. All materials for construction have been carried in the same way, brick, stone, mortar, lime, and sand...One group of men did nothing but mix (all by hand) the concrete which was prepared for them by other groups, one did nothing but carry the bags of cement, another brought and dumped water, another sand. About sixty men were used just in carrying the concrete...to the third floor.⁴⁸³

In a series of shots closely paralleling this report, almost as if the Henkes were writing down their thoughts on the scenes they filmed or filming while thinking of ways to textually describe

⁴⁸² Harold Henke, personal letter from “Presbyterian Mission, Peiping” to “Dear Ones in Hollywood,” 9 November 1947. He writes, “The movies we showed the doctors were of our medical work in Shuntehfu, which now seems so far removed from the relatively well hospitalized and [sic] staffed city of Peking. And we also showed them movies we had taken of Ringling Bros. circus, the zoo, farming pictures, etc.”

⁴⁸³ Jessie Mae and Harold E. Henke, *Shuntehfu Hospital Bulletin*, December 17, 1934, 1.

the scenes, the Cine-Kodak pans across frames filled with physical activity, with Chinese workmen sawing wood, chiseling stone, and hauling bricks and mortar up a winding scaffold to complete the new three-story building. The construction activities are filmed from both the ground level and the third story, emphasizing both the height of the structure as well as the physical labor needed to create it. Then, with the construction completed, the camera cuts to shots of community leaders wearing fedoras and suits standing casually in the shade of a tree in front of the finished building. Harold Henke appears at the far right of the frame, wearing nearly identical clothing but with a light-colored ribbon pinned to his jacket, denoting his position as the hospital superintendent. One panning shot immediately afterward encompasses a large group of medical staff and mission personnel, women and men, standing together with the leaders, local gentry, and a row of military officers and uniformed policemen as they pose for a still photographer just out of the view of the movie camera. The group's large size, stretching nearly from one end of the building to the other, as well as the presence of an unseen professional photographer, reinforces the weighty nature of the occasion – the multiple imaging apparatuses signifying that this was a moment to be visually memorialized. Moreover, the multiple community subgroups included (doctors, nurses, medical staff, gentry, workmen, soldiers; men, women, and children) and a close-up of the local leaders seated in a place of honor in the front row while the still photograph is taken, all highlight the locally-oriented nature of the institution. Visually and symbolically, the Henkes (in this case, Harold, with Jessie Mae behind the Cine-Kodak) and the other American missionaries take a second-row seat. In a blowing dust storm that fades the compound in the background into a swirling haze, a long line of Chinese men invited from the surrounding district walk across the yard and file into the hospital for a “first look” tour of the facilities. The written report on the hospital construction ends with an encouraging line

echoing the filmic narrative: “Patients were moved in several weeks ago and everyone unites in admiring the large airy wards and the conveniences of the utility rooms.”⁴⁸⁴ Church members on the East Coast who watched the film would also have viewed this sequence as visual confirmation that their funds were being put to good use; the final paragraph of the report, which would have been read by supporting congregations long before the Henkes were back in the US to screen the film, reads:

In caring for [Chinese patients] we are continually grateful to the men’s class at Bradford for the fine library we have. Thru these books we are able to call in ‘consultation’ some of the best doctors in the United States and England. To Rye [Presbyterian Church] we are grateful for the help we daily receive from and through Dr. Chang...To the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church of New York City go our deepest thanks for the equipment we have and for the fine new building. May God’s richest blessing be yours and may you be blessed as you have helped this work here so much.⁴⁸⁵

The end of the first reel and the majority of the second take the audience from within the hospital compound into the streets and countryside around it. The first reel concludes with large crowds of people visiting “Health Exhibition” (衛生展覽會) put on by the medical staff and inspecting the new hospital. Intended as both an open-house tour and an opportunity for religious evangelization, the Henkes included shots of a Chinese doctor gesturing at a wall of x-ray photographs displayed inside a tent, in front of a large group of onlookers, as well as shots of a similar tent from further away.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Jessie Mae and Harold E. Henke, *Shuntehfu Hospital Bulletin*, 1.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2. From physical appearances, this man is likely “Dr. Kao,” who the Henkes reported in the 1934 bulletin as a “big...likeable, pleasant fellow, fine and patient and courteous with the patients, and he bids fair to be professionally and spiritually as big as he is large in body.” Kao (Gao) was “a graduate of the government provincial medical college at Paoting [Baoding],” and “worked as the physician for one of the big local normal schools for three years before coming to [Shunde].” The report states that Kao “[became] interested in the Gospel while taking a month of ‘refreshment’ work in Taylor Mem[orial] Hospital in Paoting. This summer he came to us because he said he wanted to spend his life doing medical work in a missionary hospital where he could work for Christ” – a serious decision with financial repercussions, as “[the mission hospital fund] could only offer him a half as much as the government school offered to keep him.”

The “Church Tour,” the 16-minute reel of film that was screened before or after the two-reel “Hospital Tour,” provided a visual and religious parallel to the medical missionary work. This film focused explicitly on the Christian community in and around Shunde, displaying the outward signs of collective spiritual growth among Chinese Protestants affiliated with the Presbyterian mission. Unlike the more focused, clinical studies of small groups or individuals in the hospital film, the “Church Tour” placed significant emphasis on mass activity and the visualization of community. Moreover, the film may have been intended as a middle-of-the-road rebuttal to conservative arguments that missions abroad placed undue emphasis on physical healing or humanitarian activities rather than spiritual conversion, as well as the opposing liberal criticisms of missionary heavy-handedness in micromanaging or delaying the organization of the indigenous church, providing American audiences with a more balanced, intimate glimpse into the Chinese Christian community as a growing, self-sufficient body of local people. This film covers some of the same spaces within the mission compound, but highlights their use for religious rather than medical activities; the audience, having sat through the hospital tour, would have recognized some of these parallel spaces.

Like the hospital film, the “Church Tour,” also begins with Dr. Chang walking and gesturing for the invisible audience to “accompany” him into the church gate, directly adjacent to the larger one he passed through for the previous film (the characters for “hospital” in the “Gospel Hospital” sign are visible at the far right side of the frame). This time, the doctor “guides” the camera and audience’s gaze past the hospital and down an alleyway to the church and missionary residences. This sequence was shot on November 28, 1934, according to the moveable calendar on the church gate, and was likely produced on the same day as that of Chang entering and walking through the hospital compound to introduce the hospital film. Chang’s

clothing is completely identical in both sequences, and the close similarities in direction and brightness of the afternoon light suggests that the filming for both sequences took place within the same hour – perhaps within minutes of each other. This also indicates that even before they turned on the Cine-Kodak, the Henkes envisioned their footage of the hospital and church as companion films, shot and screened in sequence. Moreover, the film reflects the close proximity of the medical and religious roles of the mission, in physical space and in meaning. Chang, a medical doctor, also serves as a representative of the Chinese Christians who worshipped in and extended the spiritual community beyond the walls of the mission. And unlike the polarized views expressed by conservative and liberal Protestant leaders in the United States, the two films screened together indicated that there was little separation between the church and the hospital in day-to-day activities; many of the hospital’s medical staff were reported to be closely involved in church activities, just as members of the church came to the hospital for treatment and were involved in evangelism to non-Christian patients.⁴⁸⁷ Jessie Mae noted this dual relationship in her “Pen Picture” commentary by stating:

To see, through one’s efforts, pain leave a face, and peace and rest replace it, is indeed a wonderful experience. But oh! The added and unspeakable joy that comes with seeing pain leave a warped soul, being replaced by the peace and rest of a reborn soul in Christ. Pray with us that our hospital may be a Temple of Healing, in its deepest, fullest sense.⁴⁸⁸

And as the films’ audiences may have noted, the “Temple of Healing” as described by Jessie Mae was only a stone’s throw away from its spiritual counterpart, the brick-and-stone church that stood directly across the courtyard from the hospital, separated only by a low, ivy-covered wall and clearly visible from the windows of the inpatient wards.

⁴⁸⁷ Jessie Mae Henke, in *A Pen Picture*, 10-11.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

Most of the scenes in the church film are characterized by a focus on communal aspects of Christian life in Shunde, emphasizing not only the number of Christians as well as the diversity of religious and educational activities in which they were engaged. Following the opening shots of Dr. Chang walking through the church gate, there is a sequence of congregants exiting the church on a Sunday morning, a sequence in which the camera operator moves progressively close to the church building and the people in-between shots. The number of people streaming down the steps out of the sanctuary is emphasized by the long duration of the sequence, nearly two minutes long, as one person after another exits the building and passes in front of the camera, a few pausing only long enough to drop their offerings into white tithe collection boxes on folding chairs at the bottom of the steps, overseen by two church elders. This sequence, mirroring the shots of missionaries and family members exiting buildings, allows the audience to witness the Chinese Christian community in a visual cross-section; women, men, children, elderly and young people, well-dressed gentry and poorer congregants in simple clothing, and a man with a bandaged foot on crutches, representing more mobile hospital patients who were able to attend the church service. While the Henkes presumably could easily have opted to film the service in progress, which would also have displayed this collective attendance, they selected to document the congregation in this way so as to emphasize each individual congregant as well as their collective numbers. Moreover, the extended inclusion of the post-service financial offerings by each member represented the Protestant community in Shunde as indigenously-supported and on the road to full self-sufficiency, at least in terms of the church institution. Moreover, this filmic setup served as a reminder to Depression-era audiences in the United States that despite substantial hardship, Chinese Christians were willing to continue

supporting the local church, and that perhaps audience members should continue contributing to missionary efforts in spite of their own economic downturn.

As with the movement from within the hospital to rural clinics, the church film takes the audience from the mission church to rural fellowships led by Chinese evangelists in the countryside. The sequence after that of the congregation exiting the church and mission gate is that of a sizeable group of rural Christians – segregated along gender lines – participating in a hymn singing led by an evangelist or deacon. Instead of a formal, neatly-constructed church sanctuary, the setting is a courtyard surrounded by crude mud-brick building; as the camera pans over the group, it is clear that this is somewhere outside the city, perhaps an “outstation” or affiliated fellowship that drew from the Shunde church for its pastoral staff but was composed of members who could not attend the regular services in the mission proper. From the disproportionate number of hymnbooks used by the men as opposed to the women, it is evident that many of the women are illiterate or semi-literate, and many of them – lacking hymnbooks and unable to participate in singing words they did not know well – stare at the camera operator instead (likely Harold Henke, given the camera position on the “men’s side”).

Despite the gendered imbalance in participation visible in this scene, the film quickly moves on to provide multiple views of women’s roles in the Christian community, reinforcing the idea that women were integral participants in the church’s mission rather than secondary citizens. Several scenes show middle-aged Chinese women traveling in a group on a horse-drawn cart to evangelize in surrounding areas; as they step off the cart, nearly all of them are carrying Bibles and other texts, indicating their literacy as well as their status as evangelists. Lillian K. Jenness, the principal of the “Truth Bible Institute for Women and Girls” affiliated with the Shunde mission, reported that for the 58 women enrolled at the time the film was made,

The curriculum all contains possible [forms] of Bible study and simple forms of home economics...[but] by no means is their education confined to books. Being ‘witnesses’ is one essential form of preparation. Four little Sunday Schools are carried on by students and teacher, and our preaching bands go everywhere into the city and adjoining villages. We even go farther afield. Five or six times a year, I take bands to villages where we spend six or seven days of intensive work, preaching and teaching. During the past ten months, our bands alone have had the joy of seeing 130 souls won for the Lord.⁴⁸⁹

This mobility in “preaching and teaching” that is visible in the film is not only physical, but also social and cultural, with women portrayed as students and teachers. In scenes that may have been shot by Jessie Mae while accompanying the “preaching bands,” the Cine-Kodak records women attending an outdoor Bible study led by Marjorie Judson, the American female evangelist resident in Shunde (who briefly appeared in one of the Henkes’ first films shaking hands with a Chinese boy), as well as Bible-carrying Chinese women greeting each other as they enter a home to teach. In another sequence, shot inside a courtyard, three women prepare a meal of boiled meat dumplings (餃子) before sitting down with a larger group of women (one of them the nurse Chang Jui Lan who worked alongside the Henkes since their arrival in 1929) and small children; a woman sitting at the head of the closest table mouths opening remarks or perhaps a blessing for the meal before all partake. The Cine-Kodak shuts off momentarily during the saying of the grace before starting again for the eating. Interestingly, the only two men who appear in the scene are there to serve food to the seated women, assisted in part by Chang – a visible inversion of traditional gender roles. While domestic skills and the long-term role of women in “establish[ing] Christian homes” was part of the Truth Bible Institute’s stated mission, and paralleling longstanding cultural tropes associated with foreign missions among Chinese women dating back to the 19th century, the participation of Chinese Christian women as educated, physically active, and mobile “witnesses” highlighted in the film, indicated that their role in local

⁴⁸⁹ Lillian K. Jenness, *A Pen Picture*, 6-7.

community building included but also extended beyond the domestic sphere.⁴⁹⁰ Moreover, their presence in the film provided a clear gendered counterpart that paralleled the participation of men in church activities, indicating that the church and medical missionary community, at least on a small scale, was comprised of active Christians working across gender lines.

With the exception of a few isolated close-up shots (one featuring a Chinese man singing or reciting a prayer, and the other a woman with two young boys gesturing at the camera), all of these scenes embody a sense of community action. These include several others featuring children at play and listening to outdoor lessons in the Shunde mission school, a Christian wedding procession, a large group of missionaries exiting a building after a mission meeting, and teams of young Chinese evangelists preparing materials and bicycles to set off on preaching trips into neighboring villages. The film with its recording of church members moving through space and interacting with each other lent itself well to the visualization of this kind of cultural and spiritual communal vibrancy. Even with groups of people standing still, as in a few shots of Chinese pastors, church elders, and other men gathered outside the church on a sunny day, the panning motion of the camera simultaneously emphasizes each individual as well as the group. Individual details – a young man in a white shirt strolling quickly into the frame to join the larger body of people, an elderly deacon holding a Bible to his chest and looking proudly into the lens, evangelist John Bickford mouthing some words as the lens scans across his position behind a group of Chinese church leaders – all blend into a visual fabric that speaks of communal participation. Nowhere is this visual community more evident than the centerpiece of the film, an

⁴⁹⁰ See also Sue Gronewold, “New Life, New Faith, New Nation, New Women: Competing Models at the Door of Hope Mission in Shanghai,” in Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, Connie A. Shemo, eds. *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 195-211.

extended pair of shots that, in disregard of the classical film narrative “build-up,” are inserted quite literally into the middle of the “Church Tour.”

On Christmas Day, December 24, 1934, the Chinese Christian community and members of the Shunde mission staged a parade that began in the mission compound and wound through the city streets. Led by Chinese men carrying large Republic of China flags and vertical banners reading “The Church of Christ in China” (中華基督教會), a large group of Chinese Christians files out of the hospital gate, passing underneath the “Gospel Hospital” sign, into a crowd of onlookers. As the procession turned a sharp left down the street, it passed by the running Cine-Kodak, the bodies of individuals passing closer to the lens in shadow providing a sense of depth that framed the brighter-lit part of the procession still exiting the compound. As the camera rolls, more and more people – men, women, and children, many bearing smaller banners and flags – emerge from the gate, some talking with each other or laughing, and some singing or walking silently. The occasion was important enough not only to be filmed by the Henkes, but also to be recorded as one of the opening paragraphs in the “Pen Picture,” in an account written by an unidentified missionary (perhaps even Jessie Mae or Harold) who observed the event from the same locations as the person running the Cine-Kodak. Coincidentally, a photograph taken of the procession from this parallel vantage point was reproduced in the “Pen Picture;” the image includes what may be the shadow of Jessie Mae or Harold with the Cine-Kodak cast in the foreground, standing below and to the left of the still photographer (*Images 87 and 88*):

It is a bright clear Sunday afternoon, just before Christmas. We are standing outside the big gate of the Mission Compound and, with a little group of shop keepers and ricksha pullers, we watch the open gate. Presently the singing of a hymn is heard and out through the gate there streams a procession.

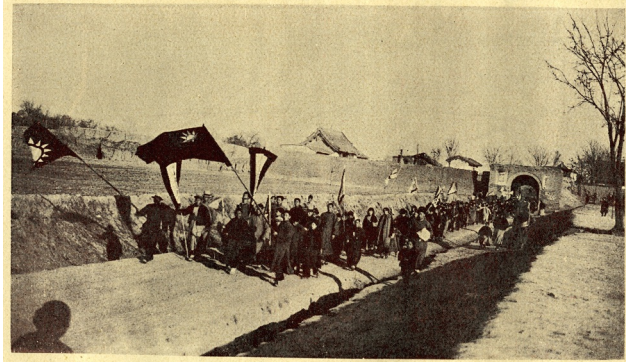
First come two men bearing large flags, the national flags of China. They are followed by a line of Bible School girls and women. Behind them are the students and teachers of the Men’s Bible School; then the doctors, nurses, and orderlies in the hospital. And then follows a large group of city and country Christians. Finally bringing up the

rear, are Pastor David Sung, the elders and deacons of the church, and the men missionaries.

The procession is fully two blocks long and the many banners and streamers, carried by the marchers make it an impressive sight. Through the main streets of the city they march, singing as they go, and the side paths and shop fronts are crowded with people, eager to see this unusual sight, a big Christian parade on Christmas Sunday!⁴⁹¹

These are individuals from various classes, genders, and mission activities acting collectively to expand the Protestant mission beyond its walls – literally pouring out into the physical environment in a public demonstration of their faith, a performative spectacle for the inhabitants of the city as well as the unseen audience of viewers in the United States. In filmic representation and action, the American missionaries disappear into the crowd and behind the camera; this comparative invisibility foregrounds the visual importance of the Chinese Christians, and by proxy, their collective identity as members of “The Church of Christ in China.” The connection visual between the beginning of the film and its midway climax is clear. Dr. Chang enters the hospital and church gates as a single Chinese Christian, but so many others emerge, a manifestation of collective work and spiritual guidance of which he, the film subjects, the filmmakers, and the multiple audiences were a part. Moreover, the prominence of the Republic of China flags underscores the participation of Chinese Christians in national life – as well as the potential for local, indigenous Protestantism as a future possibility for communities beyond Shunde, Hebei, and North China.

⁴⁹¹ *A Pen Picture*, 1934, 1-3.



The Christmas Parade

Image 87 (Christmas parade, 16mm still from “Church” film, December 1934) and Image 88 (“The Christmas Parade,” photograph from “Pen Picture,” December 1934; both Henke Family Collection)

Despite the film’s seemingly triumphal, quasi-nationalist midpoint, the denouement of the “Church Tour” brings the visual narrative back to a more locally-oriented perspective. The film shots immediately after the parade exiting the city gate show the parade’s aftermath, with the marchers gathered back in the mission compound, some milling around while others rearrange benches to prepare for a closing service or a congregational meal – an anticlimactic scene that nonetheless brings attention back to the close-knit Christian community while referencing the non-Christian surroundings that lay beyond the courtyard. While the ideal future for China might be the kind of Christian nationalism performed in the Christmas Day parade, the reality was of course quite different. In a similar way, the last sequence on the reel leaves the audience with a sense that more religious community building remained to be done. In the final minutes of the “Church Tour,” the Henkes filmed the Rev. Richard Jenness (Lillian Jenness’s husband and one of the most active evangelists affiliated with the mission) and a Chinese evangelist preaching to a group of mostly male onlookers on a city street. Changing positions several times, the Cine-Kodak records the gathering crowd. The roadside food vendors, craftsmen, and shopkeepers haphazardly filmed in the “Occupational Film” are now drawn together not by the spectacle of the camera or a market day, but by two evangelists – one

representing the American mission, and the other the Chinese Christian pastoral staff – speaking to them on the street. A uniformed soldier strolls casually by, and in the next shot, he too, is listening to the Chinese evangelist while smoking a cigarette. Jenness shifts from a primary to a supporting role, holding a religious poster while the evangelist speaks and gestures. For the film’s final shot, the Cine-Kodak was taken to the second story of a building (perhaps an inn or a large store) on one side of the street to obtain a wide high-angle shot of the entire group, now grown to include several dozen people. A woman with a sleeping child listens while leaning against a wall, a man with a bandaged head stands to the rear of the crowd, and still others mill around. The Chinese evangelist has removed his hat and now stands on a box to see over the crowd, still speaking emphatically. Jenness himself is gone, and perhaps was standing behind the camera as it rolled. The scene suddenly cuts to black; the Cine-Kodak’s 100-foot reel had reached its tail end, cutting off the shot and abruptly concluding the church film.⁴⁹²

As with the Chinese audiences, it is impossible to know exactly what the American audience thought and felt at the end of the film screening, staring at the deep black screen while either Harold or Jessie Mae shut off the running Kodascope before all of the film could be taken up and the viewers blinded by the unshielded projector bulb. Whether intentional or unintentional, the last scenes of the “Church” and “Hospital” reels embodied a contradiction, an ambiguous hope. Here were missionaries both medical and evangelistic working alongside Chinese Christians in close partnership; the “results” of which were visible as bodies undergoing

⁴⁹² This was determined by examining the final scene frame-by-frame after all of the films were digitized. The cut to black was not due to a post-production splice, as the bottom of the final frame was a fuzzy line and not a sharp edge, as it would appear if an additional segment of film were cut and pasted in. This, and the abrupt cutoff, meant that the camera was still running at speed when it exposed the last part of the film reel loaded into it. Although the Cine-Kodak was equipped with a manually-set coupled footage calculator, showing the amount of film remaining in a small window on top of the camera body, the operator was perhaps too engaged in filming the scene to notice that the film was running out, or had forgotten to reset the counter when the roll was first loaded. Either way, this indicates not only the film’s incomplete quality but also the technical contingencies involved.

treatment and the number of church attendees taking part in day-to-day religious work. But so too were the present limitations: the “hopeless cases” that represented so many other unseen individuals for whom healing was not possible, the still greater numbers of missionaries compared to Chinese medical or religious leaders, and the fact that, despite the collective development of the Shunde church, the presence of its congregants in the broader community was nonetheless still an “unusual sight” to the non-Christian populace in the provincial city – one among so many others in China. And despite the films providing in-frame motion, some manner of visual storytelling, and allowing audiences to better visualize space, place, and people in city thousands of miles away and now more than 80 years distant, so many more questions about them remain. As Jessie Mae and Harold intended to narrate the films in person, few traces of film description remain in their existing correspondence, and even the recordings made by Jessie Mae and Robert several decades afterward provide only limited discussion of some of the films.

Despite the great unknowns, these vernacular films do provide a limited window onto the complexities and possibilities of interwar missionary experience and activity. Not only did they serve as a contemporary visual “bridges” between the United States and China in filmic presentation, produced by and of people who were involved in the transnational Christian experience, but they also connect the more distant past and the present in their fragmentary, vernacular documentary nature. For brief minutes, viewers then and now can see “through a glass darkly” at communities and places that were indeed important to the Henkes, their colleagues, and the subjects of their films. This importance may be in small, highly localized visualizations of Protestant missionary perceptions – and there are likely other contemporary meanings and interpretations of these films that are now lost to time – but it is nonetheless there and partially recoverable. For the Henkes, these films memorialized experiences in the closest

possible visual analogue to bringing their faraway contacts to the mission and the people affiliated with it, for reasons of education, fundraising, or the pleasure of seeing visual images that were previously still or entirely unseen. Certainly, the films – along with the still images, textual accounts, and personal experiences that existed in parallel with them – presented Protestant missionary identities in China as not belonging to either of the Modernist-Fundamentalist poles. Of course, the complexities of missionary perception and reality extended far beyond the frames of these edited, narrated films, but the contents do subtly bridge the gap between Christian humanitarianism and Christian salvation that both sides threatened to further widen in debate, and thus distance from “on the ground” actuality in the missions. The Henkes were not unaware of this as they made and presented the films, being both missionaries and medical personnel. For the Chinese Christians who viewed the films, it was an opportunity to glimpse fragments of American life and landscape, as well as to present themselves for an audience that they could not see but were somehow connected to, through the apparatus of the Cine-Kodak as well as the perceived ties of religious faith and shared culture. And for the multiple audiences, bringing their own historical and cultural contexts to each viewing over time, these moving images – and the knowledge that these films were not only grounded in a particular environment but also physically moved across time and space – embodied the Barthesian experience of encountering the visual “*being-there* of the thing.”⁴⁹³ The bodies and camera frame moving on screen, the movement of the 16mm film drowned out by the clattering projector, and the thoughts and emotions that flashed through their minds in the viewing encounter connected the viewers to the visual remains of a past reality. The desire was and is to see more, for the films to give a more comprehensive view or a more “complete” story, speaking to the kinds of filmic

⁴⁹³ Barthes, 45.

voyeurism from which few viewers are immune. But in their fragmentary nature, the films are what they are: transnational materials that preserve the visual traces of localized activities and imaginations, embedded both in the broader experience of American missionaries and Chinese Christians in interwar China and simultaneously detached from it.

While the films discussed in this chapter were not the only ones made by the Henkes in this time, and certainly not the only ones made in China during their complete missionary tenure, they were indeed among the last complete reels to be produced of the interwar mission at Shunde. Apart from them, the Henkes made no other attempts between 1935 and 1946 to produce films that contained the kinds of narrative structure found in their pre-1935 films. Although the Cine-Kodak continued to be used for family filmmaking, recording the growth of the Henkes' children and their colleagues' families (including Ralph and Roberta Lewis's family when they arrived in Hebei the fall of 1935), as well as summer retreats to sunny Beidaihe (北戴河) on Hebei's eastern coast, the Shunde mission and its people did not appear again in visual motion. In fact, the Cine-Kodak was with Jessie Mae, Robert, Richard, and baby Lois Henke at Beidaihe when the Marco Polo Bridge Incident took place on July 7, 1937, igniting the full-scale Japanese military invasion of China; Harold Henke was then back at Shunde, taking over medical duties for Ralph Lewis, who had contracted scarlet fever.⁴⁹⁴ Vacation images of "walking on the beach," "children playing games," and boat rides off the coast produced that June gave way to a complete absence of filmmaking as the Henkes and their colleagues were caught up in the war.⁴⁹⁵ Though the Kodascope projector was used to screen pre-1937 films for a time in the mission under Japanese occupation, during which Liu Ju encountered them as a

⁴⁹⁴ Harold E. Henke, personal letter to "Dear Friends," from "House No. 5, Presbyterian Mission, Peking China," 25 October 1937.

⁴⁹⁵ Henke film box 1 contents list, undated; "[Reel] V. 1937."

young nurse, light in China would not pass through the Cine-Kodak until after the Pacific War ended. At that time, the Cine-Kodak and the family would be back in Beijing (then called Beiping), the same city in which Jessie Mae Henke had received news that she and her husband would be “getting a movie camera” nearly fifteen summers before. The 16mm film passing through the camera would be a mix of black-and-white as well as full-color Kodachrome; the subjects and settings urban rather than rural. And the Shunde mission compound, the hospital and church that were the focus of the interwar films, would no longer exist as they appeared in 1931-1934. In the interim, the compound was occupied first by the Japanese military and then the hospital devastatingly looted by both Nationalist and Communist armies for medical equipment as war-torn Hebei changed hands.⁴⁹⁶ The “Church of Christ in China,” the Republic of China, and as the Protestant missionary enterprise would not be the same institutions whose banners proceeded the singing crowd passing in front of the Cine-Kodak on Christmas Day, 1934. But much of this will be discussed in the chapters to come.

As for the films, they are stored today in two hefty metal storage cases in Robert Henke’s home in Whittier, California (*Images 89, 90 and 91*). When the cases are opened, the sour-sweet odor of vinegar wafts from the inside, a sign that the films are slowly decaying. Some portions of the films already appear “out of focus” when viewed, as the acetate emulsion base warps and shrinks with environmental changes.⁴⁹⁷ Unlike the relatively slower aging of their still photographic counterparts, with every passing day, the Henke films come one chemical step closer to being permanently un-viewable. As the current footage has been digitized, it is highly unlikely that the films will ever be screened again with the Kodascope projector as they were

⁴⁹⁶ Harold E. Henke, personal letter from the “Presbyterian Mission, Peiping, China,” 3 March 1946.

⁴⁹⁷ *The Film Preservation Guide: The Basics for Archives, Libraries, and Museums* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2004), 14-15.

originally intended. The films’ inherent silence, with the original narrators no longer living and their children advanced in age, as well as their current “immobility” due to the necessary divorce from its original viewing technologies, all seem to indicate that the experiences and visual perspectives contained in them will not last much longer. Time flowed through and around its makers, subjects, and viewers, and time continues to etch itself onto the films. But still they remain, waiting for future audiences. And as this chapter attempts to show in a fragmentary way, echoing Harold Henke’s anticipatory words to another group of intended film viewers at the end of 1931, “we hope [the film] gives you some idea of our life that you haven’t had before and that you can see something of us until we are there ourselves.”⁴⁹⁸



Image 89 (Henke China films in open storage container, March 2014), Image 90 (Henke China films in closed storage container, March 2014), and Image 91 (Henke labels in container lid, March 2014; Henke Family Collection, author’s photographs)⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁸ Harold E. Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones at Home,” 20 December 1931.

⁴⁹⁹ These photographs were taken on 6 March 2014, the day I returned the films to Richard Henke, before he returned them to his elder brother Robert for long-term storage. As part of the digitization process in San Francisco, the films were hand-cleaned and tightly wound with new leaders (the white exterior strips visible in the first image) to combat further warping. This was the last time I saw or handled the original films.

Chapter 4 – Framing Chaos: Missionary Visual Practices and the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945

On May 15, 1938, *Life* magazine featured a frame-filling cover photograph of a lone Chinese Nationalist soldier, wearing a German-styled *stahlhelm* and staring into the distance against a cloudless blue sky – toned a dark grey in the black-and-white print (*Image 92*).⁵⁰⁰ Entitled “A Defender of China,” the image was made by Robert Capa, better known for his iconic Spanish Civil War photographs and mobile, documentary imaging characterized by heavy use of 35mm rangefinder cameras.⁵⁰¹ Earlier that spring, Capa was based in Hankou (漢口) and chafing against what he perceived to be heavy-handed Nationalist control over his photographic activities. These limitations on his mobility in China and the forced inability to document his wished-for battle scenes were compounded on the US side by editorial choices by Henry R.

⁵⁰⁰ The uniform was a product of prewar Sino-German cooperation, which involved not only the exchange of raw material for peacetime industrial technology (which included cameras and optical equipment – a subject for another study), but the invitation by Chiang Kai-shek for military advisors from the interwar *Reichswehr* (e.g. Generals Hans von Seeckt and Alexander von Faulkenhausen) to train select Chinese troops in advanced tactics and mechanized warfare. The invasion of China in the summer of 1937 – and the simultaneous development of a German-Japanese alliance – put a rapid end to these plans and destroyed most of the German-trained troops (e.g. the 88th Division, 第八十八師, of the National Revolutionary Army) when they were committed, under-equipped, to early battles with the Japanese at Shanghai and Nanjing. But the German-styled uniform, at least in the imagination of the Chinese populace and foreign observers in the war’s first year, held as a symbol of a modernized Nationalist army and the hoped-for ability (albeit inflated) to effectively resist Japanese invasion. See William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984) and Bernd Martin, “Das Deutsche Reich und Guomindang-China, 1927-1941,” in Hengyu Guo, ed. *Von der Kolonialpolitik zur Kooperation: Studien zur Geschichte der deutsch-chinesischen Beziehungen* (Munich: Minvera-Publishers, 1988), 325-375.

⁵⁰¹ First a user of Leica 35mm cameras, Capa switched to an equally compact Contax II 35mm rangefinder camera and used it for nearly all of his photography in wartime China. The same camera, in Capa’s hands, produced the famous images of the D-Day landings at Omaha Beach in June 1944; Capa accompanied the first wave of US troops to land under intense small-arms and artillery fire, but tragically had all but 11 frames of his 35mm photographs (from over 70 total) destroyed in a darkroom accident after the negatives were rushed to London for processing. See Richard Whelan, *Robert Capa: A Biography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 211-214. For a representative discussion of Capa’s most controversial Spanish Civil War photograph, the *Death of a Republican Soldier*, see Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 178-185.

Luce, *Life*'s chief editor and strong supporter of Nationalist China's wartime cause.⁵⁰² Capa's images, at least those printed in the May issue, focused primarily on mass rallies organized by the Nationalist government in Hankou to promote mass mobilization and national defense: flags and marching bands, Chinese Boy Scouts listening to propaganda speeches, and the young soldier with his intense stare, described as being "15 years old...now standing at attention while schoolchildren, only a few years younger, are giving his company a farewell before they leave for the front."⁵⁰³ The article itself was optimistically titled, "China Puts Japanese Army on the Run: A unified nation reverses its war fortunes."⁵⁰⁴ But the propagandistic, almost festive images and claims of national solidarity belied a far more complex historical moment. Rather, China of 1937-1938 was beset by widespread political uncertainty, the chaotic destruction of lives and communities, and brutal violence against the local population extending across much of the country's central and eastern areas as the Japanese invasion forces advanced inland.⁵⁰⁵ Capa's photographs, despite their maker's professional credentials and aspirations, showed none of these. The images that referenced some of the starker realities, however, were still present in the print – albeit the result of a different visual experience and produced by a very different person.

Immediately following the photographs of cheering crowds and parades in Hankou, a page entitled "These Atrocities Explain Jap Defeat" featured 10 grainy black-and-white images, printed in small format – almost requiring the reader to stare closely at the page to make out the

⁵⁰² An earlier and extended foundation article for this introduction, focusing exclusively on Western (secular) photographers in wartime China, was published as "Images of Nation: Western Photographers in Wartime China," *Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal*, Vol. 39, 2009.

⁵⁰³ "Life's Cover," *Life*, Vol. 4, No. 20, May 16, 1938, 9.

⁵⁰⁴ "China Puts Japanese Army on the Run: A unified nation reverses its war fortunes," *Life*, Vol. 4, No. 20, May 16, 1938 (New York: *Life Magazine*), 11.

⁵⁰⁵ Edward J. Drea and Hans van de Ven, "An Overview of Major Military Campaigns during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945," in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea, Hans van de Ven (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 27-34.

details.⁵⁰⁶ Several close-ups of burned, stabbed, and mutilated bodies, mostly produced in hospital settings and showing graphic wounds, appeared next to images of decaying corpses spread across a city street and floating in canals. These were the civilian victims of Japanese military brutality in Nanjing (南京), a city that was occupied by the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) on December 13, 1937 after a protracted battle with ill-equipped and demoralized Nationalist defenders.⁵⁰⁷ Captions beginning with the bolded words, “Horrible death,” “Decapitation,” “For resisting assault,” “Struck by an axe” accompanied the images, underscoring the visual shock (*Image 93*). While the Japanese were far from defeated, as the article claimed, these were the first images of the “rape of Nanking” (a phrase used twice in the article itself) to reach both American and global readers of *Life*. But unlike the other images, these – perhaps the most graphic of all prior published visuals – were not produced by a photojournalist and newsreel cameraman. Rather, they were still frames, reproduced from 16mm film footage shot by an American Episcopal missionary living in Nanjing, the Rev. John Magee.⁵⁰⁸ The article referenced this, with the accompanying description noting that

These ten pictures...were taken after the Japanese occupation of Nanking, Dec. 13. The photographer was an American missionary whose name must be concealed. He used a 16-mm. amateur movie camera carefully hidden from Japanese eyes. The most dreadful

⁵⁰⁶ The defeat was more an invention of the article’s editor, as contemporary observers on the ground and later historians agree that despite the efforts of Nationalist troops (and to a lesser extent, Communist forces, which were still reorganizing in the essentially isolated rural northwest after near-annihilation during the Long March and the pre-1937 Civil War), the Japanese advance through North and East China continued steadily, sometimes with extreme loss of life on all sides – not least the civilian population. British writers W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, writing about their 1938 trip to war-torn China, sardonically reported that “Mr. T.T. Li, the official mouth-piece of the [Nationalist] Government...resembles the most optimistic of Walt Disney’s Three Little Pigs. The word ‘defeat’ has no place in his mouth. Every Japanese advance is a Chinese strategic withdrawal. Towns pass into Japanese hands in the most tactful manner possible – they simply cease to be mentioned...Nobody bothered to question [Li]...or indeed, to pretend any interest whatsoever. Any news would be circulated later, when the journalists had dispersed.” W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, *Journey to a War* (New York: Random House, 1939), 54. For more on Nationalist influence on the press corps and the complexities of foreign reportage during the war, see Paul French, *Through the Looking Glass: China’s Foreign Journalists from the Opium Wars to Mao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 238-242.

⁵⁰⁷ Yang Tianshi, “Chiang Kai-shek and the Battles for Shanghai and Nanjing,” in *The Battle for China*, 143-158.

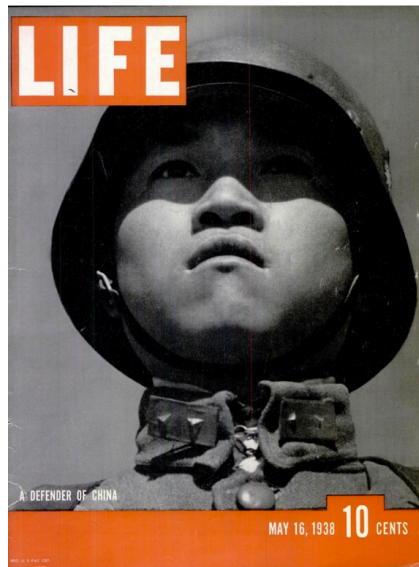
⁵⁰⁸ “John G. Magee,” in *Eyewitness to Massacre: American Missionaries Bear Witness to Japanese Atrocities in Nanjing*, ed. Zhang Kaiyuan (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe; Yale Divinity School Library, 2001), 166-227.

pictures of the rape of Nanking this amateur photographer could not take. He knew that if he filmed civilians being shot down or houses looted and burned, he would be arrested and his camera smashed. Besides, he was too busy, like other foreign missionaries and doctors, saving what civilians he could.⁵⁰⁹

The statement that the missionary's identity and camera "must be concealed" for safety reasons, along with the implication of other un-visualized scenes of military brutality in action ("the most dreadful pictures of the rape of Nanking this amateur photographer could not take") not only referenced the images as "on-the-ground" visual evidence, but also Magee's embeddedness as a missionary in China – now a war zone. By virtue of his close proximity to the local population as well as his existing ability to produce and circulate vernacular images, Magee as an "amateur photographer" was able to do what Capa and other "external" professional photographers could not: visually document the war and its effects on Chinese civilians from an "insider" perspective. Moreover, Magee as a missionary, with his supposedly more "neutral" political identity (though this was subject to contention, as will soon be shown) and the ability to move within the local conflict zones with better linguistic and cultural fluency than most foreign journalists, provided an additional layer of accessibility that was denied to others. It did not hurt that Henry Luce, the editor who assembled these images and texts, was himself a child of American Presbyterian missionaries in China.⁵¹⁰ Luce spent his first 15 years in Shandong Province and his personal connections to both the missionary enterprise and Nationalist political circles undoubtedly helped secure publication of Magee's film stills in *Life*.

⁵⁰⁹ "These Atrocities Explain Jap Defeat," *Life*, Vol. 4, No. 20, May 16, 1938, 14.

⁵¹⁰ Alan Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 13-39; see also French, 11.



Images 92 (Chinese soldier, Robert Capa photograph, *Life* magazine cover, May 1938) and Image 93 (“These Atrocities Explain Jap Defeat,” *Life* magazine page, May 1938; both *Life*, author’s collection)⁵¹¹

Magee and his colleagues’ visual practices in occupied Nanjing will be discussed further shortly.

It is necessary here to step back and discuss the historical trajectories that American missionaries (and by proxy, other foreigners) found themselves in – not only in the opening year of the Second Sino-Japanese War 1937-1938, but in the wider conflict that would soon evolve into the Pacific War. With the massive Japanese ground invasion of North China sparked by the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (盧溝橋事變) the night of July 7, 1937, and the subsequent attacks on Shanghai by Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and Navy (IJN) forces in August, missionaries’ roles as visual producers were abruptly transformed.⁵¹² They were no longer solely individuals whose images represented particular religious and cultural experiences in China; neither were their images’ reception limited to church audiences and Christian communities in East Asia and the

⁵¹¹ (Left) cover, *Life*, Vol. 4, No. 20, May 16, 1938; (right) “These Atrocities Explain Jap Defeat,” *Ibid*, 14.

⁵¹² See Hattori Satoshi with Edward J. Drea, “Japanese Operations from July to December 1937,” trans. Yang Daqing, in *The Battle for China*, 159-180. For a brief contemporary summary of the Japanese invasion from summer 1937 until the spring of 1938, see Harold John (H.J.) Timperley, *Japanese Terror in China* (New York: Modern Age Books, Inc., 1938), 61-62.

United States. As witnesses to war, some missionaries became *documentarians* in the eyes of an international mass public – catapulted to circuits of global visual transmission not envisioned before the conflict. In many ways, it was an opportune time for missionary visual practices to reach such audiences. The worldwide public that looked at Magee’s *Life* stills in the spring of 1938 had already been exposed other searing visuals to come out of the war’s first year. As the public demand for images of the Sino-Japanese conflict grew, lines between vernacular and documentary imaging by missionaries for international audiences, both mission-related and not, became increasingly blurred. At the same time, while certain kinds of missionary visual production took on photojournalistic qualities and a sense of personal eyewitness to catastrophic wartime events, the war itself deeply transformed missionary imaging and experience.

In other instances across wartime China, missionary photography and filmmaking simply ceased. Missionaries, American and European, were often preoccupied with matters greater than their usual visual practices – not surprisingly, as the *Life* article referenced, they were often “too busy, like other foreign missionaries and doctors, saving what civilians [they] could.”⁵¹³ Moreover, as the war disrupted the flow of raw photographic supplies (particularly straining for missionaries operating in rural areas, where such supplies were already difficult to obtain consistently in the interwar period) and military censorship restricted postal communications within and beyond China, many missionaries put away their cameras.⁵¹⁴ Most fell back on or increased their writing, the form of communication and documentation they could most easily practice without the technical factors inherent to photography and filmmaking. The existing contingencies that underlay missionary imaging before the war were exponentially magnified by

⁵¹³ “These Atrocities Explain Jap Defeat,” *Life*, Vol. 4, No. 20, May 16, 1938, 14.

⁵¹⁴ Louise Kiehle Scovel, letter from Japanese-occupied Jining, Shandong to “George and Harriet,” 30 August 1938; Scovel Family Collection. Scovel writes, “I am sorry we cannot send you kodaks [sic], but films cannot be bought and even the [local] photographers are so short of materials that they have to charge enormous prices.”

chaotic circumstances. In this light, American missionary visual practices in wartime China must be examined as highly fragmentary, locally specific experiences rather than broadly shared ones.

At the same time, the wartime restrictions on imaging did not mean that visual practices disappeared completely. Rather, depending on individual position and local conditions, missionaries who were able to gain access to supplies or maintained useable amounts of imaging material continued their photography and filmmaking under limited circumstances.⁵¹⁵ Not all of the resulting images or the circumstances under which they were made were as graphically sensational or widely visible to international publics as those of John Magee in Nanjing. But even vernacular images in this period nonetheless reflect (or in their absence, reference) experiences that were indicative of the political realignments in a nation fragmented by violent conflict, as well as multiple forms of wartime trauma sustained by both the missionaries and the Chinese people. Finally, the broader modern missionary experience in China offered unique perspectives for their wartime imaging. In addition to their locally embedded experiences, missionary identity in wartime China embodied a kind of existential “in-betweenness” heightened by regional and global conflict – even after the United States became involved in the

⁵¹⁵ Some American missionaries, especially those who were not caught up in the war when it came, resorted to stocking-up and strategic conservation. A young educational missionary with the Yale-in-China program (and future diplomatic historian), Edward Gulick, who arrived in Hunan in 1937, wrote that “because film was not readily available in interior China, I bought in a Hong Kong photo shop a round tin containing one hundred feet of [35mm] movie film and was given a hatful of empty cassettes. Using the hospital darkroom in Changsha, I cut the movie film and filled the cassettes with sections of it. It was Eastman black-and-white panatomic on a nitrate base, a good staple of that period. Since the subtropical climate of Hunan was rich in molds, I kept the film in various tins, usually taped shut. After exposure, I developed the film myself or sometimes had it done, and then put the negatives back into tins, where they remained with my seeing positives, as a rule, until months later. In retrospect, I am impressed by my young man’s doggedness in the face of time-consuming obstacles when I was busy with a lot of other things.” Gulick was using “what would now be regarded as trivial, not to say hopeless, equipment... a Wirgin camera which had a 3.5 Meyer Görlitz lens and roughly the 35mm equivalent of Eastman’s Brownie. For gauging light, I relied on guesswork and God’s mercy, assisted by a little tube that, when held up to the subject, admitted light in graded grays, one of which could be translated into a combination of f-stop setting and shutter speed.” While Gulick was being modest about his Wirgin’s capabilities, his photographic practices were not unusual for the era. The light meter he referred to is technically termed an “extinction meter,” and was by the end of the war – like its name – generally considered obsolete and inadequate in accuracy for color films requiring greater exposure accuracy. Edward V. Gulick, *Teaching in Wartime China: A Photo-Memoir, 1937-1939* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 5.

post-1941 Pacific War – a restructuring that in some cases aligned their visual practices with a far broader sense of “Christian internationalism.”⁵¹⁶ One young member of the wartime generation of missionaries to China (and also an accomplished photographer) described himself in terms that well represented this movement: “an idealist interested in social justice, a Christian pacifist with a strong commitment to the study of international relations...an individual with a Congregationalist’s conscience about the importance of work, and a paralytic inability to spend money joyfully.”⁵¹⁷ These broad characteristics, interwoven of course by differences in personal convictions and regional specificities, well suited many other missionaries – either those who arrived in China with such perceptions already set, or whose ways of thinking were shaped as such by the war and its chaotic upheaval. With these overlapping categories in mind, this chapter is divided roughly into three examinations: the first two focusing on American missionary imaging *of* specific wartime events in the public realm, and the third of private vernacular missionary imaging *in* wartime China. The former two involve uncovering visual practices hidden in plain sight behind well-known historical moments in wartime China; the latter, a patchwork history of invisibilities, silences, and fragmentary materials.

Negotiating Vision, Visualizing Violence: Nanjing

Almost exactly two weeks before *Life* printed both Capa and Magee’s images, a pair of American missionaries – Miner Searle Bates and Lewis Smythe – went out for a Sunday afternoon walk through Nanjing’s southern section.⁵¹⁸ Both of them were members of the United

⁵¹⁶ See Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States Between the Great War and the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

⁵¹⁷ Gulick, 3-4.

⁵¹⁸ Miner Searle Bates, first letter to United States Consul in Nanjing, John M. Allison, 6 May 1938; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 24.

