

# **Divine Domesticities**

**Christian Paradoxes in  
Asia and the Pacific**



# Divine Domesticities

## Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific

Edited by

Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly



Australian  
National  
University

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P R E S S



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Cover photos: Top – Missionary home interior, from the Reverend Corwin & Nellie Taylor Collection, University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Used with permission. Bottom – Left to right at the quilting horses: Adelaide Gifford carding wool; Mrs. Milia Kaiawe, Mrs Leialoha Kanoho, Mrs. Akao Lock, Mrs. Louisa Malina, Mrs. Kalei Montgomery, working collectively on an appliqué quilt, photographer, William Junokichi Senda, 1933. Used with permission from the Kaua‘i Museum.

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# Preface and Acknowledgements

This project began with a casual conversation over coffee one afternoon. Both of us had done research on the encounters between Western missionaries and indigenous women (in Korea, in the case of Hyaeweol Choi, and in the Pacific, especially Vanuatu, in the case of Margaret Jolly). Our conversations pointed out a number of similarities and differences in the nature and impact of Christian missionary work on the formation of new domesticities and gendered modernities.<sup>1</sup> The differences in local histories and cultures proved to be crucial. Comparing notes was an illuminating experience, learning about different values and practices between Asia and the Pacific: very different architectural features, bodily practices, marital ideals, and positions of women within social hierarchies. Moreover, the differential salience of “written” and “oral” traditions in Asia and the Pacific offered an important methodological issue in how to analyse the dynamic interactions between indigenous people and Western missionaries. To our surprise, with only a few exceptions,<sup>2</sup> there was very little research that brought together the gendered dimensions of Christian missionary encounters in Asia and the Pacific from a comparative perspective. And so, from our casual conversation came the idea of convening a conference where scholars of Asia and the Pacific could meet to discuss the diversity and complexity of missionary encounters and further investigate the ways in which local people vernacularise and appropriate Christian messages.

In preparation for the conference we held informal seminars with interested faculty members and graduate students at The Australian National University, and we found one central recurring theme embedded in the dynamic, multi-directional interactions between Western missionaries and women in Asia and the Pacific. That recurrent pattern centred on the idea of domesticity and its paradoxical meanings and practices. In August 2012 we organised an international conference at The Australian National University called *Paradoxes of Domesticity: Christian Missionaries and Women in Asia and the Pacific* with the goal of addressing these questions. It attracted historians, anthropologists, literary scholars and ethnomusicologists as presenters and

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1 Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009; Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Digital reprint 2009; Margaret Jolly, *Women of the Place: Kastom, Colonialism and Gender in Vanuatu*, Chur and Reading: Harwood Academic Press, 1994.

2 Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus (eds), *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999; Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly (eds), *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Digital reprint 2009; Margaret Jolly and Kalpana Ram, *Borders of Being: Citizenship, Fertility, and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

discussants. It brought together many senior scholars with several emerging researchers including postdoctoral fellows and graduate students. It offered an exceptionally fruitful and stimulating platform for a comparative study across the regions of Asia and the Pacific representing periods from the nineteenth century onwards. The results of our robust and vibrant debates are reflected in all the chapters in this volume.

We must express our deep appreciation to several institutions and individuals who have helped to bring this volume to early fruition. We are extremely grateful to the Academy of Korean Studies for providing funding towards the conference, administrative assistance and the publication of this volume, which came through a generous grant funded by the Korean Government (MOE) (AKS-2011-BAA-2106) on Transnational Humanities in Korean Studies, a project that is directed by Hyaeweol Choi. We are also indebted to the Australian Research Council which, under the auspices of the Laureate Project held by Margaret Jolly, *Engendering Persons, Transforming Things: Christianities, Commodities and Individualism in Oceania* (FL100100196), provided support for field and archival research and contributed towards the costs of the conference and preparation of this volume. We thank the Research School of Asia and the Pacific of The Australian National University for funding the visit of Professor Holly Wardlow, who gave the public lecture “Paradoxical Intimacies” as part of the conference. We also express our gratitude to Daniel Chua for his efficient and gracious help in administering the conference website, finalising the program, organising publicity and catering, and Nicholas Mortimer for assisting with travel and conference administration. We are exceptionally fortunate to have had the excellent assistance of Dr Carolyn Brewer in copyediting and ensuring stylistic continuity in the volume and reproduction of images. We thank the two anonymous readers for ANU Press for their insights and enthusiastic approval and Professor Stewart Firth, chair of the Pacific Editorial Board, for his swift and decisive direction. Mitiana Arbon and Nicholas Mortimer provided the original cover design. Finally, we extend our thanks to all of our contributing authors for their full conference drafts and for their gracious and timely responses and revisions based on our suggestions. We could not have done this without them.

Hyaeweol Choi  
Margaret Jolly  
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# Paradoxes of Domesticity: Missionary Encounters in the Making of Christian Homes in Asia and the Pacific

Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly  
The Australian National University

## Vignette 1

One day in the 1890s, a group of Korean women gather together to pay a visit to the home of the local missionary from the United States. This was more than a social call; it was an expedition. The missionary home was filled with all manner of exotic stuff they had never seen before, and the Korean visitors were intrigued by the promise of what they might find there. In preparing to host her visitors, the wife of the missionary might take some extra care to highlight these attractions to make the experience all the more impressive for her guests—polishing the clock on the mantle, bringing the rocking chair into the sitting room, uncovering the typewriter on the desk. Here was an opportunity. Once these women were in her home and captivated by all of the exotica, she could talk to them about the Christian faith and start the process of bringing them out of their “paganism” into salvation. In the course of that afternoon visit, the missionary wife told the story of Jesus, and her guests listened politely, intently. To be sure, she imagined, some of those visitors would denounce their “traditional” beliefs to accept Christianity. And in the end one guest, a Korean shaman, expressed a readiness to accept Jesus Christ. However, that openness to Christ was not to the idea of a single God in the Christian tradition. Rather the shaman accepted Jesus as another in the panoply of spirits, reasoning that having one more god to worship could only be an added benefit.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The vignette is inspired by observations by Annie Baird in her book, entitled *Daybreak in Korea*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909, pp. 60–63.

## Vignette 2

April 3, 1820. A group of high-ranking Hawaiian women board the brig *Thaddeus* in the harbour of Honolulu to meet several Protestant missionary couples sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. They included two widows of King Kamehameha who had united the islands in one kingdom in the late eighteenth century and the wives of two of his senior advisors. The Hawaiian women admired the magnificent gowns of the seven American women who sat down with them on the decks to teach them the art of sewing. Mrs. Holman and Mrs. Ruggles got out their scissors and, using small patches of cloth, taught the Hawaiian women how to use a needle and thread. That day, the queen dowager Kalākua Kaheiheimālie ordered a dress for herself fashioned in the style of the missionary women, made out of white cambric and falling to her ankles. She wanted it finished quickly as they sailed along the western side of Oahu so that she might show it off to the King.

In subsequent decades noble Hawaiian women monopolised the arts of sewing and especially quilt-making. But they creolised the novel layering styles with those of their indigenous fabric *kapa* (barkcloth), eschewed laborious patchwork for the rarer appliqué technique and indigenised motifs. From the mid-nineteenth century the Hawaiian quilt became an icon of royalty, indigeneity and anti-colonial resistance. And although many Hawaiians embraced Christianity and relaxed the taboos (*kapu*) of their ancestral religion, which separated people by rank and gender, reverence for the indigenous gods of creation persisted into the twenty-first century.

These two vignettes reveal the powerful connection between the appeal of Christianity and the allure of material things, between religious conversion and capitalist commodities. The first vignette shows how material goods were useful as a device for instigating interaction. It was not just the exotic furnishings that served to draw in the Korean community. Even the daily necessities in the missionary home, like canned food, were tantalising in the eyes of the local women. Christianity, the new religion, was also a novelty, and despite the missionaries' attempts to enforce the conventional Judeo-Christian concept of God, those local women interpolated their own familiar, indigenous and polytheistic belief system into their understanding of Christianity, thus demonstrating the dynamic and creative nature of missionary encounters. The second vignette shows how the new cloth became integral to the practice of Christianity. The power of this new foreign god was associated with such cloth and other goods which missionaries brought to the Pacific, but just as converting

to the new religion was not a matter of supine acceptance, adopting these novel commodities involved active appropriation and indigenisation of the power of foreign goods and the foreign god.

We call this volume *Divine Domesticities*. The double meaning of “divine” suggests both the sanctity in the notion of the Christian “home” and the sensuous beauty of a new way of materialising and embodying domestic life. Creating Christian homes was a central goal of evangelical activities. Christian spirituality was adorned with Western modern manners and material goods in the novel form of an ideal home life; however, as the stories told in this volume suggest, the nature of missionary encounters with indigenous populations was in no way a simple matter of transmission and acceptance. Rather, these encounters were dynamic and multi-directional.

Since the publication in 1984 of Jane Hunter’s book, *The Gospel of Gentility*,<sup>2</sup> which pioneered a new direction of research in the field of missiology with its deliberate focus on women missionaries, a number of studies have explored the complex dynamics of gender, race and culture in foreign mission fields within the context of Euro-American imperial expansion.<sup>3</sup> Western women missionaries constituted a group that was larger, better organised and more globally connected than any other organisation of women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> The extent of their global reach and connections with indigenous people and cultures was unprecedented. Earlier studies have demonstrated how the religious zeal to convert “heathen sisters” to Christianity drove thousands of European and American women out of the comfort of their homes and into the world with the conviction that they had a role to play in the “civilising mission.”

2 Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

3 Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Connie A. Shemo (eds), *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010; Ruth Brouwer, *Modern Women Modernizing Men: The Changing Missions of Three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902–69*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002; Hyaewool Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009; Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus (eds), *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999; Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999; Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly, *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Margaret Jolly and Kalpana Ram (eds), *Borders of Being*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001; Leslie A. Flemming (ed.), *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1989; Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawai’i*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989; Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874–1914*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989; Patricia Hill, *The World their Household: The American Woman’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870–1920*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985.

4 Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Connie A. Shemo, ‘Introduction,’ in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, ed. Reeves-Ellington, Sklar and Shemo Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 1–18, pp. 2–3.

Significantly, this missionary zeal was combined with a Victorian notion of domestic virtue and gentility that missionary women largely cherished as the true province of women. The establishment of “Christian homes” became the signature goal of women missionaries.<sup>5</sup> However, commitment to religious piety coupled with their domestic ideals paradoxically allowed missionary women to engage in work in the public sphere, even at a global level.<sup>6</sup> Women’s work in Christian missions was often spoken of as domestic duties and housework, a paradoxical metaphor since the work often took them far beyond the sphere of the home. As Susan Thorne notes, “Part of the transformative power of the missionary project was its sanctioning of transgressive behavior as religious exceptions to gender rules.”<sup>7</sup>

Building on earlier studies, this volume advances both theoretical and methodological issues in three ways. First, we approach missionary encounters with indigenous people in Asia and the Pacific as indispensable to the development of distinct forms of “modern domesticity” in the various locales.<sup>8</sup> The concept of modernity is notoriously complex and much debated. Many scholars speak of plural modernities.<sup>9</sup> Recent research suggests that modernity did not originate in isolation in the West but rather emerged *through the interaction* between the West and its colonies.<sup>10</sup> Like the notion of modernity, the concept of domesticity is also slippery and ambiguous. In “exploring the dramatic and spectacular changes in domestic life in the Pacific,” Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre point out that “everywhere colonialism had enormous effects, but these were regionally variable and rarely unitary. Rather than presuming the fatal impact of a monolithic colonialism we have tried to scrutinise the complexities of colonial processes.”<sup>11</sup>

Eschewing a singular definition, we rather ask what constitutes the domestic in context, and how the existing practices—residential and architectural patterns, marital and parenting relationships, material cultures and bodily habits—change or continue. We see Christian missionary encounters as pivotal in the

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5 Dana Robert, “The ‘Christian home’ as a cornerstone of Anglo-American missionary thought and practice,” in *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706–1914*, ed. Dana L. Robert, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, pp. 134–65.

6 William R. Hutchison’s book title, *Errand to the World* and Patricia Hill’s, *The World Their Household* (1985), succinctly capture this central paradox of domesticity. See William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

7 Susan Thorne, “Missionary imperial feminism,” in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, ed. Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, pp. 39–65, from p. 50.

8 Timothy Mitchell, “The stage of modernity,” in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, pp. 1–34, p. 2.

9 See Ram and Jolly, *Maternities and Modernities*.

10 Mitchell, “The stage of modernity”; Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

11 Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, “Introduction,” in *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, ed. Jolly and Macintyre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 1–18, p. 3.



development of diverse forms of modernity and central to the fashioning of diverse new domesticities. Contributors to this volume outline the specific contexts in and processes through which modern domesticities emerged. The dynamic interactions between longstanding beliefs and customs and newly introduced Christian doctrines, embodied practices and cultural meanings created environments in which earlier gender relations in the domestic sphere were simultaneously altered and/or reinforced.

A recurrent theme in this volume is how the local negotiation of modernity has often led to seeming contradictions between the ideals of modern domesticity and the actual practices.<sup>12</sup> We demonstrate a palpable tension between an abstract ideal of Christian domestic life for the modern era and the actual practices of both the Western women missionaries and their indigenous converts. Contrary to an idealised home life and the conventional role that women were supposed to play in it, these newly Christian women often moved into public, sometimes even global, positions through educational and transnational Christian alliances. The new woman in the home was also engaged in the exercise of novel power and authority through the command of the new “scientific” practices of childrearing, hygiene and household management. The modern ideal of domesticity was also actively incorporated into the imagination of modern nation-state building and nationalist movements in resistance to colonial powers, especially in Asia. Those competing demands constitute the “paradoxes of domesticities.”

We use “paradoxes” as an expedient concept for revisiting the division between the public and the private domain from a comparative perspective.<sup>13</sup> Historians have shown how domesticity was not always limited to family life.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore,

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12 Hyaewool Choi, “Christian modernity in missionary discourse from Korea, 1905–1910,” *East Asian History* 29 (June 2005): 39–68; Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China 1857–1927*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001; Talal Asad, “Religion, nation-state, secularism,” in *Nation and Religion*, ed. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 178–96; Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

13 Prior to the modern era in Europe, the majority of women, most often peasants, had much influence in the self-sufficient household. Furthermore, the moral influence of women and the significant role they played in family rituals and household management in pre-modern periods went far beyond the private domain. See Catherine Hall, “The history of the housewife,” in *The Politics of Housework*, ed. Ellen Malos, London: Allison and Busby, 1980, pp. 44–71; Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China’s Long Eighteenth Century*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997; Martina Deuchler, “Propagating female virtues in Chosŏn Korea,” in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*, ed. Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan Piggott, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003, pp. 142–69. The development of a gendered division of labour has illuminating precedents. Barbara Welter’s analysis of the “cult of true womanhood” demonstrates how white middle-class women in the United States and Great Britain in the nineteenth century colluded in the ideology of domesticity, a dogma that they clearly valued, even cherished. Barbara Welter, “The cult of true womanhood: 1820–1860,” *American Quarterly* 18(2) (1966): 151–74.

14 Leonore Davidoff, “Gender and the ‘great divide’: public and private in British gender history,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15(1) (Spring 2003): 11–27; Mary Ryan, “The public and the private good: across the great divide in women’s history,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15(2) (Summer 2003): 10–27; Elizabeth Thompson, “Public and private in Middle Eastern women’s history,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15(1) (Spring 2003): 52–69;

the tensions between the ideological poles of a feminine “domestic” and masculine “public” became even more pronounced in the era of imperialism when the transnational interactions between people, material goods, ideas and images intensified at an unprecedented pace.<sup>15</sup> What followed was a major shift in perspective on the proper space for women and men and their engagement in the family and the broader society. The concept of “paradoxes of domesticities” captures the dynamic, fluid and sometimes contradictory currents in how modern domesticities that were shaped by the transnational encounters between disparate cultures and people within hierarchical power relations.

Second, as suggested above the essays in this volume demonstrate the agency of Asian and Pacific women in linking their past religious, familial and cultural practices with newly introduced “modern” Western ideals and practices. The two introductory vignettes above and the essays in this volume indicate that indigenous populations did not simply accept the newly introduced religion and lifestyle; rather the encounters are better characterised as creative interaction, resistance, transformation, even indigenisation. Previous studies have largely privileged the perspective of Western missionary women, in part because there is a relative wealth of archival materials written by and about Western women missionaries. In contrast, there is a relative paucity of materials created by indigenous women. To capture the dynamic interplay between the indigenous and the foreign, the old and the new, it is crucial to amplify the voices of local people so that their experiences form part of the narrative, along with those of Western missionaries. Thus contributors to the book have drawn their analyses and insights not only from Western archival sources but also from primary sources in Asian and Pacific languages.

Furthermore, given the low rates of literacy among indigenous women in certain places and periods and the consequent scarcity of written materials authored by them, contributors have utilised alternative sources including photographs, artefacts, architecture, museum collections, oral histories and ethnographic observations. These proved to be highly valuable in revealing the reciprocal flow of influences between Western missionaries and indigenous populations in Asia and the Pacific, from the nineteenth century to the present. In a later section of this chapter, we offer more detailed explanations of the different “ways of knowing” deployed and methodological challenges we faced, bringing into sharp focus the dynamic interplay between foreigners and locals in missionary encounters. Our contributors make copious but critical use of archival materials, keenly aware that available documents are partial in both senses, incomplete

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Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987; Amy Kaplan, “Manifest domesticity,” *American Literature* 70(3) (1998): 581–606.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, “Public and private in Middle Eastern women’s history.”

and inevitably saturated with colonial and missionary desires. Still, we are creative in admitting other modes of analysis when “written” documents and local voices are conspicuously absent.

Third, we bring together examples of missionary encounters in the region of Asia and the Pacific in order to highlight their breadth and complexity and to demonstrate how the different local and national histories and cultures engendered a wide range of perceptions, discourses and practices of domesticity. This vast coverage offers two distinctive advantages. It allows us to examine the impact that different kinds of colonial relationships had on indigenous populations. We illustrate how the status of missionaries and whether they were part of a colonial authority or not created different perceptions on the part of the local people. An exemplary comparison can be made between US missionaries in the Philippines, which was a US colony, Korea, which was colonised by Japan—a non-Western and non-Christian imperial power, and China, which was semi-colonised by Western powers and Japan. These differing colonial relationships served missionaries in their evangelising activities in distinctive ways, both positive and negative.<sup>16</sup>

The other advantage is that the breadth of the region we cover in this volume reveals not only tantalisingly diverse local cultures and histories, but diverse emphases in analysis. For example, the different salience of “written” and “oral” traditions in Asia and the Pacific help us contemplate an important methodological issue in how to analyse literacy per se in the dynamic interactions between indigenous people and Western missionaries. For instance, standard historical accounts in East Asia show how indigenous literacy for a small elite was crucially reconfigured by Christian mission education, catalysing the phenomenon of the “New Woman,” which proliferated in part through the thriving print media.<sup>17</sup> Reading and writing women, who were largely educated at mission schools, pursued new ways of doing domestic life and beyond. In the Pacific there was no such indigenous literacy so Christianity brought not just the Bible but the written word. Christian projects simultaneously transcribed and translated oral languages into texts, pre-eminently Bibles, catechisms and

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16 Hyaewool Choi deploys the concept of “Christian modernity” in her analysis of American missionary discourses from Korea during the politically turbulent period between 1905 and 1910, when Korea was being colonised by Japan. She contends that while religion was deeply implicated in the imperial politics of Japan and the USA, the idea of Christian modernity running through different narratives emerges as a powerful way for the missionaries to resolve the tensions caused by the political turmoil intertwined with racial and cultural clashes. See her article, “Christian modernity in missionary discourse from Korea.”

17 Some of the representative works on the phenomenon of the “New Woman” in East Asia include Jan Bardsley, *The Bluestockings of Japan: New Woman Essays and Fiction from Seitō*, Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2007; Hyaewool Choi, *New Women in Colonial Korea: A Sourcebook*, London: Routledge, 2013; Theresa Hyun, *Writing Women in Korea*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007; Hu Ying, *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1898–1918*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000; Hua R. Lan and Vanessa L. Fong (eds), *Women in Republican China: A Sourcebook*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1999.

hymns and introduced Pacific women to books in foreign languages for the first time. Indigenous language texts in the Pacific date back only to the first Christian missions. Indigenous languages persist in daily conversation, as cherished oral traditions and powerful spoken or sung words. These are crucial in charting changes in both the material and spiritual dimensions of domesticities.

## Permeability and paradox: Revisiting domestic and public in Asia and the Pacific

When missionary women arrived in their various mission fields, they brought with them a particular sense of civilisation based on Christian faith and more often than not the Victorian notion of domesticity. Based on these values and this worldview, they led a campaign to reform the “heathen family” into a Christian family. Yet, they had to deal with the existing gender relations and practices of the local people. For example, in East Asia, gendered spatial distinctions prevailed due to the Confucian-based dichotomy of “inner-outer” with women in the inner domain and men in the outer. From the perspective of missionaries the confinement of women to the inner, domestic space was a clear sign of oppression and cruelty, and yet, as historian Martina Deuchler argues in her analysis of women in Chosŏn Korea (1392–1910), the confinement of women (mostly of the upper class) to the domestic space did not necessarily prevent them from having an influence in the public sphere through their moral righteousness.<sup>18</sup> Or, as Latu Latai’s chapter shows, the architecture of the traditional Samoan house, usually open without enclosing walls or doors, shocked women from the London Missionary Society due to the lack of privacy. Yet, the indigenous open design of the *fale* (house) was deeply divine—connecting its inhabitants with ancestors and the land. Ancestral religion conferred on women high status as sacred sisters and priests and yielded significant powers of mobility. It was under such richly diverse cultural circumstances that a missionary campaign to reform the “heathen family” into a Christian family was carried out with both intended and unintended outcomes.

Hyaewol Choi’s chapter explores the complex notion of “home” that was negotiated in the transcultural encounters of Korean women and American women missionaries at the turn of the twentieth century. She details how the missionary home served as an “object lesson” to local women, who had the opportunity not only to see the Western-style missionary household and all of its accoutrements but also to witness the interactions between Western husbands and wives and the child-rearing styles of Western parents. To be sure, local women did not always accept Western-style domesticity. Many of

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18 Deuchler, “Propagating female virtues in Chosŏn Korea.”

them could not afford modern products from Western countries or imported ingredients for a Western diet. Some found Western child-rearing practices or conjugal relationships inappropriate for the Korean context. Nonetheless, the missionary home presented a new model of domesticity embodied in material, familial and religious practices.

If the missionary home offered a small-scale object lesson to local women, mission schools for girls were a second key platform for cultivating and propagating Christian domesticity through the curriculum, extracurricular activities and perhaps most importantly dormitory life. As Laura Prieto shows in this volume, “dormitory work” provided missionary women with a “splendid opportunity for doing personal work” in the Philippines under United States colonial rule. The dormitory as a secluded and protected space served as a “Christian home” where Filipina students learned not only domestic skills and hygienic practices but broader secular knowledge and competitive sports.

Graduates from mission schools also played a significant role in social reform movements with a particular focus on home improvement and hygienic child rearing. Helen Schneider and Sonja Kim offer fascinating analyses of the dynamic interactions between newly introduced ideals of domesticity and locally appropriate and meaningful practices in their accounts of the social service programs in rural China and the “Better Baby Movement” in Korea, respectively. Schneider’s chapter uncovers the rich history of Chinese women’s involvement in social service programs that had been initiated by missionaries but further developed and indigenised by Chinese people. Such programs targeted less privileged families in rural communities through short-term training projects, hygiene movements, day-care and nursery programs, and model home exhibits in their immediate urban neighbourhoods or in more rural parts of China. These outreach projects were designed to define and address some of the modern social problems observed by foreign missionaries and Chinese elites, but they also provided practical training and experience for a growing cohort of professional women. Sonja Kim’s chapter focuses on American missionaries’ attempts to transform Korean practices in child birth and child rearing in collaboration (and sometimes in direct tension) with the Japanese colonial state which also actively instituted maternal and infant welfare programs for its industrial and military goals. More importantly, Kim demonstrates how the activities and demands of Korean clients and Korean nurse-midwives helped to shape these projects to enhance maternal and infant health.

Newly available scientific knowledge offered a wide range of information on nutrition, hygiene, and home finance. Modern material goods and ingredients exemplified ideas of elegant home interiors and tastes for a modern lifestyle. A well-educated mother and wife was considered better suited to manage a modern household than was the traditional figure of the sacrificing mother.

At the centre of these changes in East Asia was the introduction of home economics as an academic discipline. Missionaries and mission organisations played a major role in facilitating this process. Ava Milam (1884–1976) was a particularly influential figure in this regard. She was an American professor of home economics at Oregon State University who made a tour of East Asia, advocating the crucial importance of scientific homemaking for the broader society.<sup>19</sup> Her influence was embodied in the establishment of home economics departments in China, Japan and Korea. Furthermore, future experts in home economics from the local populations were trained with scholarships provided by universities in the United States. These students expanded the scope of women’s work in the public sphere in the name of the ideal domesticity for the modern era. This creative tension between devotion to the private domain and an active search for public engagement often characterises the transcultural interactions between Western missionaries and indigenous women. While those interactions reinforced the assumption that women belonged in the domestic sphere, they simultaneously led women to greater national and even global engagement, thereby challenging established gender boundaries.

The paradoxes of domesticity become evident when we contrast the conventional image of missionary women as “maternal” and “domestic” with what they actually did or how they actually lived.<sup>20</sup> As Latu Latai argues in this volume, British mothers of the London Missionary Society sent their children away from the mission field and thus failed to fulfil their idealised maternal duties.<sup>21</sup> A missionary wife could also hire servants for extremely modest wages to perform childcare and other domestic chores that would normally have been done by the woman of the house. Local servants usually came from the poorest strata of the local community. In East Asia or the Philippines, a single US dollar went a long way toward covering the cost of maintaining household staff. The general expectation was that pastors, priests, nuns and missionaries would lead relatively humble lifestyles, so a missionary household with several servants was rather incongruous. Although there was a measure of public criticism on the seeming contradiction of maintaining a missionary home with servants, some missionaries argued that the hiring of servants helped them meet the greater goal of evangelism. The rationale was that having this assistance in the

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19 Ava Milam Clark and Kenneth Munford, *Adventures of a Home Economist*, Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1969; Helen Schneider, *Keeping the Nation’s House: Domestic Management and the Making of Modern China*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011.

20 Langmore, *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874–1914*; Huber and Lutkehaus (eds), *Gendered Missions*.

21 Living in the mission field included dealing with a remote environment, poor transport and communications and/or unhealthy tropical environments (often fused with notions of moral contamination). Any schools that existed were considered inferior to schools at “home.” Some missions established foreign schools (such as the P’yŏngyang Foreign School in northern Korea) specifically for the children of missionaries and teachers were hired from their home countries. Even this type of foreign school could not fulfil demands for a modern education beyond the secondary level and for higher learning the only option was to send children “home.”



home enabled missionary women to engage more completely in the mission's evangelical and educational work with local women (see Choi this volume). Missionary women's advocacy of Christian homes was thus made visible and public as they were relieved of the very domestic work they advocated.

Single women missionaries who had no explicit family obligations in the mission field also enjoyed the assistance of local servants and employees. Unlike married women, single women missionaries were more fully incorporated into the mission organisation as independent participants. For one thing, they were paid for their work, albeit usually at a rate lower than that of men. In contrast, married women did not receive a salary because they were considered dependants of their husbands. That difference in status reinforced a view in which single women missionaries were professionals paid to do the work of the mission; thus, for them domestic tasks were of lesser importance. In her chapter, Laura Prieto argues that single women missionaries "were themselves ambivalently domestic at best" and "embraced new ideals of public engagement, advanced education, professionalism, wage earning and physical vigour."

Moreover, even if those missionaries were fully committed to the ideals of domesticity, their advocacy did not necessarily have the intended outcome. Rebecca Copeland's chapter addresses precisely this issue by analysing the close relationship between Mary Kidder (1834–1910), a missionary from the Reformed Church in the United States, and her Japanese student, Wakamatsu Shizuko (1872–1895), an orphan who eventually became a prominent writer, translator and educator. In their longstanding relationship, the lessons that Kidder meant to deliver on the issues of domesticity, marriage and career did not have the expected impact on her student. Copeland concludes that both Kidder and Wakamatsu managed to conceal their own "need for agency and independence, behind the cloak of domesticity and mission."

As each chapter in this volume demonstrates, the boundary between the public and the private in Asian and Pacific contexts was thus fluid and permeable. The missionary home served as a pulpit. Ideals of domesticity at mission schools were taught by missionary women whose professionalism, economic independence and pleasure in the modern leisure of sports deeply inspired indigenous girls and women, many of whom in turn chose to work in the public arena as teachers, nurses, doctors, writers, journalists or secretaries. Domestic ideals in abstract and practical terms paradoxically resulted in a cadre of new women equipped with modern knowledge and zeal for work in public and global realms.

## Sacred and secular genealogies: Christian missions and states – colonial and contemporary

Western missionaries often established missions in places that had been colonies of their home countries. Comparison of the American missionaries who went to the Philippines, a colony of the United States, and those who went to Korea, a colony of Japan, shows how the ramifications of this nexus of the missionary enterprise and the colonial endeavour created different dynamics in the interactions between missionaries and the locals. Because Korea had been colonised by Japan, a non-Western and non-Christian imperial power, American missionaries were intricately positioned between the Japanese colonial authority and Korean nationals, who were often anti-Japanese. Koreans viewed American missionaries not as part of the official colonial power but rather as a potential ally in resistance to Japanese authority. This perception created unique opportunities for American missionaries in that they gained special favour from Koreans as “modernisers.”<sup>22</sup> However, they also had to face another reality in that they were forced to collaborate with Japanese power in order to maintain and strengthen mission activities under Japanese rule. Even when they made careful choices in their collaboration with Japanese authorities, working with a non-Christian colonial power was not easy. Sonja Kim’s essay in this volume demonstrates how American missionaries were engaged in a “tacit partnership” with the colonial government to maintain their mission work, while they also felt compelled to promote their own distinctively Christian medicine as opposed to the secular medical service practiced by Japan.

The experience of American missionaries in the Philippines was different. In her chapter, Laura Prieto details the historical context of US imperialism in the Philippines, whose existing cultural inheritance had come from Malay tradition, Islamic influence and centuries of Hispanic Catholic colonisation. American colonial authority in the Philippines, Prieto suggests, was not seen as a force of “invaders or conquerors” but more as an agent of “benevolent assimilation,” whereby the United States would inculcate native peoples in the “individual rights and liberties which [are] the heritage of free peoples.” Thus American missionaries in the Philippines “saw themselves as partners of the federal government in education, filling in the religious components missing from a secular system.” In particular, the provision of education was a “cornerstone of benevolent imperialism,” and mission schools were designed to “help modernise and Americanise as well as ‘Christianise’ the Filipino people.”

Along with different relations to the respective colonial powers, vastly different histories and local cultures also generated distinctive receptions for the new

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22 Choi, “Christian modernity in missionary discourse from Korea, 1905–1910.”



Christian faith and the changes it brought to women's lives. The effects can be seen in the ways local people perceived missionary work and the work of newly-converted native Bible women. The opportunities Bible women had were similar in Korea and the Philippines. It was an opportunity for literacy, travel, employment, leadership and even social respect in the form of a diploma. However, the socio-cultural contexts in which they took up the work of the mission were vastly different. Filipina women had much more freedom and independence of action in daily business and social life. In contrast, Korean women, like many other East Asian women, were secluded and prohibited from the public domain. Thus in Korea the early groups of Bible women were subjected to criticism for their new religion and public activities, and sometimes even threatened in the streets. Filipina Bible women were not subjected to such treatment.

The complex and tense relationship between Christian missions and secular states in diverse local contexts plays out both in the colonial period and beyond, as chapters on India and Papua New Guinea (PNG) reveal. Kalpana Ram suggests there are sacred genealogies for the developmentalist state in India. Development, like Christian conversion, is an emotional and embodied process engaging a radical "turning" and a sense of rupture between past and present. Christian women of Tamil Nadu who became teachers, health practitioners and social workers in the employ of Catholic NGOs, contrasted the constraints and the irrational traditions of their mothers' lives with their own mobility and the enlightened freedom of modernity. Ram discerns a longer genealogy connecting these contemporary twentieth-century women with their precursors—Bible women who were models of independent, professional women. Moreover, Ram suggests that Christianity, and in particular Catholicism in Southern India, was and is a crucial institution of governmentality beyond the state in both colonial and postcolonial periods. She argues, Christianity is relevant not only as a minority religion associated with remote, "backward," low-caste groups or marginalised groups like the Dalits, but is foundational in much broader movements for emancipation in India, including feminism and socialism.

The chapters by Jemima Mowbray and Debra McDougall similarly address the question of the relation between Christian missions and the state. But in the Pacific, unlike India, Christianity is *the* majority religion. In the contemporary states of both PNG and Solomon Islands approximately 95 per cent of people proclaim they are Christian, and Christianity is, together with *kastom* (tradition/culture), fundamental to the avowed values of the independent state. Jemima Mowbray notes the lacunae in studies of the gender agendas of the colonial state in PNG and suggests that both Christian missions and early colonial administrators saw women's hard physical work—cultivating taro and yams, looking after pigs, hauling wood and water and nurturing children—as the source of their low status. Yet colonial policies apropos land and labour in fact

increased women's burdens in subsistence work and marginalised women from the processes of economic modernisation. Men, not women, were employed as indentured and later waged labourers on plantations, mines and in towns, even as domestic servants, and men alone gained the new knowledge of agricultural extension and modern education and assumed leadership roles in church and state. The distinction of domestic and public in the context of colonial PNG thus maps a distinction between a feminised subsistence sphere in the village and a masculinised modern sphere in the town.<sup>23</sup>

Mowbray complicates and nuances this narrative derived from colonial state archives with narratives of the lived experience of women of Buka Island. These women are committed Christians and proud to be *ol meri bilong wok* (hard-working women). Their work in the commodity economy was portrayed as maternal nurture, but they see a big difference between cash earned through cultivating cash crops and cash earned as independent workers. They see education, first provided by Christian missions rather than the state, as the privileged route to such good work and greater autonomy from the demands of kin.

Debra McDougall's chapter likewise charts how the domestic and public realms have been reconstructed by the interaction of Christian missions and state in neighbouring Solomon Islands. Based on extended ethnography in Ranongga in the Western Solomons and a group portrait of one prominent family, McDougall explores the processes whereby women have been recently included in realms of customary authority previously restricted to men. She stresses women's past strong leadership roles as chiefs in the matrilineal clans of the region. She affirms the central importance of women in the collective conversion to Christianity which opened up new spaces for women to lead in the public sphere. As in PNG, men dominated in the sphere of modern economics and politics introduced in the colonial period; this domination is now often considered *kastom*. McDougall examines the complementary partnership of Joyce Dunateko and her husband Simion Panakera as an example. He became an influential leader in "native administration" and a successful entrepreneur. She managed a large, bustling and very clean household. She also became prominent in the Methodist women's group.<sup>24</sup> Their daughter Marina Alepio, was recently elected to the position

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23 See Anne Dickson-Waiko "Colonial enclaves and domestic spaces in British New Guinea," in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2007, pp. 205–30.

24 Such church groups are, as Anne Dickson-Waiko observes, the "missing rib" in studies of Pacific feminisms. See Anne Dickson-Waiko "The missing rib: mobilizing church women for change in Papua New Guinea," *Oceania* 74(1–2) (2003): 98–119, p. 103.

of “tribal” chief, legitimised by locals espousing values of human rights and gender equality. But, McDougall argues, the power of chiefs is parlous and “domesticated” in an era where state politicians prevail.<sup>25</sup>

## The architectonics of home and emotion: New Christian families in conversion experiences

As we have already observed, Christian missionaries confronted vastly different forms of domestic dwelling across the region, many of which they designated “houses” or “huts” rather than “homes” because they lacked privacy, conjugal seclusion and the emotional intimacy they associated with “home, sweet home.” As Hyaeweol Choi shows (this volume), American Protestant missionaries saw Korean houses as small, dark and dingy in contrast to the large homes of the first missionary couples, which emitted a divine “glimmering light.” They were not just glowing with space and exotic modern furnishings but with the love of an intimate couple and a novel nuclear family.

Similar questions about the material and emotional texture of the new Christian families fashioned not only in houses but in mission dormitories and refuges emerge in several chapters focused on children: Annie McCarthy and Jessica Hinchy on colonial India, and Sue Gronewold and Shih-Wen Sue Chen on China. McCarthy grapples with Christian child rescue as exemplified in the relationship between Miss Amy Carmichael, an Anglican missionary from Keswick, and Preena (aka Pearl Eyes and “the Elf”), the first child she rescued from the fate of being a temple dancer and wife to the Hindu gods (*devadasi*, but in British eyes, a “prostitute”). Carmichael aimed to rescue Preena from what the British saw as “sexual slavery” to the gods, a judicial invention at odds with the complexities of being *devadasi*. The discourse of child rescue in colonial India, as in many contemporary Christian NGOs, creates the child as victim. But, as McCarthy shows, Preena was in Carmichael’s words “wilful,” playfully subverting Biblical lessons. Preena’s recalcitrance continues as she matures from impish child to a Christian teacher, and ultimately a nun in Carmichael’s new order, Sisters of the Common Life. As her compound swells, Carmichael increasingly legitimates this new Christian home with the language of family—she is their mother and they are all servants of God. But, unlike the *devadasi*, these servants are celibate.

These novel forms of extended holy Christian families were in the contexts of British colonial India distinguished from the “deviant domesticities” which are the subject of Hinchy’s chapter. Diverse Indian families were marshalled by the British into “normal” conjugal families. But only those of subalterns were

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25 See Dickson-Waiko, “Colonial enclaves and domestic spaces in British New Guinea.”

subject to imperial intervention. After the Indian Revolt of 1857, despite the new official policy, the colonial state and Christian missionaries continued to intervene by attempting to rescue children born into the families of both female prostitutes and transgender eunuchs, especially *hijra*. Both evinced the spectre of sexualised childhood but whereas the removal of children from families of eunuchs was legislated, it was not for families of female prostitutes. The British sought to prevent “emasculatation” and sodomy in the *hijra* domestic space, and conceived it as dark, criminal and inscrutable. The complex realities of *hijra* relationships were obscured by British claims that children were kidnapped and coerced into such identities and that *hijra* exclusively threatened procreative sex (rather than blessing as well as cursing fertility). “Rescuing” the children of *hijra* had practical limits in the problematic co-operation between levels of government and between the colonial state and Christian missions. Moreover, *hijra* children themselves often subverted their rescue and reform. They were not perceived as innocent victims but as dangerous and corrupting. Yet, despite the British efforts to exterminate eunuchs, they resisted and persist to the present.

Gronewold’s chapter deals with “deviant domesticities” in Shanghai, where a Christian refuge for Chinese prostitutes was opened by an interdenominational committee of Western women in 1901. Prophetically called the Door of Hope, this was a rescue mission that recuperated prostitute women and their children. From the early twentieth century and especially after the Communist victory in 1949, it was critiqued as foreign intervention. The Communists expelled all Western missionaries in 1951, and the Door of Hope was firmly closed. Gronewold shows how, despite the maternalist coercion and discipline on the part of the German and American women who ran the refuge, the dominant memories on both sides were of “tender ties,” a cosy home, a new family. Elderly Chinese women recollected that they had indeed been “saved”—from cold, poverty and starvation, and their souls claimed for Christ. Western women managers were perceived as “mothers”; co-residents were sisters, aunties and nieces. In their memory work Western women also emphasised enduring familial bonds and their love for younger girls. This was a “tough love,” a love mixed with coercion and confinement. And no doubt the rosy, even romantic memories of the Door of Hope were, for its erstwhile Chinese residents, amplified by being marginalised as “foreign lackeys” by the Communist regime while for the Western women they were fuelled by the Cold War and inflated in their own life trajectory as they moved from being powerful saviours to frail elderly women.

In dealing with the contrast between indigenous and introduced Christian ideas of home and family we need to consider how ideas and emotions are materialised in architecture. Latu Latai depicts how the architecture of the Samoan *fale* with its vaulting dome, its formidable wooden posts tied together with intricate

lashings and its openness to the tropical air was iconic of the free flow of the extended family, or *aiga*. In such open spaces Samoan women moved about expansively, gathering power over the course of their lives from their sacred role of sisters to their later status as wives and mothers. The early missionary wives of the London Missionary Society who dwelled in the *fale* were aghast at the lack of privacy, at the prospect of having to fashion the “object lesson” of the domestic life of a Christian home on an open stage, and they were hugely relieved when they could move into their own homes with white limestone walls, partitioned rooms and picket fences. One hundred and eighty years later Samoans are devout Christians, yet the indigenous *fale* persists. Latai insists that the foundational love and respect for the sacred sister perdures alongside that of wife and mother, which is more privileged in Christian theologies. Yet, as we have witnessed in East Asia, the establishment of mission schools in Samoa also promoted the value of education for women and opened up independent vocations for women as teachers, nurses and secretaries.

In stark contrast to the Samoan *fale*, the form of the indigenous house of the Huli of PNG was small, snug and enclosed by deep trenches and tall stands of trees. Until recent decades husbands and wives lived, ate and slept separately, with men peripatetically moving between clan men’s houses, their own small houses or visiting their wives (several if they were polygynous) and women living with other women, including their affines. Holly Wardlow observes that there was arguably no domestic sphere which men and women shared prior to Christian conversion. In the pre-Christian past, a moral and fertile union was seen to require the rigorous separation of men and women, husbands and wives, subduing and containing uncontrolled desires. Despite theological differences, all the diverse denominations to which the Huli converted from the late 1950s required that Christian converts be monogamous and that husbands and wives live together. But, as Wardlow argues, conversion is not a singular event but a protracted process, even a troublesome struggle. Living together has proved difficult for Huli husbands and wives, even more so than ending polygyny. Many Huli struggle to embody this new spatial, emotional and ethical practice; it becomes an *askesis*—a self-discipline of everyday life—enhancing both the person and the collectivity. Not all have embraced it and, for those who have, the close physical proximity brings the peril not just of sexual pollution but of emotional intimacy. Husbands seem especially worried about the eviscerating power of a proximate wife’s breath, smell, words, emotions and thoughts lying heavily “on the skin.” Wardlow’s chapter thus underlines the close association between the materiality of the Christian home and its sensuous, emotional and ethical character. Christian projects of conversion have tried not just to transform the fabric of houses but the gendered embodiment of persons, refashioning

both what lies on the skin and beneath. This is focal to the final four chapters: Shih-Wen Sue Chen on China, Laura Prieto on the Philippines, Anna-Karina Hermkens on Papua New Guinea, and Margaret Jolly on Hawai'i and Vanuatu.

## On and beneath the skin: Embodiment and sensuous agency

Shih-Wen Sue Chen's chapter explores the trope of child rescue in China and the horrors of female footbinding in works published by the London Missionary Society in the early twentieth century. Back in Britain performances of dramas such as *He and She from O'er the Sea* evoked Chinese cruelty (and in particular binding the feet of young girls to make them dainty and sexually alluring "golden lilies") graphically depicting the excruciating pain which young girls suffered and the cruelty of their mothers and fathers. Girls who converted were portrayed as unfettered and emancipated from a cruel patriarchy, as in the transformation of one character from Little Bitterness to Little Happiness. Chen argues that such performances not only raised crucial funds for missionary efforts but inculcated a sense of responsibility on the part of British children for "saving" Chinese children. For the child actors the multi-sensorial experience of music, memorising lines and donning costumes entailed "literally putting themselves in someone else's shoes." Such performances often occluded the difficulties of missionary efforts and reinscribed the confident presumption that Chinese women's lowly status was a sure sign of a stagnant civilisation. At the same time, for actors (and perhaps audiences) these performances also troubled gender constraints at home; exemplified by tight-laced, deforming corsets in dramatic contrast to free-flowing Chinese costumes.

Transforming what is on and beneath the skin is also focal to Laura Prieto's chapter. She focuses on Filipina residents of dormitories and Bible women working for American Protestant women in the period 1900–1930, a period characterised by a new image of the modern Christian woman who was not sequestered in domesticity and practising pure piety, but rather was confidently entering the public sphere through the opportunities afforded by higher education and corporeal reshaping. The dormitories of mission schools were both refuges designed to protect the purity of young girls and women and hot houses in the creation of "New Women."<sup>26</sup> Central to this was a kind of corporeal confidence cultivated through athletics like baseball and basketball, feminine

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26 Choi, *New Women in Colonial Korea*; Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 45–47; Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910–1945*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008; Bardsley, *The Bluestockings of Japan*; Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006; Insook Kwon,



forms of “muscular Christianity.” However, the figure of the modern Christian woman was not just an American imperial imposition; Filipinas vigorously transformed introduced models. Prieto illustrates this through the *terno* or “butterfly dress,” the preferred formal attire of Bible women and some white American “sisters.” This dress was not a form of “native dress,” nor modelled on either the clothes of American missionary women or the global style of the “Modern Girl.”<sup>27</sup> Creolising two Spanish styles, it was a distinctive design with butterfly sleeves symbolising both nationalism and femininity, sovereignty and modernity. It was associated with both suffragists and beauty queens, making “suffragists seem less radical and beauty queens more progressive.” Its material elegance and exotic appeal likely attracted American missionary women to collect and wear the *terno*. In Prieto’s terms this imperial refashioning was “the antithesis of assimilation and Americanisation.”

Anna-Karina Hermkens similarly sees corporeal transformation as central to Anglican missionary efforts in the Collingwood Bay region of PNG from the 1890s. This involved stripping away the signs of savagery and heathenism on women’s bodies: their tapa skirts, their necklaces and armlets, their coconut oil and especially their facial tattoos. Such designs visualised clan ancestral histories, custodianship of land and the changing relations in a person’s life cycle, signs on the skin which penetrated deeply into the bone of a person. The process of corporeal conversion is evinced in a missionary’s account of the story of Manua, “transformed from a frightened, dirty and smelly heathen girl into a nice-looking clean young Christian women dressed up in western clothes.”

Although it seems that wearing Western clothes was less critical to Anglicans in this region than missionaries elsewhere in the Pacific, changing what was on the skin was still seen as central to changing what was beneath: corporeal and spiritual conversion were thus intimately linked, in both foreign and local Christian perception. Hermkens also points out an interesting paradox in this process, as foreign male missionaries eagerly collected “old clothes,” along with other “curios.” These exchanges were not only crucial to local relations but were disseminating evidence of the progress of their mission to the world beyond. They eagerly collected the materials of “satanic” practice and sent them off to museums in Port Moresby, Australia, Britain, Europe and the United States. They thus visualised and materialised the changes, the “vanishings” they had helped to effect, and refashioned themselves as both Christians and agents of a secular, scientific imperialism.

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“‘The New Women’s movement’ in 1920s Korea: rethinking the relationship between imperialism and women,” *Gender and History* 10(3) (November 1998): 381–405; Yung-Hee Kim, “Creating new paradigms of womanhood in modern Korean literature: Na Hye-sŏk’s ‘Kyŏnghŭi,’” *Korean Studies* 26(1) (2002): 1–60.

27 The Modern Girl around the World Research Group (ed.), *The Modern Girl Around the World*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2008; Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Margaret Jolly's chapter, relates the twin histories of the Hawaiian quilt and the "island dress" of Vanuatu, both dating from the mid-nineteenth century. In Oceania, as elsewhere, the adoption of cloth and the sewing skills associated with Christian missions have been unduly seen as an imperial imposition and thus a form of capitulation to the gendered corporeal codes of Christianity. In the case of the Hawaiian quilt, the predominant patchwork forms taught by New England Protestant missionary women to high-ranking Hawaiian women were within a few years transformed into distinctive local forms, using the rarer and more valued appliqué technique with a cut-out layer on top of a bottom layer of a different colour (for example red on white). Layering techniques and aesthetic associations were suffused with the materials and meanings of the indigenous cloth, *kapa*, which was earlier used both to clothe bodies and wrap sacred things. The motifs of Hawaiian quilts swiftly transformed from snowflakes and log cabins to local flora and fauna. More than a depiction of local landscapes, these were claims to indigenous custodianship of land and ocean in the face of American imperialism and celebrations of the power of Hawaiian royalty against the invading cartels of mercantile, plantation and missionary influence.

The story of "island dress" in the independent state of Vanuatu yields distinctive echoes. From the 1840s missionaries from the several Christian denominations working in the archipelago were eager to clothe the indigenous population, both men and women, since exposed breasts, testicles and bottoms were seen as symptoms of spiritual depravity. The Presbyterians concentrated in the central and southern islands were especially eager to cover the offending body parts, and one particular form of the "island dress" worn in contemporary Vanuatu is derived from a design for a night-gown that appeared in a late nineteenth-century Presbyterian magazine. Though this may be seen to be a capitulation to Christian codes about sexuality and modesty, Vanuatu Christian women eagerly embrace this style as their own and use bright fabrics with tropical Pacific motifs and adornments of lace and ribbons to sew dresses which are "flash." Island dress is simultaneously a sign of the independent nation of Vanuatu, of collectivities of women (for example church groups and NGOs) and of individual tastes. Still, these days younger and single women often refuse to wear island dresses saying they are hot, ugly and old-fashioned. The disciplining efforts of jealous boyfriends, husbands and male chiefs who insist that women should wear island dress reveals that clothes are statements as much about intimate, domestic relations and sexual morality as national and Christian dispositions. Thus, the history of island dress is not a matter of *either / or* but rather *both / and*.



## Ways of knowing

This volume offers novel insights into the paradoxes of domesticity which emerged for women through the encounters between Western missionaries and people in Asia and the Pacific. And, as many chapters affirm, such insights are grounded in distinctive ways of knowing. These are alert not just to the words of the archive but the multi-sensorial, embodied character of past and contemporary experience. There has been much reflection of late on the complicit relation between the assemblage of archives and formation of nation-states and about the embodied experience of working in archives.<sup>28</sup> The missionary archives which are foundational for most of the chapters of this volume are not as heavily implicated in the formation of national histories as state archives, and even though they have been used to write histories of emergent nations such as China, India, Korea and Vanuatu, they also reveal the transnational even universal character of the Christian missionary project. Like all words from the past distilled in documents, these archives are partial in both senses: partial in the sense of an incomplete congregation of written words preserved on paper; and partial in the sense of being written with a particular purpose, which in the case of Christian missionaries was to promote and record the process of conversion and modernist visions of civilisation.

As we witness throughout this volume the diaries and letters of individual missionaries, the records of missionary organisations and churches, and the magazines used to promote missionary causes and raise funds are replete with stories of how Christian missions tried to change the very idea of “home” in Asia and the Pacific. These voluble voices articulate and amplify the words of Jules Michelet: that the archive is not a place of silence but a noisy place resounding with the loud voices of the dead.<sup>29</sup> This imagined conversion of the written word into an aural experience alerts us to another important perception: work in the archive is a multi-sensorial and embodied experience. Who is not prone to the malaise of “archive fever” as one touches,<sup>30</sup> often with tentative white gloved fingers, a bundle of dusty, decaying papers with barely perceptible ink scrawls? Or as one feels the indented press of a red pen correcting a

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28 We are thinking here especially of some writings by Carolyn Steedman and Ann Stoler, including Carolyn Steedman, *The Archive and Cultural History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001; Carolyn Steedman, “Intimacy in research: accounting for it,” *History of the Human Sciences* 21(4) (2008): 17–33; Carolyn Steedman, “After the archive,” *Comparative Critical Studies* 8(2/3) (2011): 321–40; Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

29 See Steedman, *The Archive and Cultural History*; reflecting on Michelet and also on the idea that the historian reanimates the dead by breathing in dust of the archive.

30 The phrase derives from Jacques Derrida’s book, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, English trans. Eric Prenowitz, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Derrida considers the memory work of archiving not just a public obsession but a private one and like Steedman also explores how new electronic and digital technologies are changing the character of the archive.

typescript which caused such agony to the author who never published it?<sup>31</sup> The palpability of the pulp of paper is felt by any historian and the process whereby historians faithfully transcribe with their sharpened pencils, word for word (including errors), the jottings of a past author is a process whereby the researcher re-embodies experiences of the past in the present, a sort of “ghost-writing” across decades or even centuries.<sup>32</sup> Technologies of replication from archaic microfilm to the latest digital cameras can, as Carolyn Steedman and others observe, detach and distance us from communing with the pages of the original but the latest technologies also allow us to magnify and read inscrutable handwriting and to digitally trawl through documents searching for thematic connections and key concepts occluded by the lineality of reading in a strict chronology, from start to finish.

These reflections on access to the written texts of the past reverberate differently in our two regions. In Asia there are centuries of indigenous literary traditions and copious texts written in local languages before, during and after Christian conversion. While this longstanding tradition of literacy in Asia was an entitlement of the privileged classes for centuries, the vast majority of women had been excluded from access to the tradition. Missionary work in education began to change this gender disparity in literacy and education. Indeed, local populations were attracted to mission schools in part because of the possibility of becoming literate. Together with enthusiastic local responses, women missionaries pioneered work in girls’ education.<sup>33</sup> By the early twentieth century, educational institutions for girls and women in China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines and other countries were largely run by missionaries and their local colleagues.<sup>34</sup>

In the Pacific by contrast, although there were graphic forms used in designs of pots, tapa and tattoos, there were no indigenous forms of writing. Indigenous literacy thus emerges first through European contacts and preeminently in missionary projects from the first Catholics in Micronesia in the seventeenth century. Christian texts such as the Bible, catechisms and hymn books were not just circulated in metropolitan languages like English, French, German, Spanish and Latin but were frequently translated into local languages. Missionaries

31 This is Margaret Jolly’s memory of working in the John Layard Archives in San Diego.

32 See especially Steedman, “After the archive”; and Derrida, *Archive Fever*.

33 Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea*.

34 Missionaries made a substantial contribution to the development of national languages. In East Asia, written Chinese had prestige and was widely adopted as a lingua franca before Protestant missionaries arrived in the nineteenth century. Vernacular writing systems were not appreciated by the Chinese-reading literati class. However, missionaries discovered that it was the Korean vernacular that allowed for the faster dissemination of the Bible. As such they strongly advocated the use of Korean *han’gŭl*. Subsequently, missionaries’ educational work for women combined with this emphasis on vernacular languages contributed both to the formation of a class of educated women and an appreciation of the vernacular languages. See Ross King, “Western Protestant missionaries and the origins of Korean language modernization,” *Journal of International and Area Studies* 11(3) (2004): 7–38.

were enthusiastic language-learners and even linguists in places like Papua New Guinea, Solomons and Vanuatu, where the diversity of local languages was a huge challenge (880 in Papua New Guinea, 77 in Solomons, and 110 in Vanuatu still extant today). Islanders thus combined their indigenous oral traditions with introduced literate traditions, rendered both in metropolitan and local languages. If we use the sources written in local languages and especially by Islander authors, new perspectives emerge. Latu Latai's research on the crucial significance of Samoan missionary men and women in the conversion of the western Pacific has revealed the critical importance of using not just the copious and well-thumbed texts of Western missionaries but archival sources in Samoan language and combining these with Samoan oral histories and subsequent ethnographic and historical materials.

More recently, historians of Christianity have been complementing these written sources with the visual record of drawings and photographs; they are reconnecting to the past through the preserved materiality of houses and dress; they are even excavating the past through archeological digs, not just what has been controversially called the "pre-history" of those without writing, but the more recent historical archaeology of Christian missions in Asia and the Pacific. Many of these different ways of knowing the past are exemplified in this volume.

Photographs are crucial to the stories of Christian conversion told in several chapters. Through a selection of superb black and white photos, Hyaewol Choi lets us imagine the "sightseeing" that Korean women did in the homes of American Protestant missionaries, not just witnessing but perhaps even coveting the grandeur and novelty of these dwellings with their cosy interiors outfitted with chairs and tables, rugs and soft furnishings, all part of the "object lesson" of the true Christian home. These photographs also suggest the central role of Korean nannies and domestic servants in maintaining the cleanliness and order of the homes of the American missionaries and document the emergence of centres of higher education in home management like Ewha College where Christian values and professional home economics were taught together. Anna-Karina Hermkens' ensemble of missionary photos from the Anglican Archive of Collingwood Bay PNG illustrates the dramatic corporeal transformation of Maisin girls as they converted to Christianity: their valuable body ornaments and tapa skirts removed, their identifying facial tattoos banned, their bare breasts covered with new cloth.

In her story of the relation between the Protestant missionary Amy Carmichael and Preena (the child Carmichael claimed to "rescue" and convert), Annie McCarthy uses the evidence of photographs to open up a space between Carmichael's violent maternalism and Preena's resistant agency. Early photographs in Carmichael's books present children like Preena not as individuals but in "ethnographic" mode, as typical representatives of their Hindu religion and caste, girls

destined to become *devadasi*. Later photographs taken both by Carmichael and a professional photographer are rather more personalised and familial, evoking the way in which Carmichael increasingly authored herself as a “mother.” While Carmichael’s texts offer many glimpses of Preena’s witty cheek and subversive questioning, the posed photographs rather suggest a poised Preena sitting in pure, virginal white robes or confidently teaching a class of younger converts.