Christian Missionary Society and also professors affiliated with the University of Nanking (金陵大學); Bates – named university vice-president that January in an effort to increase foreign protection – taught History, and Smythe, Sociology.⁵¹⁹ They were also on the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone, a group formed by foreign residents in Nanjing in the wake of the Japanese occupation to provide humanitarian care and some manner of protection for civilian refugees. The two had also personally witnessed atrocities committed against the Chinese civilian population in the city after Japanese troops led by General Iwane Matsui (松井石根) occupied it on December 13, 1937.⁵²⁰ Their writings to family and colleagues in the United States were filled with horrified (and at times, seemingly numbed) reports of violent sexual assaults on women, mass murders and torture, and other such brutalities, sometimes taking place before their eyes on the grounds of the university campus and near their mission residences.⁵²¹ Though neither Bates nor Smythe reported the Sunday walk as anything other than an innocuous stroll (and it may or may not have been), the Japanese occupation forces did not see it that way. Their activities that afternoon exposed the risks associated with wartime missionary visual practices and the perceived threat to Japanese control over visual documentation in occupied urban China. As the two missionaries quickly discovered, the battle for China was also a battle for control over visual production.

⁵¹⁹ Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, xxi, 3.

⁵²⁰ Yang Tianshi, “Chiang Kai-shek and the Battles for Shanghai and Nanjing,” in *The Battle for China*, 157-158.

⁵²¹ Some of these firsthand accounts from both Nanjing and elsewhere in 1937-1938 China, a number with names excised “because many of [the missionaries] are still engaged in the districts from which they write, and publication might prejudice their ability to continue”, were reprinted in Timperly’s *Japanese Terror in China*. Further extensive compilations have been completed using missionary and diplomatic documents, including Zhang’s volume as previously cited, as well as Timothy Brook, ed., *Documents on the Rape of Nanking* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999) and Suping Lu, ed., *A Mission Under Duress: The Nanjing Massacre and Post-Massacre Social Conditions Documented by American Diplomats* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2010).

That day, Bates carried with him a compact 35mm camera, perhaps a Leica or Contax rangefinder (*Images 94 and 95*); as he and Smythe walked along, he “took some pictures of street scenes and canals.”⁵²² “At about 4:15[PM],” the pair “turned into Chung Hwa Lu (中華路) and walked northward;” as Bates reported later, “[there] I took a picture across the street, and remained carrying my small camera in my hand. There were no soldiers in sight, and neither then or at any other time did I take a picture of anything military.”⁵²³ Shortly after this, “several trucks with [Japanese] soldiers, drawing good-sized guns on mounts behind them” overtook the duo, passing them from behind and heading north.⁵²⁴ Bates noted that “I did not wish to have any difficulties, and slipped my camera into my pocket.”⁵²⁵ With the trucks gone, Bates continued photographing, believing that there was little risk of military interference.



Image 94 (Leica II 35mm rangefinder camera) and Image 95 (Contax II 35mm rangefinder camera; both author’s collection and photographs)⁵²⁶

A few minutes later, however, “a group of soldiers came running southward and blocked our way. They were followed by an officer in a car.”⁵²⁷ The troops accompanying the trucks and

⁵²² Bates, first 6 May 1938 letter to Allison.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ (Left) Leica II 35mm rangefinder camera (c. 1932) with compact 3.5cm f/3.5 Leitz Elmar wide-angle lens detached at left; (right) Contax II 35mm rangefinder camera (c. 1936) with 5cm f/1.5 Carl Zeiss Sonnar lens.

⁵²⁷ Bates, first 6 May 1938 letter to Allison.

artillery had evidently spotted Bates and his camera, even as he tried to conceal it, and came to investigate. The confrontation that followed sparked a series of negotiations between the American missionaries and the Japanese authorities concerning photography as a form of potential surveillance, with perceived risks to the occupying military. Bates continued that

The officer asked me in English if I took pictures, and I said that I did, pulling out my camera to show to him, while stating that I had snapped buildings and scenes. The officer said, apparently following the statement of the soldier who pointed to me while speaking in Japanese, that I had photographed the Japanese army. I replied that I had not done so at all. The officer was very courteous, and seemed puzzled to know what to do next. I offered to give him my film so that they could see I had taken nothing military. He encouraged the idea, and I took out the film with some difficulty and loss, since the roll of 36 exposures had been only partly used and I was not accustomed to the process of removing a film before complete exposure (my camera requires complete use of the roll, then reverse winding for removal). The officer asked me for my name and address, which I gave with a card...He said that the pictures would be returned in about three days. Dr. Smythe was close at hand during the whole affair, and can answer questions if need be.⁵²⁸

Bates' voluntary surrender of his film – partially couched in technical terms that indicated his photographic knowledge, to a certain extent, and the small size of his camera (36 exposures was considered a large quantity compared to most other cameras, and was then available only to users of “miniature” 35mm cameras) – was accompanied by negotiations with the military authority present over what was considered acceptable to photograph (“buildings and scenes”) and what was not (“the Japanese army”). The handing over the film represented a transfer of power, from the photographer to the (presumably) photographed; after all, the film needed to be processed and examined in order to confirm Bates' story about his non-military visual subjects. At the same time, there was also a sense of ambiguity in what exactly to do with the photographer and his companion – they were in a public space, even if it was officially under some form of military control in occupied Nanjing. The “courteous” Japanese officer and the suspicious infantrymen

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

clearly had some sense that “unauthorized” photography of military activities was a potential security problem, but as Bates noted, also “seemed puzzled to know what to do next.”⁵²⁹

This was further articulated four days later, as Bates was called to the Japanese embassy in Nanjing at the request of a “Mr. Takatama” (高玉) of the Consular Police – an individual that Bates, a few months earlier, strongly suspected of procuring young Chinese women for forced sexual services.⁵³⁰ There, the officials carried on an extended conversation with Bates about what they termed the “the incident of May 1st,” with Consulate-General Yoshiyuki Hanawa (花輪義敬) reporting that his contacts in the Imperial Japanese Army were “very indignant at your taking picture[s]...[and reported] that you were stopped by soldiers while taking military pictures.”⁵³¹

Bates and Hanawa sparred verbally for some time, with the Consul-General suggesting that even if the missionary had not made any military photographs prior to being stopped, “then you were

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Miner Searle Bates, “Documents: Nanking Safety Zone, Number 48, Notes on the Present Situation, January 22, 1938, 9am,” reproduced in Brook, *Documents on the Rape of Nanking*, 94. “January 19, Mr. Takatama [高玉] of the Japanese Consular Police, came to the University [of Nanking] Middle School and asked for six women to wash clothes...Mr. Takatama said that they must be young and when asked why young[,] instead of being able to wash clothes[,] replied [that] they must be pretty (Bates).” This was by no means an unfounded suspicion. 8 days earlier, John Magee (also Bates’ colleague on the International Committee) reported in a letter to his wife that “yesterday in the hospital I saw a woman who had been stabbed in a number of places and her head almost severed. She had been taken with four other women from the University of Nanking by Japanese who said they needed to have some women wash for them and serve them. According to this woman’s story, the younger and prettier of them had been raped about forty times at night after washing clothes in the day time. She herself and the others had worked in the day and then were raped ten or twenty times at night. One day two soldiers told her to follow them and they took her to an empty house and there tried to cut off her head. She has a perfectly horrible cut in her neck and the marvel is that she is alive...She said some of them were officers.” Magee reported separately that “The people in the Japanese Embassy with the exception of one of the Consular Police [Takatama] who has proved a most disagreeable person, have tried to be of service and are ashamed of the terrible things the soldiers have done...” John Magee, personal letter to Faith Magee, 11 January 1938; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 188.

⁵³¹ Bates, 6 May 1938 letter to Allison. Hanawa, a career diplomat, is also listed in the 1942 *Orient Year-Book* (東洋年鑑), published by The Asia Statistics Company in Tokyo (formerly the Japan-Manchukuo Year Book, 英文日滿年鑑). His entry reads: “Foreign Service, b. Aug. 1892, Yamanashi-ken. Carrer: grad. Polit. Course Tokyo Imp. Univ. 1918; passed Higher Civil Service Exam 1928; Eleve-Cons. Canton and later Ottawa 1922, Seattle 1927; Cons. 1929; 3rd Secr. Emb. Manchukuo 1932; 2nd Emb. Secr. 1933; 1st Secr. Emb. Peking 1936; Secr. Foreign Office; Cons.-Gen. at Nanking 1938; Cons.-Gen. at Hankou; Nanking. Present post: Councillor Emb. to Manchukuo since Oct. 1940. Address: c/o Jap. Emb. Hsinking [新京].” Hanawa’s several international diplomatic stations explain his fluency in English as well as his intimate knowledge of occupation developments, having been posted in major Chinese cities before and after Nanjing, as well as the puppet state of Manchukuo (滿洲國).

about to take a picture,” (though he also conceded that the military letter reporting on Bates’ activities “was not very specific in its suggestion that [he] was stopped in the process of photographing”) – concluding that “[you] ought not to take pictures under present conditions.”⁵³² In return, Bates took to drawing a crude diagram to indicate his position in the street, “emphasizing that this was all apart from the actual taking of a picture.”⁵³³ In defending his and other foreigners’ ability to continue their personal photography, Bates pointed out in frustration what he considered a basic right to produce images in a public space, as well as seemingly unequal lack of restrictions afforded to Japanese photographers in the occupied city; “I said that if it was considered an offence to photograph a scene on a main street, when nothing military was involved, it would be better to give notice in advance. Certainly no foreigners realized that such was an offence, since several Japanese shops sell photographic equipment, and since Japanese are freely taking pictures everywhere.”⁵³⁴ To this end, Hanawa finally gave in and mentioned the elephant in the room – “the military,” he admitted, “consider that foreigners in Nanking are really supporting the Hankow Government” – a statement that he himself did not seem to take quite seriously, glancing at the other consular official in the room, Yasui Kasuya and “laugh[ing] heartily.”⁵³⁵ The missionary did not see the humor in the situation, and replied

⁵³² Miner Searle Bates, second letter to United States Consul in Nanjing, John M. Allison, 6 May 1938; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 25.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid. The “Hankow Government” here refers to the Nationalist government (國民政府) under Chiang Kai-shek, which at this time had retreated from its former capital of Nanjing to the inland city of Hankou (漢口), where Robert Capa made his photographs of anti-Japanese demonstrations. It was considered by the Japanese authorities to be both politically illegitimate and close to defeat (Hankou itself would fall to Japanese forces on October 27, 1938, after a pitched 4-month-long battle). Nanjing at this time was governed by the collaborationist Reformed Government of the Republic of China (中華民國維新政府) under chairman Liang Hongzhi (梁鴻志); within a year and a half, this was merged into the broader Reorganized Government of the Republic of China, under former left-leaning Nationalist politician Wang Jingwei (汪精衛) – considered a “race traitor” (漢奸) in the broader popular Chinese imagination during and after the war. See also Timothy Brook, “The Plan,” “Complicities/Nanjing,” “Assembling the Occupation State,” in *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 32-61; 125-158; 221-239. Also Stephen R. Mackinnon, *Wuhan 1938: War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 39-43.

with apparent seriousness that “American residents, whom I knew well, were not engaged in any sort of political and military activity, and were attending to their proper business. Such an attitude as that of the military was unfounded and irrelevant.”⁵³⁶

Yet, the military’s approach to foreign photographers in Nanjing was perhaps not as “unfounded and irrelevant” as Bates claimed. After all, unfavorable images of the Japanese invasion had reached – and clearly outraged – mass audiences worldwide in the months leading up to this small-scale “incident” involving the missionaries and the military. One was an iconic photograph taken on August 14, 1937 by Shanghai News (申江新報) and Hearst News cameraman H.S. Wong (王海升) – also with a Leica 35mm rangefinder – of a wounded Chinese baby screaming in the ruins of Shanghai’s South Station after a Japanese air raid (*Image 96*).



Image 96 (H.S. Wong photograph, *Life* magazine page, October 1937; *Life*, author’s collection)⁵³⁷

⁵³⁶ Ibid. The characters for Yasui Kasuya’s name still unidentified, but he is referenced in Minnie Vautrin’s diary entry of February 21, 1938; Minnie Vautrin; Suping Lu, ed., *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence, 1937-38* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 171. Vautrin, an educational missionary with the American Foreign Christian Missionary Society, was affiliated with Ginling Women’s College (金陵女子大學) in Nanjing and a key member of the International Committee responsible for the Nanking Safety Zone. Deeply involved in rescue work – the campus harbored over 10,000 refugees in the first five months of 1938 – and an eyewitness to a massive number of atrocities, Vautrin suffered a debilitating mental breakdown before returning to the United States in 1940 and committed suicide on May 14, 1941. Lu, xix-xxviii.

⁵³⁷ “The Camera Overseas: 136,000,000 People See This Picture Of Shanghai’s South Station,” *Life*, Vol. 3, No. 14, October 4, 1937. Almost exactly 60 years later, in 1998, this image became the target of Japanese revisionist manga

Life printed the image in its October 4, 1937 issue and estimated its public reception at over 136 million people.⁵³⁸ Many of the same readers, while settling into their seats at movie theaters in the US and other Western countries, were treated to dramatic newsreel footage of the “accidental” sinking of the US Navy gunboat *USS Panay* by other Japanese aircraft on December 12, 1937, produced by Norman Alley, a Universal camera operator on board the vessel who filmed the attack in its near-entirety.⁵³⁹ Though Hanawa and Bates could not predict the upcoming *Life* article featuring Magee’s film stills (though perhaps Bates, with his close association with Magee and others on the International Committee, was quietly anticipating it), American public opinion had by then strongly turned against the Japanese, reinforced by the

author Kobayashi Yoshinori in his popular nationalist manga series, *On War – Shin gōmanizumu sengen supesharu sensōron* [新ゴーマニズム宣言 *special* 戦争論]. The manga claimed that the famous crying baby photograph was in fact a staged scene, leading American audiences to be mindlessly taken in by the image widely reprinted in *Life* and other foreign magazines. Kobayashi’s argument hinges on a secondary frame – a still from H.S. Wong’s 16mm movie camera, which he used interchangeably with his Leica – showing a Chinese man placing the baby on the bombed platform, ostensibly to pose it for the cameraperson. In fact, the man was one of several civilians (possibly including the baby’s father, though this is not confirmed) ferrying the baby and another wounded toddler from another platform across the tracks, carrying one child at a time and putting them down in sequence. Newsreel film footage – likely shot by Wong or another cameraperson moments before the iconic still photograph was made – clearly displays this greater context. This footage, certainly not digitized or widely available at the time of *On War*’s publication in 1998, strongly refutes Kobayashi’s argument. Ironically, Kobayashi’s supposed exposé of the “fabricated” image is itself a fabrication, created by eliminating the broader visual contexts. *On War – Shin gōmanizumu sengen supesharu sensōron* [新ゴーマニズム宣言 *special* 戦争論] (Tokyo: Gentōsha, 1998), 158-160

⁵³⁸ Ibid. Another child, then nearly 4 years old, was with his mother and siblings at one of the railway stations in Nanjing when Japanese warplanes attacked transportation hubs in the lead-up to the December 1937 occupation of the city. Alexander Chuang, current director of the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum, remembered the terrifying roar of steam locomotives rushing through the station at high speed, attempting to evade the falling bombs by acting as moving rather than stationary targets. Meanwhile, railway cars full of screaming, panicked refugees – Chuang and his family among them – stood motionless at the station platforms, decoupled from the engines and easy targets for the attacking aircraft. Chuang commented sadly that the locomotives were not considered as easily replaced as raw manpower (in the eyes of the Nationalist government) and were more important to save compared to the civilian masses attempting to escape the invasion. He and his family survived the bombing raid and eventually made it out of Nanjing ahead of the Japanese occupation, traveling by truck (which Chuang also remembered as being ordered not to stop, lest fleeing people along the roads swarm and overload it) to unoccupied Hankou and later to Chongqing, in the interior, where they were reunited with Chuang’s father, a minor Nationalist official. Alexander Chuang, personal interview with the author, San Diego, California, 28 August 2008. See also Minnie Vautrin; Suping Lu, ed., *Terror in Minnie Vautrin’s Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence, 1937-38* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), x-xi.

⁵³⁹ “A Universal Cameraman Documents American History: ‘The Panay Incident,’” *Life*, Vol. 4, No. 2, January 10, 1938, 11-17; also Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China’s World War II, 1937-1945* (New York: Mariner Books, 2014), 132. For a contemporary American scholarly response, see also Miriam S. Farley, ed. *American Far Eastern Policy and the Sino-Japanese War* (New York: American Council Institute of Pacific Relations, 1938), 4-5.

wide circulation of images in international media – though most Americans, as a 1938 social study showed, were still undecided in regard to any direct intervention in the war.⁵⁴⁰ These sentiments were clearly not lost on the Japanese military officials in Nanjing and other occupied areas. In any case, the conversation ended without a clear conclusion; “Mr. Hanawa thanked me for my report, and said he would talk again with the military...The entire conversation was friendly in manner. I gathered the impression that the military letter was a vague explosion, and that the Consul-General was really trying to ease things if my account gave him a basis for doing so.”⁵⁴¹ Nonetheless, after leaving the Japanese embassy, Bates penned a letter of complaint to John M. Allison, the American consul in the city, which concluded:

What I did was done publicly on a main street, where there were no sentries or other indications of restriction. I made no effort to avoid the issue, and at some little loss and inconvenience to myself I offered my film for investigation. No report has been made from the film on the central point of whether I did or did not take a military picture. My ‘sincerity’ was met only with suspicion...[And] not only did Mr. Takatama of the Consular Police come here to summon me, but he has declared to at least one foreigner upon his own initiative, that I was in trouble because of taking military photographs...I resent any implication of guilt, and believe the Japanese authorities should clear it entirely with the military, for the sake of the organizations and interests with which I am connected, and for the welfare of other foreigners in the future. Commutative suspicions may result in serious trouble hereafter.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴⁰ Farley, ed. “Immediate Choices Before the United States,” subsection entitled “Public Opinion in United States,” in *American Far Eastern Policy and the Sino-Japanese War*, 51-52. The study concluded in part that the “average American” did “[feel] sympathetic toward China, especially if he has had any missionary contacts.” For a focused contemporary article on these newsreel and magazine images from a communications studies standpoint, see Gary Evans, “The Nanking Atrocity: Still and Moving Images, 1937-1944,” *Media and Communication*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Basel, Switzerland: Librello, 2013), 51-67. The article does contain a number of factual errors, however, and while Magee’s films and the *Life* article are mentioned, the missionary perspective is largely absent.

⁵⁴¹ Miner Searle Bates, second letter to United States Consul in Nanjing, John M. Allison, 6 May 1938; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 25-26.

⁵⁴² Ibid. Allison, incidentally, was the namesake for the “Allison Incident” four months earlier, when he was struck in the face by a Japanese soldier, while attempting to gather facts related to the abduction and rape of a Chinese female employee (whom Bates himself had interviewed after the attack; an interview that purportedly led Allison to the location of the rape) at the University of Nanking. See “STORY OF ASSAULT ON US EMBASSY OFFICIAL; Mr. John M. Allison Investigating Story of Chinese Woman Accusing Japanese of Rape,” *The North China Herald*, 2 February 1938, 162; “The Allison Incident” in *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, 3 February 1938, 148; “DIPLOMAT SLAPPED BY TOKYO SOLDIER; John M. Allison, American in Charge at Nanking, Struck – Protests to Japanese,” *New York Times*, 28 January 1938, 12.

These negotiations, however outwardly courteous and characterized by appeals to American neutrality and the legality of public photography of a “non-military nature,” uncovered the greater lack of control by the Japanese military over missionary (and other foreign) imaging in occupied China. Moreover, it displayed in some form the missionaries’ ability to leverage their multiple identities – as here, with Bates’ open-ended appeal to the American consul – to protect their personal mobility and visual practices in wartime.⁵⁴³ Incidents of this kind demonstrated that missionaries who owned cameras were capable of continuing their imaging if desired. And even as American missionaries in Nanjing submitted incredibly detailed losses compensation claims to the US Secretary of State – testifying to the theft or destruction of possessions by Japanese troops – photographic equipment was conspicuously absent from property lists, some that included items as oddly specific as “3 Dozen Mason Jars filled with canned fruit, pickles and jelly glasses.”⁵⁴⁴ Missionaries with cameras (like Bates and Magee) if they owned them to begin with, undoubtedly carried such valued equipment close at hand – and ready to use.

Moreover, the threats to military control that Consul-General Hanawa articulated were likely a verbal articulation of Japanese authorities’ persistent fears that the “on-the-ground” images and reports transmitted out of Nanjing by missionaries and other foreign members of the International Committee were strongly at odds with the image of occupation they wished to provide to the world. As Bates noted, Japanese photographers were seemingly free to engage in their photography of the city, though the American missionaries and other foreigners on the

⁵⁴³ This “small-scale” extraterritoriality in Japanese-occupied areas disappeared after the United States’ entry into the Pacific War after December 7, 1941 as will be discussed later in this chapter, along with the larger repercussions for Western missionaries in China.

⁵⁴⁴ James H. McCallum, “Losses of Personal and Household Furniture Sustained by James H. McCallum at His Residence at 209 Peh Hsia Lu, Nanking, between December 11, 1937 and January 1, 1938 (All losses computed in United States currency)” attached to American Consul R.L. Smyth, “Subject: Sino-Japanese Hostilities, 1937-1938, American Losses Resulting From, Reverend James H. McCallum, Claim of,” dated 23 August 1938; reproduced in Lu, *A Mission Under Duress*, 316-317.

International Committee unanimously perceived these visual practices as incongruously one-dimensional, particularly against the backdrop of widespread (and highly visible) violence against civilians. Smythe, for example, wrote in a letter to American supporters – marked “DO NOT PUBLISH!” ostensibly for safety reasons – that “we also better understand Japanese propaganda! In the midst of such great suffering in January [the month in which Smythe and others reported a horrifically high number of mass rapes and civilian executions], Japanese news squads went around staging pictures of Japanese soldiers giving candy to a child or an [Imperial Japanese] Army doctor examining 20 children. But these acts were not repeated when no camera was around!”⁵⁴⁵

Another missionary on the International Committee, George A. Fitch, formally affiliated with the YMCA in Nanjing, also noted plans for “moving pictures [to] be taken [by the occupation forces] of happy people waving flags, and welcoming the new regime [during a January 1 celebration of the Japanese occupation at the Nanjing Drum Tower]...[while] the burning of the city continues [and] cases of girls of twelve and thirteen years of age being raped or abducted are reported.”⁵⁴⁶ Numerous Japanese propaganda posters plastered on walls and buildings across the city “[said] that they are now looking after the welfare of the people” – visual displays of claimed benevolence that were utterly at odds with the massive bloodshed taking place in the same urban spaces (*Image 97*).⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁵ Lewis S.C. Smythe, letter to American mission supporters “Dear Friends in God’s Country,” from the University of Nanking, 8 March 1938; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 25.

⁵⁴⁶ George A. Fitch, personal diary entry, 30 December 1937; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 98.

⁵⁴⁷ Fitch, personal diary, “New Year’s Day” [entry written across 1, 11, and after 19 January 1938, referenced in text but otherwise undated]; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 100-101.



Image 97 (Japanese propaganda poster from occupied China, after 1937-1938; Frank Mount Pleasant Special Collections and Archives, Chapman University)⁵⁴⁸

“One poster,” Fitch noted, “showed a smiling Chinese woman and child kneeling before a [Japanese] soldier who was giving them a loaf of bread...[while another] picture [was captioned] ‘Soldiers and Chinese children happy together, playing joyfully in the parks. Nanking is now the best place for all countries to watch, for here one breathes the atmosphere of peaceful residence and happy work.’”⁵⁴⁹ It was perhaps this stark contrast between military propaganda and the brutal reality, along with the public boast – ironically cutting both ways – that “Nanking is now the best place for all countries to watch” that further galvanized the actions that Fitch took next. Not long after encountering the propaganda posters, and already an eyewitness to widespread atrocities, Fitch obtained a military exit permit to travel through the lines to occupied Shanghai.⁵⁵⁰ On January 19, 1938, he boarded a crowded Japanese military train departing the

⁵⁴⁸ Maker unknown, “See how kind and affable the Japanese Army is” (請看日軍和藹可親的態度), trans. Tanya Cao, Chapman University Frank Mount Pleasant Library of Special Collections and Archives, <http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/japanese_propaganda_posters/1/>, accessed 28 April 2016. While it is unclear whether or not this poster was among those posted in Nanjing, the style of the imagery and the accompanying message closely mirrors the propaganda posters that Fitch, Magee, and other missionaries encountered in the city during the massacre.

⁵⁴⁹ Fitch, personal diary, “New Year’s Day” [entry written across 1, 11, and after 19 January 1938, referenced in text but otherwise undated]; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 100-101. Fitch stated in his entry that “this translation was made by a member of my staff, and I can vouch for its authenticity, incredible as it may seem.”

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

embattled city. Fitch noted later that he was “a bit nervous,” and it was not solely because he was in a railway car packed with a large and “unsavory crowd of soldiers,” in his own words.⁵⁵¹ Rather, “sewed into the lining of my camel’s-hair great-coat,” he recorded, “were eight reels of 16mm. negative movie film of atrocity cases, most of which were taken in the University [of Nanking] Hospital.”⁵⁵² This was none other than John Magee’s raw film footage – and it was on its way to an international public.⁵⁵³

When Fitch arrived in Shanghai, having avoided detection of the films during Japanese security checks, “as soon as I could...I took them to the Kodak office for processing[;] they were so terrible that they had to be seen to be believed...the Kodak representative rushed through four sets for me and of course I was asked to show the film at the American Community Church and one or two other places.”⁵⁵⁴ It is not surprising that the Community Church on Avenue Petain in Shanghai’s French Concession, built and attended by a thriving American expatriate community, was the first place Fitch publicly screened the resulting films.⁵⁵⁵ Mirroring missionary visual practices in peacetime, churches – with their capacity for mass congregations-turned-audiences as well as projection equipment presumably ready for use – became the prime location for this visual dissemination. And in addition to Magee’s film production in Nanjing and Fitch’s smuggling of the raw footage for processing in Shanghai, Protestant missionary networks carried

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid. Coincidentally, the Kodak office to which Fitch took Magee’s raw footage was the same facility that processed Jessie and Harold Henkes’ films produced in prewar Hebei of 1931-1937, the subject of another dissertation chapter on interwar missionary filmmaking in North China.

⁵⁵⁵ John Craig William Keating, *A Protestant Church in Communist China: Moore Memorial Church Shanghai* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2012), 104. This particular church, built in 1925 in a streamlined Neo-Gothic style, still exists today and serves an international Protestant Christian community in Shanghai; the author visited it in 2011, but did not realize at the time that it was the building in which many of his research contacts – missionary children – worshipped and gathered while they were students at the pre-PRC Shanghai American School, which was housed in a set of Georgian revival buildings across the street (also still standing in nearly the same exterior condition as they were evacuated in 1949-1950, and now occupied by PLA Naval Research offices).

the films out of China and to an unlikely place: Japan. As Fitch noted, the audience that was stunned by the first screenings also included individuals thinking of ways to expose broader publics to the films' contents, explicitly utilizing transnational Christian connections to achieve this. As he noted in his diary:

Miss Muriel [sic] Lester of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (British) happened to see one of the [film] showings [in Shanghai] and expressed the thought that if some of the Christian and political leaders in Japan could see the film they would work for an immediate cessation of hostilities. She offered to go to Japan and show it there to selected groups if we would supply her with a copy. I didn't have much faith in the success of her plan but nevertheless gave her one of the copies. . . . Some weeks later she reported that she had shown it before a small group of leading Christians in Tokyo, but that they felt only harm could come from an effort to show it further so she finally abandoned her plan.⁵⁵⁶

It is not surprising that the "leading Christians in Tokyo" felt it too much of a political and institutional risk to continue publicizing the films, as the footage was extremely graphic and Magee's extensive descriptions highly damning. Interestingly, Magee's introduction to the film also displayed some idea – or at least, a dim hope – that the film might somehow make it to Japan and expose audiences there to brutalities in occupied China, along with key differentiation between the ostensibly uninformed Japanese civilian population and the Japanese military behind the atrocities. Channeling Christian internationalist ideologies, paired with the possibility that his films might act as a visual "missionary agent" in this context, Magee noted that

These pictures have been taken with no thought of stirring up a spirit of revenge against the Japanese, but with a desire to make all people, Japanese included, realize how horrible this war has been and to determine that every legitimate means should be used to stop this conflict manufactured by the Japanese military. The photographer has often been to Japan and knows how beautiful that country is, and that many noble people are to be found there.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid. The Fellowship of Reconciliation was a primarily Protestant Christian pacifist organization, consisting of various allied groups – including some closely aligned with Quaker communities – across Europe and the United States, active in anti-war, disarmament, and related Christian activism in international political spheres since the First World War. Muriel Lester, an English Baptist and pacifist leader, was one of the Travelling Secretaries for the Fellowship who was then in East Asia; she had earlier supported Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent protests in interwar India and was later twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. For a biography of Lester, see Jill Wallis, *Mother of World Peace: The Life of Muriel Lester* (London: Hissarlik Press, 1993). See also Joseph Kosek, *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

If the people of Japan could really know how the war was made, and how it has been conducted, a vast number of them would be horrified.⁵⁵⁷

The footage that the eight reels contained (later re-edited into 12 individual films altogether) was indeed horrifying. Magee's descriptions narrated the atrocities in extreme detail; to give an idea of the enormity of the events partially visualized in his footage, the missionary began by stating that "the pictures shown herewith give but a fragmentary glimpse of the unspeakable things that happened following the Japanese occupation of Nanking on December 13, 1937. If the photographer had more film and more time, he could have taken a great many more scenes."⁵⁵⁸ Then he noted – this statement quoted in part by *Life* – that "great care had to be exercised not to be seen so as not to have his camera smashed or confiscated. It was for this reason that he could not take pictures of people being killed or of the vast numbers of dead lying about in many parts of the city."⁵⁵⁹ The first footage that did not show aerial bombings (which were filmed from a distance, as aircraft targeted multiple areas in the city before occupation) was shot three days after the Japanese army entered the city, and consisted of "Chinese women on Shanghai Road [上海路], Nanking, kneeling and begging Japanese soldiers for the lives of their sons and husbands when these were collected at random on the suspicion of being ex-soldiers. Thousands of civilians were taken in this way, bound with ropes, carried to the river bank in Hsiakwan [下關], to the edges of ponds, and to vacant spaces where they were done to death by

⁵⁵⁷ John G. Magee, "Introduction of Magee's Film," n.d.; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 202. In an April 1938 letter written to the Rev. J.C. McKim from occupied Shanghai, Magee repeated the words of his introduction almost verbatim, noting with greater detail that "I have visited Japan a number of times and once had the pleasure of living with my family alongside of your sister at Mayabashi [sic; Maebashi 前橋]. It is a beautiful country and I thought the people charming. How to reconcile the Japan that I have seen and the savagery that I have seen here is a problem that I have not solved yet." Magee personal letter to McKim, 2 April 1938; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 199-201.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 201.

machine-guns, bayonets, rifles, and even hand grenades.”⁵⁶⁰ These scenes were filmed at a distance, through a damaged window of a vacant house, using a telephoto lens attached to Magee’s Bell & Howell Filmo 70D 16mm movie camera. As the women kneel and gesture frantically, the camera turns on and off several times; Magee likely attempted avoid being spotted by the crowd of Japanese infantrymen – armed with bayoneted rifles and rounding up a group of Chinese men, some wearing white armbands, before marching them out of sight (and presumably to their deaths). The image’s shakiness, magnified by the telephoto lens and combined with the long-distance shot, referenced Magee’s need to film surreptitiously (“great care had to be exercised not to be seen”) and reminded viewers of the person whose hands and body held the running camera.⁵⁶¹ The same telephoto lens, rotated out of the way when not in use, appears as an out-of-focus silhouette at the film frame’s top right corner in wide-angle shots, a subtle reference (even if unintentional, caused by the turret lens attachment on Magee’s Filmo) to the camera’s existence in the environment along with that of its user (*Images 98 and 99*).



Image 98 (Magee film still 1) and Image 99 (Magee film still 2; both Yale Divinity School Library)⁵⁶²

⁵⁶⁰ John G. Magee, “Film 2,” scene 2; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 203.

⁵⁶¹ These visual cues were further articulated (and appropriated by wartime and postwar Hollywood cinema) as a result of large scale military filmmaking during World War II. As such, Magee’s filmmaking fit into a historical moment that was being primed for such film production and reception, though as this section concludes, he was likely ahead of his time as an “amateur” filmmaker. In their afterlives, Magee’s images of violence are now framed by the greater body of 20th century war films and ways of seeing modern war that are such a large part of global visual consciousness. See Patricia Zimmermann, “Cameras and Guns: 1941-1949” in *Reel Histories: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 90-111.

⁵⁶² John G. Magee, film stills from Reel 9, RG 242 John Magee Family Papers, Yale Divinity School Library, <http://divinity-adhoc.library.yale.edu/Nanking/Magee_reel_9_clip.mp4>, accessed 9 May 2016. The black spot in the upper right hand corner is the disengaged telephoto lens.

Despite these visual cues indicating Magee's filmmaking presence on the ground, much of the violence referenced in the film was visualized after the fact – unburied corpses lying where they fell, refugee camps packed with throngs of displaced Chinese civilians, and wounded and dying individuals undergoing treatment in the University of Nanking hospital. The latter scenes, both in visual framing and textual description, mirrored the kinds of medical imaging that missionaries engaged with prior to the war; Magee filmed nurses and doctors examining horribly injured patients at close distance, focusing on their wounds, while the textual descriptions accompanying these scenes sometimes drifted into highly clinical language, perhaps as a result of collecting information about the patients directly from the medical staff.⁵⁶³ One example from Magee's description noted that a man filmed in the hospital had “six bayonet wounds, one of which penetrated his pleura giving rise to a general sub-cutaneous Emphysema. He will recover.”⁵⁶⁴ However, this kind of imaging format was leveraged not merely to promote medical missionaries' humanitarian care for Chinese individuals (though this was part of the implicit narrative), but rather to point back to the wartime events – and military brutalities – that caused the grotesque wounds and deaths.

⁵⁶³ Magee, “Film 3,” scenes 10-12; “Film 4,” scene 1; “Film 11,” scene 4; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 206-207; 224.

⁵⁶⁴ Magee, “Film 4,” scene 5; reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 208. Portions of the medical descriptions likely originated with Dr. Robert O. Wilson, who was personally affiliated with the Methodist Church (having been born to American Methodist missionaries in Nanjing) and one of only two primary physicians at the University of Nanking hospital. See Zhang, 391. Coincidentally (in the author's eyes), another Methodist medical missionary, Dr. Robert E. Brown in Wuhu [蕪湖], just south of Nanjing in Anhui Province, used the hospital's cars to drive Chinese refugee women away from areas where Japanese troops were known to search for them during the broader occupation of smaller cities around Nanjing. As Brown recorded in a personal letter, “I did not hesitate to go out into the city with one or both of our cars to pick up women wherever I learned they were in hiding. On some days I made as many as four trips bringing back carloads of younger women and girls. If our cars had never rendered any other service, they have been worth far more than their cost during these few weeks and I hope some way may be found to express special thanks to the friends in Albion and Ann Arbor, Michigan, who gave these cars to me. Without them, it would have been utterly impossible to have saved these women or to have brought in provisions to keep the institution [Wuhu General Hospital or 蕪湖醫院] going.” The “friends in...Ann Arbor” likely included congregational contributors from the Methodist – later First United Methodist – Church (which still exists on State Street in the city). Brown himself received his MD from the University of Michigan Medical School in 1918. Brown, personal letter, 17 December 1937; reproduced in Lu, *Mission Under Duress*, 12.

As such, Magee used the films as a focal point for numbingly detailed textual descriptions of violence against civilians, the images' indexicality serving to heighten the horror of that which was unseen. One particularly graphic example was represented on film in shots of an elderly woman, whose images in the film were followed by "the picture show[ing] the bodies of...16 and 14 year old girls, each lying in a group of people slain at the same time." While the images were visually jarring in their own right, the events that lay behind them were even more so. The woman was in fact the survivor of a brutal attack that Magee reported at such breathless length, not sparing horrific details, that the full text could not possibly be read or even accurately quoted while watching the film. One representative portion of his description reads:

On December 13 [1937, the day Nanjing was occupied], about thirty [Japanese] soldiers came to a Chinese house at #5 Hsing Lu Kao in the southeastern part of Nanking, and demanded entrance. The door was opened by the landlord, a Mohammedan named Ha. They killed him immediately with a revolver and also Mr. Hsia, who knelt before them...begging them not to kill anyone else. Mrs. Ha asked them why they had killed her husband and they shot her dead. Mrs. Hsia was dragged out from under a table in the guest hall where she had tried to hide with her one-year old baby. After being stripped and raped by one or more men, she was bayoneted...and then had a bottle thrust into her vagina, the baby being killed with a bayonet. Some soldiers then went to the next room where [there] were Mrs. Hsia's parents, aged 76 and 74, and her two daughters aged 16 and 14...[after executing the grandparents], the two girls were then stripped, the older being raped by 2-3 men, and younger by 3. The older girl was stabbed afterwards and a cane was rammed into her vagina. The younger girl was bayoneted also but was spared the horrible treatment that had been meted out to her sister and her mother...The last murders in the house were of Ha's two children, aged 4 and 2 years respectively. The older was bayoneted and the younger split down through the head with a sword.⁵⁶⁵

Enacting a kind of vernacular investigative filmmaking, Magee not only filmed the survivors and victims of the killings, but also collaborated directly with the subjects of his film to collect as many eyewitness details and additional footage as possible. The missionary, likely using linguistic skills developed for his peacetime mission work, assembled his descriptions by interviewing the survivors of the killings, not least the 8-year-old girl who managed to hide in

⁵⁶⁵ Magee Film 4, scene 9, reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 209.

another room of the house (“where lay the body of her mother”) after being bayoneted, subsisting – along with an uninjured 4-year-old sister – “on puffed rice and rice crusts that form in the pan when the rice is cooked [鍋巴]” for two weeks, surrounded by their murdered family members.⁵⁶⁶ “It was from the older of these children,” Magee wrote, “that the photographer was able to get part of the story, and verify and correct certain details told him by a neighbor and a relative...after 14 days the old woman shown in the picture returned to the neighborhood and found the two children. It was she who led the photographer to an open space where the bodies had been taken afterwards. Through questioning her and Mrs. Hsia’s brother and the little girl, a clear knowledge of the terrible tragedy was gained.”⁵⁶⁷ On a separate occasion, guided by the children and their uncle (“Mrs. Hsia’s brother”), Magee visited the house with his camera and filmed the survivors standing in various spaces related to their testimonies, visualizing specific parts of the house related to the killings; “a little courtyard off the room where their two older sisters...were raped and killed,” “a table upon which one of these tragedies occurred [with] blood...on the table and on the floor,” “the room where their mother was raped and killed,” and even the “spot in the courtyard where the Mohammedan Ha was killed, the blood still showing on the stone.”⁵⁶⁸ To underscore the stark incongruity between the atrocities and Japanese propaganda – visually echoing George Fitch’s (and other missionaries’) reports on such discrepancies – Magee made sure to film “a Japanese poster on the wall of the very next house to that in which these tragedies occurred. A Japanese soldier is shown carrying a small child and giving a bucket of rice its mother and sugar and other edibles to its father. The writing on the

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 209-210.

⁵⁶⁸ Magee Film 7, scene 6, reproduced in Zhang, *Eyewitnesses to Massacre*, 216.

upper right hand corner says: ‘Return to your homes! We will give you rice to eat! Believe in the Japanese army! You will be saved and helped.’”⁵⁶⁹

In producing the film and circulating it, Magee hoped that he might lead international audiences to “believe *not* in the Japanese army,” but rather in the power of filmic indexicality and missionary embeddedness, contrary to propaganda on the ground. As with the idea that his work might serve as a filmic expose for Japanese civilian audiences, Magee perceived that the raw footage was going on to larger audiences beyond his knowledge or direct control. In preparation for this, he included notes in his description for later editors, saying for example that “the scene shown here should be joined to Film 4, Case [scene] 9 – the story of a household of eleven persons who were killed as it is the same case.”⁵⁷⁰ The carefully categorized, visible physical results of atrocities, viewed alongside Magee’s textual reports detailing un-visualized events, constituted a highly damning record of the Japanese army’s atrocities in Nanjing. But in a way, this format – and several other key contextual factors – contributed to the film’s undoing. As mentioned previously, the extensive descriptions of violence often outpaced the onscreen images, making it extremely difficult to match vision with text, particularly when the films were screened and narrated for a mass audience (intertitles, when introduced later, were also gross simplifications of Magee’s reports). This disjuncture meant that few audiences could take in Magee’s documentary material as-produced; even in the later historical record, Magee’s film descriptions, have served a stronger purpose in texts on the Nanjing Massacre, stripped from the visual material they were originally meant to accompany.

Moreover, the fact that these films were shot by a missionary and circulated through missionary networks meant that they were on the one hand accessible to a larger group of

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

church-affiliated audiences – but on the other, also divorced from popular mass media such as the news organizations that stunned a much larger international population with the *Panay* footage and the *Chinese Baby*. While Magee’s stills and fragmentary descriptions reached *Life* readers with Henry Luce’s intervention, his films and larger reports remained largely in the circulatory networks of American missionary organizations. The format of missionary film screening (scheduling a special screening date in a church or auditorium, narrating the silent film as it was projected, and responding to audience questions and comments afterward) also further limited its distribution, requiring significant labor on the part of its lone narrator before and during screening – in this case, George Fitch. Fitch apparently attempted to show the films in various churches and Christian organizations in the United States, but grew tired of process and the lack of greater response and by 1939, had ceased presentations.⁵⁷¹ Even when confronted with such graphic footage, American church audiences were still wrestling with the larger questions of nonintervention and isolationism on a political scale – not to mention that the invasion of China progressed so rapidly that Nanjing was, in the eyes of many outside observers, soon one of several major cities to fall to the Japanese.

Finally Magee’s role, from a broader perspective, was as a missionary, not a filmmaker or newsreel cameraman. As *Life* referenced it, “the most dreadful pictures of the rape of Nanking *this amateur photographer* [my emphasis] could not take.” Despite his extensive footage and background reporting, Magee was clearly labeled an “amateur,” a term that carried a greater lack of cachet and stigmatic shades of unprofessionalism in the 1930s than in later periods.

Vernacular filmmaking, even with such content as war atrocities and mass murder, simply operated on a different scale compared to the filmic format, mass distribution, and audience

⁵⁷¹ Evans, 57.

accessibility held by professional newsreels or Hollywood-produced films. While *Life* attempted to parlay Magee's amateur status into a picture of dramatic on-the-spot filmmaking by a neutral individual confronted by violence, it was also a double-edged sword. The statements "the most dreadful pictures...[he] could not take" and "besides, he was too busy, like other foreign missionaries...saving what civilians he could" (particularly without seeing the larger, more traumatizing body of Magee's films and texts) likely led skeptical readers to imagine that the few poorly-reproduced film stills were all that the missionary could manage, and that (of course!) his "real work" was in the mission church, not behind a movie camera. In a way, world audiences, by virtue of their contemporary visual literacy, were not yet ready to take such films seriously, and the chasm between the amateur and professional worlds of filmmaking meant that Magee's work was never seen as widely as he had hoped. In a way, however, Magee's shaky handheld camera and personal embeddedness in the war zone prefigured later trends in filmmaking – as wartime military filmmaking, postwar Hollywood's adoption of "gritty" handheld cinematography, and on-site television reporting conditioned mass audiences to appreciate (and to look for) such forms of visual "realism."⁵⁷² And his films and film descriptions, though yet to be more widely seen and discussed, formed a focal point for historical responses to present-day Japanese nationalist denials of the Nanjing Massacre – as well as major studies by both Chinese and foreign scholars focusing on the violence that appeared in Magee's images and greater atrocities that took place outside the camera's frame.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² Zimmerman, 90-111.

⁵⁷³ Daqing Yang, "The Challenges of the Nanjing Massacre," in *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 140; Takashi Yoshida, "A Battle over History in Japan," in *ibid.*, 106-107. See also Kobayashi Yoshinori, *On War – Shin gōmanizumu sengen supesharu sensōron* [新ゴーマニズム宣言 special 戦争論] (Tokyo: Gentōsha, 1998), 158-160.

Interestingly, Magee and his missionary colleagues' experiences in Nanjing were reframed in a different cinematic light when he, Miner Searle Bates, George Fitch, and Lewis Smythe appeared as filmic characters in 21st century dramatizations of the Nanjing Massacre.⁵⁷⁴ While the other missionaries' photographic roles are entirely absent from these films, Magee and his camera stand in as a reference to contemporary visual documentation of the atrocities, signaling to audiences that yes, there was a filmmaker on the scene (though his actions are depicted, somewhat ironically, in large scales of production and circulation denied to his films in their original historical contexts). In a way, the framing and reframing of Magee's Nanjing images – then in *Life*'s article, now in commercial dramas and docudramas – reflects the power of vernacular imaging by a missionary “eyewitness” in wartime China, as well as the slipperiness of such images, which simultaneously shock and defy clear-cut definitions across time.

National Identity and Mass Imaging: West China

As millions of refugees and core elements of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government retreated to Southwest China ahead of the invasion, American missionaries who elected to leave their prewar locations or were already in the path of the nationwide exodus followed suit. Chongqing (重慶), Chengdu (成都), Kunming (昆明), and Guilin (桂林) – formerly peripheral cities in comparison to Shanghai, Beijing, and prewar capital Nanjing in the east – were reshaped as wartime metropolises, centers for industrial production, higher education, popular culture, and Nationalist military resistance.⁵⁷⁵ American Presbyterian educator Gerald F. Winfield was among

⁵⁷⁴ Bates, Fitch, Magee, and Smythe are featured in the docudrama *Nanking* (2007), played respectively by actors Graham Sibley, John Getz, Hugo Armstrong, and Stephen Dorff. In *John Rabe* (2009), Magee is a minor character portrayed by Shaun Lawton, while Smythe is played by Christian Rodska. The latter film features missionary surgeon Dr. Robert O. Wilson in a much more prominent role, played by Steve Buscemi of *Boardwalk Empire* fame.

⁵⁷⁵ See also Pingchao Zhu, *Wartime Culture in Guilin, 1938-1944: A City at War* (New York: Lexington Books, 2015); Isabel Brown Cook and Christina Kelly Gilmartin with Yu Xiji, *Prosperity's Predicament: Identity, Reform,*

the missionaries who escaped to Chongqing in “Free China,” 1260 kilometers southwest of his prewar post in Shandong, where he was a specialist in public health and parasitology instructor in Cheeloo University’s (基督教齊魯大學) medical college.⁵⁷⁶ The university (also known as Shantung Christian University), along with 47 other religious, private, and national universities, had itself evacuated from North China to West China with a large portion of its faculty and students – joining the wartime West China Union University (華西協和大學) as one of several guest institutions.⁵⁷⁷ While in Sichuan province (spending time in both Chongqing and Chengdu, where the West China Union University was located), Winfield continued his biomedical and agricultural studies, attempting to combat infectious disease in areas of West China that lacked sanitary infrastructure. Some of this work became the raw material for a postwar book entitled *China: The Land and the People*, an eclectic scientific, historical, and cultural analysis mixed with snippets of autobiography.⁵⁷⁸ While the grander schemes of Nationalist military operations, political alliances with western powers, and Japanese aerial bombing of interior cities largely swirled around him, Winfield wrote and photographed as an uprooted American missionary, one whose responsibilities and regional base were reconfigured by the war.⁵⁷⁹ And as a faculty member affiliated with Cheeloo University in exile, Winfield documented the institution’s

and Resistance in Rural Wartime China, ed. Gail Hershatter and Emily Honig (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, Publishers 2013); contemporary analyses include H.H. Kung (孔祥熙), *China’s Wartime Progress* (Chungking: The China Information Committee, 1939); Hubert Freyn, *Free China’s New Deal* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943); Lawrence K. Rosinger, *China’s Wartime Politics, 1937-1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945).