Finally, Laura Prieto’s chapter suggests that, in the context of the American Protestant mission in the Philippines, photographs are not just ephemeral illustrations of what can be discerned in texts. A photograph taken in Mindanao before April 1922 is exemplary: it shows two American Protestant missionaries, Isabelle and Florence Fox, with four Filipina women who in the caption are collectively designated as “girls.” Although Prieto suggests that the erasure of indigenous individuality is “emblematic of the colonial archive,” here rather their particularity is pictorially evoked and their mutual relation suggested, across the borders of nation and race. Prieto reads self-consciousness, wariness and weariness in their expressions but also observes their connections through costume. They stand together in a row with the white women at either end, “enclosing” the unnamed Filipinas who are simultaneously subjects of Christian conversion and agents changing their clothes and changing their lives.

Other ways of knowing are employed elsewhere in the book. Anna-Karina Hermkens’ research was enhanced by working with the materiality of museum collections as well as texts, photographs and ethnographic observation and interviews. Margaret Jolly has learnt a great deal from looking at collections of Hawaiian quilts in museums and galleries in Honolulu and through observing, touching and wearing both indigenous “grass skirts” and introduced “island dress” in Vanuatu. Latu Latai and Holly Wardlow respectively offer a graphic sense of the materiality of the Samoan and the Huli house through the experience of their own dwelling in such houses. We have not in this volume made use of archaeological techniques to track the transformations of domesticities but historical archaeologists are at work digging in the diverse sites of Christian missions across the Pacific and Asia. All of these non-textual techniques evince a strong sense of the embodied material character in transformations in domestic and public life.

## Positionality and our present

Finally we want to briefly reflect on our own positionality as authors in this volume. We are a diverse congregation, some of us writing about the places where we were born or from where our ancestors came, others about places to which we have travelled as scholars, either through the embodied process

of “fieldwork” or through long sojourns in the archives. We are aware that regardless of our positions it is too easy to adopt a position of knowing scholarly superiority in relation to people living in the past or in a present remote from our own familiar experience. Indeed in response to our problematic of “paradoxes of domesticity,” articulated at our international conference, one of our authors felt compelled to ask “whose paradoxes?” and to ask whether our own lives were not also saturated with similar paradoxes. They surely are.

Writing from Australia, where our first woman (now past) Prime Minister was cruelly attacked not just for her policies but for her looks, for her living with an erstwhile hairdresser in a de facto relation, for not being a mother and for not being Christian, one can discern the ghosts of past debates about good Christian homes and the rival claims of married maternity and public professional independence. We live in an era where diverse new families are being created through new regimes of fertility control, adoption and gay marriage but where some are keenly resisting these changes with appeals to the traditional values and practices of Christian families. Perhaps this volume has shown that these “traditions,” forged in the fire of global Christian modernities, are rather less ironclad and more flexible and sinuous than some proclaim.



## **Part One**

# **Permeability and Paradox: Revisiting Domestic and Public in Asia and the Pacific**





# 1. The Missionary Home as a Pulpit: Domestic Paradoxes in Early Twentieth-Century Korea

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The English phrase “home, sweet home” was widespread in the Korean print media by the late 1920s. It signified a loving modern nuclear family with a husband and wife and their children living in a modern house (*munhwa chut’aek*; literally culture house) in peace and harmony.<sup>2</sup> Articles describing celebrities’ “home, sweet home” were frequently featured in popular magazines, offering an idealised form of modern family life. The first issue of the magazine, *Sin Kajǒng* (New Family), even included the musical notation for the song *Home, Sweet Home*.<sup>3</sup> The adoption of the phrase “home sweet home” signals a shift in the conception of domestic lifestyle. This image stands in sharp contrast with the centuries’ old Korean tradition of the extended family in which several generations would live together in a single household. The traditional family model followed a rather rigid code of proper behaviour in which the wife was expected to obey her husband and serve her in-laws with utmost dedication. Even the architecture of the traditional Korean house, especially that of the upper classes, physically separated living quarters for women and men with women housed in the inner chambers (*anch’ae*) and men residing in the outer chambers (*sarangch’ae*). Given this long-standing tradition, the new form of domesticity presented women with a stark contrast to the traditional domestic arrangement that meant close scrutiny by in-laws and the absence of love-based conjugal intimacy. In this vein, the emergence and popularity of the idea of “home, sweet home” deserves close analysis within the context of changes in domestic life in modern Korea.

In this chapter, I explore the genealogy of the idea of the modern home in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Korea within the context of Korea’s encounter

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1 This chapter draws on both Korean and English archival sources that include newspapers, journals, magazines and minutes of the annual meetings of missionary groups in Korea. They include: Minutes of the annual meetings of the Woman’s Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Korea, General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey; *Gospel in All Lands*; *The Korea Magazine*; *The Korea Methodist*; *The Korea Mission Field*; *The Korea Review*; *Woman’s Work*; *Woman’s Missionary Friend*; *Noble Journals* (Mattie Wilcox Noble); *Kaeb’yŏk*; *Sin kajǒng*; *Sin yŏsŏng*; *Tonga ilbo*; and *Yŏsŏng*.

2 Ch’oe Pyŏngt’aek and Ye Chisuk, *Kyŏngsŏng rip’ot’ŭ* (Capital Report), Seoul: Sigongsa 2009.

3 Yi Paeyong, *Han’guk yŏksa sok ūi yŏsŏngdŭl* (Women in Korean History), Seoul: Ōjini, 2005.

with American Protestant missionaries. I specifically examine the role of the missionary home as a model for what would constitute modern family and home life. In doing so, I map out the trajectory through which a new conception of domesticity moved from missionary homes to Korean homes mediated by native Bible women and experts in home economics, which emerged as an academic discipline.

One of the main goals American women missionaries had for their evangelical work was the establishment of “true Christian homes” as the foundation of true civilisation. Dana Robert demonstrates how the idea of the Christian home played a crucial role in shaping Anglo-American missionary thought and practice from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. It provided missionary women with a powerful rationale “for the participation of women in all aspects of mission work, including homemaking, evangelism, fund-raising, teaching, and even social reform.”<sup>4</sup> There is a certain paradox in the fact that these women who were holding up the ideal of domesticity were also frequently engaged in work outside the domestic sphere. This paradox is also found among those local women who were converted to Christianity by missionary women. While the missionary message and teachings centred on domestic values and religious piety in “women’s work for women,” local women did not confine what they learned from those teachings to the domestic sphere. Just like their missionary teachers, for some of the newly converted local women the acquisition of the skills of modern domesticity became a gateway for novel opportunities in the public domain as teachers, nurses, Bible women and social workers. Domestic paradoxes arose out of the tension between the idealised role of women in the private domain of the family and the new opportunities that arose for women to engage in public action.

Much scholarship has suggested that the boundary between the public and the private is fluid and that there is a gap between dominant gender ideology and women’s actual lives.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, as Elizabeth Thompson argues, the

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4 Dana Robert, “The ‘Christian home’ as a cornerstone of Anglo-American missionary thought and practice,” in *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706–1914*, ed. Dana L. Robert, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, pp. 134–65, p. 136.

5 Comparative histories of gender have shown that the division between public and private is a rather modern construct. Prior to the modern era, the majority of women, most often peasants, played a significant role in the productivity of the self-sufficient family unit. Furthermore, women’s moral influence and their significant role in family rituals and management in pre-modern periods stretched far beyond the private domain. It is only with the rise of modern capitalist industrialisation and urbanisation that a gendered division of labour, that assigned men to the public sphere and women to the private, arose. The development of a gendered division of labour has illuminating precedents. Barbara Welter’s 1966 analysis of the “cult of true womanhood” demonstrates how white middle-class women in the US and Great Britain in the nineteenth century colluded in the ideology of domesticity, a dogma they valued, even cherished. What is perhaps more important is that even this modern construct of gendered boundaries is fluid. Problematizing the rigid division between the private and the public in the modern era, historians have offered examples that illustrate how domesticity is not always limited to family life. See Catherine Hall, “The history of the housewife,” in *The Politics of Housework*, ed. Ellen Malos, London: Allison and Busby, 1980, pp. 44–71; Barbara Welter, “The

already dynamic relationship between the public and the domestic was further intensified with the advent of imperialism. Transnational colonial encounters and foreign missionary enterprises further triggered and contributed to a major shift in perspectives on the proper space for women and men and their engagement in the family and the broader society.<sup>6</sup>

Building on previous studies, I specifically investigate the ways in which the transcultural encounters between Korean women and American missionary women transformed the domestic arena. At the abstract level, both Koreans and missionary women shared the idea that their proper space would be in the domestic sphere;<sup>7</sup> however, they were a world apart in the material, social and cultural conditions they had in their respective domestic spheres. Ellasue Wagner, a Southern Methodist missionary in Korea from 1904 to 1940, expressed the American viewpoint in a 1908 article for a missionary magazine describing the typical Korean house as “dingy, dark, and generally very dirty ... we say that a Korean woman *has no home, only a house* [emphasis added].”<sup>8</sup> In the eyes of Koreans, in contrast, the missionary home must have seemed palatial, large and filled with exotic furnishings. The wide gap in material conditions between the missionary home and Korean household further highlighted vastly different cultural practices in marital relationships, household management and childrearing. In this vein, the transcultural encounters between Koreans and American women missionaries triggered a major shift in perspectives on domestic ethics and practices.<sup>9</sup>

The chapter starts with the initial experiences Koreans had with missionary homes and then traces the ways in which the missionary model was further propagated, hybridised and institutionalised by Korean “Bible women” and a new class of Korean women who had been trained in “home economics” at mission schools to become rational, professional and scientifically-minded housewives. Examining both discourses about and experiences of domesticity, I argue that the transcultural interactions between American missionaries and Koreans are best characterised as a creative tension between devotion to the private domain and active public engagement. That is, while such interactions

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cult of true womanhood: 1820–1860,” *American Quarterly* 18(2) (1966): 151–74; Leonore Davidoff, “Gender and the ‘great divide’: public and private in British gender history,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15(1) (2003): 11–27; Mary Ryan, “The public and the private good: across the great divide in women’s history,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15(2) (2003): 10–27; Elizabeth Thompson, “Public and private in Middle Eastern women’s history,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15(1) (2003): 52–69.

6 Thompson, “Public and private in Middle Eastern women’s history.”

7 Hyaewool Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

8 Ellasue Wagner, “A Korean home,” *The Korea Mission Field* 4(6) (June 1908): 90.

9 Thompson, “Public and private in Middle Eastern women’s history.”

reinforced the assumption that women belonged in the domestic arena, they simultaneously allowed women to engage at the national and even global level and thus to challenge established gender boundaries.

## **“The plainest missionary home is still a palace in the eyes of the native”**

In 1908, Mattie Noble, a prominent woman missionary who was in Korea from 1892 to 1934, wrote in her diary that “a Christian home in a non-Christian land is a great object lesson.”<sup>10</sup> That idea formed the basis for a strategy in which the missionaries were able to take advantage of the Koreans’ curiosity about the missionaries, their lifestyle, their dwellings and furnishings; they used their homes as models to illustrate the virtues of a Christian household. With the arrival of Western missionaries in the late nineteenth century, the missionary home became an object of curiosity among Koreans. One missionary suggested that the furnishings and the practices were so peculiar and so exotic that the Korean visitors took the missionary home to be the fanciful residences of “mountain spirits.”<sup>11</sup> To missionaries, the things commonly found in their homes—chairs, tables, rugs, sewing machines—were ordinary everyday household items; however, local people had never seen such paraphernalia and, for the most part, did not have the means to possess such things. As Annie Baird, a long-serving missionary who was in Korea from 1891 to 1916, noted, “The plainest missionary home is still a palace in the eyes of the native.”<sup>12</sup> The exotic furnishings were more than a simple curiosity; they were exotica coveted by Korean visitors. Many Koreans made spontaneous “sightseeing” visits to the homes of missionaries to see all of that extraordinary stuff.<sup>13</sup> Rather than seeing these visits as an inconvenience, the missionary woman looked upon them as opportunities to introduce the new religion to their captive audience. In her 1909 book *Daybreak in Korea*, Baird vividly describes one of these visits. A group of local women, led by a female shaman, asked to take a peek inside the missionary home having heard about all of the exotic things that could be found in foreigners’ houses and the new “doctrine” (read Christianity) that the missionaries had brought to Korea. The missionary woman invites the local women in to explore, allowing them free reign to examine the household items. However when she tries to introduce the new religion, to her dismay,

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10 Mattie Noble, *Noble Journals*, The General Commission on Archives and History, the United Methodist Church, Drew University, 1892–1934, vol. 4, p. 3a. The entry is titled “Pyeng Yang School April 1908,” in which Noble made a plea to potential donors in the US in support of the establishment of a foreign school for missionary children in Korea.

11 Annie Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909, p. 60.

12 Annie Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1913, p. 25.

13 Baird, *Daybreak in Korea*, pp. 58–63.

the Korean visitors continually interrupt her to ask questions like “How old are you?” “How many children do you have?” or “Are your parents living?” which she describes as “irrelevant.”<sup>14</sup> What’s more, the Koreans do not sit and listen compliantly. When the missionary woman says, “You all know about God, of course?” the Korean shaman reacts “with strong traces of resentment,” saying, “Who doesn’t know about God?... Do you take us for animals?”<sup>15</sup> In the end, the missionary’s tenet that Jesus Christ is the only “Lord and Saviour” was challenged by Koreans’ polytheism. In Baird’s account, for the Koreans, “The more objects of worship the better,” and thus the local women decided to “just worship him (Jesus Christ) along with all the rest.”<sup>16</sup> Such interactions indicate that the missionary home was a dynamic site in which vastly different material, religious and cultural thoughts and practices were assessed and negotiated for use in the local context.

In addition to welcoming these spontaneous “sightseeing” visits from the Koreans, the missionaries also offered invitations to local Koreans for more planned events. Mattie Noble, who kept a diary over the forty-two years of her service in Korea, describes one particular incident in a journal entry around Christmas in 1893. She writes how she wanted to invite the local women into her home to introduce the holiday. She had her Korean teacher “write me a nice invitation to my neighbor women to come in the afternoon.” To her surprise, “more than I invited heard of my plan” and “more than fifty women besides children” came. She prepared a table “well loaded with nuts, oranges and cakes” and borrowed from her missionary colleague a “baby organ.” She describes how none of the Korean visitors had heard about Christmas or Jesus, and she says, “What an opportunity to tell them the story.... I wanted to win their hearts for Jesus and let them see that we foreigners loved them.” She describes how she led her visitors in songs and prayer, after which she offered refreshments, which “the poor heathen women and children enjoyed.” To Noble, the Koreans’ overwhelming positive response to her invitation was a sure sign that this initial friendly encounter would certainly make Koreans welcome her into their homes more heartily.<sup>17</sup> She feels that her gambit paid off, as she reports that her experiences from home visitation brought her “in touch and sympathy with the women as no other work” did.<sup>18</sup> From these accounts it is clear that in these early encounters, the missionary home acted as a transnational space in which Koreans came into contact with a new form of domesticity that incorporated modern material conveniences and the new religion.

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14 Ibid., pp. 62–63.

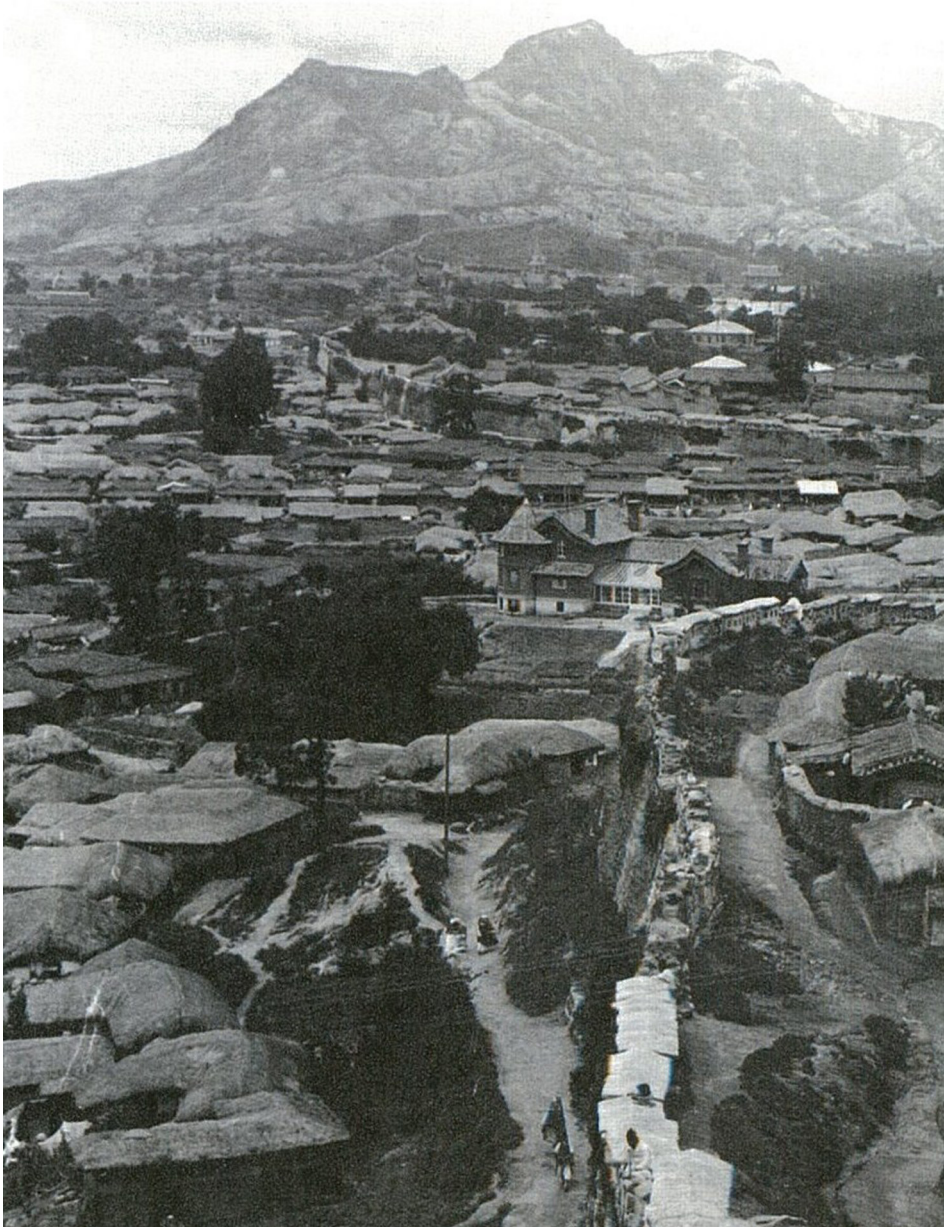
15 Ibid., p. 62.

16 Ibid., p. 63.

17 Mattie Noble’s journal, 25 December 1893. See also D.L. Gifford, *Every-Day Life in Korea*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898, pp. 148–49.

18 Mattie Wilcox Noble, “Report of Evangelistic work, Bible Institutes, and Three Day Schools, Pyeng Yang,” Annual Meeting of the Woman’s Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Korea in 1906, pp. 60–65.





**Figure 1. Horace Underwood's Western-style house**

Source: Sung-deuk Oak, *Hanbando tae puhŭng*, Seoul: Hongsŏngsa, 2009, p. 41.



**Figure 2. Missionary home interior, featuring unidentified woman**

Source: The Reverend Corwin & Nellie Taylor Collection, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

In the early period of the mission, missionaries often lived in houses that were in the style of the Korean upper class (*yangban*) and families of wealth, with some minor interior renovations such as installing glass windows, which did not exist in the traditional Korean house. However, it was not long before they began to build Western-style houses for their residences (Figure 1). These houses were typically funded through an appropriation by the foreign mission board, but some missionaries used their own private funds to build rather grandiose structures, which often drew harsh criticism from Western visitors passing by.<sup>19</sup> Often located in the most sought-after sites, missionary houses prominently stood out amid the humble, thatch-roofed Korean huts.<sup>20</sup> Prolific nineteenth-century world traveller, Isabella Bird Bishop (1831 to 1904), reports that French Catholic missionaries lived “in the wretched hovels of the people,

19 Katherine Ahn, *Chosŏn ūi ōdum ūl palk’in yŏsŏngdŭl* (Awakening the Hermit Kingdom: Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea), trans. Kim Sŏnggŭng, Seoul: P’oieama, 2009, p. 174.

20 Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, p. 26; Ahn, *Chosŏn ūi ōdum ūl palk’in yŏsŏngdŭl*, p. 26.

amidst their foul surroundings, and shar[ing] their unpalatable food and sordid lives.”<sup>21</sup> In contrast, American Protestant missionaries were for the most part living in houses that were substantial and reasonably comfortable.

In order to maintain their standard of living, missionaries would bring with them or import from the US the accoutrements of fine Western homes.<sup>22</sup> The missionary homes were typically equipped with modern Western furniture and artefacts that very few Koreans had ever seen before. A photograph of a Korean woman (Figure 2) illustrates some of the details of the missionary home interior, which typically included chairs, books, lamps, clocks, framed photographs, rugs and richly patterned wallpaper, but in some instances might also have contained such unusual furnishings as an organ, a furnace, a sewing machine or a typewriter.<sup>23</sup> As Dae Young Ryu demonstrates, the majority of missionaries came from the middle class or at least strove to obtain the status of the middle class, and most of them “endeavored to retain their American middle-class lifestyle” in the Korean mission field.<sup>24</sup> Thus, their furniture and other household items were very important in maintaining their middle-class identity and their standard for “a civilized lifestyle.” Not only home interiors but food and daily goods were also imported in bulk from companies like Montgomery & Ward in Chicago so they could continue their Western diet and lifestyle.<sup>25</sup> Arthur Brown, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions from 1895 until 1929, viewed American products as important economic means for introducing Western civilisation to mission fields and developing “desire” for these modern material products and ultimately for the lifestyle with which they were associated.<sup>26</sup> In a significant way, the furnishings and goods that could be found in the missionary household offered Koreans a glimpse of the modern home and a new lifestyle that would have been attractive even though it was not immediately available to the vast majority.

The missionary home put on display not only a drastically different material culture but also new kinds of marital relationships and child-rearing principles. From the missionaries’ viewpoint, the Korean ideal home differed from the

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21 Dae Young Ryu, “Understanding early American missionaries in Korea (1884–1910): Capitalist middle-class values and the Weber thesis,” *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 2009, (En ligne), 113 | janvier-mars 2001, mis en ligne le 19 août 2009, URL: <http://assr.revues.org/20190>, accessed 16 May 2012.

22 Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, p. 27.

23 Arthur J. Brown, *The Mastery of the Far East: The Story of Korea’s Transformation and Japan’s Rise to Supremacy in the Orient*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1919, p. 471. See also Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, p. 27.

24 Ryu, “Understanding early American missionaries in Korea,” p. 98. See also A. Deacon and M. Hill, “The problem of surplus women in the nineteenth century: secular and religious alternatives,” in *A Sociological Year Book of Religion in Britain*, no. 5, ed. D. Martin, London: SCM Press, 1972, pp. 87–102.

25 Mattie Noble’s journal, 22 October 1892; 22 June 1897; 6 December 1897. American missionaries also celebrated the Fourth of July, gathering together and enjoying “fireworks, we shot off a few fire crackers.... sang patriotic songs, and were treated with ice cream & cake.” Mattie Noble’s journal, 15 July, 1893.

26 Brown, *The Mastery of the Far East*, p. 471.



American in virtually every aspect.<sup>27</sup> To begin with, the arranged marriage system in Korea was in conflict with the love-based marriage advocated by American missionaries. Mary Cutler, a medical missionary in Korea from 1892 to 1939, conveys the missionary discomfort with Korean practices, saying that the “marriage customs here seem dreadful to those who have been acquainted with Christian rites. The bride has never seen the man whom she promises to honor, love, serve and obey.”<sup>28</sup> In the long-held tradition of arranged marriage, a union between a man and a woman was not a matter of the two individuals but of their families. The union was determined entirely by the parents. One can find a certain paradox in the missionary critique of arranged marriage in Korea, in that missionaries themselves were often constrained by familial or congregational pressures in seeking their own marital partners. Many married hastily prior to their departure to the mission field. Indeed, single and widowed missionaries often found their spouses in the same mission field while working. To be sure, in the case of such strategic marriages, individuals still had the power to choose their partners. Even so, missionaries expressed concern that there was no proper process for the prospective bride and groom to get to know each other prior to the wedding ceremony.

As mission work progressed, missionaries began to express some relief that a Christian form of courtship and matrimony had started to put down roots. James Gale, a Canadian Presbyterian missionary who was in Korea from 1888 to 1929, noted that a “new style of courtship” had emerged among Christian Koreans in which a Christian man and woman would exchange correspondence filled with quotations from Christian tracts to express their love and commitment to each other, foregoing the traditional match-making arranged by parents. Indeed, to the missionaries, the very basis of a Christian home began in the union of a Christian man and a Christian woman. This Christian home in turn offered the promise of proliferating and consolidating the Christian population.<sup>29</sup> Missionary teachers often worried about the possibility of their students marrying non-Christians. In this vein, the ideal union was one between graduates of Ewha Girls School and Paejae Boys School, both Methodist-run mission schools in Seoul. The medical missionary Mary Cutler pointed out that a woman who has married is said in Korean to have “gone to her mother-in-law” rather than creating her own *home*—a concept for which she claimed Korean had no equivalent term. Therefore, from the missionary viewpoint, the Christian *home* created a new ideal domesticity without “heathen characteristics.”<sup>30</sup>

27 “Home life in Korea,” *Woman’s Work* 16(11) (1901): 301.

28 Mary M. Cutler, “A Korean wedding,” *Woman’s Missionary Friend* 37(4) (April 1905): 131–32.

29 Minutes of the Third Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, held in Seoul, 9–14 May 1901, pp. 2–3.

30 Cutler, “A Korean wedding.”

In a 1931 article in *The Korea Mission Field*, Mattie Noble wrote with pride that “the Christian home cannot hide its light. Glimmers from it are carried away by visitors and workers in the home and too far away towns and villages.”<sup>31</sup> She describes running into a Korean man who had visited her house only once twenty years prior. He told her how he had become a Christian “through the influence of that one visit years before” and how it had inspired him to put “more beauty and cleanliness into his own home.”<sup>32</sup> To Noble, her own home was no longer a private space for the exclusive use of her family. Rather it was a public space, a model and a laboratory for the training of Korean converts and employees. Early on, she envisioned the missionary family serving as an ideal for Koreans to look up to and emulate. For her, the relationship between the missionary husband and wife demonstrated the ideal of companionship, in which the wife no longer has to be subservient but rather enjoys a fuller life with her husband, which was very different from the conventional marital relationship in old Korea.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the mission home exemplified the proper behaviour of children and good parenting. When Noble held classes at her home, Korean women often brought their children. She found that Korean children were “left untrained,” breaking things and acting like tyrants with their mothers. Noble “gave them [the mothers] a little talk on the government of children,” and she saw it begin to have some effect as Korean mothers started to discipline and punish children for their unruly behaviour.<sup>34</sup>

Noble sums up the gradual but lasting impact of the missionary home on the Korean woman and family:

She [the Korean woman] is learning, and she sees the bearing out of this truth in concrete, tangible form in the missionary home, by observing the wife and mother,—her freedom, her love, her authority ... this missionary mother has met people who have told her how, in the raising of the children, they have taken pattern after some methods they had seen used in the raising of children in the missionary home.<sup>35</sup>

Noble asserted that “the home shapes the civilization. Women make the home,” and missionary homes are important grounds “for the redemption of the heathen woman.”<sup>36</sup>

This presumed influence emanating from the missionary home was possible in part thanks to the servants and maids they hired locally. In his account of

31 Mattie Wilcox Noble, “The missionary home,” *The Korea Mission Field* 27(4) (1931): 75–77.

32 Noble, “The missionary home,” p. 76.

33 Mrs. A.M. Sharrocks, “Work among Korean women,” *The Korea Mission Field* 2(2) (1905): 33–35.

34 Mattie Noble’s journal, 1 February 1897.

35 Noble, “The missionary home,” pp. 75–77.

36 Jennie Fowler-Willing and Mrs. George Heber Jones (Margaret Bengal Jones), *The Lure of Korea*, Boston: Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1910, p. 7.

the day-to-day existence of American missionaries in Korea, Daniel Gifford, who served in the Korean mission field from 1888 to 1900, says that “as a rule, [missionaries] live with the same simplicity as ministers in the country villages of America.” However, there was one significant exception: missionary families hired servants, a practice that was associated with middle-class families in the US. Gifford notes that “the customs of the country require them [missionaries] to keep, at low wages, two or three servants.”<sup>37</sup> While he does not offer any deeper explanation of this “requirement,” it can be inferred that having servants was an expedient strategy by which missionaries could gain respect from the local community because the ability to hire servants suggested means and status—status that would have been equivalent to that of the upper class in the eyes of local Koreans. In addition, helping hands from Korean servants would have been essential for missionaries who were not familiar with the Korean lifestyle.

However, as Gifford implies, missionaries were aware of the basic contradiction between the simple life like that of their counterparts at home and a comfortable, even luxurious life surrounded by many servants.<sup>38</sup> Baird provides a detailed rationale for hiring servants in Korea. She says that ideally missionaries would do their work wholly on their own, but “as time passes on and our mental vision clears, we begin to see that the cheapest and most plentiful thing under heathen skies is human manual labor, and the scarcest and most precious is missionary time and strength.” More importantly, she continues, “We will soon realize, too, with an intensity that is almost painful, that we are face to face with the most difficult undertaking of our whole lives, the acquisition of an Eastern language, and we begin to see that upon the acquisition of this language, by ourselves and others like us, depends the eternal and in a large sense the temporal welfare of a whole people.”<sup>39</sup> Emphasising the priority of evangelisation as more deserving of the time and energy of the missionaries, Baird argues that utilising the cheap and plentiful labour from local people offers greater benefits than the general principle of leading a simple and humble life. She even argues that those who decide “to dispense with servants altogether” and adopt a plainer but more laborious option (doing their own work) “are not able, as a rule, to prove that they can become as efficient missionaries.”<sup>40</sup>

To be certain, a missionary wife’s domestic responsibilities might have prevented her from engaging in her original evangelical ambitions outside the home, especially when she had the responsibilities of child-rearing.<sup>41</sup> However, a squad of servants ready to assist her with domestic chores would afford her

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37 Gifford, *Every-Day Life in Korea*, p. 157.

38 Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, p. 22.

39 Ibid, p. 23.

40 Ibid, p. 24.

41 Gifford, *Every-Day Life in Korea*, p. 157; Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984, p. 100.

more time to devote to evangelical purposes. In fact, the domestic space of the home became a legitimate and expedient venue for achieving both religious goals and domestic projects.<sup>42</sup> In this vein, it is illuminating to look at Mattie Noble's typical daily routine. Her diary entry for February 11, 1908 includes an outline of that day's schedule:

a.m. Planned for the Household for the day.

Working on a Montgomery Ward & Co. order for the household for six months' use.

Call from a Bible woman and consultation over the work.

12. m. Attended an ordination service at the Church. Mr. Rufus was ordained Deacon.

2 to 3:15 Held a women's meeting.

4:00 Attended an infant baptism service (Evelyn Becker's).

7:00 p.m. Attended the revival service at the Church.

We can see that her day was split between household planning in the morning and training and outreach activities in the afternoon and evening. The ready availability of servants at extremely low cost—five dollars per month was the average wage for a servant—certainly enabled the missionary wives to use more of their time and energy for the “welfare of a whole people.”<sup>43</sup>

While the presence of household help offered some freedom for the missionary wives to engage more directly in the work of the mission, it was not without problems and frustrations. The missionaries had their own sense of the ideal domestic state and proper domestic practices, and they frequently expressed chagrin, even anger, at the inability of the uninitiated Koreans to live up to Western standards. Noble referred to the training and working with servants as “our great trial out here” because of the Koreans having “so much disease and lice and being so stupid.”<sup>44</sup> She wrote extensively about her largely negative experiences with servants in her home, especially in her early years in Korea. She hired local men and women as cooks, housekeepers and babysitters (*amah*). Since these Koreans had no experience with Western-style domestic practices, she had to teach them almost everything. By the time the Nobles arrived in Korea in 1892, Korean cooks had recipes for Western dishes available to them in

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42 Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, “Introduction: gendered missions at home and abroad,” in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, ed. Huber and Lutkehaus, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, pp. 1–25, p. 13.

43 Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, p. 63.

44 Mattie Noble's journal, 17 October 1894.

Korean. Still they needed a great deal of training. One day Noble was planning a dinner for three guests and ordered a menu: tomato soup; canned beef, fresh corn and potatoes and canned peas; canned pineapples, ice cream and nuts and lemonade. She thought the cooks “ought to do very well” given the recipes in Korean, but she expressed dismay at the cooks’ inability to follow instructions properly and complete the menu.<sup>45</sup> She describes Korean cooks and servants as dirty, untrustworthy, and very slow to learn. In a journal entry she offers a list of items that had been stolen from her family by Korean domestic workers.<sup>46</sup> In another entry she recounts the discovery that two of the people she had hired as servants—one as an *amah* and the other as a cook—were found to have syphilis. She wrote in her journal in 1894:

Our Amah and Boy had great body lice,<sup>47</sup> and I had commanded them to get rid of them or they could not stay. We thought it no use to send them away, as the next ones we hired might in all probability be the same, but today found out that they have syphilis, and now they must go. Oh, how badly I feel that they have been here at all. She has very, very little to do with our baby and how glad I am that it is so. Arthur says that these people are making us distrustful, for the great majority deceive so.<sup>48</sup>

Her frustration is summarily expressed in her journal entry of December 6, 1897. She writes, “I am sick and tired of these cheating, thieving dull people. Every once in a while I get such a nervous headache over their exasperating ways, I don’t know what to do. Everything that is bought wears one because they cheat so.” At the same time, she wonders, “But why do I write so, I do love the people, and thoroughly enjoy doing for them and teaching them, and consider it a great privilege, but I do think that I will get old and gray-haired sooner than if we lived in America.”<sup>49</sup>

She remarks on her discontent and frustration with the wide gap between her own standard of domestic management based on the lifestyle of the white middle-class family in America and certain realities she faced in Korea. However, at the same time she expresses guilt over complaining about Korean hired help. Over time, her “great trial” in the handling of her servants subsided, perhaps because she gained a firmer grip on the training and management of servants and communicating her preferences about domestic style to them, or perhaps because the Western style of domesticity became more familiar and more commonly practised among Korean locals.

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45 Ibid., 28 July 1893.

46 Ibid., 11 January 1895.

47 Noble calls male servants “boys.”

48 Arthur Noble is Mattie’s husband. Mattie Noble’s journal, 17 October 1894.

49 Mattie Noble’s journal, 6 December 1897.

Despite the trials that missionaries had with servants, the hard work, faithfulness and full dedication of these servants to missionary families were vital for the daily lives of missionaries in Korea. In fact, Annie Baird suggested that difficulties with servants arose “not from unwillingness to serve but from *over-willingness*.”<sup>50</sup> For a meagre monthly wage of five dollars, servants did practically everything—cooking, sewing, cleaning, delivering mail, carrying water from a distant well, cutting wood and cultivating gardens. As the missionary home frequently played host to visiting dignitaries, servants were often responsible for preparing and cooking for quite lavish dinner parties featuring Western-style menus and service.<sup>51</sup>

And over time some servants and *amahs* came to do more than simply work to maintain the household. Edith Parker Johnson, a Northern Presbyterian missionary who was stationed in Korea from 1897 to 1913, marvelled at the effective and sincere work of her *amah*, who led a prayer session for visiting local women in her home. She wrote:

One day some women came saying they wanted to learn about the Jesus doctrine. After talking to them for some time, I called in the amah to tell them the story of Christ in better Korean than I could muster. She spoke a few words and then, to my astonishment, said: “Let us bow in prayer,”... she offered prayer ... Christian women in America with centuries of Christian training behind them, sometimes find it difficult to lead in prayer before others, so I think our amah has begun well her Christian life.<sup>52</sup>

Examples like this demonstrate how the missionary home evolved into a place where training in a modern form of domesticity and successful evangelisation came to be intermingled. While working as servants and *amahs*, Korean employees were not only instructed in how to serve and maintain a household in the Western style but also became perhaps the most intensive targets of the missionaries’ evangelisation efforts. Some of them later worked as Bible women, mediating between the missionary home and Korean homes. In this way, the transnational experience of modern domesticity became inextricably bound together with Christian doctrine.

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50 Baird, *Inside Views of Mission Life*, p. 62.

51 For instance, on 12 February 1908, Mattie Noble hosted an elaborate dinner in honour of Bishop Harris, who was visiting Korea. Fifteen guests, including the Korean Governor in P’yŏngyang and the Japanese Resident of P’yŏngyang as well as the Bishop and American missionaries, were present, and a six-course dinner was served: 1. Bouillon; 2. Steamed fish with white dressing and mashed potatoes; 3. Roast bustard and potatoes, dressing, baked beans, cabbage salad, and gravy; bread, jam, and pickles; 4. Pumpkin pie; 5. Oranges, apples, and peanuts; and 6. Coffee.

52 *Woman’s Work* 15(11) (1900): 306–07.

The missionary home served as an informal pulpit as well as a model for imparting what constitutes the “ideal home.” As an anonymous “missionary wife” claims, “the missionary’s wife ... knows how to make home the dearest, sweetest and most charming spot in all the world for the inmates of that home. Who can measure the influence of a well-ordered home in a heathen land?”<sup>53</sup> A missionary wife would hire local women to cook, clean, sew and do laundry. These hired local women then had to be trained to perform the household tasks as an American housewife would do them, so the missionary household became a site through which these domestic ideals came to be known and practised by Koreans.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, it was often in the missionary home where missionary wives could engage in the evangelisation efforts of the mission. These missionary wives opened their homes to offer Bible classes for the converted, to train Korean Bible women, to hold sewing classes during which they would discuss the gospel, and to bring young people in for choir practice.<sup>55</sup> In addition, Korean visitors or workers observed new disciplinary methods in child rearing. While the wealth of cultural and material experience that could be found in the missionary home certainly had an impact, it is also important to note that a relatively small number of Koreans had the opportunity to actually visit one. In this context, those Korean servants, *amahs* and the other local women who received certain training from missionaries became an important conduit between the missionary home and the greater Korean population. In this regard, the role of the Bible women was perhaps most prominent as the mediator in bringing together the different lifestyles and negotiating the tensions that existed between them.

## Evangelising modern domesticity

The term “Bible women” (*chōndo puin*) refers to those Korean women who had converted to Christianity and shown such dedication to church work that they were hired with mission funds to serve as personal helpers to women missionaries and work under missionary supervision.<sup>56</sup> Their primary task was to bring the Bible and religious tracts to Korean women through a program of home visitations, often in remote villages. The number of missionaries was always limited, and they were largely stationed in bigger cities. Because of these limitations in personnel, it was difficult for missionaries themselves to visit places far away from their mission station. It was Bible women who filled this void, and they became indispensable agents in propagating Christian doctrine to

53 “Missionaries’ wives,” *The Korea Methodist* 1(11) (10 September 1905): 146–47.

54 Ibid.

55 H.G. Appenzeller, “Woman’s Work in Korea,” *Gospel in All Lands* (September 1891), p. 424; *The Korea Mission Field* 34(11) (Nov. 1938): 233.

56 Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea*, pp. 65–66.



the wider population, especially those who lived in remote villages. In addition, the missionaries' limitations in linguistic and cultural proficiency often would not allow them to have satisfactory communication with local women, and the local women's suspicion or even fear of foreigners also acted as an impediment to interaction. In this vein, Kate Cooper (1908–1957) noted that “many of the country women are dependent almost entirely upon the Bible women for all their help.”<sup>57</sup> The devotion of the Bible women to the task of delivering the gospel to the Korean people and their success in that task was a continual theme in the mission reports and personal accounts of the missionaries. Lura McLane Smith (1911–1950) wrote, “It is impossible to estimate fully the value of such work as they [the Bible women] are doing.”<sup>58</sup> Bible women showed “such aptitude in the work of rescuing others” and were willing to work for little pay, so in the minds of most missionaries “the good resulting makes the support of a Bible-woman one of the best paying investments which can be made.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Rosetta Sherwood Hall (1890–1935), a Methodist medical missionary in P’yŏngyang, complained that “we are now obliged to pay our servants more than our Bible women receive, and that does not seem right.”<sup>60</sup>

Generally being a Bible woman was a full-time commitment. Missionaries faced great difficulty in recruiting “able-bodied, efficient women” who could devote their time fully to evangelical work. Custom forbade young women from travelling, and tradition placed heavy demands on women in their prime to perform domestic duties.<sup>61</sup> For those reasons, widows and older women were often preferred for these positions as they had fewer family obligations and were able to travel more freely.<sup>62</sup>

The first Bible women did not all become literate; however, literacy in Korean eventually became a requirement for anyone hoping to become a Bible woman. The Bible women needed to be literate in order to read the Bible and teach it to local women. Furthermore, attaining literacy turned out to be a crucial factor in their gaining certain respect in the broader community, especially among the women with whom they interacted, as literacy was a rare achievement among Korean women at the time. While literacy in Chinese was more prestigious, Korean literacy still had value. In this context, as Nellie Pearce Miller of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Korea noted, many new local women had come to her Bible School “simply because they want to study.”<sup>63</sup>

57 Kate Cooper, “The Bible woman,” *The Korea Magazine* (January 1917): 6–10.

58 Lura McLane Smith, “Korean Bible women,” *The Korea Mission Field* (October 1937): 213; Mattie Wilcox Noble, “Conditions in Korea,” *Woman’s Missionary Friend* 39(5) (May 1907): 172; “Bible women,” *The Korea Review* 6 (1906): 140–47, p. 146.

59 *Woman’s Missionary Friend* 27(9) (March 1896): 259.

60 *Ibid.*, 38(8) (August 1906): 295.

61 “Bible women,” p. 140.

62 Cooper, “The Bible woman,” pp. 6–10.

63 *Woman’s Missionary Friend* 37(8) (August 1905): 291.





**Figure 3. Women's Bible Institute, Taiku in 1917**

Source: Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

Bible women received their training from missionary women both informally in the missionary home and more formally at Bible institutes (Figure 3).<sup>64</sup> They learned how to read vernacular Korean and received lessons on Christian religious texts in addition to receiving training in such skills as basic mathematics, writing, hygiene, physiology, cooking and care of the sick.<sup>65</sup> They were also instructed in some principles of teaching and lesson planning.<sup>66</sup> Women who completed the curriculum successfully were awarded a diploma. Olga Schaffer (1910–1916), a Methodist missionary, observed that “the Koreans ‘love’ diplomas, and their good prestige depends largely upon the possession of one or more.”<sup>67</sup> Thus the promise of a diploma acted as an inducement to “inspire faithful attendance and enthusiasm to the end.” Receiving a diploma would have been an aspiration for many Korean women, and the pride they took in that achievement was reflected in the fact that they would “frame it and hang it on the wall of their little home.”<sup>68</sup> It was a public endorsement that signified these Bible women were able to read and teach. More importantly, it was a public recognition that these women were qualified to do public work.

64 Sung Deuk Oak, ‘Comment,’ in *Sources of Korean Christianity*, ed. Sung Deuk Oak, Seoul: Han’guk kidokkyo yŏn’guso, 2004, p. 188.

65 Miss Butts, “Report of workers’ class of Bible Institute, Pyeng Yang,” *The Korea Mission Field* 9(1) (1913): 11; Margaret Best, “Courses of study and rules of admission of the Pyeng Yang Presbyterian Women’s Bible Institute,” *The Korea Mission Field* 6(6) (June 1910): 152–54.

66 N.R. Scholes, “Developing women leaders,” *The Korea Mission Field* 12(7) (1916): 187–89.

67 Olga Schaffer, “Yeng Byen Women’s Bible Class,” *The Korea Mission Field* 9(11) (1913): 284–86.

68 “A Bible Class in Seoul,” *Woman’s Missionary Friend* 53(4) (April 1921): 124–26.

Upon completing their preparatory education, they were assigned to lead small groups of women in the study of the Bible and to perform other church activities under the guidance of the women missionaries.

Bible women took advantage of women's desire for literacy and taught *han'gŭl* (Korean writing system) to "those desirous of learning to read," using those lessons as opportunities to teach the Bible and the gospel during these home visits.<sup>69</sup> And just as missionary women used their own missionary homes as a pulpit, the Bible women turned the Korean homes into pulpits. In doing so, Bible women represented a new form of womanhood that incorporated skills of literacy and teaching, public work and unprecedented mobility across various social divisions.

In addition to literacy, Bible women's modern knowledge of the work of the domestic sphere, including nutrition, hygiene, home management and child-rearing were also regarded as an attractive quality. During the training sessions run by missionaries, prospective Bible women received "lessons in cooking, sewing, canning, gardening and other things for the making of a better home."<sup>70</sup> These secular classes were sometimes open to non-Christians as well as Christians because there was significant interest on the part of local women, and missionaries saw this as another opportunity to gain converts. The popularity of the knowledge of home management and child-rearing was manifested most clearly in the work of the Seoul Evangelistic Center (*T'aehwa yŏjagwan* in Korean; literally "the Garden of Heavenly Peace"), which was established in 1921 with financial support from the Boards of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society and the Women's Council of the Southern Methodist Church. The Centre offered instruction in a variety of skills, including English language, piano, organ and singing lessons, and "everything from the canning of tomato juice for their babies to the cooking of a foreign meal for the husbands."<sup>71</sup>

Within the Centre, there were three departments: Evangelistic, Educational and Social Services and Public Health. The department of Public Health and Child Welfare, which was organised in 1924 by Elma Rosenberger (1921–1940) and her Korean assistant, was hugely popular and influential. Rosenberger recalls that when the work of public health began in 1924, "the word *Public Health* [original italics] was not even known" among the public.<sup>72</sup> This public health program started with medical missionaries and their Korean assistants making visits to homes to treat mothers and their children. Newspapers reported this new practice, and word spread. In the opinion of many missionaries, Korean

69 "Bible women," pp. 140–47.

70 Bessie Oliver, "Rural evangelistic work," *The Korea Mission Field* 33(10) (October 1937): 211–12.

71 Oliver, "Rural evangelistic work," pp. 211–12.

72 Elma Rosenberger, "Public health and child welfare work in Seoul," in *Fifty Years of Light*, Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Seoul, Korea, 1938, pp. 31–33.

children were not being brought up properly and their health and well-being were often imperilled. Mrs. William B. McGill (1889–1905), a Methodist missionary, expressed concern that “Korean babies are not treated hygienically. They are exposed to all kinds of danger—falling, burning, diseases, dirt.”<sup>73</sup> In this context, the Public Health and Child Welfare program of the Seoul Evangelistic Center initiated a pioneering program that provided instruction in scientific techniques of child rearing through “weekly well-baby clinics, weekly mother’s clubs, a milk station from which mothers can get supplies for their babies, free bathing station, home visitation work” (Figure 4). The importance of raising healthy children and the widespread acceptance of modern child-rearing practices is reflected in the rise of the phenomenon of baby shows. When the first “Baby Show” was announced in 1925, one thousand babies were entered into the competition.<sup>74</sup> By the late 1930s, “public health” was “blazoned on the front pages of magazines and newspapers, and regular health programs were given over the radio.”<sup>75</sup> Indeed, in the 1930s two major women’s magazines, *Sin Kajöng* (New Family) and *Yösöng* (Women), which were financed by the daily newspapers, *Tonga ilbo* (Tonga Daily) and *Chosön ilbo* (Chosön Daily) respectively, filled their pages with abundant information on scientific childcare and hygienic homemaking.

Together with trained nurses, Bible women provided basic information about public health and new home management skills not only in the city streets but also in remote rural villages. Bessie Oliver (1912–1958), a Southern Methodist missionary, reported details of rural evangelical work that she and some Korean Bible women had done to help create happier homes. They established a regular set of practices that included church services accompanied by “talks on health, home improvement and other helpful subjects,” as well as “sewing, knitting and cooking institutes.” In order to provide the needed hands-on experience, “a Demonstration House for trying out home improvement projects” was built. It had “one room 16’x24’ for classes and club work and a kitchen 8’x24’, also a bedroom 8’x12’. Our house has many windows. We have tried to put in improvements and conveniences within the reach of the average Korean home.”<sup>76</sup> This Demonstration House supported itself in part with a small-scale canning business that used peas, butterbeans, corn, tomatoes and peaches produced in local gardens, an effort that was supposed to help people bring a wider variety

73 W.B. McGill, “The Korean baby,” *The Korean Repository* (March 1898): 92. The fact that a six-year-old girl “is not weaned yet!” was also shocking to some missionaries. See Lulu Ribble Wells, “Village work in Korea,” *Woman’s Work* 17(9) (1902): 266.

74 Elma Rosenberger, “The Seoul Social Evangelistic Center,” in *Fifty Years of Light*, pp. 28–30.

75 Elma Rosenberger, “Public health and child welfare work in Seoul,” in *Fifty Years of Light*, pp. 31–33. By the late 1930s, the Seoul Evangelistic Center’s membership reached 2,890. Members were affiliated with a variety of clubs, clinics and societies for women and children.

76 Oliver, “Rural evangelistic work,” pp. 211–12.

of vegetables in their diet in addition to supporting the Demonstration House.<sup>77</sup> They also introduced a “Homes Day,” which was intended to help “every church member, and as many non-Christians as we can reach to make their homes more happy; more helpful; more beautiful; more peaceful.” During Homes Day, participants received booklets on how to make “better homes,” including table etiquette in Korea and elsewhere, as well as lessons on games and crafts for children and first-aid.<sup>78</sup>



**Figure 4. A clinic at the Seoul Evangelistic Center**

Source: General Commission on Archives and History, the United Methodist Church, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.

Bible women played a key mediating role in conveying and distributing the ideals of the Christian home based on what they observed and learned from women missionaries’ modern homemaking and child rearing. Their cultural affinity with and intimate knowledge of the Korean home and family made them ideal candidates for delivering new domestic knowledge and adapting that knowledge to the Korean circumstances. In addition, Bible women themselves presented a new model of womanhood. They were literate, earned wages, worked outside the home and exercised leadership roles in public forums such as Bible classes and social service programs. While they advocated a new domesticity,

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77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

their roles and activities took them far beyond conventional domestic duties. As with missionary women, the very emphasis on domesticity and religious piety provided Bible women with social mobility through their literacy and further education and new opportunities to work in the public and gain independence.

## Home, sweet home

The model provided by the missionary home and the lessons Bible women delivered to local Korean women introduced the idea of better homes, more scientific child-rearing and more hygienic family management. This type of domestic knowledge was popular among those drawn to the Christian church and social service programs for the underprivileged. However, a more systematic training program within the framework of formal schooling began when Ewha College established the Department of Home Economics in 1929 after many years of fundraising targeting Christian groups of different denominations as well as individual donors. Ewha College was the only institution of higher learning for women in Korea, and up until that time it had had only two departments—a Department of Literature and a Department of Music.<sup>79</sup> To be sure, the teaching of domestic skills had been an established practice at mission schools for girls from their inception in the late nineteenth century. Missionary and Korean teachers taught sewing, embroidery and cooking as important skills for girl students. However, “home economics” as a defined discipline with a foundation in legitimate scientific principles was not yet well known. It was only when Harriett Morris (1921–1959), a Methodist missionary and teacher, joined the faculty of Ewha in 1921 that classes in Home Economics were offered to train young women to become experts on home management as well as scientifically-minded housewives. Morris received a B.A. in home economics from the Kansas State University in 1918 and taught the subject for several years before she joined the Korea mission in 1921. At Ewha, she began to introduce Western cooking techniques and Western notions of nutrition that included awareness of calories and vitamins.<sup>80</sup>

79 The essay further elaborates on fund-raising efforts as follows:

The teachers tried hard to get money for another and now the Literary and Music Departments can say they have gained [a] sister. At first the faculty had Yen 10,000 given by Miss Hillman and Miss Morris' father, which was used in preparing classrooms, cooking and sewing laboratories. In America the Southern Methodist women think specially of a Home Economics Department in Korea and decided to send \$1,000 more a year. The Canadian Woman's Missionary Society also is going to send \$2,000 next year. With this money Ewha plans to prepare more complete equipment and pay more in teachers' salaries as the number of classes increases. We must pray for the whole college but music and literary girls must pray especially for their baby sister. Let's try hard to help her grow without any interruption. *The Korea Mission Field* 27(3) (March 1931): 58.

80 *Ewha kajǒnghak 50 nyǒnsa*, Seoul: Ewha yǒja taehakkyo kajǒng taehak, 1979, pp. 173–75.



A crucial impetus for further development of the field came in 1923 when Ava B. Milam (b. 1884–d. 1976), a professor of home economics at Oregon State University, visited Ewha as part of her Asian tour from 1922 to 1924 to “spread the gospel of home economics” in the words of Helen Schneider.<sup>81</sup> She also helped to create a scholarship program at Oregon State for Asian students majoring in home economics. Several Ewha graduates received this scholarship, obtaining training under Milam’s supervision and becoming leading experts in the field. The first Korean recipient of this scholarship was Kim Hamna, who received an M.A. from Oregon State in 1927. Around that time Harriette Morris returned to Korea after she had obtained an M.A. at Columbia University. Kim and Morris joined together to advance a plan to establish a Department of Home Economics with generous contributions from donors including Mary Hillman, a former missionary from 1900 to 1928, who had served as acting president of Ewha from 1904 to 1905, and various missionary organisations affiliated with Southern Methodist, Canadian, and Australian churches and the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society. In 1929, Ewha was authorised by the government to establish a Department of Home Economics.

The department offered courses not only on domestic skills, such as cooking, dressmaking, housekeeping and child health, but also on pure science subjects, including chemistry, physics, biology and bacteriology. To ensure graduates were well-rounded in both mind and body, the department also required students to take social studies, English, ethics, religion, music and physical education.<sup>82</sup> Teaching the theories and principles of modern domesticity was not the primary goal. Rather, they heavily emphasised the practical application of domestic and scientific knowledge to the reality of the Korean home. To this end, the department built Home Management House, a two-story structure designed in the style of a Korean home (Figure 5). The house was made available to students with advanced standing, who stayed there for the six months prior to their graduation, practising what they had learned in the classroom in an actual domestic setting, doing all the basic domestic tasks from grocery shopping to planning meals, cleaning the house, gardening and undertaking home improvement projects. They even had a child named Pobae to provide them with first-hand experience in child-rearing (Figure 6).<sup>83</sup> The faculty also stressed the importance of economic independence by teaching craftwork that could be done at home.<sup>84</sup>

81 Helen Schneider, “The professionalization of Chinese domesticity: Ava B. Milam and home economics at Yenching University,” in *China’s Christian Colleges: Cross-Cultural Connections, 1900–1950*, ed. Daniel H. Bays and Ellen Widmer, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 125–46, p. 132. Milam is the author of *Adventures of a Home Economist*, Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1969.

82 *Kajǒng kwahak taehak 70 nyǒnsa*, Seoul: Ewha yǒja taehakkyo kajǒng kwahak taehak, 1999, p. 23.

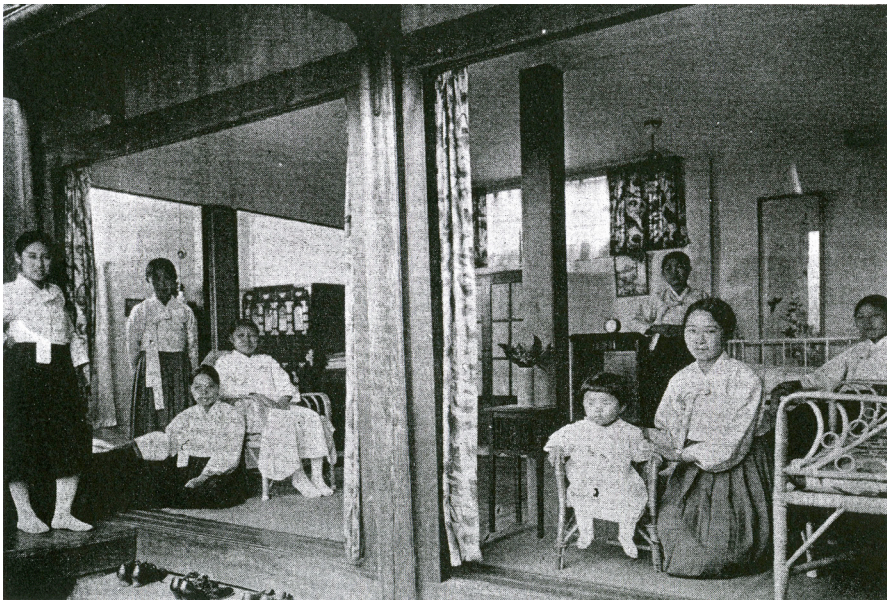
83 *Kajǒng kwahak taehak 70 nyǒnsa*, p. 26.

84 Ewha 100 nyǒnsa p’yǒnch’an wiwǒnhoe, *Ewha 100 nyǒnsa* (The Hundredth History of Ewha Womans University), Seoul: Ewha yǒja taehakkyo ch’ulp’anbu, 1994, pp. 173–74, 204–07.



**Figure 5. Home Management House Opening in 1936**

Source: Ewha yŏja taehakkyo kajŏng taehak, *Ewha kajŏnghak 50 nyŏnsa*, Seoul: Ewha yŏja taehakkyo kajŏng taehak, 1979, p. 15.



**Figure 6. Inside the Home Management House at Ewha**

Source: Ewha yŏja taehakkyo kajŏng taehak, *Ewha kajŏnghak 50 nyŏnsa*, Seoul: Ewha yŏja taehakkyo kajŏng taehak, 1979, p. 14.