⁵⁷⁶ Charles Hodge Corbett, *Shantung Christian University* (New York: United Board for Christian Colleges in China, 1955), 219-220. See also Winfield obituary, “Gerald Winfield, Ex-Chief of AID Training, Dies,” *The Washington Post*, 25 July 1984.

⁵⁷⁷ Corbett, 237-240.

⁵⁷⁸ Gerald F. Winfield, *China: The Land and the People* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1948), specifically chapters on “Health,” 104-145, and “Starting with Sanitation,” 255-275.

⁵⁷⁹ Winfield, 112-135. Making a comparison to the war, Winfield noted that “[When] China was at war for eight years, 1937-1945...most of her cities crowded with defenseless civilians were bombed repeatedly [and] millions of ill-equipped soldiers were slaughtered in battle...And yet from 30 to 35 million Chinese died from fecal-borne diseases during the same period of time. At least three times as many people died from this group of diseases during this eight-year period, or in any other eight-year period, as were killed by the war.” Winfield, 112-113.

continued efforts at medical and scientific education for undergraduates even under wartime constraints. As such, his photographs – mostly made with a Leica and occasionally other cameras when available (sometimes a Rolleiflex or a 4x5-inch press camera) – represented an embedded perspective on wartime communities in the western interior. Most specifically, the images framed Chinese resistance as a mass phenomenon, visualized in terms of collective action in labor, education, and political participation.

The majority of Winfield's photographs that still exist can be categorized in part as a cross section of wartime modernity juxtaposed against the stark environmental, geographical, and military challenges that West China faced between 1939 and 1945 – obstacles that were overcome by mass labor. Winfield made numerous photographs of transportation methods employed in the interior, imaging riverboats pulled over rapids by teams of laborers as well as similar man-powered wheelbarrows plying the rural with loads of cargo. But while these transportation modes were quite common in missionary imaging before the war, Winfield's images were framed in the context of the incredible physical efforts that moved entire communities and industries to Sichuan – China saved quite literally by the blood and sweat of its population in a time of national emergency. As Winfield noted in his postwar analysis,

[To 'international' construction projects such as the Burma Road and military airfields] may be added the story of a purely Chinese accomplishment, the transporting of two hundred thousand tons of machinery to unoccupied territory in the summer of 1939. As city after city fell to the enemy...the Chinese retreated into the mountains of the interior, taking with them as much war and educational equipment as could be lifted by human backs. Whole arsenals were moved upriver...dozens of types of machinery and equipment from...other fallen cities were stripped from factories and shipped out under the Japanese guns...Loads of four to six tons were carried in huge rigs designed so that more than one hundred men could lift and carry at the same time...Smaller machines, and boxes and bales of parts and supplies were carried aboard [fleets of transport boats] by the tens of thousands to the rhythmic swaying of elastic carrying poles on the shoulders of two, four, or six men...who bore them down slippery banks and across narrow plank gangways.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁸⁰ Winfield, 215-218.

Winfield's photographs of men straining at tow cables, hauling boats up the Yangtze River, and overloaded carts pulled along dirt roads by fatigued but muscular laborers emphasized not so much the individuals involved but the communal work that enabled the successful 1938-1939 retreat and continued even as the Japanese attempted to invade the southwestern provinces – first by military campaigns and then by massive aerial bombing attacks when the ground forces were stalled (*Images 100 and 101*).



Image 100 (Laborers pulling transport boats, West China, c. 1942-1943) and Image 101 (Laborers pulling cart, West China, c. 1942-1943; both Winfield-Sullivan Family Collection)⁵⁸¹

Visually and meaningfully, Winfield's images aligned well with themes in Chinese nationalist and leftist cinema that glorified collective labor as a method to resist Japanese aggression before and during the war years. *The Big Road* (大路), a popular leftist film produced by the Lianhua Film Company (聯華影業公司) in 1934, three years before the Second Sino-Japanese War, prophetically concluded with a group of laborers building a modern highway (the eponymous “big road”) to carry military supplies, only to be strafed and killed on the job by a harassing

⁵⁸¹ The author is indebted to Margaret Winfield Sullivan and Charley Sullivan (Winfield's daughter and grandson, respectively) for generous access to these photographs, which remained with the Winfield family even after Gerald Winfield's papers were archived with the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health. Charley Sullivan kindly (and literally) brought these to my attention in early October 2014, and Margaret and her siblings provided permission to use these photographs in the dissertation. See Charley Sullivan and Margaret Winfield Sullivan, personal emails to the author, 5, 7, 8, 9 October 2014.

Japanese warplane. Visually resurrected by double-exposure cinematography, the workers' "spirits" dramatically arose from their corpses to continue building the road on screen, accompanied by the martial strains of patriotic music. Coincidentally, Winfield was acquainted with exiled Chinese filmmakers during his time in the interior, and made specific mention of Shen Xiling (沈西苓), a prominent playwright and director employed by both Lianhua and the Nationalist Central Film Studio (中央電影公司) in his postwar study.⁵⁸² Though Shen died shortly before Winfield's arrival, it is possible that Winfield discussed visual production with other individuals affiliated with these studios – though a definitive link remains to be found.

Collective education and political participation were also Winfield's primary subjects. Along with candid portraits of prominent scholars who had joined the ranks of educators in wartime exile – among them John Lossing Buck (an American Presbyterian agricultural economist and Pearl Buck's ex-husband) and Marion Yang (former director of the First National Midwifery School) – Winfield turned his lens to student groups affiliated with Cheeloo and West China Union University.⁵⁸³ The students were photographed in their cramped living spaces, with one typed caption reading "fourteen girls lived in this one small room in the dormitory of

⁵⁸² Winfield, 221. His account focuses primarily on the personal tragedy that befell Shen while in Chongqing; the director had left his wife and two small children in Shanghai in 1938 "rather than risk the trip to bomb-gutted Chungking," and requested that they come to him only after the war situation stabilized. "Mr. Shen... was overjoyed at the prospect of seeing his family – especially the baby, who must by now be a sizeable son. By telegram he followed their tedious progress by bus, train, and foot across South China toward Chungking, and the day of their arrival found Mr. Shen elaborately prepared for the family reunion." But just before the family reached Chongqing, the bus on which they were traveling rolled off of a mountain road, killing Shen's wife and children. Shen, traumatized and grief-stricken, died of typhoid fever in 1940, one year after completing his last project with the Central Film Studio, *Children of China* (中華兒女). Yingjing Zhang and Zhiwei Xiao, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 303-304. See also Laikwan Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema: The Chinese Left-Wing Cinema Movement, 1932-1937* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002).

⁵⁸³ For Buck's seminal prewar studies, see John Lossing Buck, *Chinese Farm Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930); and *Land Utilization in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937). For Marion Yang's contributions and controversies in relation to public health, reproductive medicine, and maternity in modern China, see Tina Phillips Johnson, *Childbirth in Republican China: Delivering Modernity* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011) and Yuehtsen Juliette Chung, *Struggle for National Survival: Eugenics in Sino-Japanese Contexts* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 118-127.

Cheeloo University while it was refugeeing in West China. The room was so crowded that all of its occupants could not sit down to study at the same time.”⁵⁸⁴ Similar tight framing showed students crowding around a Chinese instructor to get a good look at a laboratory demonstration, as well as a group of smartly-attired male students sitting and listening to a standing female professor (*Images 102-105*).⁵⁸⁵ Whether restricted by lack of space or due to a deliberate visual framing, the closeness with which the groups appeared underscored the collective nature of wartime education – with students and faculty continuing their studies together, despite being far from their hometowns and prewar institutions, thrown together in the rural interior but able to function as a cohesive learning community.



Image 102 (Female students in dormitory, West China, c.1942-1943), Image 103 (Outdoor seminar with professor, West China, c.1942-1943), Image 104 (Students attending medical demonstration, West China, c. 1942-1943), and Image 105 (Female students adjusting clothing, West China, c.1942-1943; all Winfield-Sullivan Family Collection)

⁵⁸⁴ Winfield photograph, typed verso description, Winfield-Sullivan Family Collection.

⁵⁸⁵ This professor clearly appears in several other Winfield photographs but remains unidentified.

And when Winfield attended university athletic events held in Chongqing and Chengdu, his camera pulled back to encompass large groups of student athletes from various institutions participating in pre-game rallies led by military officers, cheering in front of large portraits of Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen – mass events intended to strengthen public allegiance to the Nationalist cause (*Images 106 and 107*). As such, wartime education in West China was exemplified by a sense of progressive modernity (coed classrooms and graduation ceremonies, senior female professors instructing young Chinese men, etc.), continued institutional efficacy under difficult circumstances (students studying and living in crude environments, participating in medical relief work), and participation in mass demonstrations – experiences bound with a sense of collectivity and national identity. In an interesting parallel, Winfield’s photographic styles and subjects somewhat mirrored those made by photographers embedded with Communist forces in Northwestern China, who also employed tight framing, mobile photography, and group imagery to reinforce their own visualizations of wartime community.⁵⁸⁶ While it is not possible to determine a direct correlation between these imaging styles, Winfield himself collected a number of images of Chinese Communist students in guerilla units – possibly made by a journalist or fellow missionary who traveled between Chongqing and Yan’an (延安) on a documentary trip (at least one of which took place in 1944) – and it is not unlikely that he compared these photographs from “the other side” with his own, even after the fact.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁶ For a parallel perspective on Chinese Communist war photography, focusing in particular on Sha Fei (沙飛), a photographer embedded with the Eighth Route Army (八路軍) in the Jin-Cha-Ji Military District (晉察冀軍區), see the author’s two-part article, “Sha Fei (沙飛): Communist Concepts of National Identity in Chinese Wartime Photographs,” *San Diego Chinese Historical Society and Museum Newsletter*, Summer 2009 (13, 17) and Fall 2009 (12, 17). Also Eliza Ho, *Art, Documentary, and Propaganda in Wartime China: The Photography of Sha Fei* (Columbus: East Asian Studies Center, The Ohio State University, 2009). Photography in the Communists’ Yan’an (延安) base area by journalists Edgar and Helen Snow is discussed in part of the author’s article, “Images of Nation: Western Photographers in Wartime China,” *Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal*, Vol. 39, 2009.

⁵⁸⁷ See also “Father Cormac Shanahan, C.P., St. Paul of the Cross Province (1899-1987),” Passionist Historical Archives, <<http://www.cpprovince.org/archives/bios/12/12-21a.php>>. *Life* also sent a journalist couple – Carl and Shelley Mydans – to Chongqing, where they produced a large number of photographs and articles.



Image 106 (Nationalist sports rally, West China, c.1942-1943) and Image 107 (Nationalist sports rally track event, West China, c.1942-1943; both Winfield-Sullivan Family Collection)

Winfield's visual practices, however, were not limited to personal images of collective resistance and community-building in West China, but also extended to visual dissemination of such ideas for a mass audience. After the United States entered the war in 1941 and initiated extensive military support for the Nationalists, Winfield was hired by the Office of War Information (OWI), with headquarters in Chongqing and Chengdu.⁵⁸⁸ As an OWI administrator, Winfield's responsibility was to organize a film strip production program, drawing explicitly on his prior expertise in missionary education, photography, and visual presentations. This was the "United Nations Filmstrip Propagation Department" (聯合國影聞宣傳處) or "United Nations Filmstrip Library" – jointly supported by the OWI as well as the Chinese Ministry of Education (中華民國擴教育部) and the British Ministry of Information. As Winfield testified before the US House of Representatives' postwar Committee on Foreign Affairs, in the four years he headed the program, it grew to encompass "a projection network in free China of 450 projectors

⁵⁸⁸ For a more military- and politics-specific study of OWI's operations in China, see Matthew D. Johnson, "Propaganda and Sovereignty in Wartime China: Morale Operations and Psychological Warfare under the Office of War Information," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2, March 2011, 303-344.

and produced 200 different films to tell the Chinese people about the war effort.”⁵⁸⁹ In addition to promoting “the war effort” and Nationalist political ideologies, the program’s goal “[was] one of popular education, using audio-visual materials to teach the Chinese people how to...care for their health, improve methods of plant and animal breeding, the cultivation of crops, and so on. We use...media posters, graphic portfolios, booklets, and film strips, in coordination to achieve the saturation of the whole community with the information to be taught.”⁵⁹⁰ Groups of field projectionists – mainly young men – were trained to operate film strip equipment ranging from kerosene-powered lantern slide machines refashioned from Coleman lamps to electrically-powered Society for Visual Education (SVE) 35mm projectors with accompanying portable generators and public address systems.⁵⁹¹ The projectionists were then assigned to certain rural districts – either working individually with the oil-fired projector (“[the projectionist] can take about 5 gallons of gasoline or kerosene and stay out in the country and show all of this material” before exhausting the fuel supply) or in 4-person teams with generator-powered equipment.⁵⁹² The film strips themselves, containing photographic reproductions or hand-drawn Disney-esque cartoons with paired narration, were produced by Chinese artists and technicians, making use of processing facilities in Chongqing and Chengdu.⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁹ “Statement of Dr. Gerald F. Winfield, Formerly with Office of War Information,” *International Technical Cooperation Act of 1949 (“Point IV” Program), Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Eighty-First Congress, First Session on H.R. 5615*, 5 October 1949 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 170.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 170-171.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 173. It is likely that these official connections to photographic resources in Chongqing and Chengdu (supported by OWI and the affiliate institutions) allowed Winfield to produce a far greater number of personal and work-related images than most other American missionaries elsewhere in wartime China. After all, with a ready supply of film stock, chemicals, and darkroom facilities nearby (much of it sourced from the United States, as with the Chicago-built SVE projectors), Winfield certainly did not have as many material limitations as most others.

On at least one occasion, Winfield photographed the training process with a borrowed press camera and flashbulbs. In his images, Chinese instructors lectured on projection techniques and technologies before giving an example show. During one of these shows, a still image of Chiang Kai-shek standing before a microphone in mid-speech (perhaps paired with an actual recording of the Generalissimo himself or a transcript performed by a narrator) was cast on the screen, a sample of the Nationalist propaganda intended for rural audiences who did not have wide exposure to other mass media forms (movies, radio, etc.) typically employed by the government (*Images 108-111*). Afterward, groups of students worked with SVE projectors, five to seven people per machine, practicing loading and projecting film strips – their training *en masse* mirroring the mass scale and form of audiences for which their work was intended. One photograph in the series showed young men with military-style khakis and identification badges crowded into a single room, making test projections onto sheets of paper propped up against the projectors' carrying cases. An instructor at the far end of the room, speaking into a microphone (perhaps using the same public address system his students would later use to broadcast their own narrations in the field), read instructions aloud from a prepared manual; behind him, an oversized cutaway diagram of a film strip projector hung dog-eared from a blackboard alongside a partially erased word: "Ko[dak]" (*Image 111*). And in the corner, a slogan painted in bold black letters on the wall encouraged the tinkering students to think about the broader implications of their work – strengthening the idea that the wartime film strips were much more than a novelty: “優良的放影隊是電影教育的優良學校” (“an excellent projection team is an excellent school of film education.”)



Image 108 (Filmstrip screening for group audience, West China, c. 1942-1943), Image 109 (Trainees test-projecting filmstrip, West China, c. 1942-1943), Image 110 (Trainees examining filmstrips and equipment, West China, c. 1942-1943), and Image 111 (Group instruction in filmstrip projection, West China, c. 1942-1943; Winfield-Sullivan Family Collection)

These mobile “school[s] of film education” were intended for large groups of illiterate people in the Chinese interior; Winfield estimated that “by the use of loudspeaker equipment it is possible to set up and show film strips to 3,000 to 5,000 people, and that is the kind of crowd you are going to have...in the villages when you go in to put on one of these shows, because the people come from miles around to see them. They will stand there for 2 or 3 hours in the evening in order to see a film strip show of this kind.”⁵⁹⁴ Whether or not the film strips’ “official” medical and political messages were effectively carried across was a different issue entirely. As seen in the previous chapter on interwar missionary filmmaking, missionaries knew (or suspected) that visual presentations were often more a form of entertainment than education.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 172.

Winfield, aware of this unintended effect, designed the presentations such that “as part of the total show, film strips are included telling about America and other parts of China, and even cartoon strips that are just fun and entertainment...then in the middle of the show, much like a ‘commercial’ on the radio, is the education material that we see to saturate the community with.”⁵⁹⁵ And in July 1944, one such film strip “telling about America and other parts of China” (intended more as political commentary than mere “fun and entertainment”) made it from West China to a global audience via *Life* magazine, which reproduced the individual frames storyboard-style under the heading “Speaking of Pictures...Fable of Birds Tells War History to Chinese.”⁵⁹⁶ Framing anti-Japanese resistance within a cartoon entitled *Story in the Woods*, and with anthropomorphic birds representing Japan (blackbirds), Nationalist China (sparrows), and the United States (eagles), the film strip was intended to give a broad view of the US alliance with China – including a not-so-subtle critique of the Americans’ late arrival in the war from the Chinese perspective. As the article summarized the narration:

Once China and the United States lived together in a pleasant and friendly world. Suddenly the Japanese war birds came over, dropping their bombs on the busy peaceful people of China. While hundreds of Chinese homes were wrecked and thousands of civilians killed, the U.S. danced on in happy isolation... Then came the Japanese blow-from-behind at Pearl Harbor. For the Chinese this was the great turning point of the war. With a furious determination, America threw its ingenuity and its full strength into the battle, building all kinds of modern weapons...smash[ing] the Japanese with such a power that the Chinese dream of driving back the enemy started to become a reality. At the end of the cartoon, this dream really does come true, and the Chinese and Americans, conscious of new strength, pledge hereafter to keep the peace they once lost.⁵⁹⁷

Winfield was credited as the project’s “instigator” (described as the “36-year-old Johns Hopkins graduate who taught public health in China for 11 years with pictures like these”), and the article

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 172.

⁵⁹⁶ “Speaking of Pictures...Fable of Birds Tells War History to Chinese,” *Life*, 24 July 1944, 12-14.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 14.

claimed that the film strips “have already been seen by over 2,000,000 people and have gone as far into the Asian wilderness as Lhasa, Tibet.”⁵⁹⁸ Perhaps due to the publicity garnered by *Life*’s publication and the project’s close proximity to other, larger American and Chinese collaborative reconstruction ventures in West China, Winfield’s work on mass visual education would continue to have greater effects (visible on both national and international scales) even after the war ended. The United Nations Filmstrip Propagation Department would eventually find a postwar afterlife in the Sino-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction headed by Y.C. James Yen (晏陽初).⁵⁹⁹ Incidentally, almost exactly the same methods of production and dissemination would later be used by rural propaganda teams in the early People’s Republic of China, with the core patterns set by Winfield’s program expanded to include political films and collective post-screening discussions and surveys.⁶⁰⁰ While it is nearly impossible to track the exact geographical reach of Winfield’s film strips or their specific effects on the wartime audiences that viewed them, this was undoubtedly one of the first cases of mass imaging

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 13. This reference to the film strips reaching Lhasa in Tibet “far into the Asian wilderness” is not as far-fetched as it seems. Given the formal (but not always uncontested) political ties between the Nationalist government in wartime Chongqing and Lhasa, the urban center for Sino-Tibetan exchange – as well as Chiang Kai-shek’s personal appointment of a special diplomatic mission under Shen Zonglian (沈宗濂) to Tibet in 1943 (just as the film strip production in West China was in full swing) – it is possible that this provided an avenue for the films’ distribution there. Their visual simplicity and understandability likely enhanced their accessibility for audiences outside of China (albeit not originally intended by Winfield and his collaborators) who did not speak Chinese – as in the case of the *Life* reproduction or the reported Tibetan viewers. See also Chang Jui-te, “An Imperial Envoy: Shen Zonglian in Tibet, 1943-1946,” in *Negotiating China’s Destiny in World War II*, ed. Hans van de Ven, Diana Lary, and Stephen R. Mackinnon (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 52-69; and Hsiao-ting Lin, *Tibet and Nationalist China’s Frontier: Intrigues and Ethnopolitics, 1928-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

⁵⁹⁹ “Statement of L.G. Shreve, President, Counsel Services Inc., Baltimore, MD,” *International Technical Cooperation Act of 1949 (“Point IV” Program) Hearing*, 5 October 1949, 163-170.

⁶⁰⁰ The rural film distribution model that reappeared in the PRC featured “a mobile film projection team...made up of two or three persons, often young girls. A team was typically equipped with a generator, a 16mm projector, a gramophone, and slide-making facilities...in order to facilitate peasants’ comprehension of films, projection teams were required to use oral explanations, which in some cases had to be in local dialects. A single show involved three steps: pre-show propaganda, impromptu explanation during the show, and after-show collection of opinions;” of course, “when films were shown, attendance was good, and reportedly the local peasants thoroughly enjoyed most of them, viewing them as a major entertainment despite their high political content.” See Alan P. L. Liu, *Communications and National Integration in Communist China* (University of California Press, 1971), 165-166.

technology and explicit political connections employed to reach a mass audience in Nationalist West China – with one American missionary’s visual practices at the nucleus.

Fragments, Chaos, and Invisibilities: North China

In North China, missionaries continued their visual practices on a more limited scale, though their images lacked the visible results of violence, explicit governmental engagement, and international viewership that characterized John Magee and Gerald Winfield’s respective imaging in Nanjing and Chongqing. Instead of directly imaging acts of war, however, the war swept up around them – informing their experiences and registering indirectly on what they did (and did not) photograph. This, however, did not mean that the war was invisible to missionaries or the images they did produce. In North China, missionary activities and life was dramatically disrupted by the Japanese invasion in July 1937. Many Protestant missionary families were already separated during that time – men who were doctors or evangelists stayed behind to staff their mission stations while their families typically went to Beidaihe (北戴河) in Hebei to escape the summer heat by the ocean. The missionaries, attempting to continue their prewar patterns of summer work and travel, were caught up in the invasion, witnessing the repercussions in fragmentary ways as they moved through China. Harold Henke had begun the summer of 1937 with a brief respite with Jessie Mae and their children at the retreat, but returned to Shunde to relieve Ralph Lewis, who was recovering from scarlet fever and hoped to rejoin Roberta and his family vacationing at Beidaihe.⁶⁰¹ Lewis, carrying his Rolleiflex camera and film but declining

⁶⁰¹ Lewis 139-140; also Roberta Lewis, personal letter to mother and family, 17-18 July 1937; file 21a. “We are happily and peacefully settled. Read the paper every day the minute it arrives and ‘stew’ awhile – await anxiously letters from Shunteh. One day it seems they (Gene [Harold Henke] and Ralph) will come, the next day they decide not to come. The latest word has it that Ralph will come alone. He is so weak from his long illness that he can do little to help there and it is getting very hot. He mite [sic] as well come and store up a little sunshine and cool ocean

to use it along the way – perhaps due to his weakened condition and rough travel conditions – arrived at the sea after a chaotic trip by rail and bus through Baoding (保定) and Tianjin (天津). At times, he was the “only Caucasian” and surrounded by anxious Chinese civilians who “all wanted to talk, telling me about the battle going on near Beijing, but as far as they knew...not in Tianjin.”⁶⁰² At nearly the same time, Harold and his evangelist colleague, Rev. John Bickford, traded places with Lewis, returning to the mission by going south to Canton and then back north by railroad to Shunde – traversing China to skirt military engagements taking place across the northern provinces.⁶⁰³ This frenetic movement in the shadow of the growing war – with the missionaries sometimes traveling alongside or against the exodus of refugees fleeing southward – also meant that imaging was far from their minds.

While Lewis’s photographs from that summer in Beidaihe differed little in their appearance as ordinary vacation photos – his children playing together with other missionary children and other gatherings of families and friends, in image that looked much like ones taken in peacetime – the war was already close at hand (*Images 112 and 113*).

breeze for his work next year. Their hospital [in Shunde], if war really comes, will be used as 3rd base hospital for wounded officers, probably. At present many troop trains are going past Shuntehfu.”

⁶⁰² Lewis, 140.

⁶⁰³ Lewis memoirs, 140-141; Henke personal letter to friends from “House No. 5, Presbyterian Mission, Peking,” 25 October 1937. Both Henke and Bickford later returned to Beidaihe in mid-August, after deciding that the war situation in Shunde was too unstable to stay for the time being.



Image 112 (Children at Robert Henke’s sixth birthday party at Beidaihe, September 1937) and Image 113 (Jessie Mae, Lois, Richard, Harold, and Robert Henke, summer 1937; both Henke Family Collection)⁶⁰⁴

In the early hours of the morning after Lewis arrived in Beidaihe, as his camera sat unused in its case, he and the other missionaries were awakened in their seaside cottages by the roar of “many Japanese military planes, heavily loaded, flying south over our heads. About an hour later, several groups of planes, this time lightly loaded [were seen] flying back toward Mukden in Manchuria... Later in the day we heard that their objective was to completely destroy the Tianjin R.R. [railroad] Station. Just the day before I had been in that station waiting for a train to Peitaiho [Beidaihe] and now it was in ruins.”⁶⁰⁵ The warplanes Lewis observed were in the process of bombing Tianjin in preparation for the July 29 IJA attack on that city, which fell after a fierce day-long battle.⁶⁰⁶ And as if foreshadowing greater international conflicts to come, from

⁶⁰⁴ These photographs, produced by Ralph Lewis on or around September 9, 1937, are of the Henke family at Beidaihe; they were later pasted into one of the Henkes’ scrapbook albums and annotated by Jessie Mae Henke. As will be discussed shortly, essentially none of Lewis’s own photographs (or copies of these images) from after late 1936 currently exist in his family’s collection – likely due to their destruction in a particular incident in 1942. Bob (Robert) Henke’s birthdate is mentioned in Jessie Mae Henke’s *Family History* (unpublished manuscript, 1988), 14; using this birthdate, the square image format native to Lewis’s Rolleiflex, and the annotation “Bob’s 6th Birthday,” it is possible to determine that these images were made while Lewis and Henkes families were together at Beidaihe in the late summer after the invasion.

⁶⁰⁵ Lewis, 141.

⁶⁰⁶ Drea, Peattie, and van de Ven, eds., 145.

the same vantage points at the resort, “in the evenings we could hear from our porch the U.S. Marine Corps holding their target practice south of us, just this side of the port of Qinhuangdao (秦皇島). Sometimes we could see the tracer-bullets flying off above the ocean at night.”⁶⁰⁷ At one point, Lewis, Roberta, his eldest son and the Henkes’ two sons – Robert and Richard – took a small boat out from Beidaihe to visit an US Navy warship that had anchored off the Shandong coast, likely as a security measure to protect foreign interests in the area while the Japanese military swept southward through North China.⁶⁰⁸ In a strange dual encounter with both “hard” American presence in China and “soft” popular visual culture, the group was escorted onto the vessel to find that the off-duty sailors were enjoying “a movie going on the after-deck[;]...it was a talkie and Shirley Temple was playing.”⁶⁰⁹ This was not the last time Beidaihe, American missionary images, and the US Navy were indirectly involved. After the US entry into the Pacific War, photographs taken at the resort – images of the coastline and beaches made during

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid. Roberta Lewis, in a personal letter written that July to her mother and sister, also noted quite perceptively that “If the Japanese don’t get out of [China] there is sure to be WAR in no uncertain terms. I hate to think of it for poor China’s sake. They [the Chinese] are just getting on their feet politically and tho’ they could put a good fight I’m afraid would come out badly crippled. The J[apanese] seem to have no sense of honor. I guess more than half of the world will be at war if this one starts. We’re on the brink of war but it could be avoided still. I feel that the J[apanese] want war or they wouldn’t have set the stage as they have. All their nat’ls are being bro[ugh]t out from the interior – many troop trains coming from Manchuria, all loaded with ammunition, food, horses, soldiers, etc. Poor China! They really are a peace-loving people.” Roberta Lewis, personal letter to mother and family, 17-18 July 1937; file 21a-21b.

⁶⁰⁸ Lewis, personal letter to mother-in-law Taylor and family, 9 August 1937; file 23-23a. As Lewis recorded beautifully: “at seven o’clock we sailed out of our little harbor and around light house point, seeing a beautiful sunset with clouds overhanging the mountains in the west, and a new moon was just over the clouds, and the mountains were as ragged and jagged as any Chinese painting ever made them...then the stars came out and after rounding the light house point we saw [an] American warship riding at anchor with her lights coming out of portholes and the two riding lights on her masts...we came closer to the ship at anchor and the boys surely did have a great time discussing the boat and whether it would permit us to come close or not, whether it would fire her guns at us since it was a gun boat, etc...as we came close to the companion way near the stern the lights were flashed on and we were told that we could come on board. The boys and Berta and I were thrilled...we had seen that there was a movie going on the after-deck, so when we walked up the companion way we were right there and could see it very plainly. It was a talkie and Shirley Temple was playing.” The boys who boarded the ship that evening, Harry Lewis, Robert and Richard Henke, are now in their 80s but have a vague memory of this incident; Lewis, personal interview with the author, Mt. Hermon, California, 11 August 2014; Richard Henke, personal interview with the author, Rolling Hills, California, 29 July 2013.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

pre-1941 visits there – were collected by the FBI from missionary families living in the US, to be used as reference materials for a proposed (but never enacted) amphibious landing to recapture the area from the Japanese.⁶¹⁰

In many cases, as battle lines moved on and parts of the country settled into an uneasy but relatively quiet occupation under the Japanese, missionaries continued their prewar projects – evangelical, medical, and educational – in an environment dramatically changed from that of their previous experiences. The Japanese military authorities generally treated American and other foreign missionaries as non-combatant neutral parties; so long as their activities were not openly anti-Japanese, and took place in relatively stable and well-controlled areas (unlike Nanjing in the first few months of occupation), they were not seen as much of a threat. Indeed, in order for the missionaries to continue their work in North China, cooperation with the occupation forces was necessary, especially since many of the Chinese staff – doctors, nurses, pastors, and Chinese Christians – had either fled to other provinces ahead of the invasion or were otherwise incapacitated.⁶¹¹ For the most part, the Americans staffing missions in occupied areas found themselves in a politically ambiguous position. Strong personal alignment with the Chinese wartime cause gradually shifted into a strange friendship with the Japanese, characterized in part by the need to mediate between the military authorities and the local Chinese population. Day-to-day interactions with the Japanese were characterized less by constant antagonism than by a form

⁶¹⁰ Margaret Winfield Sullivan, email to the author, 9 October 2014. “The picture story that sticks most vividly in my mind...has to do with the FBI during the [Second World] War. Mother, my sisters and I were in Springfield MO [,] living there while Dad [Gerald F. Winfield] was in China until the war ended. The FBI came to the house one afternoon, (I assume they had contacted Mother beforehand [,] but I was only 9 so don’t know all the ins and outs) to see the pictures of our summer vacations at Beidaho [sic]. They wanted to see what the beach looked like, presumably in advance planning for a possible landing there later in the war. The borrowed some of them [for copying], which were returned later. The landing, of course, never happened.”

⁶¹¹ Jessie Mae and Harold Henke, letter to supporters, from “Presbyterian Mission, Peiping,” 15 December 1937.

of normalcy, even if begrudgingly accepted in the face of post-invasion upheaval among the Chinese communities the missionaries worked.⁶¹²

Harold Henke, for example, after moving back and forth between Shunde to Beiping in the fall and early winter of 1937, determined that he ought to continue his medical mission work regardless of the war situation, and returned to the city – temporarily leaving behind Jessie Mae and their sons in Japanese-occupied Beiping for safety.⁶¹³ Anticipating the need to work with the occupying forces, the Henke strongly noted that it was “an answer to prayer” when John Bickford, on a trip back from Beiping with much-needed “mail and supplies,” brought with him

Dr. An... a native of this province who has had two and one half years postgraduate medical work in Tokyo. He speaks Japanese easily. A smile on his face most of the time makes one feel friendly to him at once. He has agreed to work with us for at most six months. He will spend two thirds of his time in medical work, the balance in teaching Japanese and in aiding as interpreter.⁶¹⁴

This interpretation was crucial, as both the local leadership and Chinese Christian communities with whom the missionaries were previously familiar were largely in disarray, replaced by Japanese military authorities on whom the Americans needed to rely. Moreover, Henke’s emphasis on An’s “teaching Japanese” meant that he was aware that the occupation was not to be a temporary situation. In any case, there were more pressing needs at hand. With a skeleton staff of only a few student nurses led by the resilient Chang Jui Lan (who had worked alongside the Henkes since their arrival in 1929), Stephen Tu (the one-legged laboratory technician who appeared in the Henkes’ prior photographs and hospital film), and a scattering of servants and untrained helpers, Henke was now faced with “increasing numbers...of in-patients [with] gunshot and bomb wounds...some of these are the worst I have ever had to care for and many

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

have been neglected before coming to us” – along with “more than 500 refugees living in our schools and in the basements of the church and O.P.D. [outpatient department] and also dormitory for our student nurses.”⁶¹⁵ Among these refugees was a 20-year-old woman named Liu Ju (劉舉), whose family – Protestant Christians – hailed from the city of Shijiazhuang, 108km due north of Shunde along the Beiping-Hankou railway line.⁶¹⁶ Her family had evacuated their home in the face of the invasion but only made it as far as Shunde before taking shelter at the Presbyterian mission there as the Japanese army overtook the city. With encouragement from her father and perhaps due to the pressing lack of nursing staff on hand, Liu volunteered to become a nurse trainee, and within two years appeared in a photograph with a larger class of student nurses by Ralph Lewis (*Image 114*). It was at this time that she began a half-century-long friendship with the Henkes, Jessie Mae in particular, whom she recalled as being “like family.”⁶¹⁷

It should be noted that the war also produced a larger spectrum of incidental – and sometimes transformative – contacts between Chinese civilians and missionaries of other denominations and orders, whose missions were reshaped (and in some cases, overwhelmed) by the massive influx of refugees. In Henan province, directly south along the Pinghan railway line from the Henkes’ mission station, refugees flooding into the city of Xinxiang (新鄉) ahead of the Japanese included a young mother, her daughter, and an elder son about 9 years old. Taken in with over a thousand other displaced civilians by the Roman Catholic Society of the Divine Word (聖言會 or SVD, *Societas Verbi Divini*) after the nearby Anglican mission in Xinxiang evacuated its priests and staff, the small family remained in the SVD compound, the boy

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Liu Ju (劉舉), personal interview with the author, Wuchang, China, 22 May 2011.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.; Lewis photograph in Henke *Chicago Tribune* scrapbook 2; see also Lewis, 149-152. For an in-depth study of refugee experience during the war, see R. Keith Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness: Refugees during the Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

remembering the time being rather idyllic. It was also there that two American Catholic priests from Illinois – Frs. Joseph Henkels and Thomas Meagan, SVD – played a deeply influential role in shaping the boy’s religious and cultural convictions. The boy, who also showed significant interest in foreign languages, was baptized, given the Christian name Joseph, and supported by the SVD for his minor and major seminary education. Little did he know that almost exactly a decade-and-a-half later, he would be in Rome, developing a taste for pasta and sneaking onto a press platform in St. Peter’s Square with an Indian seminarian to watch Pope Pius XII declare the Assumption of Mary as dogma. It was in this way that the future Archbishop of Taipei, the Most Rev. Joseph Ti-Kang (狄剛), was received into the Catholic Church.⁶¹⁸



Image 114 (*Chicago Tribune* album detail, “Student Nurses,” c.1938-1939; Henke Family Collection)⁶¹⁹

The future Archbishop’s family also converted to Catholicism at this time, though his maternal grandfather converted not so much in a religious manner but in a general acceptance of missionary involvement in China.⁶²⁰ A local elder in charge of keeping the peace during the

⁶¹⁸ Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Ti-Kang (狄剛), personal interview by the author in Keelung, Taiwan, 17 July 2013.

⁶¹⁹ In this image from the second Henke *Chicago Tribune* scrapbook, Liu sits at the far left end of the first row, while the Henkes’ earlier “adopted Chinese daughter,” Yang Ai-jung, sits at the center of the group. Both Liu and Yang would maintain their friendship with the Henkes well into the postwar period, with photographs from that part of their life kept in the Henkes’ scrapbook album. Liu herself kept in touch with the family until Jessie Mae’s death – and even afterward, through her son, Li Weilai – until her own passing on 21 August 2011 at 94 years of age, almost exactly three months to the day that the author interviewed her at her home in Wuchang.

⁶²⁰ Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Ti-Kang (狄剛), personal interview by the author in Keelung, Taiwan, 17 July 2013.

invasion (and who had also encouraged his family to seek protection at the Catholic mission for their personal safety), he had formerly felt all foreign missionaries to be “pioneers of imperialism” – a view he formed after gaining a general knowledge of Anglican missionaries, for whom church and state (particularly in colonial contexts in China) were often explicitly and uncomfortably linked. But the war and the American missionaries’ more independent roles in protecting Chinese civilians in opposition to another imperialist power changed his perspective completely. As the immediate military dangers passed and the Japanese occupation became entrenched in North China, he was among those who found a more moderate position in relation to the foreigners with whom he was formerly at odds.⁶²¹

From the missionaries’ perspective, there were indeed some visible lulls in the upheavals brought by the invasion and occupation. By the spring of 1938, Harold Henke able to return to Beijing to visiting Jessie Mae and their children, and reported with some relief that “Shuntehfu has been quite peaceful and there are many signs of [a] return to normalcy. Many stores are open and every public service, except the postal office[,] is open again. The railroad station has been rebuilt.”⁶²² This stability under Japanese occupation meant that Henke and other missionary staff were able to travel more freely in the province, allowing in the case of Shunde for the Presbyterian hospital staff to “increase...to over 50 again,” and for formerly unaffiliated medical personnel to fill temporary positions while they themselves away from their home institutions.⁶²³ He and Jessie Mae obtained special Japanese military identification documents, enabling them to get through checkpoints within and beyond Beijing (*Image 115*); on at least three occasions,

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Harold Henke, personal letter to supporters, 11 February 1938.

⁶²³ Ibid. Henke mentions a “Dr. Wang, a man of 45 years of age, a graduate of Cheeloo University in 1918, has come to help in surgery,” while “Dr. Paul Adolph, a brother of our missionary in Yenching, and a China Inland Missionary, has come to help until the way opens for him to return to his own station in southern Shansi [山西].”

using these passes to move between the Presbyterian mission compound and commercial districts in the city, they went to watch “very good movies” – including MGM’s 1937 production of Pearl Buck’s *The Good Earth*, a film that was partially shot on-location in China prior to the war’s outbreak, and whose leading roles were played by Caucasian American actors in yellowface.⁶²⁴

However, despite the outward “return to normalcy,” some “200 to 700 refugees” still lived within the relative safety of the Presbyterian compound at Shunde, while the mission hospital continued to treat rounds of “40 to 60 patients, about nine tenths of these [having] gun, bomb, or knife wounds, for banditry is rifle in all our country districts.”⁶²⁵ In regard to “banditry,” as Ralph Lewis, who returned with his family to Shunde after their 1938 furlough in California, later explained

There was a great deal of terrorist activity in North China at that time with marauding bands of the old [warlord] troops that were neither loyal to the Central Government [Nationalist] nor to the Japanese or Communist troops. They were trying to make their own living by preying on the local population, making night raids on small villages near us [in Shunde] to get grain, livestock, and capturing young men, forcing them to join their forces. We often heard the wailing of women not far from us as their men were being dragged from their homes...During those raids we would occasionally hear bullets ricocheting through the trees[;]...this never bothered the children, though it made us wonder about the future.⁶²⁶

Under these chaotic circumstances, interactions between the American missionaries and the Japanese authorities became more frequent. The occupation forces were the closest source of military stability in the region, as well as the primary arbiters of missionaries’ access to required

⁶²⁴ Harold Henke, personal letter to Ethel and Harlan Palmer from “Presbyterian Mission, Peking,” 15 February 1938. While in the city, the Henkes saw movies that included Warner Bros.’ *The Prince and the Pauper*, RKO Radio Pictures’ *Shall We Dance?* and *The Good Earth* (all released earlier in 1937). Regarding the last film (and its circuitous route from Pearl Buck’s creative mind and experience as an educational Presbyterian missionary in interwar China, through popular literature and Hollywood, back to a missionary moviegoer in wartime China), Harold commented briefly, “The ‘Good Earth’ seems to me a splendid picture and surely gives in many ways a fair picture of Chinese life. Some parts have been censored here[,] chiefly those connected with the revolutionary scenes.” Henke does not describe how he recognized the censorship in the film, but it was evidently obvious enough for him – perhaps due to re-editing by the censor – to relate it to “revolutionary” (likely pro-Nationalist) themes.

⁶²⁵ Harold Henke, personal letter to supporters, 11 February 1938.

⁶²⁶ Lewis, 154.

supplies, transportation, and communications networks (though all three were often hindered by formal military operations or guerilla warfare spearheaded by Chinese Communist forces in the Northwest).⁶²⁷ As the occupation of North China moved into its second (1939) and then third (1940) years, such partnerships became more common. Despite being in “enemy-held” territory and aligned with a (now much more nebulous) conception of Chinese national identity, the missionaries’ relationships with the Japanese grew still more ambiguous, while their medical work and evangelism looked increasingly more like their prewar activities.⁶²⁸ Lewis expressed some sympathy toward the Japanese who were now the primary local security force, writing that “we often saw Japanese troops leaving the city, marching out west to the mountains where the Communists were entrenched, trying to flush them out. Often these soldiers were crying as they marched by our [mission], leaving the fortified city, knowing that many of them would never return.”⁶²⁹ Henke, on one of his trips returning to Shunde from Beiping, traveled with a Japanese Protestant minister (“a returned student from Columbia University”) and a Japanese soldier who “was our escort over the last 80 miles. He was most thoughtful and courteous and we enjoyed several afternoons together studying English and Japanese before he went to Taiyuan [太原].”⁶³⁰ Taiyuan, incidentally, was located in the rugged northwestern provinces where the Chinese Communist forces were most active; it is possible that this Japanese soldier was later among those IJA troops that Lewis witnessed going “as lambs to the slaughter” against them.

⁶²⁷ Ibid. For an in-depth account – sans visual practices – of this kind of missionary-Japanese interaction in occupied Zhejiang province, see Charles Bright and Joseph W. Ho, eds. *War and Occupation in China: The Letters of an American Missionary from Hangzhou, 1937-1938* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2017).

⁶²⁸ *Report of Medical Work, American Presbyterian Mission, Shuntehfu, Hopei, North China 1939*, Henke Family Collection.

⁶²⁹ Lewis, 154.

⁶³⁰ Jessie Mae and Harold Henke, letter to supporters, from “Presbyterian Mission, Peiping,” 15 December 1937.

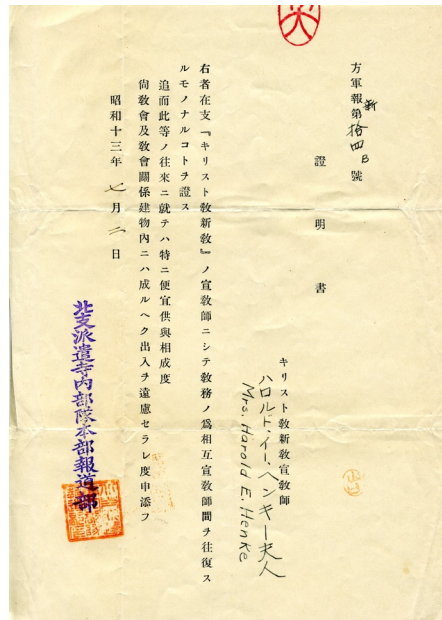


Image 115 (Jessie Mae Henke’s IJA military identification pass, July 1938; Henke Family Collection)⁶³¹

On the other hand, the missionaries also witnessed official retaliation against Chinese individuals suspected of aiding anti-Japanese guerillas in the region. Following an unsuccessful raid on the Shunde railway station by Communist troops (purportedly attached to the popularly-supported Eighth Route Army) crossing the border from nearby Shanxi province, “the Japanese Army came to the [mission] hospital and told me [Ralph Lewis] that we had spies in our staff...they took three or four men away, one being our business manager, the chief accountant, and one or two laborers.”⁶³² When visiting the men in prison, Lewis found the mission accountant, “being held in a wooden cage, like an animal...covered with body lice [and]...very concerned about his wife and children” and overheard terrible screaming from another part of the

⁶³¹ Japanese pass for Jessie Mae Henke, issued 2 July 1938. The text from right to left reads as translated: “[Area Army publication] No. 14 B; Certificate; Protestant Minister; Name: Mrs. Harold E. Henke; ‘This is to certify that the Christian minister named above is one whose missionary work demands interaction with other ministers. In order to facilitate these interactions, and also to make convenient [her] movement in and out of the church(es) and related facilities, we ask you to grant permission to free passage;’ 13th year of Showa (1938), 7th month, 2nd day.”

⁶³² Lewis, 160. See also Yang Kuisong, “Nationalist and Communist Guerilla Warfare in North China,” in *The Battle for China*, Drea, Peattie, van de Ven, eds., 308-327. The business manager is listed in the 1939 hospital report as Chang Shu Hsien, and the assistant business manager as P’i Ching Lien. Lewis’s memoirs do not verify which of these men was the one imprisoned.

facility.⁶³³ “Several days later[,] the person who had been screaming...was brought to our hospital by his family. He had been falsely accused and the Japanese had beat him to get a confession...[using] a bamboo pole that had been sliced down to fine, tiny slivers...[which] caused to skin to be cut [into] just raw flesh with no skin left.”⁶³⁴ Writing in his memoirs, Lewis stated that the incident troubled him so greatly – not least in a spiritual sense – that “I will never forget...that terrible beating; and when at our Communion Service, I think of Jesus suffering for me when He was beaten by Pilates’ soldiers.”⁶³⁵ He also later learned that it was the mission’s business manager “who had made contact with the Communist Army and had given them signals from our hospital [the night prior to the attack on the railway station];” when the man did not return from prison (and was likely executed by the Japanese), Lewis concluded that he “was a loyal Chinese citizen doing what he thought best for his country.”⁶³⁶

In a less overtly violent case, one of the evangelists at Shunde, the Rev. Richard Jenness, also witnessed troubling machinations “behind closed doors” when attending a regional meeting of religious leaders organized by Japanese military authorities in late June 1938 – an assembly that included representatives from local Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist, Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim groups.⁶³⁷ Noting that the atmosphere was one of “no freedom, only a strained look of anxious expectancy,” Jenness reported that the purpose of the meeting, as announced by a coalition of Chinese elites and Japanese “handlers” (“the district magistrate of the local puppet

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Ibid. Lewis eventually saved the man – who had also lost much blood during the beating – by performing an extensive emergency skin graft, and also shared the fundamentals of Christianity with him while he recovered in the Shunde mission hospital (emphasizing Christ’s shared passion and physical sacrifice when discussing Christian belief with him). “Eventually” Lewis wrote, “he and his family came to accept Christ as their Savior.”