Ewha graduates were spearheading new trends including modern domesticity. *Tonga ilbo*, a leading daily newspaper, considered graduates of Ewha to be the ones who “hold the key to the Korean culture.”<sup>85</sup> Pang Sinyŏng (1870–1977), the head of Ewha’s Home Economics Department in 1936, told a reporter from *Tonga ilbo* that her department aimed to produce women who were appropriate for Korean homes. Furthermore, Pang emphasised that, “more and more students wanted to study home economics for the purpose of becoming *true housewives*, and after graduation many of them did become *full-time housewives* [emphases added].”<sup>86</sup>

Ewha authorities’ emphasis on *Korean* homes and *true housewives* was noteworthy. Korean critics had expressed deep concerns about the missionaries’ influence on Korean women because they were certain that these Korean women “would be unfitted to live in the homes from which they had come.”<sup>87</sup> They suspected mission schools to be a training ground for Western-style knowledge and practices that would bear little relevance to the Korean reality. At that time, the majority of Koreans were poor peasants and led a lifestyle that was vastly different from that of missionaries and the tiny number of Korean elites. There was not a sizable middle class in Korea that was equivalent to the middle class in the US or Japan at the time.<sup>88</sup> Even in the 1930s, the overall situation did not change much. In 1932 Ko Yŏngsuk, a woman intellectual, pointed out that women could learn about hygiene, nutrition and scientific child-rearing, but the social reality was that the majority of women simply did not have the time or financial resources that would allow them to practise modern child-rearing and home maintenance.<sup>89</sup> It was one thing to learn about the benefit of “milk, soap, clean clothes, mosquito nets, orange juice, big airy rooms, etc. they [mothers] need for their babies.” However, it was another matter entirely whether those mothers could actually afford all these modern products.<sup>90</sup> In this vein, modern homemaking and child-rearing that was appropriate to the Korean family became a vital issue in granting legitimacy to such education and appealing to the general public. To that end, school authorities tended to stress that they were not interested in teaching “theories” or “academic debates” but rather very practical skills with a strong sense of reality and adaptability.

85 *Tonga ilbo*, 6 February 1936, p. 6.

86 “Kyomun ūl naonūn sae ilkkun ūl ch’ajasŏ” (Visiting newly graduating students), *Tonga ilbo*, 6 February 1936, p. 6.

87 Marie E. Church and Mrs. R.L. Thomas, “Lulu E. Frey who went to Korea,” in *The One Who Went and The One She Found*, Women’s Foreign Missionary Society, 1929, pp. 150–57, pp. 152–53.

88 Kim Sujin, “1920–30 nyŏndae sin yŏsŏng tamnon kwa sangjing ūi kusŏng” (Excess of the modern: three archetypes of the new woman and colonial identity in Korea, 1920s to 1930s), Ph.D. dissertation, Seoul National University, 2005, pp. 271–72.

89 Ko Yŏngsuk, “Yi Kwangsu ssi ūi mangdam” (A rash statement: rebuttal to Yi Kwangsu), *Sin yŏsŏng* 6(11) (1932): 14–16.

90 Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea*, p. 83.



That is, they would teach how to make a stew with locally available ingredients or how to run any kind of household, from one bound by extreme poverty to one of exceeding wealth.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the promise of spreading modern domestic knowledge, there continued to be deep anxiety and suspicion about “educated women,” who were often accused of causing instability and disharmony in the family. Ko Hwanggyōng (b. 1909–d. 2000), who served as head of the Home Economics Department at Ewha from 1940 to 1945, captures public sentiment in her essay on women and the family system in Korea. Taking women’s education as the key factor in bringing about major changes to the family system, Ko describes what happens when an educated woman marries and begins her family life. Ko suggests that, given the small number of educated women, they could not immediately change the overall family customs or family traditions, but their preferences may eventually lead to changes in the family that favours, for instance, love marriage over arranged marriage or raising children according to the parents’ own beliefs without interference from their in-laws. Ko points out that the majority of educated women still conform to traditional family ethics and practices, but their modern perspectives have brought about a “dual life” (*ijung saenghwal*) in the sense that they are caught between an ideal and reality; however, the duality confronting the current generation may be resolved in the next generation once this novel, foreign-seeming ideal has become more widespread.<sup>92</sup>

One of the manifestations of the growing desire for modern home life was the circulation and consumption of the song, *Home, Sweet Home*. The song was so widespread that it was often played at concerts. Young children and students learned the song.<sup>93</sup> Novelists adopted the image of “home, sweet home” in the portrayal of newly married couples, invoking the idea of a nuclear family based on love, respect and sense of selfhood.<sup>94</sup> Popular magazines were eager to report on the “home, sweet home” of well-known public figures, embracing the dynamics between the husband and wife, the child-rearing methods that they used, diet and nutrition, and aspects of “culture house” (*munhwa chut’aek*)—modern residential architecture.<sup>95</sup> This popular image of “home, sweet home” in the 1920s and 1930s is in dramatic contrast with the Korean home American missionaries first observed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As mentioned earlier, the medical missionary Mary Cutler described how

91 *Tonga ilbo*, 11 February 1936, p. 5; 29 January 1938, p. 3.

92 Ko Hwanggyōng, “Chosŏn yŏsŏng kwa kajok chedo” (Korean women and family system), *Yŏsŏng* 2(10) (October 1937): 36–39.

93 *Tonga ilbo*, 29 May 1931, p. 3; 11 February 1936, p. 5; 24 January 1936, p. 6.

94 *Tonga ilbo*, 5 August 1933, p. 2; Pak Yŏnghŭi, “Pallyŏ,” *Samch’ŏlli* 10(1) (1938): 46–48.

95 “Mundan wangnae,” *Kaebŏk* 2 (December 1934): 84–85; “Sweet home, Yi Kwangsu ssi kajŏng pangmungi,” *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* 34 (November 1930): 110–13; “Tong sŏ nam puk,” *Samch’ŏlli* 5(4) (1933): 102–06; “Kŭriun sinhon sidae,” *Samch’ŏlli* 5(3) (1933): 64–67; “Munsa puin pangmungi,” *Samch’ŏlli* 5(3) (1933): 81–83; “Yŏgija kunsang,” *Kaebŏk* 4 (March 1935): 74.

marriage for a Korean woman meant that she went to live under the dictates of her mother-in-law rather than creating a distinct home of her own.<sup>96</sup> Ellasue Wagner said, "A Korean woman has no home, only a house ... a very poor mud hut."<sup>97</sup> The discursive transition from "no home" to "home, sweet home" in Korea was a dynamic transcultural process in which American Protestant missionaries, Bible women and a newly educated class of women in urban and rural areas all actively participated with their own vision of ideal modern domesticity under constrained local circumstances.

## Conclusion

Conforming to the old, while imagining or practising the new, summarily captures the dynamic process of the formation of the modern domesticity that arose through the transcultural interactions between Korean women and American missionaries. The missionary home was an object lesson for "heathens" on the domestic ideal. Missionary women used their homes as a platform where they could engage in evangelical persuasion from their own private space by turning it into a public pulpit. Teaching the gospel went hand in hand with teaching domestic arts because the opportunity to learn those practical domestic skills was what attracted local women. Some of these local women were appointed as Bible women to assist the missionaries in various activities. The unique and crucial role that the Bible women played in the evolution of a new domesticity cannot be emphasised enough. They served as key mediators between missionaries and Koreans, extending the pulpit into the Korean homes they visited in the course of delivering knowledge of the gospel and modern domestic practices to local women. In a significant way, the Bible women belonged to the class of New Women (*sin yŏsŏng*) in that they were literate, possessed modern knowledge of domestic science, earned their own income and worked in the public domain as independent career women. Like missionaries, their piety and sense of domesticity became a means by which women took on more active roles in public. The modern sense of domesticity gives rise to the professionalisation of "home economics." Firmly grounded in the value of domestic skills, the discipline reinforced the old notion that women's proper space is in the private, domestic arena; however, it also established standards for good domestic practice, thereby elevating the work of the home to that of a profession, and created opportunities for women to take on public roles as teachers, professionals and social workers.

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96 Cutler, "A Korean wedding," pp. 131–32.

97 Wagner, "A Korean home," p. 90.

This perforated boundary between the domestic and the public can be best represented in the career of Kim Hwallan (b. 1899–d. 1970), a well-known protégé of missionaries and the first Korean president of Ewha College. When she was interviewed by a women’s magazine, she was asked if it would be necessary to provide vocational education at girls’ schools. She answered: “Once women get married, they all become housewives. That’s why girls’ schools offer home economics, teaching them cooking and sewing. Therefore, I don’t think it is necessary to offer them vocational education. [If anyone wants to go further] they may go to professional schools.”<sup>98</sup> It is perhaps ironic that the most prominent woman educator at the only women’s college, a woman who had extraordinary accomplishments in virtually every domain, reinforced the idea that the proper place for women is in the domestic realm. Her public prominence as an educator, public intellectual and globally connected elite woman, especially through YWCA and other Christian organisations, is firmly rooted in her contribution to “better homes” appropriate to the Korean context. Coping with the seemingly paradoxical relationship between idealised domesticity and an active public life, Kim and her contemporaries took a long journey to make that paradox less paradoxical.

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98 Kim Hwallan, “Chinjŏn ūi yŏjŏng esŏ: kyoyukkye,” *Sin kajŏng* (January 1936): 12–13.



## 2. Missionaries and “A Better Baby Movement” in Colonial Korea

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### Introduction

On a cold winter morning in January of 1924, American missionary and trained nurse Elma T. Rosenberger and her assistant, Korean nurse-midwife Han Singwang, knocked on doors in Seoul inviting mothers and their young children to a new infant welfare clinic at T'aehwa yŏjagwan (hereafter, T'aehwa, called the Social Evangelistic Centre by the missionaries).<sup>1</sup> This was a community centre for Korean women and children founded in 1921 by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Women's Council of the Southern Methodist Church for evangelistic, education and social service purposes.<sup>2</sup> The first day, one baby came. The next, two more. Rosenberger recalled how difficult it was initially to garner Korean interest, “We literally got

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1 Many of the original journals and reports used in this chapter are in limited edition, located in archives in both the United States and South Korea. Reports by individual missionaries, their institutions and stations of the American Presbyterian boards are provided by the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS) located in Philadelphia, PA. These reports are also available in microfilm at the University of California, Los Angeles and in serial form in Seoul at the Institute for Korean Church History (*Han'guk kidokkyo yŏksa yŏn'guso*). The *Bulletin of the Nurses' Association of Korea* published in both the Korean (*Chosŏn kanhobu hoebo*) and English languages are located in the rare manuscript section of Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea. *The Korea Mission Field* was a journal of this period (1905–1941). While it has been re-published in serial and microform format, it is available primarily in libraries of seminaries or successors of mission colleges in Korea. There is currently a project to make the journal digitally available which is now searchable through 1922.

The Korean Christian newspaper, *Kidok sinbo* (Christian Messenger), Chinese medical missionary journal, *The China Medical Journal*, and annual reports of the Korea Woman's Conference (KWC) of the Methodist Episcopal Church are also available in re-published editions. The *China Medical Missionary Journal* (1887–1907) was renamed *The China Medical Journal* (1907–1932); the latter publishing research articles from the Korean Medical Missionary Association (KMMA). There are no publicly available editions of the journal from the KMMA. Not all of the annual reports of the KWC are extant. Those that have been found are in print and microform and may be obtained at certain American libraries, the United Methodist Archives at Drew University, and in Korea at Ewha Woman's University and Institute for Korean Church History.

2 *Tonga ilbo* (East Asia Daily), 27 February 1921. T'aehwa later became a union centre with the two Methodist denominations along with the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America. The fact that missionaries translated *T'aehwa yŏjagwan* into English as the “Social Evangelistic Center” as opposed to a literal translation as “T'aehwa Women's Center” attests to the centre's primary purpose of evangelism. It was also the predecessor to the centre known today as *T'aehwa kidokkyo sahoe pokchigwan*, or Taihwa Christian Community Center. For a fuller history of T'aehwa, see Yi Tŏkchu, *T'aehwa kidokkyo sahoe pokchigwan ūi yŏksa: 1921–1993* (History of Taihwa Christian Community Centre), Seoul, Korea: T'aehwa kidokkyo sahoe pokchigwan, 1993.

cold feet when we opened our work at Seoul in the Social Evangelistic Centre (T'aehwa), because people did not understand what we wanted and would not let us into their homes."<sup>3</sup> But soon home visits to attract members were no longer needed. "Calls [were] coming to us, more than we could answer," Rosenberger reported.<sup>4</sup> After one year, 462 babies were registered on the roster. By the end of the 1930s, most American Protestant mission stations throughout the peninsula offered some form of infant welfare services. They established infant health clinics, organised baby shows and mothers' meetings, offered obstetric referrals and milk feeding stations, and trained Korean nurse-midwives, public health and social welfare workers.

On one hand, this transpired as an outgrowth of global practices in the medicalisation of childbirth and childrearing. The nineteenth century in the West witnessed the solidification of obstetrics and paediatrics as specialised medical fields that demanded the professionalisation of practitioners who increasingly oversaw the pre- and post-natal care of parturient mothers and their infants in institutionalised settings of the hospital or clinic. Shifts in notions of childhood became conceptualised in campaigns to lower infant mortality rates and promote their welfare. The main agency to implement this was the infant welfare centre; its core activities being the periodic examination of babies and the instruction of mothers in the care of their children. Other welfare programs included mother-craft schools, day nurseries, baby week, milk stations, expanded obstetric and prenatal care through home visiting or lying-in accommodation, cultivation of district nurses and social service workers, child protection legislation, and state maternity benefits such as mothers' pensions and meals for expectant and/or breastfeeding mothers.<sup>5</sup> Many of these were run by local governments and Christian missions, which Roger Cooter suggests may be more significant than institutionalised paediatrics in the broader history of child health and welfare of this period.<sup>6</sup> Missionaries drew from maternal and infant welfare practices back home in developing similar programs in Korea.

On the other hand, missionaries in Korea as elsewhere placed heavy emphasis on persuading their converts to adopt mission "ideals of domesticity," thereby intervening directly with local habits in marriage, gender and family relations,

3 Sherwood Hall, "Pioneer missionary work in Korea," in *Within the Gate*, ed. Charles A. Sauer, Seoul, Korea: Korea Methodist News Service, 1934, pp. 94–105, p. 104.

4 Elma T. Rosenberger, "Public health work in Seoul," *Bulletin of the Nurses' Association of Korea* 1 (1925): 12–13.

5 For more on the history of childbirth and infant welfare practices in the United States and Europe, see works such as Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750–1950*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986; Alisa Klaus, *Every Child a Lion: The Origins of Maternal and Infant Health Policy in the US and France, 1890–1920*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993; Richard A. Meckel, *Save the Babies: American Public Health Reform and the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1850–1929*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.

6 Roger Cooter, "Introduction," in *In the Name of the Child: Health and Welfare, 1880–1940*, ed. Cooter, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 1–18.

dress and living arrangements.<sup>7</sup> A Christian life was to entail more than spiritual faith and theological understanding. As Hyaeweol Choi's chapter attests, the establishment of "true Christian homes" affords "civilisation" as well as proper Christian lifestyles to new converts. In this way, missionaries' attempts to transform Korean child-birthing and rearing practices were natural extensions of their evangelising efforts. Furthermore, infant welfare work allowed missionaries to focus on social service, a call renewed by the global mission community in the 1920s and 1930s to be linked with evangelism.

However, the emergence of infant welfare projects seemed an anomaly in the overall picture of medical missions in Korea. The 1920s coincided with retrenchment in budgets and reluctance from Mission Boards to support further medical work which was allegedly provided (however minimally) by Japan, Korea's colonial overseer. This chapter then addresses this conundrum—why were new infant health programs started at a time when medical missions were being attenuated? What implication does this raise in regards to mission work in general? Furthermore, the emergence of mission infant welfare programs in colonial Korea dovetailed with the bio-politics of the Japanese imperial state that sought to protect its female subjects' fertility and infant viability to increase the population with healthy bodies for industrial and military goals of imperial expansion. Efforts to promote maternal and infant welfare by the colonial state became increasingly visible by the late 1920s and were supported in general by medical missions. Yet missionaries had ambivalent at best, antagonistic at worst, relations with the colonial government in the realm of medicine. What insights into this complicated relationship between foreign missionaries and Japanese colonial authorities does an exploration of infant welfare provide?

Using infant welfare as a prism, I interrogate the ways the context, mission goals and encounters that missionaries had in Korea shaped the implementation, intentions and meanings of their medical programs. I argue that infant welfare appealed to missionaries as an area of their focus despite limited resources not merely for the real material benefits they provided to young mothers and infants but also because they believed it enabled Koreans to embody the ideal Christian family. Furthermore, missionaries' attempts to differentiate themselves from Japanese "secular" medicine on moral grounds allowed them to carve a space in a medical world quickly closing by both their Mission Boards and the Governor-General of Korea (GGK).

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<sup>7</sup> See Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, "Introduction: gendered missions at home and abroad," in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, ed. Huber and Lutkehaus, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, pp. 1–38. For more on the work of missionaries in Korea, see Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.



## Early medical encounters in the Korean mission

One narrative in the Korean mission field is that of Horace Allen, physician and a Presbyterian missionary, who saved the life of Min Yöngik, nephew of Queen Min in the aftermath of the bloody 1884 Kapsin Coup. His surgical skills won the support of the royal family, and he was granted permission to establish *Chejungwöñ*, the first hospital based on Western medical therapeutics in Korea and the predecessor to today's Severance Hospital affiliated with Yonsei University. This is the "Allen myth," which according to Korean scholar Sin Tongwöñ, shapes much of the conventional understanding of the role of foreign missionaries in Korean medical history.<sup>8</sup> What this "myth" elides, however, was the already present thirst for new knowledge and adaptation of practices associated with Western science and medicine, such as the smallpox vaccination, in self-strengthening attempts to bolster the Chosön dynasty's "wealth and power" in a rapidly changing world.<sup>9</sup> *Chejungwöñ* then was an expansion of Korean self-strengthening reform platforms already in place. The fact that Allen was a missionary was secondary as the Chosön court explicitly prohibited proselytisation of the Christian faith on Korean soil and Allen's recognised status in Korea was medical officer of the American Legation, not missionary. Moreover, the name of the hospital itself, which literally means "House of Succouring the People" was translated into English by Allen as "His Majesty's Hospital," which attests that medical services provided there were to remain firmly on Korean terms and to augment the King's benevolence to his subjects by providing them with health services.<sup>10</sup>

What Allen accomplished was to open the door in Korea to other medical missionaries who soon followed, initially to assist him and later to extend mission work in other parts of the peninsula. From the perspective of the missionaries,

8 Sin Tongwöñ, *Hoyöлча Chosön ül süpkyökhada: mom kwa üihak üi Han'guksa* (Cholera Invades Chosön: History of the Body and Medicine in Korea), Seoul: Yöksa pip'yöngsa, 2004, p. 224.

9 "Wealth and power" refers to the larger pursuit of "rich country and strong military" (*puguk kangbyöng*), a slogan with classical Confucian roots associated with self-strengthening efforts of late nineteenth-century East Asia, including Korea. For more on early health reforms implemented by Koreans before 1910, see Sin Tongwöñ, *Han'guk kündae pogön üiryosa* (History of Health and Medicine in Modern Korea), Seoul: Hanul Academy, 1997; and Pak Yunjae, *Han'guk kündae üihak üi kiwöñ* (The Origin of the Korean Modern Medical System), Seoul: Hyeon, 2005. In English, see Soyoung Suh, "Korean medicine between the local and the universal: 1600–1945," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2006; and Sonja Kim, "The search for health: translating *Wisaeng* and medicine during the Taehan Empire," in *Reform and Modernity in the Taehan Empire*, ed. Kim Dong-no, John B. Duncan and Kim Do-hyung, Seoul: Jimoondang, 2006, pp. 299–341.

10 In a letter (dated 27 January 1885) to the Foreign Office of the Korean government which he copied into his diary, Allen assured the court that the hospital would be "called 'His Corean Majesty's Hospital,' and ... it would undoubtedly still further endear the people to their monarch and elevate them in many ways." Horace N. Allen, *Allen üi ilgi* (The diary of Horace Allen), trans. Kim Wönmö, Seoul: Dankook University Press, 1991, p. 431. The original name of the hospital was *Kwanghyewöñ* ("House of Expanded Grace") but was quickly changed to *Chejungwöñ* to strengthen its image as succeeding former Chosön welfare institutions. Sin Tongwöñ, *Han'guk kündae pogön üiryosa*, p. 81.



medical work aimed to break the prejudice and gain the trust and confidence of the Korean people in their evangelistic institutions, a strategy commonly used in other mission fields. Medical work was found to be so effective in gaining Koreans' interest in missionaries and their messages that it became a principle of all missions that no station would be opened in the interior without the presence of a doctor. As Reverend Hoffman acknowledged, "The best means to prepare a people's mind to lend an ear to the gospel message is the surgical work of the hospital."<sup>11</sup>

A common theme running across missionary accounts is the varied, even colourful, medical landscape missionaries encountered. They were appalled by what they determined were inferior, inadequate, or barbaric native healing traditions in Korea, "The differences in habits of life, of food, of standards of social customs are calculated sometimes to produce a feeling of disgust."<sup>12</sup> Challenges were allegedly many for "the medical missionary has not only to heal sickness, but to try and remove gross ignorance and superstition regarding diseases."<sup>13</sup> These "superstitions" could be outright dangerous, "pathetic and sad," and physicians recorded injuries caused by Korean therapeutics such as blinding an eye when needled, burning of skin and delayed treatments because a patient sought a shaman.<sup>14</sup> To the missionaries, many of their patients were "grateful" for their services, an appreciation resulting with the Gospel "finding an entrance into hearts and homes of many."<sup>15</sup>

On one hand, these narratives speak to the increasing acceptance of Western therapeutics among Koreans. Coupled with the already existing self-strengthening desires mentioned earlier, when new methods become packaged with visible results, medical knowledge and practices associated with them become powerful. On the other hand, mission reports reveal the competitive nature of the Korean medical playing field. Missionaries grumbled about cases worsened by native practices, but they also demonstrated how patients chose from a broad spectrum of care providers, including the local shaman, acupuncturist, drug peddler or other healer. The supposed "superiority" of mission medicine was not necessarily readily or immediately accepted by Koreans. To them, mission dispensaries and hospitals were just one option out of many, and missionaries found themselves in a fierce contest. Sometimes mission clinics were consulted as a last resort. Other times, patients "experimented," testing to see which method provided the better result.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, by the

11 C.S. Hoffman, "The Hospital as an Evangelizing Agency," *The Korea Mission Field* 12(1) (1916): 48–50.

12 "Books on Korea," *The Korea Mission Field* 4(1) (1908): 13–16.

13 E.D. Follwell, "Hall Memorial Hospital and Dispensary," *The Korea Mission Field* 2(1) (1905): 5–6.

14 E.D. Follwell, "Medical practice in Pyeng Yang," *The Korea Mission Field* 2(8) (1906): 149–50.

15 "Mokpo Station Report, Southern Presbyterian Mission," *The Korea Mission Field* 5(4) (1909): 53–55.

16 For example, one physician recounted a case that puzzled him until he realised that the patient used the remedy he gave in one eye while treating the other eye with medication given him by a local Korean healer. Apparently, the patient did this in order to find out which method (missionary or local) was more effective. See "Brevities," *The Korea Mission Field* 11(2) (1915): 54–56.

1910s the burgeoning pharmaceutical industry with new-style drug stores and vendors (including foreigners, especially Japanese) attracted Korean consumers with their products' promises to provide a quick fix, producing patients who were "double victim[s] of disease and mixed treatment."<sup>17</sup>

The awareness that their patients may go elsewhere exhorted missionary physicians to perform successively. As Dr Sharrocks reported, "Mission hospital exerts influence upon the general population through word of mouth, or base conclusions based on medical work."<sup>18</sup> Then in order "to obtain results in the spiritual sphere, [the mission hospital] must obtain them surgically and medically as well," Dr Johnson concurred.<sup>19</sup> Demonstrating "success," however, could entail a physician's selection of therapeutics that produced visible signs of efficacy but compromised sound medical judgment, for example prescribing opiates to relieve a cough.<sup>20</sup>

Missionaries believed they were rectifying inferior, even abysmal, health conditions due to native ignorance, lack of common sense, or superstition. It was merely a matter of time before Koreans would "learn" and perform "proper" health practices. However, missionary reports were foremost in garnering support back home for their work by highlighting the superiority and necessity of their medicine. Their reports thus fail to inform us of the efficacy of other native healing methods (except in terms of lack with practices deemed barbarous or superstitious) or to provide a clearer understanding of patients' choices in health-related matters. Moreover, as Ruth Rogaski reminds us, the turn of the twentieth century was before the era of antibiotics and still a time of flux in etiological understanding of disease. Western confidence in "divergence" in medicine between the East and West was thereby misguided.<sup>21</sup> Except in surgery, little difference in efficacy existed between Western and eastern therapeutics. A "divergence" in medicine lay rather in the political and social organisation of disease management, such as sanitary bureaus and hospital administration.

While missionaries endeavoured to gain trust from their patients, the very disconnect in communication could hinder that very goal. Their assumptions that their patients would understand their prescriptions or have the means to follow through on treatment belie the gulf not only in understandings of the

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17 Miss Ernsberger, "Baldwin Dispensary Report, 1909," *The Korea Mission Field* 5(7) (1909): 112–14.

18 A.M. Sharrocks, "Can less than two doctors in a single hospital achieve the best result?" *The Korea Mission Field* 12(1) (1916): 15–19.

19 Woodbridge O. Johnson, "Personal report for 1909–1910 of Woodbridge O. Johnson, MD, American Presbyterian Mission," *The Korea Mission Field* 6(11) (1910): 274–79.

20 Follwell, "Hall Memorial Hospital and Dispensary," p. 6.

21 For further discussion on whether there was a "divergence" in medicine, see Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meaning of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004.

body and management of illness, but also in modes of dialogue between these foreign visitors and their Korean hosts.<sup>22</sup> For example, in Dr Nolan's account, questions to one patient such as his age, location of residence and complaints were met with what Nolan perceived were irrelevant, perhaps amusing, responses: "Who? I?" "I was born on the tenth day of the fourth moon of the second year of the present King's reign." "Anybody can tell you where I live. Just take the big road and travel until you get nearly in sight of the big temple." "I live in ... magistracy, but don't see what bearing that has on the case; give me some medicine."<sup>23</sup> But when his patient began to explain his complaint with, "My neighbor has a son Kim, who married..." Nolan interjected saying he did not need to know the genealogy of the patient or his neighbour and for him to just "Answer my questions," to which the patient replied, "As I started to say, Kim was beating his wife, my cousin. I interfered, and he struck me with his pipe, making a painful bruise." To Nolan, he was asking simple questions to which his patient did not reply directly. To the patient, he did not understand the relevance of his residence to his case. Moreover, he felt the need to introduce the relationships of the people involved in order to provide a full account of how his injury was sustained to facilitate Dr Nolan's prescription of treatment.

This could be interpreted as simply a language barrier. It also reveals differences in health-related practices that complicate medical missions. It was standard in the Sino-classical medical tradition, of which Chosŏn Korea was a part, for patients to provide detailed narratives of how they came to their ailments and not just a description of symptoms. Missionary physicians insisted on their routines in hospital-clinic administration with scheduled consultation hours and hospital diet with which Korean patients were not familiar. Physicians sometimes gave up expectations of payment in cash for their services—patients were accustomed to offer gifts in kind to express their gratitude, would wait until full recovery before offering remuneration, or assume treatments were offered in charity according to ethics of "Confucian benevolence." Nevertheless, missionaries insisted on their therapeutic methods and were chagrined when patients did not behave accordingly. They reported patients who ingested the piece of paper on which a prescription was written or medications that were to be applied externally (the patients were not informed how to exchange the prescription for medication or proper application), took doses all at once ("take every three hours" did not make sense when one had never seen a clock) or stretched them out to last longer, did not return for further treatment, or refused surgical procedures or hospitalisation. Sometimes unfamiliarity with Western methods complicated

22 Limitation of space prevents a further discussion here of Korean health practices prior to Korea's Opening in 1876. For more, see works such as Donald Baker, "Oriental medicine in Korea," in *Medicine Across Cultures: History and Practice of Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, ed. H. Selin, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003, pp. 133–53; and Sin Tongwŏn, *Chosŏn saram ūi saengno pyŏngsa* (History of Birth, Aging, Disease, and Death during the Chosŏn Dynasty), Seoul, Korea: Hangyŏre ch'ulp'ansa, 1999.

23 J.W. Nolan, "An afternoon in the clinic," *The Korea Mission Field* 2(7) (1906): 121–23.

their treatment. Other times, it was factors such as logistics (distance, finance, finding alternate childcare if mother is hospitalised), Korean habits (customarily reluctant to the cutting and opening of skin or leaving family members alone in the care of others), or family dynamics (lack of permission from parent, parent-in-law, or husband).

This discussion is not to castigate missionaries for lacking communication skills or being self-serving in their medical work, but to urge an understanding of their contributions within the framework they were offered and received. Many Korean patients found genuine relief and comfort from missionary dispensaries and hospitals, but they also approached them in ways that were familiar to them. Missionaries occasionally catered to their patients' wishes (such as use of heated beds to mimic the heated flooring of Korean-style *ondol*). They offered surgical and nursing training but that was geared towards Korean assistants and clerks who worked in the missionary clinics and dispensaries, and conversion to Christianity was a requirement. To missionaries whose primary objective was evangelisation and whose perception of Koreans as heathens informed their condescension towards native healing traditions and everyday habits, their medical work was foremost a moral mission. This shaped not only the rationale for their services but also the manner in which the services were carried out, including infant welfare work.

The clinical dispensary was central to missionaries' evangelising efforts. They held "regular service ... consisting of a song, simple Gospel talk and prayer" before opening.<sup>24</sup> Korean assistants were Christian converts who were "in attendance for the purpose of preaching, exhorting, distribution of tracts, and sale of Gospels," not necessarily to provide medical assistance.<sup>25</sup> Bible classes were open to patients.<sup>26</sup> Surgical operations began with prayer as well. Medical and nursing education for Koreans included daily Bible study. "My students must first be sincere Christians who are eager for souls," wrote one missionary.<sup>27</sup> It is this integration of medical work with missionaries' evangelical programs that is reflected in mission infant-welfare work built upon an existing system of mission dispensaries and hospitals. Missionaries provided the education and therapeutics needed by Koreans to rectify infant health care problems. Koreans (mothers in particular) were to adopt the new childrearing methods. All of this was to be along Christian lines.

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24 Ibid., p. 121.

25 Ibid.

26 Dr J.W. Nolan, "How a doctor won his way," *The Korea Mission Field* 2(8) (1906): 157.

27 Dr H.C. White, "The doctor's point of view," *The Korea Mission Field* 3(2) (1907): 18–22.

## Missionary players in a colonial medical system

With Japan’s colonisation of Korea in 1910, the Governor-General of Korea (GGK) overhauled Korea’s medical and health system centred on bio-medicine.<sup>28</sup> Elements included state management of the medical professions (regulation of the education, training, licensing and practice of physicians, nurses, midwives, pharmacists and drug-sellers); policing the population with country-wide sanitary administrative measures and a public physician system; strict regulation of private hospitals; and the establishment of a system of public (Municipal, Charity, Provincial) hospitals in major cities throughout the peninsula. Foreign missionaries and their medical institutions found themselves having to adapt to the new system or else close. An unstated tension emerged between medical missions and the colonial government in which the line between cooperation and competition was ambiguous.

Mission reports suggest frustration with the increasing restrictions on their medical work. Licensing requirements required all physicians trained in institutions other than those accredited and recognised by the GGK to pass a Government examination before being given a permit to practise in Korea.<sup>29</sup> Some missionaries sought to avoid the licensing exams altogether by getting their education or license from countries with reciprocity with Japan, such as Canada and Great Britain.<sup>30</sup> Licensing regulations hampered nursing efforts in Korea as potential nursing missionaries decided to go to China instead of Korea. Those who took the medical licensing exam had to do so in the Korean or Japanese language in Seoul, or they could opt to do it in English in Tokyo which

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28 While the medical system was to be centred on bio-medicine, the GGK did allow traditional care providers to practice in limited ways. This helps account for the transformation and preservation of elements considered today as “Korean Medicine” or *Hanŭi*. See works such as Sin Tongwŏn, “Ilche ūi pogŏn ūiryŏ chŏngch’aek mit Han’gugin ūi pogŏn ūiryŏ chŏngch’aek mit Han’gugin ūi kŏngang sangt’ae e kwanhan yŏn’gu (A study on the policy of health services and Korean’s health state in Japanese colonial state,” M.A. thesis, Seoul National University, 1986; Pak Yunjae, *Han’gŭk kŭndae ūihak ūi kiwŏn*; and Yonsei taehakkyo ūihaksa yŏn’guso (ed.), *Hanŭihak, singminji rŭl alda* (The Modernization of Korean Traditional Medicine during the Colonial Period), Seoul, Korea: Akanet, 2008. In English, see Suh, Soyoung, “Herbs of our own kingdom: layers of the ‘local’ in the *Materia Medica* of Chosŏn Korea,” *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 4(2) (2008): 395–422. For English accounts of medical administration during the colonial period, see Soyoung Suh, “Korean medicine between the local and the universal: 1600–1945”; and Sonja Kim, “Contesting bodies: managing population, birthing, and medicine in Korea, 1876–1945,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2008.

29 Letter from Wm H. Forsythe to A.W. Halsey, 13 June 1915, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, Secretaries Files: Korea Mission, 1903–1972 (bulk 1911–1972), Presbyterian Historical Society, Record Group 140, Box 14, Folder 19 (hereafter, PHS, RG 140-14-19).

30 Sherwood Hall, the son of missionaries James and Rosetta Hall and anti-tuberculosis campaign advocate in colonial Korea, received his medical licence in Great Britain. Douglas B. Avison, the son of the superintendent of Severance Hospital Oliver Avison and a paediatrician active in infant welfare work in colonial Seoul, received his medical training in Canada and was thus exempt from GGK licensing exams.

was offered only twice a year. But the expenses involved in travelling to Tokyo amounted to 350 yen. The same sum would support a local preacher in Korea for an entire year.<sup>31</sup>

Other obstacles to mission medical work included higher credential requirements for professors at the Severance Hospital, interference from Japanese police and red-tape from the Japanese Association of Nurses which prevented the Korean nursing organisation's entrance into the International Council of Nurses. Only Severance, among the mission hospitals, was accredited as a medical school. In 1919, the mission hospital in Syen Chen (Sinch'ŏn) attested to anxieties among missionaries over the new medical ordinances, which "exercise an impartial control over all hospitals. In most respects the Provincial Chief of Police interprets and enforces the ordinance, but in many details the County or Township head police holds the power of life or death over the hospital."<sup>32</sup> For example, the requirements of the 1919 Private Hospital Regulation for hospitals to have a separate isolation ward and at least ten beds were difficult for mission hospitals to meet, and so many shut their doors.

Furthermore, competition with Government and charity hospitals meant the loss not only of patients but also of personnel. Korean physicians and nurses left work at mission hospitals for better pay elsewhere, and foreign medical workers and hospitals failed to meet licensing, teaching or operating requirements. Even missionaries were not immune from the allure of other opportunities made available. For example, Dr Wells active in P'yŏngyang resigned from the Presbyterian Mission in 1916 in order to work as a physician for the Seoul Mining Company.<sup>33</sup> The sense of competition medical missions faced from the changed colonial situation was so intensified that in 1913, the Korean Medical Missionary Association admitted:

In view of the fact that the establishment of medical work in many places in Korea by the Japanese government, has caused some to think that this might seriously affect our medical missionary institutions, even perhaps to the extent of rendering the continuance of our work unadvisable, or at least to the point of making it unwise to plan any further enlargement of the present staff and equipment.<sup>34</sup>

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31 Letter from Dr Brown to E.M. Dodd, 27 November 1922, PHS, RG 140-14-19.

32 "Annual Report of 'In His Name Hospital,' Syen Chen (Sinch'ŏn), Korea, 1918-1919," PHS, RG 140-6-46.

33 "The Resignation of Dr and Mrs. Wells from the Presbyterian Missions, North," *The Korea Mission Field* 12(1) (1916): 29. He was not the only one to do so. In 1909, another medical missionary resigned to work for the American Gold Mining Company. "Annual Report of Kwangju Station, Southern Presbyterian Mission," *The Korea Mission Field* 5(4) (1909): 58-64.

34 W.E. Reid, "The Annual Meeting of the Korea Medical Missionary Association, Sept 30 to Oct 2, 1913, at Severance Hospital, Seoul," *The Korea Mission Field* 9(12) (1913): 316-18.



Dr Roy Smith of the Northern Presbyterian mission reported that Japanese hospitals had more medical personnel on staff (in contrast to usually one at mission facilities), were able to treat 3–5 times more patients, and appealed to Koreans in that they were operated on by Asians in Asian-style.<sup>35</sup> Missionaries admitted that improvements in sanitation and hospital care were attributed to the GGK. They recognised that they were competing not only with the government hospital which handled many charity cases, but also with private Japanese and Korean physicians.<sup>36</sup>

This did not, however, lead missionaries to conclude that their work was no longer needed. Rather, they endeavoured to strengthen medical mission facilities so as to not fall behind the standards and services of Japanese hospitals. "What if [Koreans] compare this apparent indifference to their needs with the diligence of the Japanese government in manning and equipping institutions for the sick?"<sup>37</sup> The Korean Medical Missionary Association in 1913 resolved that no new stations were to open unless they had at least two missionary physicians and a trained nurse with proper equipment. "Japanese medical work ... greatly increases the urgency of a more efficient manning and equipment of our medical missionary plants."<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, there was a consensus among missionaries that they filled a spiritual void left, a point further explicated later in this chapter. Medical missions cultivated Christian workers who offered proper care, healing both the body and the soul in Christian service. While the government may be better at providing costly, "good, modern treatment and proper appliances," this did not relieve the church or mission boards of providing care for Korean patients. Dr Weir exhorted, "No amount of Government Charity hospitals, no increase in the number of non-Christian doctors can in the least relieve the Church of Christ of her responsibility to the bodies as well as to the souls of men.... No, the work being done by the Government does not make ours less necessary, but more."<sup>39</sup>

Despite the ambivalence they felt in regards to the medical system put in place by the GGK, missionaries did ally with the colonial government in areas of shared goals and interests. They were impressed with the material benefits Japan promised to provide. They agreed that the poor state of health in Korea was due to ignorance and superstitious customs. Thus they welcomed Japanese sanitary and medical work. As Dr Smith wrote in 1934, "Government control has done much to teach the Korean people the need for and methods of modern

35 R.K. Smith, "Medical practice in Chosen," *The Korea Mission Field* 13(5) (1917): 120–22.

36 A.G. Fletcher, "Concentration and efficiency," *The Korea Mission Field* 12(2) (1916): 39–44.

37 "From the view point of the Doctors," *The Korea Mission Field* 9, (2) (1913): 43–45.

38 Reid, "The Annual Meeting of the Korea Medical Missionary Association," p. 318.

39 Hugh H. Weir, M.B., "The place of medical mission work in Korea" *The Korea Mission Field* 10(7) (1914): 191–93.

sanitation, but they still have a long ways to go in assimilation of the teaching, and every word of encouragement we can give help[s] in the process.”<sup>40</sup> Missionaries cooperated with quarantining efforts, accepted Imperial donations and recognition,<sup>41</sup> participated in government-initiated health campaigns, and strove to meet the higher standards demanded by the government. They invited Japanese physicians and administrators to medical mission events such as the annual meeting of the Korea Medical Missionary Association or medical student graduate ceremonies at Severance Medical College.

Medical policies in colonial Korea were implemented as part of broader strategies to expand population growth and cultivate healthier bodies both in the Japanese empire at large and at home to extract necessary human resources for imperial expansion. In Korea, the GGK pursued pro-natalism by restricting threats to population growth (criminalising abortion, infanticide and certain forms of birth control), promoting new childbirth practices through the professionalisation of new-style midwives and curricula in girls’ schools, and detailed record-keeping so the state could keep track of birth, mortality and morbidity statistics.<sup>42</sup> In 1914, the GGK adapted Meiji regulations regarding the training and licensing of new-style midwives in Korea (the “New Midwife,” *J. shin-sanba*), the gateway through which the state supervised and intervened in women’s reproductive activities (such as preventing unregulated abortions and infanticide) by replacing older childbirth cultures with new medicalised practices.<sup>43</sup> Public health activities such as mandatory smallpox vaccinations (a major child killer), licensing prostitution in hope of regulating sexually transmitted diseases (a cause of infertility and debility), and sanitation programs (to curtail contagious disease) aimed at enhancing the health of the general population.

Despite the professed concern of the colonial authorities in the health and welfare of their ruled population, however, infant-welfare work in Korea was woefully lacking. The state may have sought to enhance women’s reproductive health, which in turn was to strengthen the conjugal unit on which the imperial state was based, but midwives in colonial Korea were overwhelmingly Japanese

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40 “Personal report of Roy Smith, 1934,” PHS, RG 140-9-1.

41 Some examples include Rosetta Sherwood Hall who was honoured on the birthday of the Japanese Emperor and received a set of silver cups for her medical work with women and children and educational work with the blind and deaf in 1915. The Presbyterian Hospital in Taegu received a gift of 500 yen from the provincial governor. See “Annual Report Taiku (Taegu) Station for 1929–30,” PHS, RG 140-7-1.

42 For more on GGK biopolitics, pronatalism and statistics, see Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910–1945*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008; Jin-kyung Park, “Corporeal colonialism: medicine, reproduction, and race in colonial Korea,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008; and Sonja Kim, “‘Limiting birth’: birth control in Colonial Korea 1910–1945,” *EASTS* 2 (2008): 335–59.

43 For more on midwives and reproductive politics in Japan, see Julie M. Rousseau, “Enduring labors: the ‘new midwife’ and the modern culture of childbearing in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan,” Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1998; and Sabine Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003.



and located in urban areas, largely servicing the Japanese settler population.<sup>44</sup> Korean customs dictated that women were not inclined to be examined by male physicians, yet there was a dearth of female physicians who remained a small minority of the physician community throughout the colonial period and who lacked an accredited medical school (Keijō Woman’s Medical School) until 1938. Women who wanted to practise medicine studied abroad or under the tutelage of mentors. Unless they attended a recognised medical educational institution such as the Tokyo Women’s Medical College, they qualified to practise medicine only after passing the GGK licensing exam. Korean commentators in the late 1930s, alarmed by continued infant mortality rates, pointed to the lack of maternal and infant facilities and services.

Lack of funds and administrative burdens may account for the GGK’s general negligence in maternal and infant welfare. However, comparisons with Japan and the shift towards increasing attention to maternal services after 1937 highlight imperial characteristics of the medical system implemented in Korea. There were a number of educational facilities geared towards the training of female physicians in Japan, whereas none were implemented by the GGK in Korea.<sup>45</sup> Midwives in Japan formed professional organisations and local governments and private organisations instituted maternal health centres such as family planning and maternal clinics. Post-1937 policies to improve obstetric conditions and encourage reproduction in Korea included: increasing food rations for pregnant women, day nurseries, etc. Plans to establish maternal health services did not materialise.<sup>46</sup> In general, limited health campaigns in Korea reflect an official attitude that medical services were foremost to serve imperial goals of conciliation, protect the Japanese settler community, and “offer” nominal health education, while access to medical care remained pitifully inadequate, especially in the countryside, and much less for women and children.

## A “better baby movement” in Korea

It was in this vacuum that infant-welfare centres in Korea were started, funded, and staffed overwhelmingly by foreign missionaries. Even before 1924, missionaries expended considerable effort in spreading the “gospel of hygiene,” especially as it related to everyday practices within the domestic space, whether from the pulpit, in hospitals and schools, through women’s groups,

44 See Yi Kkonme, *Han’guk kũndae kanhosa* (History of Modern Nursing in Korea), Seoul: Hanul Academy, 2002.

45 The medical school for women accredited in 1938 emerged out of joint efforts by Korean physicians and missionary Dr Rosetta S. Hall and was thus a private, not a public, school.

46 An T’aeyun, *Singminji chõngch’i wa mosõng: ch’ongdongwõn ch’eye wa mosõng ïi hyõnsil* (Remaking Mothers: the Politics of Motherhood in Colonial Korea), P’aju, Korea: Han’guk haksul chõngbo, 2006.

printed literature, or other informal means. Tracts such as the “Care of Infants” written by Dr James Van Buskirk were handed to mothers of small children in dispensaries. “Hygiene of Parturition” by Dr Alfred M. Sharrocks and “Advice to Mothers” by Mattie Noble were used as basic texts in women’s meetings and classes.<sup>47</sup> The women’s mission hospital at East Gate was committed to teaching young mothers how to care for themselves and their babies, and infant welfare workshops with free baths and care during the summer months were held.<sup>48</sup>

Modelling similar events in the United States, missionaries held baby shows—one record indicates as early as 1916 at the Songdo (Kaesŏng) Station—which awarded babies according to their sex, weight, height, proper number of teeth and chest measurement, and distributed educational information on the food, rest, hygiene and care of infants in the hopes of a “full fledged Better Baby Movement here and thereby help lessen the frightful mortality among infants.”<sup>49</sup> In 1919, missionary Mabel Genso conducted a Mothers’ Club in Seoul to partake in this “Better Baby Movement” with monthly weighing and examination of infants and lectures by physicians and nurses.<sup>50</sup>

The work, however, was sporadic depending on interested missionary involvement until it became systematic with the new infant health clinic at the T’aehwa in 1924. T’aehwa pioneered a strong commitment to comprehensive social services by combining preventative and therapeutic medical care with an educational component, reinforced by home visits and return trips to the clinic. Babies attended periodically to be weighed, measured, examined and treated for minor ailments. A Korean Bible woman or nurse, if available, provided a follow-up home visit. T’aehwa began a Baby Show in 1925, which became an annual event, spreading to other mission stations and later conducted in conjunction with GJK-sponsored Children’s Day. Missionaries offered free medical examinations, toys and prizes for the “best” baby according to standards of weight, height and health.<sup>51</sup>

Out-clinics started in three different parts of the city.<sup>52</sup> Prenatal work functioned in conjunction with mission hospitals. Mothers registered with T’aehwa went to East Gate Woman’s Hospital for delivery, and Severance Hospital treated sick babies. Baths at T’aehwa started in 1927 for a nominal fee, and then water

47 A.F. Hillman, “Chong dong dispensary and medical work in Ewha Haktang,” *Annual Report of the Korea Woman’s Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1912): 54–56.

48 See annual reports of the Korea Woman’s Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the early 1900s.

49 “What are you doing in your station for the help of mothers, especially in the home and with little children?” *The Korea Mission Field* 12(4) (1916): 114.

50 Mabel R. Genso, “Work with Korean mothers,” *The Korea Mission Field* 15(12) (1919): 263–64.

51 Elma T. Rosenberger, “Public health work at the Social Evangelistic Centre, Seoul,” *Bulletin of Korean Nurses’ Association* 9 (1928): xv–xviii.

52 Elma T. Rosenberger, “Report of public health work, Social Evangelistic Centre, Seoul,” *Bulletin of Nurses’ Association of Korea* 13 (1929): 28–31.

was let loose for street children in exchange for recitation of Bible verses.<sup>53</sup> A year later in 1928, T'aehwa began a milk-feeding station that prepared and provided undernourished infants with supplementary nutrition. As it was soon discovered that some mothers abhorred the notion of their children drinking milk from an animal, a soy milk formula learned from China was used. The soy milk formula was deemed successful for catering to the dietary tastes of Koreans and, being more affordable to produce, T'aehwa even secured a government permit to can soy milk powder.<sup>54</sup>

Women's and infant health care came to the forefront of cooperative medical mission ventures in the late 1920s. T'aehwa hosted the first public health conference in 1926, inviting nurses and midwives across denominations and from around the peninsula to come for lectures on hygiene and public health work with mothers and children. This became an annual event called the Public Health Nurses' Institute, and it was held at various infant-welfare centres throughout the peninsula. In 1928, the Korean Woman's Medical Training Institute opened its doors and devoted itself to the medical education of Korean women with the initiative and support of mission organisations, particularly through Dr Rosetta Hall.<sup>55</sup> In preparation for this work, Korean female physician Dr Kil Chŏnghŭi, co-founder of the Woman's Medical Training Institute, worked at East Gate Woman's Hospital, specialising in obstetrics, gynecology and pediatrics. The following year, T'aehwa joined forces with Severance Hospital and East Gate Hospital to create the Seoul Child-Welfare Union with Dr Douglas Avison, a pediatrician at Severance, as its director. The three sites shared personnel and resources, with a Well-Baby Clinic at each site. The clinics also served to train nursing and medical students in public health work. This was also the same year that Ewha Woman's College inaugurated its Home Economics Department.<sup>56</sup> According to one of its faculty and Korean graduate of mission schools, Home Economics was directly linked with efforts to reduce infant mortality and thus the same content on infant care given to mothers attending infant-welfare clinics were given to Home Economics students.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore,

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53 Clean, heated water as well as a large enough container to bathe in were luxuries that many Korean households did not have. Bathing was considered necessary to cleanliness, paramount in missionaries' understandings of health. Thus baths were common in infant welfare programs, although in this case, they were aimed at bringing older street children into contact with the Centre, staff who would later visit their homes to evangelise. "Annual Report, Social Evangelistic Center, Seoul, Korea, January 1932," PHS, RG 140-14-9.

54 The soy formula was developed at Peking Union Medical College and at T'aehwa it was deemed to cost only 3 sen per feeding in contrast to the 10 sen for canned cream. N. Found, "A cheap substitute for milk," *The China Medical Journal* 45(2) (1931): 144-46. See also "Annual Report Social Evangelistic Center, Seoul, Korea, January 1932."

55 This is the training institute that later became accredited as the Keijō Women's Medical School in 1938.

56 See Hyaewol Choi's chapter, "The missionary home as a pulpit: domestic paradoxes in early twentieth-century Korea," in this volume.

57 Hanna Kim, "The need of home economics education in Korea," *The Korea Mission Field* 25(10) (1929): 215-16.

a printed list of publications endorsed by the missionary-dominated Korean Nurses' Association (*Chosŏn kanhobuhoe*) for the edification of Korean nurses included health tracts given to mothers at the infant-welfare clinic.<sup>58</sup>

Other mission stations throughout the country followed suit with similar programs. Missionary Maren Bording started the infant and maternal health clinic in Kongju at a similar time as T'aehwa in 1924, and opened a new branch in Taejŏn when the provincial capital moved there from Kongju in 1932. Medical work here differed from other mission stations in that it lacked a doctor and hospital but housed a full-service infant and maternal health centre. Besides a bi-monthly Well-Baby Clinic, Kongju started a Milk Station in 1927 and a nursery for motherless babies or babies of sick mothers in 1930. It also offered a two-year training course for baby nurses targeting high school girls and a four-month post-graduate nursing course in Public Health and Infant Welfare. There was a clinic for Japanese babies, and a Korean nurse-midwife was on staff devoted to the pre-natal, delivery and post-natal care of Korean mothers and babies in their homes.<sup>59</sup>

How, then, did missionaries understand the problems facing Koreans in terms of infant welfare? While recognising the inferior state of public works or family finances, they attributed early childhood mortality largely to maternal ignorance, particularly in regards to feeding, fueled by Korean customs. In other words, mothers did not know the proper methods of feeding and failed to offer nutrition required for healthy growth. Late weaning and the lack of milk after weaning, the inferior quality of the Korean diet (as perceived by missionaries), pre-mastication of food (transferred from adults' mouths to infant), the early start of solid food (while still breast-feeding), restrictions in the diets of sick children and feeding infants on demand instead of on schedule were said to tax the health of infants through their digestive tracts, exacerbating or even bringing on illnesses leading to an untimely demise.

According to the *Chōsen sōtokofu tōkei nenpō* (GGK annual statistical yearbook) in 1920, nervous system-related disorders accounted for 21 per cent and infectious diseases 29 per cent of infant deaths under the age of one year. In 1925 and 1930, nervous disorders again were reported as the number one cause of infant mortality, claiming 25 per cent of all (reported) infant deaths (under 12 months of age) in both years. The category of nervous disorders likely included infants who suffered from convulsions brought upon by high fevers or dehydration from diarrhea that stemmed from infections or other illnesses. Nevertheless, while

58 One example of the association's endorsed publications includes Frances Lee's, *Children Nutrition and Health*. "Endorsed N.A.K. Publications," *Bulletin of the Nurses' Association in Korea* 24 (1932): 64–65.

59 "A public health aeroplane trip from North to South in Korea," *The Korea Mission Field* 36(5) (1940): 81–83; and Maren P. Bording, "Infant welfare and public health work in Kongju," *The Korea Mission Field* 24(3) (1928): 52–53.

government statistics presented respiratory and nervous ailments as the more common causes of infant mortality, missionaries focused on proper nutrition and eating habits, particularly the scheduled feeding of infants, as the root of most infant illnesses. The Kongju Infant Welfare Center handed out a Feeding Schedule pamphlet written in vernacular Korean to mothers. The rhetoric of the pamphlet was frightening. It warned, "44 out of 100 newborns are dead in their first two years." The reasons lay in the inability to stick to scheduled feeding, clean bathing and clean clothing. "Do you want to kill your beloved child?" the pamphlet asked, "Or do you want it to live?"

This stress on proper feeding, while common in other areas of the world, was more than simply an application of foreign methods in Korea. It also indicated missionaries' more general concerns about digestive-related ailments in Korea. Anxieties about their own digestive health were rampant in the Korean missionary community. The gluten-related ailment sprue was cited as one of the major health concerns for the foreign population. The Research Department of the Severance Union Medical College conducted several studies on Korean foods and food values, dietetic conditions and the negative impact of the Korean diet on missionaries.<sup>60</sup> Missionary children, including the daughter of Dr Rosetta S. Hall, fell victim to dysentery with its symptomatic diarrhea and mode of transmission through drinking water. Digestive-related maladies were highlighted as the most common cause of illness among missionaries after exhaustion or overwork.

Moreover, while infant-welfare work in Europe and America retreated from a focus on milk supply to a focus on labour legislation (to enhance breastfeeding), free meals to supplement breastfeeding mothers' nutrition and mother pensions, missionaries in Korea concentrated their efforts on changing Korean child-rearing customs particular in terms of diet. They circulated detailed instructions on solid foods in addition to scheduled feeding. Korean children were "fortunate" if they survived habits that allowed them to "eat nearly all kinds of green fruit and vegetables," only to suffer from the intestinal parasites contracted from the not-so-dead-and-dried-fish at the markets.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps because breastfeeding was nearly universal, missionaries felt little need to mention its benefits, although they were disquieted by the fact that Korean infants seemed to nurse constantly for three to four years, way beyond the recommended one year. Cow's milk, which was uncommon in the Korean diet and generally out of the reach for many, was encouraged to supplement nutrition. Missionaries may have invoked

60 Two published reports include James Van Buskirk, *The Composition of Typical Korean Diets*, Seoul, Korea: Severance Union Medical College, 1924; and J.D. Van Buskirk and F.M. Stites, MD, "The health of missionaries in Korea," *The Korea Mission Field* 18(8) (1922): 163–86.

61 A.G. Fletcher, "Concentration and efficiency," p. 42.

poverty, poor sanitary works and improper pre- and post-natal care in passing, but they did not pursue these aspects of infant-welfare work with as much fervour as they did Korean feeding habits.

By the late 1930s, mission infant-welfare work existed in some shape or form in Seoul, Taejŏn, Kongju, Andong, Kangye, Taegu, Sinch'ŏn, P'yŏngyang, Haeju, Chemulp'ŏ, Wŏnsan, Kaesŏng, Chŏrwŏn, Ch'unch'ŏn and Suwŏn. The expansion of this new field of medical work, however, seemed precarious in a time of retrenchment. For example, even when financial support was offered to expand or develop hospitals, as in the case of Ms. Schaufler who in the mid-1920s was considering to donate more funds to the Cornelius Baker Memorial Hospital in Andong which was named after her father, Mission Boards refused, not wanting to commit to sustain hospitals at expanded levels.<sup>62</sup> They also expected medical missions to be self-supporting. By the 1920s, North Methodists closed three of their six medical stations. Medical missions in P'yŏngyang decided to consolidate their efforts through union work with one hospital. Medical work was heavily dependent on personnel and funds—should the physician or nurse go on furlough, mission hospitals closed unless they were able to procure replacements, often employing Korean graduates to serve in the meanwhile. The global economic recession of the 1930s further cut back on appropriations, and missionaries often had to dig into their own pockets or appeal to personal friends and supporters to fund their clinics. Well-baby clinics required a doctor's time—precious when doctors at mission stations were already overtaxed.<sup>63</sup> Clinics demanded a full-time nurse when few could be spared, and someone preferably Korean to communicate with mothers. Space was an issue, with church offices being used if there was no room at the hospital or dispensary. Milk was not inexpensive either—hence the centre at Kongju had to resort to serving a more upper-class clientele in order to fund the service, thereby deviating from their professed goals of social service.<sup>64</sup>

The work at times seemed to cost too much with little result. The Well-Baby clinic in Andong shut down for a few years in the early 1930s for this reason. According to its annual report, "One of our saddest set-backs has been the dropping away of the baby clinic. It was found that we were giving too much charity."<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, despite the strain on resources, by 1940 most Presbyterian and Methodist mission stations offered some form of infant welfare service.