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

⁶³⁷ Richard E. Jenness, letter to supporters, from “American Presbyterian Mission, Shuntehfu, North China,” 11 July 1938, included in “Extracts from China Letters,” 2-4, received in United States 19 September 1938; Henke Family Collection.

government,” “a young Chinese gentleman, head of the local bureau of education,” and “a young Japanese army officer, the advisor to the magistrate...and other military men”), was to encourage the religious communities “to join together in helping forward the plans for a ‘New China.’”⁶³⁸ It was clear to the American evangelist that “we were there to be formed into a tool for organized Japanese propaganda,” and he refused to bow to the Japanese flag when the group was collectively requested to do so at the opening ceremonies.⁶³⁹ His lone act of defiance was reportedly shared only by a Polish Catholic missionary and a Chinese Catholic schoolteacher in the room, who also refused to bow to “the conquerors” or to express support for the Japanese – earning Jenness’s undisguised respect for them, even as a staunch Protestant.⁶⁴⁰

Against all of this, the North China missionaries continued their photography when possible – with fragments of these complicated interactions and contentions appearing in their images. The Henkes’ scrapbook album, assembled in the postwar era, mirrored these in two pages of photographs directly facing each other. Containing images made by both the Henkes and Lewises in 1938-1939, one of the pages (*Image 116*) which itself followed a series of medical photographs, was covered with photographs of what appeared to be “routine” peacetime Protestant missions work: groups of smiling Chinese evangelists, elders, and pastors; doctors and

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid. While Jenness noted that the Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, and Muslim representatives all expressed support for the Japanese authorities, either openly or when coerced (and then expressed in anti-Nationalist and anti-Communist terms – as these political groups had supposedly denounced “superstition” in their prewar campaigns), the Chinese Catholic representative announced that “‘we Christians,’ and with a slight gesture he included Mr. C. and myself [the Protestant representatives; ‘Mr. C’ likely being a Chinese Christian whose name Jenness self-censored for safety], ‘feel highly honored to be included in your conference here. Besides the usual aims of education our Christian schools have a distinct and particular aim, and that is to win men to faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and to lead them to an understanding of His teachings; thus preparing our pupils to be good men and to serve society and last, but not least, to save their souls. We believe in eternal life after death, and it is our mission to save men to spend that eternity with God in heaven.’” Jenness and the other representatives in the room were startled by this statement – loaded with religious themes in contrast to the straightforwardly pro-Japanese political statements made by other representatives – and he admitted that “I could not but think that the young Catholic teacher had won the laurels, and I was profoundly grateful to him for including us [Protestants] when he spoke.”

two classes of nursing staff (one of which included Liu Ju as a trainee nurse); and photographs taken of celebrations connected with Christmas 1939 inside and outside the Shunde Presbyterian church (including several successive images highlighting the Henkes' and Lewises' less-visualized musical talents; Harold playing the violin; Ralph, the trombone; Roberta, the cello; and Jessie Mae, the harmonium while singing). Were it not for the "Christmas 1939" annotation and the images on the page to follow, it would be difficult to determine whether these innocuous photographs were made in peacetime or war.



Image 116 (*Chicago Tribune* album page with Christmas service, c.1939) and Image 117 (*Chicago Tribune* album page, refugees and IJA officers, c.1939; both Henke Family Collection)

But on the page immediately facing it (*Image 117*), further images from the Christmas service indicate that the mission is packed with a large number of refugees. A photograph taken from the top of the outer compound wall frames throngs of people (far more than a prewar service) packed into the courtyard, listening to a sermon on the same platform where the missionaries performed their Christmas music. Even as this and other images from the service reference signs of the war's effects on the civilian population, below them a number of other prints were pasted in: small print of Japanese Army officers standing together – one of a man who appears to be a commanding officer, with winter greatcoat and sheathed sword –

photographed when they visited the mission compound. The occupiers, the occupied, and the missionaries caught in between were all visualized in the same space. At the bottom of the page, two enlarged prints featured Harold Henke and Ralph Lewis flanking a Japanese officer on the steps of the hospital; Henke's 2-year-old daughter, Lois, likely insisted on standing in front of her father for the photograph. These images were clearly made in quick succession, with two different officers between the Americans; Harold, Lois, and Ralph's gazes and facial expressions – bearing rather ambiguous smiles – shifted slightly between exposures, but their postures remained roughly the same while the officers moved in to take their place in the group (*Images 118 and 119*). These were among the few enlarged prints from this time, a rarity compared to the much smaller contact prints typically produced by the missionaries; this may indicate that they were made by an official Japanese photographer accompanying the visiting soldiers, or perhaps Ralph Lewis, who was the only individual in the compound with access to an enlarger – a device that he designed and built himself prior to the war – and perhaps produced enlargements as gifts to share with the visitors, keeping lesser-quality reprints for himself and Henke.⁶⁴¹ Next to these prints, a group photograph with two Japanese officers (one of them the same individual from the previous images with Harold, Lois, and Ralph) surrounded by individuals Jessie Mae captioned as “Catholic friends:” a foreign nun in her hooded habit and two dark-robed missionary priests (likely Polish Catholics), along with a Chinese medical staff person. This was one of the few images depicting Catholic missionaries in Shunde that the Henkes kept, indicating that the war – and perhaps some indirect facilitation by the Japanese – forged a stronger kind of ecumenism in

⁶⁴¹ The print on the right-hand side of the set is somewhat dark, indicating insufficient exposure during the enlarging process. Given the need to make test prints before making further copies in the darkroom, this may have been a “rejected” print that either Lewis kept for himself (the better ones going to the visitors and other recipients) or the official photographer (if this was the case) gave to the missionaries. If Lewis was the maker of these photographs, it makes sense that he would keep a test print, as replacement stocks of printing paper were likely not easy to come by and the print was still decently viewable as-is.

Christian missions normally separated in peacetime by religious tradition and culture, even within the same mid-sized Chinese city.

Finally, at the bottom right corner of the page, a portrait of a young, clean-shaven Japanese enlisted man (*Image 121*). This image was not made by the Henkes or Lewises, but was instead a commercial photograph made in Japan prior to the infantryman's arrival in China, bearing the studio stamp "TSUDANUMA."⁶⁴² More likely than not, this was a photograph given to the Henkes by the pictured soldier, indicating some kind of relationship – or at least a brief but friendly exchange – that existed between him and the missionaries during occupation. Jessie Mae Henke and her sons recalled off-duty Japanese cavalymen stopping their mounts at the Presbyterian mission to play an informal game of baseball with the boys (who were equipped with miniature baseball uniforms and equipment gifted by supporters in the United States).⁶⁴³ On several occasions, Japanese Christian officers and enlisted men also attended Christmas and Easter services at the mission church – sometimes sitting next to perturbed Chinese congregants and refugees who were typically on the receiving end of their military presence outside the church walls.⁶⁴⁴ Perhaps it was one of these soldiers who presented his portrait to the Henkes on such a visit, who duly kept it in their postwar scrapbook as a keepsake of a lost friendship, even

⁶⁴² Given the Tsudanuma stamp, the soldier's lapel pins, and his shoulder patches (the right pin showing a prominent number 2 and the left resembling that of a railway regiment; the patches indicating his rank as a "Superior Private" 上等兵), it is likely that he was a member of the 2nd Railway Regiment, which was raised in Tsudanuma (津田沼) in Chiba Prefecture (千葉県) and listed as an occupying force in North China during and after the 1937 invasion. Responsible for operating armored trains and engaging in specialist railway warfare, the 2nd Regiment was among the troops of the First Army, North China Area Army (commanded by Lieutenant General Katsuki Kiyoshi) that took over the Pinghan railway (平漢鐵路) running from Beiping to Hankou through Shijiazhuang, Baoding, and Shunde in late August and early September 1937. See Kazuo Tamayama, *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 1-3; also Satoshi with Drea in *The Battle for China*, 161-162. Uniform identifications from reference slide "Japanese Army Uniform," Office for Emergency Management, Office of War Information, Domestic Operations Branch, Bureau of Special Services; NARA; <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%22Japanese_Army_Uniform%22_-_NARA_-_514675.tif>, accessed 14 May 2016.

⁶⁴³ Jessie Mae Henke, *Family History*, 16; Robert and Richard Henke, personal interview with the author, Pasadena, California, 29 June 2012.

⁶⁴⁴ Jessie Mae Henke, "Substance of My Talk on China to Groups," 9.

after the later events of the Pacific War formally categorized the Japanese as the Americans' national enemy.



Image 118 (Harold Henke, Lois Henke, Japanese officer, Ralph C. Lewis, c.1939), Image 119 (Harold Henke, Lois Henke, Japanese officer, Ralph C. Lewis, c.1939), and Image 120 (Japanese infantryman's portrait, *Chicago Tribune* album, c.1939; all Henke Family Collection)

The war and occupation also shaped missionary imaging in a material way. Still photography, which required far less raw film material and could be easily processed in mission compounds (as opposed to being sent out to an urban developing facility elsewhere) was preferred due to wartime shortages and the difficulties associated with regional shipping. The Henkes practically stopped their filmmaking with the Cine-Kodak, save for brief snippets of footage shot in 1939 and showing only medical cases.⁶⁴⁵ Military censorship was also an ever-present challenge, and not always visible to intended audiences, especially as missionaries in occupied North China attempted not to draw unwanted attention to themselves or their Chinese colleagues (lest either group be accused of anti-Japanese activities, with potentially tragic

⁶⁴⁵ These are identifiable by the presence of medical staff who were only in Shunde in 1939 (e.g. Richard Stein or Richard Frey, the Austrian Jewish medical technician who later joined the Communists) and by direct comparison with still photographs taken by Ralph Lewis at the same time and featured in the 1939 hospital report.

consequences). Unlike John Magee and Gerald Winfield, who benefitted from a sizeable community of foreign supporters and relatively fluid access to both church networks and like-minded governmental parties, missionaries working in smaller towns, rural areas, or regions under “deeper” occupation were at the mercy of Japanese censors who had far stronger control over mail traffic.⁶⁴⁶ Self-censorship, as a result, was quite common. The Shunde hospital report for 1939, for example, made no direct mention of the war – stating only that “the ‘incident’ in the fall of 1937...and the press of medical work and the shortage of staff have prevented the completion of the work [of preparing a hospital report] until now.”⁶⁴⁷ The only reference to military events – beyond the clearly self-censored reference to the invasion of China as a mere ‘incident’ – came from a patient testimony accompanied by a photographic portrait by Ralph Lewis, describing a man who suffered brutal retaliation at the hands of the Chinese military rather than the Japanese.⁶⁴⁸ It is unclear how much of a hand the local Japanese authorities had in influencing the textual choices, but to sharp-eyed readers elsewhere, these phrases may have

⁶⁴⁶ Winfield in West China reported that “the story of the Chinese Post Office, for example, would provide material for a fascinating thriller. Throughout the war it was possible to send letters from anywhere in ‘free China’ to most places in ‘occupied China’ simply by addressing them and dropping them in the nearest postbox. Postal service was maintained in spite of incredible difficulties met by postmasters who packed up their stamps and seals for a brief stay in the hills while fighting swept back and forth over their districts, after which they would emerge from hiding to inquire [which military force] was holding the town at the moment and to resume the handling of mail. Links between Japanese-controlled and free areas were maintained at hundreds of points by carriers moving on foot, junks, or carts, keeping a huge flow of mail in transit.” He then shared the account of Myron E. Terry of the Christian Literature Society in occupied Shanghai, who arranged to have Bibles and religious tracts forwarded to him through villages “listed by the Japanese as under their control...but actually in free China,” with the help of an Italian postal inspector retained by the occupation forces who was sympathetic to the missionaries. The result was that “the several thousands of packages delivered to free China...[kept] the Christian community of the interior supplied with literature during the long years between Pearl Harbor and V-J Day.” Winfield, 119-220.

⁶⁴⁷ *Report of Medical Work, American Presbyterian Mission, Shuntehfu, Hopei, North China 1939*, 3.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10. His actions were also described in politically ambiguous terms, in which the man (a mayor of a village) had supplied “the victorious Japanese soldiers [with food and fodder] after they drove the Chinese troops away” only to be burned alive, bayoneted, and left for dead by Chinese soldiers when they “recaptured, for a short time only, the village.” The full testimony reads, “Mr. Wu and his family have become Christians during his stay in the hospital. Terribly burned over his chest, in his armpits and on his back he has been with us four months. As mayor of his village he levied food and fodder on the members of his town for the victorious Japanese troops when they drove the Chinese troops away. Later on, the Chinese recaptured, for a short time only, the village. Because he had to that extent cooperated with the invaders he was burned and then thrown into the wayside to die. As a parting token he was given six deep cuts in his neck with a bayonet.”

sounded strange – though they may not have known why. Recipients of photographic prints, however, would have seen quite literally the censor’s imprint, as in the case of prints made and sent from Jining, Shandong by Dr. Frederick G. Scovel and Myra Scovel (the Presbyterian medical missionaries who also enjoyed American dance records, as described in a previous chapter). At some point between Shandong and the United States, the envelopes bearing their photographs were opened and the images – even comparatively mundane ones, depicting the family on vacation at Mount Tai (泰山) or in front of their mission residence in Jining – stamped with the symbol of a Japanese military censor, approving them for release (*Images 122 and 123*).



Image 121 (Scovel family at Mount Tai, verso with IJA censor’s stamp, July 1940) and Image 122 (Scovel family in Jining, verso with IJA censor’s stamp, March 1939; Scovel Family Collection)⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁹ Frederick and Myra Scovel, black-and-white prints, Scovel Family Collection. The stamp on the lower right image (the verso of the image directly to its left) reads “Jining Kempeitai [Military Police]” (濟寧憲兵隊), with the print passing through the censor’s office on 18 March 1939 (year marked 14 for the 14th year of the Shōwa Emperor). The photograph above it, from the Scovels’ Mount Tai visit, was similarly stamped on 13 July 1940.

The Scovels, like the Henkes and Lewises, had continued their medical mission work in occupied Shandong. Unlike the other two missionary families, however, they were direct victims of violence associated with the Japanese occupation. No more than a year before the first photograph above was passed by the censor, Frederick Scovel was shot by an intoxicated Japanese infantryman in the courtyard of the Bachman Hunter Hospital compound in Jining.⁶⁵⁰ The soldier had entered the compound in search of women, and resisted several attempts by members of the Chinese nursing staff to block him. As Scovel walked in front of the soldier, he shot the doctor in the lower back, fired again as he fell (missing the second time), and would have killed him had the gun not inexplicably jammed on the third shot, aimed at Scovel's head.⁶⁵¹ His life was saved not only because the firearm malfunctioned, but also because of close contacts between the Presbyterians and the local German Catholic mission. A family friend, a Catholic lay brother named Linoldhus (with whom the family conversed exclusively in Mandarin, their only shared language), raced through Japanese lines on his bicycle before the authorities shut down the roads, carrying a message to the American consul in Qingdao requesting advanced medical assistance.⁶⁵² While the attempted murder was serious enough to be reported, if only briefly, in the *North China Herald*, and the Scovels produced a deposition for use by the American consulate in case of diplomatic action, tight Japanese control over the Shandong area and Scovel's rapid recovery meant that the news was not picked up by broader media channels. Instead, high-ranking Japanese military officers and medical personnel visited

⁶⁵⁰ Myra Scovel, *The Chinese Ginger Jars* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), 74.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid. Also Louise Kiehle Scovel, letter to "Ada and All" in San Diego, 4 June 1938, Scovel Family Collection.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 75-76; 82-83. Scovel was reportedly the only non-military surgeon in the area, and there was no one else available to operate on him other than Japanese personnel, with the Chinese doctors at the Presbyterian mission not trained in trauma surgery. Soon after the news got through, Dr. Green

the Presbyterian compound to make amends and the soldier was quietly executed shortly thereafter, albeit against Scovel's wishes to prevent it.⁶⁵³

Scovel himself owned an early-model Leica rangefinder, purchased not only for its excellent portability but also because he used it for medical microphotography (its screw-mount for interchangeable lenses and small size made it well-suited for attachment to a microscope, which he already had on hand), while Myra used a folding Kodak camera for her snapshots.⁶⁵⁴ While no existing visual materials directly depicted events associated with the shooting or even Scovel's prewar and any wartime microphotography, this was likely a representative case in which vernacular photography served as a form of pleasure – carried over, of course, from the prewar period – with Scovel choosing to image people and things that were not directly part of the war violence and personal stresses already very much a part of their day-to-day lives. It is unclear whether or not the 1938 shooting played a role in this, but it is likely that the trauma was not far from the family's minds in the years afterward.⁶⁵⁵ As such, the photographs from the

⁶⁵³ Louise Kiehle Scovel letter, 4 June 1938, Scovel Family Collection. Even when on official visits to assist Scovel, the local Japanese military doctor treated the gateman at the Presbyterian compound with unexplained violence, kicking him viciously as he led the way. Myra Scovel recorded this in her autobiographical account, and this was remembered very clearly by the children. The gateman appears in one of Scovel's family films, to be discussed shortly. Scovel, 83; Carl Scovel, personal interview by the author, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, 26 February 2012.

⁶⁵⁴ Louise Kiehle Scovel, personal letter to Frederick Scovel from Cortland, New York, 8 May 1932, Scovel Family Collection; "I'm sure the medical work will pick up as you get it going better. It is interesting about your microscope photography – let us hear more. I don't see why a photograph of your diploma wouldn't do for the inspector." Also Jim Scovel, Carl Scovel, and Anne Scovel Fitch, personal interview with the author, Walnut Creek, California, 18 July 2014. The occasion for this interview was the morning before the memorial service for Janene Scovel, the wife of Thomas (Tom) Scovel, the youngest Scovel son who was born the year after his father was shot. He is the toddler with the hand on his brother Jim's head in the top photograph, taken at Mount Tai in 1940. In addition to the siblings already listed above, Tom and his youngest sister, Victoria (Vicki) Scovel Harris, were also present. Another sibling born in China, Judith Scovel Robinson, was not present – she and her husband reside in England were only able to visit later that summer – but was interviewed by the author in Walnut Creek on 8 August 2014.

⁶⁵⁵ The entire family, including Jim, Carl, and Anne Scovel, along their grandmother (Frederick Scovel's mother), Louise Kiehle Scovel, was present at the compound when he was shot, and along with the Chinese medical staff and servants, were among the first to witness the immediate aftermath. Myra Scovel recounted that she herself was unable to break the news to her children, as their nanny Chang Ta Sao, as the family referred to her, "overcome with grief and anxiety, had somehow got hold of Fred's bloodstained shirt and was sitting in the middle of the nursery floor, rocking back and forth and wailing 'Your father was shot. Your father was shot!' while the stunned children huddled in a circle around her. They looked up at me as I came into the room and did not say a word." Scovel, *The Chinese Ginger Jars*, 76.

period depicted domestic scenes much divorced from the war. At some point, Scovel obtained at least one roll of Kodachrome color positive film, a cutting-edge medium only made commercially available in 1935 and still not widely used in most parts of the world (let alone wartime China). With it he produced 35mm color slides in Jining and during a family trip to Qingdao in the summer of 1940 (*Images 123 and 124*).⁶⁵⁶ Given the need for very precise exposure measurement, along with the color film's extreme insensitivity to light, high cost, and limited supply, the number of images was small – and therefore precious to conserve. Even in this limited set of color images, however, it is possible to see what Scovel felt was most important to visualize in his personal wartime experience: immediate family members and close medical colleagues – all people who stood by him when he was shot.



Image 123 (Thomas Scovel in Qingdao, 35mm Kodachrome slide, summer 1941) and Image 124 (Hospital staff in Jining, 35mm Kodachrome slide, c.1940-1941; both Scovel Family Collection)⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁶ Richard L. Simon, *Miniature Photography from One Amateur to Another* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1937), 127. Although Kodachrome was already two years on the market at the time the handbook was published in 1937, Simon made no mention other than a somewhat dismissive afterword, “I have not discussed color photography in this book, because I do not know its use at first hand. Because at present it is impossible to do your own developing and printing, and because to show color films they must be projected on a screen they don’t appeal to me. From friends I hear they are simple to use [relatively], and that Kodachrome is the best of the lot. If you use Kodachrome, set your Weston meter at 8.”

⁶⁵⁷ Frederick G. Scovel, Kodachrome 35mm color slides, c. 1940-1941, Scovel Family Collection. The slide on the left was made in Qingdao during a family vacation in 1941; the toddler in the photograph is the Scovels’ third son, Thomas (Tom), who was born in January 1939. Tom later earned his PhD in psycholinguistics from the University of Michigan and went on to a missionary educator’s career in Thailand before teaching at the University of Pittsburgh and San Francisco State University. The slide on the right, featuring the Chinese medical staff at the Jining hospital, was made in the courtyard where Scovel was shot. In making the photograph, Scovel is standing not far from where the event took place; the gate behind the group is the one through which the soldier forced himself.

With the outbreak of war between the United States and Japan, however, missionary imaging in North China experienced a precipitous decline. Ralph Lewis and the Scovel family were asleep in their mission stations when the bombs fell on Pearl Harbor several time zones away on December 7, 1941. Despite being in different parts of North China, their experiences rapidly began to converge; on the morning of December 8, they were promptly placed under military house arrest as civilian noncombatants. Making his usual morning rounds in the hospital, Lewis was alerted by a Korean interpreter working with the Japanese military that a contingent of troops was waiting outside the clinic; he walked outside to see “a group of Japanese soldiers standing there in formation, with their arms and two heavy machine guns...[a] tall, good-looking Japanese officer shouted something at me...[and] the interpreter told me that war had broken out between the United States and Japan and that I would be held as a civilian prisoner until such a time when they could send me back home.”⁶⁵⁸ The Scovels, preparing for breakfast, were abruptly greeted by a somewhat more sympathetic Japanese officer, whose troops were guarding the mission gate; mixing official regimen with a personal touch, he offered to hold and comfort the Scovels’ crying ten-week-old daughter, Judy, while he read the arrest document aloud to the stunned family.⁶⁵⁹ The mission churches and hospitals – now considered enemy property overnight – were to be confiscated by the occupation authorities and turned over to a “newly formed Church of Christ in China” under Japanese supervision.⁶⁶⁰ Shortly thereafter,

⁶⁵⁸ Lewis, 164.

⁶⁵⁹ Scovel, 97-98. “The officer said, ‘Here, let me hold her.’ As he rocked her in his arms, he read to us the document from Tokyo. ‘You are not to leave the house. Everything you formerly owned is now the property of the Imperial Japanese Government... There, there, don’t cry, little one, everything will be all right... You are to make lists in triplicate of everything in the house. Your money is to be counted, the house searched in the presence of this officer... There, there, don’t cry, don’t worry, little one.’”

⁶⁶⁰ Lewis, 164. By this time, the Henkes had gone back to the United States on their 1940 furlough, having perceived that the unrest in East Asia might cause further issues for missions work; Harold and Jessie Mae stayed in the Midwest between 1940 and 1945, where Harold undertook remedial medical training at the University of Chicago. Ralph and Roberta Lewis decided that it would be best for Roberta and the Lewises’ four children to return to the United States in March 1941 in case hostilities flared up. Lewis, 154. The Scovels, on the other hand, elected to stay

with guards posted inside and around their residences, the missionaries settled into a tense waiting period – filled with boredom as well as strange friendships with the soldiers whom they saw daily. With their movements limited to the houses in which they were confined, what visual practices they could engage in reflected a forced domesticity.⁶⁶¹ As Myra Scovel wrote,

It was quite an experience to be interned in one's own house for a year. We were guarded by Chinese soldiers [collaborationist reserve troops commanded by the Japanese], one of whom used to sit on a soapbox at the front gate and embroider beautifully on pieces of grass linen, his gun propped up on his shoulder. Fred was the only one allowed out of the compound, and he was permitted to go only as far as the hospital, a few doors down the street from our own gate. We read our books over and over again...we bicycled around the tennis court for exercise. We had picnics on the roof and in every corner of the yard, and did all the things we had always thought we would do if only we had the time. Once we had orders to prepare for repatriation. Trunks were packed, examined by the Japanese, repacked, kicked open and the contents strewn; repacked, re-examined and finally sealed shut. But nothing more happened. Every time an officer came to call, we would ask him, 'When do we go to America?'⁶⁶²

Using up the last of the Kodachrome on the roll in his Leica, Frederick Scovel made a few images that reflected this experience of being shut-in. Those that still exist are rather mundane, showing a corner of the courtyard next to the mission residence and a distant view of a factory

together as a family (sans Frederick Scovel's elderly mother, Louise Kiehle Scovel, who returned to the United States to see her sister in the spring of 1941). Scovel, 91-93; 100. In terms of the Japanese-organized Church of Christ in China, Myra Scovel reported that "a Japanese [individual] who called himself a pastor-doctor...came down from the capital city once a week to make his inspections...[he] seemed also to be a member of what was called Special Services, whose duty it was to investigate subversive activities. It was difficult to figure out what the pastor-doctor was doing. We had a good time together one evening as he taught us to sing a hymn in Japanese, 'Where He Leads Me, I will Follow.'"

⁶⁶¹ Lewis was confined with three of his fellow mission staff – evangelists John Bickford and Lillian K. Jenness (the wife of Richard Jenness, who had died unexpectedly in mid-1941), and Rose S. Rasey, an Australian nurse who had transferred to the American Presbyterian mission from the China Inland Mission. While the internment began well, and Lewis had many hours to chat with his new roommate, Bickford (whom he had formerly considered a colleague but had not known personally because their mission responsibilities were different), by Easter 1942, the group discovered that their coffee supply was running low. "We began to cut down on the amount we consumed. Nevertheless, the day came when there was no more. Then the trouble began." Lacking caffeine and perhaps manifesting cabin fever, "our tempers became rather sharp, and [the daily card games of] 'Rook' didn't help matters any. We had some real heated arguments, and I was afraid that some of us were beginning to show signs of paranoia." The mission cook, noticing this, obtained green coffee beans from another Chinese cook employed by the Polish priest at the Roman Catholic mission in Shunde – saving the Presbyterians from their frayed nerves. "Now that we had some more coffee," Lewis wrote, "after roasting it we surely enjoyed it, but were very careful to use it only on special occasions...soon our tempers became much more civilized, and when finally the coffee ran out completely, we were prepared for abstinence." Lewis, 169.

⁶⁶² Scovel, 99.

smokestack visible from just over the wall (*Images 125 and 126*). Yet, in their limited framing, they embodied the isolation felt by the people behind the lens – after all, they were the only images Scovel could make in his family’s strained confinement in Jining. Lewis, on the other hand, stopped making photographs completely. It would be over a year before the missionaries left their stations, but even then, the war had small but lasting effects on their images’ afterlives.



Image 125 (Jining mission residence courtyard, 35mm Kodachrome slide, c.1941-1942) and Image 126 (Jining mission residence wall, 35mm Kodachrome slide, c.1941-1942; both Scovel Family Collection)⁶⁶³

When the time came in late 1942 and early 1943 for foreign missionaries across eastern China to be moved into Japanese-organized internment camps to await formal repatriation to Europe or the United States (though the specific circumstances of this internment were not yet clear to them at the time), visual materials were among the first personal items that they thought of. As they prepared to leave their mission stations for a more nebulous fate, the materiality of their photographs and film – and their underlying connections to the missionaries’ personal lives – became a central part of the transition experience. Lewis, on being informed “on a sunny day in late November [1942]” by Japanese officers that “we could each take two suitcases of our best belongings which we cherished very much,” immediately “planned to take my two photo albums

⁶⁶³ Frederick G. Scovel, Kodachrome 35mm color slides, c. 1941-1942, Scovel Family Collection.

and other photographs” alongside “two of my best Bibles that I had been using in studying with John Bickford.” But when the day came for Lewis to leave Shunde,

Our things had to undergo inspection. We were told to bring out our suitcases, opening them for examination so they could see what things we were taking. They started with the other two [American missionaries, Bickford and Jenness] first...going through everything very thoroughly. I do not recall anything being taken from the others, but when they came to my belongings and found my photo albums[,] they had a great time. They went through them page by page, stripping out pictures of my family and making remarks in Japanese about them all and tearing them into bits before my eyes, laughing loudly. There was nothing I could say, as they were in charge of our well-being. So I was left with NO pictures...I tried to show no anger and prayed that the Lord would give me grace under this situation. He did[,] but it surely hurt, to say the least. Now, knowing more about the true war situation, I believe [the Japanese officers] were showing their anger because of recent reverses the Japanese army and navy were experiencing.⁶⁶⁴

In Lewis’s eyes, the destruction of his photographs by the Japanese officers was an invasive attack on his family and personal life. In this moment, photographs not only visually represented their missionary makers’ experience, but their materiality clearly carried with it emotional ties to the privacy of the image contents as well as Lewis’s imaging labor – both of which were intruded on (and irreversibly ruined, in a material way) by authoritative power. Perhaps to prevent a similar fate from befalling their personal belongings and visual materials, when the Scovels were alerted in spring 1943 of their imminent transfer to an internment camp, they “[became] squirrels; we hid things.” As Myra recounted,

We took all of Beloved Grandmother’s [Louise Kiehle Scovel] old family mahogany and stowed it behind a chimney in the attic. Then we built a false wall across the room and plastered it over to look as if there were nothing behind it. We took our precious music records and slid them down on ropes between two walls. We scrambled up to hidden recesses under the eaves and concealed our best-loved pictures. Fred filled an old camphor box with our wedding silver, sealed it shut, painted it with a heavy coat of white lead, and

⁶⁶⁴ Lewis, 176-177. In mid-November 1942, US Navy forces had just defeated the IJN during the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, not only crippling Japanese naval forces but preventing the IJA from reinforcing troops on the island – sealing the fate of those fighting the Americans there. The author’s maternal grandfather (Wang Chi-kuang), a teenaged Taiwanese conscript in the IJA (台籍日本兵), was among the reserve forces slated to join a later wave of reinforcements, likely intended for Okinawa. Japan’s defeat in mid-August 1945, just as 18-year-old Wang was completing military training in Taiwan, likely saved his life. The author’s mother was born less than a decade later.

buried it in a deep hole under the porch, along with his stamp collection, Father [Carl W.] Scovel's pulpit Bible, and the children's baby books. We had no money to hide.⁶⁶⁵

Although "a Japanese officer and five soldiers arrived to search the house...the officer was either extremely stupid or extremely kind; I incline toward the latter view, for he found nothing." After the war ended and the Scovels returned to Jining in 1947, they knocked down the false walls, pulled up the ropes, and retrieved most of their belongings (*Images 127-129*).⁶⁶⁶ Not everything was recovered immediately, however. Their 16mm films, most of which were shot before they arrived in China in 1930 (concealed with the phonograph records between the walls) were gone, but not lost. They would not be reunited with the family again until the 21st century.⁶⁶⁷



Image 127 ("Aunt Martha" clock with Louis Kiehle Scovel in New York, c.1930), Image 128 ("Aunt Martha" clock with Scovel family in Guangzhou, c. 1948), and Image 129 ("Aunt Martha" clock in Carl Scovel's home, Massachusetts, June 2013; Left and center, Scovel Family Collection; right, author's photograph)⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁵ Scovel, 105.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 158. According to Myra Scovel's personal diary, the recovery took place on May 13, 1947. "Opened secret room and found all in good condition," she noted, "Hole under porch broken into – silver and stamps gone! But nobody touched things like the horrible Peking incense burner in the attic!"

⁶⁶⁷ The ropes holding the family films had snapped sometime between their concealment in 1943 and the Scovels' return to Jining in 1947, and the reels fell into the bottom of the house. There they sat in darkness, protected from the elements by their airtight metal canisters and the foundation walls. Some 60 years later, in 2002, workers demolishing the mission compound to make way for new buildings broke through the house foundation and discovered the reels there. The director of the Jining City Historical Museum (濟寧市歷史博物館) was called to investigate, discovering to her great surprise that the reels were still viewable; bacteria growth on the canisters, however, gave her a "wicked rash" when handling them. The footage was subsequently digitized and screened in a surprise presentation for the two eldest Scovel sons, Carl and Jim (aged 84 and 86, respectively), when they revisited their childhood home and the Jining Hospital (the successor to the American Presbyterian institution) in late April 2016. Carl Scovel, "The China Trip," 6-7; shared in personal email to author, 29 April 2016; also Jim Scovel, "Jim's China Trip April 2016," 1-2; shared by Vicki Scovel Harris in personal email to author, 21 May 2016.

⁶⁶⁸ One of the items that the Scovels hung between the walls was a late-19th century New England clock they affectionately called "Aunt Martha." The clock was brought to China by Frederick's mother, Louise Kiehle Scovel,

Both Lewis and the Scovels were destined to meet again in person at the Weih sien Civilian Assembly Center (維縣集中營) in Shandong, a prison camp for foreign noncombatants that was housed, somewhat ironically, in the former American Presbyterian mission compound (樂道院) where *Life's* Henry Luce had spent his childhood.⁶⁶⁹ There, Ralph Lewis and Frederick Scovel lent their skills to the community medical service, became acquainted with the eclectic group of foreigners with whom they are interned (Lewis crossing paths with not only the Scovels but also a certain young Scottish missionary, a former Olympian named Eric Liddell), and settling in to a harsh but strangely colorful confinement.⁶⁷⁰ Myra Scovel, who documented the internment in her own words some two decades later, shared the same experiences with a greater personal challenge. She was several months pregnant when she and her family were interned, and formed a community with other expectant and nursing mothers, who met daily to drink crushed eggshells dissolved in thin bone broth, attempting to provide sufficient nutrients for their unborn children.⁶⁷¹ But even as the missionaries began their largely un-visualized internment

who had previously kept it in the Cortland, New York manse she shared with her husband, Rev. Carl W. Scovel (who died in the summer of 1932), before coming to live with her son and his family in Shandong. With the exception of the internment, she would remain with them until her death in Canton in 1948. The photograph on the left was made in the manse before 1932; "Aunt Martha" is visible directly behind the lamp to the left of Louise Scovel. The center image, with the clock presiding over a family meal, was made in Guangzhou (廣州) – the Scovels' 1948 mission post, after they retrieved the clock from its hiding place in Jining. And the photograph on the right was made by the author, who encountered "Aunt Martha" occupying a place of honor in Carl Scovel's parlor (converted to a guest bedroom) when he visited for his dissertation research in early June 2013.

⁶⁶⁹ Langdon Gilkey, *Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women Under Pressure* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1966), 10; for a brilliantly-researched independent study of the various civilian internment camps across China between 1941-1945, see Greg Leck, *Captives of Empire: The Japanese Internment of Allied Civilians in China, 1941-1945* (Bangor: Shandy Press, 2006); Ralph Lewis and the entire Scovel family are listed on the Weih sien camp rolls, as reproduced in Leck's work.

⁶⁷⁰ Lewis, 180-201. Scovel, 105-142. Lewis's first explicit mention of the Scovel family in his memoirs records that "the three story hospital building...did not interfere with our view of the skies. Fred Scovel, from the Shantung Mission of our denomination, was in the camp with his family [and] wife Myra...I knew that he was an amateur astronomer. We got a group together who were interested in learning about astronomy, especially the Constellations we could see at that time of the year. Fred made rough drafts of the sky and talked to us about what we would be seeing, and then took us out in an area where we could sit down on the ground and look up at the beautiful sky." Lewis, 186. Eric Liddell and his prewar life would later become the focus of the 1981 British film *Chariots of Fire*.

⁶⁷¹ Scovel, 115.

without access to cameras or film – a pivotal experience in itself, worthy of a different set of historical questions – a visual remnant of their prior experience was already moving ahead of them, traversing the wartime world.

Sometime between their house arrest in December 1941 and Weih sien internment in spring 1943, Frederick and Myra Scovel made a short 8mm Kodachrome color film in their mission residence.⁶⁷² Like the Kodachrome slides and the couple's writings on their confinement, the 4 minute 15 second footage, shot almost entirely in the courtyard and interior of their house, reinforced this isolation. Though the background scenery changed little, the Scovels tried to fit as many of their family, friends, and missionary colleagues into the film as they could before the reel ran out, passing the camera from one person to another as needed. Brother Linoldhus, the man who saved Frederick Scovel's life, made a brief appearance, as did the Chinese servants and their own families who lived with the Scovels. The Scovel family walked back into the mission house together, the film faded to white and then cut – an appropriate visual metaphor for the end of their time in Jining. Sometime thereafter, the undeveloped footage began made a remarkable journey across China, most of which must be guessed at. The only location in the world at the time that could develop Kodachrome color film was the Eastman Kodak company plant in Rochester, New York, and so the film needed to be sent there.⁶⁷³ With the war preventing the film's direct shipment eastward across the Pacific, it was likely mailed into the interior – passing through Japanese-occupied territory via the wartime Chinese postal service and heading south past Shunde, where Ralph Lewis was also under house arrest. After its arrival in

⁶⁷² The original 8mm copy of this film is currently in the author's possession, on loan from Carl Scovel. It has been professionally cleaned and digitized, and will soon be deposited in the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, part of several collections assembled by the author.

⁶⁷³ Sylvie Pénichon, *Twentieth Century Color Photographs: Identification and Care* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2013), 163-164, 182.

“Free China,” where Gerald Winfield was based, the film was likely loaded with other mail into air transports flying over the Himalayas to India, making its way from there by sea to the United States. Having circumnavigated the war-torn world, the film somehow arrived safely at Rochester and was duly processed, going through “twenty-eight stages [lasting] three and a half hours, and... three separate processing machines.”⁶⁷⁴ And there it sat for lack of a return address. In late December 1943, Frederick Scovel, released from Weih sien with Myra and their children – having also followed a similar path around the world in their repatriation journey – also arrived at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, taking up a position as the company physician there.⁶⁷⁵ Not long afterward, in early 1944, a Kodak employee in the processing department made the connection between the doctor and the orphaned film (“Are you Scovel?” his second son recalled the unknown employee telling his astounded father, “we’ve got a package here with your name on it”) and the footage made in China reunited with its makers.⁶⁷⁶ In another apt parallel, Myra Scovel noted that en route back to the US via Portuguese India, “in the first batch of mail to reach us in Goa, a friend had sent a [Biblical] verse that had become a prayer: ‘Behold I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee to the place which I have prepared.’”⁶⁷⁷ Of course, she was thinking of her and her family’s wartime experiences, but it could have applied equally well to the film. The passage was from the Book of Exodus.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., 163.

⁶⁷⁵ Scovel, 144. Myra Scovel went into labor as their repatriation ship, the Swedish Red Cross vessel MV *Gripsholm* was landing in New York on December 1, 1943. She was rushed to an ambulance and gave birth to her daughter Victoria (Vicki) Scovel within an hour after disembarking. See also Lucy Greenbaum, “Babies Make News on Gripsholm; One Waits to Be Born in the U.S.,” *New York Times*, 2 December 1943, 24.

⁶⁷⁶ Carl Scovel, personal interviews with the author, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts; 26 February 2012, 2 June 2013.

⁶⁷⁷ Scovel, 144; the passage is from Exodus 23:20 (KJV). The Scovels had left China with several hundred other foreigners via the Japanese repatriation ship *Teia Maru*, and were waiting in Goa to be picked up by the *Gripsholm*. Ralph Lewis also traveled with them on both legs of the voyage.

Realignments, Repetitions, and Missionary Imaging Beyond the War

In navigating the chaos of the Second Sino-Japanese War, American missionary experience and visual practices were profoundly shaped by new identities and encounters. While widespread violence, political realignments, and wartime contingencies disrupted missionary activities on national and global scales, the abilities, interests, and technical capabilities of missionaries to visualize China and their experiences there – developed during the interwar period and part of their longer historical trajectory – continued on a micro level. For some, this meant leveraging their photographic and filmic abilities for wartime humanitarian or political aims. For others, this meant a withdrawing from or limiting of visual practices as the pressures of the war grew too great. But these shifts in individual experience also paralleled broader changes in the way that world audiences perceived (and quite literally pictured) wartime China and American involvement there. Even as missionary visual practices were curtailed, American perceptions of China and public sentiments were also broadened and reshaped by the war; the audiences, therefore, were no longer the same as those before the conflict began. As images of wartime China moved through American mass media channels imbued with new ideas (beyond interwar conceptions of Christianity and modern mission) about Sino-US national alliances and cultural encounters, so too were visual meanings of missionary images and missionaries as Americans in China colored by these interconnections. No longer were American missionaries primarily defined by their religious institutions and modern Christian activities abroad in the interwar sense. Nor were they considered insular emblems of extraterritoriality, requiring Western imperial intervention in a helpless and “backwards” China, as in the case of foreign missionaries in the Boxer Uprising nearly half a century before. Rather, their identities – at least from an American public point of view – were more strongly than ever perceived as modern

mediating figures, defined by dual identities as both citizens of the United States and “friends of [a modern] China” in wartime. Moreover, their presence in China was more strongly colored by Chinese nationalist ideologies in the wake of the 1937 Japanese invasion and, after December 1941, their collective experience as the largest body of American noncombatants on the receiving end of Japanese military aggression in East Asia. Their images, therefore, reflected both documentary and mediational impulses, bridging spaces not only between China missions and American religious bodies, but wartime China and the United States more broadly.

These identities would continue to play a crucial role in the postwar era, as the American missionary return to China reestablished institutional and communal ties broken during the war. At the same time, the missionary experience and imaging during the Second Sino-Japanese War prefigured greater historical changes to come – changes that were to have even more drastic effects on missionary activities in China and Chinese Christianity as a whole. There were to be many striking repetitions. The wide attention paid to China as a modern nation confronted by Japanese imperialism and the country’s complicated roles in global conflict would carry over into the postwar world order. As the guns fell silent across the Pacific, missionary cameras, photographs, and films would continue to play roles in shaping and documenting experience, framing communities, and tracing transnational networks. The belligerents, alliances, and meanings of modern mission in China, however, would change dramatically. The perspective of the postwar world would be focused on that of a nation confronted by crippling internal strife and the resurgent development of Chinese Communism, now well within the specter of the global Cold War. Within four years after the 1945 conclusion of the Pacific War, American missionaries would find themselves facing a striking sense of *déjà vu*, with their experiences shaped again by violence and national chaos, and personal and institutional contingencies – this

time caused by internal conflict rather than external forces, and to result in the ultimate departure of all missionaries from the country. In these moments and afterward, missionary visual practices would be characterized by deeper senses of collective loss, nostalgic longings reinforced by images of an unrecoverable past, a present that was fading away, and a future that could not be. These were visions, literal and figurative, that would outlast the missionary enterprise itself.

Chapter 5 – Memento Mori: Loss, Nostalgia, and the End of American Missionary Visual Practices in Postwar China, 1945-1951

On December 22, 1949, Father William Klement, S.J., a Catholic priest affiliated with the California Jesuit province, composed a letter in “mid-Pacific,” aboard a ship steaming its way eastward to Asia.⁶⁷⁸ The letter was intended for his colleague, Father Bernard Hubbard, S.J., a lecturer at Santa Clara University nicknamed the “Glacier Priest” for his scientific research in Alaska during the 1930s.⁶⁷⁹ Klement began his letter with some disappointment, noting that “it’s the darnest thing the way I had to miss you all around.”⁶⁸⁰ The two priests had just missed meeting each other in person. Hubbard returned to California after a lecture series on the East Coast and Midwest in November 1949, arriving at almost exactly the same time Klement started across the Pacific. Klement, however, was not merely thinking of a missed connection between friends. There were other, greater losses at play. As he sat at the typewriter, he was at the end of over a decade of life in China, half of which was spent as the rural mission pastor (*Vicar forane*) in Yangzhou (揚州), Jiangsu Province. His ship, however, was headed not to China, but to the Philippines – where Klement was to take up administration of a major Jesuit language school (Maison Chabanel) that had just relocated to Manila from its original location in Beijing.⁶⁸¹ It

⁶⁷⁸ Fr. William J. Klement, S.J., to Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., 22 December 1949, California Jesuit Archives, Santa Clara University (hereafter CJA-SCU). The author thanks archivist Bro. Daniel Peterson, S.J., for his generous and invaluable assistance in identifying and providing these materials for research. Without the letter referenced here, the author would not have been able to pursue the search for the important films discussed in this chapter of his doctoral dissertation.

⁶⁷⁹ “Missionaries and the Cinema,” *The International Review of Educational Cinematography*, July 1932, 557-558.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸¹ Fr. William J. Klement, S.J., personnel file (“William J. Klement, 1906-1994”), CJA-SCU.

was a chaotic conclusion to the foreign missionary enterprise in which Klement – and many other American missionaries like him – were now caught up.

Three months before, on October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong before a battery of microphones in front of a jostling crowd in Tiananmen Square, and speaking in his distinctive Hunanese dialect, stridently proclaimed the official founding of the People’s Republic of China. While politicians and pundits in Washington continued pointing fingers over the “loss of China” and Shanghai citizens crowded into city streets to watch the new Public Security Bureau (公安局) conduct public executions of so-called “counterrevolutionaries,” foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians were caught in-between nations, conflicts, and their multiple identities.⁶⁸² Many – both Protestant and Catholic – growing increasingly aware of the “writing on the wall,” permanently left the Mainland in the year before. Others remained by choice or by necessity, unsure of the immediate future, but retaining some hope that their activities in China could continue under the new regime.⁶⁸³ Klement was among the American Catholic missionaries who left ahead of the PRC’s founding, departing Shanghai on December 1, 1948 – nearly a month to

⁶⁸² Frederic Wakeman, Jr., “Cleanup,” in *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People’s Republic of China*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Paul G. Pickowicz (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 33; 40-43. See also Robert P. Newman, *Owen Lattimore and the “Loss” of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). In regard to the urban Chinese Catholic community’s uncertain situation at the PRC turn, see Paul P. Mariani, “The Lines are Drawn” and “Targeted Attack,” in *Church Militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 27-67; 68-108.

⁶⁸³ See also Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 159-175. Also Oi Ki Ling, *The Changing Role of British Protestant Missionaries in China, 1945-1952* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), 110-112. As Ling states, “there was no move to eliminate the whole of Western presence immediately after the Communist takeover or when the PRC was established in October 1949. Several reasons may account for this policy... There was no doubt that the overriding concern of the Communist leadership was the speedy restoration of production and rehabilitation of the war-damaged economy... To consolidate its power the CCP had established a united front which included a large number of non-Communists. Too radical a policy, such as the outright expulsion of Westerners, might have alienated the Western educated intellectuals. The Communists wanted to ‘create an image of reputable government worthy of a place in the international diplomatic arena,’ and especially in the United Nations. The expulsion of Westerners would tarnish their image. It is no coincidence that in large cities like Beijing and Tianjin missionaries and the churches were better treated than in remote areas. The presence of foreign diplomatic representatives and the likelihood and unfavorable publicity by foreign personnel encouraged leniency... in large cities the Communists had often shown a friendly attitude toward missionaries who remained and had sometimes asked why others had left. Such a friendly attitude did not last long.” Ling, 111-112.

the day after the California Jesuits' Father Superior, Paul O'Brien, notified provincial headquarters in Los Gatos that "the Nationalist Government [is] about to fall."⁶⁸⁴ These recent memories were undoubtedly on Klement's mind in this moment in late 1949, as he wrote to Hubbard. But the immediate subject at hand was something else entirely: the priests were in fact corresponding about filmmaking. Attached to Klement's letter was a lengthy 21-page "screenplay," containing commentary meant to accompany several thousand feet of 16mm color film footage that he, Hubbard, and other Catholic missionaries shot together in China before 1948. At the same time, there was something different about this correspondence on visual practices. The times had changed, and the people and visions along with them.⁶⁸⁵

Klement and Hubbard's films (to be discussed in detail later in this chapter) were among the final kinds of visual material produced by American missionaries before the founding of the PRC in 1949. Many of these images were shaped in production and reception by degrees of collective hope, loss, and nostalgia. In some senses, these were greater postwar recapitulations of missionary experiences during the previous Second Sino-Japanese War, both political and personal. The missionaries who lived through the wartime period had developed stronger ties with an embattled China and Chinese nationalism, as well as parallel nationalistic connections to the United States as it was involved in the post-1941 Pacific War against Japan. In the postwar period – and especially as the Chinese Civil War re-ignited and the global Cold War became more of a visible reality – these political imaginations were more strongly colored by US

⁶⁸⁴ Author unknown, "Father William J. Klement, S.J., Obituary," CJA-SCU.

⁶⁸⁵ For a concise and critical overview of this period from a contemporary perspective (written 4 years after the events of this chapter and without, of course, the focus on visual practices) see Creighton Lacy, "The Missionary Exodus from China," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia, December 1955), 301-314. Lacy articulates the major historical shifts from an institutional point of view, and expresses well the kinds of broad disappointments expressed by missionaries after their activities and communities in China collapsed during the Cold War. He also describes the diasporic movement of the missionary enterprise from China to other places (in parallel with Chinese expatriate communities) throughout East and Southeast Asia – an expansion of missionary visual practices that the author hopes to explore in a future study focusing on Thailand and Taiwan.

domestic imaginations regarding the threat of Chinese Communist Party (CCP), particularly its increasingly visible antagonism toward foreign religious institutions (in which missionaries came under more heated fire than before, lumped together in the CCP's political imaginary with American "imperialists" meddling in Chinese affairs).⁶⁸⁶

At the same time, the meanings behind postwar missionary images cannot be reduced to one-dimensional products of political or national ideologies. On the levels of personal perception and emotion, the war had profoundly changed the ways that missionaries viewed their presence in China and their modern identities. Many had experienced losses of their own – measured in both human and material terms – and also witnessed among their own communities and colleagues the loss of life and massive destruction that devastated the Chinese population as a whole. The end of the war in 1945 thus brought hope and renewed possibilities, but was not without deep uncertainties and anxieties. The experiential and spiritual "in-between-ness" of missionaries and Chinese Christians thematically framed these images just as much now as it did their complicated identities before this time. Yet, the historical changes experienced by missionaries in postwar China were in many ways more collectively traumatic than previous years, not least because of the rapid shifts in national identity and threats to foreign missionary activity that took place between 1945 and 1949. The optimism and possibilities of renewed missions in the immediate postwar moment were replaced in less than four years by feelings of

⁶⁸⁶ The most famous example of this is Mao's August 18, 1949 article entitled, "Farewell, Leighton Stuart [别了，司徒雷登]," in which he roundly attacked American influence in postwar China – particularly support for Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government – as an imperialist ploy (part of a "U.S. policy of world-wide aggression since World War II") to destroy the Chinese people alongside Chinese Communism. Interestingly, he began the speech (framed as a sarcastic celebration of US Ambassador John Leighton Stuart's exit from China) by describing and then "exposing" Leighton Stuart's previous credentials as a modern Protestant missionary and missionary child: "Leighton Stuart is an American born in China; he has fairly wide social connections and spent many years running missionary schools in China, he once sat in a Japanese gaol during the War of Resistance; he used to pretend to love both the United States and China and was able to deceive quite a number of Chinese." The same description could have applied to a large number of American Protestant missionaries. Mao Zedong, *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Volume IV* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 433-440.

impending loss, as the Chinese Civil War reshaped the national landscape in ways that severely precluded further missionary activity.⁶⁸⁷ These feelings were especially salient as the massive regime changes of the late 1940s, with the relatively pro-Christian Nationalist government (embodied most prominently in US public consciousness by Soong Mei-ling and Chiang Kai-shek's Methodist faith) retreating to the island of Taiwan in the face of nationwide Communist military victories on the Mainland.⁶⁸⁸ As long-term mission enterprises collapsed in 1949-1951 and broader Cold War developments in East Asia – namely the Korean War – expedited the final expulsion of all missionaries still resident in the PRC, the future of Christianity in China and foreign missionary involvement in its development looked progressively bleaker.⁶⁸⁹

Under these circumstances, as mission institutions and personnel were gradually cut off from the Chinese communities and environments with which they were once associated, photographic images of Christian activity and missionary life in the pre-PRC era provided visions of a more stable past – as well as indexical icons of hope and religious futurity. These mixed feelings, centered on vision, were well represented in 1951 by an Presbyterian educator at Hangchow Christian College (之江大學) in Zhejiang Province, who wrote of straining “to get a last look at [the college campus]” as the train carrying him and his American colleagues steamed out of Hangzhou “and the College became lost to view.”⁶⁹⁰ Physical sight was replaced by religious imagination and personal nostalgia as the missionary continued:

And now we were leaving, not through any wish of our own but in order that our continued presence might not become a source of embarrassment or even danger to our Chinese colleagues. We were leaving with no sense of utter frustration, as though all we had been helping to build would come crashing in ruins to the ground, but with a deep, ineradicable

⁶⁸⁷ Bays, 146-160.

⁶⁸⁸ Joyce Mao, *Asia First: China and the Making of Modern American Conservatism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 21-25; 54-59.

⁶⁸⁹ Ling, 121-122.

⁶⁹⁰ Clarence Burton Day, *Hangchow University: A Brief History* (New York: United Board for Christian Colleges, 1955), 154-155.

belief that what was permanent in our building was of God and would remain. It was something spiritual and what is spiritual is indescribable, is inheritable, because it is of the essence of eternity. As the Scripture says: ‘Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.’”⁶⁹¹

The desire to grasp remnants of an idealized Christian past in the crumbling present, and to hope for an alternative future “of the essence of eternity” was most strongly embodied in and reinforced by visual materials. As initial hopes turned to angst-laden uncertainties and institutional losses led to nostalgic longing, photographic images became symbolic windows – “*memento mori*,” in Susan Sontag’s words – through which missionaries and Chinese Christians collectively looked back at experiences and communities that no longer existed (and forward to an uncertain future).⁶⁹² Sontag’s elaboration of the term, composed less than two decades later, fits well with this moment in missionary visual practices:

It is a nostalgic time right now, and photographs actively promote nostalgia. Photography is an elegiac art, a twilight art...a beautiful subject can be the object of rueful feelings, because it has aged or decayed or no longer exists. All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt.⁶⁹³

Though referring explicitly to photographs, this perspective may be also applied to vernacular filmmaking. Missionaries and Chinese Christians, confronted with the historical collapses and shifts taking place around them (often before their own eyes and sometimes their photographic lenses) were in many ways witnessing “time’s relentless melt” in their own identities. Roland Barthes expressed images’ relationships to such changes in a parallel way:

The Photograph does not necessarily say *what is no longer*, but only and for certain *what has been* [‘what I see has been there, in this place which extends between infinity and the

⁶⁹¹ Day, 155. The Biblical passage quoted here is from First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:57-58, KJV), reading in context: “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

⁶⁹² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1978), 15.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

subject...it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred]...the important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time.⁶⁹⁴

Time, vision, and imagination – among the many elements that had undergirded missionary experience and visual practices in the many years before the end of the mission enterprise – now coalesced in the images that remained after their makers were no longer in China or able to return to it (echoing Barthes’ lament that “what I see has been there, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject...it has been here, and yet immediately separated”). With these historical contexts and visual characteristics in mind, this chapter traces the final forms of missionary visual practices during these tumultuous years in late Republican China and the early PRC – producing images that were deeply shaped by hope, loss, and nostalgia. To understand the decline’s full trajectory, however, one must start by looking at the beginning of the end.

Hopes and Uncertainties: Re-visualizing Post-1945 Republican China

Almost as soon as the Second Sino-Japanese War ended, American missionaries flooded back to China to resume their activities across the country. Those who had relocated to the wartime interior now migrated again, following paths of refugees and Nationalist government elements returning eastward to areas formerly occupied by the Japanese military – and in some cases, still occupied by demobilized Imperial Japanese Army personnel awaiting repatriation, a fact that was to prove a sore spot in contemporary perceptions of Nationalist mismanagement of China’s former enemies.⁶⁹⁵ In the United States, missionaries who had been repatriated from internment camps across East Asia during the Pacific War or who were fortunate enough to have

⁶⁹⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 77, 85, 88-89.

⁶⁹⁵ Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 338.

left China before December 1941 now booked passage on contracted US Navy transports plying peacetime waters. In many cases, men (and to a lesser extent, single women) affiliated with Protestant missions went ahead of time to secure mission properties and renew contact with Chinese colleagues, with married individuals sending afterward for spouses and families through mission organization contacts.

The missionary re-occupation proceeded relatively quietly at first, but quickly grew into a larger and more publicized diasporic return. In the fall and winter of 1946, for example, over 1300 Protestant missionaries departed San Francisco on two separate voyages aboard the chartered SS *Marine Lynx* – a cargo- and troop-carrying ship that had that same summer returned Jewish refugees to Europe from Shanghai (where many had escaped from Nazi Germany) and would later ferry UN troops during the Korea War, under US Navy ownership.⁶⁹⁶ The September 29, 1946 departure of 400 missionaries aboard the *Marine Lynx* was prefigured by a celebratory mass meeting at the San Francisco Opera House, attended by more than 3000 audience members, representatives of 123 Protestant churches “sending out” the aforementioned missionaries, and public figures including none other than Henry Luce – who, rather unsurprisingly, gave a sermon on ““Faith, Hope, and Love, but the greatest of these is Love.””⁶⁹⁷ Luce was followed on the stage by Chinese historian and sinologist William Hung (洪業), secretary of the Harvard-Yenching Institute and one of the driving forces behind Yenching University (燕京大學)’s prewar development. Speaking before the assembled audience, Hung, himself a wartime refugee in the United States and a celebrated orator, framed China’s postwar future in both politically dark and liberal Christian terms:

⁶⁹⁶ William Hung San Francisco Opera House speech transcript, in W.H. Dobson, “Quarterly Letter #21,” 15 December 1946, 3; Henke Family Collection. See also Sigmund Tobias, *Strange Haven: A Jewish Childhood in Wartime Shanghai* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

When I say welcome I mean not only these [missionaries] who are here but to the thousands to augment the few who are already there [in China]. China has great need of these men and women. A civil war is raging and as bad as that may be, it may develop into another world war. Suspicion has already arisen. But I am one of those who still believe in the possibility of the elimination of civil and world wars by reconciliation, faith, and love of God.⁶⁹⁸

It was with such hopeful sentiments that the returning missionaries, along with numbers of their Chinese and American supporters, perceived the immediate postwar moment. Among the groups of “veteran” returnees were also younger missionaries who had not been in China before and had committed to vocations during the war; their approaches were buoyed by an even more spirited approach to rebuilding missions and Sino-US contacts in the immediate postwar world, echoing the optimism once expressed by their older counterparts in interwar period.⁶⁹⁹ Though it was generally known – far more clearly, of course, by those like William Hung in international diplomatic or scholarly circles– that China was entering a period of precarious national instability, foreign missionary presence and institutional connections to the United States as an ally in aid and reconstruction were still regarded (at least by the American public) in generally optimistic and at times triumphalist terms.

This renewed exchange also extended to visual materials on a broad scale. Chih Tsang, a businessman-turned-economist writing for the New York-based Institute of Pacific Relations, calculated on the eve of the war’s end that “photographic goods” would be among “the most important imports from the United States” to China in the immediate postwar period.⁷⁰⁰ Tsang estimated that the nation would see approximately an annual import of \$2,340,000 (USD) worth

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Richard Henke, phone interview with the author, 23 August 2016. Henke, who returned to China with his mother and siblings as a 12 year old in 1946, remembered the many new, young US missionaries as having an strikingly upbeat attitude, to which he found easier to relate as a teenager. These younger missionaries also largely lived at the other Presbyterian compound in Beijing, located on Gulouxi Road (鼓楼西大街), not far from the Drum Tower.

⁷⁰⁰ Chih Tsang, *China’s Postwar Markets* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, The MacMillan Company, 1945), vi, 112.

of such goods, but also implied that such projections were still dependent on the maintenance of political stability and economic development, writing:

The limited purchasing power of the Chinese people postwar will not be conducive to large-scale imports of photographic supplies and motion pictures. The probable influx of tourists after the war, the growing popularity of American motion pictures in China and the increasing use of films as a means of propaganda and education will certainly create a greater demand for such goods than existed during the war years. But until general living conditions improve, photography and motion pictures will remain a privilege for a limited few. Imports will at most, therefore, approximate the prewar level but, with the temporary elimination of Germany and Japan as important suppliers, United States manufacturers should certainly take a much larger share of this trade.⁷⁰¹

Tsang was likely not thinking of American missionaries as among the postwar “influx of tourists” that might reactivate the Chinese market for photographic goods, but they certainly played a role in doing so. Among the first small groups of American missionaries to return to China in late 1945, almost exactly three months and two weeks after the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay, was Harold Henke. Sailing on a Liberty ship built too late to take part in the war (“new and clean as a whistle”), he temporarily left behind Jessie Mae, their two now-teenaged sons and young daughter, and a medical practice in Lockport, Illinois that he had taken up during their wartime furlough.⁷⁰² Traveling with him was the church-gifted Cine-Kodak movie camera,

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., 112-113; 119-120. For reference, and to better understand his statement on “the temporary elimination of Germany and Japan as important suppliers,” Tsang reported earlier that “the average annual value of photographic goods, including cameras, moving picture films, and photographic supplies was about \$2,418,000 during the last three prewar years [1934-1937], with the United States supplying 59%, Germany 27% and Great Britain 4%. Germany led in the export of cameras and photographic lenses while the United States easily outdistanced all other countries in supplying motion picture films. The United States, closely followed by Germany, also led in the export of photographic materials and supplies to China. After war broke out, their annual import value during the first three war years averaged only around \$1,500,000. Japan, however, began to sell China considerable quantities of photographic supplies and exceeded both the United States and Germany in their particular class in 1939 and 1940. Nearly all such goods were shipped to occupied areas.” Tsang, 112.

⁷⁰² Harold Henke, letter to “Dear Ones in Hollywood,” 21 December 1945; letter to “Dear Friends in the USA,” 3 March 1946, Henke Family Collection. Replete with typing errors, Henke’s December 1945 letter read, “we sailed [from New York] late Saturday afternoon in the fog and wind with me failing to get warm with all the clothes I could pull on. . . Yesterday we sailed along with Haiti on our east and Cuba on our west watching porpoises, flying fish, birds, and sundry ships. An escort airplane carrier went by haughtily asking our name and destination [sic] and giving us no information in reply. This is a freighter with much UnRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] supplies and 4 men going out for that work, 4 Chinese men returning and 4 missionaries – one Dr. Norton an Episcopal teacher from Shanghai, a Rev. [Augustus Inglesbe] Nasmith from near Ningpo and a big 300lb.

now on its fifth journey across the Pacific. Frederick Scovel and Ralph Lewis returned by a similar route, each also carrying their own still cameras. With supplies of photographic material not yet reaching missionary demand, Frederick – not long after arriving in Shanghai – wrote back to Myra Scovel still in Rochester, New York, requesting that she bring over some rolls of black-and-white Kodak film to resupply his Leica when she and their five children returned.⁷⁰³ Supplementing his nearly two-decades-old Rolleiflex with newly-available photographic technology, Lewis purchased an ungainly Kodak 35 rangefinder when it became available in early 1946, experimenting with Kodachrome color film before leaving his family’s wartime home in San Anselmo, California for China (*Images 130 and 131*).⁷⁰⁴ His unfamiliarity with the new camera’s focusing system and the inability to see the results until Eastman Kodak processed the slides (as opposed to the usual home or local processing of black-and-white negatives) resulted in the majority of Lewis’s early color slides, taken first in Southern California and then in places across Hebei, being unfortunately out-of-focus.⁷⁰⁵ Jessie Mae Henke and Myra Scovel and their respective children followed in the *Marine Lynx* voyages of late 1946, nearly a year to the date their husbands left the US, while Roberta Lewis and her children sailed in August 1947.⁷⁰⁶ Also on board the *Marine Lynx* with the Henkes and Scovels on its late September

ex football [sic] player from U. of Illinois who goes out from the Pocket Testament League to work amongst soldiers both US and Chinese.”

⁷⁰³ Frederick Scovel, letter to Myra Scovel, 1946.

⁷⁰⁴ Kalton C. Lahue and Joseph A. Bailey, *Glass, Brass, and Chrome: The American 35mm Miniature Camera* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 212-215. Production of the Kodak 35 had stopped between 1941 and 1945, as Eastman Kodak shifted to war production, painting the chrome bodies in drab olive green for military use. This was played up in wartime advertisements, which touted the Kodak 35 “in uniform” and drummed up interest for postwar sales. Given that production and imports of German-made Leicas and Contax cameras were cut off completely by the Second World War (not to mention their higher prices both before and after the war), it is possible that Lewis was influenced by the easier availability of the Kodak 35 in making his purchase.

⁷⁰⁵ Lewis Kodachrome slide collection, 1947-1952, Lewis Family Collection. Focusing the Kodak 35 involved turning a sharp – often skin-tearing – thumbwheel to merge two halves of an optically split image in a very tiny viewfinder, compared to judging focus on the Rolleiflex’s much larger glass screen. The author encountered such a Kodak 35 in a Berkeley, California antique store in middle school and was similarly frustrated by its use.

⁷⁰⁶ Harold Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones at Home,” 20 July 1947.

voyage were a large number of American Jesuit missionaries, including members of the California Province destined for the Roman Catholic mission in Yangzhou, the later site of Klement and Hubbard's filmmaking. One of them, a 28-year-old Chinese scholastic named George Bernard Wong (黃花觀) – born in Macau and educated in Shanghai, Los Gatos, California, and Spokane, Washington – headed to advanced language training at Maison Chabanel (the same language school Klement would administer after its exit from China) before going to Yangzhou.⁷⁰⁷ Wong would himself cross paths with the filmmakers not long afterward. In any case, the American Catholic missionaries who boarded the *Marine Lynx*, traveling in close quarters with large numbers of American Protestants, imagined their sailing date a little differently. September 29 was also the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel, the leader of heavenly armies destined to vanquish the forces of hell in the Last Judgement.⁷⁰⁸



Image 130 (Kodak 35 wartime advertisement, *Life* magazine, May 1944) and Image 131 (Kodak 35 postwar, *Life* magazine, July 1947; both Eastman Kodak Company, author's collection)⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁷ Claudia Deveaux and George Bernard Wong, S.J., *Bamboo Swaying in the Wind: A Survivor's Story of Faith in Imprisonment in Communist China* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2000), 3, 13-31, 48-49, 55-56.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 49. "And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." Rev. 12:7-9 (DRA).

⁷⁰⁹ (Left) "Kodak 35 – your 'Civilian Miniature' is with the Army...Navy...Air Forces...Marines...in Uniform," Eastman Kodak advertisement in *Life*, 8 May 1944; advertisement concludes, "If you are not one of those who own this smart little Miniature, you can look forward to it as one of your 'after the war' experiences." (Right) "A great

On the other hand, 1947 was not 1927. Lewis's defocused slides were an apt visual metaphor for the views that greeted the missionaries on their return. The Chinese landscape that they encountered was at once familiar but also profoundly reshaped by the war and still rapidly changing. As with the chartered US Navy transports that took them to China, American military presence was now extremely visible in major cities like Shanghai and Beiping, where the US wartime alliance with the Nationalist government and postwar occupation forces meant a large number of military personnel on the ground.⁷¹⁰ With the railroads between Shanghai and North China cut and an air ticket insufficient to cover the 200 pounds of luggage that he carried, Henke hitched a ride to Qinhuangdao on Navy LST (Landing Ship, Tank) 557, one of multiple American vessels ferrying Nationalist soldiers from the south to mobilization points in the north, in preparation for renewed anti-Communist campaigns.⁷¹¹ Along the way, he assisted the ship's overworked doctor in treating seasick Chinese infantrymen and at one point took part in detonating a floating mine with a borrowed rifle (his shots missed, but Henke nonetheless described the experience as a "thrill").⁷¹² After arriving in Beiping via Qinhuangdao and Tianjin, Henke wrote from the large Presbyterian mission compound there at No.14 Erh Tiao Hutung (二條衚衕) that "everywhere here...one sees the evidence of 8 long years of war[;] autos, buses, streetcars, carts, houses, people, all show the effects of overwork, lack of replacement, lack of repair, strain. Windows unbroken still have strips of papers pasted there in all kinds of designs to

favorite for 'color'...Kodak 35 camera with range finder," Eastman Kodak advertisement in *Life*, 28 July 1947; this is the camera that Lewis purchased and brought to postwar China.

⁷¹⁰ Zarrow, 24-25. Beiping (北平) was the official (Nationalist) name for the city otherwise commonly known as Beijing or Peking (北京) between 1928-1949, renamed so as to differentiate it from the Republic of China's capital at Nanjing. Beiping is used throughout this chapter so as to mirror contemporary usage in the primary sources. It should be noted that the missionaries and others writing about the city quite often lapsed into calling it "Peking" out of habit. The author switches to Beijing near the end of the chapter to reflect the city's new identity in the PRC.

⁷¹¹ Harold Henke, letter to "Judy, Eth, and Mildred," 3 March 1946, Henke Family Collection.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*

absorb the force of explosions.”⁷¹³ Conditions in rural Hebei, to which Henke and Lewis intended to return, were far worse. Four Chinese staff members who traveled from Shunde to Beiping to greet Henke on his return reported that while

The churches have held together finely[,] the hospitals have all been run to the ground...nothing has been replaced during these war years. All 3 [of] them [likely referring to the Presbyterian Douw Hospital (道濟醫院) in Beiping and the Grace Talcott and Hugh O’Neill Hospitals in Shunde] have lost varying amounts of equipment. Shunteh has lost the most, things having been taken in successive lots, the last one taking the sterilizers, beds and even the windows. It is now the center of one of the areas so much under discussion, the railroad has been destroyed north and south for a distance of 80 miles.⁷¹⁴

Hebei as “one of the areas so much under discussion” clearly prefigured the greater damage of the developing Chinese Civil War. Although Henke did not mention – or perhaps know himself – the identity of the “last [group]” that carted off the hospital equipment from his former mission, the countryside was indeed ravaged by guerilla warfare and scorched-earth practices in the final war years, followed by the destructive movements of Nationalist and Communist forces jockeying for position in areas left vacant by the retreating Japanese.⁷¹⁵ In striking echoes of the previous Japanese occupation and a reflection of greater changes to come, by early October 1946, Harold Henke reported that “there is a [Nationalist military campaign] on to drive the Communists into the mountains [in Hebei],” lamenting that most of the remaining family belongings left behind in Shunde “will probably be lost now.”⁷¹⁶ Nonetheless, Presbyterian

⁷¹³ Harold Henke, letter to “Dear Friends in the USA,” 3 March 1946, Henke Family Collection.

⁷¹⁴ Harold Henke, letter to “Judy, Eth, and Mildred,” 3 March 1946, Henke Family Collection.

⁷¹⁵ Henke added in the March 3 circular letter that “Mrs. [Lillian] Jenness upon her return here from Weihsien [Internment Camp] wrote the leader of one of the groups who had been [in Shunde] and received back here the Xray machine, and several boxes of laboratory and operating room equipment, and some drugs. Much of this is unusable now and an Xray mechanic is coming this week to test the Xray machine.” The ‘group’ that looted the hospital is not mentioned yet again, which may mean that it was either a local paramilitary force (‘bandits’) or a Nationalist- or Communist-affiliated armed group that was not clearly known to the missionaries. In any case, they were well-known enough for Jenness to contact them and successfully retrieve this major hospital equipment, including the X-ray machine that was originally a gift of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York.

⁷¹⁶ Harold Henke, letter to “Dearest Ones in Lockport and Eu Claire,” 6 October 1946. “There is not mauh [sic] I can do in the way of preparing for their [Jessie Mae, Robert, Richard, and Lois Henke’s] arrival [in Beiping]. Of course what little of our things at Shunteh were left by the various groups there that have come and gone, Japs to Communists, will probably be lost now as there is a drive on to drive the Communists into the mountains. In any

evangelist Lillian Jenness (whose husband Richard appeared near the end of the Henkes' prewar "Church Tour" film and had died from exhaustion in 1941) staunchly elected to stay in Shunde in spite of the developing conflict.⁷¹⁷ By mid-December 1946, she was under house arrest by the Communists who had taken control of the city – though she fared better than the Catholic mission in the city, whose priests and religious were quickly arrested and imprisoned in the aftermath.⁷¹⁸ In the end, Henke, Lewis, and Scovel were unable to resume medical missionary activities in their prewar locations; less than two years after their return, Shunde and Jining were already caught up in and cut off by the Civil War crossfire.⁷¹⁹

Nonetheless, the missionaries and the Chinese individuals who survived the war took up collective attempts to rebuild their institutions and restart life – albeit in a far more complicated postwar world, and for some like the Henkes and Scovels, in different local environments. Liu

case there was no chance of bringing any of it here. So right now all we have to start on is our grand piano and bed room set I bot [sic] from the Leynses [Dutch Presbyterian missionaries] with two single beds, two dressors [sic], two chairs and a small bedise [sic] table. Not very much to welcome the fa[m]ily but it will be a started and we will borrow from the others [missionaries'] houses enof [sic] to live with, mostly wornout and in bad repair stuff."

⁷¹⁷ Author unknown [possibly Lillian Jenness], "The Entrance into Glory of Richard E. Jenness," reprinted by E. Roger Jones, 13 June 1941, Lewis Family Collection. Richard Jenness had died after a sudden illness on April 16, 1941, and was buried in the garden of the Hung Tao Laymen's Bible School affiliated with the American Presbyterian mission in Shunde. It is likely that Lillian's decision to stay behind in postwar Shunde was influenced both by her husband's legacy – by all accounts, he was a strong advocate of the Chinese Christian community in peace and war – as well as her proximity to his final resting place. Interestingly, the eulogistic testimony written about Richard Jenness's death included a comment by a Chinese Christian doctor, who immediately after Jenness passed away, reportedly "was so impressed with the expression of his face in death that he insisted that a picture be taken. 'You must take his picture as a testimony,' he said, 'that is how a Christian ought to look!'"

⁷¹⁸ Harold Henke, letter to mother, 16 December 1946, Henke Family Collection. "Lillian Jenness is being held by the Communists in her home in Shunteh and is not allowed to go out or others to come in. I have reported the matter to the Consul who is making the representations to the government. The word came out by one of the Chinese Catholic priests who escaped [that] all the Catholic people were being arr4sted [sic] and imprisoned. There is not much we can do about it from here [in Beiping]. I have contacted the UNRRA people who have access as they take stuff in and they may be able to get in touch with her and help her come out. Tho she may not do that since she has insisted all along that Shunteh is where she wants to be and is willing to stay on there regardless. She needs our prayers." Eventually, negotiations with the US Army resulted in three military planes sent to Shijiazhuang to extract Jenness and "mostly Polish" 20 Catholic priests and nuns in the spring of 1947. Harold Henke traveled on one of these airplanes to provide medical assistance and to see his prewar colleague, who had by that time undergone an early "struggle session" organized by the Communist authorities in the area and was in no condition to continue her mission work. Henke, personal letter to "Dear Ones in [Lockport] and Eu Claire, 16 March 1947.

⁷¹⁹ Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 203-206, 305-307.

Ju, the nurse that underwent training at Shunde between 1937 and 1941, left her hometown in Shijiazhuang and took up a position in the Tianjin Central Hospital (天津中央醫院). By 1947, she had met her future husband, Li Qinghai (李慶海), a young Cornell-educated expert in surveying engineering and a leftist intellectual who was then working in the North China area.⁷²⁰ The two of them were married and photographed in the Presbyterian compound in Beiping in 1948, with a wedding reception that was hosted in part by the Henkes; Liu and Li's images were to play a key role in the Henkes' later remembrances of China. Fr. Thomas Henkels, the American SVD missionary who baptized the future Archbishop Joseph Ti-Kang (狄剛), now moved between Shanghai and Henan, taking on administrative responsibilities and coordinating medical supply shipments distributed by the UNRRA and CNRRA.⁷²¹ He and his 35mm camera became minor actors in a political drama beyond China's borders, when in early 1947, he was quietly asked by a US Graves Registration Service officer to photograph the burial site of a certain John Birch, whom Henkels described as

A Protestant minister from Georgia, who was with the 14th Air Force as a consultant and interpreter...[who] had been killed after the war was over when the group he was with was ambushed by the Reds near Hsu-chow [徐州]. [The survivors] bought a Chinese coffin and got permission from the local authorities to bury him among the graves of the deceased monks in the temple grounds on a knoll outside the city. At the head of the grave they erected a stone monument with his name engraved on it. The colonel [David Barrett] told me that [Birch's] parents had requested him to send them a snapshot of John's grave...[H]e told me that his Graves Registration Unit had received orders from Washington forbidding them to take or send photos of graves to any relatives requesting them. He asked me to take a picture...and send it to John's parents since I...could ignore the order.⁷²²

⁷²⁰ Liu Ju (劉舉), personal interview with the author in Wuchang, China, 22 May 2011. Li Qinghai photograph albums 1 and 2, Li/Liu Family Collection, photographed in Wuchang, China, 23-24 May 2011. Li later played an active role in the post-1949 CCP reorganization of higher education, though he and his family suffered greatly during the Cultural Revolution, no doubt due to his earlier American connections.

⁷²¹ Henkels, 165-176.

⁷²² Henkels, 169.

During a railway layover in Xuzhou, Henkels climbed the hill to the temple and photographed the grave with his “mini camera;” after returning to his Catholic mission base in Xinxiang (新鄉), Henan, he “developed the film, made several prints, and sent the negatives and prints to the address of John’s parents which [Barrett] had given me,” and which Henkels referenced in his mission notebook (*agenda missionarii*) (*Images 132 and 133*).⁷²³ The priest could not have known at the time, and was apparently unaware when writing his memoirs in Chicago forty years afterward, of his role in supplying images later used to bolster Birch’s myths.⁷²⁴

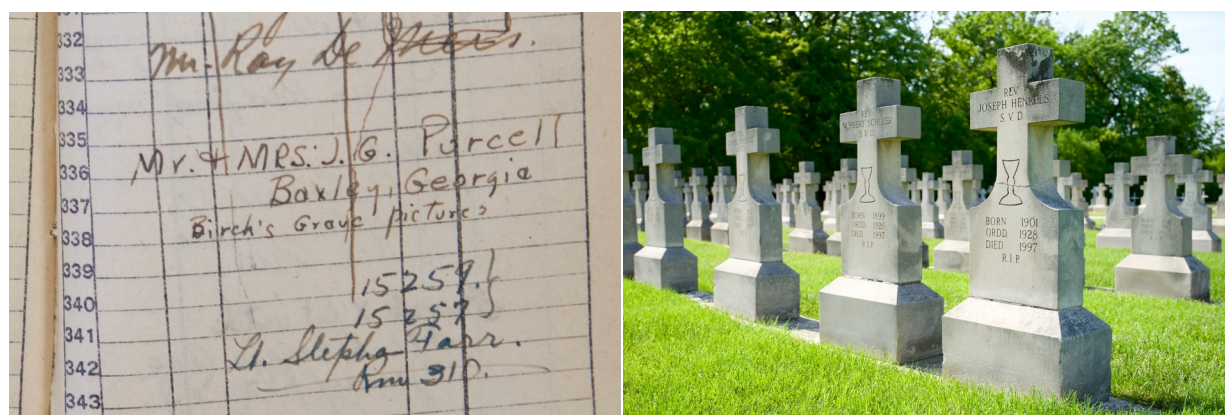


Image 132 (Fr. Joseph Henkels, SVD, agenda notebook page, c.1946-1947) and Image 133 (Fr. Joseph Henkels, SVD, gravesite in Illinois, June 2016; both Robert M. Myers Archives, Society of the Divine Word; author’s photographs)⁷²⁵

⁷²³ Henkels, 169-170.

⁷²⁴ See also Terry Lautz, *John Birch: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). As for Colonel David Barrett, his longer involvement in China extended not only to the Graves Registration Unit but to the prewar US Consulate in Beijing and the first command of the United States Army Observation Group (Dixie Mission) working with Mao Zedong and the CCP in Yan’an in 1944 – of which John S. Service was a part. See also “Barrett, David D[ean],” in David Shavit, *The United States in Asia: A Historical Dictionary* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 29-30; David D. Barrett, *Dixie Mission: The United States Army Observer Group in Yanan, 1944* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1970); and John N. Hart, *The Making of an Army ‘Old China Hand:’ A Memoir of Colonel David D. Barrett* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1985).

⁷²⁵ (Left) Fr. Joseph Henkels, *Agenda Missionarii* 1942 [notebook used in 1946-1947], Chicago Province S.V.D., S.V.D. Confreses, Administrative Files, Memorials, Box 270, Robert M. Myers Archives. J.G. [John Groce] Purcell was a deacon in the Baxley Baptist Church in Georgia, and apparently an associate of the elder Birches, who settled in Georgia after their Baptist mission activities in India, where John Birch was born. (Right) Fr. Joseph Henkels’ gravesite, St. Mary’s Cemetery at the Society of the Divine Word, Techny, Illinois. At the end of the author’s archival research on June 3, 2016, archivist Peter Gunther and fellow researcher John M. Morgan indicated that Henkels was buried in the SVD cemetery several hundred feet north of the archives building. It seemed apt to pay Henkels’ grave a visit before leaving – and to make a photograph of it.

Other American missionaries' postwar activities had less long-term political import, though dramatic in their own ways. Frederick Scovel, unable to continue working in Jining due to the approaching Communist-Nationalist fighting, relocated alone to Huaiyuan (懷遠) in Anhui, where he and the war-ravaged Hope Hospital (民望醫院) there were confronted in sequence by a massive cholera epidemic, two destructive floods, and then a locust plague of minor Biblical proportions that wiped out much of the local food supply.⁷²⁶ With these greater issues to contend with, Scovel produced practically no photographs with his Leica after returning. Some of his diary entries reported suffering from fever in Anhui's overwhelming August heat and humidity as well as feelings of personal isolation; after sending off his 60th letter to Myra, he hurriedly scribbled at the top of one page: "295th day of separation."⁷²⁷ Photography, as during his prior experience in the Second Sino-Japanese War, was yet again likely the last thing on his mind.

Harold Henke fared somewhat better while restarting his work in urban Beiping, writing more optimistically to US supporters that

[This return] has given me a chance to renew old friendships and make new contacts with the doctors and nurses in Peking. It has been most encouraging to find the Chinese doctors now in charge of the National Health Administration here, in charge of CNRRA [Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration], the Chinese counterpart of UNRRA, and in the hospitals to have the very same spirit of service and sacrifice that is the aim of Christian missions...the Chinese doctors and nurses that I have talked with this week have a splendid program ahead and already have some fine projects underway.⁷²⁸

Protestant evangelistic activities at Henke's new position in Douw Hospital (道濟醫院) affiliated with the American Presbyterian mission (located just across the street from the hospital complex)

⁷²⁶ Scovel, 147-149. Frederick Scovel personal diary, 12-16 August 1946, Scovel Family Collection.

⁷²⁷ Scovel diary, 15 August 1946, 19 September 1946. At this time, Myra Scovel and their children were still living in Rochester, New York.

⁷²⁸ Henke to "Dear Friends in the USA," 3 March 1946. For a contemporary American perspective on the National Health Administration's wartime activities, see "Public Health," in James Stevens Simmons, Tom F. Wayne, Gaylord West Anderson, and Harold MacLachlan Horack, *Global Epidemiology: A Geography of Disease and Sanitation, Part One: India and the Far East* (London: William Heineman, Ltd., 1944), 36-38.

were also relaunched with similar kinds of optimism. In another postwar letter, Harold and Jessie Mae reported “a series of evangelistic services...held for our hospital staff and workers and a large number either gave their hearts to the Lord for the first time or rededicated them to His Service.”⁷²⁹ For patients at the hospital, the Henkes employed a new “follow-up method” that had been developed – but not fully implemented – by prewar collaborative work between evangelists like John Bickford and the Presbyterian medical staff at Shunde. Combining sociological and statistical tools in the epitome of a modern missionary approach to Protestant conversion, this evangelistic “follow-up” involved

[providing] each patient [in Douw hospital with]...an evangelistic record sheet along with his clinical record, which gives data as to his attitude towards the Gospel, progress, et cetera. Upon discharge, the lower half of the sheet is filled out and mailed to the resident [Chinese] evangelist nearest his home in the hope that in this way many doors that are opened through our medical work may continue to stay open.⁷³⁰

The same group of Chinese hospital staff, many of whom had attended the religious meetings and were also responsible for implementing the new evangelistic methods alongside their medical duties, also formed entirely new audiences for the Henkes’ film screenings. On at least one occasion, the prewar films that the family shot between 1931 and 1935 in Shunde were projected for some of the Douw staff; “the movies we showed the doctors,” Henke wrote, “were of our medical work in Shuntehfu, which now seems so far removed from the relatively well hospitalized and staffed city of Peking.”⁷³¹ The films, originally produced for American church audiences, now served as a reminder of a prewar life “so far removed” in time and space from the Henkes’ postwar activities. The Henkes also screened the 1934 furlough “movies we had taken of Ringling Bros. circles, the zoo, farming pictures, etc.” – but instead of informing rural

⁷²⁹ Harold and Jessie Mae Henke, letter to “Dear Friends in the United States,” 20 January 1948.

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Harold Henke, letter to “Dear Ones in Hollywood,” 9 November 1947.

mission attendees about American life and leisure, as they had in the years before the war, these films were more simply a form of entertainment for their postwar urban audience. After all, when projector was shut off that evening in Beiping in 1947, the Henkes treated the Chinese doctors not to an informative lecture about life in the United States, but to “guessing games, repeating a short poem when the trick is to first clear your throat, etc...[and] Chinese checkers.”⁷³² Amusement aside, the film’s visual-temporal “transport” may well have reminded Harold and Jessie Mae (and their children) of the distances and differences between their prewar mission and the postwar environment they now found themselves; immediately after writing about the “game night,” Harold reported that “the new language administration here is changing the whole system of Chinese romanization from the one we have used all these years and which all dictionaries are based upon. How these new students are going to get along is questionable for they will have to learn TWO romanizations [emphasis in the original] or else not use dictionaries.” It is unclear who he was referring to as “these new students,” but this group may well have included himself, Jessie Mae, and the other missionaries. In any case, much was the same – and much was also different.

Dictionaries aside, politically the Henkes also encountered rapidly growing signs of anti-American sentiment around the same time they viewed their old films in early-to-mid 1947, as Beiping was rocked by heated demonstrations following the rape of a Chinese female student at Peking University by two US Marines on Christmas Eve 1946.⁷³³ While not discussed in detail

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Harold Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones in Eau Claire and Lockport,” 5 January 1947; Harold Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones at Home,” 1 June 1947. In the former letter, written the week after the event, Henke briefly noted, “a possible raping of a Chiese [sic] girl by two Marines here gave cause this week for an anti American parade by students and on that day all of us were asked to stay off the streets.” In the latter, he wrote, “yesterday was to have been a demonstration day by all students and laborers against the political situation in their effort to force mediation and peace onto the country. All Americans were asked to remain off the streets and curfew from 10 P.M. has been on for several days. But no trouble occurred at all as far as we know. The children were home from school all day.” See also Robert Shaffer, “A Rape in Beijing, December 1946: GIs, Nationalist Protests,

by the Henkes and their immediate colleagues' correspondence, the crime rapidly galvanized anti-American demonstrations across China (igniting already simmering cultural-political tensions, leveraged by leftist activism spearheaded by both Nationalist and Communist groups) and also drove a noticeable wedge between American missionaries and military personnel, with a Marine chaplain reporting that "missionaries here in China tell us that the American Marine has unknowingly done irreparable harm to the mission work of the church."⁷³⁴ In the midst of these unsettling experiences, the prewar films heightened the senses of dramatic change across time – mediating past visions and present viewing experiences, with the missionaries looking at and imagining their prior experiences on the screen and turning outward to situate these memories in the new environment around them.

Re-forging ties with the postwar Chinese professional and missionary community also paralleled broader reconnections to space, place, and peoples on a private level. As Jessie Mae wrote six months after returning to China with Robert (aged 16), Richard (12), and Lois (7), "the children had some drastic adjustments to make just at first as we knew they would have after six years of life in the States [1940-1946]. Starting late in school, being unable to speak Chinese, being the only missionary children in the school, beside the fact that they were the only Americans there whose father was not at least a Colonel had its drawbacks."⁷³⁵ The Henkes' three children were far from alone in this regard. As Protestant missionary families flooded back

and American Foreign Policy," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, February 2000), 31-64.

⁷³⁴ Schaffer, 44. Quoted from William Summers, "The Chaplain Speaks," *North China Marine*, 25 January 1947, 8.

⁷³⁵ Jessie Mae Henke, letter to "Dear Friends in the USA," 30 April 1947. Jessie Mae was also caught up in the postwar medical activities at Douw Hospital, writing that "the hospital continues to be full to overflowing. With a mediocre staff the burden is not light for Gene but you who know him best realize that he is happiest when busiest. I had firmly decided that woman's place was in the home, only to be thrown almost upon arrival in the same old maelstrom, a hospital full of patients, an inadequate staff, a nursing education program undertaken on a shoe string. Compensation came when my students went on the wards after three months in the classroom in full uniform to do a fine job of bedside nursing."

to China, they brought with them children whose experiences before, during, and after the war were deeply influenced by profound cultural shifts between life in prewar China, life in the wartime United States, and relocation to postwar China. These were experiences that they often found difficult to articulate to others not in their situation, but were first described less than two decades later as those of “third culture kids” by sociologists.⁷³⁶ Missionary children, like their parents, also sought ways to visualize China and their own experience, particularly if their mothers and fathers were also engaged in visual practices. Some of them were gifted cameras by their parents or relatives, and while living at residential schools like the Peking American School (or PAS, for families based in North China) and Shanghai American School (SAS, for those from Central and South China), developed connections with other foreign children, those of missionaries or otherwise, who were also interested in photography.⁷³⁷ The SAS, for example, boasted a darkroom-equipped “Photography Club” managed by Val Sundt (a Protestant minister and English faculty member who used a German folding rollfilm camera), and attended by 20-30 students, many of whom were missionary children.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁶ See John and Ruth Hill Useem, “The interfaces of a binational third culture: a study of the American community in India,” *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 23, 1967, 130-143.

⁷³⁷ Both Jessie Mae Henke and Roberta Lewis were involved in the administration of the Peking American School while in the city, with Henke working as Secretary of the Board of Managers, “[taking on] duties...fallen to me which have also taken many hours. The School needs help in its efforts to re-establish a sound education program for our children and I have felt as a parent of three of the students, it was a responsibility I could not well ignore.” She continued her report by stating that she found it “difficult to evaluate yet just what [the missionary children] are getting out of this experience of living in a foreign land, but...[felt] that they are stimulated to think about forms of government, world peace, and fundamental issues in a way that is unique and probably would not have come to them in the peaceful, luxurious life of the United States.” Jessie Mae Henke, *Annual Report, 1947-1948, to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions*, 2. Also Robert Henke, phone conversation with author (Japanese classmate, Ms. Krebs, PAS and personal worldviews about East Asia and the world).

⁷³⁸ “Photography Club,” *The Columbian 1949* (Shanghai American School, 1950), 66; David Angus, phone interview with the author, 20 August 2016. The *Columbian* yearbook – the last one produced by the SAS before the school closed in 1950 – had this to say about the Photography Club: “This year SAS renewed the once-functioning Photography Club, under the spirited direction of Mr. [Val] Sundt. The popular organization increased quickly in size...a dark room was fitted out and a series of test was instituted which had to be passed by each member before permission could be granted to use the darkroom alone. With money collected from monthly dues and also from contributions, the Club laid up a store of supplies for darkroom use. Meetings were held every Tuesday afternoon, usually including lectures on Photography by Mr. Sundt or movies...It is through the Photography Club and its facilities that many of the pictures appear in this COLUMBIAN have been made.” Incidentally, one of the club’s

Ralph and Roberta Lewis's oldest son, Harry, who attended both PAS and SAS due to his family's movements between both North and Central China (to be discussed further shortly), assembled a scrapbook containing photographs made with his own medium format camera as well as the Kodak 35 and Rolleiflex occasionally borrowed from his father (*Image 135*).⁷³⁹ Carl Scovel, Frederick and Myra's second son, befriended SAS classmate Theodor "Teddy" Heinrichsohn, whose background as the son of a German ex-missionary-turned-businessman and an aristocratic Manchurian-Chinese woman enabled him to develop an early interest in photography, first using his father's Leica II and then an American-made Univex Mercury 35mm camera after the war.⁷⁴⁰ The two of them were active in the SAS Photography Club, and sometime after 1948, Scovel purchased a Mamiyaflex Junior (one of the first postwar cameras to be exported from Japan) to make his own photographs in Shanghai and his family's postwar mission postings in Huaiyuan and Canton.⁷⁴¹ Other missionary children took the opportunity while living in urban centers (sometimes far from the rural environments where some of their parents were based), to gain access to commercial developing. David Angus, whose father was an evangelist in Fujian with the Reformed Church in America, sent his negatives to a studio down the street from the SAS, where the rolls (made with a Kodak Box Brownie) were processed at a cost of 68,000 yuan in the spring of 1949 – yet another telling indicator of the

student members, Joan Smythe, was the daughter of Lewis Smythe, the American missionary educator at the University of Nanking who was stopped by Japanese troops as his partner, Miner Searle Bates, was taking photographs (the episode discussed in the previous chapter).

⁷³⁹ Harry W. Lewis, phone interview with the author, 17 August 2016. Lewis no longer remembers what make of camera that he used to make his own photographs, other than it was not advanced. It may have been a box or folding camera that his mother Roberta used before the war (her own photography was more limited compared to that of her husband), or something much like it. In any case Lewis's next cameras – purchased during his time in the US Army in the Korean War – were a Retina IIIc and then a Nikon S2 rangefinder, neither of which were inexpensive (the Nikon was later stolen while Lewis was stationed in Japan).

⁷⁴⁰ Theodor Heinrichsohn, interviews by the author, 28 and 29 October 2013, in Leverkusen, Germany.

⁷⁴¹ Carl Scovel, interview by the author, 3 June 2015, in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

nationwide inflation preceding the collapse of the Nationalist government (*Image 136*).⁷⁴² For the most part, the children's vernacular photography followed in the footsteps of their parents in general style and content. Their visual practices, however, continued beyond their immediate life in postwar China. Photographic skills picked up or honed at SAS and PAS developed into longer-term interests in visual practices, as in the case of Harry Lewis, who continued photography courses during his undergraduate studies at Whitworth College in Spokane after 1949, and Theodor Heinrichsohn, who collected photographic equipment as a pastime, supported by his later position as the president of Bayer Pharmaceutical in Japan.⁷⁴³ A number of others also took up missionary callings as adults (including three of the Lewises' four children and one of the Scovels', variously based in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Thailand in the decades to come), combining photography with their vocations in echoes of their parents' imaging in China.⁷⁴⁴



Image 134 (Harry Lewis scrapbook album page, c.1948-1949) and Image 135 (May Lung Studio negative sleeve used by David Angus, c.1948; left, Lewis Family Collection; right Angus Family Collection)⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴² David Angus, phone interview by the author, 20 August 2016.