62 See letter from Arthur J. Brown to Ms. Schaufler, October 19, 1925, PHS, RG 140-14-22. This was in fear that should support not be continued, the Mission Board did not want to be financially responsible for maintaining hospital operations.

63 Dr Douglas Avison noted, "[Child welfare clinics] take time, workers, and money. The work is enjoyable but when added to an already overload, they sometimes tax both patience and strength." See "Personal report of Douglas Avison, 1932-3," PHS, RG 140-9-14.

64 Soy milk formula was offered as an alternative to poorer patients.

65 "Report of the Cornelius Baker Memorial Hospital, Andong, 1930," PHS, RG 140-7-29.



## Placing Christian service and family in infant welfare work

Situating infant welfare work within the larger context of global missions and Korea's colonial medical system furthers our understanding of why health services for infants were promoted in a period of declining resources. Medical work, in general, was believed to be an essential part of Christian work, even "an outgrowth of Christianity" as "Jesus Christ had compassion on the multitude" and commissioned that there be healing of the sick in the Church.<sup>66</sup> In the mid-1920s, the Rockefeller Foundation sponsored the Layman's Inquiry which produced a report representing seven American Protestant denominations that assessed the work of, and suggested reforms for, Protestant missions. It reflected the unease Protestant denominations felt about the role of Christianity and missions particularly in Asia and the relationship between evangelism and social service. Moreover, it addressed concerns about whether medical missions were needed where imperial powers proactively constructed modern medical systems, as in the case of Japan in Korea. The report acknowledged, "With a Government so progressive, and so intent on making the best of Western science its own, there has seemed to other boards little need of embarking upon a costly program of medical relief."<sup>67</sup> However, the report concluded that this did not signal the end of medical mission work. Rather, the report justified their work with the ideal of Christian service.

This articulated a sentiment begun in the early years of Japan's colonial rule that Christianity in Korea offered different and better modes of medical service and education. A missionary strategy that Hyaewol Choi calls "Christian modernity," placed Christianity at the heart of the missionary modernising enterprise. Their presence was justified by the claim that missionaries added moral and spiritual dimensions to modern ways of being that Japan's colonial project of material and technological modernisation lacked.<sup>68</sup> One mission hospital reported, "As Government institutions and native physicians increase and as the church grows the purpose and need of the mission hospital changes from its importance as a means of contact more and more to that of the Good Samaritan."<sup>69</sup> Medical education at Severance was essential for it offered "medical education under Christian influence and in the Christian spirit." Imagine the danger when, as

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66 Sharrocks, "Can less than two doctors in a single hospital achieve the best result?" p. 17.

67 William Ernest Hocking, *Re-thinking Missions: a Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years*, New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1926, pp. 198–99.

68 See Hyaewol Choi, "Christian modernity in the missionary discourse of Korea, 1905–10," *East Asian History* 29 (2005): 39–68.

69 "Kennedy Memorial Hospital Report, 1919–1920," PHS, RG 140-7-36.

Dr Van Buskirk then a professor at Severance continued, “if we fail to do this ... we allow the great and influential medical profession to fall into non-Christian or anti-Christian hands.”<sup>70</sup>

Missionaries feared that a “Japanese system of medical treatment, empirical remedies, shot-gun prescriptions, and intra-cutaneous, intra-muscular, intravenous, and intra-anything injections” would let the “lust for gold” rule the work of the physician.<sup>71</sup> In such a system, “it is only the charity patient who is being turned away.” Private duty nurses would have no place. To counter this, Christian physicians and schools producing Christian medical workers instilled “the spirit of Christian Service” to bring about “the milk of human kindness.” Thus, the future of medical missions was to lie in public health, particularly with social services as the extension of “the usefulness of the hospital by connecting its helpful service with the homes of the people.”<sup>72</sup> They were to ensure Koreans’ access to medical services that may be hampered by their material, economic or social conditions through the provision of care in the home “as a practical expression of the gospel of Christ.” The Laymen’s Inquiry concurred, “the Commissioners are convinced that ... much that is worthwhile can be done in [fields of health education, preventive medicine and public health nursing].... In particular, efforts in health education should be focused upon school children and mothers.”<sup>73</sup>

For these reasons, medical missionaries insisted on the value of their presence. Keeping the Christian mandate in mind, they persevered to continue medical services by meeting GKG licensing and operating requirements, particularly in areas of common interest such as infant welfare. In this way, there was a tacit partnership between the missionaries and the colonial authorities. The 1927 mission Public Health Conference included a visit to the Government Hospital.<sup>74</sup> Mission-affiliated visiting nurses and midwives used a Midwife Bag that was used in Japan.<sup>75</sup> It was said that “government officials approve highly of anything done for public health,” and that the work in Kongju was “shown much consideration by them.”<sup>76</sup> The milk station in particular was supported by the local police and higher officials.<sup>77</sup> The East Gate Woman’s Hospital started a special training session for senior nurses in midwifery in 1929, equipping the classroom in the same way as the Government Hospital School for Midwives and

70 J.D. Van Buskirk, “Christian medical education, its place and opportunity,” *The Korea Mission Field* 20(7) (1914): 213–14.

71 E.W. Demaree, “The future of medical missions in Korea,” *The Korea Mission Field* 30(4) (1934): 74–76.

72 O.R. Avison, “Social service and the hospital,” *The Korea Mission Field* 20(7) (1914): 203–06.

73 Hocking, *Re-thinking Missions*, p. 213.

74 “Public Health Institute,” *Bulletin of Nurses’ Association of Korea* 5 (1927): 5–13.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 6.



employing the same teacher.<sup>78</sup> This was conducted in hopes that their graduates would pass the Government Licensing Examination and receive their licences as midwives.

Infant welfare work in Kongju (and later Taejŏn) demonstrates most clearly this relationship between medical missions and the colonial state. The director Maren Bording was permitted a new building to house the infant welfare work by local authorities in 1929. For her work, they granted Bording a medical licence although she was not a trained physician.<sup>79</sup> They also made annual contributions starting in 1930. As children of Japanese officials enrolled with her services, the local government loaned a small building for a milk station so that milk would not have to be transported daily from Kongju to Taejŏn. In other centres, Japanese support came as single donations, such as the 50 yen received from Countess Kadama, wife of the Vice-Governor of Korea, to be used for prizes in the Baby Show in Seoul in 1932, or serums to vaccinate children. If tensions existed with the colonial government in the carrying out of infant welfare work, mission records were relatively silent.<sup>80</sup>

In addition, missionaries saw infant welfare as an area not fully met by the state. While the GGK established an elaborate system of hospitals and medical education throughout the peninsula and proclaimed various public health campaigns, GGK campaigns lacked the resources to effect significant material improvements in Korea's health conditions. Elma Rosenberger attributed high infant mortality rates to the "ignorance of hygiene and sanitation, low economic status, lack of effective quarantine arrangements, poor housing, and early resumption of household duties after confinement."<sup>81</sup> The poor state of public works (such as open sewers) in Korea did not help matters, but until proper infrastructure could be implemented, missionaries sought public health work as means to "preach prevention and prevent sickness."<sup>82</sup> The state through its social service arm, the Chōsen shakai jigyōkai (Chōsen Welfare Society) began to sponsor a Children's Day in 1928 three years after T'aehwa began its annual Baby Show. This Day was later extended in 1931 to an annual week-long public education campaign in May termed "Loving and Protecting the Child (K. *yuyu-a aeho*. J. *nyūyoji aigo*)." But while the activities of the Chōsen shakai jigyōkai were generally limited to working with other medical institutions to provide free health and dental exams for the young and broadcasting the proper health care of infants, standard weight and height charts, statistics on infant mortality

78 Elisabeth S. Roberts, "Report of East Gate Hospital," *Bulletin of Nurses' Association of Korea* 13 (1929): 26–27.

79 Hall, "Pioneer missionary work in Korea," p. 105.

80 This is in contrast to other aspects of medical work missionaries contested with the state, such as physician licensing, teaching credentials and operation of smaller or less equipped clinics.

81 Elma T. Rosenberger, "The new 'Seoul Child-Welfare Union,'" *The Korea Mission Field* 26(5) (1930): 109–10.

82 Esther L. Shields, "Mrs. Ludlow and Kim Whe Soon," *Bulletin of Nurses' Association* 3 (1926): 12–13.

during the week, missionaries endeavoured to work directly with their Korean clients on a long-term and frequent basis. Despite the annual exhortations of the “Loving and Protecting the Child” campaigns, infant welfare institutions failed to materialise in a significant way in the 1930s. In 1936, there were around twenty infant welfare-related institutions and daycare centres, most of them run by Christian missionaries.<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, the mode of infant-welfare operations with their periodic check-in and follow-up illuminates their importance to overall missions. Periodic medical examinations to prevent and treat ailments before they become fatal conformed generally to medical recommendations in the West. But this was time-consuming and costly, sometimes with little improvement in overall mortality or morbidity. This pattern used in mission hospitals and dispensaries, however, allowed missionaries to pursue other goals, most obviously that of evangelising and, in the case of infant-welfare work, the transformation of domestic practices. Continued visits to the infant-welfare clinic by the mother and infant, followed up with visits home by a nurse or Bible woman and Mothers’ Meetings to reinforce instruction certainly aided evangelising efforts. As one station reported in 1930, “The humanitarianism of the work is therefore apparent, not to mention the opportunity it offers for catching and holding the mothers for Christ.”<sup>84</sup> At T’aehwa, “the mothers who bring their babies regularly to this Clinic are almost sure to become Christians.”<sup>85</sup> Clinic reports listed statistics not only of the number of infants examined and treated, but also the number of mothers who converted to Christianity.<sup>86</sup>

That some clinics were conducted through Cradle Rolls of churches attests to the close link between church and evangelising goals exhibited in infant welfare work. Cradle Rolls were rosters of infants and their mothers associated with local churches. What missionaries discovered was that many young mothers who expressed little interest in Christianity were interested in care for their children. Whether their children became part of the Cradle Rolls before or after they attended the clinics, the mothers of Cradle Roll infants were organised into Mothers’ Meetings, offered medical examinations for their children, and lectured on childrearing techniques. Cradle Rolls and infant welfare work were deemed “a real help in winning some of these who have been so slow to hear when preached to.”<sup>87</sup> “Graduates” of the Cradle Roll would then move into the

83 Kim Hyegyŏng, *Singminji ha kŭndae kajok ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa chendŏ* (The Formation of the Modern Family and Gender during the Colonial Period), Seoul: Ch’angbi Publications, 2006, p. 152.

84 “Kangkei Station Report, June 1930,” PHS, RG 140-7-1.

85 “Annual Report of Seoul Station, 1927–1928,” PHS, RG 140-6-55.

86 Interestingly, the numbers were quite marginal, relative to the number of infants examined. This corroborates my point later in the paper that Korean mothers found the medical exams more appealing than the Christian religion itself. For example, in 1932, Elma Rosenberger reported that only seventeen people converted to Christianity through the Child Welfare work. A total of 2,533 babies attended the clinics. See Elma T. Rosenberger, “Child welfare work,” *Bulletin of Korean Nurses’ Association* 24 (1932): 36–40.

87 Rosenberger, “Child welfare work.”

kindergarten department of local church Sunday Schools. Cradle Rolls in fact were a means to obtain future Sunday school students and bring families into the church.<sup>88</sup>

In this way, infant welfare work allowed missionaries to reinforce and bring to fruition ideal visions of the Christian family in the Korean home. They interpreted certain aspects of Korean family dynamics as antithetical to Christian life, particularly those categorised as ruled by Confucian patriarchal principles and filial piety which demanded respect for (and perhaps unilateral submission to) parents, husbands, in-laws and the elderly. Children were relegated to marginal, perhaps pitiful positions, their physical and mental health an afterthought. It was claimed that "Korean children have very little amusement.... Fun must not be allowed even to children."<sup>89</sup> How could children thrive in such an environment, especially when they were not wanted or neglected as in the case of one girl whose father would not give permission for her to receive treatment because she was a girl?<sup>90</sup>

Missionaries believed Christianity offered Korean children humanity not found elsewhere. As Mrs. Norton claimed, "Christianity is the only religion that appreciates childhood."<sup>91</sup> In this way, "children were gifts from God and to be cherished. They were to pray and be thankful for, and happy about their children."<sup>92</sup> Thus, "the recognition of childhood is a sure test of the narrow or full development of Christianity." To be Christian, to live a Christian life, was to ensure the development of children's faculties, and that meant addressing the physical, mental and spiritual needs of children.<sup>93</sup> Christianity required the reformation of childrearing techniques. Parents should not only ensure the health of their young but also change how they related to their children, for example by setting a moral example and not using corporal punishment when disciplining. This connection between Christianity and childhood better contextualises the Sunday school movement in Korean churches and the emergence of mission kindergartens and formal baby welfare clinics in colonial Korea.

"And a little child shall lead them." So it was written in the Taegu station report in 1930. The leadership of the child in his/her purity and innocence had the ability to bring his/her family to church and Christian living. "The child of

88 "Chuil hakkyo, yŏngabu 1, yŏngabunŭn muŏssinyo" (Sunday School, Cradle Roll 1, what is the Cradle Roll?), *Kidok sinbo* (Christian Messenger), August 2, 1916.

89 Syngman Rhee, "Child life in Korea," *The Korea Mission Field* 8(3) (1912): 93–98.

90 "Brevities. Medical," *The Korea Mission Field* 10(8) (1914): 246–48.

91 Mrs. A.H. Norton, "Kindergarten work," *The Korea Mission Field* 8(8) (1912): 234–36.

92 Other articles in the Korean Christian newspaper *Kidok sinbo* attest to this view on children. See for example Mrs. Avison, "Kajŏng tamhwa, Christian ũi kajŏng ũi kŏnsŏl kwa palchŏn," (Building and developing a Christian home), *Kidok sinbo*, 26 April 1916.

93 Chŏnju Ch'oe puin, "Kajŏng pogam, pumo ka chanyŏ ege ch'aegim" (Protecting the home, responsibility of the parent towards children), *Kidok sinbo*, 24 December 1919.

today is the man of tomorrow. How important was it, therefore, that children shall grow up healthy and strong.”<sup>94</sup> With these words, the Presbyterian Hospital at Taegu fulfilled “a long cherished dream for a Baby clinic.” The physical well-being of the child was thus central to the project of the Christian home. Other scholars have demonstrated how gender relations, particularly between husbands and wives, were central to mission-modernising projects to reform the domestic space. Korean women were to achieve “true womanhood” and build an ideal Christian family based on a companionate marriage.<sup>95</sup> They were also to ensure that “special care is taken of the health and the moral development of the child,”<sup>96</sup> and it was “‘Mother and Child Welfare Work,’ which is proving a great help to the Church in ... building healthy Christian homes.”<sup>97</sup> Perhaps missionary infant-welfare work can best be summed by Elma Rosenberger:

We do not only try to help them physically but we always like to talk to them about that biggest and brightest hope in our lives which is Jesus Christ and the Christian hope for which we live and move and have our being, and many times we have the privilege of praying with them. We want to teach them that without this hope they cannot quite raise their children as they ought to, nor have the highest purpose in life for them.<sup>98</sup>

This then was the bio-politics of mission infant welfare work. Christian principles demanded missionaries provide social services (including health care) in a world devoid of Christian spirit or morality. They were also to build Korean Christian homes by promoting the health and welfare of the very young. And medical and other services protecting the young were best realised with the Christian faith amidst a secular world. For these reasons, infant welfare work was to remain an integral part of medical missions. There was to be no rest “until in all the Christian homes, the children are passionately loved, are wisely and patiently taught, their future planned for and in fact the responsibility of such a gift from God more fully appreciated.”<sup>99</sup>

94 “Annual Report of Taiku Station for 1929–1930,” PHS, RG 140-7-1.

95 Views like this are well expressed in reports such as Mattie Wilcox Noble, “What the Bible has done in Christian Korean homes,” *The Korea Mission Field* 11(1) (1915): 11–13. For example, Christianity was believed to prevent husbands’ violence against wives, raise the marriageable age and eliminate concubinage. Hyaewool Choi in *Gender and Mission Encounters* discusses further the complicated relations between missionaries and their projects in cultivating “ideal womanhood” in Korea.

96 Noble, “What the Bible has done in Christian Korean homes,” p. 11.

97 “Mission hospitals in Korea,” *The Korea Mission Field* 33(5) (1937): 94–103, p. 102.

98 Elma T. Rosenberger, “Public health work in Seoul,” *Bulletin of the Nurses’ Association of Korea* 1 (1925): 12–13.

99 “The child, the home and the Sunday School,” *The Korea Mission Field* 11(10) (1915): 282–83.

## Conclusion

By the 1920s, infant mortality statistics worldwide became sensitive indices of social welfare and sanitary administration, resulting in a growing anxiety about infant mortality rates, and the recognition that such rates needed to be lowered.<sup>100</sup> How societies addressed the concern varied. However, as Alisa Klaus noted, "The social visions of reformers and politicians and the political culture in which they worked determined the institutional structures through which scientific principles were put into practice."<sup>101</sup> For example, the more private and unregulated nature of American medicine and the social activism of women's groups help explain their local character, and opposition to public infant welfare centres from the medical community, as well as the large presence of women in baby-saving campaigns and child-welfare administration in the United States. France's main concern with military preparedness, a tradition of government intervention in social life, and an understanding of infant mortality as related to women's wage labour account for larger state involvement and the funding of medical and economic provisions for pregnant and post-partum women, and cooperation from the organised medical profession.

Missionary infant welfare work in Korea, likewise, was shaped by the vision of its reformers and the colonial medical system in which they found themselves. It is facile to assume that the missionaries provided Koreans with universal health care standardised by a science with its objective claims. This chapter suggests, however, that missionaries' interpretations of the health needs of and solutions for Koreans informed the kinds of services they provided. They reflect assumptions missionaries made when equating their medical knowledge and practices with civilisation. In addition, Christian ideals of service and domesticity surrounding family, home and childhood were pivotal in shaping the ways missionaries pursued infant welfare programs to meet evangelistic goals. These were done under what they perceived as secular and perhaps inferior conditions of the Japanese colonial medical system. While missionaries were not a unified contingent, as far as infant welfare was concerned, they agreed that Christian medical and social services were sorely needed within a Japanese colonial context. Moreover, Christian visions justified the physical well-being of the child which would be best served by the mode of infant-welfare clinics and mothers' clubs. Maternal ignorance of child-rearing techniques, particularly feeding, were targeted as the primary cause of infant death and best combatted

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100 United States Children's Bureau and Nettie Pauline McGill, *Infant-welfare Work in Europe: An Account of Recent Experiences in Great Britain, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy*, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1921, p. 7.

101 Klaus, *Every Child a Lion*, p. 16.

with health education. Already established church traditions such as mothers' clubs and rosters of infants in the Cradle Rolls and Sunday Schools of local churches facilitated infant-welfare work.

Moreover, it is common to characterise this infant welfare work as primarily provider-client, moving in one direction from missionary to Korean mother. Unfortunately, Korean participants in infant-welfare work left little written record besides some articles on women's and child health issues in the vernacular media.<sup>102</sup> As is usually the case with mission archives, Korean participants are relatively absent, appearing mainly as anonymous clients whose cooperation or lack thereof was used to reinforce claims made in mission reports, or as examples of mission success in transferring proper infant-welfare work, knowledge and practice. It is thus difficult to gauge how they perceived and interacted with the new modes of maternal and infant care practices presented through mission infant-welfare work, or the extent of missionary influence. Moreover, the scope of this chapter does not allow for a fuller examination of Korean workers such as physicians, nurse-midwives, Bible women, or Mother Meeting leaders who were integral to the successful operation of missionary infant-welfare work through their close interactions with Korean families who had young infants.<sup>103</sup>

Regardless, what remains clear is that foreign missionaries were more effective than the colonial authorities in implementing systematic and sustained maternal and infant welfare programs. Perhaps the GKK's later involvement in consolidating infant health programs reveals both anxiety that private health and welfare projects were growing into a formidable force and a lack of genuine interest in paediatric and women's health (with pre and postnatal services) beyond their reproductive capabilities. As discussed, the GKK supported a "Love and Protect the Child" campaign ostensibly to address the problem of high infant mortality in Korea. The timing coincided with the missionary annual Baby Show, and missionaries cooperated with the week-long campaign. In the 1930s, however, the campaign's name was changed to "Health Week," thus eliminating the concentrated focus on infant welfare. Missionaries maintained their focus on consistent infant welfare work in their missions.

For the most part, the GKK condoned missionary infant welfare activities. The missionaries' fragile partnership with the authorities in the realm of medicine, however, restricted their activities. Moreover, their belief in shared goals of civilisation tacitly tied them to imperial goals of conciliation and nominal health

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102 One example is Ms Ch'oe from Chŏnju whose articles appear in the Christian newspaper *Kidok sinbo* in 1919 and 1920. Those who did write, for the most part, adopted exhortations to maternal attention to infant care and criticism of Korean daily habits in the home similar to those of missionaries. In terms of general rhetoric, it is difficult to distinguish between that of the missionaries and the colonial authorities. Both shared similar condescension towards Korean customs and habits in daily life including childcare.

103 I address this in my current work in progress.



education. They thus failed to muster a movement to sufficiently address the structural factors contributing to infant mortality, a concern many Korean reformers raised in the press. Perhaps missionaries considered labour legislation, maternal insurance and public sanitation as outside their jurisdiction. It is more likely, however, that these were not as fitting with their bio-politics in the creation of Christian homes.

The lack of finances, withdrawal of missionaries with Japan’s military escalation in Asia, and inadequacy of state initiatives further prevented the emergence of major public maternal and infant health programs during the colonial period. The missionaries’ legacy, however, may not be best measured by the number of infants examined and treated, or the mothers who converted to the new regimes in child-rearing or even Christianity. Rather, they left behind a firm rationale for, model of, and experience in infant welfare work. The leadership experience gained by Korean women as medical and social service professionals and organisational leaders left an indelible mark as some women took up leadership positions in re-building Korean society after its liberation from Japanese colonial rule.<sup>104</sup> Mothers’ clubs as a means through which to transmit “ideals of domesticity” particularly in their relation to child-rearing techniques as directed from above, whether it be United States military occupying forces, South Korean state, or missionaries, were to re-appear continually throughout the twentieth century.<sup>105</sup>

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104 One example is Esther Koh (Ko Hwanggyŏng) who worked in mission social service centres during the colonial period and continued welfare work with women and children in the post-liberation period. She was the only woman to serve on a committee advising Park Chung Hee on family planning.

105 For more on how Mothers’ Clubs functioned in family planning and home economics campaigns under Park Chung Hee see John DiMoia, “알맞게 낳아서 훌륭하게 기르자!” (Let’s Have the Proper Number of Children and Raise Them Well!): Family Planning and Nation-Building in South Korea, 1961–1968,” *EASTS* 2 (2008): 361–79; and Seungsook Moon, *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.





# 3. All Other Loves Excelling: Mary Kidder, Wakamatsu Shizuko and Modern Marriage in Meiji Japan

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## Introduction

The adage, “Do as I say, not as I do,” might well have been on the lips of American missionary women in Japan at the turn of the twentieth century. As Jane Hunter, a historian whose work has focused on missionary women in China, observes, “The message of Christian domesticity preached by missionary women [in China] was less transformative than the force of their own example.”<sup>2</sup> Trained “in submission, service, and love, all objects of the mission cause,”<sup>3</sup> American women were thought to be inherently suited to serving Christian goals. But more often than not, as these women crossed into unfamiliar territory, they also found themselves at odds with the very values and behaviours they were intent on projecting. Karen Seat notes in her study of American women missionaries in Japan, “Conservative American ideologies of womanhood, in fact, were powerfully undermined by the very women who were charged to promote them—namely, white Protestant missionary women. While nineteenth-century missionaries were often the purveyors of what amounted to sexist and racist ideologies compatible with the age of imperialism, the mission movement was much more complicated and much less predictable than any such one-dimensional depiction.”<sup>4</sup> Committed to promoting Victorian notions of modesty and encouraging the establishment of Christian homes, these missionaries frequently discovered that their efforts generated surprising outcomes. This chapter will focus on one such case in late nineteenth-century Japan by

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1 I visited the following archives and repositories: Ferris University Library Archives (FULA), Yokohama, Japan and the library at the International Christian University (ICU), Mitaka, Japan. At ICU, I accessed the *Jogaku zasshi* a set of journals. All other research was conducted at my home institution, Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

2 Jane Hunter, “The home and the world: the missionary message of U.S. domesticity,” in *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, ed. Leslie A. Flemming, Boulder, San Francisco and London: Westview Press, 1989, pp. 159–66, p. 164.

3 Barbara Welter, “She hath done what she could: Protestant women’s missionary careers in nineteenth-century America,” *American Quarterly*, Special Issue: *Women and Religion* 30(5) (Winter 1978): 624–38, p. 626.

4 Karen Seat, “Providence Has Freed Our Hands” *Women’s Missions and the American Encounter with Japan*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008, p. 4.

exploring the relationship between Miss Mary Kidder, a missionary with the Reformed Church in America who was sent to Japan in 1869, and her student Wakamatsu Shizuko, an orphan who would eventually become a prominent woman writer, journalist, educator and translator.

## Mary Kidder and the romance of mission work



**Figure 7. A youthful Mary E. Kidder (1834–1910)**

Source: Ferris University Library Archives.

A graduate of Monson Academy in Massachusetts and a teacher at various private schools throughout the Northeast, Mary E. Kidder (1834–1910), was eager to do more in service to society (see Figure 7). She worked for a time in Brooklyn, New York, catering to the dispossessed. She thought of applying to the missions that were then evangelising among Native Americans. But when she met Dr Samuel Robbins Brown (1810–1880),<sup>5</sup> a missionary to Japan with the Reformed Church of America, she was convinced that she should be sent to Japan. Apparently, Mary had wished to depart for the mission fields even earlier, but personal hindrances always interfered. Once, when she was “but a school girl,” her father had intervened. Another time there were “more paramount claims” on her life.<sup>6</sup> And yet a third time, she had to deny foreign mission service because she had been saddled with family responsibilities—nursing a sickly sister after their mother’s death. But in 1869, a healthy and independent thirty-five-year old and with “all hindrance of a personal character now being removed,”<sup>7</sup> Mary was ready to accompany the Browns on their return to Japan.

When she presented herself to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America, she spoke of her excitement over the “romance” of the adventure but hastily added that she was led by Providence in her request to be sent to Japan. Indeed, she was to announce in a letter home to family just before her departure that though friends and acquaintances thought to dissuade her from leaving, “nothing but a direct interposition by Providence or some insurmountable obstacle will prevent me from going.”<sup>8</sup> Dr S.R. Brown vouched for her suitability, arguing that she could be instrumental—once she had acquired the language—of administering to Japanese womanhood, “a work that must be done before that nation can be [welcomed to its] place among Christian nations and which ought to be begun now.”<sup>9</sup> And so, the Missionary

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5 S.R. Brown had studied at Amherst, Yale and Union Seminary in New York. In 1838 he set out for missionary work in Macao with his bride, Elizabeth Bartlett. Here he met Dr James Curtis Hepburn, a physician and Presbyterian missionary who would soon be influential in Japan. Brown returned to the United States in 1847 to allow Elizabeth, who had had three children, to recover from a lingering illness. While in the United States, Brown served as the headmaster for the newly opened Roma Academy in New York. Additionally, he became the pastor of a Dutch Reformed church in Lake Oswego and a teacher at Springside Boarding School for Boys in Auburn, New York. It was at this institution that Mary Kidder became acquainted with him.

6 Mary Kidder, Brooklyn, New York, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 3 May 1869, p. 5. Mary Kidder Miller’s Letters to Dr J.M. Ferris (1869–1878) are archived in the Ferris University Library Archives (FULA), Yokohama, Japan.

7 Mary Kidder, Brooklyn, New York, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 1 March 1869, p. 4.

8 From a digest of Mary Kidder’s letters home, as compiled by her great-niece, Elizabeth Kidder Morton, and presented by her to Ferris Women’s School on 14 June 1972, (FULA). This letter is dated 28 March 1869, Brooklyn, New York. It was the last letter sent to her family in Wardsboro, Vermont before she departed for Japan.

9 Dr S.R. Brown’s recommendation of Mary Kidder, Brooklyn, New York, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 28 February 1869 (FULA). As collected in her letters to Dr J.M. Ferris, p. 2. In places where the handwritten letters were illegible, the copyist left blanks. These are represented by [brackets] enclosing my own guess at what might be missing.

Board of the Reformed Church in America dispatched Mary to Japan in the summer of 1869, making her the first single North American missionary woman to enter the nation.

Mission boards understood that the most important means for rooting Christianity in native soil was through the establishment of Christian homes. And women were the key. Or, as one missionary is noted to have claimed: "You cannot evangelize a country until you convert the women."<sup>10</sup> Given the sensitive nature of evangelizing to native women, female missionaries were essential. For one thing, it was more natural for women to interact with other women, particularly in countries such as Japan, where women were denied contact with men outside the family, particularly foreign men. For another, the missionary woman could better demonstrate the "Christian" way of raising children, which was believed to be more loving, more involved and healthier for both mother and child.<sup>11</sup> But married women were often too preoccupied with this very task, and sadly at times too haggard from successive childbirth in their adopted lands, to engage their native counterparts. Mission boards, often at the urging of affiliate women's boards, began to send single women to the foreign fields, in the hope that they might best accommodate the needs of the native woman. These single female missionaries, given the kind of intimacy that they were able to establish with the women in their midst, were profoundly influential, though their success was often accompanied by unexpected tensions and contradictions. As Seat observes, "Protestant women's missions opened up a space of legitimacy for American women who actually did not fulfill domestic roles, as they were able to justify leaving their own domestic sphere to build a vast mission movement focused on employing unmarried missionary women."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, these mission women were often involved in enterprises, such as schools and charities, that depended on the work of native women, thus drawing them further and further out into the public sphere and away from their domestic duties.

Mary spent most of her first year in Japan in the remote region of Niigata. By sheer diligence and determination she managed to teach herself Japanese, using "Hepburn's Dictionary, first edition—Brown's Grammar, and a very small pamphlet of Aston's—I do not remember the title; and the help of a young girl who came to me to learn English."<sup>13</sup> Much to Mary's delight—and to the Browns' keen disappointment—a salary dispute between the Japanese government and

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10 As cited in Seat, *"Providence Has Freed Our Hands,"* p.57.

11 Marjorie King, "Exporting femininity, not feminism: nineteenth-century U.S. missionary women's efforts to emancipate Chinese women," in *Women's Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, ed. Leslie A. Flemming, Boulder, San Francisco and London: Westview Press, 1989, pp. 117–35.

12 Seat, *"Providence Has Freed Our Hands,"* p.57.

13 Mary Kidder Miller, "The Christian movement in Japan," *Japan Evangelist* (August 1909): 126–27, p. 126.

Dr Brown forced the party to leave Niigata and return to Yokohama.<sup>14</sup> By July 1870 they were back in the thriving metropolis, which Mary described as being tantamount to a return to New York City.

In Yokohama, Mary could set about doing the job that she felt she had been called to do: teach women. Because single foreign women in Japan were required to have some sort of employment,<sup>15</sup> Mary officially became a teacher of English, an occupation that freed her somewhat from her obligations to the Browns. But it did not accord with what she felt was her “mission.” Mary was intent on establishing a school for women. As Hyaeweol Choi notes, “Missionaries put a priority on educating girls and women as the fastest way to introduce the Bible and Christian teachings.”<sup>16</sup> Of course, Japan at the time still restricted Christianity, and missionaries were not allowed to proselytise directly. But Mary and others of her generation held firmly to the idea “that national progress was associated with the status of women in society.”<sup>17</sup> Mary’s early letters to Dr J.M. Ferris, General Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church, teem with an enthusiastic desire to strike out on her own and get the job done. She was full of ideas for establishing schools. Her main requirements were firstly that she should teach only women; and secondly that she should be able to communicate directly with her students without the hindrances of the foreign community. Her dreams, however, would be long in the making.

From October 1870, she was asked to assist the Presbyterian missionary Mrs. Clara Hepburn (1818–1906), wife of Dr James Curtis Hepburn (1815–1911). Best known today for his work in compiling the first Japanese-English dictionary—the one Mary used to learn Japanese—and for the system of Romanisation that bears his name (and is still considered standard today), Dr Hepburn was also extremely active in translating the Bible into Japanese. From 1859 he and his wife had run a compound in Yokohama where he practised medicine, taught a variety of subjects from English to theology, and, once the practice of Christianity was allowed in 1873, openly conducted worship services. His wife had been teaching an English class for boys and girls on the compound since 1867. Just prior to Mary’s arrival, however, she had been saddled with the

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14 According to Miller, “The Christian movement in Japan,” p. 126, the government claimed the dispute was over salary. But Mary suggested that the real dispute concerned Dr Brown’s insistence on teaching his students about the Bible—a practice that was then disallowed.

15 Elizabeth Kidder Morton’s editorial note on the year 1870 of Mary Kidder Miller’s *Letters home, 1869–1870*.

16 Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, p. 19.

17 Rui Kohiyama, “‘No nation can rise higher than its women.’ The women’s ecumenical missionary movement and Tokyo Woman’s Christian College,” in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Connie A. Shemo, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 218–39, p. 220.

care of an infant whose missionary parents, Mr and Mrs. Edward Cornes, had died in an explosion aboard a ship in Tokyo Bay. Mary, therefore, assumed Mrs. Hepburn's work with the English class.

Clearly grateful for the opportunity, teaching English had nevertheless not been the life's work that Mary had had in mind. As she had written to Ferris while still in Niigata, "If it seems best I hope when I have a sufficient knowledge of Japanese that instead of teaching English that I may give my whole attention to religious instruction in their own language."<sup>18</sup> The following September, after the Hepburns had left for Shanghai to attend to the publication of his dictionary and the translations of the Gospel of Mark, Mary limited the class to girls. And thus the inauguration of "Miss Kidder's School for Girls," known as the first school of higher learning for women in Japan. In October 1871 she had twelve girls:

Seven of them are from fourteen to seventeen & the remaining five are eight to ten, since very small they seem about like the children in America at five or six. All these girls are bright and very quick and no one of them has been more than three mornings in learning her alphabets, large and small letters & one learned the whole the first day.

I have taught them several hymns & they sing "Jesus loves me" beautifully.... The very smallest one who is but a mite of a child sings very sweetly and with a clear voice that can be heard distinctly above the others and it would do your heart good to hear their dear little voices so sweetly singing these precious hymns & to feel that the day may be near when their hearts will respond. It seems to me that great things are in store for us concerning this people.<sup>19</sup>

Although she would give the names of her students in other letters, here she does not, leaving biographers to puzzle as to whether or not this tiny mite of a child was the seven-year-old Wakamatsu Shizuko, the other focus of this present study.<sup>20</sup>

## Wakamatsu Shizuko — an orphaned childhood

Names, like lives and family bonds, were ephemeral during the turbulent years surrounding the Meiji Restoration of 1868. When Shizuko was born in Aizu-

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18 Mary Kidder, Niigata, Japan, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 2 February 1870, pp. 14–15.

19 Mary Kidder, Yokohama, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 21 October 1871, pp. 19–20.

20 Honda Hayao, "Wakamatsu Shizuko no uketa kyōiku no kurisutokyō to shūhen—toku ni misu kidā ni tsuite" [The educational background of Shizuko Wakamatsu—The association with Miss Kidder], *Fukushima joshi tanki daigaku kenkyū kiyō* 10 (1988): 1–18, p. 11.



Wakamatsu, she was given the name “Kashi,” in honour of the fact that she had been born on the “first calendar sign” (*ki’noene*) in the sixty-cycle zodiac. She was the first child, and the name augured a bright future. With its additional meaning of “armour,” the name was fitting for a Samurai daughter. Her father had been adopted into the Matsukawa household, having originally been a member of the Furukawa family. To complicate matters, he changed his name because of his activities in the Kyoto region as a spy for the Aizu clan. Hereafter, he and his immediate family were registered under the name Shimada. Shizuko, therefore, spent the first five years of her life as Shimada Kashi. Her name would go through several other permutations, however, before she emerged as Wakamatsu Shizuko—a name she selected for herself (see Figure 8).<sup>21</sup>



**Figure 8. Wakamatsu Shizuko as a young girl (1864–1896)**

Source: Ferris University Library Archives.

<sup>21</sup> She began using the penname in 1886: Wakamatsu from the place of her birth, and Shizu meant “God’s servant.”

Following the defeat of the Aizu clan in November 1868, Shizuko's father escaped to Hokkaidō. Eventually he was captured and imprisoned, but none of this information reached Shizuko's family, who had been sent with other members of the Aizu clan to a barren strip of land in northern Aomori. Shizuko's mother died shortly thereafter, and Shizuko, now assumed to be an orphan, was adopted out to a family in Yokohama. Overnight she became Ōkawa Kashi.

Shizuko's adoptive father was a silk thread merchant with the Yamashiroya in Yokohama. His wife was a former prostitute. Shizuko joined the couple in the summer of 1870 when she was six. Bereft of her father and still grieving for her mother, Shizuko felt disoriented, confused and completely abandoned. To compound her discomfort, she fell ill. Perhaps in an effort to give his wife some respite from the sulky child, or perhaps in an effort to join the newly "civilised," Mr Ōkawa decided to enroll Shizuko in Miss Kidder's School. And so off she went every morning to the Hepburn compound.

## From Noge Hill to the Yamate Bluffs

Miss Kidder had been conducting her "school" in the dispensary on the Hepburn compound—a small second-floor room. When she had only needed to accommodate a few little girls, the space was tolerable. But by January 1872 she had nineteen; twenty-two in February. To compound Mary's problem, the Hepburns were scheduled to return from Shanghai in the fall of 1872 and begin using the dispensary again, forcing Mary to seek new quarters for her burgeoning school. Help was soon to come from the governor of Yokohama, Ōe Taku, whose young wife happened to be one of Mary's students. Governor Ōe secured a house for Mary on Noge Hill in "a part of the native town where all the highest government officers of this place reside."<sup>22</sup> Most of the pupils, Mary noted in her letter to J.M. Ferris, were from the Noge Hill area and were delighted with the change and with their pretty new school house. Shizuko, however, was not. The Ōkawa residence was now too far, and she had no choice but to withdraw until Miss Kidder opened a boarding school in 1875.

Miss Kidder was now Mrs. Miller, having married E. Rothesay Miller, a Presbyterian missionary, in 1873. I will return to a discussion of their marriage below. But first I will continue describing Mary Kidder's struggle to create and maintain her "school for girls." In Mary's letters to J.M. Ferris, she returns again and again to her request for money to open a school of her own, a school where she can exercise the kind of influence over "her girls" that she thinks is necessary; a school where they can all live together in Christian love. To have

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22 Mary Kidder, Yokohama, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 30 September 1872, p. 33.

this school Mary needed land from the Japanese government, money from the mission, and assurances from both that she would have the wherewithal to maintain what she had created. From the government she wanted the promise of a rent-free lease. From the mission she wanted the promise of an assistant, preferably one who could play the cabinet organ or if not, someone middle age “who can take care of the house.”<sup>23</sup> Her demands seemed impossible. But Mary, as is clear from her correspondence, was not easily deterred. She was tenacious and astute in her negotiations with both the Japanese government and the mission. In November of 1874, after two years of discussion, she was able to secure a piece of land that was “beautifully situated, can be seen from this bay and the whole town, but is very retired, and is by far the best lot for a girls’ school that there is in Yokohama.”<sup>24</sup>

Having finally secured the land, Mary set about seeing to the building of her school. The total cost of the construction was \$5,500. The mission would guarantee only \$5,000. Mary’s husband, E. Rothesay Miller, contributed the remaining \$500 from his personal funds.<sup>25</sup> He also designed the structure, which consisted of a large classroom on the first floor in addition to a library, recitation room, study, scholars’ dining room, kitchen and a large work room. On the second floor there were three bedrooms 18 x 18 feet (approximately 5.5 x 5.5 metres); and thirteen 12 x 6 feet (approximately 3.6 x 1.8 metres), in addition to bathrooms, closets and a large hall.<sup>26</sup> The rooms that the girls would use were floored with *tatami* so that the girls could sleep on futon, in accordance with Japanese customs,

as we do not think it wise to educate them so that they cannot live in their own homes and there seems to be some danger of that. I do not suppose there is one single Japanese family from the Emperor down who lives commonly in a foreign way. There are but few who can afford it even if they wish it, so for the present, I propose that our pupils shall have enough of Japanese surroundings to remind them of home.<sup>27</sup>

Other Western educators in Japan believed the West reflected the height of civilisation and moreover that “the US most closely reflected God’s kingdom on earth, and that their country should therefore serve as a model for all the world.”<sup>28</sup> These educators wished the Japanese to adopt more fully a Westernised lifestyle. And for a brief period, as Japan rapidly modernised in an effort to overturn the Unequal Treaties, it seemed the nation was on the path to just such a

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23 Ibid., 7 March 1874, p. 60.

24 Ibid., 8 November 1874, p. 65.

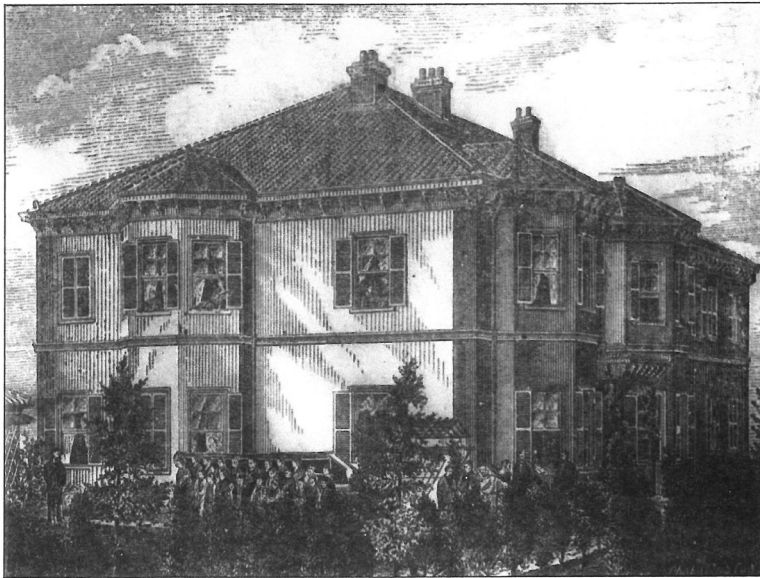
25 Ibid., 8 January 1875, pp. 70–71.

26 From a digest of Mary Kidder’s letters home, 25 April 1876, Yokohama.

27 Mary Kidder, Yokohama, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 3 December 1874, pp. 67–68.

28 Seat, “Providence Has Freed Our Hands,” p. 48.

transition. But by the late 1880s authorities began to criticise Western educators for trying to make “European or American women out of our daughters, and their educational efforts tended to produce indiscriminating Westernization, which our country does not want.”<sup>29</sup> Mary, as the above quotation makes clear, took a more measured approach. Her students wore Japanese kimono, although she did require them to wear a cotton chemise underneath, presumably for hygienic reasons as they could wash these once a week—something that could not be done easily with kimono. Their food was typically Japanese. On special occasions they had Western meals and Mary insisted that each girl learn to use tableware properly. In their lessons as well Mary’s focus was not exclusively on English. By 1875 she had quite mastered her own lessons in Japanese and was teaching daily in the language, as had been her goal. By now she had on her staff an American assistant, sent by the mission board (but apparently not the organ-playing middle-aged woman she had desired), and several Japanese teachers. The faculty offered the girls an assortment of subjects: arithmetic, geography, first lessons in philosophy, botany, English, composition.<sup>30</sup> She also allowed room in the curriculum for Chinese and Japanese studies.



明治8年6月1日フェリス和英女学校落成校舎

### Figure 9. Ferris Seminary

Source: Ferris University Library Archives.

29 Naruse Jinzō (1859–1919), founder of Japan Women’s College, as cited in Ann Harrington, “Women and higher education in the Japanese empire (1885–1945)” *Journal of Asian History* 21 (1987): 169–86, p. 173.

30 From a digest of Mary Kidder’s letters home, 4 June 1873, Yokohama. See also Mary Kidder, Yokohama, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 28 December 1875, pp. 75–79.

Surely the proof of a school's success is in its students. Ferris Seminary—for this is the name by which the school was known after the new facilities were opened in June 1, 1875—produced numerous graduates over the years, some notable (see Figure 9).<sup>31</sup> But none as distinguished as its first, Wakamatsu Shizuko.<sup>32</sup>

## An exception to Darwin's Law

Wakamatsu Shizuko would become known as Japan's most pre-eminent female translator of English to Japanese. Although she translated a variety of English "classics," such as Charles Dickens and Alfred Lord Tennyson, it is for her translation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* that she is best known. Shizuko's unique translation style helped chart the way for a modern written idiom in Japanese letters. Additionally, she was influential in establishing space in the literary arena for both the woman writer and the child reader (see Figure 10). Her many accomplishments are due to her own talent and tenacity but also owe no small measure to the training that she received from Mary Kidder. Shizuko's comfortable fluency in English, her appreciation of a narrative geared toward the "common reader," her sympathy for children, and her determination to raise the standards of Japanese literature were clearly influenced by Mary's own goals and aspirations.<sup>33</sup>

When Shizuko returned to Mary's school in 1875, she had been tacitly severed from the Ōkawas. It was understood that Ferris Seminary would henceforth be her home. In an early letter to J.M. Ferris Mary described a few of her students by name. Of Shizuko she notes:

Behind little Ko and wearing a very distinct velvet collar is Kashi [Shizuko]. She is from Yedo, speaks English well and wrote the composition about tea. I sometimes think she is a Christian. She understands much of the Bible history—She was my pupil long ago and then when her parents went to Yedo to live she went with them and returned to us when we opened the boarding school.<sup>34</sup>

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31 The school takes its name from Isaac Ferris, a leader in the Reformed Church and the father of J.M. Ferris who was then Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church.

32 Another Ferris student of note was Sasaki Toyosu (1853–1901) who became active in both the temperance and the anti-prostitution movements.

33 For more on Wakamatsu Shizuko and her contributions to Japanese literature, see Rebecca Copeland, *Lost Leaves: Women Writers of Meiji Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000, pp. 99–158.

34 Mary Kidder, Yokohama, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 28 December 1875, pp. 75–79.



**Figure 10. Wakamatsu Shizuko, translator, author, educator**

Source: Ferris University Library Archives.

It is clear that Mary doted on Shizuko, and on the other boarders—most of whom rarely had occasion to return home during the school year. Mary and her husband frequently had the girls into their own home, not far from the seminary, where they treated them to Western meals. On Christmas Day they had special celebrations—providing each little girl with dolls and a stocking full of presents. Or as Mr Miller describes the event in a letter to a Sunday School class back in the United States:



Two years ago the girls in our school had their stockings hung up on a sofa in the schoolroom and getting up early in the morning enjoyed opening them and finding their presents just as you do at home. I do not mean they have their own stockings hung up because they only wear funny little socks with a place to put the big toe in like a mitten. Mrs. Miller lent them her long stockings.<sup>35</sup>

Shizuko was baptised in 1877 at the age of thirteen. The Reverend Rothesay Miller performed the ceremony at the Yokohama Kaigan Church. Now a Christian, and at last part of a family, Shizuko worked tirelessly for Ferris Seminary and for her new faith. Mary proudly reported to the Woman's Board in 1878 that Shizuko and a classmate had received permission to teach on Sunday in a private Japanese school, thus establishing their own little Sunday School. Since Shizuko admittedly looked to Mary Kidder as her surrogate mother, confiding in her "what she does to no one else,"<sup>36</sup> it devastated her when Mary decided to return to the United States on furlough in 1879. Mary did not return until 1881. Mary's role at the school was temporarily filled by her assistant Miss Emma Whitbeck, another single missionary with the Reformed Church. In later correspondence with J.M. Ferris, Mary would divulge her great dissatisfaction with Miss Whitbeck. It seems that the latter was a proud woman, hardly the middle-aged housekeeper that Mary had requested! Apparently, her interaction with the girls in the school had been extremely perfunctory: "There was also no sympathy with the pupils. Miss W. taught them during school hours very well but seldom saw or spoke to any of them beside. No one knew or seemed to care anything about their personal joys or sorrows. I think this has been one of the greatest obstacles to the prosperity of the school."<sup>37</sup> Indeed, by the time Mary returned the student body had dwindled to a mere eighteen, having seen a healthy average of thirty-seven students in 1878.

Upon her return to Japan, Mary and her husband resided in the Tsukiji area of Tokyo where they were engaged in a new project unrelated to the school. Shizuko visited Mary regularly to help her with her work—she was then beginning to publish a Japanese-language gazette known as *Yorokobi no Otozure* (Glad Tidings) aimed at women and children. Shortly she would begin issuing a monthly just for children, which she called *Chiisaki Otozure* (Little Tidings). Over the summer of 1882, Shizuko stayed with Mary and helped her with these publications. During their days together, she would confide in Mary, describing her discouragement and disappointment in the school. Several of Shizuko's classmates had left the school to marry and most were not happy in their marriages. Shizuko saw very little future for herself, imagining that if

35 Ibid., 10 January 1879, pp. 79–84.

36 Mary Kidder, Tsukiji, Tokyo, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 19 January 1882, p. 89.

37 Ibid., p. 86.



she too must end up in an unhappy marriage, what had been the point of her education. She considered withdrawing from the school. But Mary did what she could to restore Shizuko's determination. She wrote, "Although I never allowed her to know how I felt about it, and it required all my persuasion almost my authority to make her return to it. She is a noble girl, duty alone led her back to school to do what good she could."<sup>38</sup>

Apparently Mary's advice proved sound. Miss Whitbeck was shortly to resign from her post and was replaced by Mr and Mrs. Eugene S. Booth. According to Mary "it seems like the beginning of a bright day for the school."<sup>39</sup> Mr Booth proved to be a very capable administrator and teacher. Under his care, Ferris Seminary produced its first graduating class. It was a class of one: Wakamatsu Shizuko. Shizuko would say of her accomplishment several years later: "The school conferred a certificate on the sole survivor of a class whose fate must always be an argument against Darwin's favorite theory."<sup>40</sup> Despite the smallness of the graduating class, Mr Booth spared no formality. He had a proper ceremony, inviting an assemblage of distinguished missionaries and Japanese, and he required that Shizuko give the English speech that she had prepared and rehearsed for two days. It is clear that Booth, like his predecessor, was exceedingly fond of Shizuko. He would say of her that she had not only mastered the idiom of the English language, but she possessed the

exceedingly rare faculty of being able to view things from an Anglo-Saxon viewpoint, which made her ... an excellent interpreter of Western thought and temperament. [And she managed this without significantly losing] her Japanese qualities or instincts in any degree. Her character as a Japanese woman was enlarged, enriched, and broadened by the knowledge she had gained of the characteristics of her foreign sisters, both of those with whom she came in personal contact and of those whose acquaintance she made by reading.<sup>41</sup>

## Missionising marriage

The goal of these missionary educators was not to churn out Westernised versions of womanhood, regardless of accusations to the contrary, but to insure a steadfast loyalty to Christ. Naturally, Christian values were at times intertwined with the American morals the missionaries espoused. But it is clear from her

38 Ibid., p. 89.

39 Ibid., p. 88.

40 Wakamatsu Shizuko, "Yesterday and tomorrow," in *In Memory of Mrs. Kashi Iwamoto*, ed. Iwamoto Yoshiharu, Tokyo: Ryūkei sho sha, 1981, pp. 162–71, first published by Yokohama seisha bunda, 1896, p. 167.

41 Eugene S. Booth, "Foreword," in *In Memory of Mrs. Kashi Iwamoto*, ed. Iwamoto Yoshiharu, Tokyo: Ryūkei sho sha, 1981, pp. i–xxvi, first published by Yokohama seisha bunda, 1896, p. v.

correspondences that Mary Kidder was sensitive to this inevitability and strove to keep Westernisation and Christianisation separate. She endeavoured to create young women who were firm in their Christian faith and who would carry that faith home to their Japanese families. To meet this goal it was important that these Japanese women were able to maintain strong ties to their families so that their families would be receptive to their good influence. In her reports to the Woman's Board of the Reformed Church in America, Mary cites several cases where her young charges influenced parents and siblings to convert to Christianity.

For Mary, and for many of the missionaries at the time, the greatest proof of a Christian future for Japan was in marriage. Converting heathen women may have been the first step in saving the nation; but marrying her to a Christian man was the second. Mary dreamed of all her Christian students marrying men in the faith. And she despaired when time and again her dreams failed to come true. For example, in her 1878 Report she writes:

Five of my pupils have married during the year. I am sorry to say that three of these who were Christians have married heathen. One Christian has married a Christian and is doing effective work with her husband in the Nagasaki field. The fifth had not been long with us and was still a heathen when she left to be married....

... Kuni Tamura, one of those who married heathens, has been much persecuted by her husband and they are at present separated. We cannot say what the end will be perhaps the hand of the Lord is upon her to deepen her Christian character...

... Ko Okada who only left us two months ago, perhaps has not yet felt the unhappiness which is sure to come with a heathen husband whatever his worldly advantages may be....

... She hopes to be the means of his conversion. We pray that this may be so.<sup>42</sup>

Although Mary was generally favourably disposed to Japanese customs and culture, she adamantly detested the Japanese family structure, particularly the custom of arranged marriage. In her correspondence to the United States she frequently noted the keen disappointment she felt when one after another, the girls she had taught were removed from her school so that they could marry men they did not know and certainly did not love. Many of the girls were barely fifteen, and the men they married were frequently far their senior.

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42 Mary Kidder, Yokohama, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York. This correspondence is titled "Report of Ferris Seminary for 1878," and is signed by Mary E. Miller and Emma C. Whitbeck, n.d., FULA, pp. 100–101.

Mary was resolved to educate her girls as best she could, to foster in them the strength they would need to resist the “evil” customs of their land and to hold out for appropriate marriage partners. Unfortunately, Christian men in Japan were still few and far between.

You can imagine Mary’s joy, therefore, when her prized pupil and surrogate daughter Wakamatsu Shizuko found herself engaged to marry a handsome young Christian man, Serada Tasuku in 1886. Mr Serada, whose younger sister was a Ferris student, was an officer in the Imperial Navy. His work with the Japanese Embassy had taken him to the United States where he had lived for a number of years. He was therefore conversant with American customs and mores, and gifted in English. The foreign instructors at Ferris found him absolutely charming. Mary adored him and was instrumental in arranging that he and Shizuko become engaged to marry. She was understandably dismayed, therefore, when Shizuko broke her engagement one year later. No amount of pleading could persuade her to change her mind. Shizuko divulged no excuses. But as she was to become a writer, we can turn to her later prose fiction and essays for possible answers.

## A Japanese New Woman

Shizuko’s 1889 short story *Sumire* (Violet) seems to offer an explanation. Serialised in *Jogaku zasshi* (The Woman’s Education Journal), the story describes the “friendship” between Miss Sumire Mano and her frustrated suitor, Mr Sawabe. Miss Sumire is an orphan (Figure 11). Educated in a mission-school, she is a Christian, economically independent, and twenty-four-years old. As the story opens, she is being courted by the handsome, courteous, and dignified Mr Sawabe, who has recently returned to Japan with a degree from a university in Berlin. Inexplicably, Sumire has turned down his marriage proposal. He is stunned.

“Do you not enjoy my company? Have you not relied on me as a dear friend? I say this at the risk of being judged overly persistent, but I must state unequivocally that I consider you a friend among friends. Amidst all of *Womankind* you are *the woman* whom I most ardently respect. Our friendship began so happily, and it is my fondest desire that we allow it to grow to even greater heights. Yet you will not even consider such. I do not understand why [emphasis in original].”<sup>43</sup>

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43 Wakamatsu Shizuko, “Sumire,” *Jogaku zasshi* 183 (19 October 1889): 215–16. Words italicised in the translation are rendered in English in the original.



Figure 11. *Jogaku zasshi*, 1885–1904

Source: The Nihon Kindai Bungakukan (Museum of Modern Japanese Literature).

Mr Sawabe is the ideal Meiji man. Intelligent, sophisticated, sensitive to female concerns, he is in quest of that ever-ephemeral “perfect woman” who will complete him, and who will assist him in creating that equally ephemeral “perfect home.” He tells Sumire: “While I was in America, I lived for a time in a Christian home that was remarkable in its perfect beauty. Having received the benefits thereof, I have been progressively distressed by the unsatisfactory home life that I have witnessed here upon my return.”<sup>44</sup>

Dissatisfaction with the present condition of Japanese home life was indeed a central concern for Japanese intellectuals, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), founder of Keio University, and Iwamoto Yoshiharu (1863–1942), the editor of the above-mentioned *Women’s Education Journal* and the chief administrator of Meiji Women’s School, founded by Japanese Christians in 1885. Contributions to the short-lived *Mei roku zasshi* (Meiji-Six Journal) (1874–1875), bear out this attention to Japanese family reform. Meiji intellectuals criticised the traditional family codes for warping Japanese womanhood and for denying Japanese men the joy of a warm and wholesome “home” life. A true “home” (written in *katakana*

44 Ibid.

as *hōmu*) was warm and sweet and produced by the voluntary union of a man and woman who turned to one another for companionship. “Voluntary” was of course the key to this family unit. Traditional views of marriage venerated family hierarchy and history over individual choice. Women, and men as well, were generally married by patriarchal decree. The individual’s interest in the intended union was not often an item of consideration. Japanese men who had had the opportunity to travel in the West were intrigued by the kinds of marriages that they saw there—marriages that they presumed were based on individual selection. Equally novel was the notion that men might engage women in meaningful conversations and exchanges of ideas.