⁷⁴³ Harry Lewis, phone interview with the author, 17 August 2016, in Sacramento, California; Theodor Heinrichsohn, interview by the author, 28 October 2013, in Leverkusen, Germany.

⁷⁴⁴ Cecile Lewis Bagwell, Charles Lewis, and Wendy Lewis Thompson, personal interview with the author, 4 July 2011, in Mt. Hermon, California; Thomas Scovel, personal interview with the author, 16 January 2015, in Walnut Creek, California.

⁷⁴⁵ (*Left*) Harry Lewis, scrapbook album 1948-1949, Lewis Family Collection; the pre-teen boy with the glasses visible in the lower left hand photograph is Richard Henke, the Henkes' second son (who was traveling with the

Returning to the parents of these children, Jessie Mae concluded her 1947 letter with an observation of the overlapping contradictions – familiarities and uncertainties, hopes and anxieties – that characterized the postwar moment:

Peking outwardly is much as we remember it in 1940. The colorful wedding and funeral processions, the noisy New Year celebrations, even the pigeons with whistles tied to their backs flying in musical circles. The enticing shops are still enchanting. The terrific inflation and corresponding sky rocketing prices are at once ridiculous and tragic if any semblance of economic stability is to be realized. Foodstuffs are plentiful, coal is scarce, both are too expensive to be purchased except as absolute necessity demands. There is a new spirit in the air, perhaps a healthy sign of growing pains, perhaps evidence of disease that sooner or later must be eradicated. It is a great time to be living here and to have even a small part in moulding [sic] the thought and direction of this young democracy.⁷⁴⁶

These experiences translated into the Henkes' postwar visual practices as well. Harold and Jessie Mae, after all, had returned full circle to the city where they had first undertaken their formal language training in 1928-1929, where they made their first still photographs in China, and where they had traveled before and during the war. It is not surprising, then, that their visualizations of the city were shaped by their past experience and their new encounters with an environment that had undergone two decades of change. Perhaps in an attempt to access familiar sights, the Henkes went around the city imaging sights “as we remember” that Jessie Mae described in her letter. One of the great differences now, however, was that visual technologies (namely the wide availability of Kodachrome film) had finally “caught up” with the Henkes' desire to visualize “the colorful wedding and funeral processions,” details that the couple attempted to describe when writing about their black-and-white photography in Beijing some

Lewis family on an excursion to the Great Wall outside Beijing in this particular occasion). (*Right*) May Lung Studio (美倫照相館) commercial negative sleeve used by David Angus in Shanghai, Angus Family Collection.

⁷⁴⁶ Jessie Mae Henke, letter to “Dear Friends in the USA,” 30 April 1947. In regard to rampant postwar inflation, Jessie Mae added in the letter's postscript that “we had hoped to have this printed and mailed from Peiping. But at a cost of 270,000 dollars for the printing of over 11 cents (1100 dollars Chinese) per letter for postage, we thought you would understand why we have accepted the offer of a friend in Chicago to mail it for us.” For the political and economic background of inflation – in particular from the Nationalists' perspective – see Orne Odd Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 182-185.

twenty years earlier. One of the Henkes' films, likely made in 1947 with the Cine-Kodak, displayed a *mélange* of color (*Image 136*). The film was filled with other shots of brilliant paper lanterns shaped as fish and other animals, a bright red catafalque and white mourning outfits of a lavish funeral (that of a person known to the Henkes, whose family permitted them to film the proceedings), the khaki uniforms worn by an American infantryman on leave, and children wearing appropriated cold-weather army caps bearing the Nationalist "blue sky with a white sun" (青天白日), gaping at three American visitors picnicking in a forest clearing (*Images 137*). In a way, their imaging now blended more strongly with genres of postwar touristic and home movies. With no clear imperative to produce films for American congregations or Chinese audiences, the Henkes filmed Beiping's general "outward" appearances (parks and markets, the Forbidden City and Coal Hill, etc.) and US-styled leisure activities at the Presbyterian mission (including holiday parties, complete with conga lines) partly due to their new environment and partly to produce scenes for personal viewing enjoyment (*Images 138 and 139*).



Image 136 (Colored paper lanterns, Henke Kodachrome film, Beiping, c.1947) and Image 137 (Children watching picnic, Henke Kodachrome film, Beiping, c.1947; both Henke Family Collection)



Image 138 (Forbidden City from Coal Hill, Henke Kodachrome film, Beijing, c.1947) and Image 139 (Missionary conga line, American Presbyterian compound, Beijing, c.1947; both Henke Family Collection)⁷⁴⁷

Examining the images against the backdrop of their longer time in China and Jessie Mae’s expressed sentiments, however, indicates that the films and the Henkes’ postwar production represented some deeper search for meaning – as well as a grappling with the knowable present and an unknown future. In a sense, “old China” (at least that space and place that the Henkes first encountered as young, newly-married missionaries in 1927) was still there in some visible form, in the traditional handicrafts, open-air markets, public rituals, and thronging crowds that appeared in the colorful 1947 film. At the same time, the Henkes themselves had aged, moved in and out of the country in war and peace, and were now encountering changes in “new China” that were in many ways beyond their full comprehension – though they, in their twentieth year as missionaries, were no strangers to local and national wars, unexpected political changes, and regional catastrophes. As the days passed, the Henkes and other American missionaries in urban positions like theirs, became more and more aware of the intense pressures that the local population was undergoing, and that some kind of massive

⁷⁴⁷ Henke postwar 16mm Kodachrome film, Henke Family Collection. Ralph Lewis, his Kodak 35 in its leather case and swinging from a strap around his neck as he takes part in the conga line, is visible wearing a fedora at the far right end of the still frame. The teenager in the winter jacket directly in front of him is the Henkes’ eldest son, Robert (Bob), and Jessie Mae Henke is the gray-haired woman looking downward at the center of the frame.

change was coming. During the Lunar New Year of 1947, for example, as firecrackers exploded across Beiping and families gathered for communal meals (“these people,” the Henkes noted, “generally have so little enjoyment in life that this period means a great deal to them,”) Harold Henke was kept engaged in Douw Hospital with bloodied hands, operating on several individuals who had attempted suicide by slashing their own throats:

One of the customs of the day is that all bills must be paid before the last day of the old year. With depression so extensive, prices so high and business generally so poor, I suppose that that explains why we have had three attempted suicide cases... Two nights I have been up this week with men who tried to end their worries this way[;] both of them are still alive but one has a hug[e] defect in his windpipe and the other has a very deep and long neck wound... The first was a woman[,] and she died the second night after the injury.⁷⁴⁸

Politically, by mid-1947, around the time the Henkes made their family films in and around Beiping, the US-led Marshall and Wedemeyer Missions’ negotiations between Nationalist and Communist representatives had also largely broken down.⁷⁴⁹ In the wake of these failures and rising public sentiment against their presence, American military forces began a rapid withdrawal from the city – a change in atmosphere that the Henkes noted.⁷⁵⁰ Perhaps reflecting the growing lack of American diplomatic influence over the Chinese political situation in the summer of 1947, the commanding officer of the latter mission, General Albert Wedemeyer, had sufficient free time to visit the Presbyterian mission for a Sunday evening reception, during which he demonstrated (to the delight of the Henkes’ children) his little-known talent of riding

⁷⁴⁸ Harold Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones in Lockport and Eau Claire,” 27 January 1947. 5 more cases of attempted suicide followed in the days to come, according to a letter written by Harold to his family on 8 February 1948, recalling the suicide cases of 1947 (totaling 8) and fearing for the worst. These were not the only casualties of 1947’s Lunar New Year. The week before, Henke and the two other doctors at the hospital had to operate on “bad firecracker injuries in little children – one [with] three fingers blown off and the other a hug[e] explosive wound of one side of the face that took...2 hours to clean and repair.” Henke, personal letter to mother, 19 January 1947.

⁷⁴⁹ Westad, 160-161. The breakdown in negotiations was no secret to the officers and diplomats involved in both missions; a staff officer with Marshall’s postwar mission admitted privately to his family shortly after arriving in China in 1947 that he felt that the mission was “destined to fail.” Mary Dodge Wang, personal interview with the author in Denver, Colorado, 17 February 2014.

⁷⁵⁰ Harold Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones in Lockport and Eau Claire,” 2 April 1947. “The US forces are rapidly withdrawing from Peking and we have had some dinners with firends [sic] who are leaving [and] are about to do so.”

backwards on a bicycle and was filmed by Harold Henke's Cine-Kodak while doing so.⁷⁵¹ At the same time, fighting between the Nationalists and Communist armies in Northeast and Central China was bloodily swinging the tide of the Civil War in favor of the Communists – news the missionaries received in bits and pieces, even if they were grounded in the Nationalist-controlled areas where they worked.⁷⁵² At the same time, there still was no clear indication from the ground-level point of view that monumental changes were about to take place. The Henkes, reporting on radio news that Nationalist and Communist troops were now “fighting both north and south of the Beach [sic]” at their former summer vacation spot in Beidaihe, remarked that “[this] will put a crimp in our summer vacation plans” – “a shame[,] since we had hoped to get started on some needed repairing on the house [at Beidaihe] as well as have a good vacation[,] but there is no other way out.”⁷⁵³ Perhaps it was for these mixed uncertainties and continued hopes for national stability that Jessie Mae focused in her letter on “[the] new spirit in the air, perhaps a healthy sign of growing pains, perhaps evidence of disease that sooner or later must be eradicated.” Was this “disease that...must be eradicated” referring to the resurgent presence of Communism in China, a metaphor that Chiang Kai-shek famously employed during the earlier

⁷⁵¹ This footage, shot with the Cine-Kodak, unfortunately cannot be located and is presumed to no longer exist. Harold Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones in Lockport and Eau Claire,” 5 August 1947; Richard Henke, phone interview with the author, 22 August 2016. Harold Henke wrote, “Gen. Wedemeyer and his mission have been here over the weekend. Sat[urday] night we were invited to a buffet supper for him which was very nice and gay in the garden of the US Embassy. Then Sunday he called on us here at 5:30 – originally planned for 11 – and I took him on a hurried trip thru the hospital and then back to the compound where he met everyone and had fir[uit] drinks. He was very genial and gracious. Rikki [Richard] got him to sign his name several times and told him he would auction the autographs off at the carnival the children are staging to raise money to help the refugees from the communists [sic] areas to our east. Then the general thrilled the children by getting on one of [o]ur bikes and riding it BACKWARD. He said he hadn't don[e] that for years. He seemed to enjoy the freedom from meeting people formally and the chance to talk to the children. We got some movies of him as well as pictures.”

⁷⁵² Harold Henke, personal letter to “Dearest Ones at Home,” 20 July 1947. “We continue to be peaceful and quiet here tho[ugh] civil war is on in various parts of the country and there is much fighting going on in Shantung and Manchuria, tho from here we have little reliable and up to date information. At any rate we are very peaceful in Peking and one would not know that there is strife all about us.” Indeed, the family had only the day before gone on a hike along the Great Wall outside Beiping and “hope that when peace is restored out here that we can some day make [a] trip” to “Tai Shan, the sacr[e]d mountain in Shantung.”

⁷⁵³ Harold and Jessie Mae Henke, personal letters to family, 25 May, 1 June 1947.

pre-1937 iterations the Chinese Civil War?⁷⁵⁴ What were these “growing pains;” were they the kinds of pains and sacrifices, on a national level, that Chinese patients in missionary hospitals and church members endured, in the hopes of physical and spiritual salvation? These were in some ways questions unanswerable in any clear sense, particularly in what was immediately visible to the postwar missionaries. But there was yet an anxiety-ridden but wishful hope in what they could see and what they framed in their images. The final end of missionary activities in Mainland China was not yet a reality, and perhaps, in “hav[ing] even a small part in moulding [sic] the thought and direction of this young democracy,” that end might not come at all.⁷⁵⁵

These feelings were embodied, perhaps inadvertently, by a segment of the Henkes’ Beiping color film shot from a mountain summit on the western outskirts of the city. The Cine-Kodak panned across a muddy brown landscape gridded by rice paddies and moved upward to frame the Longevity Hill (萬壽山) and Kunming Lake (昆明湖) that formed the Summer Palace (頤和園) complex visible in the distance. But before doing so, it focused shakily for a few seconds on a line of antlike figures marching in formation along a major road in the immediate but still distant foreground, with a tiny box of a lone supply truck taking up the rear (*Images 140 and 141*). The line, which stretched along the white sunlit road – the road itself snaking through the paddies and disappearing into the horizon near the Summer Palace – was likely a company-level detachment of Nationalist troops on their way out of the city, conceivably armed with

⁷⁵⁴ Lloyd Eastman, “Nationalist China during the Nanjing decade, 1927-1937,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 13, Republican China 1912-1949, Part 2*, ed. John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 148.

⁷⁵⁵ Jessie Mae Henke, letter to “Dear Friends in the USA,” 30 April 1947. By January of the following year, however, Harold reported that “we here in Peking are quite peaceful but all about us civil war rages...one has a feeling that we are more or less sitting on top of [a] volcano which may decide to blow up one of these days.” Harold Henke, letter to “Dearest Ones in Hollywood, Lockport and Eu Claire and Pinckneyville and Washington,” 18 January 1948.

American-made weapons and materiel, as was common to that period and region.⁷⁵⁶ It is entirely unknown (now and likely to the Henkes at that moment and when they later watched the films) what these troops were doing, whether they were on routine maneuvers or reinforcing an outlying Nationalist garrison in preparation to meet the encroaching forces of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). What the Henkes perhaps did not fully understand was that their lives as American missionaries in China were already intertwined with these faceless, nameless soldiers – from the film's point of view – representing a government that was soon to fall. The camera had brought them together in a distant way, against the backdrop of an “old China” and a new era, as both groups headed toward an uncertain and ultimately life-changing fate.



Image 140 (Nationalist infantry marching near Summer Palace, Beiping, c. 1947-1948) and Image 141 (Longevity Hill and Kunming Lake from distance, Beiping, c.1947-1948; Henke Family Collection)

Loss and Longing: Declension, Religious Views, and the End of Missionary Imaging

The day before Jessie Mae Henke typed her 1947 letter, a khaki-clad American officer walked the streets of Beiping, carrying a professional Bolex 16mm movie camera and several fresh reels of Anscochrome color film for reloading.⁷⁵⁷ Accompanied by two other men with still

⁷⁵⁶ Derk Bodde, *Peking Diary: A Year of Revolution* (New York: Henry Schuman, Inc., 1950), 68-69; 103-104.

⁷⁵⁷ Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Ageless China*, 16mm color sound film, c.1947-1950; Capt. M.R. Kenney, US Army Advisory Group, “Invitational Travel Orders, Father BERNARD HUBBARD,” 22 April 1947, CJA-SCU.

cameras, the officer visited typical historic sites, strolling through the Forbidden City and climbing to the top of the ancient astronomical observatory (古觀象台), where he pre-focused and handed his camera to one of his companions to get a shot of himself sighting through the Qing-era theodolite. The feat required the officer to pull hard on the weatherworn apparatus to get it pointing heavenward, but he did not seem to mind manhandling the 300-year-old equipment (*Image 142*). Sometime afterward, the officer changed out of his military uniform, laying aside the pressed khaki fatigues with a small silver cross pinned to the lapel, and putting on a flowing black cassock identical to those worn by his traveling companions. In this outfit, and with his Bolex running in the hands of another companion in a courtyard near Beiping's Roman Catholic North Church (北堂), Father Bernard Hubbard, S.J., approached, genuflected, and kissed the right hand of Cardinal Thomas Tien Ken-sin, SVD (田耕莘) – the Archbishop of Peking and China's first "Prince of the Church" (*Image 143*).⁷⁵⁸ Above and behind him in the frame, scholastic George Bernard Wong stood by as a translator, having accompanied Hubbard – a stranger to the Catholic mission in China – during his brief 3-day visit to Beiping.⁷⁵⁹ Within a

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid. In a strange twist of fate, on April 7, three weeks before Hubbard filmed Tien, the cardinal met Harold Henke for dinner. As Henke wrote, "Monday...night I was invited to dinner by Cardinal of the Catholic church, T'ien. I had met him a week before on an inspection tour with the International Relief Comm[itee]. He is very pleasant to meet and we had a dandy dinner." Henke, personal letter to "Dearest Ones in Lockport and Eu Claire," 9 April 1947. In yet another strange historical connection, the author's father, Jimmy Nanhsiung Ho (賀南熊), recently revealed that he served as an acolyte for Cardinal Tien's Requiem Mass on the morning of July 28, 1967. Tien had died suddenly while in Chiayi, Taiwan, where Ho was then a 16-year-old altar server at St. John's Cathedral (聖約翰主教座堂). Despite repeated efforts by the author to locate photographs or film of Tien's funeral service, none have yet surfaced. The former acolyte remembered being so apprehensive about performing his liturgical duties that he did not notice or clearly recall any photographers being present. Ho was born in Taipei, Taiwan in 1949 to a Chinese Catholic mother from Chaozhou (潮州), Guangdong – whose ancestors were converted to Roman Catholicism by the Paris Foreign Missions Society (*Société des Missions étrangères de Paris*) in the late 19th century – and a Nationalist infantry captain from Ningbo (寧波), Zhejiang Province. Jimmy Nanhsiung Ho, personal interview with the author, 10 November 2015 in Walnut Creek, California.

⁷⁵⁹ Deveaux and Wong, 56. Though Wong does not record Hubbard's visit or the audience with Cardinal Tien in his published memoirs, he gives a list of places that he often visited while on excursions in Beiping that appear in almost the same sequence in Hubbard's *Ageless China* film, along with short sequences in the footage showing Wong walking through these spaces or interacting with local people (likely also translating for Hubbard).

few days, Hubbard was re-attired in his chaplain's uniform and on board a transport aircraft flying southward to Nanjing and then Shanghai, where he continued his fast-paced filmmaking before leaving the country entirely.⁷⁶⁰ A few weeks later, with his unprocessed 16mm footage packed securely for transport back to his home base at Santa Clara University in California, the Navy chaplain made a similar trip through Japan, where he was photographed again in his fatigues by a US Army Signal Corps photographer – this time demonstrating the Bolex for a young Japanese girl wearing a kimono at the Sacred Heart Academy in Tokyo (*Image 144*). This was the first and only time that Hubbard was in East Asia, with the priest regarding his 1947 trips through the two countries as another set of experiences to add to an international (and domestically marketable) filmmaking resume.⁷⁶¹ His fame had already been made elsewhere.



Image 142 (Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., at Beijing astronomical observatory, 1947) and 143 (Cardinal Tien Ken-sin, Hubbard, and George Wong, SJ, at Beitang, 1947; both CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)⁷⁶²

⁷⁶⁰ Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Ageless China*, 16mm color sound film, c.1947-1950; Capt. M.R. Kenney, US Army Advisory Group, "Invitational Travel Orders, Father BERNARD HUBBARD," 22 April 1947, CJA-SCU.

⁷⁶¹ Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., to Richard O'Connor, Magnavox Corporation, 15 December 1950, CJA-SCU.

⁷⁶² Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Ageless China*, c.1949-1950, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF. These and the following screenshots are taken from *Yangchow 1948* and *Ageless China*, full-length 16mm color films discovered by the author at the archives of the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco (Ricci Institute-USF) in late 2014 and transferred to permanent archival ownership at the California Jesuit Archives at Santa Clara University (CJA-SCU). The author extends sincere thanks to the staff of both institutions, in particular Dr. Xiaoxin Wu, Fr. Antoni Ucerler, S.J., and Mark Mir at the Ricci Institute and Br. Daniel Peterson, S.J., at the CJA-SCU for their generosity in supporting the rediscovery, digitization, and investigation of the films.



Image 144 (Hubbard displaying 16mm Bolex camera to Japanese girl, Tokyo, June 1947) and Image 145 (American Bolex advertisement featuring Hubbard and camera, May 1948; left, US Army Signal Corps; right, American Bolex Co.; both author’s collection)⁷⁶³

Unlike the other missionaries previously discussed, Hubbard’s long-term mission base was in Alaska and California rather than East Asia, and his career as a semi-professional filmmaker differed quite radically from that of a typical Catholic mission priest. He was an unabashedly self-promoting character, having built his reputation on ethnographic films shot on well-publicized scientific expeditions to Alaska in the early 1930s; these translated into lucrative lecture tours, all of which further expanded his public image.⁷⁶⁴ As with the transitions between his chaplain’s uniform and clerical garb, Hubbard moved fluidly between multiple commercial, military, and religious spheres (*Image 145*). Unlike other missionaries in China who for the most

⁷⁶³ (Left) Photographer unknown, US Signal Corps Photo from ACME, 17 June 1947. Typed caption on verso reads, “W838569 New York Bureau. Father Hubbard Makes Friends. Tokyo, Japan – Father Hubbard, Catholic chaplain, shows his movie camera to a small Japanese admirer during his visit to the Sacred Heart Academy in Tokyo. He took motion picture of the celebration in his honor.” (Right) “Father Hubbard, famous Explorer, Scientist, and Educator, says ‘I consider BOLEX the best 16mm camera I have ever used,’” American Bolex Company, Inc. advertisement in *Popular Photography*, May 1948, 9. Incidentally, the Signal Corps photo was reused in the Bolex ad, captioned as “JAPAN” at the bottom left corner of the print.

⁷⁶⁴ See Caprice Murray Scarborough, Deanna M. Kingston, *The Legacy of the ‘Glacier Priest,’ Bernard R. Hubbard, S.J.* (Santa Clara: Santa Clara University, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, 2001), 60. In 1931, Hubbard was apparently the “highest-paid lecturer” in the United States, receiving approximately \$2000 per appearance.

part kept fundraising well within the purview of overseas mission organizations, Hubbard saw no problem in directly leveraging his personal and commercial contacts to finance his Jesuit missionary filmmaking and vice versa – displaying the products of his mission travels for public consumption. The Anscochrome color film that he carried with him through China was largely donated by the Ansco company based in Binghamton, New York, on the condition that he publicize its use in his filmmaking. He certainly did so in practice, orchestrating a not-so-subtle “product placement” shot of himself handing a “present” of an Ansco sheet film pack to a perplexed, crippled Chinese child in Yangzhou (*Image 146 and 147*).⁷⁶⁵ And almost exactly a year to the date Hubbard left China, the American Bolex Company, the producers of the 16mm camera he extensively used, released a full-page advertisement in *Popular Photography* hailing the priest (now prominently displaying his clerical collar while cradling the Bolex) as a “famous explorer, scientist, and educator,” surrounded by still images from various countries that Hubbard filmed during his 1946-1947 world tour of Jesuit missions (*Image 146*). The advertisement also reproduced a written testimonial by Hubbard, touting the Bolex as a camera rugged enough to withstand “the dust and heat of Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq...the humid heat of India, Ceylon, and the Philippines,” and of course, “the dust of North China.”⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁵ Hubbard was no stranger to product placement, having included similar visual references to sponsors of his expeditions in Alaska, including Purina Dog Chow and the American Can Company. See Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Alaska's Silver Millions* (1936), <<https://archive.org/details/AlaskasS1936>>, accessed 15 August 2016.

⁷⁶⁶ American Bolex Company, Inc. advertisement in *Popular Photography*, May 1948, 9.



Image 146 (Hubbard handing Anscochrome film pack to crippled Chinese boy, 1947) and Image 147 (Chinese boy displaying Anscochrome film pack to Hubbard’s camera, 1947; both CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)

China, however, was not at first a planned stop on Hubbard’s tour. Rather, it was after landing in Manila from Ceylon in the spring of 1947 that Hubbard received a cabled message from Fr. Paul O’Brien, S.J., the mission administrator of the California Jesuit Province – the religious order to which Hubbard belonged – requesting him to come to China and produce films there.⁷⁶⁷

Hubbard’s reputation and advanced filmmaking skills, O’Brien hoped, would help to publicize (and secure further support for) the Jesuit mission institutions in the country, even as the political situation deteriorated. Though O’Brien’s personal thoughts on the filmmaking impetus were not clearly articulated from Hubbard’s point of view (beyond a desire to support existing fundraising efforts) in 1947, it is highly likely that the Provincial perceived that foreign missions were slowly being squeezed out of existence in China, and desired a filmic record of the Jesuits’ missionary work before further instability prevented such visual practices. As a result, Hubbard, the interloping “outsider,” became a filmic collaborator with Catholic missionaries already in China, namely William Klement at the California Jesuits’ community in Yangzhou. Their collaborative films were framed by competing visions of “old” and “new” China and Chinese Christianity as

⁷⁶⁷ Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., letter to Fr. Joseph King, S.J., 18 March 1947, CJA-SCU.

the American mission enterprise faded from view. They also represented views of the missionary loss and nostalgia from two different registers: one from the Chinese “interior” and the other from an American “exterior.” The shifts between the films were partially a result of re-editing and reframing by their makers as historical changes took place around them.

Less than two years after his Beiping sojourn, Hubbard was back in his dedicated editing laboratory at Santa Clara University, surrounded by reels of processed and unprocessed film that he had shot around the world. Sitting on his editing table in early 1950, next to a well-used 16mm splicer and viewer, was the color footage he and other Jesuit missionaries had produced in China and William Klement’s December 22, 1949 screenplay, recently arrived from the Philippines.⁷⁶⁸ Most of the China footage had already been edited in an earlier form by October 1947, then intended as publicity films for then-current Jesuit missions in the country.⁷⁶⁹ But with the outcome of Chinese Civil War now clear, Hubbard began to re-edit the collected footage into two new and separate films. The first, entitled *Yangchow 1948*, was composed primarily of mixed silent footage, including film shot between 1946 and 1948 by Klement and other Jesuits formerly based in the eponymous city.⁷⁷⁰ The second film, containing more of Hubbard’s 1947 material, was now titled *Ageless China* and printed to include a soundtrack, for which the priest composed a spoken narrative and included generic orchestral background music to accompany

⁷⁶⁸ Fr. William J. Klement, S.J., to Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., 22 December 1949, CJA-SCU.

⁷⁶⁹ Fr. Calvert Alexander, S.J., letter to Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., 3 October 1947, CJA-SCU. Hubbard, who was then in Springfield, Illinois, forwarded Alexander’s letter to Father Provincial Joseph King in Santa Clara, California, noting in pen at the bottom of this letter that “in regard to the California Province film, you could phone Fr. Weber and tell him I left the new copy with a slip of paper identifying it in the cabinets... The first week of lectures are [sic] over. I rest a lot and feel pretty well. In between times I work on the China film (Yangchow – Peiping etc.) and it looks good.” A few days later, however, on October 12, Hubbard was hospitalized at the Loretto Hospital in Chicago, where he penned another letter to King, indicating that “the cardiograms show a myocardial disease that cannot be cured, but can be held in check by proper rest. The orange juice is coming out of my ears!!” but nonetheless stating that “you should see the North China movies. I am getting them in shape little by little and they are very colorful and interesting. All we took along the Grand Canal and in Peiping are editing up nicely,” Hubbard to King, 12 October 1947, CJA-SCU.

⁷⁷⁰ Fr. William J. Klement, S.J., to Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., 22 December 1949, CJA-SCU.

the footage. The specific intended audiences for the films was (and still is) not entirely clear. While Klement described his screenplay as “some ideas which I had used in showing the pictures,” and asked Hubbard if he would rather “use the explanation of my script here to compose your own commentary bringing the contrast with today’s Red China...or just send me a list of the titles used and their sequence and I will try to make a running commentary,” neither filmmaker revealed for whom they were already screening or planned to screen the products of their extensive labor.⁷⁷¹ Given Klement’s route from California to the Philippines and Hubbard’s lecture circuits across the United States, however, it is highly possible that the films were intended for missionaries and Catholic laypeople who previously worked in Yangzhou, now relocated to institutions in Southeast Asia or elsewhere, or the American congregational supporters who had formerly contributed funds and other kinds of support to Jesuit missions in pre-1949 China. In both cases, the goal was no longer to drum up support or to inform others about *current* missionary efforts, but rather to present a visualized and idealized past in a way that would elicit (and also, to certain extent, satisfy) feelings of loss and nostalgia.

Yangchow 1948, the film that was edited along the lines of William Klement’s letter-screenplay, reflected a kind of communal nostalgia that could only be felt by viewers and producers who were “on the ground” in that area before 1949. While most of the Anscochrome footage was produced by Hubbard and Klement (the latter’s camerawork being noticeably shakier than the former) other missionaries affiliated with the Jesuits also made contributions. Among these were the Society of the Helpers of the Holy Souls (拯望會), a group of female religious and Chinese Catholic laywomen that Klement specifically named as “a really poor outfit [that has] done so much for us in China that we owe them a great debt.”⁷⁷² Keeping with

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷⁷² Ibid.

the possible idea that *Yangchow 1948* film would serve as a visual commemoration of the Helpers' efforts in China and their ties with Chinese community, Klement suggested that the specific part of the film that he shot ("this old copy of mine") should be donated to the representatives of the Society "when you [Hubbard] are all through with [editing] it."⁷⁷³ As such, in both production and reception, the film was a substantially communal effort from the outset. It also represented the collective view of former American Catholic missionaries "looking back" at visual remnant of a mission project and Chinese Catholic community that by this time in 1949-1950 was already in substantial disarray.⁷⁷⁴ These perspectives were shaped by visual framing of temporal and geographic distance, juxtaposed against a strongly localized "interiority."

The film opened abruptly with a slightly out-of-focus of the gleaming white Gothic church in Yangzhou, the building's spires filmed from a long distance with a telephoto lens (*Image 148*). Klement's narration, as he framed it in the letter, began "approaching the town from the East the first thing to catch the eye...are the towers of the Catholic church peering over the walls of the city."⁷⁷⁵ This visual and narrative focus on the church's architectural prominence was not only intended to serve a typical missionary ideal (emphasizing the prominence of the building as an important site in the city for local Catholic worship and its connections to global Christianity) but also heightened the imagined distance and the sense of loss. The view of the church from afar was as emotionally and spiritually fraught as it was geographic and visual, mirroring missionary imaginations and heightened by Klement's description of the place from the perspective of a person on the ground "approaching the town from the East." Of course, such an approach was at the same time physically impossible to the missionaries who made and

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁴ See also Bays, 150-151.

⁷⁷⁵ Fr. William J. Klement, S.J., to Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., 22 December 1949, CJA-SCU.

watched the film, now separated from Yangzhou and the Chinese Catholic communities there by the newly-fallen “Iron Curtain.” Klement referenced this separation in a striking mix of defiant and wishful terms, noting that

The present church was erected just after the Boxer Rebellion...Persecution has hit the Church more than once before. But always in the History of the Church back she comes stronger than ever. Christ and His Church will stand in China long after Stalin and his red hordes are but pages of old histories lying on dusty library shelves.⁷⁷⁶

By positing a parallel between the Boxer Uprising and the nascent PRC (interestingly ascribing Communism’s success to Soviet rather than Chinese origins) Klement simultaneously drew viewers’ imaginations to the implied long-term permanence of the Yangzhou church building as well as the ultimate spiritual triumph of “Christ and His Church” across time. Surely, if the Yangzhou church withstood the Boxer Uprising in 1900, it could just as well weather the contemporary “red hordes” – who in time would pass into historical irrelevance (from the Klement’s point of view) as did the Boxers. By conflating the visible with the invisible, with eternal Christianity ultimately defeating earthly Communism, the church building’s historical identity and that of the unseen Catholic community was reshaped in a spiritual dimension.



Image 148 (Catholic church in Yangzhou, filmed from distance with telephoto lens, 1947; CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid. For more on the contemporary attitudes behind this statement, see Peng Deng, *China’s Crisis and Revolution Through American Lenses, 1944-1949* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), 56-58.

⁷⁷⁷ Frs. William Klement and Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Yangchow 1948*, film still, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute.

Shifting from the distant view to the ground in a more literal way, the camera immediately cut to street scenes and public activities in Yangzhou (merchant vendors, food preparation, local residents and passerby, etc.) that were not uncommon in pre-1949 missionary imaging. At the same time, many of these views were dated by the highly visible presence of uniformed Nationalist soldiers boarding a ferry, walking through alleyways, and at some points staring with a mix of interest and disdain at the cameraperson. One scene filmed across the Grand Canal (大運河) featured passengers disembarking from a riverboat in front of a wall emblazoned with a Nationalist propaganda slogan: 好男兒決不逃避兵 (“good men don’t desert the army”) – a darkly ironic warning, given the heavy losses the government was then suffering in the Civil War (due in part to desertions and mass disenchantment with the government) as well as the Communists’ victory by the time the film was complete (*Image 149*)⁷⁷⁸



Image 149 (Ferry landing passengers in front of slogan, Yangzhou, 1947; CJA-SCU, Ricci Institute-USF)

Visual anachronisms aside, as with the long-distance view, many of these scenes would have been recognizable to the missionaries who once walked through the streets, purchased foods and

⁷⁷⁸ The phrase, beginning with “好男” (“good men”) was likely intended to co-opt colloquial anti-military proverbs, such as one that the author’s paternal grandfather once shared with his father: “好鐵不打釘，好男不當兵” (“good iron is not used for nails; good men do not join the army.”) Other Nationalist wartime slogans inverted this phrase, e.g. “好鐵能打釘，好男該當兵” (“good iron can be used for nails; good men should join the army.”)

goods from the vendors, and interacted with the local people – military and civilian – on a regular basis. But here in the post-1949 moment, Klement’s narrative mixed feelings of hope and loss, particularly as the film focused on elements of Catholic mission activities and communal development that were cut short by national change. Following several shots of khaki-uniformed Chinese boy scouts marching past the camera at drill – images of quasi-nationalistic cohesion distantly framed by the then-salient Republic of China rather than the People’s Republic – the camera moved on to the same boys in a “Close Up of Hearing Mass.” “All these boys attentively hearing Mass,” Klement wrote, “Nine out of ten are still pagans or at least not yet baptized [sic], though all study the catechism, fervently say their prayers and attend Mass.”⁷⁷⁹ As close-ups of the scouts (all gazing intently at a field altar brilliantly adorned with liturgical elements) flashed across the screen and their scoutmaster, local missionary priest Fr. Louis J. Dowd, S.J., celebrated the Mass and preached a sermon against the backdrop of Yangzhou’s historic Slender West Lake (瘦西湖), the written narrative asked the unseen audience for their support.⁷⁸⁰ But rather than financial or physical contributions, typically asked of supporting groups but no longer viable in this historical moment, Klement’s narrative asked only for religious intervention. “This young pagan still not baptised [sic] desires only to be a priest. Yours [sic] prayers especially during these times in China will help him realize his dream.” With long-term mission aspirations – here embodied by a young Chinese boy who reportedly “desire[d] only to be a priest” –

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid. Dowd continued his missionary career in East Asia well after he was expelled from Mainland China in 1952; thereafter, he relocated to Hsinchu (新竹) in Taiwan – a prominent post-1949 base for Jesuit missions in the continuing Republic of China – and worked extensively among youth and prison ministries there until the 1970s. His longer career arc (and the decision of the California Jesuit leadership to maintain his presence in East Asia) was due in part to Dowd’s reported fluency in Chinese reading and writing, which Klement reported separately in his film narrative; “Fr. Dowd is very good in Chinese, not only in the spoken but in the written language as well. Fr. Chiang principal of our school told me that Dowd knows more Chinese than [sic] did himself.” For a reference to Dowd’s later work in Taiwan, see also “Once a Prisoner, He Now Helps Inmates,” *Catholic Courier*, 11 July 1969. <<http://lib.catholiccourier.com/1969-courier-journal/courier-journal-1969%20-%200526.pdf>> accessed 6 June 2016.

crippled by overwhelming contingencies, only prayers were of continued efficacy in linking American Catholics to Chinese converts – or potential converts (*Images 150 and 151*). At the same time, these sequences embodied a kind of “lost cause” pathos, even as they presented the potential Catholic futures of the boys seen on screen. On their way to the campsite where the Mass was celebrated and the group performed martial arts drill and an impromptu “photoplay” for the camera, the boy scouts passed through Yangzhou, likely a creative choice by Klement or Hubbard to highlight their local environment as a backdrop. In the process, heightened by edited sequences depicting the group taking various routes and a riverboat as they traveled to the camp, the boys marched by crowds of curious onlookers (likely drawn by the spectacle and the foreign priest behind the camera) that included large numbers of stony-faced Nationalist officers and infantrymen. The strong contrast between the boys seemingly “playing at soldiers” and the adult Nationalist troops – largely co-opted or militarily defeated by the People’s Liberation Army by the time the film was edited and screened – only served to strengthen viewers’ recognition that both the boy scouts’ personal lives and the world of the Catholic mission institution behind their organization were soon to be – and already, at the very same time – dramatically altered.



Image 150 (Fr. Louis J. Dowd preaching to Chinese boy scouts, Yangzhou, 1947) and Image 151 (Chinese boy scout listening to Dowd’s sermon, Yangzhou, 1947; CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)⁷⁸¹

⁷⁸¹ Klement and Hubbard, *Yangchow 1948*, film still, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute.

A shot that came after the boy scout sequence, depicting “Fr. Fahy and Sister Catechizing Group,” was framed in Klement’s screenplay with the same mixed language of hope and defeat:

Though 90% of [these] kids are pagan still they take all catechism and learn the doctrines of our Faith, the prayers, etc. It can be hoped that when they grownup [sic], they will become Christians, or at least have no objection to their children becoming so. Of course with the closing of Christian schools even this remote hope vanished...⁷⁸²

These references to forced separation and dashed hopes extended not only to living communities, but to those of the dead. A black cross visible above and behind a catechist and a young boy, a then-temporary grave for a Jesuit missionary who died shortly before the film was made, was described as such: “[while] it is not permitted to bury inside the city at present...when people have become accustomed to it we will make it a regular cemetery. The first plot has been reserved for Fr. Simons who will be brought here in a more peaceful day” (*Image 152*).⁷⁸³



Image 152 (Catechist displaying doctrinal illustration for orphan boy, Yangzhou, 1947; CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸² Ibid. The “Fr. Fahy” named here – later Monsignor – was Eugene Fahy, S.J., who a few years after the film’s production was imprisoned by the PRC government and tortured alongside several other American and Chinese Catholic priests (at least one of whom, Fr. Matthew Su, S.J., died after being brutally tortured). These events had not yet happened at the time of Klement’s writing, but were soon to become international news, as Catholic and secular sources (including *Life* magazine) covered the arrests and torture. See *International Fides Service*, 9 February 1952, #297, NE 49; 14 June 1952, #315, NE 188-189; *Life*, 8 September 1952, 126-146. Fahy Library (濟時樓圖書館) on Fu Jen Catholic University’s campus in Banqiao, Taiwan, is named after him.

⁷⁸³ Ibid. The deceased missionary was Fr. William O’Leary, S.J., who unexpectedly died in Yangzhou at the age of 34, a victim of cerebral meningitis. Deveaux and Wong, 57-58.

⁷⁸⁴ Klement and Hubbard, *Yangchow 1948*, film still, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute.

Mixing already untenable plans for the present with the future, this sentiment prefigured later political narratives regarding the desire of Nationalist leaders (including most prominently Chiang Kai-shek) to be reinterred in their lost “homeland” after their deaths in exile, while the visual framing subtly conflated visible Chinese Catholic communities with American missionary bodies interred in their shared land.⁷⁸⁵ At the same time, and somewhat tellingly, references to the “vanishing” of a “remote hope” were buried in an overarching narrative that attempted to give a more hopeful view of Catholicism in China. Even if the indigenous church was cut off from the West and the visible scenes were now mostly memories, the idea was that the communities and individuals associated with Catholicism in Yangzhou would continue to exist under divine protection – rather than the limited reach of earthly mission institutions – into the foreseeable future.

This conflation of loss and hope colored a mass view of the Yangzhou Catholic community in a way the centerpiece of the film (and quite literally the midpoint of the 37-minute long footage) – a 4-minute-long sequence that William Klement produced in the Yangzhou mission compound. This sequence covered the preparations for an open-air Mass, beginning with American priests, Chinese nuns and seminarians, and other laymen – several smiling and bantering with each other, and one Chinese Catholic priest proudly carrying a German-made Exa 35mm camera around his neck – setting up a massive altar in the courtyard.⁷⁸⁶ The red-clothed altar was backed by a verdant green backdrop, a billowing golden canopy, and as the camera panned upward, a row of yellow-and-white flags (colors traditionally associated with the

⁷⁸⁵ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 585-587.

⁷⁸⁶ This camera-carrying Chinese priest may be “Father Chang” mentioned in Klement’s screenplay.

Catholic church) and then on a tall pole forming an apex above the altar, the red-blue-and-white flag of the Republic of China. In a single view, the Chinese Catholic laypeople and religious who faced this altar – and the audience of the film – took in the symbols of their faith, institutional allegiance, and pre-1949 national identity in a swath of colors (*Image 153*). Collective identity, comprised of both Chinese and Western elements, was then visualized in the Mass, itself characterized by pageantry and liturgical regimentation. As strings of firecrackers smoked and exploded at the far end of the courtyard, a procession led first by a Boy Scouts' drum corps and then a line of acolytes (no less than four swinging censers) marched toward the altar before the priests ascended it and removed their birettas for the ceremony. Klement filmed all this first from the top of the altar platform and then from the side, enabling to him to pan across the mass of participants while also including the liturgical actions taking place at the front (*Image 154*).

These privileged positions (being close or in front of the altar, standing outside rather than within the body of communicants, etc.) translated into filmic views that mirrored the visual perspectives of a priest celebrating the Mass, gazing out at the community of which he was simultaneously a part of, and also apart from. While Klement, in the moment of filming, probably envisioned his filmmaking – especially the wide-angle panning viewers – as a more prosaic way of displaying the size and mass participation of the Catholic community in his mission, post-1949 viewers (especially those who were formerly missionary priests in China, who celebrated Mass in spaces and before peoples much like these) would more likely have looked at these scenes with a range of nostalgic emotions. In looking at the participants looking back at the camera, they may also have sensed the irrevocable spatial and temporal disconnect between themselves and the filmic subjects – wondering, perhaps, what became of the Boy Scouts, the acolytes, the nuns, and the staring, kneeling, moving mass of congregants left behind in Yangzhou after their departure.

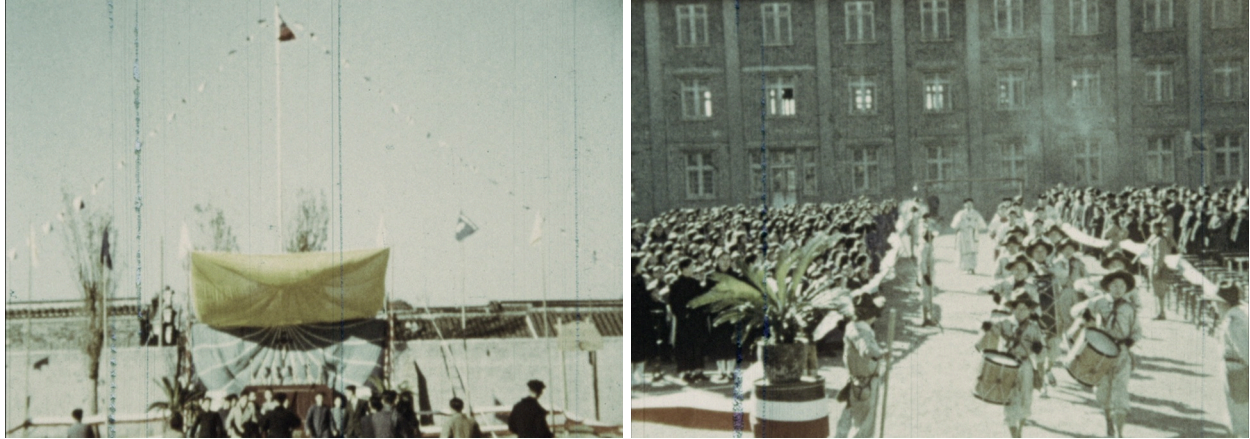


Image 153 (Open-air altar after setup by nuns, priests, and laypeople, Yangzhou, 1947) and Image 154 (Open-air Mass procession led by Chinese boy scouts, Yangzhou, 1947; both CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)

And perhaps in a nod to the former subjects of the film now viewing it in a different historical context, *Yangchow 1948* ended with three and half minutes of rather prosaic footage that was entirely separate from the prior filmic narrative. This was the Catholic mission parallel to Protestant “home movies,” depicting American priests – several of whom were shown earlier in more formal religious or educational activities – in their mission residence, chatting and laughing, shaking hands with each other (while walking out of a mission residence, no less; the same trope seen in Protestant films) and speaking casually with Chinese staff and colleagues. The final shot, interestingly, depicted one of the younger goateed Jesuit priests – now wearing the dirt-covered uniform of a laborer – working amiably alongside a small team of Chinese workmen to construct a brick structure, perhaps an outbuilding to be used in the mission compound. The film cut to black with no clear resolution, inviting (perhaps inadvertently) the metaphor of the mission as a work-in-progress now left incomplete (*Images 155-157*).



Image 155 (American Jesuit missionaries greeting each other, Yangzhou, 1947), Image 156 (Chinese man handing letter to American Jesuit missionary, Yangzhou, 1947), and Image 157 (Jesuit missionary alongside Chinese workers, Yangzhou, 1947; all CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)

Bernard Hubbard’s sound film, *Ageless China*, articulated these perceptions of communal separation, loss, and hope on a national scale, though also more characterized by his “external” identity and less of the nostalgic longing that characterized Klement’s visual narrative. Both his and Klement’s film played with past-present temporal continuity – views of the past shaped by an uncertain present and a hopeful religious futurity. Hubbard, who shot his footage in major cities (Beiping, Nanjing, Shanghai) all under Nationalist control in 1947, now presented them as an idealized perspective of a “lost China,” an approach that likely figured into his decision to describe the country in the title as “ageless.” On the one hand, Hubbard’s idea of China’s “agelessness” meant a persistence of the traditional and ancient, even in modern times; shots of Ming and Qing-era architecture took up most of the film’s running time, especially since

Hubbard seemed especially taken with the grandeur of the Forbidden City. This gave it the flavor of a travelogue or ethnographic film, not surprising given Hubbard's prior film experiences.

At the same time, *Ageless China* advanced arguments about Roman Catholicism's (and by proxy, Christianity's) long-term resilience in China – the agelessness, therefore, was not only merely an orientalist vision of traditional Chinese culture and anti-modernity (though Hubbard's commentary certainly played up that perspective as well), but rather that the regime changes that had expelled both the Nationalists and Christian missionaries from the country would ultimately be insignificant “bumps in the road” from a religious perspective. Some of this took a blatant political turn. Paralleling Klement's sentiments about Chinese Communism's illegitimacy with a visual anachronism, Hubbard decided to retain – and emphasize near the film's beginning – a long shot of the Tiananmen Gate decorated with a large portrait of Chiang Kai-shek rather than the then-new (and now internationally visible) image of Mao Zedong (*Image 159*).⁷⁸⁷

Interestingly, this shot was accompanied by a lengthy monologue about Beijing's former capital status during the Yuan Dynasty, as part of “Kublai Khan's...greatest empire in the history of the world,” which Hubbard finished by pausing for effect and adding that “it was far greater in area than the Communist empire of today, inside the Iron Curtain.”⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁷ For an excellent study including Mao's portrait in Tiananmen Square and the effects of political imagination on space and place, see Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). The afterlives of Mao's image as used in official, artistic, and politically dissenting ways is well-explored in Minna Valjakka, “Renegotiating the Traumatizing Experiences: Reemploying Images of Mao in Contemporary Art,” in *The Use of Mao and the Chongqing Model*, ed. Joseph Y.S. Cheng (Hong Kong: The City University of Hong Kong Press, 2015), 277-304.