When the author Shizuko learned that others were criticising her decision to break her engagement, she defended her views on marriage in a fairly testy essay entitled “Tama no koshi” (The Jeweled Palanquin), also published in *The Women’s Education Journal* two months later.

I find there is no proverb more harmful to women than the one lauding the orphan maiden who marrying above her station, is “borne aloft in a jeweled palanquin.” In our society, a poor woman may marry into the manor, and all will applaud her great fortune. When I hear such I feel my heart is being rent with a sword.<sup>45</sup>

Marriage for Shizuko was not to be a conveyance for female advancement. Nor were women to rush into matrimony at the cost of their own integrity. It seems likely, therefore, that though Shizuko admired and respected her suitor, she did not love him. No matter what her reason, however, a twenty-four-year-old woman’s refusal of marriage must have seemed childish, selfish and irresponsible. Both of the systems that Shizuko had been raised to respect—Japanese and Protestant American—viewed marriage as the centre of a woman’s life. That Shizuko was willing to face the censure of those closest and dearest to her—indeed that she would break the heart of Mary Kidder Miller—shows the strength of her own convictions.

Similarly, Shizuko creates in her alter ego, Sumire, a pure and principled resistance. Sumire will not marry merely for the sake of convention. Or, in Wada Shigejir’s words:

The woman here described is not the radical women’s rights agitator, nor is she the childishly sweet maiden tucked protectively away in her room. This is woman of superior intelligence who possesses great self-awareness. In short, she is an idealized woman. Indeed, in her we sense Shizuko herself—or rather a sanctification of her ideal self. I suppose

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45 Wakamatsu Shizuko, “Tama no koshi,” *Jogaku zasshi* 195 (11 January 1890): 558.

there is a cloying touch of narcissism here, but we can also perceive in her portrayal an overwhelming sense of mission as an enlightened individual to advance her cause while clinging to her idealism.<sup>46</sup>

The scenario that Shizuko crafted of a man and woman speaking intelligently and *as equals* about such ethereal subjects as friendship and platonic love was, as Wada has implied, ahead of its time. The notion that marriage should be premised on love and that the love between a man and woman could circumvent the purely physical and unfold on a spiritual level was still an unusual topic in Japan. But what is most surprising about Shizuko's text is that it does not end in marriage. Almost all the stories at the time inevitably viewed women within the frame of the marriage system. They were either young maidens on the brink of matrimony often torn between suitors—such as Futabatei Shimei's Osei in *Ukigumo* (Drifting Clouds, 1888), or they were newly married women struggling to adjust to the disappointment and misery of their wedded state—as in the case of Otane in Tsubouchi Shōyō's *Saikun* (The Wife, 1889). By concluding her tale with the denial of matrimony, Shizuko shifts attention away from marriage as the inevitable conclusion to a woman's life and onto Sumire as an individual.

Sumire's reasons for declining Sawabe's proposal are tethered loosely to an early love for a man who died young. But Shizuko's focus in the story is less on what motivates Sumire's rejection of marriage and more on her choice to do so. Whatever her reasons, Sumire said "No." And it is her ability to do so that Shizuko celebrates. By saying "no," by establishing her own volition, Sumire represents a new type of woman. In Sumire, Shizuko creates a woman who is "feminine," virtuous and pure, yet independent.

Shizuko's reasons for refusing to marry Serada are equally vague. She was not opposed to marriage per se. To the contrary, Shizuko—like her mentors—believed that marriage was the centre of a woman's life. But she also believed that marriage was to be a partnership. And she longed for a marriage that would allow her to continue to contribute to society in the way she had been trained. She had grown up under the influence of missionaries and had observed their constant dedication and sacrifice in their determination to make Japan a "better place." Many of the women she was closest to were single, and purposefully so, manifesting the "conviction that a life in service to God and to womanhood was more valuable than fulfilling the Victorian ideals of marriage, motherhood, and domestic bliss."<sup>47</sup> Shizuko, too, wished to dedicate her life to the mission. In addition to assisting the missionaries with their goals, Shizuko resolved to work

46 Wada Shigejirō, "Wakamatsu Shizuko," in *Meiji zenki joryū sakuhinron—Higuchi Ichiyō to sono zengo*, Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1989, pp. 276–80, p. 278.

47 Seat, "Providence Has Freed Our Hands," p. 2.

with her pen—to write—for the betterment of her sisters and brothers. In fact, she believed that through writing a woman could help to “cleanse the filthy air of society.”<sup>48</sup>

## Modelling marriage

What I find interesting in Shizuko’s behaviour is the possibility that she was influenced to stick to her principles by the very woman who was most determined to see her marry. Mary had offered herself as a text for Shizuko—as a model for Christian womanhood. And Shizuko had learned well by her. I say this because of Miss Kidder’s own marriage and the inspiration it provided her many female students.

After only three years in Japan, Mary married the aforementioned Rothersey Miller (1843–1915), a Presbyterian missionary (see Figure 12). Miller was the product of a wealthy family. His father had been successful in the steel industry, and Miller had enjoyed the luxury of an elite education: Washington University in St. Louis, Princeton, and the Princeton Seminary. Shortly after graduating from the seminary, he was dispatched as a missionary to Japan. And within months after his arrival there in the summer of 1872, he was engaged to Mary Kidder. Some speculate—tantalisingly so—that they had known each other in New York—where Miller’s father had an office—and that Miller had followed Mary to Japan.<sup>49</sup> Their wedding ceremony, which took place on July 10, 1873, was simple but purposely conducted so that it could be viewed by an audience. Miss Kidder invited all of “her girls,” and most attended. She wanted them to see a “Christian wedding.” What they saw was a bride who was by then an ancient thirty-nine, her husband ten years her junior. The wedding sent shock waves through the missionary community in Japan, waves that carried all the way to the mission offices in the United States.

It seems both mission boards—Mr Miller’s Presbyterian and his wife’s Reformed Church were alarmed by the marriage. There was the matter of age—both the wife’s advanced age and her groom’s relative “youth.” But there was also the question of the Ferris School and the different mission boards. Most assumed that Mary would resign her post (and salary) to join her husband on the Presbyterian Mission. She even received letters from ladies’ church groups welcoming her into the Presbyterian fold. But Mary Miller had no intention

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48 As cited in Rebecca L. Copeland, *Lost Leaves: Women Writers of Meiji Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000, p. 37.

49 Nakajima Kōji, “Senkyōshi E. Rōsei Mirā,” in *Ayumi: Ferris Archives Bulletin* 38 (1996): 1–32, p. 14.



of abandoning her fledgling school, then in the process of acquiring building funds. As she states in a letter to J.M. Ferris, informing him of her intention to marry Rothesay:

Do not think that I have or shall lose my interest in my school. I shall not. If you build a schoolhouse for us, I shall stay in school as long as I can. You will perhaps think it is a misfortune that we are not connected with the same board but if you very much desire it I think Mr M would come over to the service of our Board.<sup>50</sup>



**Figure 12. Rothesay Miller (1843–1915)**

Source: Ferris University Library Archives.

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<sup>50</sup> Mary Kidder, Yokohama, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 19 April 1873, p. 42.

Mary Miller also considered “taking the school with her” to the Presbyterians—should she be required to join her husband’s church—and it seems the Hepburns (particularly Mrs. Hepburn) began to argue that since the school had begun on their compound in 1870 it was Presbyterian all along. This intelligence riled Ferris, as he had just got the Reformed Church Mission Board to raise \$5,000 for the school dormitory! And it provoked a lengthy letter from Mary in which she tried to set the record straight about “her” school.

Will give you a history of the school and you can judge to whom it belongs.... Mrs. Hepburn asked me to teach those girls whom she had been teaching & I think also some boys, although I am not sure that they had been her pupils before coming to me.... I taught in the Pres. Dispensary because it was not used and it was convenient. Mrs. H. had previously taught in her own house.

During the year I made every effort to get pupils and succeeded in getting six girls in all and then told the boys that I could teach them no longer.... I never spoke of it as a school but my class. At the end of the second year, Dr & Mrs. Hepburn returned from China where the Dr had been for months publishing his dictionary. He told me he wished to use the dispensary and advised me to try to find another place for my school, never in anyway indicated that it was theirs. Nor has anyone else ever thought of such a thing.... Mrs. H. had never assisted me an hour since I began to teach.

I hope this letter will set your mind quite at rest about the school & no one can take it away from me unless I say I will not teach the girls.<sup>51</sup>

Much of the discomfort over the marriage also revolved around the question of salary. It was unprecedented for a missionary couple to receive separate salaries. Generally appointed *as a couple*, the husband received a salary plus an allowance for his wife—this regardless of the extent of work that she did for the missions. But Mary continued to receive her salary from the Reformed Church, and Miller from the Presbyterians. As Mary explained to Ferris in the above cited correspondence, “All the missionaries here think we are quite right in each continuing in separate Boards if we prefer it.”<sup>52</sup>

But apparently not *all* the missionaries were in agreement with the Millers’ status. In a letter dated September 26, 1874, nearly ten months after the above letter, Mary complains to Ferris,

Nearly every letter from the Secretary of the Pres. Board to the mission here, has some disagreeable saying concerning me.... In the last letter

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51 Ibid., 4 December 1873, p. 49.

52 Ibid., p. 49.

the Rev. Sec. says “The Reformed Church Board are about sending out a teacher to Mrs. Miller’s school. Soon to be followed by another. The sooner the better for we cannot help feeling that it would be far better for Mr & Mrs. Miller to be in Yedo.” Why I do not know. Mrs. Hepburn has never been cordial since she returned from America and found I was not under the Pres. Board but the Dr is too good a man to be influenced by such a circumstance and is as cordial as ever.<sup>53</sup>

In the end, after much bickering, cruel gossip, and backbiting, Mr Miller resigned from his post as a Presbyterian missionary, relinquished his salary, and joined his wife in her mission—all so that she would not be forced to leave her school. In addition to these sacrifices and his contribution of money and time to the building project for the school, he began working alongside Mary—attending to his own studies and sermon preparation in the mornings, and helping at the school in the afternoons. His behaviour dismayed the missionary community and precipitated a letter from Ferris in which he cautioned Mary that “the husband is the head of the household.” She responded immediately to assure Ferris that she had no intention of usurping her husband’s rightful role as household head—nor had she been advocating that women preach (apparently there had been nasty rumours).<sup>54</sup>

We had quite a laugh over your little speech to us in regard to our mutual relations. I exactly agree with you that the husband is head of the wife not only in theory but in practice, and so we have exactly agreed in all our plans for missionary work. Mr Miller told Dr Hepburn plainly ... that if I come over to their mission I could not take the school, that he would not permit it for he did not think it right. However, although it was pleasant for me to remain in school, we thought it not best and so concluded that as soon as some teachers were sent out I should leave it to go with Mr Miller. This was our only plan till the letter about which I wrote you in Sept. came which caused my husband to resign his connection with the Pres. Mission.

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53 Ibid., 26 September 1874, p. 63.

54 The Reformed Church, like many Protestant organisations at the time, did not tolerate women speaking authoritatively to mixed gatherings—let alone preaching from the pulpit. Apparently Ferris had heard rumours that Mary’s students were behaving improperly. Mary responded:

Your views in regard to women speaking or praying in mixed company exactly coincide with my own and I am sure that none of my pupils have done anything that you would disapprove of. When we were on a trip north in the Summer we were staying with the relatives of some of our pupils, one of them a girl of fifteen. She helped me in talking to natives mostly men who came where we were staying to ask about our religion. There was nothing like preaching, we all sat down, they asked us questions and we answered them, sometimes talking hours in this way. Sometimes there were but one or two present and at other times twenty to thirty. That is all the “preaching” either myself or my pupils have done (Mary Kidder, Yokohama, to Dr J.M. Ferris, New York, 8 January 1875, p. 73).

I did not influence my husband to do that, indeed I felt badly about it, at the same time I thought it was right and that it was a providential arrangement for me to be allowed to remain in my school.<sup>55</sup>

Mary even assured the General Secretary that she had Mr Miller read and approve of all her correspondence before she set it to post. Somehow one doubts that a woman who had managed to write her own letters for thirty-some years would suddenly feel moved to seek her husband's approval, but here she is at the end of this particular letter remarking: "You may laugh over my letter but I asked Mr Miller if I might write you what I pleased provided I would be very wise, to which he said, 'yes.' So I have written what I have."<sup>56</sup>

The legacy of Christian womanhood that Mary bequeathed to Wakamatsu Shizuko, therefore, was one that "gained its highest glory from its ability to exercise power indirectly through suasion and influence."<sup>57</sup> She pursued her goals with quiet determination. As Karen Seat notes, "A zealous, self-sacrificing, and even (as some might conclude) masochistic missionary spirit was deeply embedded in American Protestantism, which stood in tension with the domestic ideal of protecting women and the private sphere."<sup>58</sup> And here lies the irony. Mary, and missionary women like her, had come to Japan eager to uplift heathen women and rescue them from their presumed oppression.<sup>59</sup> They were eager to convert women who would then "replicate the values of middle-class American Protestants in raising future generations."<sup>60</sup> But the presence of these women in foreign lands, particularly single women, exposed the foreign subject to examples of New Women, "women defined not by their domestic subordination but by their confidence that they had something of their own to offer their fellows."<sup>61</sup>

Mary effectively offered Shizuko and her contemporaries a new model for marriage. She had married for love—not for procreation, nor for protection. And she had married a man who supported *her* goals (in the guise of God's goals) and not one who demanded that she yield to his. With this as her text, therefore, it is not surprising that Shizuko would have felt compelled to resist a marriage that she perhaps intuited would deny her the ability to fulfill her own mission. In her short story, *Sumire*, she has the suitor trying to win the hand of the protagonist

55 Mary Kidder, Yokohama, to Dr. J.M. Ferris, New York, 8 January 1875, p. 71.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

57 Jane H. Hunter, "Women's mission in historical perspective: American identity and Christian internationalism," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Connie A. Shemo, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 19–42, p. 25.

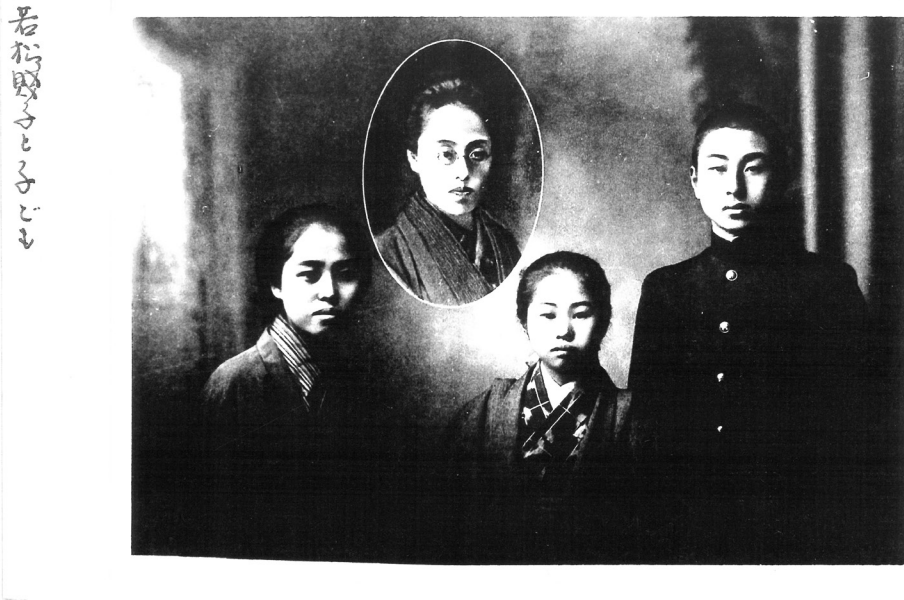
58 Seat, "Providence Has Freed Our Hands," p.46.

59 By way of comparison, see Choi's description of similar encounters between American Protestant missionaries and Korean women in *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea*.

60 Seat, "Providence Has Freed Our Hands," p. 7.

61 Hunter, "Women's mission in historical perspective," p. 27.

by declaring that none will make such a perfect helpmeet as she: “The only one who can encourage and support me in both my personal and professional worlds is you. Only you can ... propel me to victory on the battlefields of this world.”<sup>62</sup> Perhaps Shizuko wished for victory on her own battlefields.



**Figure 13. Wakamatsu Shizuko (inset) and her three children**

Source: Ferris University Library Archives.

She was at the time involved in what she saw as important work for Japanese womankind. In a sense, she was carrying on the tradition Mary Kidder Miller had established at Ferris Seminary. But Shizuko was also creating her own path, imbuing her work with her own sense of citizenship and pride as a Japanese woman, a sense that Booth had declared she had never lost, despite her “Anglo-Saxon viewpoint.” In addition to teaching Japanese composition, English translation, home economics, and health at Ferris, Shizuko had organised a literature club for women known as the “Jishūkai” or “Society for Timely Reflection.”<sup>63</sup> Profoundly interested in helping others of her sex to enjoy the kind of education she had received, Shizuko was keen on doing what she could to promote improvements in social conditions for women.

62 Wakamatsu Shizuko, “Sumire,” *Jogaku zasshi* 183 (October 19, 1889): 215–16.

63 Shizuko found the source of her society’s name in a Confucian saying. Or as Shizuko described it (in English):

The rather antiquated origin of the term ‘*jishū*,’ may suggest to you one of our principles; our desire to form a habit of not slighting anything because it is old, and to keep fresh whatever has value in the saying of that venerable sage Confucius, to whom our country owes so much.



In so doing she sought to make Japanese literature more suitable for women.<sup>64</sup> In this enterprise she joined a small group of like-minded Meiji intellectuals, among them the editor and educator Iwamoto Yoshiharu, a Christian, and a man for whom Shizuko felt the love she had not felt for Serada.<sup>65</sup> Shortly after Shizuko broke her engagement to Serada she married Iwamoto, much to the delight of her missionary family. Theirs was an excellent match. With Iwamoto as her partner, Shizuko was able to acquit her role as wife and mother (she had three children),<sup>66</sup> while also distinguishing herself in the fields of journalism, education and translation (see Figure 13). As Booth, Mary Miller's successor at Ferris Seminary, observed of Shizuko:

A new woman undoubtedly she was, not in the sense, however, which has come to be attached to that term on account of the appearance of a few monstrosities in modern civilization, but a new woman in the highest and best sense. A regenerated woman directed by the forces of a new life.<sup>67</sup>

Both Mary Kidder Miller and her beloved pupil Wakamatsu Shizuko left Japanese women with important legacies (see Figure 14). The school that Mary fought tenaciously to found still stands on the Bluffs of Yokohama, having achieved university status in 1965. Wakamatsu Shizuko, the school's first graduate, went on to earn renown as not only a translator but an early proponent of children's literature in Japan. Clearly inspired by her mentor, Mary Kidder Miller, to whose gazette for children she had contributed, Shizuko was one of the first in Japan to celebrate childhood as a special status. And, like her mentor, Shizuko was able to conceal her own need for agency and independence, behind the cloak of domesticity and mission. Unlike other Japanese women of her generation—such as Fukuda Hideko or Yajima Kajiko—she did not threaten the patriarchal system—at least not directly. Rather Shizuko knew how to work within the system to accomplish her own aims. In so doing, she presented herself as the exemplary New Woman, and proved that she had inherited Mary Kidder Miller's unintended legacy.

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The Chinese teacher in the well-known passage from which the two words are taken comments on the pleasure of acquiring knowledge, and then reviewing or dwelling upon it from time to time. See Shizuko's English essay, "Bungakukai jo," *Jogaku zasshi* 242 (1890): p. 11.

64 M.E. Miller had called Japanese literature "filthy." It was her disregard of the literary texts available to women that had encouraged her to issue her own gazette for women and children, the *Otozure* (Good Tidings) series, with which Shizuko had worked. From a digest of Mary Kidder's letters home, Morioka, 15 July 1890.

65 See Rebecca Copeland, "Sex and the lady translator in Meiji Japan or translation as a transsexual act," *Proceedings of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 5 (1999): 88–95.

66 Her eldest son's daughter, Iwamoto Mari (1926–1979) was a world-renowned violinist.

67 Booth, "Foreword," p. xi.



**Figure 14. Mrs. Mary Kidder Miller**

Source: Ferris University Library Archives.



## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Profs Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly for their tireless work on this volume and their good cheer along the way. Dr Carolyn Brewer has been most patient and careful with edits and explanations. Research for this chapter was conducted at the Ferris University Library Archives in Yokohama, Japan, where I was very grateful to Ms. Kazuko Nakayama for her help and guidance. I also profited immensely from the holdings at the International Christian University. Whereas my own field of research is literature, I was influenced to undertake this topic due to more personal concerns. My parents were missionaries to Japan involved in education and themselves developed lasting and dear relationships with many of the young women they encountered there. I dedicate this chapter to their memory.

# 4. Raising the Standards of Family Life: Ginling Women's College and Christian Social Service in Republican China

Helen M. Schneider  
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## Introduction

In the past the greatest fault of Ginling Women's College was in only thinking of how fine, how fine, Ginling was in lifeless reading of a few books and engaging in so-called social service. But we didn't know whom we were trying to reach with our service, nor what goal we were trying to achieve. Then doing only a few tiny superficial things was counted as social service. Therefore, when I think of all that in the past, I feel very ashamed.

Wu Yifang, 1973<sup>1</sup>

Between 1928 and 1951 Wu Yifang served as the president of the Protestant missionary-founded Ginling Women's College.<sup>2</sup> During their 1952 reshuffle of higher education, the new Communist regime organised Ginling out of existence. Wu remained in leadership positions during the Maoist period.<sup>3</sup> Her condemnation of Ginling's social service work shows that she embraced the Communist critique of Christian education as an insidious form of what has been termed cultural imperialism, or what she called "cultural aggression."<sup>4</sup> Wu held that social service only temporarily and superficially ameliorated the distress of the working and peasant masses, and thereby delayed a political revolution which would bring about real change. Despite these later criticisms, during

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1 Chao Hao-sheng, typescript of interview of Yi-fang Wu, 1973, PHA, RG 279-1-5, p. 12.

2 For much of its history, Ginling Women's College was known as *Jinling nüzi wenli xueyuan* 金陵女子文理学院 in Chinese. Here I retain the original Romanisation—Ginling. For histories see Jin Feng, *The Making of a Family Saga: Ginling College*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009; Matilda C. Thurston and Ruth Chester, *Ginling College*, New York: United Board for Christian Colleges in China, 1955.

3 For a biography of Wu, see Mary Jo Waelchli, "Wu Yifang: abundant life in training women for service," in *Salt and Light: Lives of Faith that Shaped Modern China*, ed. Carol Lee Hamrin with Stacy Bieler, Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009, pp. 152–70.

4 Chao Hao-sheng, typescript of interview of Yi-fang Wu, pp. 5–6.

much of the Republican period (1911–1949) Wu devoted herself to preparing college-educated women for service—to China, to Chinese women and for God.<sup>5</sup> This preparation was not just through reading “lifeless” books but through learning foreign knowledge, designing programs to help raise living standards and engaging in social service to improve Chinese families.

For several decades much has been written about the role of women missionaries as agents of cultural imperialism, about interpreters of foreign culture or as teachers of new forms of domesticity.<sup>6</sup> More recent scholarship on China has looked at the first generation of local Christian women and their role in transforming the church from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Some of this work shows how describing missionary work with women as cultural imperialists has ignored the crucial role of Chinese women in shaping their own society.<sup>8</sup> This chapter considers this issue in a slightly later historical period by focusing on the 1930s and the 1940s. What happened once China’s Christian colleges had trained a generation of Chinese women? How did they understand concepts of service and their roles in transforming China? To answer these questions, this chapter looks at the social service work of Ginling College, a Christian women’s college established by missionaries in 1913.

Ginling’s work occurred at a time of intensive nation building, when the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) social and political order had crumbled and, when after 1927, the Communist and the Nationalist party (the Guomindang) struggled for ascendancy. Wu and other Chinese women worked hard to figure out ways to provide meaningful service to the developing nation of China. The service work that occurred under Wu’s leadership was a result of processes of cultural exchange and transformation rather than one of Euro-American cultural imperialism and a Western imposition of knowledge. Educated Chinese women—as students, graduates, and leaders of Ginling—indigenised or localised foreign knowledge about how to reform families originally learned from their missionary teachers.

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5 Ryan Dunch has pointed out that “a common thread running through Protestant women’s roles was an ideology of service, whether to the church, to family, to Chinese women, or to nation.” See Ryan Dunch, “‘Mothers to our country’: conversion, education, and ideology among Chinese Protestant women, 1870–1930,” in *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility*, ed. Jessie G. Lutz, Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010, pp. 324–50.

6 For an overview of this literature see Barbara Reeves-Ellington, “Women, Protestant missions, and American cultural expansion, 1800 to 1838: a historiographical sketch,” *Social Sciences and Missions* 24 (2011): 190–206.

7 Jessie G. Lutz (ed.), *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility*, Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010.

8 Ryan Dunch has discussed this problem for scholars when looking at missionary work in China. See Dunch, “Beyond cultural imperialism: cultural theory, Christian missions, and global modernity,” *History and Theory* 41(3) (October 2002): 301–25. Margo S. Gewertz has pointed out the need to look at Chinese Christian women outside of the “analytic frame of cultural imperialism.” Gewertz, “Women and Christianity in rural North Henan, 1890–1912,” in *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility*, ed. Lutz, Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010, pp. 199–213.

Chinese women took up foreign missionary ideas about women's roles in transforming families, as well as disciplinary training to do so, and developed programs they felt would meet China's needs.

In this chapter I will show some of the ways that missionary ideas about service and domestic improvement were localised and indigenised in China through an examination of Ginling's social service under the direction of Wu. I look particularly closely at Ginling's development of rural service stations after 1938, when social service shifted from foreign missionary leadership to an almost complete indigenisation of programs under Chinese women's leadership during the Sino-Japanese war. I draw heavily on the professional correspondence of Wu and Ginling graduates found in archives in the United States and China. These materials show how concepts of rural and domestic improvement circulated between the two countries, and eventually came to be transformed by Chinese women.

An examination of Ginling's rural service shows that in some respects Wu was not far off the mark. From the 1930s on, Ginling women assumed educated elite superiority and accepted some gender roles learned from both historical precedent and from their missionary teachers. Ginling women aimed to reconfigure ideas of domestic improvement, or reform of China's family and home life, and transferred the standards they deemed modern to the "backward" women of China. They positioned themselves as arbiters of modernity because they had scientific, professional training and, as women, they had an affinity for working with women and children. Through their social service, Ginling women created a sphere of action for educated Chinese women.

In their efforts to save China through service, Ginling women furthered discourses of Chinese backwardness and followed what they thought were superior forms of reform from the West. In some ways, they were practising a form of self-Orientalism. Arif Dirlik suggests self-Orientalism should be partly seen as "how Euro-American images of Asia may have been incorporated into self-images of Asians."<sup>9</sup> Protestant missionaries over the course of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century saw Chinese society as one with a multitude of problems. One, of course, was that China was a heathen land. But beyond that, they believed certain social practices, such as foot binding and the keeping of concubines, must necessarily be reformed. Protestant missionaries presented the "uplift of Chinese women" to the Chinese as a crucial component of Christianity, and it became a measure by which the Chinese were judged.<sup>10</sup> It was also a standard by which Chinese judged themselves. The "backwardness" of women became an

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9 Arif Dirlik, "Chinese history and the question of orientalism," *History and Theory* 35(4) (December 1996): 96–118, p. 104.

10 Dunch, "Mothers to our country," p. 325.

important trope for Chinese reformers in explaining why China lagged behind other nations in terms of social, economic and political development during the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In response to the problem of backwardness, Protestant missionaries and Chinese reforming nationalists educated Chinese girls and women to be better wives and mothers. For women missionaries, education was tied to the vision of “saving women and children through improving the homes.”<sup>11</sup> For late Qing and early twentieth-century Chinese reformers, families seemed a natural target for change because they believed a well-ordered family was the cornerstone of a strong state. Families should be better organised and managed, and improving mothers and wives as the inhabitants of those spaces became particularly important.<sup>12</sup> In the early decades of the twentieth century, reformers of all stripes argued that women should be prepared to keep house with an eye toward such ideas as child psychology, nutrition and hygiene.<sup>13</sup> Protestant missionaries had the same vision. “In the Protestant version of the emerging nationalist discourse, the domestic role of women was linked not just to the future of the church, but also to the fate of the nation.”<sup>14</sup> Education should enable women to excel in managing their homes and families.

Protestant missionary views on the need to improve Chinese domesticity were amplified by the growing importance of the social gospel in China. “The Social Gospel advocated responsible citizenship, clean government and greater government involvement in promoting social welfare and labour rights. And, crucially, it proclaimed democracy essential to Christian practice.”<sup>15</sup> Christian service organisations, such as the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and newly founded Christian colleges followed the social gospel and sought practical ways to improve and save China by providing educational, medical and social services.<sup>16</sup> “Service” was a way of illustrating Christian faith, and many hoped it would attract Chinese to Christianity. Social service also became a vehicle for conveying ideas about family practices and scientific-based

11 Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Connie A. Shemo, “Introduction,” *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 1–16.

12 Susan Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003; Joan Judge, *Precious Raft of History: The Past, the West, and the Woman Question in China*, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008, pp. 115–16.

13 Helen M. Schneider, *Keeping the Nation’s House: Domestic Management and the Making of Modern China*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011.

14 Dunch, “‘Mothers to our country,’” p. 325.

15 Susan M. Rigdon, “Communism or the kingdom: ‘saving’ China, 1924–1949,” *Social Sciences and Missions* 22 (2009): 168–213, p. 169.

16 Jun Xing, “The American social gospel and the Chinese YMCA,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 5(3–4) (1996): 277–304; Jeff Kyong-McClain, “Making Chengdu ‘the Kingdom of God as Jesus conceived it’: the urban work of West China Union University’s Sociology Department,” *Social Sciences and Missions* 23 (2010): 162–86.

improvement of the home. In promoting Christian service to help China, the assumption was that foreign knowledge was superior. It should be considered an aspect of what Ryan Dunch has called “missionary paternalism.”<sup>17</sup> Women at Ginling College embraced foreign ideas about service to China, and with their foreign knowledge they claimed they understood the “needs” of China and could help solve China’s problems by transforming backward family practices.

In the process, Ginling women localised aspects of modernity that were circulating globally in the first decades of the twentieth century. One aspect of the global modern was the standardisation of domestic practices through the field of home economics (or domestic science) which many Protestant missionaries taught as a new field of knowledge for transforming local societies.<sup>18</sup> As Ellen Fleishmann has argued, home economics was simultaneously recognised in many parts of the globe among modernising elites as a way to “eradicate backward tradition.”<sup>19</sup> She writes, “Educators, politicians, and social reformers everywhere were championing similar values (the importance of the well-regulated, clean, modern and moral home); and teaching similar subjects and skills (hygiene and sanitation, cooking, sewing, decorating, household budgeting, time management).”<sup>20</sup> Social reformers in China were no exception.

Missionary teachers and social service organisations like the YMCA filtered ideas about social reform and domestic improvement to China as they served as agents of what Ryan Dunch has called “global modernity.”<sup>21</sup> Steps were taken to combine ideals of service, national strengthening and improving Chinese homes and families through social service. At Ginling, this work started out as missionary-directed efforts to improve the lives of Ginling’s neighbours. As they established rural service stations in the late 1930s, educated Chinese women at Ginling became effective bearers of global concepts of childrearing, nutrition and other family practices. They, rather than their missionary teachers, motivated efforts to eliminate what they saw as intolerable Chinese backwardness.

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17 Dunch, “Beyond cultural imperialism,” p. 310.

18 Some examples include, Ellen Fleishmann, “Lost in translation: home economics and the Sidon Girls’ School of Lebanon, ca. 1924–1932,” *Social Sciences and Missions* 23 (2010): 32–62; Deborah Gaitskell, “Housewives, maids, or mothers: some contradictions of domesticity for Christian women in Johannesburg, 1903–39,” *Journal of African History* 24 (1983): 241–56; Nancy Rose Hunt, “Domesticity and colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura’s *Foyer Social*, 1946–1960,” *Signs* 15(3) (1990): 447–74; excerpts from Karen T. Hansen, “Introduction: domesticity in Africa,” in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. Hansen, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992, pp. 1–36; Hyaewool Choi, “‘Wise mother, good wife’: a transcultural discursive construct in modern Korea,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 14(1) (Fall 2000): 1–34; Hyaewool Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009; and Michael Schneider, “Globalization and historical writing: home economics as internationalism in Japan 1920–1940,” *Waseda Journal of Asian Studies* 23 (December 2001): 79–101.

19 Ellen Fleishmann, “At home in the world: globalizing domesticity through home economics in the interwar years,” in *Transnational and Historical Perspectives on Global Health, Welfare and Humanitarianism*, ed. Ellen Fleischmann, Sonya Grypma, Michael Marten and Inger Marie Okkenhaug, Kristiansand, Norway: Portal Books, 2013, pp. 160–83, p. 175.

20 Fleischmann, “At home in the world,” pp. 182–83.

21 Ryan Dunch, “Beyond cultural imperialism,” p. 318.

## The expansion of social service and domestic improvement projects

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese nationalists and Protestant missionaries were in general agreement that female education needed to stress domesticity, or better household management. Educators believed in the transformative power of home economics because it stressed the ways scientific and practical approaches might come to bear on managing the home.<sup>22</sup> It was seen as a field that would prepare women for service—to their families and to the Chinese people. Chinese educators encouraged the development of domestic training in the Chinese-founded normal schools for girls that opened in the first years of the twentieth century.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, American home economics experts travelled to China to spread the word about the applicability of the field in China's relatively new institutions of higher learning. In 1922, two female home economics experts from Columbia Teachers College, including the Head of the Department of Household Administration, visited several Christian colleges "to discuss the advisability of extending the work of home economics."<sup>23</sup> At almost the same moment, two professional home economists from Oregon State College, Ava Milam and Camilla Mills, travelled to China with the support of the Women's Foreign Mission Board of the Methodist Church.<sup>24</sup> Their goal was to establish a department of home economics at the missionary-founded Yenching University (Yanjing daxue) in Beijing.<sup>25</sup> They were successful, and in 1923 female students started to take classes in Yenching's department of home economics.

Milam's efforts to spread the gospel of home economics were based on a belief that the field had a universal power to benefit societies but that it had to be localised to fit new environments. "If the study of home economics could contribute to the improvement of home life and society in one country, it could do likewise in other countries."<sup>26</sup> This was not to be wholesale adoption of American-style home economics however. In the case of China, Milam believed that Westerners could "open the way," but the field had to be a cooperative endeavour between Chinese and Americans. "The great differences of economic

22 Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House*, pp. 12–15.

23 Elizabeth Pepys, "Scientific housekeeping," *North China Herald* (8 April 1922), p. 138.

24 Helen Schneider, "The professionalization of Chinese domesticity: Ava B. Milam and home economics at Yenching University," in *China's Christian Colleges: Cross-Cultural Connections, 1900–1950*, ed. Daniel H. Bays and Ellen Widmer, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 125–46.

25 For Yenching's history, see Philip West, *Yenching University and Sino-Western Relations, 1916–1952*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972; Arthur Lewis Rosenbaum, "Yenching University and Sino-American Interactions, 1919–1952," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 14 (2007): 11–60.

26 Ava Milam Clark and J. Kenneth Mumford, *Adventures of a Home Economist*, Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1969, p. 140.



levels and the differences in customs in family life between China and the United States made us realize that the building of these courses must be done with the aid and approval of the Chinese if home economics courses were to become indigenous."<sup>27</sup> Her goal was to train Chinese women in theories and scientific principles of home economics. Concepts, once grasped, would be turned into practical solutions by a cohort of Chinese experts. To train those experts, Milam developed fellowship opportunities for women to study home economics in the United States and provided ongoing advice to leaders of institutions as they expanded their home economics programs.<sup>28</sup> Milam's venture to expand home economics was taken up by a generation of Chinese educators. Many colleges and universities—Christian and national—established departments of home economics over the course of the 1920s to the 1940s.<sup>29</sup> Graduates worked in fields including nutritional science, child welfare, education and social work, using home economics knowledge to better the lives of Chinese people.

Home economics as developed in the United States had much in common with the field of social work. Both fields aimed to apply scientific methods to the problems of the human condition. Both disciplines connected to the development of social sciences in the West.<sup>30</sup> Like home economics, social work required investigation of a set of circumstances and the application of practical means for improvement. Sociology appealed to Chinese and Westerners alike who adhered to the social gospel vision of Christianity because both, social gospel theology and sociology, shared ideas of reform and improvement.<sup>31</sup> Like home economics, training in the fields of sociology and social work started in missionary-founded schools. One of the first departments of sociology opened at Yenching in 1922, and it trained both women and men for social service.<sup>32</sup> Other missionary-founded colleges had similar departments, including Ginling College where sociology became one of the most popular majors.<sup>33</sup>

27 Ibid., p. 159.

28 Ibid., pp. 185–201. Milam pushed for the development of home economics in other parts of Asia as well. On the significance of Ava Milam in the context of home economics in Korea, see Choi, "'Wise mother, good wife,'" p. 15.

29 Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House*.

30 Yung-Chen Chiang, *Social Engineering and the Social Sciences in China, 1919–1949*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. See particularly the introduction.

31 Jeff Kyong-McClain, "Making Chengdu 'The kingdom of God as Jesus conceived it.'"

32 Dong Tianmin, 董天民, "Yanda shehuixue xi jianshi" 燕大社会学系简史 (A Brief History of the Sociology Department), in Bing Xin, Xiao Qian et al., *Yanjing wenshi ziliao, di ba ji* (燕京大学文史资料, 第八辑), Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1994, pp. 65–69. On their social work activities in the early 1930s, see, Wang Jiachen, "Yanjing daxue, shehui xuejie danxingben," Yenching University, Volume on Sociologists, August, 1936, SHAC RG 113/291.

33 "Biye tongxue xiaoxi" 毕业同学消息 (News about our graduates), *Jinling nüzi wenli xueyuan xiaokan* (Ginling College for Women Review) 115 (5 May 1944).

One organisation where Ginling women served after graduation was the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).<sup>34</sup> The Chinese YWCA and YMCA were both involved in projects to improve the homes of China. For example, in 1923 the Shanghai YWCA carried out "House-warming" activities. "Among the aims of the Association has been the teaching of the proper care for babies, baby welfare, home hygiene, home economics, and home ideals." To further those aims, they held "playground work on Saturday morning for 70 children of the neighbourhood who must come with clean hands and face or else they will not be admitted."<sup>35</sup> In 1928, the Hangzhou YMCA and YWCA jointly sponsored work on domestic improvement, which included a contest for better babies and a health movement.<sup>36</sup>

Ginling students conducted similar activities to transform the lives of their neighbours in Nanjing. In the 1940s, former College president Mrs. Lawrence Thurston explained there were "six main avenues of service" at pre-war Ginling. Teachers encouraged students to conduct practical service that included extension courses; child welfare day school; a homecraft extension course that provided looms for women to start their own businesses; evangelical work at neighbourhood centres; medical centres with trained nurses; and provided a loan fund for women (perhaps similar to modern day microloans).<sup>37</sup> Much work was realised under the guidance of Minnie Vautrin, who was known for her work with "neighborhood education, homecraft-industrial education, and experimental secondary education."<sup>38</sup> In 1924, when they realised neighbourhood children did not attend school, Ginling students, under the guidance of Vautrin, started teaching children to read in a so-called "Practice School." Vautrin wrote, "Last year there were fifty little boys and girls studying there—learning to work, learning to play, learning those things which make life richer and better. Each Sunday afternoon there is a very modern little Sunday School there, conducted by a group of Ginling students."<sup>39</sup> In the 1930s, Vautrin described how students worked to improve public health by distributing mosquito nets to prevent the spread of malaria and offered quinine to prevent malaria from recurring.<sup>40</sup>

34 On the YWCA see Elizabeth A. Littell Lamb, "Going public: the YWCA, "'new'" women and social feminism in republican China," Ph.D. diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2002.

35 "Practical work organized by the Chinese Y.W.C.A.," *North China Herald* (1 December 1923): 648.

36 Gui Dehua 桂德华, (photographer), "Ertong weisheng yundong, Baby's Health Exhibit" *Liangyou* (The Young Companion 良友) 33 (December 1928): 38.

37 "Ginling in Nanking: an interview with Mrs. Lawrence Thurston," *China Christian Advocate* (February 1941): 3.

38 Ellen Widmer, "The seven sisters and China, 1900–1950," in *China's Christian Colleges: Cross-Cultural Connections, 1900–1950*, ed. Daniel H. Bays and Ellen Widmer, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 83–101, p. 91.

39 Minnie Vautrin, "How Ginling students are sharing with their neighbors," n.d., UTS, MCT Papers, box 8, folder 27.

40 Minnie Vautrin, "The mosquito campaign," 1930–1931, UTS, MCT Papers, box 8, folder 31.

Vautrin was not alone in these activities. In the mid-1930s, Mareb Mossman, a sociologist teaching at Ginling, started a community centre on campus and did group work for children.<sup>41</sup>

Ginling students and faculty followed the social gospel in attempts to find lasting solutions to the social problems they saw in Nanjing. For example, Ginling student and future YWCA secretary, Deng Wuzhi, reported that a sociology class visited a centre for poor children. After their visit they presented a series of recommendations which included asking the government for further support, suggesting improvement of sanitation, and requesting better record keeping and statistics about the care of the children.<sup>42</sup> Deng, a Christian, feminist, and communist who became a proponent of better workers' rights as leader of the YWCA, learned some of her practical ideas about service at Ginling. She was encouraged to major in sociology by teacher Mary Treudley, who was "known for her philosophy of relating religious education to contemporary social problems."<sup>43</sup> Deng's and her classmate's efforts to permanently improve the quality of life for Chinese people show how they understood ideas of service as learned from their missionary teachers.

In the pre-war period, the social service work directed by Christian Colleges and the YMCA/YWCA movements took place in urban areas. But before 1927, when no central government alleviated the burden of economic and natural disaster carried by the peasant, and when the newly formed Communist party was concerned with the urban proletariat, missionaries and pastors were working among the rural masses. Early efforts to combine social service with agricultural education were made at a few Christian colleges and by some Chinese leaders, like James Yen Yan Yangchu and his rural reconstruction experiment at Dingxian.

Work with the rural populations on Christian reform projects became more widespread in the late 1920s and the 1930s. At that point, many efforts to transform Chinese society through social service were led by Chinese Christians. One reason for this was the changed political landscape after 1927, when Chiang Kaishek established a Nationalist government in Nanjing and took steps to exterminate the Communists. In this new environment, the Nationalists mandated that the heads of Christian schools had to be Chinese, religious lessons must be elective, and that students receive patriotic instruction.<sup>44</sup> It was after

41 Wang, Ying'an, "Yangwu gaicheng de ertong fuli shiyan suo" (From a sheep shed into a child welfare station), in *Yongjiu de simian* (Memory Forever) 永久的思念, ed. Jinnüda xiaoyouhui (Ginling Women's College Alumnae Association), Nanjing: no publisher information available, ca. 1993, pp. 111–13.

42 Deng Yu-dji, "The Ping Erh Yuen," *Ginling College Magazine* 2(1) (December 1925): 31–37.

43 Emily Honig, "Christianity, feminism, and communism: the life and times of Deng Yuzhi," in *Christianity in China: from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Bays, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 243–62, p. 252.

44 Daniel Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, Chichester, West Sussex and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 125.

the promulgation of these regulations that Wu became head of Ginling. Despite the anti-Christian tone of the new rules, the change in leadership revitalised the spirit of reform for many Christians, both Chinese and foreign. This is partly because Chiang's new wife, Song Meiling, was from a prominent Christian family and Chiang himself converted.<sup>45</sup> Many Christian service organisations believed there was a possibility of working with the government on important projects of reform.

In the 1930s, Christians became more involved in rural service and reform projects. In 1929, the Chinese-led National Christian Council (NCC), which had adopted many tenets of the social gospel, created the position of secretary for rural life to Christianise rural populations.<sup>46</sup> The Council was, like many other Christian groups, interested in the improvement of Chinese homes. "The NCC had a special work division devoted to 'Christianising the home,' among whose goals were raising the status of women and children in the home, introducing village women to domestic 'science' and encouraging them to take a more active role in the education of their children and promoting public health."<sup>47</sup> After 1934, Chiang Kaishek and his wife appealed to Christian missionaries to plan rural restoration projects in areas that had been cleared of Communist bases. Rural social service became an important goal that aligned Nationalist government and Christian interests.

The project of "reconstruction" in the wake of victory over Communists fed into a broader Guomindang project of revitalisation. The Guomindang and missionary advisors designed the New Life Movement to create a more disciplined population in preparation for what many saw as a coming war with Japan. It emphasised frugality, personal hygiene, cleanliness and orderliness and therefore also touched on family habits and the improvement of Chinese women.<sup>48</sup> Song Meiling, as one of the leaders of the movement, called on educated women to aid in its organisation. She emphasised the importance of social service in ways similar to those expressed by Christians in earlier years.<sup>49</sup> The Guomindang and educated Chinese women, such as those at Ginling, were in agreement that educated women were most suited to attempt to change the practices of "backward" Chinese women.

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45 Ibid., pp. 126–27.

46 Rigdon, "Communism or the kingdom," p. 181.

47 Ibid., p. 185.

48 Sue Groenwald, "New life, new faith, new nation, new women: competing models at the Door of Hope Mission in Shanghai," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Connie A. Shemo, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 195–217, p. 195.

49 For more on the New Life Movement and family reform, see Helen M. Schneider, "Women and family education reform in wartime China, 1937–1945," *Chinese Historical Review* 20(2) (November 2013): 180–210.

The Guomindang and the NCC efforts led to a growing interest in working in rural service and in improving the quality of women, but this did not immediately result in widespread service for rural women. In 1936, Ginling graduate Liu Yu-hsia wrote about her experiences in the YWCA. Even though she focused on developing work in rural China, Liu criticised the YWCA for being, “not too much conscious of the important place of rural women. I am sending you a poster.... It reminds people that 85% of our women are rural.”<sup>50</sup> Liu’s work convinced her of the need for college-trained women who were better prepared than junior-middle school girls to lead rural efforts.

Rural problems are so many and work especially with women so slow and indefinite, that it really requires girls with analytical minds and organizing power in order to have clear understanding of these situations and the right method of working. Then, usually in the country one is pretty well cut off from all intellectual and helpful resources like libraries, hospitals, teachers, and friends and easily come to the point of desperation and discouragement. In order to prepare for that, I think a spirit of Christian service and will to develop oneself to be the best help in such a situation are important.<sup>51</sup>

Liu notes qualities that only a Christian college could instil in Chinese women. Ginling eventually provided training in rural service—three years after Liu wrote her letter.

## The expansion of rural social service in wartime

Rural service work at Ginling, and at other institutions, developed in the late 1930s in great part due to the war against Japan. The war led the Nationalist state to ask more of its citizens and accelerated the desire of educated women to serve their country. One reason why Ginling expanded their social service was the promulgation of new government regulations. After the full-scale Japanese invasion in August, 1937, the Nationalist government, through its Ministry of Education, ordered colleges and universities to establish more social education projects which they believed would rationalise society, improve national morale and encourage participation in wartime efforts.<sup>52</sup> From its wartime capital Chongqing, in Western China, the Nationalists partially funded these efforts even when the military was struggling against the Japanese. Wu was aware of

50 Liu Yu-hsia to Miss Greist, 24 October 1936, UBCHEA RG 11 box 138-2745.

51 Ibid. Liu continued this work at least until early 1938. See, Catherine Sutherland to Ginling, 18 March 1938, UBCHEA RG 11 box 138-2745.

52 Ou Tsuin-Chen, “Education in wartime China,” in *Nationalist China During the Sino-Japanese War*, ed. Paul K.T. Sih, Hicksville NY: Exposition Press, 1977, pp. 89–123, p. 116.

the Nationalists' policies. In 1939 she wrote, "The Minister of Education has sent notices to all the schools and colleges for them to promote 'Social Education' which includes adult education, and other forms of extension in the work for the community in which the institution is located."<sup>53</sup> Throughout her career at Ginling, Wu had encouraged her students to work in social service.<sup>54</sup> The new rules did push her to expand these efforts, but most importantly for Wu, "social education" was a "field of service which a Christian women's college ought to be doing seriously."<sup>55</sup>

Another reason for the expansion of social service had to do with the physical relocation of the College. Ginling was one of the many colleges on the east coast in the path of the 1937 Japanese invasion and had to abandon their Nanjing campus. Ginling administrators accepted the offer of the West China Union University to join them on their campus in Chengdu, Sichuan. As many faculty and students travelled westward they learned about their country. One student wrote about the trip, which took two months, "This is the first time I have ever really traveled in China. I am surprised at the richness of the country and this makes me hope."<sup>56</sup> They also saw more of the poverty and hardship of the population with which they had not previously been acquainted.

After Ginling was established in Chengdu, they continued to serve their nearby neighbours much as they had in Nanjing. During the academic year 1939–1940, students and faculty planned and carried out social education programs like literacy training (mostly for women and children, but also for workers); citizen's education that included lectures, showing movies and opening a reading room; health education which provided public health guidance, pre- and post-natal counselling for mothers, and a playground for children; production education to disseminate ideas about better weaving, embroidery and handicraft production; and War of Resistance education in which they lectured on the wartime situation, conducted interviews with soldiers' families and tried to help them, propagandised during school breaks, and instilled knowledge about air defence and anti-poison gas defence.<sup>57</sup> The Ministry of Education did monitor and support their efforts. One wartime inspection reported that the school was carrying out the "correct kind of social service," which included encouraging sewing and weaving items for soldiers at the front.<sup>58</sup>

53 Wu Yifang to Mereb Mossman, 15 November 1939, UBCHEA RG 11 box 139-2786.

54 Waelchli, "Wu Yifang: abundant life in training women for service," p. 159.

55 Wu Yifang to Mereb Mossman, 15 November 1939.

56 Wei Djen-dze "Trip to Hankow," 15 July 1938, UTS, MCT Papers, box 7, Folder 4.

57 "Minguo ershiba niandu Jinling jieban shehui jiaoyu gongzuo jihua dagang" (Draft of 1939 Ginling social education work plan) SHAC RG 5/11512; Liu Shuyuan, "Ben xueqi lian ban shehui jiaoyu gongzuo" (Social education work from this semester) *Jinling nüzi wenli xueyuan xiaokan* (Ginling Women's College Review) 70 (January 20, 1940): 5–6.

58 Xu Songming (徐诵明) "Shicha sili Jinling nüzi wenli xueyuan baogao" (Report on visit to Private Ginling College for Women), SHAC RG 5/1997.



## Preparation for rural service

After they relocated to Chengdu, Ginling soon started planning for rural service. The wartime disruption and relocation to Sichuan was part of the reason, as was the growing importance of rural work for China's Christians over the course of the 1930s. As chair of the National Christian Council in the late 1930s, Wu was undoubtedly aware of the trends in rural service, but she wanted women's issues to be addressed. Her determination to accomplish this can be seen in the letters exchanged between Wu and Mereb Mossman, who had taught sociology and led social service at Ginling in the early 1930s. In November 1939, Wu wrote, "the fact is, there is a real lack of women well-trained academically and technically and with a real spirit of service."<sup>59</sup> Wu's great concern was that women should conduct service that male leaders were ill-prepared, or disinclined, to carry out. For example, in January 1940 Wu wrote to Mossman about the efforts of Chinese progressive educators under James Yen to establish a college of rural reconstruction.<sup>60</sup> She worried that Ginling was not "training women workers for the rural families." She continued, "In a large institution the main emphasis is bound to be placed on the training of men workers along various lines including civil servants for the *hsiens* [counties]. When I first thought of setting up a rural station, I had in mind giving a short training course of two years to train women workers for the practical work in the country."<sup>61</sup> Wu's concern for training Ginling women to be leaders, who would then pass leadership skills on to rural women, continued into the 1940s. In April Wu wrote to Mossman:

The need for well-trained women for rural work is urgent. We are too slow in taking up the challenge, and the men's institutions see the opportunities and go ahead with programs, even if they do not know how to carry them out. Quite often it weighs very heavy on my conscience whenever I realize that Ginling, as a woman's college, is not taking up the responsibility as she ought to in this war time, particularly in meeting definite fields of work for which college women should be trained.<sup>62</sup>

There is no small degree of competition here with male-led institutions. This is based on Wu's sense that educated women should be trained in specific areas where they could best serve China.

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59 Wu Yifang to Mereb Mossman, 15 November 1939, UBCHEA RG 11 box 139-2786.

60 She is referring to Yen's efforts to found the Rural Research and Training Institute at Xiemachang, Sichuan, which was working in conjunction with the Nationalists' National Rural Reconstruction Institute at Beibei. The NCC started experimental rural centres in 1939. See Rigdon, "Communism or the kingdom," pp. 193-95.

61 Wu to Mereb Mossman, 20 January 1940, UBCHEA RG 11 box 139-2789.

62 Wu Yifang to Mereb Mossman, 1 April 1940, UBCHEA RG 11 box 139-2786.



In most of her wartime letters to Mossman, Wu inserts a plea for Mossman to return to Ginling in order to train students in social work. But Mossman pushed back against the idea that she, as a foreign expert, was necessarily the best qualified to conduct this work. In a 1936 letter explaining why she could not return to China, Mossman wrote, "And there is the other question as to the whole future of Ginling and whether it is better that I or someone else (Chinese) should be the one to develop the social work training there." Through development of the field, she added, "Ginling is best suited to make a powerful contribution to China and Chinese life."<sup>63</sup> Mossman believed there were Chinese qualified to serve in this capacity.

Wu was not adverse to hiring qualified Chinese, but being best qualified to serve meant having an academic and technical grasp of ideas about service from the West. Wu therefore encouraged Ginling graduates to study abroad, which usually meant taking a higher degree in the United States. In a late-war letter Wu asked Mossman where students should study rural sociology. Wu wrote, "I realize that rural conditions in America and here are so different that studies in America cannot help in the practical work." However, students could "get at the fundamental principles and the applications according to conditions there" and then apply that knowledge to China-specific situations once returned.<sup>64</sup> The foreign training of Chinese women was an important way that ideas about service became localised. Once they were trained in "fundamental principles," Wu wooed them back to Ginling to serve in ways practical for China.

Wu's efforts to train social service leaders were augmented by Ginling's establishment of the Department of Home Economics. The department started offering courses in the fall of 1939.<sup>65</sup> Of particular interest was the field's possibility of providing expertise in areas of child welfare and nutrition. Like rural sociology, Wu imagined American home economics might provide a base of knowledge on which Ginling graduate women could work out the practical applications of the field for China. Wu went to great lengths to cultivate talent in both fields. In the case of one student, she suggested topics of research that would best help China—and Ginling College. In 1943 Wu wrote a series of letters to Li Meiyun who was studying home economics at Cornell University. In one, Wu asked Li to consider changing her dissertation topic.

I wonder if you might not think of some subject in the field of rural education but related to home economics.... While you are studying here you want to fit that study into the needs in China. Rural reconstruction is becoming a more important phase of the large program

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63 Mareb Mossman to Rebecca Greist, 22 May 1936, UBCHEA RG 11 box 139-2786.

64 Wu Yifang to Mereb Mossman, 5 January 1945, UBCHEA RG 11 box 137-2757.

65 *Jinnüda dashiji, 1913–1953* (A Chronology of Ginling Women's College, 1913–1953), 1993, p. 17.

of reconstruction in China. Furthermore, in our effort to set up a really democratic government, popular education for the masses in the rural regions is important.<sup>66</sup>

Wu's vision of service was to create better citizens and a better, more democratic China—ideas in keeping with the social gospel approach of many American missionaries to China just a few decades earlier.

Wu's efforts to expand the pool of Chinese women educated for service had some effect. In the case of Li Meiyun, Li researched social, economic and political factors in rural Sichuan and about how to improve education there.<sup>67</sup> Wu asked Li to consider returning to Ginling after finishing her doctorate as a member of the rural service or home economics staff. To make her point, Wu explained the goals of rural work, the first of which was "to give direct service to the rural homes." Another aim was to prepare women workers for rural reconstruction who had "a spirit of Christian service." Those women, Wu continued, "will be increasingly needed in view of the important rural reconstruction and the attention our Government is giving to developing this program." Wu also explained how Li's training would be most useful. "In fact, there can be much correlation and cooperation between the home economics and a rural service station. For instance, such problems as nutrition, clothing and toys for the children in the rural places can be worked out under the direction of the professors."<sup>68</sup> Wu was not able to convince Li to join Ginling's rural staff—Li went to the University of Nanking. Nonetheless, her interactions with Li show how Wu consistently pushed for the growth of home economics and rural service to improve Chinese family life.

## Ginling's wartime rural service stations

Wu had asked Li Meiyun to return to a rural service station that Ginling had started earlier in the war. The College opened their first rural service centre in Sichuan at Renshou (Jenshow) in the fall of 1939. The centre remained open until March 1943.<sup>69</sup> Ginling chose Renshou in part because a Canadian mission station was there and the Nanking University Agricultural College was expanding work in that area.<sup>70</sup> In the last two years of the war, they operated a

66 Wu to Miss Mei-yun Li, 9 July 1943, UBCHEA RG 11 box 138-2769.

67 Mei-yun Li, "An analysis of social, economic, and political conditions in Peng-Shan Hsien, Szechwan China, looking toward improvement of educational program," Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1945.

68 Wu Yifang to Miss Li, 28 November 1943, UBCHEA RG 11 box 138-2769.

69 *Jinnüda dashiji*, 1913–1953, 1993, pp. 17 and 23. In Chinese it is "Renshou" (仁寿县) but in the English language documents it is often "Jenshow."

70 Thurston and Chester, *Ginling College*, p. 116; Irma Highbaugh, "Ginling College begins a rural service station in Szechuan," *The Chinese Recorder* 70 (March 1940): 144–49.

station at Zhonghechang. In both locations the goal of the work was primarily to serve the rural families of China and to train a cohort of women qualified to do so.

In the spring of 1939, Ginling sent two women, Phoebe Hoh and Wu Suen-i, to Renshou County to study the feasibility of starting a rural service centre. Hoh did her preparatory work four miles south of Renshou at Chen Chia Tze (she translated it "Chen's Ancestral Home"). She discovered villagers travelled to the market town of Renshou once or twice a week, usually on foot. Because villagers saw their trip to market as a business and social occasion, Hoh believed it would be just the place for Ginling to establish a "social centre." There villagers from all directions could rest, chat and be entertained. Hoh wrote, "After friendships have been established, a regular program of religious education, health, singing, lecturing on all sorts of topics can be carried on."<sup>71</sup> When the visitors returned to their home villages, they would tell others what they had learned.

Hoh suggested ways that Renshou might begin to solve the problems of rural backwardness. The content of instruction could be based on her observations of villagers' lifestyles, "from our talks with the people we have been told many interesting things about the cooking of food, washing of clothes, working in the field, spinning and weaving. We noticed that we could suggest many ways in which the work might be carried on with greater economy of time and energy." In addition to improvement in domestic work, Hoh believed they could raise education standards. She noted that many villagers had learned some characters, but forgot them because they did not read enough. "The habits of the people are not yet cultivated. The never-ending hard work, the impoverished living, the stupefied spirit leave no time, no heart, no taste or desire for reading."<sup>72</sup> Hoh's goals were to adapt kinds of social service work similar to what Ginling had been doing in Nanjing (literacy, playgrounds for children, domestic advice, medical examinations, handicraft production) to the rural scene.

In addition to helping raise the standards of rural life, another goal in the development of Renshou was to train more Chinese women to develop rural work on their own. Wu wrote to Mereb Mossman about this problem and the work at Renshou in 1939. "Last spring, when Miss Phoebe Hoh and Wu Suen-i went down to make a start, it did not go very well, but a foundation was made in making contacts with local people. This autumn we are very happy that the Women's Foreign Missionary Society (W.F.M.S.) loaned us Irma Highbaugh for a period of two years."<sup>73</sup> It is clear that Wu believed some foreign expertise was still needed in order to make Renshou a success.

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71 Phoebe Hoh, "November days at Chen Chia Tze," November 1939, UBCHEA RG 11 box 137-2756.

72 Ibid.

73 Wu Yifang to Mereb Mossman, 15 November 1939, UBCHEA RG 11 box 193-2786. W.F.M.S. was affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Irma Highbaugh, who Wu was so pleased to have join Renshou's staff, shared Wu's vision of training personnel. She included it on her list of rural service goals.

1. To serve the rural people and meet their needs. It is this that governs all policies.
2. To provide a center where the college students can get practice, inspiration and vision for their rural work.
3. To produce materials out of actual rural experiences and research which shall eventually go into the rural reconstruction curriculum of the college.<sup>74</sup>

Training was important, but Highbaugh prioritised the meeting of Chinese "needs" as the first purpose of their work. Rural service centres become a place for women to expand their horizons for service, at the same time emphasising the development and betterment of Chinese life practices as the educated women saw fit.

The idea of "meeting the needs" of the Chinese people and making a difference in their lives was discussed by Ginling workers. In a later account, Xiao Dingying (Sociology 1939) explained that their work at Renshou focused particularly on maternal and child health, education and production. The maternal and child health division ran health clinics and provided vaccinations for young children, a service that was free for the poorest clients. The handicraft division encouraged cross-stitch handiwork, where local women decorated bedding and tablecloths. Ginling College then facilitated their sale abroad to get foreign currency.<sup>75</sup> An additional element, not remembered in the later account, is emphasised in contemporary accounts, is the "need" to modernise family practices in rural homes. Hoh made this clear in her assessment of Chen Chia Tze. Ginling students worked on what Highbaugh called "family life training," in part by creating nursery age play groups, which, she explained, gave children routines as an important part of their development. Children learned "proper play" (with toys), how to use the toilet, and received more nutrition.<sup>76</sup>

Two anonymous reports about Renshou, written in the early 1940s, echo the ideas of training workers, establish the need for changing family practices, and explain the ways Renshou served China by meeting the country's needs. The first report, "A Plan for Work in a College-Sponsored Rural Service

74 Highbaugh, "Ginling College begins a rural service station," p. 145.

75 Xiao Dingying 肖鼎瑛, "Renshou xian xiangcun fuwu chu" (Renshou county rural service station) 仁寿县乡村服务处, in *Yongjiu de sinian* (Memory Forever) 永久的思念, ed. Jinnüda xiaoyouhui (Ginling Women's College Alumnae Association), Nanjing: no publisher information available, 1993, pp. 109–10.

76 Highbaugh, "Ginling College begins a rural service station," p. 146.

Station,” notes a goal was to train physically strong rural leaders who would eliminate “deadening customs” and who would work for “their own economic improvement at the same time that they unselfishly take responsibility for the uplift of their community.”<sup>77</sup> The second report continues in this vein:

The Rural Staff feel that the needs of the rural women and children are economic with need for small home industries; health needs—common hygiene practices and especially maternity welfare, need to learn food values and the way to adequately nourish the family; need to change the arrangement of homes for better and happier use of the family; and for children there is a need for better clothing and toys.<sup>78</sup>

The authors of these documents make clear value judgments about the superiority of their vision of progress in rural areas. The first report is specific about the shortcomings of rural people. “Cheating, whether it be in embroidery work or as a teacher cheating on her time invested, are moral problems.” It also reported, “Superstition and customs that mar and dwarf personality are religious problems and can be solved no other way.”<sup>79</sup> The report does not state outright any evangelical aims, but instead suggests specific social programs to guide the development and reform of the population.

Ginling rural service workers thought very carefully about how to overcome the cultural, moral, and religious shortcomings they encountered in Renshou. Changing “dwarfed personalities” began with the education of children. One report echoed Highbaugh’s observation of the need for better home environments. It suggested “family life work,” the objectives of which was “to change family life producing a clean, light, airy home in which a child may grow and change parents to realise the basic needs of the developing personality of the little child.” They started a “preparation for marriage class” for sixth grade boys and girls of the Canadian Mission’s Hua Ying School to involve children and their parents in the “project of changing the home.” They worked in conjunction with Hua Ying and the local government school to establish a girls’ club where girls learned how to express themselves, “how to be a person,” how to fit in with their environment, and how to be leaders.<sup>80</sup>

The Ginling workers also tackled the issue of morality by dealing with women’s customs. The report noted, “Idle life among the leisure class of Jenshow is just one long summer of gambling.” Ginling organised a women’s club to encourage more patriotic activities and social work among the women. “The women

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77 “A plan for work in a college-sponsored rural service station,” typescript, English, no author, ca. 1941, SHAC RG 668/12.

78 “Renshou, Sichuan Province,” January, 1941, typescript, English, SHAC RG 668/12.

79 “A plan for work in a college-sponsored rural service station.”

80 Ibid.

responded by raising money and giving thirty wadded jackets to the old people in the Old People's Home. They want to be organized and carry on some more serious work."<sup>81</sup> The aim here was to change habits of service among another cohort of women.

Ginling Renshou workers tried to reform rural families by using exhibitions and displays. They designed an exhibit in six rooms of the service station, with one room each devoted to "embroidery, health, foods and nutrition, model house, toys, children's clothing, and poultry." The food display included an exhibit of rabbits, some of which had eaten carrots and some of which had not. The report noted that of the exhibit attendees, "many sighed and said: we did not know that carrots were so good a food and so we fed ours to the pigs."<sup>82</sup> One report claimed that the home exhibit "gave new ideas on family life to thousands of people during the winter vacation of 1940 and 1941."<sup>83</sup>

The authors of both reports felt that much more could be done. One report recommended that Renshou staff be augmented by a trained home economist to "work on Family Life Improvement." It suggested that the local schools teach "home-making", and "that a wholesale campaign be pursued to eliminate one evil in the home equipment such as changing the toilets or covering food."<sup>84</sup> Cleanliness was important from a public health standpoint, but also inched the rural people closer to a moral and spiritual transformation.

Students found the work difficult, but a good learning experience. They discovered local people were "not conservative as they had always thought, but wide awake and very receptive to new ideas." The report added, "At the same time [we] felt there was great need of long consecutive work to accomplish lasting results."<sup>85</sup> Experience and observation empowered students to make recommendations for longer term change. One wrote, "There is a lack of money and method. Money could be loaned by cooperative banks. Methods could be supplied by spinning machines with thirty spindles, which are locally made and can be purchased for thirty dollars."<sup>86</sup> While the centre did receive some foreign aid and government support, finances were stretched thin as the war with Japan continued.

Despite the call for "long consecutive" work, Ginling could not maintain Renshou. The College moved the rural service station to Zhonghechang (Chung

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81 Ibid.

82 "Renshou, Sichuan Province."

83 "A plan for work in a college-sponsored rural service station."

84 Ibid.

85 "Renshou, Sichuan Province."

86 "Ginling in Chengdu—summer service at Jenshow," n.d., UTS, MCT Papers, box 7, Folder 4.



Ho Chang).<sup>87</sup> Zhonghechang was advantageous because, unlike Renshou, it was proximate to Ginling's Chengdu campus, and like Renshou, it was the site of a Canadian mission station and it received some government and foreign funding. The stations were similar in terms of stated goals, including training women leaders for social service. Practical service work at rural stations complemented book reading and classroom instruction. For example, soon after Zhonghechang opened, the home economics staff offered a number of classes on family relations and children's welfare (nutrition and psychology) in conjunction with the department of sociology.<sup>88</sup>

As with Renshou, Zhonghechang workers strove to improve the conditions (or "respond to the needs") of rural populations, particularly women and children. This is emphasised at several points by Ginling 1941 sociology graduate Anna Hsiung (Xiong Yana) who was closely involved in Zhonghechang and in Ginling's post-war rural service work. Hsiung, as the daughter of a Methodist church superintendant and a graduate of a Christian high school, felt the need for Christian service and social improvement.<sup>89</sup> In 1944 she wrote that the goals of Zhonghechang's rural nursery school were to lessen the burdens for peasant women, to train child welfare workers, to experiment with possible techniques for nursery schools in the countryside, and to develop good citizens.<sup>90</sup> She expressed the needs she saw in a typescript, writing, "If China is to become a real democratic country, women, half of her population, must not be neglected. We felt deeply that to educate the rural women was one of our unalienable obligations. Therefore, a women's class was organised as an experiment aimed at training women for democracy."<sup>91</sup> Hsiung aligned the goals of Christian service, a feminist agenda of an aware population, and the creation of a strengthened national polity.

In a pamphlet published by the Association of Universalist Women, who helped sponsor Ginling work at Zhonghechang, Hsiung and her colleague Tsu Yu-dji wrote most extensively about their work for children. They reported holding twice-monthly parents' meetings to encourage projects to benefit children. These projects were similar to those at Renshou in terms of cleaning and covering toilets for small children's use, making more comfortable clothing, creating toys for the children and improving children's nutrition. Hsiung and Tsu wrote that their child welfare efforts, supported in part by the Sichuan

87 Known as Chung Ho Chang in English language materials, it was at Zhonghechang in Huayang County 中和场, 华阳县.

88 *Jinnüda da shiji*, p. 24.

89 Hsiung Ya-na, letter to Mrs. Mills, 9 July 1947, UBCHEA RG 11 box 137-2757.

90 Xiong Yana 熊亚拿, "Sichuan sheng zhengfu shehui chu, Jinling nüzi wenli xueyuan he ban xiangcun tuoersuo" (Sichuan provincial social bureau and Ginling Women's College jointly operated rural nursery school), *Jinling nüzi wenli xueyuan xiaokan (Ginling Women's College Review)* 112 (16 March 1944) (report is from the fall of 1943), pp. 3-4.

91 Hsiung Ya-na, "Our first year at Chung Ho Chang," July 1943-1944, UTS, MCT Papers, box 10, folder 14.



Social Bureau, “seem fitted to the Chinese rural life.” The Bureau was impressed enough to ask them to participate in provincial-level child welfare exhibitions. Ginling workers trained women to work in village nurseries, using the facilities of another cooperating unit, the United Church of Canada for the training. As a result, “The ‘Bible woman’ of the church has a good chance to tell the Bible stories and to introduce Christianity to the girls and women who are attached to our project.”<sup>92</sup> Here job training came with a dose of evangelism.

The work at Zhonghechang was fully Chinese in project design and implementation. Sichuan province provided an annual subsidy for nursery work, and provided personnel for physical examinations, vaccinations and basic health care of local women and children. The Guomintang state invested in the project in part because the models might be useful, but also because it helped strengthen the nation and aid in the war effort. Zhonghechang helped the war effort in some direct ways, by providing haircuts and laundry services to soldiers conscripted from the local area when they passed through town.<sup>93</sup>

A report in the pamphlet from Wallace Grant Fiske, identified as “Chaplain 14th Air Force stationed in China,” suggests how the wartime imperative for healthy citizens overlapped with the impulse for Christian service to reform habits. He observed a nursery class singing and noted, “Even though I could not understand their Chinese, I did know from their gestures that they were learning such lessons as the importance of keeping their bodies clean, drinking only boiled water, and ridding their homes of filth and flies.” With clear admiration, Fiske added that the Ginling workers made home visits, conducted a program of nursing, and led “instruction in home-making, child-care, and sanitation.” Fiske continued, “They know the home needs of these people and the friendly smiles and respectful bows when we walked in the streets testified to the confidence and esteem which everyone has toward them.” He was greatly impressed with the work of Hsiung and Tsu. Of all the mission stations he had visited in China and India, he had not met “workers for whom I have greater admiration than these two consecrated labourers at Chung Ho Chang.” They expressed their appreciation for the aid supplied by the Association of Universalist Women. “But,” Fiske wrote, “before them I felt humbled and I know I should thank them for the privilege of giving us a share in this great Christian work.”<sup>94</sup>

The work in Zhonghecheng is an example of how missionary ideas about domestic improvement were indigenised by Chinese women for strengthening

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92 Hsiung Ya-na and Tsu Yu-dji, “A look at our work in China,” in the Association of Universalist Women, “A Look at our work in China, sponsored under the auspices of Ginling College in Chung Ho Chang,” Boston, 1945, from Hsiung, Ya-na folder, Graduate School Records, DRMC Cornell University Library Collection #12-5-636.

93 Ibid.

94 Wallace Grant Fiske, “I saw our work in China,” in “A Look at our work in China.”

China. Christian service was undoubtedly an important part of this work for Hsiung. She accepted that China was “backward” and needed better sanitation, improved childrearing methods, and modernised family practices. She felt it absolutely necessary to live among those being reformed and enlightened and to model the correct hygienic behaviour and religious belief as well. In a typescript found in her application materials for graduate study at Cornell she described how Ginling workers interacted with the local people.

We have become one of them, and we are their friends, yet they have discovered certain differences between us and themselves: we say grace or sing before each meal; we have two pairs of chopsticks for each person at the table—one to serve with and one to eat with; we use mosquito nets gathered into a round band at the top instead of square ones; we have foreign friends come visit us. However, these four differences make no gulf between us and the local people, they regard these dissimilarities as our peculiarities just as Brother Wang has a peculiar way of drinking his tea.<sup>95</sup>

The education, practices and beliefs of the Ginling rural service workers set them apart from the rural masses. Yet Hsiung claims the particularities of worship or efforts to avoid sharing germs were eventually accepted as quirks of individuals rather than ideas of foreign import. Hsiung was one of many in rural service who took their missionary teachers’ messages of the significance of public health, cleanliness, better childrearing and Christian vision and made them seem Chinese.

Foreign missionary women had advanced notions of improving Chinese homes and women from the mid-nineteenth century. By the end of the war in 1945, the ideas of Christian service, rural education and domestic improvement were largely indigenised. Ginling leaders like Wu consistently advocated the idea that educated women, like Ginling graduates, should be particularly responsible for the welfare of China’s disadvantaged women and children. The Guomindang Nationalist state provided some financial assistance in the realm of child welfare, social education and public health. During the war the Nationalist party also planned for the welfare of the Chinese people in the longer term.<sup>96</sup> Ginling women pushed this modernising agenda and found ways to fund it. They courted and received foreign aid money, not just from mission bodies but from institutions like the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association (UNRRA). And it was Chinese women, many of them trained in missionary

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95 Hsiung Ya-na, “Two years at Chung Ho Chang, a backward glance,” n.d., found in the folder of Hsiung, Ya-na, Graduate School Records, DRMC, Cornell University Library Collection #12-5-636.

96 Tehyun Ma, “A Chinese Beveridge plan: the discourse of social security and the post-war reconstruction of China,” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11(2) (December 2012): 329–50.

institutions, who designed and organised these programs that operated on the continuing assumption that the educated elite knew what was best for the Chinese masses.

## Ginling's post-war social service

Once back on their Nanjing campus after the Sino-Japanese war, Ginling College continued to train its graduates to reform Chinese homes and family life. Wu wrote in a report to the Board of Directors in 1946, "There are special projects to which Ginling should give attention, such as the re-establishment of the Education Department, a course in Personnel Guidance, Extension work into home through the Home Economics Department and the Child Welfare Program."<sup>97</sup> As with the work in the wartime rural service centres, Ginling students were encouraged to diagnose Chinese family life with an eye toward meeting the needs of China. Accordingly, students in one child welfare class noted that many children "are not really taken care of by their parents so they are trying to teach good habits, [like] cutting nails, brushing teeth, and cleaning hands."<sup>98</sup> Their solution was continued attention to nutrition, hygiene and habit formation. Other child welfare students expanded on reasons for children's problems. They noted in shorthand: "Breakdown of large family system partly responsible for mental problems—no one now to train young mothers. Large families will probably never be restored—necessary to cope the problem [*sic*]."<sup>99</sup> To help children with behavioural problems, a Ginling professor of child welfare ran a child guidance clinic in Nanjing. One of her goals was to "help children with personality problems so that they may become healthy adults, both mentally and physically, and useful citizens."<sup>100</sup> As in Renshou, modification of behaviour was a vital factor for national salvation. At this time, the social problems were expressed in the language of a growing mental health field rather than one of morality. The underlying assumptions remained the same—that educated Chinese women should intervene in the family life of others.

As during the war, in the post-war period there continued to be a lack of trained female personnel who understood modern standards of home economics or social work. Wu continued to push for graduate training abroad, and mobilised her foreign and domestic contacts to help place Ginling graduates. The importance of foreign knowledge in developing a pool of talented Chinese

97 "Report to Board of Directors of Ginling College," 9 November 1946, SHAC RG 668/214.

98 "Ertong fuli shiyan suo gongzuo baogao," (Child Welfare Experimental Center Work Report), 1945, SHAC RG 668/10.

99 "The scope of the child care field in China," outlined by Chinese Students at the Vassar Summer Institute for Family and Child Care Services in War time (July 1948), SHAC RG 668/13.

100 Ming-sin Hsueh Tang, "Report on child guidance service, 1946–1947," SHAC RG 668/13.

leaders may be illustrated by the case of Anna Hsiung. Both Irma Highbaugh, who worked with Hsiung at Zhonghechang, and Wu wrote her strong letters of recommendation to attend Cornell University.<sup>101</sup> During the war Wu often wrote about the need to train Chinese women for service so that women's issues would be addressed. Highbaugh echoed these sentiments when she wrote, "I should hope that Cornell University will be able to admit her and to provide for her whatever scholarships may be available to foreign students. I trust that in this way, the splendid service which the university has given to China through agricultural and technical training of many of her men, may thus be extended to one of her very able women."<sup>102</sup> For both of these Christian educators, Chinese women were as capable of making contributions to China equal to those of men.

On the basis of these and other recommendations, Hsiung entered Cornell as a candidate in Child Development and Family Relations in 1946. Hsiung wrote to Ginling soon after her arrival in the United States that she felt quite at home. "From my trip and my short experience in America, I understand that God has planned well for me and this friendliness of the Americans impressed me deeply."<sup>103</sup> She completed her M.A. thesis, "Study of family life in preschool children in a Chinese rural town," in 1947. It was largely based on her work at Zhonghechang and provided ideas about how to plan for future social wellbeing in China's countryside.<sup>104</sup> At the behest of Wu, Hsiung returned to China to join the staff of Ginling's new rural service station later that year.<sup>105</sup>

Ginling's new rural service station was called Shwen Hua Cheng (Chunhuazhen in Jiangning County) and was approximately twelve miles south east of Nanjing.<sup>106</sup> The area had been occupied by the Japanese, and, according to one report, at least 3,000 families badly needed "reconstruction."<sup>107</sup> Funding came from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Social Welfare Committee of United Service to China, and the women of the American Universalist Church.<sup>108</sup> The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association funded a feeding

101 Irma Highbaugh to Dean Sarah Blanding, Department of Home Economics, Cornell, March 9, 1946, folder of Hsiung, Ya-na, Graduate School Records, DRMC, Cornell University Library Collection #12-5-636; Wu Yifang to Sarah Gibson Blanding, 14 March 1946, UBCHEA RG 11 box 137-2757.

102 Irma Highbaugh to Dean Cunningham, Graduate School, Cornell University, 9 March 1946, folder of Hsiung, Ya-na, Graduate School Records, DRMC, Cornell University Library Collection #12-5-636.

103 Hsiung to Mrs. Mills, 23 September 1946, UBCHEA RG 11 box 137-2757.

104 "Students from outside the continental United States who are studying or who have studied home economics in United States Colleges," *Omicron Nu Magazine* 26(4) (Spring 1949): 36-47, p. 45.

105 Hsiung to Mrs. Mills, 26 October 1947, UBCHEA RG 11 box 137-2757.

106 In Chinese it is "Chunhuazhen" (淳化镇) but in English language documents it is "Shwen Hua/Shuen Hwa Cheng." See Ginling College rural service station at Shwen Hua Cheng (1947-1948), SHAC RG 668/11; Tsu Yu-dji, "Report on rural service station at Shuen Hwa Cheng, 1947-1948," SHAC RG 668/14; Li Zhenkun 李振坤, "Chunhuazhen de xiangcun fuwu zhan" (The Rural service station at Chunhuazhen 淳化镇的乡村服务站), in *Yongjiu de sinian* (Memory Forever) 永久的思念, ed. Jinnüda xiaoyouhui (Ginling Women's College Alumnae Association), Nanjing: no publisher information available, 1993, p. 114.

107 Ginling College rural service station at Shwen Hua Cheng (1947-1948), SHAC RG 668/11.

108 Tsu Yu-dji, "Report on rural service station at Shuen Hwa Cheng, 1947-1948," SHAC RG 668/14.

station for children and organised handicraft work of sewing, cross stitch and paper cut-outs.<sup>109</sup> According to a later account, Ginling helped sell these items and children's toys abroad to help "open new possibilities for economic advance of the rural population."<sup>110</sup> The social service conducted at Chunhuazhen was much like that at Renshou and Zhonghechang, with emphasis on bettering the lives of women and children with economic advancement, literacy, child welfare and domestic improvement work all on the agenda. One report noted successes in a two-week training course in family life: "The results of the training were apparent: the mothers attempted to keep their house cleaner and they tried to use better methods in training their children."<sup>111</sup>

In the post-war period, the Christian missionaries' vision of domestic improvement, particularly in rural areas, remained a powerful one even after the foreign missionaries were mostly absent from the scene. Their influence remained through funding and the transmission of the ideologies of domestic reform imbued by their Chinese students. In the case of Ginling College, Chinese women became indigenous bearers of what they believed to be superior knowledge and domestic modernity that would best serve China.

## Conclusion: After the revolution

In the immediate aftermath of the Communist victory, Ginling leaders were still hopeful that their forms of social service might continue to serve in the development of China. In 1950, a Chinese child-welfare professor noted, "We have worked hard to keep up the college standards and to prove to the new society at large the real spirit of service to people for which the college stands."<sup>112</sup> Despite Ginling's efforts to maintain the college as a place to train Chinese women for service, the new regime dismantled all the Christian colleges in their educational reorganisation of colleges and universities in 1952. Wu eventually backed away from her efforts to develop social service at Ginling, damning the social service work, such as handicraft efforts at Renshou, as poisonous. Wu claimed that these American-funded efforts to provide a livelihood to Chinese women made those involved feel that "only America was good." Wu argued in 1973, "The poison in the so-called cultural aggression lay in having us take the poison without knowing it."<sup>113</sup> But in claiming ignorance of cultural aggression

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109 Ginling College rural service station at Shwen Hua Cheng (1947–1948).

110 Li Zhenkun, "Chunhuazhen de xiangcun fuwu zhan," p. 114.

111 Ginling College rural service station at Shwen Hua Cheng (1947–1948).

112 Ming-Sin Hsueh Tang to Ginling College Committee, 26 October 1950, UTS, MCT Papers, box 7, folder 43.

113 Chao Hao-sheng, typescript of interview of Yi-fang Wu, p. 6.

at the time, Wu also denied her own role, and the role of other Chinese women, in forwarding a Christian vision of service and in envisioning a better Chinese future.

There are many reasons for this later critique of Christian social service as “cultural aggression.” The activities were associated with the bourgeois elite and they rested on foreign connections. Many Chinese leaders were foreign trained, and often projects received material support from abroad. Another strike against service efforts was that social service providers claimed to know what the Chinese masses “needed” without really consulting the masses. This was opposed to “learning from” the masses. Finally, as Wu pointed out in her 1973 self-criticism, “In the past I thought it was my job to run a school, and to let students do the serving of society, but this didn’t fundamentally change any of China’s problems.”<sup>114</sup> Social service only ameliorated conditions caused by the capitalist system. In 1973 Wu argued that only through revolution could the structures of Chinese society be altered to provide greater opportunities for all.

As the Chinese state thinks about how to best meet the needs of its people in a post-socialist age, it seems a good time to re-think the work of women reformers from the first half of the century. Despite the later negative view of social service, the experiences of educated Chinese women involved in these projects suggests a significant way that they envisioned a changed and reformed society in the Republican period. As I have shown in this chapter, Chinese women at Ginling College embraced the scientific vision of progress and enacted family betterment campaigns taught by their missionary teachers. Chinese leaders, like Wu, developed transnational networks to exchange ideas about relief projects, solicited funding for those projects, pushed the Chinese state to meet their responsibility to the Chinese people, and worked with the Nationalist party. Through these efforts, educated Chinese women made the missionary ideals about social service their own.

The projects that women designed to improve the lives of disadvantaged women perpetuated ideas that women should serve society in ways different from men. Women’s vision of service rested on the assumption that they were best suited to effect family reform, women’s development and improvement of child welfare. Ginling rural service workers and Wu often, but not always, stressed what they could do to improve the lot of all Chinese women by encouraging correct management of homes, rationalisation of production, better hygiene and improved childrearing. They embraced the idea that Chinese families needed to be restructured, and that efficient and scientific approaches to domestic life that were circulating globally could be learned and applied to solve China’s social problems.

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114 Ibid., p. 5.



At the same time, the knowledge, skills and training in how to improve Chinese families acquired by Ginling women both enabled them to gain authority over others seen as less advanced than themselves and empowered them to suggest the ways that the state might improve the conditions for less privileged members of society. Like the missionaries who constructed images of backwards and heathen Chinese, Ginling women constructed a group of individuals less advanced than themselves—rural Chinese women, who needed saving and guidance out of a condition of ignorance. Educated Chinese women perpetuated discourses about Chinese backwardness and benighted Chinese womanhood. Wu trained a cohort of Chinese woman leaders who could rise to the challenges of Chinese backwardness. As she realised later, she had not worked for long-term political change. She did not push her graduates to work in the highest levels of party leadership. For Ginling administrators and students like Wu Yifang, women’s leadership meant improving the lives of Chinese women and children and recommending policy changes to the state. Leadership meant that leading Christian social service efforts rather than serving alongside men in national policy-making bodies was the most significant way that educated women should serve Chinese society.

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## **Part Two**

# **Sacred and Secular Genealogies: Christian Missions and States— Colonial and Contemporary**



# 5. Sacred Genealogies of Development: Christianity and the Indian Modern

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## Introduction

The term “development” is by now indelibly associated in much critical social theory with “discourse,” in the sense that Michel Foucault made his own.<sup>1</sup> Writing in the wake of an earlier decade’s work on colonialism as discourse, Arturo Escobar celebrates the possibilities of extending Foucault’s method to development.<sup>2</sup> But—like any method—discourse analysis brings with it characteristic preoccupations and orientations that foreclose certain possibilities while opening up others. Once a methodological stance is adopted, certain consequences are set in motion. Escobar wishes “to show in detail how development works.”<sup>3</sup> But his enterprise now becomes identical with setting out “to show how a corpus of rational techniques—planning, methods of measurement and assessment, professional knowledges, institutional practices and the like—organises both forms of knowledge and types of power, relating one to the other, in the construction and treatment of specific problems.”<sup>4</sup>

In India, despite the fact that Foucault’s analysis of discourses was meant to shift the argument away from a Marxist preoccupation with state power, it is the earlier tradition which continued to shape the analytics of postcolonial scholarship. The state, both colonial and postcolonial, continued to dominate analyses—the difference is that now, state “discourses” became the locus of the exercise of power. “Development” became identified by influential scholars of Indian nationalism such as Partha Chatterjee with the “developmental state,”<sup>5</sup> the developmental state with developmental state discourses, and, in a further

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1 In this chapter I take Foucault’s method of discourse analysis as a widely known and utilised aspect of the social sciences. But see for example, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Random House, 1977.

2 Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

3 Escobar, *Encountering Development*, p. 18.

4 Ibid.

5 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

narrowing of scope, developmental discourses became rationalising discourses. The characteristic discourse of development became that of the planners. The rhythm of development is now identified with the homogeneous measured time of the Five Year Plan.

My scepticism is not directed at a broader historical argument, the argument that the Indian state was quintessentially “developmental” when it emerged as the independent nation. Unlike the account provided by Escobar—who begins his narrative with the Truman Doctrine of the post-war period—“developmentalism” in India had its antecedents in an anti-colonial critique. This critique took the form of an economic indictment of colonialism. The immiseration of India’s artisanal industries came to stand for a state whose interests did not coincide with the welfare of its people.<sup>6</sup> But if the postcolonial state was developmental, it does not follow that development can be understood entirely in terms of the state. Nor can we assume that development can be understood entirely as a rationalising episteme, or even exclusively as an episteme for that matter. For the young people I write about in this paper, and especially the young women, the experience of development was deeply affective, capable of transforming their experience of temporality and bodily experience. I speak principally of young women in rural Tamil Nadu whom I have encountered in the course of field work over the years, who have been fully engaged in propagating developmental projects of health, democratisation and employment. Although their experience certainly entails engagement with new forms of knowledge, it exceeds what can be captured in discourse analysis. The temporality of development, for them, was neither regulated, nor planned. Instead of the homogeneous empty time of planners, or even the linear time of progress, theirs was a charged experience of past and present, one which served to break temporality into two. Even to a sympathetic outsider such as myself, there was no discernible “event” that could be held accountable for such a rupture: all I could identify was the ongoing process of being trained and seeking to educate others around them. But in the experience of the young women, their present and future was divided, not simply from their own past, but from the past that continued to be embodied in their mothers’ ways of doing things.

In order to integrate such experiences into the account we give of Indian modernity, we need to direct our attention to genealogies other than the rationalising and systematising operations of expert discourses, and towards institutions other than the state. The urgency of additional perspectives is felt with particular force when undertaking ethnographic or any empirical research which considers the experience of actors—or, as Michel de Certeau

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6 Satish Deshpande, “Imagined Economies,” *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 25(26) (1993): 5–35; Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*; Manu Goswami, *Producing India. From Colonial Economy to National Space*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

would put it—the perspective of the *users* of discourses<sup>7</sup> rather than those discourses viewed, as Foucault does, systemically, in a more abstract fashion. Anthropologists have certainly been quick to point out that “to think of *the* discourse of development is far too limiting ... within development there is and has always been a multiplicity of voices, ‘a multiplicity of knowledges,’ even if some are more powerful than others.”<sup>8</sup> But the language of this re-formulation perpetuates the assumption of an exclusively epistemic relationship to the world. All that has been altered is that we now have many “knowledges,” instead of one. I have recently argued at length for the indispensability of thoroughgoing alternatives to the dominant “mentalist” philosophical traditions which continue to shape many aspects of the social sciences. These alternatives should integrate affect and emotions with a much fuller version of bodily experience than is commonly made available.<sup>9</sup> In this paper I bring that argument to bear on the method of genealogy. We must include among the genealogies of the modern those that are not simply rationalising and systematising, but are charged with the affective force of the sacred. We may find that neglected genealogies are capable of transforming even rationalising endeavours. The work on the visual imaginary of Indian nationalism is pertinent here, for it suggests that the rationalising project of mapping the colony, a fundamental example of Foucault’s thesis on power and knowledge, corresponds only to the perspective of *one* side, that of a colonial state intent on turning unknown territory into knowable manageable “space”. But the devotional effects of nationalism *transformed* this geometric measurable space. As a result of affective involvement, the tapering map of India was clothed in a sari, the shape of the map became the curving female form of Mother India, and the entire image was given life by the sacred energy and beauty of the luminous Hindu goddess. For nationalists, such a map “interpellates” its viewers—it “calls out” and exhorts her (male) devotees to liberate her from foreign conquest.<sup>10</sup>

But we need to look at more than Hinduism for our sacral genealogies of the Indian modern. I suggest in this paper that the terms in which young women speak of their involvement, and their understanding of the changes that flow from their involvement, take up a model provided by Christianity. It is not Christianity in general that is relevant as a genealogy for these purposes. Genealogies do not bear down on the present as a totality, nor as a unitary essence—unlike essentialist understandings of how “tradition” works. Instead, relevant parts are picked out

7 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

8 R.D. Grillo, “Discourses of development: the view from anthropology,” in *Discourses of Development. Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. R.D. Grillo and R.L. Stirrat, Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997, pp. 1–34, p. 22.

9 Kalpana Ram, *Fertile Disorder: Spirit Possession and its Provocation of the Modern*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013.

10 Sumathi Ramaswamy, “Visualising India’s geo-body: globes, maps, bodyscapes,” in *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*, ed. Sumathi Ramaswamy, New Delhi and London: Sage Publications, 2003, pp. 151–90; Goswami, *Producing India*.

by different kinds of projects. For instance, it is not the confessional aspects of Christianity emphasised by Foucault that are apposite for the experiences I seek to describe here.<sup>11</sup> Rather, it is the charged experience of conversion as described by phenomenologists of religion as varied as Martin Heidegger and William James.<sup>12</sup> Both use the trope of an affectively laden, decisive *turning* to describe conversion. For James, writing in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*,<sup>13</sup> it is the turn from a divided self to a unified one that separates the past from the present of conversion. For Heidegger, the turning or *kehre* captures the experience of early Christians, whose “turn” towards a new beginning transforms their experience of time itself. Of particular importance for this essay is the manner in which Heidegger uses his own move away from a scholastic version of theology to the affective Christianity of Martin Luther, as well as that of the early Christians, as a means of “rejecting the calendrical time (*chronos*) of worldly reckoning for the “moment” (*kairos*) of insight and revelation.”<sup>14</sup>

Certain obstacles lie in the way of a fuller acknowledgement of the place of Christianity in Indian modernity – on the part above all of the dominant category of Indian intellectuals, who come equipped with the tacit background and assumptions of middle class Hinduism. Missionary Christianity’s involvement with the colonial project constitutes a particularly salient impediment. I well recall my own grandfather coming out with sharply honed defences of Hinduism, seemingly out of nowhere. In fact they were sharp rejoinders to the slurs he and his generation had heard or read from missionaries, colonial administrators, scholars and Western doctors—as well as from Islamic critiques—directed at “idol worshippers.” The representatives of colonial rule may have left India, but the necessity of “talking back” to colonial interlocutors continued to shape the rhetoric of a whole generation of Indians. A lively literary representation of a robust response by a Hindu to a missionary occurs in the novel *Chikaveera Rajendra*, written by one of Karnataka’s leading writers, Masti Venakatesa Iyengar.<sup>15</sup> It is set in the last days of a small Kannada kingdom of Kodagu, before its takeover by the British East India Company. Fr. Megling’s request for a debate to prove the superiority of Christianity is part of the wider British-led manoeuvrings to unseat the king, but also to destroy the autonomy of the kingdom.

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11 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978.

12 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell, 1962. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York: Penguin Books, [1902] 1985.

13 James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, cited by both Eliza Kent, *Converting Women. Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 5–6; and Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold. Conversion, Modernity and Belief*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 84.

14 Charles Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1995, p. 212.

15 Masti Venakatesa Iyengar, *Chikaveera Rajendra*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1992.



Megling opened the discussion:

“We maintain that our religion which was established by Jesus Christ is superior to yours. Do you have anything to say?”

The Hindu guru answers:

“We aren’t schooled in the art of discussing our faith. You are welcome to claim that your religion is superior. We believe that our religion is equally great.”

Fr. Megling responds:

“Instead of worshipping the only One, who is the Lord of the Universe, you worship many lesser Gods. That is not the way to redemption. We want you to have faith in our god and be redeemed.... One more thing. You make idols of your gods and worship the idols. You claim that God manifests himself in the form of man, even a pig and fish. You have a monkey for his servant and you claim that it crossed an ocean. You mislead the people with all these fantastic stories. All this is very wrong.”

After being harangued by Fr. Megling in this fashion for some time, Bhagavati stands up. She is a striking figure of a woman, a shamanic priestess of the goddess. She is granted permission to respond to the padre:

“You have found much in our religion to criticise. May I ask you to say something about your own faith?... You say God the Father, don’t you? Not the Mother?”

“You are right. It’s God, our Father.”

“Your concept of God includes the Son also.”

“Right, our concept of God includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

“He has no wife?”

“No.”

“How did he beget his son then?”

“There’s no limit to his power.”

“Why shouldn’t God who can beget a son without having a wife not take the form of a monkey and cross the ocean?”

“I don’t see what one has got to do with the other.”

“If you attribute miracles to the enormous power that resides in God, why do you find fault when we explain our miracles in terms of the same source of power?”

“Your words display an incomplete grasp of our faith, madam. I’m sure you are just repeating the words you have heard elsewhere.”

“You are right. I’m sure you haven’t learnt things about our religion in any other way. You are also repeating what you heard other people say.”<sup>16</sup>

Bhagavati’s acute responses eventually have the crowds cheering—and it is impossible for the anti-colonial intellectual, with sensibilities further honed by two decades of postcolonial critique, not to join them in the general jubilation. But the politics of this response are no longer, if they ever were, simply anti-colonial. The resentment sown by this mode of high-handed dismissal and characterisation of Hinduism has also been garnered and mobilised by right-wing Hindu nationalism specifically in order to target Christian conversion. For Hindu nationalists, Hinduism exists as a kind of originary identity for all Indians, an identity from which conquering religions have wrested them either by force, as with Islam, or by offering material incentives, as in the case of Christian missionaries. In this discourse, the connection between development and Christianity is indeed recognised, but only in order to denigrate conversion as an instrumentally motivated undertaking—both on the part of missionaries who offer material blandishments, and on the part of the Dalits and the Adivasi or “tribal” groupings, who made up the bulk of converts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Discrediting conversion has paved the way for “reclaiming” converts for the Hindu fold. Equally, it has paved the way for a number of states in India to pass “anti-conversion” legislation ostensibly aimed at the use of “force, fraud and allurements.”<sup>17</sup> The legislation has legitimised violence against missionaries and Christian communities.<sup>18</sup> In Tamil Nadu, where sections of the Dalit movement have meanwhile appropriated the Bible as locus of a Dalit Christianity, the legislation has legitimised anti-Dalit violence.<sup>19</sup>

The argument of this paper takes on its wider urgency against this political background. I seek to show that far from being an alien intrusive presence in India, sequestered in “backward” minority communities, Christianity has entered into some of the most recognisable streams of Indian modernity.

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16 Ibid., pp. 144–48.

17 Goldie Osuri, *Religious Freedom in India. Sovereignty and (Anti) Conversion*, London and New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 2–3.

18 Rowena Robinson, “Christian communities of India: a social and historical overview,” in *Religions and Development India Working Papers Series 1*(1), New Delhi: Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2010, pp. 1–41.

19 David Mosse, *The Saint in the Banyan Tree. Christianity and Caste Society in India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012, p. 198.

These include not only developmental agendas, but emancipatory intellectual and political traditions that call for activist engagement, such as feminism and socialism which have enjoyed a strong presence in Indian political life.<sup>20</sup>

In what follows, I propose to highlight two levels at which Christianity can be said to have provided a genealogy for development. The first is that of the church as an institution which has been a primary agent of governmentality, in all its forms, on the west coast of Tamil Nadu. The second level is that of conversion. Taken together, both these levels allow us to consider genealogies other than the state for both colonial and postcolonial India. The genealogical enterprise I propose is, in principle, somewhat different to writing ethnographies of communities who are themselves Christian. But doing ethnographic field work in a Christian community can also provide, as it has in my case, the signal provocation for re-thinking many of the tacit and foundational assumptions which arise when an intellectual belongs to a majority community, whether in terms of gender, class/caste or religion. So in this paper the two enterprises, the genealogical and the ethnographic, come together. While I have also undertaken comparative field work among Dalits in Chengalpattu District of Tamil Nadu, the ethnography that inspires this paper is taken from my work with the Catholic fisher-people on the west coast of Tamil Nadu, who form a spatially continuous coastal settlement from Kerala to the Cape at the southern tip of India.

## The church as medium of governmentality: Coastal villages

My field work began in the 1980s, before the great watershed sometimes described in abbreviated form as the “LPG era”—the era of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation.<sup>21</sup> The temporal rift generated in Indian political and social life by this vast change is yet to be fully comprehended in terms of its effects across different classes and regions in India. A postcolonial state that was committed to sponsoring industrialisation, protecting the economy against foreign capital, regulating the market and upholding goals for social re-distribution, remained recognisable in its contours even in Indira Gandhi’s period. The “LPG era” brought with it a reversal of every one of these premises. As one commentator put it: “With a massive thrust towards privatisation, the state has been in retreat since then. Each of the incentives of the 1970s has been

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20 Kalpana Ram, “Temporality and *sorge* in the ethical fashioning of the feminist self,” in *Women Making Time: Contemporary Feminist Critique and Cultural Analysis*, ed. Elizabeth McMahon and Brigitta Olumbas, Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2006, pp. 191–220.

21 Mary John and Satish Deshpande, “Theorising the present: problems and possibilities,” in *Economic and Political Weekly* 43(46) (2008): 83–86, p. 84.

reversed. Taxation levels of the rich are down to their lowest ever, food subsidies have been cut, corporates have been allowed entry into crop procurement and public investment in agriculture is at a historical low."<sup>22</sup>

The transformation is thus generally understood as a retreat of the state from its former role. In a further contribution that evoked wide commentary and debate, Chatterjee has argued that it is only now, possibly for the first time, that rural peasant communities are imbricated in the meshes of governmentality: "Governmental agencies distributing education, health services, food, roadways, water, electricity, agricultural technology, emergency relief and dozens of other welfare services have penetrated deep into the interior of everyday peasant life.... Institutions of the state, or at least governmental agencies (whether state or non-state) have become internal aspects of the peasant community."<sup>23</sup>

To comprehend the experience of rural coastal Christian communities requires us to abandon these ways of periodising governmentality, as I propose to show by drawing on field material *prior* to liberalisation. In the 1980s, state "fisheries development" was at best a distant presence, at worst, a source of dissension and disruption insofar as it meant a policy of mechanising fishing boats. Mechanisation benefitted an elite in the nearby coastal township of Colachel, but brought with it a disruption of tacit agreements over rights to fishing territories among different coastal villages. Increasingly, fisher-people in other parts of Tamil Nadu were organising to put pressure on the state to institute and police a five-mile zone from which trawling would be banned. But in Kanyakumari, the responses of *kattumaram* fishermen (origin of the English word catamaran), more typically took the form of direct tactics such as slashing trawling nets and damaging propellers. The state was therefore more typically encountered in its punitive and repressive aspects, in encounters with police. Predictably, the tense relationship between coastal villagers and the state was conflated by outsiders with the absence of law itself. Coastal villages were and are often seen as wild zones, prone to sudden inexplicable bouts of violence, drunkenness, social and cultural backwardness and poverty. This perception persists in the representations of school teachers in village primary schools and of social workers who participated in developmental initiatives.<sup>24</sup> Even in my most recent trip to south India in 2012, I found that the fisher-people in the metropolis of Chennai are plagued by similar perceptions of them as lawless communities. This perception paves the way for their displacement from Marina Beach by high rise development.

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22 Mihir Shah, "Structures of power in Indian Society: a response," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(46) (2008): 78–83, p. 80.

23 Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, p. 54.

24 Ram, *Fertile Disorder*: p. 22.

But the relative absence of the state does not mean that governmentality was not present. Let me take first the welfare aspects of governmentality. Although the welfare state was non-existent in the villages, reform-oriented clergy were proliferating schemes for improvement. A simple preliminary listing of the schemes run by clerics in Kanyakumari District gives some idea of the broad terrain covered by such initiatives:

1. Fr. Pierre Gillet, a Belgian Catholic, was working for the Kottar Social Service Society in Kanyakumari, to develop “appropriate technology” for “artisanal” fishermen. Fr. Gillet developed motorization of the *kattumaram*, as well as developing a fibre-glass model of the traditional *kattumaram*.<sup>25</sup>
2. The Belgian sisters who worked for the Kottar Social Service Society (KSSS) had started a health network with particular focus on coastal communities. They were training young women from villages as health workers who could instigate new modern practices among women, in terms of pregnancy, birth, child nutrition and child health.
3. The weaving of fishing nets had traditionally been performed by younger women in fishing villages. Sister Delphine in the convent at the Cape of Kanyakumari had organised young women into centres where they could weave fishing nets collectively. When mechanisation of netweaving entered the district in 1979, this was recognised as a threat to female employment and Sister Delphine organised and led the protests against the machines. In the long run the protest was unable to stop the machines and the number of women involved in net-weaving had fallen dramatically by 2000.
4. The model of sovereign power exercised by the church was actively challenged by the more radical clergy, who favoured instead a direct popular participation model of self-government. Echoing some earlier anarchist ideals of direct democracy, and drawing also on Latin American models of liberation theology, a charismatic Tamil priest called Fr. Edwin was particularly influential in Kanyakumari in initiating a scheme for localising democratic participation. He described the scheme many years later at a presentation to the World Social Forum held in Mumbai in 2004. His vision was to make the neighbourhood the basic unit of democratic self-management.<sup>26</sup> The neighbourhood *samuham* or council was in turn to set up a “cabinet,” equipped with “chief ministers” and “ministers” in charge of portfolios of health, hygiene, environment, income generation, children and adolescent guidance. While delegates could be chosen for village level units, all the way up to the district level, the essence of the democratic process was training

25 Pierre Gillet, *Small is Difficult: The Pangs and Successes of Small Boat Technology Transfer in South India*, Nagercoil: Centre for Appropriate Technology, 1985.

26 M.J. Edwin, Address to Workshop “Spiritualities and identities in the dialogue of civilizations,” World Social Forum, Mumbai, 2004, online: <http://www.lebret-irfed.org/IMG/pdf/Edwin.pdf>, accessed 14 April 2013.

people to engage in dialogue. In coastal Kanyakumari, the devolution of authority was essentially from the church to the neighbourhood, not from the state to the neighborhood.

5. Social workers employed by Catholic NGOs, teachers and clerics were engaged in trying out new schemes for combatting alcoholism among the men. Certain new drugs were becoming available which were said to make the drinker averse to drink. In nearby Colachel, where fishing households also raised pigs, clerics and social workers collaborated in trying to separate the residential space of households from that of pigs.
6. Some of the educated village girls were reading and teaching from reformist tracts published by clerics.<sup>27</sup> These tracts aimed at combatting superstition and ignorance in relation to sexuality. Puberty rituals were excoriated as the opposite of a true knowledge of the physiological changes in the body; the treatment of illness as spirit possession was opposed to the proper treatment of mental illness by a psychiatrist. Other reformist tracts were urging a companionate model of marriage based on mutual love and understanding.

Far from outsiders' perception of coastal villages as lacking in governance, these projects cover an extraordinarily wide range of reforms from labour issues to the proper governance of the village, the home and the space of the domestic. Yet, to understand the authority and positioning of the nuns and priests in coastal areas, we have to bring in older aspects of governmentality such as the exercise of sovereign power. In coastal areas, such power has been invested in the church rather than the state. But first, a few words about the cultural history of Christianity in fishing communities. Fishing communities, as I argued in my early monograph,<sup>28</sup> are dwellers in a distinctive *tinai*—the ancient Tamil poetic term for an ecological-cum-cultural landscape. They depend on the sea rather than the land for their livelihood, and as such have enjoyed a certain *distance* from the agrarian caste order, a relationship mediated by trade rather than by direct labour and servitude as with Dalit communities.<sup>29</sup> The gender relations of the coastal communities are notably more egalitarian and complementary than in agrarian caste society—women manage and sustain the ongoing rhythms of social life on land during the daily and seasonal absences of men on fishing trips,<sup>30</sup> while older women who work as fish traders are strikingly visible figures in their

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27 See Kalpana Ram, "Rationalism, cultural nationalism and the reform of body politics: minority intellectuals of the Tamil Catholic community," in *Social Reform, Sexuality and the State*, ed. Patricia Uberoi, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996, pp. 291–318; Ram, "Maternity and the story of enlightenment in the colonies: Tamil coastal women, South India," in *Maternities and Modernities. Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 114–43.

28 Kalpana Ram, *Mukkuvar Women. Gender, Hegemony and Capitalist Transformation in a South Indian Fishing Community*, London and New Jersey: Zed Press, 1991, p. 6.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

30 Ram, *Mukkuvar Women*; see also Cecilia Busby, *The Performance of Gender. An Anthropology of Everyday Life in a South Indian Fishing Village*, London and New Brunswick: Athlone, 2000.

indigo cotton saris, mobile presences travelling to market towns in the district. This general distinctiveness has been augmented by Christianity. Visually, no coastal village, practically from Kerala down to the Cape of Kanyakumari would be complete without the pastel-coloured whites, greens, creams and pinks of the large church and the shrine to the village's patron saint standing out against the glare of the sea, sun and sand. The history of the church in these coastal villages goes back to the sixteenth century, with the conversion of fishing communities in response to the efforts of Jesuit Portuguese missionaries and the arrival of St. Francis Xavier. Indeed, the wholesale conversion of fishing communities, with some 45,000 baptised Roman Catholics in the coastal regions of Kerala and Tamil Nadu by the end of the sixteenth century,<sup>31</sup> may be said to have set the precedence for the later "mass" conversions of agrarian lower castes that occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The effect of this long history of involvement with Christianity has been to fuse Catholicism inextricably with the style of life and occupational identity of a sea-oriented people,<sup>32</sup> known in this part of Tamil Nadu as Mukkuvars.

The quasi-sovereign role of the church in coastal villages is buttressed by a bureaucracy that extends beyond any individual village. This role is reflected in the transitory character of the parish priest who is transferable across the diocese, but it also extends into transnational connections that allow the flow of clergy between India and Western countries. Fishing families dream of having a gifted son who will become an educated parish priest in the Church. The old matriarch in the household I lived with in the village flew the black flag of mourning to declare her son symbolically dead when he thwarted her clerical ambitions for him by choosing to marry for love. The parish priest provided the immediate source of governance in village politics, presiding over everything from the adjudication of disputes, appointing villagers to positions of authority such as the village *kannakapillai* or accountant, and ritually presiding over the baptism of babies and fishing vessels alike, to punishing misdemeanours by making wrong-doers parade publicly holding a cross in hand, collecting a tithe as a percentage of the daily fishing catch. Indeed such authority has been in tension not only with sexual liaisons, but with the texture of popular Catholicism in matters such as healing and spirit possession.<sup>33</sup>

When this state-like character of the church is noticed by outsiders, it does little to alleviate the disfavour that surrounds coastal fishing villages. Instead, it conjures up the spectre of a state within a state.<sup>34</sup> At its worst, this reputation has fuelled hostile political mobilisation. In other parts of India, and certainly

31 Cecilia Busby, "Renewable icons," in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 77–98, p. 79.

32 Ram, *Mukkuvar Women*, p. 31.

33 Ram, *Mukkuvar Women*; Ram, *Fertile Disorder*.

34 Ram, "Rationalism, cultural nationalism and the reform of body politics," p. 298.



in southern India, Hindu nationalism made inroads only from the 1990s. But the coastal belt, densely settled with exclusively Christian communities, has long suffered from its representation as the domain of an alien Christian power. Hindu nationalist organisations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) began their propaganda in the late 1970s, agitating for a large memorial to the nationalist figure Vivekananda at the Cape. The building of the memorial was itself disruptive for fisher-people, and was in turn used to fuel tensions between Hindus and Christians. In 1982, when I arrived on the scene, violent attacks on the Christian fisher-people by Hindus were very fresh in people's experience. Yet the hostile imagery of a theocratic state enclosed within a nation state was echoed even by the official Commission of Inquiry, supposedly conducting a neutral investigation into the violence:

By way of explaining the firings on groups of fishers, police officials and district administrators spoke of the defiance of the fishing community, which only recognised the rule of religion. In statements echoing RSS rhetoric about a monolithic minority impervious to national law and order, they depicted the coast as a theocracy within a secular nation-state and attributed fisher "intransigence" to the consolidation of Christian clerical power on the coast and the increase in money power through fisheries development.<sup>35</sup>

If the reigning image of Christianity in coastal Kanyakumari has been that of a theocratic feudal and *alien* institution keeping a modern progressive secular Indian state at bay, the reality is quite the opposite. Active modernisation was propagated by the nuns and priests, rather than by the state. Schemes proposed by clerics were comfortably able to involve secular professionals such as school teachers, health workers, social workers. The issues that people brought to the village councils and to priests were similarly secular in character, and reflected many of the characteristics of coastal communities. A journal kept by the newly instituted Village General Body or *Samuham* in Fr. Edwin's parish noted the issues that were being brought for adjudication. I list them below:

1. Peace talks are requested after clash between two families in the village, which has also involved kin in other villages.
2. A fish vendor is harassed by the family of her daughter's lover—his family holds her responsible for not properly controlling her daughter. Her husband is away on seasonal migration, and the boyfriend's family is threatening to dishonour her other daughters in retaliation. She seeks safety from the council.

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35 Ajantha Subramaniam, "Mukkuvar modernity: development as a cultural identity," in *Regional Modernities. The Cultural Politics of Development in India*, ed. S. Sivaramakrishnan and Arun Agarwal, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 262–85, p. 277.

3. The sale of the family house is disputed by a returning fisherman back from seasonal migration—he has chased out the new occupants, and they seek compensation.
4. A woman complains about having given another family a loan of Rs.20,000 to buy a boat. The family has disappeared after re-paying only a fraction of the loan. She wants the party traced and the money recouped.
5. A fish vendor complains that her neighbour takes advantage of the fact that both she and her husband (a fisherman) are away during the day and the daughters are alone. She is concerned that it is her daughters whose reputation will be damaged.
6. A woman complains that she is harassed for not giving the full dowry.
7. A woman has been deserted by her husband. She initially left home during pregnancy after a fight, and went back to her mother's. The husband then refused responsibility for the child, and during one of his seasonal trips to Kerala, married a woman there. She tried to buy back their house from her ex-husband's family, but they now deny receiving money and are allowing the husband to re-occupy it. She would like to at least have her money returned.
8. The mechanised boats from this village are disturbing the *kattumarams* in a neighbouring fishing village, and a dispute is simmering.
9. The *samuham* has been asked to write a letter on behalf of a girl who was pressured into an abortion by her boyfriend, who said he did not want a shotgun marriage but would marry her. He is now rescinding his promise of marriage.
10. The *samuham* is asked to organise water supply and the extension of water pipes to this section of the village.<sup>36</sup>

The village council is here being asked to adjudicate on disputes that carry with them all the flavour and texture of social life in a coastal village: domestic disputes over escalating rates of dowry,<sup>37</sup> the incapacity of working parents to protect the safety and reputation of their daughters, and wives who find themselves made vulnerable to second marriages and liaisons by the seasonal pattern of male absences. Even the disputes over money reflect the dense network of credit that binds and divides fishing households.<sup>38</sup> Not only do a striking number of these issues concern women, but it is older women who bring these to the council, reflecting their prominence as traders, money lenders and mainstays of households during the absence of men.