⁷⁸⁸ Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Ageless China* film narration, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF.



Image 158 (Tiananmen with Chiang Kai-shek portrait, Beijing, 1947; CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)

As Hubbard also peppered the film’s commentary with descriptions of Jesuit (and other Catholic orders’) accomplishments in China, it was clear that filmmaking journey was meant to visualize the long-term historical traces of missionary presence. His casual “experimentation” with the 300-year-old astronomical instruments was accompanied by a discussion of Fr. Ferdinand Verbiest’s role in designing them for the 17th century Qing court, he and other Jesuits were filmed gazing at the tombs of Matteo Ricci and Verbiest still intact in Beijing, and even his visit to Shanghai (“strange city that is a hodgepodge of European, American, and Chinese influences,” Hubbard declaimed) primarily featured the French Jesuit orphanage, crafts workshops, and educational center at Zikawei (徐家匯) rather than any other sights in the city.⁷⁸⁹ Visible spaces and places were all framed by Catholic missionaries’ past presence. A long hallway near the

⁷⁸⁹ The Shanghai sequence was introduced by an intertitle reading “Shanghai – City of Contrasts,” and long shot of a Texaco gas station in the city, surrounded by cars and moving masses of people. Hubbard intoned that “now in one long jump from the old imperial splendors of Peking to the modern city of Shanghai, where a Texaco sign, looming up in front of the camera, highlights the contrasts between the grandeur of Peking and the drabness of Shanghai – strange city that is a hodgepodge of European, American, and Chinese influences.” The same language – “the City of Contrasts,” no less, was used to describe the city in *A Guide to Catholic Shanghai* (Shanghai, Tou-se-we Press, 1937), vii. It is likely that this guide or a copy of its contents was on hand when Hubbard was assembling his film commentary. The language used is so similar and the narrative exhibits a number of striking parallels that it would not be surprising if this was the primary reference text Hubbard had next to him while taking notes.

Temple of Heaven (shot lengthwise, so as to appear as though stretching into infinity) was described as a place where “it was interesting to reflect that back in the 17th century, many a Jesuit missionary walked these same corridors, these same paths, looked upon these same architectural wonders” (*Image 159*).⁷⁹⁰ The audience was thus invited to overlay what they were seeing – indexical spaces framed by Hubbard’s film and his presence at these historic sites with Catholic importance – with imaginations of a past-present missionary legacy. Though both viewers and filmmakers were now to be counted among those past missionaries who walked through, looked upon, and lived in China (also consigned to “pages of old histories lying on dusty library shelves,” the fate that they hoped would befall Communism), it was entirely possible, then, that future generations of new missionaries and church adherents would follow, despite the ravages of time.⁷⁹¹



Image 159 (Hallway near Temple of Heaven, Beijing, 1947; CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)

The film’s thematic elements thus attempted to demonstrate the long historical lineage of modern Catholic missions in China rather than the missions themselves. And to assuage viewers that

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁹¹ Fr. William J. Klement, S.J., to Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., 22 December 1949, CJA-SCU.

indigenous Catholicism was fully capable of continuing without foreign missionary presence, even Hubbard's audience with Cardinal Tien at the North Church – not least the filmmaker's on-camera demonstrations of deference to the cardinal – was intended to convey the message (albeit couched in highly idealized terms) that the indigenization of the Catholic hierarchy in China was well underway.⁷⁹² As Hubbard noted

[Tien was] not the first [Chinese] bishop by any means. There was a Chinese bishop in the 17th century, and there have been many since, and there are many today. But Cardinal Tien was the first to become a Prince of the Church. And here he is [onscreen]. His elevation marks a great step nearer the goal of all missionaries in China. Most of the foreign missionaries belong to various religious orders; almost every order of the Church is represented in China. But all of them have a single goal. They all look for the day when the Church in China will be entirely in the hands of a native episcopacy and clergy. That is the aim of the Church in every mission land. The missionary orders are but John the Baptists preparing the way, ready, even anxious to step aside as soon as the secular clergy are ready to take over.⁷⁹³

While the characterization of missionary orders as “John the Baptists...ready, even anxious to step aside” was somewhat of an overstatement, the Catholic Church in China was indeed at its most stable period of numerical growth when Hubbard and Klement produced their films in 1947.⁷⁹⁴ And certainly by the time the films were screened in this form, after 1950, the metaphor of John the Baptist was far more applicable in a tragic rather than an triumphal sense; like the New Testament herald of Christ who beheaded on the orders of a tyrannical leader (his head being famously delivered to Herod Antipas on a silver platter), so too were the missionaries now rapidly being cut off from communities in China by Communist victories and political

⁷⁹² Archbishop of Nanking (and in 1969 to become the second Chinese Catholic cardinal after Tien), Paul Yü-Pin (于斌), writing for postwar American audiences, articulated a similarly optimistic but considerably more realistic view in a *Life* article, entitled “Christianity in China: Strengthened by the war, the Christian Church is no longer a ‘foreign invader’ but a firmly rooted and thriving Chinese institution.” Paul Yü-Pin, *Life*, 13 January 1947, 39-40.

⁷⁹³ Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Ageless China* film narration, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF.

⁷⁹⁴ Mariani, 16-17. As Mariani states, “by 1948 the Catholic Church in China as a whole was also quite strong: 3.3 million Catholics out of a total population of 458 million, 5,700 priests (nearly half of whom were Chinese), 978 brothers (60 percent Chinese), and 6,927 sisters (70 percent Chinese). In fact, China had a religious personnel-to-parishioner ratio that was the envy even of long-established Catholic nations.”

contingencies beyond their control.⁷⁹⁵ As such, any visual, statistical, and imagined references to the strength of the indigenous church – able to self-govern, evangelize, and maintain its structural integrity in the absence of foreign aid or intervention – provided an element of hope for those viewers watching the films.

It is not surprising, therefore, that *Ageless China*'s narrative arc and Klement's typed screenplay both ended with images that reinforced the idea of a resilient indigenous Catholic community, strengthened not by association with foreign power but by divine protection that transcended earthly boundaries. This perception was most clearly articulated by an extended sequence showing Chinese Catholic laypeople, foreign missionaries and Chinese clergy, and members of Catholic religious orders strenuously climbing the steep green hills of Sheshan or Zose (佘山) in mass pilgrimages carried out there to the Basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan (佘山進教之佑聖母大殿).⁷⁹⁶ Indeed, "in May 1947, Mary was crowned Queen of China at Sheshan," at almost the same time that Hubbard was in Shanghai.⁷⁹⁷ While William Klement, perhaps running out of typing paper or time, neglected to discuss the footage in detail in his December 1949 epistle (though bookmarking it at the end of his screenplay), Hubbard incorporated a large portion of it in the conclusion for *Ageless China*.⁷⁹⁸ As the soundtrack featured pipe organ strains

⁷⁹⁵ The traditional Biblical account of this incident is found in the Gospel of Matthew, 14:1-12. "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife... But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John the Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison" (Matt. 14:1-3; 6-10, KJV).

⁷⁹⁶ Jeremy Clarke, "Our Lady of China: Marian Devotion and the Jesuits," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* (St. Louis, Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits, 2009), Vol. 41, No. 3, Autumn 2009, 18-41.

⁷⁹⁷ Mariani, 16. It is not clear whether or not the Hubbard's footage of

⁷⁹⁸ Klement to Hubbard, 22 December 1949, CJA-SCU; Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., *Ageless China* (n.d., c.1949-1950), 16mm color film with sound narration, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF. See also Hubbard to Richard O'Connor, Magnavox Corporation, 15 December 1950, CJA-SCU.

of Schubert’s “Ave Maria” and Hubbard’s voiceover extolled the devotion of “Shanghai’s Catholics,” long lines of Chinese pilgrims jostling, kneeling at Stations of the Cross, and climbing to the Sheshan summit filled the screen (*Images 160 and 161*).



Image 160 (Medium shot of Chinese pilgrims at Stations of the Cross, Sheshan, 1947) and Image 161 (Pilgrimage procession approaching basilica summit, Sheshan, 1947; both CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)⁷⁹⁹

By leveraging film’s ability to image movement, space, and temporal continuity in parallel with religious imagination – grounding spiritual identities in communal practice and physical space – the Sheshan sequence provided viewers with visualized conceptions of mass devotion in relation to the Catholic community remaining in China. The hope was of course that these communities and individuals, expressing their public devotion to Catholicism in the pre-1949 period, would continue to do so even as the “mission church” passed away and the indigenous “church militant” succeeded it in the face of domestic political persecution and further institutional isolation in the global Cold War.⁸⁰⁰ In the case of the Chinese Catholics in Shanghai, this was not merely wishful thinking by foreign clergy but a matter of communal identity. Though Hubbard and Klement had no way of knowing this at the time their films were shot, and even as Hubbard edited them in Santa Clara, many of the Shanghainese pilgrims, religious, and clergy visualized

⁷⁹⁹ Hubbard, *Ageless China*, film stills, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF.

⁸⁰⁰ Bays, 169-175.

in the Sheshan sequence were already (or very soon to be) involved in anti-Communist resistance based primarily on their religious convictions and allegiances to the global Roman Catholic Church. Within weeks of the PLA takeover of Shanghai on May 27, 1949, a dissenting movement organized by the Bishop of Shanghai, Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei (龔品梅) took to both public and “underground” opposition to Communist power, while the new government responded by initiating a wide-scale Public Security Bureau crackdown on Chinese Catholic communities in the city.⁸⁰¹ So resilient was the movement’s confrontation with the authorities that it was not until 1955 that Kung and hundreds of other Chinese church leaders in Shanghai and elsewhere were finally arrested in a massive purge; the bishop was subsequently sentenced to life in prison, where he was to spend the next 30 years before dying in exile in the United States.⁸⁰² To symbolize Christianity’s spiritual saliency under political fire, the final shot in Hubbard’s film was of the basilica’s spire, filmed from ground level against a brilliantly white cloudy sky. The apex featured the Virgin Mary holding the infant Christ, described by Hubbard in his solemn intonation as “the light of the world, arms outstretched over the plains of China, in intercession for this great people of this great and ancient land.”⁸⁰³ “The plains of China,” of course, were quite literally in the background of the shots that preceded this one, with the bodies of pilgrims (“this great people”) forming lines that led up from the green flatlands to the basilica behind the camera. Visually and imaginatively, the focus on prevailing emblems of Catholic belief, the moving participation of Chinese masses, and the poignant soundtrack all pointed to hope in a collective Christian identity that transcended political boundaries as well as the historical contingencies that separated missionaries and Chinese Christians (*Image 163*).

⁸⁰¹ Mariani, 27-67, 143-168.

⁸⁰² Ibid., 195-205, 215-216. Kung, who died in 2000, is buried in the Santa Clara Mission Cemetery – a little over a mile and a half from where the author was working in the California Jesuit archives.

⁸⁰³ Hubbard, *Ageless China* film narration, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF.



Image 162 (Basilica spire with Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child, Sheshan, 1947; CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF)⁸⁰⁴

Such parallels in imaging and imagination – representing physically invisible but spiritually salient links to God while earthly links between peoples and institutions crumbled – were certainly not limited to Catholic missionaries. The Sheshan sequence was strikingly mirrored in a Protestant sense by another vernacular film, this time made by Harold Henke and Jessie Mae Henke in Beijing on Easter Sunday 1948. Instead of a Gothic basilica, foreign and Chinese Protestants associated with the Peking Union Church ascended the Ming-era Circular Mound Altar (圓丘壇) for a joint sunrise service conducted by in part by Rev. Wang Mingdao (王明道) of the city's popular Christian Tabernacle (基督徒會堂).⁸⁰⁵ A small table topped with a plain altar-cloth and a white cross served as a liturgical focal point – albeit in unadorned Protestant simplicity – while Wang and a foreign pastor (possibly Rev. Wallace C. Merwin of

⁸⁰⁴ Hubbard, *Ageless China*, film still, CJA-SCU; Ricci Institute-USF.

⁸⁰⁵ See also Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 115-118, 200-201.

the China Christian Council) presided over the service in black Geneva gowns, ruffled by the morning breeze blowing across the flat-topped ancient altar space (*Images 163 and 164*).⁸⁰⁶



Image 163 (Protestant Easter Sunday service at Temple of Heaven, Beijing, 1948) and Image 164 (Congregants exiting Easter service at Temple of Heaven, Beijing, 1948; both Henke Family Collection)

The service was filmed by the Henkes on Kodachrome, again with the now-well-used 16mm Cine-Kodak camera that had accompanied them through North China since 1931.⁸⁰⁷ And though the Henkes had no official connections with the Catholic church or any of the more advanced filmmaking by Frs. Klement and Hubbard, their film contained striking visual parallels. The Circular Mound Altar was filled with Protestant congregants and photographed in several succeeding shots that framed the large architectural scale and group participation. The final part of the sequence, filmed from the top of the altar at the service's end, showed the mixed congregation streaming down the steps into the Temple of Heaven complex. Not only had they participated in a collective celebration of the Protestant Easter liturgy, but they were now carrying this personal identification with the Christian faith as each individual returned their own residences and communities in the city – dispersing but remaining. And with greater changes

⁸⁰⁶ For more on Merwin, see Wallace C. Merwin, *Adventures in Unity: The Church of Christ in China* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974); and for his perspectives on the post-1949 Three-Self Patriotic Movement in China, “‘Patriotic Gifts’ for Pummeling,” in *The Living Church*, Vol. 138, 25 January 1959, 9.

⁸⁰⁷ Jessie Mae Henke to Palmer and White families in California, 15 March 1931, Henke Family Collection.

looming on the horizon in the form of rapidly growing Communist presence in North China, it was fitting that the service took place in an aptly coincidental appropriation of former Chinese imperial space.⁸⁰⁸ The Protestant communities in the city, both foreign and Chinese, were commemorating Christ's resurrection and their public faith in a sacred space where, on the same spot, Ming and Qing emperors had also prayed and presented sacrifices – beseeching heaven (天) for rain in times of drought.⁸⁰⁹ By the fall and early winter of the same year, as PLA units commanded by Lin Biao (林彪) and Nie Rongzhen (聶榮臻) launched devastating attacks on Nationalist forces stationed immediately north of Beijing and Tianjin, civilians poured into the Temple of Heaven to seek refuge from the fighting.⁸¹⁰ As US sinologist Derk Bodde noted:

Inside [the Temple of Heaven] all the buildings...are filled with hundreds of young men (also in certain quarters, girls)...wartime student refugees from Shanxi, some of whom seem hardly older than twelve or thirteen. Most of the stone terraces outside, as well as the floors of the temple itself, are covered with their thin sleeping pads and meager possessions...The columns of the great temple and adjoining buildings, much faded from their former brilliant red, are covered with ugly written notices, and dust and debris lie everywhere on the once gleaming marble. As one mounts the steps toward places once reserved for the emperor and his followers alone at the most solemn of religious ceremonies, one cannot but turn from this scene of human misery and degradation.⁸¹¹

Bodde concluded his encounter with the shocking “human misery and degradation” pervading the temple complex by noting that “even the lower tiers of the Altar of Heaven itself,” where the

⁸⁰⁸ Jessie Mae Henke, *Family History* (Duarte, unpublished manuscript in Henke Family Collection, 1988), 19.

⁸⁰⁹ Cai Yanxin, *Chinese Architecture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 44-47. See also Xinian Fu, “Architecture Technology: Lecture 4 Ceremonial Buildings in Ancient China,” in Yongxiang Lu, ed. *A History of Chinese Science and Technology, Volume 3* (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press, 2015), 103-106. Almost exactly 75 years prior, Scottish missionary-sinologist James Legge first visited the Altar of Heaven and was moved to take off his shoes there, believing himself to be standing on holy ground. In a forerunner of later Protestant ceremonies at the Circular Mound Altar, he and the missionaries with him drew parallels between their worship with that of the emperors' sacrifices to an invisible, omnipotent divine being (drawing theological inspiration from St. Paul's reinterpretation of a Greco-Roman altar “to an unknown God” in Acts 17:23) and sang the Protestant Doxology (“Praise God from Whom all blessings flow...”) before leaving. See Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 86-89.

⁸¹⁰ Westad, 221-224.

⁸¹¹ Bodde, 12-13; entry 12 September 1948.

Henkes and their fellow Protestants had stood, sang, prayed, and appeared on film in the Easter sunrise service not long before, were now “littered with...half-dried excrement.”⁸¹²

Final Frames: Shifting Visions and “New China”

At this time, the Henkes and Lewis families were not far from the front lines themselves, and witnessed firsthand the starving refugees (for which the Presbyterian mission opened a soup kitchen, with unknown success), the ever-approaching explosions of gunfire (as Nationalist armies struggling to escape to Beiping from the north – perhaps including the company of troops that they filmed from a distance earlier that year – were surrounded and destroyed by the PLA), and the now-daily exponential increases in monetary value as inflation reached unbelievable highs.⁸¹³ Ralph Lewis, who had taken over the Presbyterian hospital in Baoding soon after returning to China found himself cut off from the rest of Hebei by fighting immediately north of the city.⁸¹⁴ On October 4, 1948, Lewis was evacuated to Beiping by one of the final air transports

⁸¹² Ibid., 13. Bodde continued somewhat disdainfully, “the greater number [of these student refugees] lie inert on their bedding and do or say nothing. Nowhere do we see books that might keep them intellectually alive, or signs of organized physical activity. As a result[,] the mental condition of these boys is far worse than that of the poorest coolie. There is no trace of leadership or organization...one might think that minimum of leadership could have organized squads to dig latrines in the extensive grounds outside. Such leadership is apparently not forthcoming – either from the students themselves, or from Peking’s many university (which might have arranged lecture and other activities to keep them occupied), or from the government. Perhaps it is too much to expect from these young men themselves, uprooted from the homes, many perhaps orphans, and all, no doubt, underfed...One may say that the demoralization of these boys is really the demoralization of their government.” An unknown reader underlined the final sentence of this quote in the book the author is consulting, held at the University of Michigan library.

⁸¹³ Harold Henke, personal letters to “Dear Ones at Home,” 5 August, 14 October, 28 October, 7 December, 19 December 1948. Westad, 222-224.

⁸¹⁴ Harold Henke, personal letters to “Dear Ones at Home,” 5 August, 14 October 1948. Harry Lewis, personal interviews with the author, 11 August 2014; 31 October 2016, Sacramento, California. Lewis was rotating with Henke and another Presbyterian doctor, William (Bill) Cochrane to handle heavy medical duties in the Baoding hospital between 1946 and 1948. Harry accompanied his father to Baoding in the summer of 1948 and was evacuated by air in order to return to the Shanghai American School, flying on a DC-3 packed with Chinese civilians and Nationalist military personnel – the railroad having been cut by fighting. The aircraft was severely overloaded (the passengers had already emptied quantities of baggage – sacrificing personal possessions to save their lives), and Ralph Lewis watched nervously as the transport carrying his son barely cleared a wall at the end of the runway as it struggled to gain lift. Harry, on the other hand, was thrilled at the adventure and did not seem to mind (or recall) the danger involved.

to leave the area ahead of the Communist advance.⁸¹⁵ Harold and Jessie Mae, still in Beiping, decided to evacuate their children. In strong echoes of their colleagues' experience during the last war, the couple packed away whatever belongings that they could ship via pre-arrangements with the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in New York, including "our movie projector and extra typewriter."⁸¹⁶ The couple also shot one of the last (but not final) segments of their remaining Kodachrome, a short and surreal sequence depicting their children and those of other families – now confined to limited movements around their Beiping compounds – displaying homemade costumes during the mission's Halloween party (*Image 165*).⁸¹⁷



Image 165 (Robert Henke costumed, Presbyterian mission Halloween party, Beiping 1948; Henke Family Collection)

Two weeks later, using the remaining typewriter not packed away in Jessie Mae's outbound luggage, the couple composed what they felt might be their final "circular" letter to supporters in the United States, expressing their dashed hopes in uncharacteristically ominous terms:

With the fall of Manchuria to the Communist armies, North China is being evacuated by all who can leave, both foreign and Chinese. This is being done with great regret. Most of us have had high hopes of reestablishing a work interrupted by the Japanese war. Civil war, however, has raged throughout North China ever since and our mission has worked under

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ Harold Henke, personal letter to "Dear Ones in the USA," 31 October 1948.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid. "Bob [Henke] dressed as a German count in my Tux, all sorts of medals and sashes, and a monocle. Rikki as a masked person with a complete black mask covering his face, Chinese fur smoking jacket and my best hat. Lois dressed at the compound part here for the younger children as a ghost." The film's contents exactly match Henke's letter description. Wendy and Charles Lewis, the two younger Lewis children, also appear briefly in this film.

difficulties in the two stations [Baoding and Beiping] in areas not under Communist control. We managed to keep a foreign staff [including Ralph Lewis] in our hospital in Paoting until October. Wherever Chinese Communists are in control, mission work sooner or later has had to close. However, up until now they have controlled no large center.⁸¹⁸

This was undoubtedly written with a sense of personal loss. The same day – notified only the day before by the US Consulate that a transportation opportunity had opened up – the couple had sent their two teenage sons, Robert and Richard, by train to Tianjin and then an LST to Qingdao, where they boarded the troopship USS *General H.W. Butner* to return to the US for good.⁸¹⁹

After some indecision as to whether to stay in Beiping or not, Jessie Mae and Lois Henke left for the comparative safety of Shanghai twelve days afterward; they joined the Lewis family that had also migrated there in November, following Ralph's narrow escape from Baoding in October.⁸²⁰

Before departing, however, Jessie Mae paused to sit for a group photograph with the Chinese nurses she worked with and trained in Beiping, nurses who would continue working there and in other institutions after she left (*Image 166*). She would not see most, if not all, of these colleagues again in her lifetime.

On the other hand, as Douw hospital was still running and there was some possibility that the mission could continue operating, Harold decided to stay behind in North China. Unlike the movie projector that was shipped off to the United States, the Cine-Kodak remained with Harold in Beiping with the last segment of color film still left inside. Visual production was still considered a viable option in the moment, even as visual display (for home entertainment and educational purposes) was no longer needed. In a way, the decision to keep the camera indicated

⁸¹⁸ Jessie Mae and Harold Henke, personal letter to "Dear Friends," 15 November 1948.

⁸¹⁹ Robert and Richard Henke, personal letter to "Nai Nai [grandmother], Uncle Sam, Aunt Dodo, Anne, and Tim," n.d. [after 11 December 1948 in Lockport, Illinois], written on USS *General H.W. Butner* letterhead. The ship was later used to ferry troops taking part in the September 16, 1950 landing at Inchon during the Korean War. "*General H.W. Butner*," *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, <<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/auxil/ap113.htm>>, accessed 14 September 2016.

⁸²⁰ Ralph and Roberta Lewis, "Summary of Life of Ralph and Roberta Lewis as Missionaries," n.d., Lewis Family Collection; Harold Henke, personal letter to "Dear Friends," Lockport, Illinois, October 1949.

that there was more to be visualized and more work to be done, while the sending away of the projector reflected uncertainties about continued domestic instability in China. It was still not clear what would happen to the missionaries as a group, but hopes persisted that their activities under could continue under Communist government, even with restrictions and further anticipated anti-American pressure.⁸²¹ As the Henkes concluded with a statement – predicated on the otherworldliness of Christian faith – that could have well fitted the previous war, or any number of earlier pressures and losses across the long spectrum of missionary activity in China:

We have our work to do here. There is a great need for us to stay and carry on. We have a great investment here in property and staff. We have God’s commission to carry His word. Hence, we feel now that this is the right thing to do. Events as they come, conditions here in Peiping, and God’s leading will direct our future path. We trust in Him.⁸²²



Image 166 (Douw Hospital nurses with Jessie Mae Henke and Elizabeth Perkins, 1948; Henke Family Collection)⁸²³

⁸²¹ Jessie Mae and Harold Henke, personal letter to “Dear Friends,” 15 November 1948. “It has seemed to many of us that missions could possibly be carried on in such a place as Peking with its large numbers of foreigners, foreign consulates, and where the publicity and public opinion would make it difficult to maintain an ‘iron curtain’. Our medical work is more encouraging that ever. We have the finest group of young doctors we have ever known and they are all Christians. The nurse’s [sic] training school is well under way again with all three classes full...we share in a bi-weekly clinic at the nearby Confucian temple where hundreds of refugees live. These three clinics are made possible by local and U.S. gifts. . .we organized a new Board of Trustees for the hospital. The Board is composed of three teachers, two engineers [-] one Chinese and our Sam Dean [-] three nurses, two ministers [-] one Chinese Methodist Bishop and our Bob Miller [-], and four doctors. . .All are fine Christians and have a splendid spirit of service. It will be stimulating to work with them.”

⁸²² Ibid. As this letter was written before Jessie Mae and Lois Henke left for Shanghai on November 27, 1948 (a decision likely confirmed only after it was sent out), the conclusion was written in the plural, assuming that Jessie Mae and Harold would stay together in Beiping and continue their medical missionary work in tandem.

⁸²³ Photographer unknown, Henke Family Collection. The caption reads: “Beiping Douw Hospital Senior Nurses Training School student body commemorating Principal Elizabeth Sarah Perkins [潘愛蓮] and Mrs. Jessie Mae

On the morning of January 21, 1949, Fu Zuoyi (傅作義), the general commanding Beiping's Nationalist defenses, formally surrendered his 25,000 troops after intense pressure from PLA representatives and Chinese Communist agents in his inner circle (including his own daughter, Fu Dongju, and her fiancée).⁸²⁴ Less than two weeks later, Harold Henke was on his way to a Rotary Club meeting at the Hotel des Wagons-Lits, a few blocks east of the US Consulate on Legation Street (東交民巷), when he was sidetracked by a massive parade of PLA troops and vehicles rolling wave on wave through Beiping's main street.⁸²⁵ "The city," he wrote to his mother the same day, "is very peacefully being taken over by the Communist armies which came in today in force. They look fine[,] well equipped and are the best disciplined Chinese soldiers that I have seen so far...[they] have a great deal of rolling stock, most of what I saw looked to be USA."⁸²⁶ Henke did not have the Cine-Kodak at hand (he certainly did not report filming or photographing the events) and made no film of the momentous occasion. He also had other concerns on his mind. After observing the parade, Henke continued on his way to the

Henke [恒琪夫人] on their departure to [their] home country, 37th year [of the Republic of China], eleventh month, twelfth day [November 12, 1948]." Elizabeth Perkins and her role in reorganizing hospital work in Guangdong after this moment in late 1948 also appears in *Selected Beijing Cultural and Historical Resources* [北京文史资料精选] (北京: 北京出版社, 2006), 231-233; assembled by the Historical Data Research Council of the Beijing Municipal Committee (北京市委员会. 文史资料研究委员会). Interestingly, the Henkes are not mentioned in this record.

⁸²⁴ Westad, 224, 226-227.

⁸²⁵ Harold Henke, personal letter to mother, 3 February 1949. Henke had been a member of the Beiping Rotary Club (composed of both foreign and Chinese men) since 1947, and regularly reported on its activities in the postwar years. A membership card he kept after leaving China indicated that he had renewed his membership in the Club on June 30, 1948, half a year before the Communist takeover of Beiping.

⁸²⁶ Ibid. Derk Bodde, who was in the crowd of onlookers watching the parade in earnest on the same day Henke encountered it – and unlike Henke, had a still camera with him and made numerous photographs of the crowd and military procession – noted that "prominent in the parade were thousands of students and workers from schools and organizations throughout the city. Many of their colored paper banners and Mao Zedong portraits were torn to tatters by the wind...I counted over 250 heavy motor vehicles of all kinds – tanks, armored cars, truckloads of soldiers, trucks mounted with machine guns, trucks towing heavy artillery. Behind them innumerable ambulances, jeeps, and other small vehicles. As probably the greatest demonstration of Chinese military might in history, the spectacle was enormously impressive. But what made it especially memorable to Americans was the fact that it was primarily a display of *American* [emphasis in the original] military equipment, virtually all of it captured or obtained by bribe from [Nationalist] forces...As the stream of trucks continued, I heard several exclaim with wonder: 'Still more! Still more!'" Bodde, 103-104, entry 3 February 1949.

meeting and then quickly back to Douw hospital; he needed to perform an emergency skin graft on a young boy with a hand mauled by a firecracker (likely part of the victory celebrations surrounding the PLA's arrival), followed by the amputation of a 56-year-old woman's leg.⁸²⁷ She had chanced upon someone in her village playing with an unexploded grenade that subsequently detonated, echoing the "innocent victim of war" that appeared in the Henkes' prewar film.⁸²⁸ The doctor also feared that with the PLA finally entering Beiping, it might not be long before other wounded civilians and soldiers from the prior fighting followed in their wake.⁸²⁹

In many ways, the stark incongruities between national change and local life (or, at least from the missionary point of view, attempts at maintaining a typical daily routine) were jarring. What they saw, what they visualized (or could not or did not visualize), and what they imagined about this "new China" often differed widely, especially now that a growing number of them had come face-to-face with the relatively un-threatening Communist forces, until then only a faceless specter on the horizon. This likely contributed to a sense of further confusion in the moment and deeper nostalgia later on, as it seemed that life for both ordinary Chinese citizens and foreign missionaries really could continue as before. As Ralph Lewis walked through the streets of Shanghai in April 1949, four months after Beiping was occupied by the PLA and a month before the PLA entered the city itself, daily life for many inhabitants in the metropolis seemed to go on as normal. Using his Kodak 35 (and now familiar with its finicky focusing mechanism), Lewis produced a number of Kodachrome slides of street life in the city on a sunny day. While food riots had been reported in Shanghai only a few months before and a thriving black market was in full swing, Lewis's candid photographs seemed to reflect a more prosaic atmosphere: one of

⁸²⁷ Harold Henke, personal letter to mother, 3 February 1949.

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

strained but un-panicked day-to-day survival.⁸³⁰ A young man prepared thick flatbread (大餅) at a street stand not far from the Bund (the intersection of Guangdong Road 廣東路 and Guangxi North Road 廣西北路, from street signs visible in an enlargement of the slide), shoppers looked over piles of gleaming green cabbage (白菜), and an aproned woman and a toddler took an afternoon stroll in the sun (*Images 167-169*).



Image 167 (Bread stand in Shanghai, 35mm Kodachrome slide by Ralph C. Lewis, 1949), Image 168 (Street market in Shanghai, 35mm Kodachrome slide by Lewis, 1949), and Image 169 (Woman and child in Shanghai, 35mm Kodachrome slide by Lewis, 1949; all Lewis Family Collection)

These and other 35mm color slides made in Hong Kong in the summer of 1949 – where the family moved briefly in early May, ahead of the PLA occupation of Shanghai – were the last photographs Lewis produced in China that still exist in any form. The family, however, would remain in the country well after the regime change, staying until 1951; it is not known whether the Lewises produced any more photographs during this time. Along with their three children (sans the eldest Harry, who had gone on to college in the US), Ralph and Roberta returned to

⁸³⁰ Harold and Jessie Mae Henke, 15 November 1948.

Beijing in the early fall of 1949, in order to take up work at Douw Hospital and relieve Harold Henke, who was finally leaving China for good.⁸³¹ They arrived on October 1.⁸³² To avoid drawing attention to themselves as they returned to the now-severely undermanned Presbyterian compound, the family – riding in pedicabs from the railway station outside the city wall and then quietly huddled in the Douw Hospital’s service jeep – made a winding trip through deserted city streets.⁸³³ Coincidentally, at that moment, most of the city’s population was gathered in Tiananmen Square to hear Mao Zedong proclaim the founding of the People’s Republic. As the family drove along, they saw brilliant red banners strung up on buildings lining the streets and heard the roaring cheers that echoed across the city from Tiananmen, later joking amongst themselves that the celebrations were intended for their return.⁸³⁴ Though the Lewises continued to work and live in Beijing until September 1952 – with the children, by virtue of their Caucasian features and then-prevalent Sino-Soviet cooperation, often mistaken as Russians from the USSR rather than Americans – they soon experienced the pressures of the new regime and anti-American sentiment that spilled over from the Korean War. Instead of cheers and banners, the children jumped at executioners’ gunshots and saw limp bodies being carted away – part of the new government’s continued campaign in 1951-1952 against counterrevolutionaries, now far removed from the prying eyes of the Western public.⁸³⁵

Much further to the south, Frederick, Myra Scovel, and their six children (the two eldest sons Jim and Carl then already enrolled at the Shanghai American School) encountered further historical ironies while now based at the Presbyterian-founded Hackett Medical Center, affiliated

⁸³¹ Ralph and Roberta Lewis, “Summary of Life of Ralph and Roberta Lewis as Missionaries,” n.d. (post-1976)

⁸³² Ibid.

⁸³³ Wendy Lewis, personal interview with the author, 4 July 2011, Mt. Hermon, California.

⁸³⁴ Ibid.

⁸³⁵ Wendy and Charles Lewis, personal interview with the author, 4 July 2011; Bays, 163.

with Lingnan University (嶺南大學) in Canton (廣州). Moving north-to-south ahead of the Communist advance, the family departed in August 1948 from their previous posting in Huaiyuan, transported by aircraft from the nearby city of Bengbu (蚌埠).⁸³⁶ They boarded the *St. Paul*, a C-47 transport operated in part by the Lutheran Church in China (中華信義會) and kept operational by cannibalizing parts from a another non-flying aircraft nicknamed the *St. Peter* (therefore quite literally “robbing Peter to pay Paul”); with the unpressured aircraft climbing to clear mountain ranges between Anhui and Guangdong Provinces, the children and the Scovels’ then-frail grandmother Louise nearly passed out at one point from oxygen deprivation.⁸³⁷ Now in Canton, Frederick finally renewed his 35mm photography along with his medical activities as Hackett’s superintendent. He produced a series of Kodachrome slides that highlighted continued (and thoroughly modern) medical missionary activities there, focusing on the Chinese staff – including a blind female evangelist who preached using a Braille Bible and played the piano at religious services – and technologically advanced facilities, including a PA system with headphones by which bedridden patients could listen to sermons and songs broadcast from a central control room (*Images 170 and 171*).

⁸³⁶ Myra Scovel, 164-167. See also Thomas Scovel, *The Year China Changed: Memories of Remarkable Events and Extraordinary People* (Mustang: Tate Publishing, 2012), 335-336. The colorful career of the *St. Paul* itself, an aircraft with activities in postwar China so omnipresent that the author encountered multiple references to it scattered across multiple unrelated Protestant missionary sources (including those of the Henkes and Scovels), is well worth a separate investigation that is far beyond the scope of this study. Apparently the *St. Paul* and its Lutheran-chartered flight crew operated extensively in peacetime, and crossed battle lines between Nationalist and Communist forces during the Chinese Civil War, extracting and relocating Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Brethren mission personnel as situations deteriorated and long-distance travel (even by other forms of air transport, military or civilian) became impossible. See also Jonas Jonson, *Lutheran Missions in a Time of Revolution: The China Experience, 1944-1951* (Uppsala: Tvåvåga Förlags, 1972), 109-110.

⁸³⁷ Myra Scovel, 164-167; Thomas Scovel, 340. Louise Kiehle Scovel, then suffering from advanced Parkinson’s disease, would die in Canton and be buried in the British Cemetery on Shameen Island (沙面島). Despite attempts by the Scovels’ youngest son, Thomas, and local citizens to locate her grave during a brief visit to Canton in 1979, the location appears to have been lost or built-over by present-day structures. Thomas Scovel, personal interview with the author, 6 July 2012.



Image 170 (Nurses, blind evangelist singing in front of microphone, Guangzhou, c.1949) and Image 171 (Patient listening to hospital broadcasts with headphones, Guangzhou, c.1949; both Scovel Family Collection)

However, when the PLA finally entered Canton on October 14, 1949 – also the day before convictions were handed down against 11 American Communist Party members in the Smith Act trials, on the other side of the international date line – the Scovels suddenly found themselves with more in common with the Communist occupiers than the local population in linguistic and cultural terms.⁸³⁸ Having spent their entire prewar and wartime lives in North China, Frederick and Myra spoke Shandong-inflected Mandarin, a linguistic background that strongly separated both them and the PLA troops (many of whom also hailed from Shandong and other northern provinces) from the local Cantonese speakers.⁸³⁹ The Scovels and Communist occupiers thus felt a surprising kind of home-place bond when encountering each other on the ground, in a part of

⁸³⁸ Westad, 284-286. Westad describes the experience of the North China-based PLA troops arriving in South China in the late spring and summer of 1949 as “the strangest experience of their lives. Everything there was foreign to them – the food, the buildings, the vegetation, the language. The great majority had little or no contact with the peasants whose villages they were quartered nearby.” For the Smith Act trials, see Michal R. Belknap, “Cold War in the Courtroom: The Foley Square Communist Trial,” in *American Political Trials*, ed. Michal R. Belknap (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 221.

⁸³⁹ Scovel, 174-175. “We loved these Shantung [Shandong] soldiers who reminded us so much of the friends we had left behind [in North China]. It always surprised the soldiers to find people who could speak their own dialect; and after our struggles with Cantonese, it was a relief to us to be able to express ourselves freely once again. In some ways we seemed less foreign to the Shantung boys than the Cantonese whom they could not understand...When Fred made rounds in the wards where many of these wounded Shantung soldiers were lying, it was like walking through a country teahouse – everyone talking, telling stories, asking questions, and the ambulatory patients preparing special bowls of meat dumplings [餃子] which they made on their little charcoal stove. It was a favorite northern dish... They loved to talk to him about their old homes and their families.”

South China that was comparatively foreign to both of them. Such peaceful commonalities, however, belied more challenging shared fates. By March 1950, after Guangdong Province was largely under PRC control, the Scovels found themselves on the receiving end of Nationalist retaliation attacks launched against the Mainland from Taiwan. On March 3, Nationalist bombs fell on Canton, including one that exploded in an alleyway near the mission residence, blowing the Scovels' youngest son, Thomas, off of his feet without seriously harming him; Hackett Medical Center filled with bloodied and dying victims (some of whom were children from a primary school destroyed by an errant bomb), and a PLA anti-aircraft gun emplaced next to the compound now fired into the sky in a futile attempt to defend both Chinese civilians and American missionaries against their former ally.⁸⁴⁰ Frederick Scovel, a universal donor, drew blood from himself to give to a Chinese woman whose leg had been torn off by an explosion, after which he was named a "hero" by the local Communist authorities and gifted with a gold pen.⁸⁴¹ The heating up of the post-1949 Cold War changed all of this.⁸⁴² Half a year later, as opening salvos were fired on the Korean peninsula, the same authorities organized public struggle sessions and regular interrogations of the Scovels and the other hospital staff, bombarding the mission in the meantime with recorded accusations broadcast from ubiquitous public loudspeakers.⁸⁴³ The allegations were that Frederick had received surreptitious air-dropped Nationalist materiel on the roof of his mission residence in Guangzhou, neglected wounded patients under his care, and was altogether an enemy of the Chinese people – an

⁸⁴⁰ Thomas Scovel, 347-349. Myra Scovel, 176; Myra Scovel diary 1949-1951, 3 March 1949, Scovel Family Collection. See also Charles Hodge Corbett, *Lingnan University, A Short History Based Primarily on the Records of the University's American Trustees* (New York: Trustees of Lingnan University, 1963), 161.

⁸⁴¹ Myra Scovel, 177.

⁸⁴² Bays, 162-164.

⁸⁴³ Thomas Scovel, 352-357; Myra Scovel, 181-184.

“American imperialist spy” (美帝國主義間諜).⁸⁴⁴ Such were the stark and often dizzying ironies faced by American missionaries who lived through the PRC’s early years and into their shared countries’ Cold War clashes in Korea.⁸⁴⁵

In between these events in 1949-1950, Harold Henke in Beiping (now renamed Beijing in a departure from its official name during the Republic of China), found himself one of a few foreign witnesses to a vivid foretaste of Protestant Christianity’s Chinese immediate future – a future without American missionaries. As the leaders of the new PRC debated issues of land reform, urban control and infrastructure, and the country’s political directions in the wake of the Nationalist withdrawal, so too did Chinese Christian leaders debate next steps for the Christian church in “new China.” Henke, perhaps as the representative of the mission-organized Douw Hospital and a member of the Chinese Medical Association (中華醫學會), was invited as one of only four foreign observers at the aptly-titled “Peiping Religious Workers’ Retreat,” held on June

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁵ At least one American missionary child born and raised in China, Martin Overholt, was in fact an infantryman with the US Marines fighting against the PLA and Korean People’s Army (KPA) in North Korea during the late winter of 1950, while his parents, William and Olive Overholt, American Methodist missionaries affiliated with Fukien Christian University (福建協和大學), were at the same time under Communist house arrest in Fujian Province. Martin’s childhood ability to speak Mandarin (mixed with street slang and swearwords picked up during his time as a student at the Shanghai American School) allowed him to communicate with Chinese prisoners, as well as to shout insults at PLA soldiers entrenched across from the UN/US lines in Korea. Martin is a survivor of bloody fighting during the Battle of Chosin Reservoir (長津湖戰役), during which several of his Marine friends were killed in front of him. He also carried – then and recollected now – a sense of deeply conflicted guilt, having been deployed to fight against Chinese Communist forces in Korea while having grown up in South China and knowing that his parents were still living among the local population there. In another strange wrinkle in the American missionary experience, Martin (while a 17-year-old student at SAS) snuck off the campus with a son of a US Army officer to explore Shanghai’s red light district. He lost his virginity to a prostitute there and subsequently contracted gonorrhea, which led to his expulsion from the school and an immediate return to his parents in Fujian. While remembering the red light district experience in some detail, he did not wish to speak much about his parents’ responses to this event. His mother simply noted in her later oral history recollections that “having small children in China was not difficult then [in the 1930s and 1940s]; the real problems came in their teens with adjustments in a boarding school – the Shanghai American School.” Martin Overholt, personal interview with the author, 22 June 2015, Washington, D.C. Also “Martin Overholt,” *The Columbian 1949*, 33. For his mother’s account of her and her husband’s experiences during the Communist occupation of Fujian during this period, see Olive Overholt, “Midwest China Oral History Interviews,” *China Oral Histories*, Book 46 (St. Paul: Luther Seminary, 1980), 17-22. See also William Overholt, “Midwest China Oral History Interviews,” *China Oral Histories*, Book 98 (St. Paul: Luther Seminary, 1980); and Roderick Scott, *Fukien Christian University: A Historical Sketch* (New York: United Board for Christian Colleges in China, 1954).

3-4, 1949 at the YWCA meeting hall.⁸⁴⁶ Henke missed the morning session of the conference due to yet another emergency surgery at Douw and when attending the second day, found the “language hard to understand.”⁸⁴⁷ One of his American Presbyterian colleagues, Robert C. Miller, and a longtime Methodist evangelist, Ellen M. Studley, however, were on hand to take copious notes, translating as furiously as they could from the rapid-fire discussions taking place before them. The Chinese individuals gathered there were a prime cross-section of individuals who would lead Chinese Protestant churches into a new broadly non-denominational, PRC-aligned era, expressing hopes and possibilities that differed radically from the kinds held by missionaries in the post-1945 period. The attendees numbered well over 50 in all, and included theologian T.C. Chao (趙紫珍) of Yenching University, “representatives of the medical and educational institutions,” and three “government representatives” – Y.T. Wu (吳耀宗), T.L. Shen (沈体蘭), and H.J. Pu (浦化人) – Protestant leaders and CCP supporters who would quickly become key figures in the post-1949 development of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (三自愛國運動).⁸⁴⁸ As Henke sat quietly (and apparently camera-less) in the conference, the representatives debated their public Christian identities in relation to the Communist state and

⁸⁴⁶ Robert C. Miller and Ellen M. Studley, “Peiping Religious Workers’ Retreat, June 3-4, 1949,” Henke Family Collection. “Dr. Harold E. Henke, Chinese Medical Association Life Membership Card, No. 1528, Issued 15 March 1947,” Henke Family Collection. After leaving China, Studley went on to be one of the early ordained female ministers in the postwar United Methodist Church. See “The Ordination of the Reverend Miss Ellen Masia Studley,” *DePauw Alumnus*, 1956; Ellen M. Studley Papers, Archives of DePauw University and Indiana United Methodism.

⁸⁴⁷ Harold Henke typed diary entries, Friday 3 June 1949, Henke Family Collection.

⁸⁴⁸ Bays, 159-163. Wu was a Congregationalist and proponent of the Social Gospel; Shen and Pu had been ordained by Episcopalian missionaries in the Anglican Church in China; and Chao was a professor of religious philosophy at Yenching. See Wu Yaozong (Y.T. Wu), *The Social Gospel* [社會福音] (Shanghai: Association Press, 1936); *Shen Tilan Memorial Festschrift* [沈体兰纪念文集] (上海: 上海市政协文史资料编辑部, November 1999); Zhao Zichen (C.T. Chao), *Christian Philosophy* [基督教哲學] (蘇州: 中華基督教文社, 1925); and Xu Yihua [徐以驊], “Pu Huaren: A Christian-Turned Legendary Revolutionary [浦化人: 出人教會的神奇人物], in *Christianity and Modern Culture* [基督教與近代文化], ed. Zhu Weizheng [朱維錚] (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Press, 1994), 269-287. See also Xu Yihua, “‘Patriotic’ Protestants: The Making of an Official Church,” in *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*, ed. Jason Kindopp, Carol Lee Hamrin (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 107-121.

their role in forging a new Chinese Protestant community, broadly divorced from the foreign missionary enterprise. The topics ranged from the role of modern theology (Chao's opening presentation was entitled "Faith for a New Day and its Commission," citing examples from scientific thought, Marxism, and Christian doctrines), to moderate views ("the [Chinese] Church will always have [a spiritual link] with the West... American money is from Christian brethren, not capitalists..."), and religious militancy.⁸⁴⁹ In regard to the third category, H.J. Pu delivered a closing talk entitled "What the Peoples' [sic] Government Hopes from the Christian Church," highlighting point-by-point

Three possibilities for the Church: 1. To have clear discernment – those who are intelligent and alert, who move ahead with this tide; 2. Those who are standing still – the same as before. Complacent; 3. Those seeking faults or sleeping. The beginning church [初級教會] was [a] property-less movement [in the first century AD]. Grew to transform the world. Saw many oppressed. [The] Church has changed... The government hopes: 1. The Church leaders will study politics – let there be mutual criticism. Send letters of wrongs to Mao Tse Tung; 2. That the Church will not go back to its old ways, but go forward; 3. That the Church will give benefits to others... 4. That it will express its opposition to imperialists and feudalists; 5. That it will... excommunicate the Chiangs [Chiang Kai-shek], Kungs [H.H. Kung], Soongs [Soong Mei-ling], etc.; 6. That it will promote peace; 7. That it will oppose interference with China.⁸⁵⁰

Defining the new Chinese church against the old – and especially against its former allies in the Nationalist government and Western powers – was the overriding theme of the conference, as was expressions of support for (or submission to) the CCP in a broad sense and a strong movement toward interdenominational unity.⁸⁵¹ While not explicitly stated (and moderated in by some speakers, who emphasized foreign missionary sacrifice and contributions to anti-Japanese

⁸⁴⁹ Miller and Studley, 1, 3-4.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid., 4. Interestingly, T.L. Shen used historical examples of American Protestantism's denominational encumbrances, stating that "[we must] promote a Chinese Church that is united. Discard denominationalism. Why have Northern [北美長老會] and Southern Presbyterian [美南長老會] churches in China because of an American civil war[?]? Put aside small differences and unite on basic principles." He also criticized the Roman Catholics as "great landowners – feudalistic. Give universal allegiance to pope. [The Catholic Church in China] should change to [a] Communist and soviet type of organization."

forces in wartime China), missionaries had little or no part in this future. Missionary modernity, already fading from the horizon in institutional form, was giving way to modern Chinese Christianity of its own structure and standing in the nascent People's Republic. In fact, the compiler of the proceedings, Robert Miller, noted in his commentary that "it will interest you [the members of the China Council and Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in New York] to know that this meeting limited the number of foreigners in order that all the Chinese leaders would feel perfectly free to criticize any aspect of the Church or mission program without fear of embarrassment to themselves or foreigners...I wish to add the assurance that the criticisms were always in a friendly and constructive vein. [All]...were anxious that the Church be enlarged and strengthened, that it be pliable enough to meet the needs and thinking of the new times." Miller's final note to the readers was also framed as an inversion of "the loss of China" in constructive (and Marxist) terms, while also subtly criticizing his own mission institution for its oversights:

There are large numbers of people who think they know China, who keep saying, "We've seen these revolutions, and they are all the same. And this one will be like all the rest." But I do not believe that is true. This new tide of thought sweeping China has its counterpart in most of the countries of the world. Economic and colonial imperialism are about over as far as the East is concerned. Feudalism is rapidly losing out here[.] Racial equality is being insisted upon, and should be a reality. The Church should ever stand in the forefront of any battle that fights for the rights and equalities of the common man. The Church in the West is not outspoken against the various forms of exploitation that mankind is afflicted with.⁸⁵²

The Church in the East, however was seemingly a different story – and that story, at least in the moment and the years to follow, was not for foreign missionaries to tell.