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36 This journal, maintained by the newly instituted village general body, was viewed on site at the coastal village where Fr. Edwin was the parish priest.

37 Ram, *Mukkuvar Women*.

38 Ibid.

## Development as conversion: The sacred effects of some secular experiences

If the initiatives I have described above cannot be classified as purely religious, neither can they be described as “secular” in any clear cut manner. The reformist clergy themselves felt quite capable of moving readily between secular and Christian discourses. In his 2003 address, speaking to an international audience, Fr. Edwin described his early successes in the district of Kanyakumari. By the time he left the district, he had succeeded in setting up 7,000 neighbourhood parliaments. To this audience, he was quite readily able to re-present, and to re-label in secular terms, what he had originally called “Basic Christian Communities.” The term he now used was a “Neighbourhood Networking of Communities.” Yet the role of prayer and invocations of divinity never disappeared from his political project. His early experiments began with prayers. In his address to the international audience, he reaffirmed his conviction that all are “children of one divine reality.”<sup>39</sup>

But it was among young women of the coastal villages that the blending of the secular and the sacred was most dramatic, even if less immediately obvious as such. I have written elsewhere of these young women.<sup>40</sup> Many of them were working for Christian non-government organisations, or were trained as teachers and social workers. Many were unemployed. Many were unmarried or in the early years of marriage. But all were imbued with deep aspirations for a better life than that of their mothers. Their use of the language of development shows a characteristic emphasis on a radical expansion of horizons. Although they utilised the developmental language of a contrast between a generalised “backward” past and a present which must be animated by *muṇṇēṟṟam* or “progress”, what they emphasised in equal proportion was a transformed experience of the self. The old self, fearful and constrained, became open to the world and emboldened to move about in it. Their discourse borrowed the antinomy between ignorance and enlightenment that their teachers conveyed, but gave it an activist orientation. Two young people, a brother and sister called Marie Terese and Fernandes, told me of Fr. Edwin’s message to them: “He told us how for 400 years the coastal people had lived in ignorance. Our

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39 Edwin, “Spiritualities and identities in the dialogue of civilizations.”

40 Ram, “Uneven modernities and ambivalent sexualities: women’s constructions of puberty in coastal Kanyakumari, Tamilnadu,” in *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economies of Modern India*, ed. Mary E. John and Janaki Nair, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998, pp. 269–304; Ram, “A new consciousness must come’: affectivity and movement in Tamil Dalit women’s activist engagement with cosmopolitan modernity,” in *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Pnina Werbner, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2008, pp. 135–55; Ram, “‘I now have *arivu* [knowledge] which dispels fears’: instabilities in what it means to ‘know’ and the effects of Tamil political party and civil society intellectuals on rural women’s discourses in South Asia,” Special issue, *Democracy, Civil Society and Governance: Contemporary Challenges in India* 32(3) (2009): 485–500.

level of education has always been lower than the rest of the district—there is a huge amount of ignorance.”<sup>41</sup> This discourse sounds extremely hierarchical, setting apart the educated from the ignorant. And indeed, it did have, as one of its effects, a strikingly new version of the hierarchy between the old and the young. Older women became the embodiment of ignorance for matters such as their maternal practices. According to Jeanette, a health worker:

Amma [mother] would keep a *katti* [iron knife] in the ashes of the stove to keep the spirits from hearing the cry of the baby. When my baby was small, I was told not to go in front of women who had lost babies before birth—if I did chance on one, I was told I should give them my baby to hold for a little while. There are many *mūta nampikkai* [backward, foolish, irrational beliefs] around. They bathe fully in the water—only then do they feel that the heat of the body is reduced. We advise them not to do that. They do not eat eggs and milk in case the baby gets too big and they have a difficult birth.<sup>42</sup>

While a certain pride was often taken by the young women who were educating “the mothers,” the reversal of authority relations between older and younger generations was even more salient. Older women who had traditionally been the mainstays of the coastal community—hardy, active and mobile presences and not simply “mothers”—now emerged in the discourse of young people as good pupils, progressing after attending a number of “mothers’ meetings.” This is Maria Terese: “Then we young people began working on our parents, and slowly some things began to change ... we have spoken in *samuhams* about the relation between hygiene and disease.... The mothers are also now confident enough to go themselves, to send petitions, go to the Municipal office, go the Collector’s office.”<sup>43</sup>

Jeanette, the young health worker, told me of the women in her village:

But 75% change their minds after we answer their questions. There is great awareness about immunisation and hygiene, and treatment for diarrhoea. Where before no liquid was given, now they give the sugar and salt solution. For *vysoori* [small pox], they seek hospital treatment. At the last mothers’ meetings the women suggested writing to the Block Development Officer over the lack of electricity and water pumps in the village; finally they went there themselves and broke their water pots outside the office.<sup>44</sup>

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41 Kalpana Ram in discussion with Marie Terese and Fernandes, coastal village of Kanyakumari District, 1983.

42 Ram in interview with Jeanette, a health worker with NGO, in coastal village of Kanyakumari District, Dec. 1991.

43 Ram in discussion with Maria Terese, coastal Kanyakumari 1983.

44 Ram in interview with Jeanette, December 1991.

Ambrose, an unmarried woman of 27, had dedicated her life to health initiatives, and was working as a midwife for a Catholic non-government organisation. Here she speaks of the women who came to her for advice:

I tell them—*namma bodykku namma bodporuppu*—we alone are responsible for our bodies.... Great problems beset our women. Men who come home with alcohol and blue movies on the brain, who won't take "no" for an answer, beat them. On the other hand, women get blamed for having children. I see many effects of our efforts. Those exposed to our talks stand out in any crowd, they talk differently to others. There is great *muny effec* [progress].<sup>45</sup>

But development brought with it more than just a restructuring of knowledge. It also brought a new affective and bodily sense of emancipation. It was not so much the older "pupils," but their young teachers who expressed this sense of emancipation. As the young women left their homes and villages to take part in collective training at missions, and found employment in non-government organisations, the conditions of their daily existence were transformed. As Maria Terese put it to me:

A great change is visible in the freedom allowed to us girls. I tell you, our own house was one where my aunty has been beaten for scaling fish seated on the verandah even though she was behind a thatch screen. Before the *samuham* I could not go out of the house freely let alone out of the village. Today, I can move everywhere and even stay away a week visiting another village to spread these ideas.<sup>46</sup>

Young men *also* spoke of a new expanded horizon: "Before, if someone came to our village, we would shy away, feel suspicious, afraid in case what we said got us into some kind of trouble. But today, we feel 'they are also human beings such as ourselves,' and we talk openly to people such as yourself."<sup>47</sup>

It was among the young women—rather than the young men—that this narrative of emancipatory self-transformation was most striking. The reasons for this had to do with the far greater constraints placed on the motility and mobility of young women. In the aftermath of the kinds of public comments made by religious and political leaders after the gang rape in Delhi in December 2012, it is clearer than ever that the attempt to make women responsible for preventing sexual violence against them, through increased self-surveillance, is not simply a phenomenon of "rural backwardness" but reflects a shared set of norms about gender relations all over India. The restrictions entailed disciplining each

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45 Ram in discussion with midwife Ambrose, Kanyakumari, January 1992.

46 Ram in discussion with Maria Terese, Kanyakumari, 1983.

47 Ram in discussion with Fernandes, Kanyakumari, 1983.

aspect of everyday bodily behaviour: speech, comportment, dress, visibility to others, all forms of social intercourse with others, and motility in general.<sup>48</sup> The enlarged perspective on the world experienced by these young women was, accordingly, not simply a mental or an epistemic shift. Although their explicit project was the dissemination of new knowledge, the sense of liberation was in keeping with the bodily nature of the restrictions to which they were subjected in the first place. Liberation took the form of a greater embodied movement in the world. It resulted in the boldness to raise questions, but it is experienced in bodily terms as “one’s mouth being loosened”:

*Appa* (father) would impose restrictions on me for coming home late from KSS meetings, but I would explain what it was about. I was told to look out—my sister-in-law’s ghost might “come on me” [possess her]—she burnt herself alive. But my mouth has been loosened since the KSS and I ask them right back: what ill has befallen me? I have done all sorts of things I was never supposed to have done. Has anything happened to me?<sup>49</sup>

It is apposite at this point to compare the experiences of these women with that of recently converted Dalits in Tamil Nadu. Here David Mosse describes the narratives of change enunciated by recent converts to Christianity:

In the 1980s, Alapuram Paraiyar men and women would often characterise their aspirations to me in terms of the notion of *nākarīkam*—that is, civility, politeness, urbanity ... in contradistinction to a servile past that was identified as *aciṅkam* [degrading, disgusting or shameful].... Apart from signifying a difference in caste relationships, the *aciṅkam* / *nākarīkam* dichotomy was part of a Paraiyar narrative of change and of their own *changeability*. It was within this discourse that people spoke of their conversion to Protestant Christianity.... Perhaps its greater historical proximity made conversion more readily a topic in interview ... but perhaps it was also that Paraiyar discourse on identity was itself more culturally disjunctive, for which Christianity provided an idiom of expression ... these Protestant Paraiyars repudiated rather than glorified their past.<sup>50</sup>

Like my respondents, these recently converted Protestant Dalits also contrast the oppression of the past with their hopes for a more civilised, less subservient future. Both groups stress the changeability of their past oppression. But the Dalit focus is entirely on caste degradation, whereas the women in coastal Kanyakumari area spoke primarily of a past in which they were sequestered,

48 Ram, *Fertile Disorder*.

49 Ram in interview with Jeanette, Kanyakumari District, December 1991.

50 Mosse, *The Saint in the Banyan Tree*, pp. 182–83.

hemmed in, restricted and policed, as *women*. Their new present, which abounded with images of enlightenment, was intimately tied to greater mobility *as women*. Among my respondents, the language of female liberation cut across caste. Although most of them were from coastal fishing communities, women from higher castes singled out their sense of their restrictions as women in even more acute terms. Ambrose, the midwife, was from the Maravar caste, a landholding family, but now in a penurious state. She was particularly caustic about the gender norms in her community: “In my family traditionally women did not come out in the daytime. Even now I cannot visit my relatives in day. In my clan and community there are families where the men are alcoholic, womanising, squandering their family wealth—but still the women could not go out to support the family or earn money.”<sup>51</sup>

The restrictions placed on women are of an extraordinarily intimate nature, not simply because they have to police every aspect of their own everyday behaviour, but because those who ask them to do so are their own families, who love them and whom they love. We may contrast this to caste oppression which can be externalised. The generation of fear of reprisals may be felt by both Dalits and women, but among women, it is mediated by love. The fear is not just of making oneself vulnerable by departing from the gender-specific codes of conduct. It is a fear of the censure that one’s actions would bring; the loss of reputation of one’s family. For the majority of young girls I interviewed, such norms seemed unavoidable. Agency lay for them in ensuring that they policed their own movements rather than waiting for their families and community to do so.<sup>52</sup> Participating in development programmes offered young women a rare opportunity for an expanded version of agency: they could move around with greater freedom while retaining respectability.

## Colonial genealogies of development: Missions versus the colonial state

In this last section I want to reflect more closely on the sense in which colonial Christianity forms a potent and ongoing tradition for secular projects. Insofar as development entails deliberate and wide-ranging interventions in order to re-shape the lives of those considered “backward,”<sup>53</sup> a closer genealogy is provided, not by the state, but by missions. Despite missionary suspicions of the material economic and political considerations at work in the “mass” conversion of south India, missions themselves enacted a hybridisation of spiritual and

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51 Ram in interview with Ambrose, Kanyakumari District, January 1992.

52 Ram, “Uneven modernities and ambivalent sexualities,” pp. 269–304.

53 See also Ram, *Fertile Disorder*.



secular colonial projects in bringing both enlightenment and civilisation to the natives. The genealogy I seek to demonstrate is more than just a distant model. Many of the specific endeavours and modes of intervention I have referred to for coastal villages have their antecedents in missionary efforts to alter modes of daily life. The London Missionary Society in south India sought to bring respectable standards of clothing to men and women, notably directing women to cover their breasts. The conflicts which ensued have been termed the Breast Cloth Controversy of Travancore, an episode favoured by historians for its capacity to illuminate the complex intersection of dissonant meanings at work. I draw in this segment particularly on the recent work of Eliza Kent on gender and Protestant missions in south India to bring together my ethnography with the colonial history.<sup>54</sup> For missions, the project was to bring civilised modesty to women from the lower caste of Nadars. The garment they wished women to wear was, in fact, not a breast cloth, but a sewn jacket.<sup>55</sup> It was the Nadar men and women who wanted to wear the upper cloth that was reserved for upper castes. For them, it was a sign of upward mobility and a militant declaration that the women were no longer sexually available to upper castes. The violent response of upper castes to both the Nadars and the missions only confirms the local politics at stake.

Colonial commentaries on “native life” for the region accord a condescending approval to Mukkuvar women for covering their breasts: “The inelegant but decent dress of the Roman Catholic fisherwomen appears to be the result of a curious compromise between barbarous laws and female modesty—they cover the bosom straight across with a cloth which runs under each arm.”<sup>56</sup>

By the time of my field work, it did not need priests to instigate sartorial change in coastal villages. Middle-class norms on the proper way to wear a sari, evolved in interaction with Victorian norms, had been generalised. Young women wore tightly sewn blouses and petticoats, although they still diverged from my middle-class tastes in preferring nylon saris to cotton handloom saris.<sup>57</sup> Their mothers, especially the older women, continued to resist blouses and petticoats, looking altogether cooler than the rest of us in the heat.

Other direct continuities with the past are to be found in the efforts of reformist parish priests to stop coastal people from raising pigs in close proximity to their living space. Kent’s research shows that when, in the late nineteenth century, missionaries finally reconciled themselves to the low caste of their converts,

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54 Kent, *Converting Women*.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 207.

56 Mateer *Native Life in Travancore*, London: W. H. Allen, 1883, cited in Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 207.

57 On the particular relationship between handloom weaving and the formation of an Indian middle-class taste, there is an extensive literature, but see Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters. Dress and Identity in India*, London: Hurst and Company, 1996. Tarlo also discusses the turn to synthetics.

in contrast to far more prestigious upper-caste conversions they had worked for, they discovered new challenges to their notions of domesticity. Upper-caste households had been found wanting because they were too confining, unhygienic as well as amoral in their sequestering of women in *purdah* and *zenanas*. Lower-caste households posed quite the opposite problems of unsuitability. They were just too porous, lacking proper boundaries between inside and outside the home.<sup>58</sup> Reports frequently mention the disruption to missionary teachers in such homes—apart from crying babies, the presence of animals is a frequent candidate for censure. As part of the effort to bring techniques of “home management” into Indian homes, model homes were built “according to Western standards of privacy, hygiene and order, with separate rooms for different functions and human inhabitants separated from nonhuman inhabitants.”<sup>59</sup>

I have referred in this paper, and extensively elsewhere,<sup>60</sup> to the contemporary reformist manuals authored by male clerics, propounding the virtues of companionate marriage, extolling the virtues of maternal love as a model of unselfishness, and generally opposing superstitious older ways of ritually marking the life cycle. These texts are written in a very characteristic style: rich in literary allusions taken from Tamil classics, peppered with aphorisms and popular proverbs. All these thematic and stylistic devices were pioneered by Christian missions. One example in particular stands out for my purposes from Kent’s account—a tract written by Anna Saththianadhan, a Tamil woman who belonged to the fourth generation of Indian converts.<sup>61</sup> Saththianadhan’s home, unlike the “chaos” of lower-caste homes, is described with approval by European visitors as having “tokens of refinement” such as chairs, sofas and tables, and offering “quiet comfort and a place of welcome for friends.”<sup>62</sup> In 1862, Saththianadhan wrote *Nalla Tāy*, possibly the first mothering manual written in south India.<sup>63</sup> But what is striking for present purposes is that *Nalla Tāy* set the definitive precedent for blending Tamil traditions of both literary and the popular, with new messages of childrearing. Some of the more arresting proverbs employed by Saththianadhan have found their way into the reformist manuals of today.

The contrast between these extensive interventions into people’s daily lives and the colonial state’s attitude to “native life” could not be more striking. To the chagrin of missionaries, District collectors actively participated in temple

58 Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 158.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

60 Kalpana Ram, “Rationalism, cultural nationalism and the reform of body politics”; Ram, “Maternity and the story of enlightenment in the colonies”; Ram, *Fertile Disorder*.

61 Kent, *Converting Women*, pp. 145–49.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 185.

63 Annal Saththianadhan, *Nalla Tāy* (The Good Mother), 1862, Madras: Christian Literature Society for India, 1921, cited in Kent, *Converting Women*, pp. 145–47.

festivals like any Hindu raja, making sure they collected temple taxes at the same time.<sup>64</sup> When the state *did* intervene in gender relations, over such matters as *sati* or widow immolation, it did so not in the name of European norms, but in the name of upholding the true scriptural tradition of the Hindus, located by orientalist scholars in Sanskrit classical texts.<sup>65</sup> In other words, the intervention of the state took the form described by Edward Said—that of restoring to natives their own tradition based on a study of “a lost, past classical Oriental grandeur.”<sup>66</sup> Missions were therefore at odds with the state, and until 1813, the East India Company actively forbade missions from preaching in the regions where it did business “out of fear that they would destabilize the region.”<sup>67</sup> Gauri Viswanathan’s work on conversion reveals further compromises on the part of the state.<sup>68</sup> When asked by converts or their families to adjudicate on the severed or strained ties between the Christian convert and their community, British court rulings tended to support the latter—ostensibly to protect the inheritance rights of the convert, but driven more by political apprehension. They feared introducing instabilities into what were taken to be the fixed and stable religious identities of Hindu and Muslim.<sup>69</sup>

By 1835 the orientation of the colonial state had shifted.<sup>70</sup> The “Anglicists,” led by Thomas Macaulay, initiated an era of state-sponsored Western education in order to create Indians who would be “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect”—a remark of Macaulay’s that is widely quoted in India.<sup>71</sup> But this state project was limited to the Indian elite. The zeal to take Christ and clinic to zones of backwardness—to the far-flung corners of the Indian Empire—the forbidden space of zenanas in town and city as well as the ‘wild’ frontiers of the Afghan border” remained a hallmark of missions, while these remained spaces that “the colonial state in the first half of the nineteenth century had itself feared to tread.”<sup>72</sup>

The genealogy I am arguing for was not only inherited by specific projects that I found still underway in rural Tamil Nadu, but also enabled the ease with

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64 Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 39.

65 Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998; Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, p. 78.

66 Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Penguin, 1978, p. 79.

67 Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 23.

68 Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

70 Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons. The Western Education of Colonial India*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007; Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*.

71 T.B. Macaulay, “Minute by the Honorable T.B Macaulay, 2nd February 1835,” in *Bureau of Education, Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781–1839)*, ed. H. Sharp, Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1920, reprint, Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965, pp. 107–17.

72 Sandhya Shetty, “(Dis)Locating gender space and medical discourse in colonial India,” in *Eroticism and Containment. Notes from the Flood Plain*, ed. Carol Siegel and Ann Kibbey, New York and London: New York University Press, 1994, pp. 188–232, p. 193.

which clerics could substitute a religious terminology for a secular one, and the ready mingling of clerical and other kinds of secular personnel in development programmes. The ground work for such ease and movement was laid in the nineteenth century.

It remains only to remark on one last but important genealogical legacy. In a stimulating paper on colonial missions in south India, Jane Haggis argued that the conservatism of the gender model preached by Christian missionaries was contradicted by the activism required of missionary wives and the single educated women who came to India during the late nineteenth century as “lady missionaries.”<sup>73</sup> There were implications for Indian women as well. The “mission of sisterhood” sought to reach upper-caste Hindu women as prestigious converts, but relied on the efforts and activism of lower-caste women newly trained as Bible women. Not only were these women increasingly trained in a professionalising manner, but to carry out their duties required of them a “range of public activities calling for considerable stamina and self-confidence.”<sup>74</sup>

The young women in today’s development programs can be seen as the direct descendants of Bible women. Both groups belong to the same region of south India, known in the colonial period as Travancore. But the more fundamental continuity is in the pattern of female agency which is unleashed in the process of bringing enlightenment to others. In both cases, such agency exceeds anything envisaged by the discourse on which they rely. The young women I write about come from communities that were Catholic in the sixteenth century. They are neither recent converts, nor professionals conveying a religious discourse. Yet the religious experience of conversion is pertinent, I would suggest, in illuminating their experience. But a further question arises at this point. Which model of conversion are we to utilise? Those who, like Kent, have examined colonial mission experiences in detail, draw a sharp distinction between the psychological “interiorist” model of conversion as an “intense, one-on-one encounter between the self and God,”<sup>75</sup> and the situation that pertains in the colonies. Enmeshed in the unequal power relations between themselves and their converts, she argues, missionaries could not bring themselves to credit their converts with the “capacity for interiority that is a necessary condition for an inner, private experience of conversion.”<sup>76</sup> Faced instead with mass conversions that followed the lines of group identity (caste, family, village), missionaries fell back on requiring converts to attest to their transformation “through far-reaching changes in their daily lives and everyday practices.”<sup>77</sup>

73 Jane Haggis, “‘Good wives and mothers’ or ‘dedicated workers’? Contradictions of domesticity in the ‘mission of sisterhood,’ Travancore, South India,” in *Maternities and Modernities. Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 81–113.

74 Haggis, “‘Good wives and mothers’ or ‘dedicated workers’?” p. 93.

75 Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 5.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

77 *Ibid.*

My material suggests that such distinctions are blurred, perhaps even unnecessary in the first place. Development agendas are very much a matter of bringing “far-reaching changes to people’s daily lives and everyday practices.” Yet the young women speak an existential language that is very close to that of religious conversion. They testify to a sharp break in their lives, one whereby their former self appears constrained, oppressed, bound by social restrictions; while the new self delights in an expansive opening to the world. If the religious phenomenologists such as Heidegger and James were indeed describing an interiority that remains entirely locked inside the subject, such close parallels would not be possible. But the gulf between the two versions may not be so vast as it appears, as long as we recall that religious conversion, however “private” it may seem to the outsider, is in experience the opening up of a new and intense relationship between self and divine Other, and not an event locked within the isolated subjectivity of the Cartesian cogito. Whether the newfound and expansive sense of agency stems from an oppressed group’s experience of a profoundly social transformation of daily existence, or from a new relationship with God, both allow the subject to re-experience the “givenness” of social life as something that can be changed and altered.

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## 6. “*Oi Meri Bilong Wok*” (Hard-working Women): Women, Work and Domesticity in Papua New Guinea

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### ***Mi Meri Bilong Wok* (I’m a hard-working woman)**

In 2007 I spent just over six months living in Basbi, a hamlet in the larger village of Hahalis on Buka Island.<sup>1</sup> During this time I recorded oral histories and undertook fieldwork with the Halia- and Haku-speaking peoples of Buka. Their villages stretch along the north-eastern coast of Buka Island which is around 55 kilometres (34 miles) in length and at its widest 17 kilometres (10.5 miles). It is the second largest island of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, located just to the north of the main island and separated from it by a narrow, but deep passage. Bougainville, formerly known as North Solomons, is now an autonomous region of Papua New Guinea (PNG), attaining this status after a prolonged period of secessionist conflict through the late 1980s and into the 1990s commonly referred to as “the Crisis.” While the work of peace-building and reconciliation remains ongoing, the ordinary rhythms of everyday life in Bougainville had, by the early 2000s, returned. Much of my time in the village was spent with women as they worked—in their kitchens and in their gardens.

The women of Halia and Haku are hard workers; nothing stops their daily labour. Rain or shine they visit their gardens. The women may plant or harvest, they may just weed; but there is always work to be done. Invariably something will be carried back for the afternoon and evening meal. A makeshift *teil* or *woksak* (a carry basket) to transport garden foods home will be quickly woven from the leaves of nearby coconut palms, and strung to their backs with a strong, surprisingly soft cord made from the beaten bark fibre of a banana tree. Women lucky enough to own a wheelbarrow bring it along to carry their tools there and garden produce back. Once home again they must fetch water, do laundry,

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1 Research for this chapter was drawn from the following archives: National Archives of Australia: A518 (A518/1), P213/3/2, Native Labour—Papua and New Guinea—Employment of Native Women; Papua New Guinea Archives: 496/ARC6A917/BN7, and Papua New Guinea Archives: 69/14-1-34/1285, Social Welfare and Advancement of Native Women Policy.



collect firewood, prepare the lunch and evening meals. And though their unemployed (or intermittently employed) husbands might pitch in, women are also generally responsible for the care of children.

Along the east and north coast of Buka Island, limestone cliffs descend steeply to the beach. Before the 1950s, and in some areas the 1960s, villages on the east coast of Buka Island were largely found on the beach and women's gardens were planted close by, directly above the villages along the cliffs. By the 1950s the Halia and Haku were being encouraged by the colonial administration to move their villages to the top of the cliff, closer to the new path (later a *karanas* gravel highway) the administration was in the process of clearing.<sup>2</sup> It was common practice across the territories for patrol officers to put pressure on villagers to relocate and reorganise the village within clearly defined, mapable boundaries. They were also often encouraged to shift or relocate the village so that it was near to a road that the local *kiap* (colonial patrol officer) regularly checked was being kept clean and clear. Defined residential clusters along cleared paths made the job of patrolling more convenient for government officers.<sup>3</sup>

On Buka Island by the time villages were being relocated from the beach tops to the cliff tops, the introduction of indigenous-managed cash cropping had begun in earnest. Coconut plantations had been established on land just the other side of the new road. As a result, food gardens got pushed further and further inland to their present position in the bush, ranging some 1.5 to 5 kilometres (0.9 to 3.1 miles) inland. This has meant a much further walk for a woman carrying her family's food and firewood back home. It has also meant a daily climb up and down the steep limestone cliffs, with women clutching multiple buckets and empty plastic bottles in order to fetch water from the main water source on the island—the *kukubui* (fresh water springs) along the beach.

Much has changed over the last hundred years or so, and the lives of contemporary Halia women do not very closely resemble those of their great grandmothers whose husbands were among the first to travel over to plantations in Rabaul, returning at the end of their contracts with their *bokis kontrakt* (labourer's case) packed with *rami* (a square piece of material used as clothing), an iron pot, and some beads.<sup>4</sup> Now axes and knives, rice and noodles, school fees, imported second-hand clothes, even mobile phones, are part of everyday life. Yet many of the women I spoke with tendered to me the simple routine of daily labour, and especially their work in the garden, as evidence that not so much had changed at all.

2 Romeo Tohiana, "The Hahalis Welfare Society of Buka, North Solomons Province: its establishment, subsequent development and eventual decline, 1960–1980," Hons. thesis, Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea, 1982, p. 5.

3 C.D. Rowley, *The New Guinea Villager*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1965, pp. 33–34; and Edward P. Wolfers, *Race Relations and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea*, Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Co., 1975, p. 5.

4 Tohiana, "The Hahalis Welfare Society of Buka," p. 27.

When Grace, my host-mother during my stay, helped me to plant a small (token) taro garden in an allotted area of her own garden land, we used cuttings she had sourced. Grace told me it was the same taro her ancestors had planted—the same plant and indeed the very same shoot that went back into the ground. The *stik taro* (the stem cutting of the taro plant) was a tangible connection between Grace and her ancestors, as was our labour.

When I went with women to the gardens during my stay I was slowly introduced to a variety of small things that had to be done each time a woman visited the gardens. I was told I must periodically call out in a small wordless holler while I worked so that other women working would hear me and know I was in the gardens. I had to build a small fire before I started work so that others—nearby in their gardens, or even back in the village—would see the smoke and know I was hard at work. And as we walked back home, tired from gardening, I would be reminded to find a flower or bright leaf from the bush by the side of the path and stick it in my hair so that on arrival back in the village there would be no confusion as to where I had been. I was told these were things that had been done by Halia women since *bipo tru* (long ago).<sup>5</sup> This was *kastom* (custom). A good Halia woman is, and always has been, industrious. These small habits help signal to others your worth, the women explained. They show everyone that you are "*meri bilong wok*" (a hard-working woman).

## Devaluing but intensifying women's work

Buka women's significant investment and pride in being recognised as hard-working women indicates the significant value they place on their labour. This is in contrast to the way in which indigenous women's work in the Pacific has often been ignored or devalued by outside observers. Certainly during the early stages of colonialism in the Pacific, Europeans who first came into contact with indigenous women failed to read women's work for what it might tell them of women's crucial, active role within traditional cultural life. Instead women's role in subsistence, specifically the hard, physical labour this involved, was seen as the source of their "low status." In colonial Papua and New Guinea (PNG), missionary and administration attempts to "uplift the native woman," to improve her status, were aimed at transforming women's work in the village. They hoped to "lighten women's load" through a refocusing of indigenous women's labour practice around family and the home, with home envisaged as a discrete physical space marked by the boundaries of a well-kept house and garden (though not food gardens), and family as a nuclear unit comprised of

5 In this passage I have referred to Halia women. The village in which I resided during my stay was a Halia village. Though there are differences in language and custom between the two groups, my description of work in the garden and of the value women place on this work holds for the women of Haku also.

mother, father and children. The indigenous woman would be remade as an ideal “modern” mother and wife. But despite colonial programs of reform, Papua New Guinean women today remain the primary subsistence agriculturalists in the village. In the pre-colonial gendered division of labour in most indigenous societies in Papua and New Guinea, women had been responsible for garden work, the collection of firewood and water, and the care of children. Women have continued to undertake this work, even as they have assumed responsibility for new domestic duties such as sewing, laundry, and general “housekeeping,” and taken on extra work that might bring in a little cash, such as market gardening and cash cropping.

It is a clear paradox of the colonial “civilising project” in Papua and New Guinea that, even as colonial officials regarded the heavy work involved in subsistence as the source of indigenous women’s low status, the administration simultaneously introduced a range of policies and programs that effectively added to and intensified women’s work. This occurred as a result of colonial policies of land and labour that first excluded, and then later marginalised women from the waged labour and commodity sector; by the relocation of villages such that the distances to be travelled by women to gardens and water sources significantly increased; and even through implementation of biomedical projects of state and church that discouraged customary indigenous family-planning measures such as birth spacing, sexual abstinence (especially postpartum) and indigenous contraceptives, a factor in the significantly increasing population.

Within this paper I use a combination of methodologies, drawing on the colonial archives—government documents, correspondence and reports—in both primary and secondary sources and placing these alongside observations from fieldwork, and the life histories shared with me in interviews with women in Buka. The blending of historical and ethnographic approaches allows not only an outline of colonial intention, policy and practice, but also gives a sense of the practical and embodied consequences of these for village women. Buka women have always regarded themselves as productive, active contributors of labour, ensuring the basic subsistence of the family. And as the nature of what constituted “work” changed through the colonial period, they have actively sought to participate in this change, taking on a variety of new forms of labour including cash cropping and the marketing of garden goods, as well as seeking training and educational opportunities that might lead in the future to paid employment. Most did this *as mothers*—their labour undertaken to ensure the basic subsistence needs of their family were met. Setting their testimonies against the colonial archives reveals a number of important tensions and disjunctions, especially in relation to the value placed on women’s work. Where outsiders and especially colonial officials have continued to devalue work done by women as “subsistence,” “domestic” or “reproductive,” Buka women have clearly valued both their subsistence and commodity labour as productive.

Anne Dickson-Waiko has argued that indigenous women's exclusion from colonial society during the period of state formation, in tandem with customary gender roles meant women through the colonial period and into the present have been positioned as somehow present in and yet existing outside of the modern state.<sup>6</sup> To the extent they have been brought within the colonial and now post-colonial state this has been,

as mothers rather than as citizens with the same rights as male citizens... while citizenship is supposedly an individual's relationship with the state, Papua New Guinean women have great difficulty in claiming rights as individual citizens. They enter the political domain as sexed beings and this construction interferes with and even sabotages their claims for equal citizenship.<sup>7</sup>

The citizen-mother, a very familiar model of female citizenship, is one rarely recognised as an equal citizen. Rather, as Carole Pateman argued in her classic though now much critiqued work on the gendering of citizenship, in traditional European understandings of the state men have been imagined as producers (in that they must work to "create" or "contract" both cultural and political relationships with one another) and are thus exemplary citizens able to exercise and access *political* rights. Women, on the other hand, are imagined as reproducers and as such hold subordinate status, remaining bound within the domestic or private sphere; their relationship to the state always mediated through their relationships with men (in their role as mothers and wives).<sup>8</sup> Pateman's work recognised women's exclusion from full citizenship based on a clear division between public and private.

This is a division that has been labelled a theoretical fiction even for Europe and one that does not apply tidily (and sometimes not at all) outside of non-Western contexts.<sup>9</sup> In PNG while there was a clear sexual division of labour prior to colonial contact, customary gender roles were understood as complementary, and certainly were not easily categorised within clearly distinguished "domestic" or "public" domains.<sup>10</sup> Yet traditional gender relations and roles were affected by

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6 Anne Dickson-Waiko, "Women, individual human rights, community rights: tensions within the Papua New Guinea state," in *Women's Rights and Human Rights; International Historical Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Grimshaw, Katie Holmes and Marilyn Lake, Basingstoke, Hampshire Palgrave, 2001, pp. 49–70, pp. 50–55.

7 Anne Dickson-Waiko, "The missing rib: mobilizing church women for change in Papua New Guinea," *Oceania* 74(1&2) (2003): 98–119, p. 102.

8 Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Cambridge: Polity, 1988.

9 For a good overview of literature assessing and critiquing the distinction, see Joan B. Landes, "Further thoughts on the public/private distinction," *Journal of Women's History* 15(2) (2003): 28–39.

10 Anne Dickson-Waiko, "Colonial enclaves and domestic spaces in British New Guinea," in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, ed. Kate Darian Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007, pp. 205–30, p. 212; Marilyn Strathern, *Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

colonialism, not least through the colonisers' promotion of an ideal of Victorian "separate spheres," and the imposition of the colonial (and equally the post-colonial) state and with this the emergence of new colonial "political" domains.

Dickson-Waiko has identified the emergence of colonial public and domestic domains along spatial lines in the early colonial period.<sup>11</sup> She persuasively argued that the Papuan administration's early protectionist policies restricting women to the village while recruiting men to plantation work, and other waged work in colonial homes and the administration created a new labour hierarchy in which indigenous men's paid labour undertaken in the public colonial domain was regarded as more important than subsistence agriculture in village gardens. This led to a gendering of colonial space such that the village came to be classed as feminised domestic or "private" space. This was a racialised as well as gendered distinction between the village as a domestic space, and colonial urban townships as the public domain, with the urban/rural divide mirroring a Eurocentric public/private split and, I would add intersecting with a colonial dichotomy of modernity/tradition.<sup>12</sup>

Indigenous women's work was marked as "domestic," but this was a "domesticity" of a different nature to that envisaged within the Victorian model of separate spheres. Victorian notions of femininity were characterised by an ideal of middle-class womanhood in which the labour of women was confined to the home (defined physically and relationally) and thus rendered invisible and often characterised in terms of its moral and religious value; women were "angels in the home."<sup>13</sup> Village women's work in the gardens was heavy physical labour, and undertaken outside of the home, and yet through the colonial classification of the village as "domestic" and as such a domain not recognised as either public or political allowed colonial agents to regard the subsistence work of indigenous women as secondary to the labour of indigenous men. Men were recognised as active economic agents, but women's work could be ignored.

In this paper I extend on Dickson-Waiko's thesis, to argue that in the post-war period work done by women in the village—in the gardens, on plantations—was undertaken in their role *as mothers*. It was thus devalued and ultimately dismissed by outsiders and colonial officials as domestic or reproductive, even when it was work that generated income and engaged women in market-based exchange. I further take my cue from Dickson-Waiko in her focus on the policies of the colonial state. Much has been written about the attempts of colonial missionaries to instill in Papua New Guinean women an ideal of domesticity,

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11 Dickson-Waiko, "Colonial enclaves and domestic spaces in British New Guinea," p. 216.

12 Ibid., pp. 216–17.

13 Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

to introduce them to the Victorian "cult of domesticity."<sup>14</sup> This paper, while recognising mission influence, argues that the policies and programs of the colonial state were significant, fundamental even, in reshaping the domestic life of village women.

## Early colonial policy regarding indigenous women

Though always crucial within the Australian colonial project, in the early colonial period Papua New Guinean women were effectively sidelined by the colonial administration. Indigenous men were given colonial positions of authority in the villages (as *luluai* and *tultuls* in New Guinea and village constables in Papua). Men were recruited to the native constabulary and employed as indentured labourers on plantations. And men, not women, were brought into colonial homes as domestic servants (*hausbois* not *hausmeris*).<sup>15</sup> Despite the efforts of some missions to provide for the education of girls, it was primarily men who were the beneficiaries of the very limited educational opportunities provided by the missions in the two colonies before World War II.

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14 Diane Langmore, "Object lesson of a civilised, Christian home," in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 84–94; Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives: Papua 1874–1914*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989; Martha Macintyre, "Better homes and gardens," in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 156–69; Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (eds), *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

15 During the early period of colonial rule in the territories there were some differences in the labour legislation of Papua and New Guinea, which meant there were higher numbers of women working as domestics in New Guinea (although the overall figure was still low). However, this did not continue for long once New Guinea became a mandated territory after World War I. Restrictions were placed on the recruitment of single indigenous women and only married indigenous women were allowed to work as domestic servants under contract. Only a married European woman in possession of a special permit could employ an unmarried indigenous woman. This form of restriction continued even under the early Labour Ordinances of the post-war period. Labour restrictions on employing indigenous women were at least partly justified by the administration as an attempt to "protect" indigenous women from the unwanted attentions of European men. Many British African colonies had similar labour restrictions and as a result there was a predominantly male domestic work force, though this was not necessarily the case across all of the South Pacific. In Papua and New Guinea, and other Pacific colonies such as Vanuatu, restrictions against the employment of women as domestic servants were eased after World War II with the result that an increasing number of women were employed as *hausmeris* from the 1950s. See Native Labour—Papua and New Guinea—Employment of Native Women, National Archives of Australia, A518 (A518/1), P213/3/2. For the case of Vanuatu, see Margaret Rodman, Daniela Kraemer, Lissant Bolton and Jean Tarisesei (eds), *House-Girls Remember: Domestic Workers in Vanuatu*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007. For British colonies in Africa see Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Body politics: sexuality, gender, and domestic service in Zambia," *Journal of Women's History* 2(1) (1990): 120–42; and Deborah Gaitskell, "Housewives, maids or mothers: some contradictions of domesticity for Christian women in Johannesburg, 1903–1939," *The Journal of African History* 24(2) (1983): 241–56.



Colonial observers—early European explorers, colonial officers, planters, settlers, travellers, missionaries and anthropologists—often assumed indigenous women to be lacking responsiveness, and ill-equipped to adapt to modern ideas and change. Sir John Hubert Murray, Lieutenant Governor of Papua from 1908 to 1940, for example, expressed clear pessimism regarding women’s ability to modernise when writing about the situation of women in Papua in 1923:

I do not think that much can be done for the women in the villages, as distinct from the men. In the larger villages it may be possible to give some of the women simple instruction in nursing (especially in the case of childbirth) and in the care of children, and it may also be possible to teach them some industry which they can carry on in their homes and which may bring a quick return—e.g. lacemaking; this will probably relieve them from some of their heavier tasks and may improve their position generally, but it is a method which can only be employed occasionally and under exceptional circumstances.<sup>16</sup>

The assumption of “natural female conservatism” remained a fundamental feature of colonial discourse, with indigenous women being described by female welfare officers as the “bulwarks of village conservatism” into the late 1950s.<sup>17</sup> And this assumption meant indigenous women were consistently positioned by the colonial administration as both a brake to, and remedy for, rapid change in the village context.

The marginalisation of indigenous women from colonial society should thus not be understood as having occurred because the administration simply ignored women, but rather because it actively sought to “lock” them in the village. As the key to assuring continued village settlement, women were prohibited from entering into indentured labour contracts and discouraged from leaving the village to accompany their husbands to plantations. Murray explained the prohibition on the basis that if women were to be employed on plantations then, “the native villages might be broken up, social life decay, the men might not return.”<sup>18</sup> If women remained in the village, “the men may drift away, but they will come back.”<sup>19</sup> Early colonial administrators in Papua and New Guinea did not want to see the indigenous population turned from “a race of peasant proprietors” into “a landless proletariat, entirely dependent on plantations for

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16 Sir Hubert Murray in response to a query regarding women’s position in Papua from Anna Bugge-Wicksell (the sole female member of the League of Nation’s Permanent Mandates), “Situation of women, 1922–23,” quoted in Susan Gardner, “Sir Paul and the Sleeping Beauty, or: some reflections on women, ‘development,’ and administration in Hasluck’s *A Time for Building*,” *Research in Melanesia* (December 1976): 31–32, p. 31.

17 See for example Lois Niall, “The education of native women as an aspect of cultural assimilation,” Paper presented at the Camilla Wedgwood Memorial Lecture and Seminar, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 1959, p. 85.

18 J.P.H. Murray, *Papua of Today*, London: P.S. King and Son, 1925, p. 114.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 114.



their livelihood."<sup>20</sup> While Murray and later colonial officers explained their focus on village preservation as a humane concern for indigenous welfare, Peter Fitzpatrick has convincingly argued that this was motivated primarily by colonial fears regarding migration to urban centres and the risks this posed for disruptive class organisation.<sup>21</sup> Given the small number of Australian colonial staff and the limited resources allocated to them, the administration could not afford to see village structures break down.

Preserving "the village" also had the effect of keeping the wages of indentured labourers low. In Papua and New Guinea the wages of indentured labourers—invariably recruited from outside the local area, so migrant labourers—were reckoned on the basis that they were single men and thus designed to cover (just barely) the basic subsistence of a single male. As Azeem Amarshi and Peter Fitzpatrick have both argued, women's labour in the villages effectively subsidised the plantation, not simply through subsistence labour in gardens but also the collection of firewood and water, preparation of foods, and their caring for and raising children.<sup>22</sup> This occurred in two ways. First the provision of homes and a subsistence base allowed capitalist plantations to pay male labourers an absolute minimum wage. Additionally women's labour in the village provided what was essentially a social security system for displaced workers and the elderly. Women bore the extra labour load men's absence implied, and often reluctantly took on work traditionally considered to be men's subsistence work (clearing land, building fences, building houses, and so on) as well as, in some instances, men's customary obligations.<sup>23</sup>

With wages for indentured labourers frozen from the turn of the century until after World War II, very little to no capital accumulation by plantation labourers

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20 J.P.H. Murray, *Review of the Australian Administration in Papua from 1907 to 1920*, Port Moresby: Government Printer, ca. 1920, p. 32. See also James Griffin, Hank Nelson and Stewart Firth (eds), *Papua New Guinea: A Political History*, Richmond, Vic.: Heinemann Educational Australia, 1979, p. 26. Later officials were equally adamant. See Paul Hasluck's discussion of this as a priority of Government (Hasluck was Minister for Territories, 1951 to 1963) in Paul Hasluck, *A Time for Building*, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1976, p. 229.

21 Peter Fitzpatrick, *Law and State in Papua New Guinea*, Law, State, and Society Series, London, New York: Academic Press, 1980, p. 2. See, for example, Paul Hasluck's minutes from 1956 regarding native labour policy in his memoir *A Time for Building*. "The special concern of the Government over the risk of building up a 'landless proletariat' and over the congregation of 'foreign' natives on the outskirts of the larger towns, has been made clear on several occasions and action has been taken to try to reduce both risks." Hasluck, *A Time for Building*, p. 229.

22 Azeem Amarshi, "The plantation system," in *Development and Dependency: The Political Economy of Papua New Guinea*, ed. Azeem Amarshi, Kenneth Good and Rex Mortimer, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 25–45, p. 30; Fitzpatrick, *Law and State in Papua New Guinea*, pp. 1–27. See also Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1970; Carmen Diana Deere, "Rural women's subsistence production in the capitalist periphery," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 8(1) (1976): 9–17. Boserup has shown that this was also the case across Africa, where again male workers' wages were kept at a level insufficient to provide for the worker's family.

23 Jennifer J. Martins, "Women and underdevelopment in rural Papua New Guinea," Hons. thesis, Adelaide: Flinders University, 1977, pp. 33–34.

occurred during this period. An indigenous women saw very little in return for her husband's absence: perhaps a calico *rami* (cloth used for clothing), an iron pot, or some beads brought back at the end of her husband's contract. Although these were desirable consumer goods and no doubt brought some prestige for the women who possessed them, their introduction effectively devalued local handicraft skills traditionally associated with women, for example calico displaced *tapa* cloth (paper bark cloth often with intricate design work generally made by women) and iron pots replaced clay pottery.<sup>24</sup> A telling example of the gendered impact of introduced commodities is the loss of pot-making skills—and with this a measure of social and economic status—among Motuan women as a result of the decline of the *Hiri*. The *Hiri* was a regional trade network involving the exchange of clay pots (made and owned by women) for foodstuffs, that came to an end once Motuan men entered into waged labour and the reliance on European goods became clearly established (by around the 1930s). Pot making had provided Motuan women with a certain social and economic status, but also—and not insignificantly—creative satisfaction. When the *Hiri* died out Motuan women stopped making pots, leading to the loss of this skill-set among village women almost within a generation.<sup>25</sup>

## Post-war “welfare and development”: The indigenous man as “peasant farmer”

After the Second World War those within the administration and the Australian Government believed economic development in the territories should take place through indigenous agricultural enterprise.<sup>26</sup> Huntley Wright has described the

24 S. Bailey, “The education of women in Papua New Guinea: the development of the process of female role definition in the central district since 1873,” B.A. (Honours) thesis, Armidale, University of New England, 1972, cited in Penny Palmer, *Girls in High School in Papua New Guinea: Problems of the Past, Present and Future*, ERU Research Report No. 23. Port Moresby: Educational Research Unit, University of Papua New Guinea, 1978, p. 17.

25 The *Hiri* was an important regional trading network involving the Motu-speaking peoples of Papua and the Kerema peoples of the Gulf. Before colonisation, the *Hiri* had been involved in an annual trade expedition in which Motuan men—in significant numbers—left their villages and undertook a long and often dangerous voyage to sail west to the Gulf in order to exchange clay pots made by Motuan women for vital supplies of sago and other foodstuffs. By the 1930s, however, the numbers of men needed to stage a *Hiri* expedition were no longer available because of men's entry into the waged labour market. Pot making had been a significant undertaking for women; the scale of the industry evident from estimates that each annual *Hiri* involved trade of somewhere between 20–30,000 clay pots (exchanged for around 150 tons of sago). Women's pot-making skills were quickly lost. Cyril Belshaw, in the 1950s, observed that only one woman in Hanuabada continued to make clay pots with any regularity. In 2007, when I did fieldwork in Hanuabada, none of the women I spoke to had ever made or knew how to make a pot. See Jemima Mowbray, “No more pots, no more tattoos: Motuan women, cultural identity, and the loss of the *hiri*,” unpublished paper presented at Oceanic Passages: Colonialism and its Aftermath, Hobart: University of Tasmania, 23–25 June, 2010.

26 Kim Godbold, “Didiman: Australian agricultural extension officers in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, 1945–1975,” Ph.D. thesis, Queensland: University of Technology, 2010, pp. 49–81. See also Ian Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship, Papua New Guinea 1945–75*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1980, p. 31.

general reform of Australia's colonial policy in the immediate post-war period—Administrator J.K. Murray and Labor Minister for External Territories Eddie Wards announced a "new deal"—and more specifically the administration's efforts at promoting the "peasant farmer," as a reconciling of Australia's strategic interests in colonial development with the administration's stated concern for indigenous welfare.<sup>27</sup> Local Government Councils introduced in 1949 were intended, argued Wright, primarily as tools of area administration able to exert "close and continuous control" over local production. The councils provided the administration with a local institution through which they could oversee local economic activity and encourage an increase in the intensity of indigenous labour. The administration's management of labour and land via councils would work in tandem with village co-operatives and a new program of agricultural extension to transform a largely subsistence economy into a commercial one.<sup>28</sup> Agricultural extension officers (or *didimen*) oversaw the program run by the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries (DASF). Providing training in "scientific agricultural methods," they aimed to encourage and extend village-based cash cropping so that village plantations might be run commercially. It was assumed indigenous men would provide the labour in the drive towards the colonies' economic development.

The administration was clear on the importance of separating out subsistence agriculture from commercial agriculture: you could not simply graft cash cropping onto existing subsistence practice. It was only through creating a "new sphere" of production that indigenous farmers would accept and implement the ideas and advice of extension officers.<sup>29</sup> Their plan for indigenous development relied then on a gendered division of labour in which indigenous men managed village plantations and the production of economic commodities, and indigenous women would continue to provide the labour for basic subsistence for the household.

When indentured labour contracts were abolished after the war and the administration framed policy around the necessity of strengthening and

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27 Huntley Wright, "Economic or political development: the evolution of 'native' local government policy in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, 1945–1963," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 48(2) (2002): 193–209. And see Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship*, p. 31.

28 This was, Wright argues, in accordance with an agrarian doctrine of development. Wright described an agrarian doctrine of development as entailing "plans for strengthening that attachment [to customary landholdings] whilst changing the terms of occupancy." This involved transforming subsistence agriculture to a situation of individualised small holdings and the intensified (agricultural) economic activity of the small holder primarily via cash cropping. See Wright, "Economic or political development," pp. 200–02. See also Wright, "Protecting the national interest: the Labor Government and the reform of Australia's colonial policy, 1942–1945," *Journal of Labor History* 82 (2002): 65–80, pp. 74–76. For a general description of plans for the transformation of a subsistence economy to an agricultural commercial one, see Diana Howlett, *Papua New Guinea: Geography and Change*, revised, expanded, metricated ed., Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1973, p. 1.

29 Wright, "Economic or political development," p. 201.

developing indigenous agricultural production, this was done on the understanding that it was utopian to think peasant subsistence could provide anything but a primitive standard of living. David Fenbury, described by Wright as the architect of the new local government policy and a key driver of post-war welfare and development policy, was clear on this point, “The ideal of the sturdy peasant proprietor, farming his piece of tribal land...is a rosy dream incapable of being realized.”<sup>30</sup>

Wright described the administration’s end goal as being the individualisation of smallholdings geared towards eventual commercial production.<sup>31</sup> While indigenous men were being trained to cultivate commercial cash crops, it was expected that women would again continue to provide a subsistence base for families that would subsidise this stage of economic development. The administration hoped that concerted attention towards promoting “economic advance” would help eventually to free women from subsistence work. Money obtained from cash cropping, or men’s involvement in waged labour, could be used to purchase introduced food and to construct permanent housing. The newly established Local Councils were also expected to play their part, helping to build water supply facilities and other infrastructure in the villages.<sup>32</sup> This was the long-range plan for women. Through indigenous economic development women’s subsistence burden would eventually be eased, allowing her to re-focus her energies on her (nuclear) family and the home.<sup>33</sup>

This raises the continuing inconsistency, or paradox, of colonial policy and practice: while the development priorities of the administration and those of colonial capitalism consistently required women to shoulder the greater part of subsistence labour in the territories, they nonetheless regarded women’s labour as a problem, if not *the* problem, to be addressed in order to raise indigenous women’s status.<sup>34</sup> When the administration decided after World War II to directly

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30 David Fenbury, “It could happen in New Guinea,” *South Pacific* 1(10) (1947): 5. As Wright explains, Fenbury here was drawing the distinction between a peasant subsistence farmer and a peasant “farmer” developing his capacity for agricultural commercial production so that he might eventually develop land holdings as plantations that would enable a profitable trade in agricultural commodities. See Wright, “Economic or political development,” p. 197.

31 Wright, “Economic or political development,” p. 201.

32 Water tanks were a priority for Councils in the early period of their introduction. The administration felt that a successful supply of water tanks to villages in Buka would act as “a tangible sign” for villagers of what a Council could accomplish. Bougainville District Annual Report, Bougainville District 1961/62, p. 16, Papua New Guinea Archives: 496/ARC6A917/BN7.

33 See for example the Australian Commission on Higher Education in Papua and New Guinea; and George Currie, *Report of the Commission on Higher Education in Papua and New Guinea*, Canberra: The Commission, 1964, p. 98. Currie in his report cited *The Ashby Report* (a document similar to Currie’s own report produced for colonial Nigeria in 1959) which explained the need for greater domestic science training on the basis that as (male) farmers became more “scientific” in their approach to the land, the ensuing development would allow and require women to become “more scientific in their approach to their homes and children.” George Currie, *Report of the Commission on Higher Education in Papua and New Guinea*, p. 98.

34 See for example comments from the Administrator Captain Barton regarding women’s situation in the British New Guinea Annual Report of 1903: “Until the male natives take a larger share of the work in the

provide welfare for indigenous women—in the form of education and health services—this engagement was premised on both a recognition and hoped-for transformation of women's role as mother and wife. Women were to be shifted into a domestic role rather than that of agricultural producer. Thus colonial interventions were focused on regulating and managing indigenous women's behaviours and practices within the appropriately feminine, "domestic" sphere of the home and the family.

In an early essay on culture contact written between the wars, William Groves, later Director of the Department of Education, argued that a good "native education" should include efforts to "make life less arduous and less exacting for the women."<sup>35</sup> He recommended changes to indigenous practice in the areas of housing, personal hygiene, food production and diet. Groves believed that practical reform in these areas would help "simplify their [villagers] everyday lives" and give women more time to care for their children and to "enjoy some of the refinements of life which European contact will make increasingly available."<sup>36</sup> Colonial reforms were supposed to result in an easier life for the indigenous woman, allowing her to better meet her duties as a mother and "contribute [her] part to the general development and uplift [of the colony]."<sup>37</sup>

Accordingly those involved in women's welfare work from the 1950s onwards made some efforts to encourage men to take on more of the general gardening work (related to food production). At a meeting of Women's Committee in September 1957, for example, a discussion of indigenous men's concerns about the time spent in government-initiated Women's Clubs taking time away from women's essential work in the garden led to the following recommendation in relation to future Club work: "Men should be encouraged to do the gardening instead of women and it was suggested that a competition should be held for best garden made by men with, perhaps, a flower arranging competition for the women."<sup>38</sup>

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gardens, and so relieve the women of their hard toil, an improvement of their domestic status, with well nourished and numerous children, cannot be expected," cited in Martins, "Women and underdevelopment in Rural Papua New Guinea," p. 30. For a later example see W.C. Groves, *Native Education and Culture Contact in New Guinea: A Scientific Approach, Being a Study of the Part That Education Might Play in the Social Adjustment and Future Development of the Natives of the Territory of New Guinea*, 1st ed. Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, [1936], reprint 1977, pp. 67–69.

35 Groves, *Native Education and Culture Contact in New Guinea*, p. 68.

36 Ibid., pp. 68–69.

37 Ibid.

38 Social Welfare and Advancement of Native Women Policy; Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Education and Advancement of Women, September 13, 1957, Papua New Guinea Archives: 69/14-1-34/1285. See also Social Welfare and Advancement of Native Women; Director, Department of Education to Director, Department of Native Affairs, 3 January 1961, Papua New Guinea Archives: 69/14-1-34/1285.

The general training program and suggested activities for Women's Clubs also emphasised a woman's role as homemaker, largely neglecting their role in the gardens. This aspect of women's work was acknowledged only in limited ways, for example "time in the garden" was a task fitted into the new daily chore rota that women were encouraged to draw up to maximise their efficiency.<sup>39</sup>

Additionally the extent to which women began to involve themselves in the new commodity economy emerging in the village was ignored by the colonial administration. As cash crept into the village economy women began to cultivate new crops as market goods and they took on a significant share of the work of cash cropping alongside indigenous men. Training in commercial agricultural practice delivered by colonial *didimen* was, however, targeted almost exclusively at men. When formal agricultural training was offered to indigenous students in 1952 no women were taken on as recruits, and they were excluded from the program up until the early 1970s.<sup>40</sup> Nahau Rooney described what standard agricultural training in the village looked like in 1975:

When the agricultural officer comes to the village he calls a meeting of all men and explains to them a new agricultural technique, cash crop, use of fertilizers, etc. When it comes to implementation, the women are the ones who get their hands dirty; they are the ones who dig, plant and harvest. Yet they are excluded from discussions.<sup>41</sup>

Where agricultural training for women was provided it was generally limited to basic garden maintenance, and suggestions regarding the introduction of new crops for family consumption rather than the skilling up of women to be active participants within a commercial agricultural economy.

What did this shift from a largely subsistence economy to one based on commodity production mean for women in the village? How did the assertion of men's primacy as commodity producers, alongside women's marginalisation from agricultural training affect women's participation in work that brought in cash, and their claims to money made through commodity production? In the

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39 Lois Niall et al., *Things to Do in Women's Clubs. [Books 1–4. First 3 Months – Fourth 3 Months]*, Port Moresby: Dept. of Native Affairs, and South Pacific Commission Literature Bureau, 1962.

40 The first Agricultural Training College was established by the administration in 1952 at Mageri Agricultural Station, just outside of Port Moresby. Mrs Dessie Wirua was the first *didimeri* (indigenous female extension officer) in the territories. She commenced training in 1962 at Taliligap Extension Centre in East New Britain, and was one of the first women to attend the Rural Development Assistant's Course in Tagak, near Kavieng in 1973. See Cecilie Benjamin, "Pioneer *didimeri* – Mrs Dessie Wirua," *Harvest* 3(3) (1976): 129–31. The first large-scale intake of female students was in 1975 when thirty young women were enrolled at Vudal Agricultural College for the first time. See Susanne Bonnell, "Women at Vudal Agricultural College," *Administration for Development* 5 (Oct. 1975): 26–31.