This may well have been in Harold Henke's mind when he ventured out to Tiananmen Square on a sunny late spring or summer day, sometime around the Religious Workers' Retreat. While going about his medical and administrative duties, seeing off other Americans leaving

⁸⁵² Robert C. Miller, endnote commentary on Miller and Studley, "Peiping Religious Workers' Retreat, June 3-4, 1949," Henke Family Collection.

China, partaking in religious services with remaining foreign and Chinese Christian colleagues, and whatever leisure activities he could manage (including watching more films, including a “color movie – the *Spanish Main*, which is not too good” at the Chen Kuang Theater), Henke quietly collected material on “new China,” perceiving that his time in the country was limited.⁸⁵³ This included full set of English-language propaganda newspapers published under the *New China Daily* banner; the nascent form of the now well-known Xinhua News Agency. And four days before he left Beijing and China for good, obtaining the official exit visa (外僑出境証) only the day prior to departure, Henke went to the Central Post Office and bought up unused sheets of PRC stamps (a number of which were simply over-stamped former Nationalist stamps – so new was the government) that he planned to gift to his son, Richard, after returning to the United States.⁸⁵⁴ On this day at Tiananmen, however, Henke was repeating something he had done in China scores of times before. It would tell yet another story: the end of an age and the beginning of a new one. He stopped, raise the Cine-Kodak to his eye, and framed the massive red edifice in its tiny folding viewfinder. He pressed the release lever and the spring motor whirred to life. The last of the Kodachrome film, somewhat damaged by heat and light after sitting in the camera unused for nearly a year, sped through the film gate – a painfully brief 12 seconds, as two

⁸⁵³ Harold Henke typed diary entry, 8 June 1949; 2 August 1949, etc. The Chen Kuang (真光) Theater, operational in Beijing since at least 1923, was also hosted lectures by American evangelist G. Sherwood Eddy and Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore in the early 1920s. For the former reference, see “Eddy-Jones Meeting,” in *Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Vol. 105, 1923 (New York: Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1923), 101. For the latter, see Hu Shih [胡適], “Rabindranath Tagore in China,” in *English Writings of Hu Shih: Literature and Society, Vol.1*, ed. Chih-P’ing Chou (New York: Springer Press, 2013), 197-198; and Stephen N. Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 173. Playwright Hsiung Shih-I (熊式一) was listed as Chen Kuang’s associate manager in 1923, referenced under his chapter contribution, “Drama” in *China*, ed. Harley Farnsworth MacNair (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), xxiii. See also Diana Yeh, *The Happy Hsiungs: Performing China and the Struggle for Modernity* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2014).

⁸⁵⁴ Harold Henke typed diary entry, 23 September 1949; 27-29 September, 1949. The stamp collection – now a rare set of historical artifacts from the early PRC – was deposited for preservation at the British Library in London, England by Richard Henke in 2014-2015. Richard Henke, phone interviews with the author, 2 August 2016; 10 November 2016.

horse-drawn carts rolled by, then 10 seconds more, after Henke changed positions, approaching the gate and pointing upward at the dual portraits hanging there (*Images 172 and 173*).



Image 172 (Tiananmen with Mao Zedong and Zhu De, final Henke film in China, 1949) and Image 173 (Tiananmen with Mao Zedong and Zhu De, closer shot, 1949; both Henke Family Collection)

The smiling, larger-than-life faces of Mao Zedong and PLA commander-in-chief Zhu De (朱德), visually and symbolically presiding over a nation moving into a new era of its own, looked out at the American missionary and his camera. Then the film ran out. There was simply no more material left for further imaging. In any case, by September 30 of that year, Henke and the Cine-Kodak were in a different place entirely: sailing east across the Pacific, never to return. He had missed the founding of the People's Republic by a mere two days. Harold rejoined Jessie Mae and their family in Lockport, Illinois soon afterward. There, they processed and watched the movie film, perhaps marveling at (and longing for) what – and who – they had left behind. The couple also assembled a large number of black and white prints, some dating back to the first moments they had set foot on Chinese soil in 1927. Jessie Mae prepared paste and a pen. Before her and her husband lay an open book with blank pages – the *Chicago Tribune* scrapbook.

The Henkes' final visual practices aptly reflected the end of American missionary life and visual practices in modern China. After all, films and albums – like human lives, national

revolutions, and photographic exposures – have a beginning and an end.⁸⁵⁵ Produced as part of historical moments in which uncertainty, hope, and loss defined missionaries’ perceptions and imaginations in China, these visual materials were imbued with meanings that passed away as the pre-1949 mission enterprise became a memory. The convergences of Christianity, Chinese community, and American missions gave way to diverging historical trajectories, particularly as Christian institutions in China redefined their identities in the tumultuous decades to follow. The films and photographs, products of experiences from a now-ended period, remained as visual-material traces of possibilities and losses just as meaningful for their makers as they were for their subjects. In some senses, it was not only the missionaries who were leaving China. China, with its shifting religious, cultural, and political changes, was leaving them. But these dual departures and the historical moments that led up to them were tied together not only by nostalgic imagination and memories of shared experiences, but by images. As the many missionaries began new lives elsewhere in the world, and the Chinese individuals with whom they were once linked went on with their own – in a new nation with its own uncertainties and opportunities – the photographs and films that bridged them remained. “All photographs are *memento mori*,” but in a way, the opposite was true as well.⁸⁵⁶ These images were also *memento vivere*: “remember that you must live.” As such, the temporalities, tensions, and transcendences reflected in them may well have fitted the opening hymn of the Religious Workers’ Retreat – sung together by the four American missionaries and the assembly of Chinese Christian leaders as their two groups diverged in time, space, and vision.⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵⁵ PhD dissertations may also be added to this list.

⁸⁵⁶ Susan Sontag, Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1978), 15.

⁸⁵⁷ Miller and Studley, 1. “Opening Worship lead by Bishop Chang; Hymn – O God Our Help in Ages Past,” Isaac Watts (1719), “O God, our help in ages past,” No. 289, *The Hymnal of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1943).

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

上帝是人千古保障
是人將來希望
是人居所, 抵禦風雨
是人永久家鄉.

在神眼中, 億千萬年
恍若人間隔宿
恍若初聞子夜鐘聲
轉瞬東方日出.

時間正似大江流水
浪淘萬象眾生
轉瞬飛飛逝, 恍若夢境
朝來不留餘痕.

上帝是人千古保障
是人將來希望
是人居所, 抵禦風雨
是人永久家鄉.

Epilogue: Moving Frames and Latent Images

The photography and filmmaking of American Christian missionaries in China were products of transnational confluences between global Christian missions, Chinese Christianity and national histories, American power and cultural influences in East Asia, and modern visual practices. This study has shown that missionary visual practices and visual materials bridged these broader historical categories and ways of seeing in individual and communal experience. The American missionary enterprise's images occupied strange spaces between visible realities, cultural and political imaginations, and religious faith – just as their makers and subjects embodied transnational identities that did not fit a single cultural construct, national history, or political affiliation. And while the images visually framed time, place, and space – subjects frozen in still photographs, movement and time truncated in film – the contextualization and re-contextualization of visual materials was hardly fixed. The elements of missionary modernity in China that were framed by visual practices, along with the visual practices and materials themselves, were all subject to change over time. Looking at missionary visuality in *and* as historical experience thus illuminates the many moving frames involved: the tensions between the seen and the unseen, temporally-bounded existences and temporally-capricious afterlives, mutable imaginations and photographically-structured visions.

Missionary modernity and visual practices, as traced through the prewar, wartime, and postwar histories of Republican China were historically contingent experiences. The religious and humanitarian activities in which American missionaries and Chinese Christians engaged

between 1920 and 1951 were all predicated on interconnected (though not neatly parallel) global, national, and local conditions that enabled their Christian projects to exist. The complicit modernities of Nationalist governance, cross-cultural religious missions, American diplomatic and commercial presences in East Asia, among others, provided both the driving engines and the opportunities for the transnational lives discussed in this study. These conditions, with their own historical changes and contingencies, directly shaped these experiences and visual practices over time while also obscuring their visibility. The world-making in which these missionaries engaged, visually and existentially, was not merely the production of imperialist utopian visions or impositions of American power, though it certainly included and complicated both. It was the visualization of experiences within a specific world of modern mission and Chinese Christianity – a world that, over time, was subsumed by the same histories of nation and global encounters in which it existed. And the specific visual practices and ways of seeing, overshadowed quite literally by the indexical visibility and malleability of their products, also faded from the broader historical record. Like exposed but yet-unprocessed photographic negatives, these macro and micro histories are best analogized as latent images: in existence at certain points in time, but now lying beneath larger historical surfaces that flatten the complicated granularities of the experiences and visuality involved.⁸⁵⁸

The greatest difficulty, therefore, is to determine how to “develop” these latent images, to select and draw analytical boundaries around experiences, meanings, and materials with such

⁸⁵⁸ Merging this photographic analogy with religious metaphor, it is perhaps appropriate – particularly from the point of view of the individuals and communities involved in this study – to also apply the following reference from Christian scripture: “now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen... Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Heb. 11:1, 3 (KJV).

fluid existences. This study has offered new possibilities, attempting to recover a subset of historical experiences by looking at and through the scattered visual traces that remain, though this is far from the totality of possible approaches that may be taken – the capaciousness inherent in any history of images, imagination, and invisibility. In unsatisfactorily acknowledging the challenges of examining categories as multi-layered as missionary modernity in China and as specific as missionary visual practices, I would like to end with a few remaining themes and tensions, focusing specifically on the general temporal endpoint of the histories (un)covered here and the fragmentary afterlives – of individuals, communities, and images – that extend beyond it.

As American missionaries left China behind them in time and space, and the foreign missionary enterprise to which they formerly belonged faded in the years after the founding of the People's Republic, many who had not reached the age of retirement were posted or elected to continue their work in other parts of Asia. With pre-1949 missionary modernity in China supplanted by the competing Communist state, missionaries looked to new opportunities – alternative modernities – in other parts of the world. Their linguistic, political, and cultural backgrounds shaped by their previous experiences in China played a role in this post-1949 reordering of the missionary enterprise, now framed in general by Cold War geographies.⁸⁵⁹ In

⁸⁵⁹ In early 1951, the American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions created a "China Reserve Personnel" list of expelled missionaries who now awaited transfer to other places in Asia – or back to Mainland China "if and when the program of missionary service can be resumed." In a notice sent to all missionaries formerly working in China, the Board stated that "the participation of the People's Government of China in the conflict with the United Nations forces in Korea, and the intensification of the Government program of anti-American propaganda have resulted in conditions very adverse to the continued presence and service of American missionaries in China. Consequently, the great majority of the Presbyterian missionaries are now reluctantly withdrawing, not because of personal hazards, but because their continued presence brings embarrassment and other more positive handicaps to the Chinese Church leaders and the entire Christian movement. The larger number of these missionaries, either directly or after a furlough period, depending on length of service and health conditions, will be transferred to other fields, particularly in Asia, where their training and experience can be most fully used... Some will be assigned to special tasks for which their service in China has prepared them. For example, consideration will be given to the assignment of... missionary couples to Formosa [Taiwan] for meeting the unusual evangelistic opportunities among the Chinese refugees in Northern Formosa. Investigation is being made of the possibility of evangelistic work among the Chinese prisoners of war held by the United Nations. Request [sic] also has been made for one or two couples with

some cases, American missionaries formerly based in China shared the diasporic trajectories with Chinese Christian expatriate communities as they moved away from the Mainland and a PRC government that was increasingly hostile to their activities.⁸⁶⁰ American Catholics like Fr. William Klement, S.J., who had either lived in postwar China or were slated to take part in missions there (but completed their preparations as mission institutions on the Mainland crumbled), now joined communities of expatriate Chinese Catholics, first in Hong Kong or the Philippines and then in Taiwan after the retreating Nationalist government secured political and social control over the island.⁸⁶¹ The Protestant missionary exodus paralleled that of Catholic groups, with the wide dispersal of former China missionaries to other Asian regions. Ralph and Roberta Lewis and Frederick and Myra Scovel were among the missionaries who elected to continue their religious and humanitarian activities outside of China.⁸⁶² After living in Beijing until they were expelled during the height of the Korean War in early 1952, the Lewises subsequently joined a Presbyterian medical mission that worked alongside Chinese expatriates living in Bangkok, Thailand, where they would remain until their retirement in 1972.⁸⁶³ After a

the Chinese language to do Christian work, during this emergency period, among Chinese students in the United States.” Author unknown, “China Reserve Personnel” Board pamphlet, 13 March 1951, Henke Family Collection.

⁸⁶⁰ The author’s paternal family were among Chinese Catholic refugees who elected to settle in Taiwan instead of remaining on the Mainland. In this case, his grandfather was a lower-ranked officer in the Nationalist infantry who found new employment in the ROC police force in 1946-1947 (in time to participate in the 228 Incident in Taipei, an event he never discussed in detail with his family), and his grandmother was a devout Chaozhou (潮州) Catholic who was a member of the Legion of Mary (聖母軍) and an active parishioner at the Cathedral of St. John in Chiayi (嘉義市聖若望主教座堂). Reflecting the uncertainty of the times (as well as the inability to fully predict future historical changes), the author’s paternal great-grandmother also arrived in Taiwan with her son in 1946, but was unable to adjust to the new environment. She returned to Mainland China not long before the regime change of 1949, and was subsequently cut off from her son and his family, never to see them again. Her second son, the author’s great-uncle, fled to Hong Kong from Zhejiang shortly after the founding of the PRC, and over time also lost contact with his elder brother in Taiwan. The author’s grandmother’s elder brother, of whom little is now known, was executed by the CCP in Chaozhou, ostensibly due to his sister’s marriage to a Nationalist officer.

⁸⁶¹ Fr. William J. Klement, S.J., to Fr. Bernard Hubbard, S.J., 22 December 1949, CJA-SCU; Beverley Hooper, *China Stands Up: Ending the Western Presence, 1948-1950* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 38-45.

⁸⁶² Myra Scovel, for example, wrote her autobiographical account of her family’s life in China, *The Chinese Ginger Jars*, from the later perspective of an expelled missionary now living in India and looking backward (with nostalgic longing) at their former experience.

⁸⁶³ During their time in Bangkok, the Lewises switched their linguistic background from Mandarin Chinese to Thai (with no little difficulty), developing connections with Chulalongkorn University and members of Thai royalty along

short residence in New York, the Scovels returned to Asia to take up medical activities at the Ludhiana Christian Medical College in India's Punjab region. John and Margaret Bickford, the Presbyterian evangelists who worked with both the Lewises and Henkes at Shunde, traveled the furthest geographically; they left Asia completely to take up a new pastorate in West Africa.⁸⁶⁴

Each of these cases reflected a post-1949 turn to alternative missionary modernities, playing out in places beyond Mainland China, where missionaries (or former missionaries) continued their lives and activities while drawing from their former experiences. Images that the missionaries produced in new locations – whether elsewhere in Asia or outside it entirely – reflected a profound shift in culture and worldview that was no longer focused on China. And visual materials produced in pre-1949 China now entered longer visual narratives that extended in time and space beyond their beginnings in a former missionary modernity: an existence that no longer existed, in locations and among peoples that could no longer be seen (often quite literally) in the same vernacular ways they had been viewed before the institutional collapse. The ways in which missionary images were viewed by their creators thus shifted repeatedly during the Cold War – encompassing the early PRC and the violence of the Korean War and Cultural Revolution into the reconfigurations of Sino-US relations that followed in the wake of the 1972 Nixon rapprochement with the PRC. Images of pre-1949 China were looked upon during the 1950s and 1960s with senses of institutional failure and nostalgic longing, reinforced most strongly by the sense of separation that missionaries felt in relation to former Chinese

the way. They also crossed paths with one of the Scovels' sons, Thomas Scovel, who was born in Jining the year after his father was shot during the Japanese occupation, undertook his early education with his parents in India (at the Woodstock School in Landour), and subsequently earned graduate degrees in psycholinguistics from Ohio State University and the University of Michigan. Scovel went to Thailand as an educational missionary with his wife Janene, where they met and worked with the Lewises. This represented the crossover between two generations of missionaries based at one time (whether as adults or children) in Republican China.

⁸⁶⁴ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1956), 125.

communities and environments and the fact that nearly all photographic images of the Mainland that circulated internationally were produced by state-sponsored official channels.⁸⁶⁵ All this is to say, however, that China did not entirely disappear from post-1949 American missionary consciousness. Their images' close association with former lived experience and vision did not allow it. Their material presence on the walls of residences, in family photograph albums, and filling slide projector trays and movie canisters all called for continual reimaginings of the past, foregrounding questions of “what had been,” “what was no longer,” and – far more tenuously – “what might be.”

While later histories of American missionary photography and filmmaking in Asia after 1949 remain to be examined, their more immediate afterlives in the 1950s and 1960s bears mentioning here. The missionaries' visual practices exited the Mainland with them, with their later careers redefining the material afterlives of their photographic equipment. Some missionaries continued to employ the same cameras they had used in China, while others were discarded or retired when the opportunity arose, especially when relocating to places outside the PRC with thriving photographic supply networks unaffected by Cold War polarization. Fr. Joseph Henkels, SVD, recorded in his missionary ledger that his first purchases after arriving in Hong Kong in September 1949 included large amounts of film, developing chemicals, and two new cameras – an expensive Leica IIIc rangefinder and a simple Argoflex twin-lens reflex (assembled in Ann Arbor, Michigan) – to continue his photography among Catholic groups in the city.⁸⁶⁶ Frederick Scovel, on returning to New York after expulsion from Canton in 1952,

⁸⁶⁵ Jonathan D. Spence, “Li Zhensheng: Photography for a Time of Troubles,” in *Red-Color News Soldier*, Li Zhensheng (李振盛) with Robert Pledge (London: Phaidon Press, Inc., 2003), 11-15. See also Jiang Qisheng (蒋齐生), *News Photography: 140 Years* [新闻摄影一百四十年] (Beijing: Xinhua Publishing House, 1989), 252-253.

⁸⁶⁶ Fr. Joseph Henkels, SVD, *Agenda Missionarii 1943* (marked “A.M.D.G. Benefactorius et emptoribus bonum annum 1943 exoptat, Orphanotropium T’ou-sè-wè, prope Zi-ka-wei, Shanghai”), Chicago Province S.V.D., S.V.D. Confreres, Administrative Files, Memorials, Box 270, Robert M. Myers Archives, 45, 111. Personal purchases

found that the Leica that had accompanied his family across China over the last 20-odd years was now beset with mechanical failures; Myra Scovel later joked that her rudimentary Kodak Brownie camera took better photographs than her husband's far more complex Leica.⁸⁶⁷ After an unsuccessful repair attempt, the Leica was replaced with a new Kodak Signet, which became the family's primary camera for later missionary activities in India (*Image 174*).⁸⁶⁸ The Lewises, leaving China for Thailand, made similar choices in regard to new photographic technology. After obtaining exit permits from Beijing for the entire family in 1952, the Lewises were photographed just before they boarded a commercial aircraft for their eastward journey. Their worn expressions reflected the stresses of abruptly leaving the country amidst anti-American protests, while slung under Ralph Lewis's arm was the well-used Rolleiflex he had brought to China in 1933, now put away in its battered leather case.⁸⁶⁹ The camera, like the missionary enterprise it once documented, was at the end of its useful lifetime. The photograph itself (a Kodachrome slide) was made instead with Lewis's Kodak 35, a subtle indication that its small film size and postwar color side technology would become the standard for him and other

aside, nearly every page of the ledger is filled with repeated purchases of photographic supplies (still and movie film, developing chemicals, darkroom enlarger parts, sometimes new cameras, etc.) in far greater quantities than Henkels could have used all by himself. It is likely that he was also managing photographic purchases of other Catholic missionaries, indicating that his colleagues in Hong Kong (including missionaries who had left the PRC with Henkels) were also equipping themselves with cameras and photographic material as part of their new missionary work. Original receipts from photographic supply stores were also stuffed here and there into the ledger, further evidencing the widespread purchases that missionaries made after arriving in the city. The Argoflex was produced and marketed by Argus, Inc., which produced the Argus C3 35mm camera – the mainstay of American 35mm photography from the 1940s through the early 1960s – and assembled of its photographic products in a large red-brick factory complex located on Ann Arbor's west side (with the buildings, still bearing the Argus name, currently owned by the University of Michigan).

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., containing Fotoprint Service "Memo of Cost," receipt made out to Fr. Joseph Henkels, SVD. The receipt lists "1 Leica Mod. IIIC, Summitar f:2 lens 5cm, #685255, [lens #] 477103, \$1,460.00" Henkels recorded the purchase of the Leica in the ledger as a cost of USD \$233.06, equivalent to \$2,350.25 in 2016 dollars.

⁸⁶⁸ Frederick Scovel, letter to Myra Scott Scovel, n.d., c.1954.

⁸⁶⁹ Paul Hsiao, phone interview with the author, 18 April 2011. Hsiao was one of Roberta Lewis's former music students (she was an accomplished cellist and taught piano and singing at the American Presbyterian compound during the Lewises' time in Beijing). He remembered attempting to comfort a distraught Ralph Lewis during the anti-American protests at Douw Hospital in 1951-1952, who was greatly disturbed by the intensity of the denunciations (which both involved and targeted Chinese staff at the hospital).

missionary-photographers in the years to come. Indeed, Lewis would produce far more color slides in Thailand than he did in China, where he and the Kodak 35 appeared in a photograph taken by his now-adult son, Harry, during a visit in the mid-1950s (*Image 175*). The Lewises' Rolleiflex and the Scovels' Leica eventually vanished from the historical record, discarded or misplaced over time due to their growing obsolescence.



Image 174 (Frederick and Myra Scovel, 35 Kodachrome slide, Agra, India, c. 1957) and 175 (Ralph C. Lewis with Kodak 35 case, Bang Peyin, Thailand, February 1955; left, Scovel Family Collection; right, Lewis Family Collection)⁸⁷⁰

Other missionaries decided not to return to Asia, having dedicated years or decades to missionary activities there and now confronted with the disappearance of institutional and communal contexts in which they could operate. Harold and Jessie Mae Henke (apart from one final personal trip to China that Jessie Mae undertook with her children in the late 1980s) were among those who did not return. They, like many other middle-aged American missionaries, had anticipated a life spent in China predicated on the forms of missionary activity, local familiarities, and national political climate with which they had engaged in the 1920s through the 1940s; while expressing strong desires to return to the country if possible, their medical mission

⁸⁷⁰ (*Left*) Harry Lewis, "Refreshments at Bang Peyin," 35mm Kodachrome slide, February 1955, Lewis Family Collection. Ralph Lewis, with the Kodak 35 hanging from a strap around his shoulder, are visible at the right side of the frame. Digital reproduction and context information provided by Harry Lewis, personal email to the author, 16 May 2015. (*Right*), photographer unknown, Frederick and Myra Scovel in Agra, India, c. 1957.

callings and what they considered “a normal life in China” were largely erased along with the pre-1949 missionary enterprise.⁸⁷¹ Despite official correspondence urging the couple at length to consider new medical missionary opportunities in “Thailand, India, Iran, and Africa” – specifically referencing expatriate Chinese communities in Southeast Asia – the Henkes ultimately concluded that familial ties and new linguistic challenges precluded any future return to missions.⁸⁷² After a month and a half of debate, the Henkes a submitted a brief but open-ended letter of resignation: “we hope that at some future time when and if it is possible to resume missionary work in China that we may again become missionaries of the Presbyterian Church.”⁸⁷³ The Henkes thereafter maintained medical practices in Lockport, Illinois and Southern California before retiring in Los Angeles. Their latter days were spent surrounded by

⁸⁷¹ Harold E. Henke to Lloyd S. Ruland, Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the PCUSA, 11 April 1951. Henke writes, “It is not necessary for us to repeat again that the Henkes are in the USA only because it is not possible to live a normal life in China at this time and that we had intended to spend our life there as medical missionaries...should resignation be the decision we would be very happy to be members of a group of ‘China Reserve Personnel’ hoping that if and when it is possible to resume mission work in China we might be included in that group.” To provide some background for this statement, official correspondence from the PCUSA mission board to which Henke was responding began, “at this time, I [Ruland] find myself in the embarrassing position of having to ask you and a number of our other China missionaries for their resignation from Foreign Board service. Because of the present outlook in China, we feel confidence that it will be a period of some years before we can hope to resume any program of service in China...the Board is under considerable embarrassment by the large number of missionaries still attached to the China field when our work there is rapidly diminishing almost to a vanishing point.” Lloyd S. Ruland, letter to Harold E. Henke, 4 April 1951.

⁸⁷² Harold E. Henke, letter to Lloyd S. Ruland, 29 April 1951. “This whole question of changing completely our life work is a problem for us as you can well understand. We are enjoying this [medical] practice [in Lockport, Illinois]...and are most happy to be near our two aged mothers at this time of their life...it is fine to be able to be with the two children not so far in college and to be close enough by Bob who is in Oberlin. We would appreciate hearing of any opportunity that might now be open for us. [However] we would not think that work could be done without the language and we doubt that we should at our ages attempt to study another foreign language. What about licensure to practice medicine [outside of China and the US]? Is there any field open where these two questions would not interfere?”

⁸⁷³ Harold and Jessie Mae Henke, letter to Lloyd S. Ruland, 7 June 1951. Ruland himself, directing the massive administrative work of reorganizing and corresponding with the waves of Presbyterian missionaries displaced from China (while also keeping in contact with those still left in the PRC under duress) apparently suffered a nervous breakdown in the late summer or early fall of 1951 and was subsequently sent to another church office. E.M. Dodd, letter to Harold E. Henke from the Medical Department of the Board of Foreign Missions of the PCUSA, 4 December 1951. Another letter from Dodd, received over six months after the Henkes’ formal resignation, contained further discussion about medical missionary work in Thailand, India, and Iran, indicating that the couple were entertaining further thoughts about returning abroad – although they ultimately chose not to. E.M. Dodd, letter to Harold E. Henke, 26 November 1951.

other elderly Presbyterian missionaries and clergy at Westminster Gardens, a retirement residence coincidentally founded by Frank M.S. Hsu, a Chinese businessman who received his early education at Presbyterian missionary schools in North China.⁸⁷⁴ The films and photographs they produced in China were joined over the decades by more characteristic American domestic images. The Cine-Kodak 16mm movie camera was retired and replaced by an 8mm movie camera (to access newer technology and reduce film costs as 16mm fell out of favor as a consumer home movie format in the 1960s and beyond). Films of family vacations and gatherings – many produced by the Henkes’ now-adult children – soon accompanied the aging China mission films.⁸⁷⁵ The same *Chicago Tribune* scrapbooks that were filled in the beginning with photographs of life in prewar and wartime China ended instead with color snapshots of the Henkes’ family trips in the US.

Traces of missionary imaging in the PRC led far more fragile afterlives. In Mainland China, Christian communities underwent tremendous internal and external pressure in the years immediately after 1949, with former denominational lines largely erased by the state-organized reforms of the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (三自运动) and the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (中国天主教爱国会), the latter officially independent of the Vatican’s

⁸⁷⁴ Hollington K. Tong (童顯光), “Fruits of Chinese-American Cultural Relations,” in *Free China’s Role in the Asian Crisis: Collection of Speeches March – November 1957* (Washington DC: Chinese Embassy, 1958), 158-159. Tong, the Ambassador of the Republic of China to the United States, lauded Hsu in his speech – coincidentally given at a “Round Table Conference on Chinese-American Cultural Relations” hosted by the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He noted that “on a recent speaking trip on the Western Coast, I was invited to visit Westminster Gardens in Duarte, California, not far from Los Angeles. There I found sixty-six retired Christian missionaries, who had served in the Far East, and who are spending their retirement in this beautiful spot without any sense that they have been institutionalized...the man behind this splendid program for the aged is, in the highest sense, a symbol of the Chinese spirit. Born a poor man, he has used his money to help his fellowmen. With the highest respect for the Chinese virtues, he now lives in this country in all simplicity. Mr. Hsu’s gesture [a formerly anonymous donation of one million dollars to found the retirement home] represents China’s appreciation for the long procession of missionaries who...worked so faithfully during the last century to help the Chinese people. The bread which they had thrown upon the waters is now being returned by such men as Mr. Hsu.”

⁸⁷⁵ Richard P. Henke, personal interview with the author in Rolling Hills, California, 12 November 2013.

ecclesiastical oversight.⁸⁷⁶ The political reorganization of religious institutions overlapped with CCP campaigns to violently root out urban “counterrevolutionaries” (镇压反革命) and “rightist” intellectuals (反右运动), as well as broader national traumas that accompanied the Great Leap Forward (大跃进) and the Cultural Revolution (文化大革命) – under which even religious institutions sympathetic to the state were targeted for ostensibly harboring individuals with pro-foreign backgrounds and nonconformist sentiments.⁸⁷⁷ Moreover, broad government oversight of educational and medical facilities across the nation (including the takeover and absorption of former missionary institutions) created a bloc of centralized state-provided public services that effectively wiped out any completion from religious groups.⁸⁷⁸ The Korean War also played a strong role in speeding the process, further focusing state attention on former ties between Chinese Christian communities and the United States, and intensifying pressure to sever them in the service of national political consolidation.⁸⁷⁹

In the meantime, visual practices in the PRC were almost entirely relegated primarily to government reportage and propaganda imaging. This was not only due to the general absence of

⁸⁷⁶ Bays, 160-166; 169-176. For another fresh perspective on this period and a Chinese Protestant individual caught up in it, see Amy O’Keefe, “Walking the Enlightened Path: Wang Mingdao’s Road to Independent Christianity under Japanese Occupation,” in *1943: China at the Crossroads*, eds. Joseph W. Esherick and Matthew T. Combs (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Program, 2015), 367-369. This chapter discusses Wang Mingdao (王明道), a leading Chinese evangelist and theological dissident who clashed publicly with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in the 1950s and was thereafter imprisoned by the government – drawing new connections between Chinese Christian experience in the Japanese wartime occupation and Wang’s later convictions under the PRC.

⁸⁷⁷ Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 197-198, 200.

⁸⁷⁸ Brown, 206-208; 211-217; Bays, 163.

⁸⁷⁹ Bays, 162-163. As Bays writes, “in this highly charged political atmosphere [of PRC campaigns to root out counter-revolutionaries and rightists], the...campaign to secure Christian renunciation of foreign ties and a commitment to the new regime took on a much sharper edge. In early 1951 the movement [for Chinese Protestants] to sign the [pro-CCP manifesto, “Direction of Endeavor for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China”] overlapped with the campaign against counter-revolutionaries, and leader in the Protestant churches...were subjected to denunciation meetings or ‘struggle sessions’ in their workplace or in public venues. Although the Christian denunciation meetings resulted in few imprisonments and only a handful of executions, those chosen for attack suffered intense humiliation and trauma, as their co-workers and even family members were pressured to denounce them. This was a nasty business, continuing for months and held in all sorts of Christian institutions – denominations, YMCAs, the Christian Literature Society...”

camera-carrying Western individuals but also because vernacular popular photography in the former Republican era (with its connections to urban elites and commercial capitalism) was largely decried as “bourgeois” culture, to be discarded in favor of revolutionary arts and a focus on state-sponsored visual production.⁸⁸⁰ As such, the forms of images that missionaries formerly produced, particularly in rural areas and communities, would not be seen outside of Mainland China (or outside of the state propaganda apparatus) for several more decades after 1949.⁸⁸¹

This breakdown of Christian community and supplanting of its Western cultural links by the competing Communist state extended not only to religious institutions’ social identity and political allegiance, but also to the symbolic structures and technologies formerly associated with foreign missionary activity that remained in evidence. Church buildings – gradually at first and then with increasing rapidity during the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution – were occupied by local work units (单位) and largely stripped of their religious trappings.⁸⁸² Alongside reconfiguration as warehouses or meeting halls, an unknown number of churches were also converted into movie theaters for screening state-sponsored films; after all, their existing architectural layout, with rows of front-facing pews and an altar or preaching space at one end of the building, lent itself particularly well to both mass assembly and film projection.⁸⁸³

⁸⁸⁰ Wu Hung, *Zooming In: Histories of Photography in China* (Reaktion Books, 2016), 124-125; 143-152; 156-157.

⁸⁸¹ Wu, 189-218.

⁸⁸² Bays, 176. “The Great Leap Forward in 1958...occasioned, for the sake of a total focus on labor mobilization and production, the closing of over 90 percent of the churches which were still open, especially in the countryside. Pastors and priests were sent into the fields to farm. The political atmosphere of the Great Leap was also so frenzied that it generated a resurgence of radical, anti-religious policies and attitudes. Believers were harassed and mistreated. Then came the famine, the result of Mao’s...economic policies. Life was difficult for all; life was worse, downright terrible, in the labor camps during the famine; many, including many Christians, did not survive.” See also John Craig William Keating, *A Protestant Church in Communist China: Moore Memorial Church, 1949-1989* (Lehigh University Press, 2013), 174-175.

⁸⁸³ Hsu, Huan, *The Procelain Thief: Searching the Middle Kingdom for Buried China* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2015). In this autobiographical account, Hsu describes a visit to Lushan (廬山), a former summer resort for missionaries and wealthy Chinese individuals later appropriated by CCP officials for similar purposes. “Built in 1897 for four thousand silver dollars,” Hsu writes, “the movie theater at the head of He Xi Lu had originally been the [missionary-founded] Union Church. The photography in the lobby depicted a magnificent church with a peaked roof that doubled the building’s height, but the caption made no mention of its original purpose, simply reading,

This visible appropriation of religious buildings for political use (and in the case of churches-turned-theaters, the literal dissemination of political visions and messages in filmic form) highlighted state control over these former missionary or Chinese Christian spaces: a conversion from the sacred to the secular. On a more private level, religious material objects like Bibles, icons, and church-oriented musical instruments were subject to destruction or confiscation, with unfortunate repercussions for their Chinese Christian owners. One Protestant couple in Dali (大理), Yunnan Province, Wu Yongsheng (吳永生) and Zhang Fengxiang (張鳳祥), who kept a small pump organ in their house – a gift from a US Army chaplain based in Yunnan during the Pacific War – had it taken apart repeatedly by members of the CCP branch office overseeing the former missionary hospital at which they still worked.⁸⁸⁴ The investigating officials claimed that the pump organ, with its box-like wooden construction, concealed a wireless transmitter with which the accused Chinese Christians were communicating with “Western enemies.”⁸⁸⁵ While the specific reasons for the investigations remains unidentified, it was perhaps no accident that the CCP investigators conflated the pump organ’s literal ability to musically “broadcast” Christian hymn tunes and the religious ideologies they represented with a hidden telegraphic link

‘Theater’s original form in 1897.’ It was converted to a theater, and its roof flattened, in 1960 [following the Great Leap Forward]. On one wall hung a framed certificate from the Guinness group recognizing *Romance on Lushan* [廬山戀] for setting the world record for ‘longest first-run of a film in one cinema’; the movie had played in their theater every day since its opening on July 12, 1980.”

⁸⁸⁴ Wu Xiaoyu (吳小雨), personal email correspondence with the author, 3 February 2017. Wu is the paternal granddaughter of Wu Yongsheng (吳永生) and Zhang Fengxiang (張鳳祥), and grew up with the pump organ in their house (where it still sits today and is occasionally played). The elder Wu and Zhang were originally affiliated with China Inland Mission and Anglican missionaries in Dali before and during the Second Sino-Japanese War, and still attend the Protestant church there today. Wu Yongsheng has also researched and produced a personal history of Christianity in Dali, 大理基督教会历史 (unpublished manuscript, completed October 2008).

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid. As Wu wrote, “so [the guards] would tear apart the harmonium to be searched. It was also taken away some times to the hospital’s Party branch office. And my uncle said he and my aunt ([my] dad’s older brother and sister) would wait until the ‘movement’ died down a little bit to sneak into the office and take the harmonium back home. That happened several times. As you can imagine, that harmonium got pretty torn [sic] during the chaotic ten years of the Great Cultural Revolution. My grandma told me that at some point there were mice that made a home inside its air box... But then later they got it cleaned and fixed, and its [sic] working pretty much fine now.

to now-distant Western imperialism. For Chinese Christians (by the late 1950s reduced to meeting in “underground” groups or otherwise registering with government-sanctioned “official” churches) this suspicion laid on Christian material objects and the wide conversion or closure of public worship spaces forced hard choices about making their religious practices invisible.⁸⁸⁶

Under these circumstances, remaining visual materials that were produced by missionaries and Chinese Christians were subject to various forms of censorship, resulting in a fragmentary history of loss and invisibility. Some of this censorship took the form of archival control by the PRC government over materials previously associated with the missionary enterprise (with mission and church scattered across provincial, city, and national archives – if they were not destroyed before entering such archives at all).⁸⁸⁷ In other cases, censorship was enacted on a private scale by Christian individuals and groups now under intense scrutiny from the state. Both trajectories are challenging to track in the present-day, but traces of the latter appear in the oral histories of people who lived through the decades following the missionaries’ departure from China. As pressures increased for Chinese Protestants and Catholics to individually disavow their former (or presently suspected) links to foreign “imperialist” institutions in reconfiguring religious community to fit state oversight, images that represented such links were subject to forced invisibility.

Despite her husband Li Qinghai’s well-established standing in the ranks of new academia in the PRC and his dedicated personal support for the CCP, Liu Ju’s family – and their photographs – did not fully escape the ravages of the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Cultural Revolution. At some point during the tumult of the mid-1960s, Red Guards in Wuhan searched Li and Liu’s personal possessions, looking for evidence to fuel a struggle session against the

⁸⁸⁶ Bays, 176-177.

⁸⁸⁷ Shen Hong (沈紅), personal interview by the author in Hangzhou, China, 28 May 2012.

family.⁸⁸⁸ One of the family's albums was carefully hidden, as it contained photographs made during Li's graduate education at Cornell, his cross-country travels with the Works Progress Administration, and Liu's postwar work as a nurse in American mission hospitals in Tianjin and Beijing.⁸⁸⁹ This album was apparently not discovered, as no damage was done to it. A second album containing photographs from the family's life in the early PRC was not so fortunate. Prints were violently ripped out of the pages, either by the family prior to the search or by the Red Guards themselves, only to be pasted back in later, some in shreds, when the threat of investigation was lifted. While neither Liu and her children spoke in detail on this traumatic period, it is not difficult to imagine what might have happened to the family (and all their visual materials) had the first album with the more damning foreign images been uncovered.

In similar circumstances, other Chinese Christians – members of the former American Presbyterian Mission at Shunde in which the Henkes and Lewises worked – reported destroying any photographs that featured foreign friends and colleagues, to prevent them from being used by local authorities as evidence of subversive Western connections.⁸⁹⁰ This destruction was carried out most often by burning the photographic prints, simultaneously assuring the images' permanent disappearance as well as mirroring (whether on purpose or by coincidence) longstanding traditions in which paper money was burned in funerals or ancestral worship ceremonies to enrich the spirits of the deceased.⁸⁹¹ In any case, with the photographs incinerated, there was nothing left – material or visual – but “dust and ashes” to indexically “prove” this prior association with missionaries. These actions signaled a partial (in the case of hidden images) or

⁸⁸⁸ Li Weilai (李維來), personal interview by the author in Wuhan, China, 22 May 2011.

⁸⁸⁹ Li's time at Cornell included a visit to the New York World's Fair of 1939, where he produced many photographs the USSR Pavilion – evidence, his son Li Weilai asserted, of his personal fascination with (and later official commitment to) international Communism. These photographs appeared in the relatively untouched album.

⁸⁹⁰ Dou Languang (窦岚光), personal interview with the author in Xingtai, China, 7 June 2011.

⁸⁹¹ Susan Naquin, “Funerals in North China,” in Rawski and Watson, eds., 39-40, 59, 61.

complete (in permanent destruction) existential break with the missionary enterprise, for reasons of personal security or ideological disavowal. At the same time, they also represented the complicated, intimately-felt meanings that Chinese Christians attached to visual material as traces of a different past; these images stood in for former relationships, community belonging, and modern identities that were now not only supplanted by the Chinese state but also carried real risks to the possessors if made publicly visible.

But times changed, and the images' meanings along with them. In the post-Mao era, as the PRC and the United States reestablished diplomatic relations and trans-Pacific travel to and from Mainland gradually increased in scale and frequency, missionary images experienced various revivals in interest. For former missionaries – many now elderly – and their now-grown children traveling back to the PRC in the mid-1970s through the early 2000s, visual materials from the pre-1949 era enabled private forms of historical recovery. Sometimes carrying quarter-century-old photographic prints on their return journeys, missionaries and their descendants retraced spaces formerly walked, searched for residences and mission structures (sometimes finding them significantly repurposed to the point of unrecognizability or totally obliterated), and remapped landscapes that had undergone yet more dramatic changes since their departure decades before.⁸⁹² In seeking out these connections, aged images – exchanged in emotional reunions with Chinese Christian friends and colleagues or even displayed to strangers in searching out now-lost places and individuals – quietly helped to re-establish links to surviving religious communities that had weathered the storms of the 1950s and 1960s. Cameras and video equipment, too, came along to document this return, sometimes replicating visual practices in the

⁸⁹² Clara Bickford Heer, personal interview with the author in Pasadena, California, 25 July 2011. Thomas Scovel, personal interview with the author in Walnut Creek, California, 13 July 2012.

same mission spaces once visualized by older lenses.⁸⁹³ Vernacular image-making, as before, served in some ways to bridge time, frame space, and script cross-cultural behaviors.⁸⁹⁴

In a way, missionary images of past were reconfigured as emblems of a quietly hoped-for futurity – with growing Sino-US contact signaling possible relationships, religious or otherwise, that would supersede, at the very least in cultural and institutional finesse, the failed missionary enterprise of the past. The greatest difference, however, was that the missionaries who exited the early PRC as long-term embedded residents came back decades later as temporary visitors and tourists, seeking remaining traces of their past in a now radically different future. The former images and those made on these return trips embodied both recovery and dislocation, the paradox of the indexical image in time.⁸⁹⁵ In aiding the viewers' remembrances of former places and times and their reconnecting with older communities, they also heightened the strong sense of visible change and reinforced the inability to truly recover the past – other than in memory and imagination. No longer were these returnees people who were engaged in extensive religious and humanitarian projects in China; the missionary modernity they had lived in, the institutions of which they were once an integral part, and the ethos behind their former experiences had passed away or evolved in forms rather unfamiliar to them. Chinese Christian communities now operated under strong state supervision and corresponding political pressures or were otherwise groups with generally greater internal autonomy (at least in “underground” or non-state churches), indigenous cultural nuances, and theological fluidity than prior mission-organized congregations.⁸⁹⁶ For every link and reconnection made, there were an equal number of fissures

⁸⁹³ Fr. Robert E. Carbonneau, personal interview with the author in San Francisco, California, 20 January 2015.

⁸⁹⁴ Thomas Scovel, personal interview with the author in Walnut Creek, California, 13 July 2012.

⁸⁹⁵ Barthes, 96.

⁸⁹⁶ Bays, 187-199.

and changes to comprehend; the pre-1949 missionary past, in many ways, was now just as foreign as the Chinese present.⁸⁹⁷

On the other hand, the circulation of photographs – and to a lesser extent, film – that paralleled these renewed relationships across the latter decades of the 20th century and into the 21st allowed Chinese Christian communities to reconstruct their own past in images. As in the Xingtai Grace Memorial Church of Christ, the former American Presbyterian mission in Shunde, and numerous other religious communities with missionary roots across modern China, visual materials borrowed or reproduced from families and archives in the United States now served as symbols of a recovered historical heritage. In some cases, they were a source of local pride, representing prior modern institutions and international cross-cultural connections that privileged these communities' embodiment of globalized Chinese perspectives (with links to the United States) half a century or more before such views became a nationalized, state-driven project in the late 1990s through the first decade of the 2000s.⁸⁹⁸ This leveraging of missionary images for new retellings, however, was built on idealizations of the past and selective (or highly limited) contextualization of visual material in official narratives – with framing publications or texts offering little discussion of the myriad complexities and challenges relating to former missionary presence in China or antagonistic relationships to Chinese state power, then and now. The balance between commemoration and critique is a tricky one, and not without risks. After all, the ashes of burned photographs and the traumas of conflicts past – international and domestic – still lie ghostly in many of the same places where these images now find themselves again.

⁸⁹⁷ Bays, 199-201.

⁸⁹⁸ Wang Ye (王焜) and An Wei (安慰) eds., *The Commemorative Photo Album of the 100th Anniversary of the Xingtai City Christian Church* [邢台市基督教堂一百周年纪念影集] (Xingtai: Xingtai Christian Council, 2003), 8

Forgotten and recovered, contextualized and re-contextualized, American missionary visual practices and materials in modern China continue to embody deeply complicated resonances beyond the seemingly simple moment of raising a camera to the eye. The modern visions that enabled their production, the peoples, times, and spaces within and outside their frames, overlapping experiences wrapped up in and around these visual practices – these are indelibly marked in small but nonetheless existent historical scales on the identities of the two countries they drew together. Other framings and other afterlives remain to be discovered in this visual medium, at once mysterious and illuminating. In their scriptural readings, missionaries and Chinese Christians alike mediated on the enigmatic verse: “through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”⁸⁹⁹ Something similar could be said about their images.

⁸⁹⁹ Heb. 11:1, 3 (KJV); “我們因著信, 就知道諸世界是藉神話造成的; 這樣, 所看見的, 並不是從顯然之物造出來的。” Ibid. (CUV)

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