41 Nahau Rooney, "What's a fair go for women?" in *The Pacific Way: Social Issues in National Development*, ed. Sione Tupouniua, Ron Crocombe and Claire Slatter, Suva, Fiji: South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1975, pp. 119–21, p. 119. And see Marie Reay, "Politics, development and women in the Rural Highlands," *Administration for Development* 5 (1975): 4–15, p. 11.



next section, I look at one case study on the practical consequences of these colonial initiatives and their reshaping of the "domestic," by examining the changes that have taken place in the everyday lives of Halia and Haku women on Buka Island.

## The case of Buka Island: Buka women's role in subsistence work

Artist Elizabeth Durack observed in the 1970s that Papua New Guinean women continued "loyally, stubbornly even" to take on the majority of subsistence work.<sup>42</sup> Though colonial observers regularly noted women's continuing responsibility for the gardens in an ambivalent tone, like Durack, Papua New Guinean women, and Buka women as earlier noted, have generally asserted a great deal of pride about their continuing role in the gardens, and their agricultural skills. These are skills that have been passed on from mother to daughter over generations involving not only specific practical skills but also often special cultural knowledge or "garden magic."<sup>43</sup> Gardening was something women commonly did together, and the garden was designated, if only informally, as women's space: a space away from the eyes of men. Here women gossiped and exchanged news as they laboured.

When I was staying in Hahalis I noticed many village women would playfully tease one another by pointing out a woman's plots as being in need of weeding, describing them as "*ol gaten bilong wokmeri*" (the gardens of a working woman/career woman). There was some shame attached to buying garden foods at the market, as though this was an admission your gardens were not growing well.<sup>44</sup> But while Buka women evince a great deal of pride in their gardens and in their role in subsistence, they also recognise they are trapped by it; it is a burden.<sup>45</sup> The substantial amount of time and energy involved in garden work leaves them little time for other activities.

The changes that have occurred in the village as a result of colonialism have not lightened women's load. Colonial officers acknowledged even at the time that change as a result of colonialism had, in fact, increased women's work. Tools introduced through contact had decreased men's workloads, but there had

42 Elizabeth Durack, *Face Value: Women in Papua and New Guinea*, Sydney: Ure Smith, 1970, p. 18.

43 For example Halia women, in the past, had dusted a ground root and leaf mixture onto stems of taro before planting to ensure successful propagation.

44 On a number of occasions my host mother admonished me for bringing home greens from the market because people would think her gardens couldn't provide enough foods for us.

45 This is an observation drawn from comments made to me during fieldwork and in interviews, but see also Eleanor Rimoldi, "Relationships of love and power in the Hahalis Welfare Society of Buka," Ph.D. thesis, Auckland: University of Auckland, 1982, pp. 294–300.



been no comparable reduction for women. Indeed on top of their subsistence work (planting, tending, and harvesting gardens) there were now additional expectations placed on women. The situation was described in the 1964–65 Annual Report for the Bougainville district, “The men [now] also have tended to want larger, cleaner houses, more clothes for all the family, and more sophisticated foods. In addition, women are required to work alongside their men in planting and harvesting cash crops.”<sup>46</sup>

On top of new additional chores, even women’s labour involved in traditional subsistence had increased. Women travelled considerably further to their gardens, as these were pushed further and further inland to accommodate cash crop plantings. The additional distance required by travelling to and returning from the gardens with garden produce in tow, adds to what is already significant labour. Similarly on the smaller islands surrounding Buka, an increase in population and thus an expansion of the areas needed for residential settlement has meant gardens must be made on the mainland.<sup>47</sup> Rachel Tsen, who is from Saposa Island just south of Buka Island, explained the consequences for women:

Island life was hard, Jemima. Especially island life after, well it came to be we can’t grow gardens here on the island. We had to start to paddle and go to the mainland. And so half of our energy was used then just to paddle. And then we go and work garden and by the time we’d done some the energy is gone and then we would paddle back again. So it was really hard work.<sup>48</sup>

Women’s increasing access to medical treatment for themselves and their children has meant the rate of infant mortality among the Halia and Haku has dropped significantly (as it has throughout PNG).<sup>49</sup> And though many village women today practice a mixture of customary and introduced “family planning” measures, the women I spoke to expressed concern about the general decline of traditional practices of birth spacing, post-partum abstinence and the use of bush medicine as birth control. They drew a link between the decline of these

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46 Bougainville District Annual Report; Annual Report—Bougainville District 1964/65, p. 33, Papua New Guinea Archives: 496/ARC6A917/BN7.

47 Regarding the increase in population, see National Research Institute Papua New Guinea, *Papua New Guinea District and Provincial Profiles*, Boroko, Papua New Guinea: The National Research Institute, March 2010.

48 Rachel Tsen, recorded interview with author, Saposa Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 13 March 2007.

49 William Agyei, *Fertility and Family Planning in the Third World: A Case Study of Papua New Guinea*, Kent, North Ryde: Croom Helm, 1988. It is important to note, however, that rates of maternal mortality have not reduced significantly, and have increased in recent decades.

practices and the significant increase in population on the island, expressing anxiety about the number of children women were now having.<sup>50</sup> Now there are too many people and not enough land, women often said to me.<sup>51</sup>

Women also complained that the land and the sea were no longer as productive as they had been when they were younger. In the past, I was told, people had followed strict customary laws about where they were allowed to fish or go hunting. "Before there were laws you had to follow—in the bush and the saltwater. In some areas you couldn't go there. It was forbidden. You couldn't swim there—don't want to scare away all fish. Chiefs would charge this man if they went and swum here. Now they don't follow laws ... you can't find fish and shellfish too. Only a little."<sup>52</sup>

The rules about where you could hunt and fish and even swim had helped ensure sustainable practice. Many of these rules have been abandoned or were no longer as strictly observed, mainly as a result of the increasing pressures to use all available land and sea resources in the context of a growing population and at the same time villagers' growing need for cash. So at the same time that hunting and fishing—the work of men—became less efficient and less productive, forcing families to rely more heavily on women's garden work, pressures on land resulted in generally less garden land, a higher intensity use of this and smaller yields.<sup>53</sup>

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50 It is interesting to note the way in which discourse justifying colonial interventions in indigenous women's fertility in the Pacific shifted through the twentieth century from the "problem of depopulation" (code for anxiety about the perceived decline in indigenous populations because of what colonial observers believed were immoral and unsanitary traditional practices) to concern for overpopulation. This is true in Papua and New Guinea, where by the late 1960s early concerns regarding depopulation had disappeared, and the administration began to focus on the need for population control and family planning (to guard against indigenous "unrestrained fertility"). See Jemima Mowbray, "Making and narrating women as modern colonial subjects in Papua New Guinea, 1945–1976," Ph.D. thesis, Sydney: University of Sydney, 2012, pp. 176–78. For a general discussion of this shift from depopulation to overpopulation in colonial debates in the Pacific see Margaret Jolly, "Infertile states: person and collectivity, region and nation in the rhetoric of Pacific population," in *Borders of Being: Citizenship, Fertility, and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Kalpana Ram, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001, pp. 262–306.

51 The increase in land disputes, for example, was identified as being a direct result of overpopulation. The conjunction of a rapidly increasing population and the development of cash crop production on the island in the 1950s led to growing pressure on land and increasing tensions and conflict between individuals and clans. When I interviewed them in 2007, most women believed land disputes had not been so prevalent and certainly nowhere near as fraught when they were children. Historically patrol officers had begun to identify this in the mid-1950s. According to a district patrol report from Buka in 1954, "Land disputes have been prominent only in the last four or five years, coincident with the development of copra production and almost invariably concern land on which groves already exist or are being newly planted." Bougainville District Annual Report; Annual Report—Bougainville District 1954/55, (part 4), Papua New Guinea Archives: 496/ARC6A917/BN7.

52 Christine Hotsia, recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 3 October 2006. Prohibition on swimming had ensured the ecosystem of the reef fish and shellfish (the *abus*—protein—that women had traditionally collected) was left undisturbed and could continually be replenished.

53 Land cannot be left fallow for as long and cropping periods are extended, while unfavourable land previously rejected is now used. Land shortage has also meant that firewood is harder to source. Women also

As the passage from the Bougainville Annual Report makes clear, Buka women were also working alongside men in establishing cash crops. In 1948 copra trading on the island resumed again after the war, with villagers embarking on a significant extension of village plantings of coconut groves.<sup>54</sup> Patrol officers complained that the peoples along the north east coast were being foolhardy in their enthusiasm for cash cropping (this despite the administration's encouragement), neglecting subsistence to take on cash cropping.<sup>55</sup> These complaints suggest that from the very start of village cash cropping indigenous women (primarily responsible for subsistence) were quite extensively involved in copra production. Women also came to be involved in the marketing of introduced crops like peanuts and watermelon and other crops newly introduced by *didimen*. By the mid-1950s half of all stallholders at the main market in Buka town were women, and at the Karola market on the west coast of the island they made up the majority of those marketing (though Karola was traditionally a women's barter market rather than a market based on exchange for money).<sup>56</sup>

Though women often provided equal labour to that of men towards cash crop production, very rarely was the income derived from this shared equally with them.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the income that they made through marketing—and could hold on to—was relatively insignificant as an income source compared to that which could be generated through cash cropping.<sup>58</sup> Women were not equal recipients of the money generated through development, and any income they did generate was spent primarily on family subsistence. Even when women began to engage and indeed play a significant role in commercial economic production this went unrecognised because women's involvement in income-generating work was less regular (though not necessarily less intensive), and because of the way in which women's income was spent (on family—food and other basic goods, clothing, school fees). As a result their labour was generally regarded as an extension of their subsistence work and understood as undertaken primarily in their role *as mothers*.

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report that reef fish are no longer as plentiful as they once were (again larger numbers relying on the same resources). See R.M. Bourke and T. Betitis, *Sustainability of Agriculture in Bougainville Province, Papua New Guinea*, Canberra: Land Management Group, Department of Human Geography, 2002, pp.75–78.

54 Max Rimoldi and Eleanor Rimoldi, *Hahalis and the Labor of Love : A Social Movement on Buka Island*, Explorations in Anthropology, Oxford: Providence: Berg, 1992, pp. 77–78.

55 Patrol Report cited in Rimoldi and Rimoldi, *Hahalis and the Labor of Love*, p. 77.

56 Bougainville District Annual Report; Annual Report—Bougainville District 1958–59, p. 32. Papua New Guinea Archives: 496/ARC6A917/BN7.

57 Margaret Nakikus et al., *Papua New Guinea: Women in Development Sector Review*, Port Moresby: UNDP, 1991.

58 Ben R. Finney, *New Guinea Entrepreneurs: Indigenous Cash Cropping, Capital Formation and Investment in the New Guinea Highlands*, New Guinea Research Bulletin 27, Canberra: The Australian National University, New Guinea Research Unit, 1969.

## The everyday work of Buka mothers: In the past, in present day Buka

Buka women told me that traditionally—from *taim bipo tru*—mothers had been responsible for the basic subsistence of their family. Apart from the help received from men to clear land, they were responsible for all other work in the gardens. They prepared the ground, planted, weeded, harvested and carried back garden produce for the family. This was work women often performed together.<sup>59</sup> Christine Hotsia remembered from her childhood, "There were no lazy women back then. Mothers worked hard in the garden. They worked together and would often work hard for two or three days, and then take a day off for rest."<sup>60</sup> Others described their mothers as similarly disciplined,

S: She [my mother] was always going for gardening, never missing a day.<sup>61</sup>

N: My mother had six children. Every day she worked in the garden, and we would follow her. My mother was a very hard-working woman.<sup>62</sup>

Women collected firewood, carried water, did the laundry, prepared food and cared for children. For a time in the early 1960s followers of the Hahalis Welfare Society, recognising women had traditionally been unfairly loaded with too much of the work of subsistence, reversed gendered roles. Men—including *tsunono* (chiefs)—were forced to take on women's work and, as anthropologists Max and Eleanor Rimoldi explained it, "feel the pain the women had felt all those years."<sup>63</sup> Women who had been a part of Welfare told me of this experiment:

R: Before the men wouldn't help, they'd just sit in the village and it would be women doing the hard work of clearing the bush and planting the food. But now some of the good ones they helped women to feed the family. Everyone was happy in the village about this. My husband—he was a good one, a real hard-working man. He'd gotten used to the collective work [of the Society] and he organised the young men to work together and help out, to help me.<sup>64</sup>

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59 To clarify, women did not work their gardens together. Each woman was generally responsible for her own garden. But they would leave together, take breaks together, and occasionally holler out to one another as they worked. This is not a hard and fast rule since on occasion women would contribute/help with labour in each other's gardens.

60 Christine Hotsia, recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 3 October 2006. See also interviews with Rose Willy, 5 November 2006, Hahalis; and Martha Tonang, 7 November 2006, Lemankoa.

61 Saline Girana, recorded interview with author, Hahalis, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 4 March 2007.

62 Namosi Tousalia, recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 17 October 2006.

63 Rimoldi and Rimoldi, *Hahalis and the Labor of Love*, p. 148.

64 Rose Tehoei, recorded interview with author, Hahalis, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 31 December 2006.



**Figure 15. Women working together in the garden. Hahalis, Buka, Autonomous Region of Bougainville 2006**

Source: Photograph by Jemima Mowbray.



**Figure 16. "Working copra" for cash. Carrying coconuts to be broken then smoked. Hahalis, Buka, Autonomous Region of Bougainville 2006**





**Figure 17. Handing over coconuts at the *smukhaus* (smoke house) built in the bush. Hahalis, Buka, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 2006**

Source: Photograph by Thiago Oppermann.

However women said the results of this “reversal” had not lasted very long after it was first initiated, and were not sure this had been particularly significant in the long term.<sup>65</sup> Instead many of the women involved in the Welfare Society stressed their equal participation in the *wok bung*—or collective labour—involved in establishing and managing the Society’s cash crops,

R: We worked together with the men [during this time]. We’d clean the coconut plantations—all of us, men and women together. The men would shake down the coconuts and then together we’d collect them and take them to the [copra] driers. And everyone, men and women, worked in the garden. The men would clear the area and the women would dig holes to plant the taro, but the men would help with this. The men would do the heavy work, but those women that could they’d work with the men.<sup>66</sup>

C: And all the women used to work with the men during this time. The men would clear the bush and the women would get the hoes and plant ... we would get money through these projects.<sup>67</sup>

It was also a mother’s responsibility to pass on appropriate knowledge about custom, to both young boys and girls—although of course there was much knowledge and practice that was gender specific.<sup>68</sup> For young girls this meant training them with gardening skills. Most women remembered that as young children they had from very early on followed their mothers to the gardens,

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65 Ibid.; Cecilia Beseke, recorded interview with author, Hahalis, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 17 February 2007.

66 Rose Tehoei, recorded interview with author, Hahalis, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 31 December 2006.

67 Cecilia Beseke, recorded interview with author, Hahalis, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 17 February 2007.

68 So Josephine Tsiperi could talk about aspects of custom as being only appropriate to be shared between females or between men:

In terms of learning *kastom*—we, us girls, we would get it from women. Boys would get taught by men. I mean sometimes they would do it with the whole clan—they would sit down, meet, and when they were having these meetings, discussions—they would touch on *kastom* during this time. Men must know about these things. Women must know about these. But in terms of *kastom*—this is the responsibility of mothers. (Josephine Tsiperi, recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 20 October 2006).

Jessie Marise explained that some stories (or knowledges) are shared only from mother to daughter. She told me of her mother introducing her to the *lilihane* (spirits of the ancestors) of her place. She took her down to the sea edge, to a certain spot where huge boulders mark the entrance to a passage of water that leads straight out through the reef. This is where her clan’s *lilihane*—described as small snakes, though some are huge, and big enough to fight with dogs—reside. The stories and knowledge she learnt from her grandmother she shared with her daughter. “They are not anyone else’s stories. They belong to me, and my mother and my grandmother before her.” Jessie Marise, recorded interview with author, Elutupan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 21 February 2007.



and when old enough they planted their own small plots. Agnes Gohul, born in 1937, remembered the small tasks her mother and other women would ask her to help with:

Back then I was little and I couldn't hold the big digging stick and dig the deep holes needed for planting the taro. So I would go and help the women with little tasks like weeding, or carrying rubbish and heaping it together. I would help them. I would carry my own little *woksak* [a woven basket] back. They would teach me how to weave these, and how to carry them back to the village [loaded with produce].<sup>69</sup>

Josephine Tsiperi, born some thirty-years later, described also planting her own small garden. The produce from this was not only for family consumption, but served also as goods for sale at market:

I told you my mother was a woman who would plant things to sell in order to get money. Well I followed her in this. I learnt this from her. So me too, I would follow whatever my mother was doing, whatever little things she was planting. I'd go to the market and sell things until I was big enough to go to school and then I stopped doing this.<sup>70</sup>

In this way young girls learnt not only the skills associated with gardening, but also those to do with marketing—what to grow, how to bundle it, and how much to sell it for.

This shift from simple subsistence to gardening for both family and for the market that emerges when these two testimonies are placed side by side, points to the expansion in mothers' responsibilities taking place through this period. A mother's work encompassed providing the basics of subsistence for her family, but what constituted "basics" increasingly included goods that could only be purchased with cash.<sup>71</sup> A "good mother" was now required to generate income to cover the costs of those things now needed by her family in the everyday—clothes, food, kerosene, transport money, and so on. Though their husbands, if waged, were ostensibly expected to contribute towards subsistence costs, very often their incomes were (and women report this as a continuing

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69 Agnes Gohul, recorded interview with author, Lemanmanu, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville 29 October 2006.

70 Josephine Tsiperi (from Lonahan), recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 20 October 2006.

71 As Josephine Tsiperi had described, in the case of her mother:

My mother used to work garden and sell produce [from it] to get money. Another way was to work copra. But most of it—the money my mother collected to pay my school fees—she got it from planting gardens. Because she found it very hard to work copra by herself. But copra she did work it a little, but mostly she planted things—all different kinds of things that she would then get money for to help out. For school fees, for clothing. (Josephine Tsiperi, recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 20 October 2006).

issue) spent on alcohol or other luxury goods. From women's oral testimonies it became clear that they felt that the heaviest burden was that of school fees. Though fathers were certainly obliged to provide monies towards this, it was generally mothers who came up with the cash (through additional labour done specifically towards generating monies for these). And it was mothers who were blamed when monies could not be found.

From the 1950s onwards Buka women *as mothers* engaged in cash-cropping and in "making projects" (marketing agricultural crops) to earn a small income. They often did this intermittently—as and when they needed the monies. The income they earned was then distributed straight back into the subsistence costs of their families. Because this work was not consistently done (as in waged labour), and money was not (and could not be) accumulated, this work—though income-generating—was regarded and valued simply as an extension or subsidy of women's basic subsistence work in the garden. It was mother's work, work for the household, and as such was seen by colonial officers and even, to an extent, villagers as reproductive labour rather than recognised as economically productive work.

There are two key practical implications of the classification of women's work in this way. First women often do not get given an equal share of income derived from cash cropping, despite their equal contribution of labour. Women I talked to in the village often saw waged work (government work, or waged work in town) as preferable because then they would "get what they worked for." Martha Macintyre, in interviews undertaken with women working in the mining industry in PNG, found that many women felt wages they received were more likely to be directly under their control and also that they would have more personal discretion about how these were spent.<sup>72</sup> They identified their wages in opposition to money made by growing marketable goods or working on cash crops with the help of family members on family land. Buka women saw this same distinction, a wage—as opposed to money made through work in the gardens growing market goods or on cash crops grown on family land—seemed a more independent source of income. Second, because women are less likely to be envisaged as primary income earners they have historically been marginalised from educational and training opportunities, trapped in a self-perpetuating cycle of exclusion from waged labour.

Women are keenly aware of their continuing marginalisation in this regard. When I interviewed Buka women, the questions I asked about waged work invariably were answered with a reference to education: an expression of gratitude

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72 Martha Macintyre, "Money changes everything: Papua New Guinean women in the modern economy," in *Managing Modernity in the Western Pacific*, ed. Mary Patterson and Martha Macintyre, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2011, pp. 90–120, p. 104.

(to parents, to teachers) that they received the education required to get a job, or alternatively their regret at having missed out on an education and thus a whole range of opportunities. Education was seen as key to waged work, or at least the main way in which women could articulate their aspirations in relation to this. This came from their very clear understanding that waged employment relied on acquiring an education beyond primary school.<sup>73</sup> Many Buka women explained their differential access to secondary education and further vocational training as having excluded them from "the good life," or at least a *better* life.

## Buka women, waged work and education

Most women when asked about whether their parents had sent girls to school, said they felt that there had been just as many girls as boys at their primary school and that parents were generally keen to see all children get an education; they "valued education." They told me girls continuing on through to high school and to further training was a different matter altogether.

Yet, though available statistics for the district suggest that the enrolment of girls in Bougainville was slightly higher than that at the broader national level, girls have nonetheless been at a clear disadvantage in terms of access to education in the region (see Table 1).<sup>74</sup> In 1950 females constituted less than a third of primary enrolments in the Bougainville district; this had improved to around 45 per cent of enrolments by the 1960s. It was, however, in post-primary schooling that the disparity was clearest: at the secondary level female enrolments fluctuated slightly but never rose above 28 per cent of enrolments in the period up until 1970.

Girls in Buka faced a number of barriers to accessing education. Schools were often a long way from village settlements. Describing Hanahan Primary School in the early 1950s, Christine Hotsia, who was born just before the war, explained:

At this school there were boys and girls, all these children who had to come from Tohatsi through to Hahalis. They used to all come here to

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<sup>73</sup> Romeo Tohiana has described the appreciation of education by Buka villagers as key to early mission recruitment of adherents who wanted to gain basic literacy and potentially jobs with the administration and mission, and thus material wealth. Tohiana, "The Hahalis Welfare Society of Buka, North Solomons Province," p. 37.

<sup>74</sup> No figures were available for this period for Buka Island alone. Helen Geissinger, writing in the late 1990s, noted that girls from the islands had traditionally been at a slight advantage in terms of access to education because generally within island cultures (Bougainville, New Ireland, East New Britain and Manus) women have held higher status within their own societies relative to their mainland counterparts. Girls in Bougainville had historically had the highest level of enrolment among the provinces. See Helen Geissinger, "Girls' access to education in a developing country," *International Review of Education* 43(5/6) (1997): 423–38, p. 429.

this one school. No, no ... it was from Gogohe through to Sing. Those from Gogohe would sleep here at the station.... And from Hahalis and Tohatsi they would come every morning and then go back to the village. So there were houses for boys on this side, and houses for girls on this other side close to the cliff, near the sisters. On Fridays they [students from distant villages] would all go back and then come back again on Mondays.<sup>75</sup>

**Table 1. Percentage of male to female enrolments in schools (both administration and mission), 1950–1970**

Year	Bougainville District				Papua and New Guinea					
	Primary		Intermediate /Secondary		Primary		Intermediate /Secondary		Vocational /Technical	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1950	69%	31%	73.5%	26.5%	*63.5%	36.5%	*...	*...	*...	*...
1961	55%	45%	76%	24%	61%	39%	82%	18%	93%	7%
1965	54%	46%	77.5%	22.5%	61%	39%	79%	21%	92%	8%
1970	54%	46%	72%	28%	63%	37%	72%	28%	76.5%	23.5%

Source: Figures based on statistical information published in Department of Territories, Report to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the administration of the Territory of New Guinea 1950/51, Administration of the Territory of New Guinea, Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, p. 160; Papua New Guinea Department of Education Statistics Section, Comparative Staffing and Enrolments Statistics: Papua New Guinea Education System, 1960–1972, PNG Dept of Education, Konedobu, Papua New Guinea, 1973, pp. 3–36.

Many young students slept in simple houses under the supervision of the mission staff, and would have to bring food supplies for the week when they returned to school on Monday morning. The long distances children were required to travel meant girls were less likely to be enrolled. Girls were required to help their mothers in the gardens to provide subsistence for their families. If a girl had to travel away for schooling, the loss of her labour impacted heavily on the family (and particularly her mother's workload). Additionally the distance girls were required to travel from villages to school raised fears for their safety, both in terms of the threat of physical assault as well as the threat of sorcery.

When parents did not have enough money to send all their children, they prioritised their sons' education over their daughters. This was a calculated decision: educated sons held a higher value to their parents than did their daughters. Jessie Marise, born in 1947, described how her family had been very poor while she was growing up. Her father had died when she was young and her mother had no siblings to turn to. Her mother struggled to find money to send her and her brother to school each year. "To earn a little money we would

<sup>75</sup> Christine Hotsia, recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 3 October 2006.

sell kerosene. My mother used to do this—borrow money from one man and then buy a full drum of kerosene and we would sell it on in the village. And that is how she paid our small fees. But it was hard."<sup>76</sup>

Jessie had loved school and having done well in her studies planned to continue on to high school. Her brother told her, however, that the family would not have enough money to send both of them through high school. Jessie had been accepted into the government-run high school at Hutjena and the school fees required were significantly higher than those at the mission-run primary school they had been attending. "My brother was in Grade 5 and I had just heard that I had gotten in to Hutjena and he said to me, 'Jessie, you can't go to school.' And I said, 'why not?' 'No-one can pay your fees. You must get married!'"<sup>77</sup> Though she had been intent on continuing her education Jessie understood she did not have much choice.

Okay, I said to him, but brother if I have children, then who will help me when they are ready to go to school, who will pay *their* school fees? And he made a promise to me then, he said, "I promise I will help you. I want you to marry because we are struggling for money." So I said yes.<sup>78</sup>

For the next few years Jessie and her new husband, a teacher earning a regular wage, supported her brother through high school and continued to support him when he went on to university. Her brother became a Chief Magistrate within the Papua New Guinean courts and has fulfilled his promise, paying the school fees for all nine of her children. "This was his promise. He tells my children, if not for me your mother would have been working too, but because of me—I ruined it for her. But I say, no—you didn't ruin it for me. You were thinking of the future. We couldn't both go to school at the same time."<sup>79</sup>

Patricia Johnson, writing in the early 1990s, argued that girls' traditional (and continued) disadvantage in accessing education in PNG had been a key factor in the increasing disparity between men's and women's, and especially rural women's, access to wealth and political power (measured by Johnson in terms of access to political office).<sup>80</sup> For families and individuals it was access to income that was considered perhaps the most valuable or desired outcome of a Western education. As Johnson explained, "While the government may phrase education policy in terms of national development and human resources,

<sup>76</sup> Jessie Marise, recorded interview with author, Elutupan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 21 February 2007.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Patricia Lyons Johnson, "Education and the 'new' inequality in Papua New Guinea," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 24(3) (1993): 183–204.

the parents who are responsible for sending their children to school are more immediately concerned with the impact of education on their children's future occupations and, thereby, on their incomes."<sup>81</sup>

Education was something highly valued by all the women I spoke to, especially by those who had not been able to continue their education or not been able to access it in the first place. The positive relationship between educational achievement and income was clear to the Buka women I interviewed: "I think back on what I did [leaving school] and I get cross with myself. Because I ruined my chances, didn't I?"<sup>82</sup> Young women who did not go on to high school, or dropped out before graduating generally came back to the village and got married. They took on the work of mothers in the village—basic subsistence labour, caring for children, caring for older relatives. Namosi Tousala, born in 1960, described what it was like for those who dropped out. "They'd finish and then they'd just stay in the village doing nothing really (*stap nating long ples*). When girls they finished Grade 6 and 'drop out,' then they only have one choice—they work garden, that's all."<sup>83</sup>

Educational achievement was thus considered crucial for women to access employment and a regular and reliable income, and thereby a measure of independence. Older women who attended school when it was, as they described it "just the A-B-Cs" (though in Buka they often called them the 'a-e-i-u's'),<sup>84</sup> said that by the time they were mothers, things in the village had changed and they had hoped that their children would go further with education so that they might get a job.<sup>85</sup> For those women of the younger generation (up to fifty years old) who had continued on to high school, the importance of "doing well" at high school was tied to their future goal of attaining waged employment. When asked what they had wanted to do after high school, though many had held a preference regarding vocation they also made clear that they were ultimately happy with any training that led to good paid employment. Rachel Topu, born in 1958, had dreamed of training to be a *didimeri* (a female agricultural extension officer), but the year she left school Vudal Agricultural College in East New Britain had closed off their intake. When she realised her parents would not allow her to travel as far as Popondetta or Mount Hagen (the locations of the other agricultural colleges) she knew she "had no choice." Instead she enrolled at Arawa Technical College in the south of Bougainville. "Did I always want to go

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81 Ibid., p. 189.

82 Rita, recorded interview with author, Elutupan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 23 January 2007.

83 Namosi Tousala, recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 17 October 2006.

84 Older women over 65 referred to this, and generally dropped the "o" in the run of vowels. These were the first letters they learnt at mission school they told me.

85 Cecilia Beseke (born 1936), recorded interview with author, Hahalís, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 17 February 2007.



work in an office? No, not at all. My first choice was to become an agriculturalist ... it was okay though, I just wanted to get work."<sup>86</sup> Cathleen Kopkop, born in 1966, and trained and employed as a teacher explained, "When I was in Grade 10, the big thing I was thinking about and looking forward to was would I get a good result, so that I would be able to go on and find good work or not?... I really wanted that I would be one of these financially employed women."<sup>87</sup> Carmelita Toahei, born in 1965, similarly was concerned to find "good work." "My thoughts had been—I must get work, and get a salary. And if I can earn my own money, hold it in my hands, then I'll be able to do all those little things for my home and my village that I'd like to see happen."<sup>88</sup>

Carmelita's turn of phrase, "earn my own money, hold it in my hands," highlighted the importance she—and many women I spoke to—placed on earning their own wages so that they had a measure of control over money.<sup>89</sup> Violence against women is a serious, pervasive problem in Bougainville, as it is throughout PNG.<sup>90</sup> A number of the women I interviewed in Buka told me of violence they had been subject to within their marriages. Martha Macintyre, who has written extensively on gender violence in PNG, suggests that given the demonstrated failure of current awareness programs aimed at reducing violence, broader programs addressing the structural economic and social inequalities between women and men are needed, focusing on women's improved access to education, health and employment opportunities.<sup>91</sup> Macintyre argues that the individual empowerment of women (for example via rights-based training)

86 Rachel Topu, recorded interview with author, Lemanmanu, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 6 November 2006.

87 Cathleen Kopkop (from KetsKets), recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 20 October 2006.

88 Carmelita Toahei, recorded interview with author, Hanahan, Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 20 October 2006.

89 And see Macintyre, "Money changes everything," p. 104.

90 See Richard Eves for a discussion of the extent of the problem in contemporary Buka. Richard Eves, *Exploring the Role of Men and Masculinities in Papua New Guinea in the 21st Century: How to address violence in ways that generate empowerment for both men and women*, Report for Caritas Australia, 2006, pp. 21–23, online: <http://www.baha.com.pg/downloads/Masculinity%20and%20Violence%20in%20PNG.pdf>, accessed 16 March 2013. Eves here follows a shift within recent scholarship and advocacy that has seen the "domestic violence" of traditional advocacy and analytical focus usefully reconceptualised as gender violence. This framing is one that acknowledges the false binary of domestic/public violence—especially given the problematic "fit" of this distinction in the Pacific context—and expands analysis to talk about violence and abuse faced by children and in some instances men in Papua New Guinea. See Margaret Jolly, Christine Stewart with Carolyn Brewer (eds), *Engendering Violence in Papua New Guinea*, Canberra: ANU E Press, 2012 online: <http://press.anu.edu.au?p=182671>, accessed 13 May 2014. See also Martha Macintyre, "'Hear us, women of Papua New Guinea!': Melanesian women and human rights," in *Human Rights and Gender Politics: Asia-Pacific Perspectives*, ed. Anne-Marie Hilsdon et al., London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 147–71; and Laura Zimmer Tamakoshi, "'Wild pigs and dog men': rape and domestic violence as 'women's issues' in Papua New Guinea," in *Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Carolyn Brettell and Caroline Sargent, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2005, pp. 538–53.

91 Martha Macintyre, "Gender violence in Melanesia and the problem of Millennium Development Goal No. 3," in *Engendering Violence in Papua New Guinea*, ed. Margaret Jolly, Christine Stewart with Carolyn Brewer, Canberra: ANU E Press, 2012, pp. 239–66, online: <http://press.anu.edu.au?p=182671>, 13 May 2014.



without a simultaneous shift in social values and cultural norms can mean in the current context that women who stand up for their rights are seen as “disempowering men” and provoke violent retaliation.<sup>92</sup> She argues strongly for the prioritising of projects that address women’s material empowerment—including policies of positive discrimination to increase the numbers of women attending school after primary school, and strategies to increase the number of women employed in the formal workforce and help reduce salary inequalities between men and women.<sup>93</sup> This connects with the sentiments of most women I spoke to in Buka. For Buka women economic independence meant more than simply greater autonomy in terms of deciding what income could be spent on. It also meant women who earned their own money were freer to leave abusive relationships.<sup>94</sup> It gave them more control over their lives.

## Conclusion

After World War II the colonial administration decided that agricultural development and the transformation of village economies from agricultural subsistence to commercial production was key to the colonies’ future. Indigenous men were to be the key economic agents in driving this transformation. Indigenous women, on the other hand, were marginalised from the training provided to men to enable commercial farming, and actively sidelined by policies that presumed men’s rights over land and over any income generated from that land. Even when the administration began to reform labour legislation to encourage more indigenous women to work, women still found themselves marginalised from waged work because of their limited access to education (in real terms, and relative to men).

The work of women today remains primarily that of subsistence agriculture. The women of Halia and Haku are particularly aware that despite the value *they* place on their work in the gardens, it is generally devalued—both within the modern capitalist economy, and increasingly within customary/traditional economies as commodities have slowly crept in and replaced the traditional wealth which women played a primary role in producing. Cash payments are slowly, for example, replacing the taro grown and the pigs raised by women for use in cultural exchange and ritual. Women are proud of their work in their

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92 Macintyre, “Gender violence in Melanesia and the problem of Millennium Development Goal No. 3,” pp. 243–247.

93 Macintyre, “Gender violence in Melanesia and the problem of Millennium Development Goal No. 3,” p. 256.

94 Again Martha Macintyre’s interviews with women indicated that many understood a wage as providing economic independence and thus freedom from abusive relationships—either a route out of established violent relationships, or alternatively the freedom not to enter a relationship in the first place or only on their own terms. Macintyre, “Money changes everything,” p. 103.

garden, but recognise the many ways in which this locks them out of various other opportunities. Anne Dickson-Waiko has observed that Papua New Guinean women's early exclusion from mainstream colonial life—including their limited access to employment and educational opportunities—meant that “ultimately it was men who were trained to man the state apparatus at independence.”<sup>95</sup> Halia and Haku women express frustration with women's lack of political representation and acknowledge their limited capacity to engage in community and government activities because of the continued pressures of work for family (including substantial subsistence labour), but particularly emphasise exclusion in terms of employment and education as avenues of self-empowerment they believe promise greater control over their lives.

While much work has been done on the missions and the varying effects for indigenous women of the “cult of domesticity” in Papua New Guinea, the central role played by the state in reshaping domesticity through its policies of land and labour has been largely unrecognised and under-researched. Examination of the gendered effects of colonial policy and programs reveals a fundamental paradox: the work of women, work believed by the administration to be the source of indigenous women's “denigration” or “servitude,” was intensified through its various policies and program, even those aimed specifically at addressing women's low status. These interventions occurred primarily via labour policy, but also through initiatives in the organisation of land, and indigenous methods of family planning. The negative consequences of colonial initiatives for women's everyday lives are shown in the lived experiences and changes as described by women in Buka. A recurring feature in their accounts, however, is the consistent rejection of and resistance to colonial adjudications that devalued women's labour, and dismissed their own views and values.

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I wish to thank Anthea Vogl for her very helpful feedback and advice on earlier versions of this paper. I would like to gratefully acknowledge the work of Margaret Jolly and Hyaeweol Choi in organising the *Paradoxes of Domesticity* conference in August 2012, and subsequently bringing this volume together. Special thanks also to Margaret Jolly for her expert advice and suggestions for the paper. I am particularly grateful to the many Halia and Haku women of Buka who generously shared their days and insights with me for this research during my stay on the island.

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95 Dickson-Waiko, “Women, individual human rights, community rights,” p. 59.



# 7. “Tired for nothing”? Women, Chiefs, and the Domestication of Customary Authority in Solomon Islands

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## Introduction

Throughout Asia and the Pacific, Christian missionaries were central agents in promulgating an ideal of domesticity that defined a woman’s place as in the home. As other chapters in this volume show, however, many European missionary women moved away from hearth and home and led prominent public lives contravening in practice what they endorsed in principle. European women and indigenous women were often present on the mission stations of the Western Pacific, albeit in secondary roles as the wives of male missionaries and converts. The same cannot be said for centres of colonial administration. As Anne Dickson-Waiko has pointed out for colonial Papua New Guinea (PNG), administrative centres were virtually all-male enclaves: European men often left their wives and families back home and indigenous men performed the domestic work that was considered to be women’s work by both colonised and colonisers.<sup>1</sup> The gender segregation of the colonial enclave was, if anything, more pronounced than that of indigenous societies of the region, some of which are famed for “sexual antagonism.” The exclusion of women from administrative centres was not accidental, but part of a late colonial strategy to prevent the native people from settling in these colonial enclaves. Keeping women in villages ensured that men would return there when their labour was no longer required, that wages would not have to be high enough to support whole families, and that labour would be available for the rural cash cropping that was the heart of the economy. Such strategies increased the burden on women, who took up the subsistence work of absent men. “A new layer of patriarchy” was thus imposed upon existing indigenous forms of male domination.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Anne Dickson-Waiko, “Colonial enclaves and domestic spaces in British New Guinea,” in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre, Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2007, pp. 205–30.

2 Dickson-Waiko, “Colonial enclaves and domestic spaces in British New Guinea,” p. 206.

Advocates of women's human rights globally often treat localised "custom" or "tradition" as little more than an obstacle to be overcome. The perspective is stated baldly for Solomon Islands by Jennifer Corrin Care: "Human rights (particularly women's rights) and customary law embrace very different ideals. Customary law is based on male domination.... Human rights, on the other hand, are founded on principles of equality."<sup>3</sup> Corrin-Care writes of "customary law" as though it somehow simply exists separate from the structures of colonial and postcolonial governance, a perspective widespread in the literature and one that radically simplifies complex and diverse gendered relationships.<sup>4</sup> Understood not as timeless tradition but instead as part of a form of rule that Mahmood Mamdani calls "decentralized despotism,"<sup>5</sup> however, we *can* say that "custom" is based on male domination. Colonialism and Christianity often solidified men's authority over women and often profoundly transformed gender roles and relationships through a focus on the nuclear family.<sup>6</sup> As Martha Macintyre notes, "Whatever the values attached to gender differences in the past, the differences that are now seen as 'traditional' form the basis for women's disqualification from the political, bureaucratic, and modern economic spheres."<sup>7</sup> The opposition between custom and human rights that Corrin-Care refers to, then, is real at least insofar as a discourse of "custom" is frequently invoked to silence women's claims for equality, recognition and human rights in contemporary Melanesia.

Despite often-expressed concerns about the apparent incompatibility of custom and human rights, especially women's rights, the diffuse powers of global governance in a neoliberal age seem to be increasingly turning to "customary authority" as a panacea for problems of governance in so-called "weak" states. The trend is striking in those African nations where leaders of newly independent states rejected customary law as part of the architecture of colonial rule and attempted to eradicate it as part of modernisation projects in the 1970s and 1980s, but since the 1990s are increasingly re-authorising customary authority.<sup>8</sup> This global trend is perhaps less noticeable in the Pacific

3 Jennifer Corrin-Care, "Customary law and women's rights in Solomon Islands," *Development Bulletin* 51 (2000): 20–22.

4 This sort of approach is critiqued by Margaret Jolly, "Woman Ikat Raet Long Human Raet O No? Women's rights, human rights and domestic violence in Vanuatu," in *Human Rights and Gender Politics: Asia-Pacific Perspectives*, ed. Anne-Marie Hilsdon et al., London: Routledge Curzon, 2005, pp. 120–42.

5 Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

6 Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

7 Martha Macintyre, "'Hear us, women of Papua New Guinea! Melanesian women and human rights,'" in *Human Rights and Gender Politics: Asia-Pacific Perspectives*, ed. Anne-Marie Hilsdon et al., London: Routledge Curzon, 2005, pp. 143–66, p. 148.

8 The resurgence of "the customary" in Africa has generated an extensive literature. See Helene Maria Kyed and Lars Buur, "Introduction: traditional authority and democratization in Africa," in *State Recognition and Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Dawn for Traditional Authorities?* ed. Buur and Kyed, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 1–28; Juan M. Obarrio, "Remains: to be seen. Third encounter between

because there was no comparable rejection of tradition: few leaders of newly independent states in the 1970s and 1980s rejected what came to be known as *kastom*, instead embracing *kastom* alongside Christianity as a constitutive pillar of postcolonial governance.<sup>9</sup> A rhetorical embrace of *kastom* often went along with an erosion of the administrative structures that supported the neo-traditional customary authorities that were constituted in the colonial period. This is particularly true in Solomon Islands, where, in contrast to neighbouring Vanuatu or Fiji, there is no national council of chiefs and, despite constant calls for decentralisation, government is and remains focused in the national capital of Honiara. Provinces are poorly funded and, since a reform mandated by structural adjustment policies of the mid-1990s, neither local courts nor local councils have functioned.<sup>10</sup> In 1998, tensions between migrant Malaitans and indigenous people of Guadalcanal, the island where the national capital Honiara is located, broke into overt conflict, initiating a period of low-level civil war that lasted until 2003 when the Australian government initiated the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).<sup>11</sup> Ruling powers today—no longer a single colonial administration but a messy conglomeration of the Solomon Islands Government, RAMSI, bilateral aid donors, global aid agencies and others have sought to re-invigorate the customary authorities that are widely seen as having helped to hold the country together in an era of state collapse. This turn to the “customary” is part of a broader neoliberal approach to state building that seeks to strengthen non-state institutions rather than actually building state infrastructure.<sup>12</sup> Focused primarily in Honiara and on Guadalcanal and Malaita (the two provinces most affected by the civil conflict), this re-emphasis on the customary is having a trickledown effect throughout the country.

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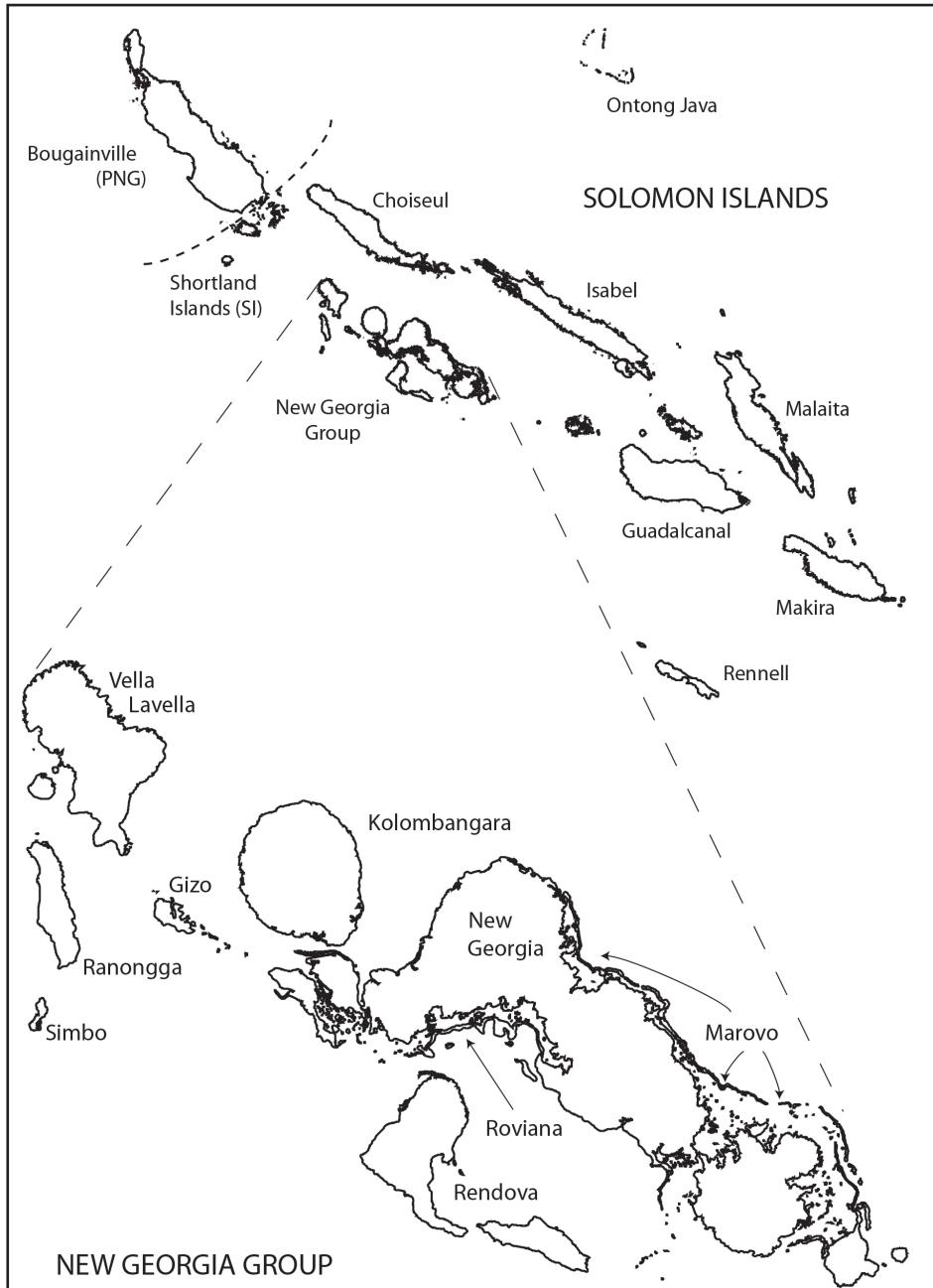
state and ‘customary’ in northern Mozambique,’ *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2010): 263–300; Harry G. West, and Scott Kloock-Jenson. ‘Betwixt and between: ‘traditional authority’ and democratic decentralization in post-war Mozambique,’ *African Affairs* 98 (1999): 455–84.

9 For collections of essays on the theme from different eras, see Roger M. Keesing and Robert Tonkinson, “Reinventing traditional culture: the politics of *kastom* in island Melanesia,” (Special Issue), *Mankind* 13(4) (1982): 374–99; Robert J. Foster (ed.), *Nation Making: Emergent Identities in Postcolonial Melanesia*, Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1995.

10 John Cox and Joanne Morrison, “Solomon Islands Provincial Governance Information Paper,” Canberra: AusAID, 2004; Daniel Evans, Michael Goddard and Don Paterson, “The hybrid courts of Melanesia: a comparative analysis of village courts of Papua New Guinea, Island Courts of Vanuatu and Local Courts of Solomon Islands,” *Justice and Development Working Paper Series*, The World Bank, 2011, online: <http://www.worldbank.org/justiceforthepeople>, accessed 23 February 2013.

11 See, e.g., Sinclair Dinnen, “A comment on state-building in Solomon Islands,” *Journal of Pacific History* 42 (2007): 255–63; Jonathan Fraenkel, *The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands*, Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press, 2004; Clive Moore, *Happy Isles in Crisis: The Historical Causes for a Failing State in Solomon Islands, 1998–2004*, Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2004.

12 Matthew Allen, *Long-Term Engagement: The Future of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2011.



**Map 1. Map of Solomon Islands, the New Georgia Group, and Ranongga Island**

Source: Created by author from sources in the public domain.



Current attempts to revitalise customary law resonate with colonial policies of indirect rule, but diverge markedly with regard to gender—a profound testament to the reach of the global feminist movement and its effects on global governance. Literature produced in the context of the intervention in the Solomons is pervaded by mantra-like invocations of the need to consider gender—few calls to recognise “customary authority” are not followed by some reference to the importance of “women’s groups” and “church groups.” Outsider attempts to promulgate a human rights agenda, however, may backfire and make indigenous women’s struggles against gender violence and discrimination more difficult. As Margaret Jolly notes, “having powerful foreigners as allies risks alienating the very local men they are trying to influence and to change.”<sup>13</sup> Indigenous women who speak of women’s rights, especially urban and educated women, become susceptible to accusations that they are merely parroting foreign discourses that are inappropriate for Melanesian situations. They must instead “operate within the small discursive space between anti-colonialism and national pride.”<sup>14</sup> At the same time that outsider support of women’s rights may invite nationalist opposition, however, the constant reiteration of the language of human rights seems to have normalised it. As I show below, phrases like “women’s rights” and “human rights” have entered the lexicon of ordinary villagers in ways that may make the inclusion of women on such things as a chiefs’ committee relatively uncontroversial.

This chapter explores emerging cracks in neo-traditional forms of patriarchy in a rural community on Ranongga Island, in the Western Province of the southwestern Pacific nation of Solomon Islands (Map 1). I begin by exploring pre-colonial precedents for women’s customary authority over people and territory, power that was largely invisible to colonial authorities and absent from colonial records. I then consider the solidification of a domestic versus political sphere at the high point of late colonialism in the post-World War II years, focusing especially on Joyce Dunateko Panakera, a former Seventh-day Adventist who became Ranongga’s first medically-trained female nurse and midwife and founded the islands’ Methodist Women’s Fellowship, and Dunateko’s husband, Simion Panakera, a businessman and customary authority in the late colonial Solomons. Finally, I turn to the women now being incorporated into the Pienuna Chiefs’ Committee in the 2000s, focusing especially on the experience of Marina Alepio, the daughter of Dunateko and Panakera, who was chosen to replace her brother as the “tribal” chief in 2005 (Figure 18).

13 Jolly, “*Woman Ikat Raet Long Human Raet O No?*” p. 129.

14 Martha Macintyre, “Hear us, women of Papua New Guinea!” p. 149.



**Figure 18. Marina Alepio with grandchild, Jericho village**

Source. Photographer Debra McDougall, 9 December 2006.

The recognition of female chiefs, the inclusion of women in chiefs' committees, and the often invisible leadership of women of previous generations belies any simple dismissal of "customary" institutions as inherently discriminatory. It points to the flexibility of local institutions and ingenuity of local people in responding to changing circumstances. At the same time, though, it is important to recognise that the customary authority that women like Marina are now taking on is greatly diminished from earlier in the century. Marina is a chief, but it is a chieftainship that has been "domesticated" by generations of colonial rule. Her work, like that of men in the same position, is focused primarily on maintaining amicable relationships within kin groups rather than engaging with powerful foreigners. The latter work is still mostly reserved for men, mostly educated urbanites who increasingly act as absentee landowners in negotiating resource deals regarding the land of their poor rural kinspeople. As Dickson-Waiko has argued, and Jemima Mowbray affirms in this volume, in contemporary Melanesia the "domestic" should be seen to consist not only of family households, but rural villages as a whole. Scholars write about the feminisation of labour markets in the industrial and industrialising worlds, where women seem more willing to take on lower-paid, less-secure, and lower-status positions that are replacing the secure employment of an earlier era. As the prestige and power of chiefs has declined and the focus of political-economic power has moved beyond local shores, it is perhaps unsurprising that women are stepping into these roles.

## Gender and power in pre-colonial Ranongga

Missionaries in the Western Solomons—like elsewhere in the colonial world—were quick to underline the urgency of their work by describing what they saw as the utterly degraded position of women. The indigenous practice of widow suicide, whereby the wives of particularly high chiefs sacrificed themselves to accompany their husbands in death, was a favourite topic of the Reverend John Francis Goldie of the Methodist Mission (established in Roviana Lagoon in 1902) as well as other Protestant missionaries in areas where such practices existed. Missionaries like Goldie also saw the hard physical labour of women in gardens as a sign of their exploitation. In a representative comment, he wrote, "I have known cases where the female slaves have become the wives of their captors, and have been treated with as much consideration as the women belonging to the tribe—which is perhaps not saying much."<sup>15</sup> As Bronwen Douglas' analysis of missionary discourse about women on Aneityum in Vanuatu suggests, such

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<sup>15</sup> John F. Goldie, "The People of New Georgia: their manners and customs and religious beliefs," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland* 22 (1908): 23–30, p. 27.

a comment is stock-standard for the region and the era.<sup>16</sup> Where they are mentioned at all, women appear in colonial and mission archives as wives and are often likened to servants and slaves.

Pacific Islands' women were not, however, only wives; they were also sisters, mothers, elders, persons of high rank or commoners, persons of particular clans. Among the most productive insights of late twentieth century studies of gender is the principle that one cannot begin analysis by assuming that "woman" will exist as a unified category in all situations. As Marilyn Strathern has argued influentially for Melanesia, we should focus instead on the *gendered relationships* that constitute both persons and exchange objects.<sup>17</sup> The point is particularly important in attempting to imaginatively reconstruct the authority that women might have had in Pacific Islands' society before church and state more firmly delimited gender roles and realms. Drawing in part on Strathern's insights, and recent work on ranked societies in Vanuatu, Jolly argues that "graded societies" should be viewed "not as unchanging institutions, eternal manifestations of male *kastom*, but as diverse and dynamic processes of rank and power, responsive to, and constitutive of, indigenous and exogenous histories."<sup>18</sup> Not only do women have parallel forms of exchange that give them status and prestige, but women may take rank in parallel or the same ceremonies.

By viewing women exclusively as wives, missionaries and colonial observers were especially likely to overlook the importance of the brother-sister relationship in many societies of Polynesia and island Melanesia, even as the policies they were implementing undermined sibling relationships. In her classic study of state formation in Tonga, Christine Ward Gailey argues that women as wives had lower rank than their husbands, but as sisters they had higher rank than their brothers; the kin relationships, not gendered bodies, determined status and power.<sup>19</sup> The cross-sex sibling relationship remains critical in Ranongga and elsewhere in New Georgia. Prior to Christian conversion, it was believed that a transgression by a sister would cause her brother to die in warfare and a brother's transgression would cause the sister to die in childbirth; both were forms of "bad deaths" that produced dangerous spirits rather than benevolent ancestors. Even today, sisters and brothers avoid physical contact and are not supposed to learn anything of the sibling's sexual relationships. Such forms of respectful avoidance are supposed to be reciprocal, and breaches may

16 Bronwen Douglas, "Provocative readings in intransigent archives: finding Aneityumese women," *Oceania* 70(2) (1999): 111–29.

17 Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

18 Margaret Jolly, "Material and immaterial relations: gender, rank and Christianity in Vanuatu," in *The Scope of Anthropology: Maurice Godelier's Work in Context*, ed. Laurent Dousset and Serge Tcherkézoff, New York: Berghahn Books, 2012, pp. 110–54, p. 114.

19 Christine Ward Gailey, *From Kingship to Kinship: Gender Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.



make sisters angry, but only brothers become violent if they hear of a sister's transgression and only brothers demand compensation. Drawing on historical sources and fieldwork in 1990–91, Christine Dureau documented how Christian ideologies of the family accorded husbands' authority over their wives and emphasised the role of "wife" rather than "sister" for women.<sup>20</sup> A decade later in Ranongga, however, many incidents of gender-based violence I heard of or witnessed involved brothers and sisters, not husbands and wives—a testament, perhaps, to the ongoing importance of the cross-sex sibling relationship.

Like many other societies of island Melanesia, Ranonggan kinship could be said to be matrilineal. A person is of the *butubutu* (which I gloss as "clan" but which is often translated into English as "tribe") of his or her mother (though she or he is said to be "born of" the *butubutu* of her father). Although they are not localised, clans are defined in a large part through their association with homologous territories. Only a handful of the clans present on Ranongga are thought to have originated on the island itself; the others trace origins to other areas of New Georgia, Choiseul, Santa Isabel and, in rarer cases, to the eastern Solomons. Clan histories focus on female ancestors, their movement across the sea, and the divisions that emerged between sisters. Today, in written genealogies increasingly produced for the purposes of land disputes, women's names tend to be written in all capital letters and link the generations while men's names are written in small letters beside their sisters. Men, not women, are most likely to be omitted from genealogies and forgotten.

Unlike other parts of the Protectorate where chiefs were the invention of the colonial government,<sup>21</sup> the islands that became known as the New Georgia group had a tradition of powerful chiefs (*bangara*) who could rally hundreds or thousands of men for the long distance war raids for which the region was notorious in the late nineteenth century. Archaeological research suggests that this chiefly complex began to emerge in the sixteenth century, when mortuary shrines became much more elaborate, and when long distance headhunting

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20 Christine Dureau, "Nobody asked the mother: women and maternity on Simbo, Western Solomon Islands," *Oceania* 64 (1993): 18–35; Christine Dureau, "From sisters to wives: changing contexts of maternity on Simbo, Western Solomon Islands," in *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 239–74.

21 Roger M. Keesing, "Chiefs in a chiefless society: the ideology of modern Kwaiio politics," *Oceania* 38(4) (1968): 276–80. For recent discussions of the long-term transformations of chiefly leadership in connection to Christianity and the state written by anthropologists who have worked for decades in the region, see Edvard Hviding, "Re-placing the state in the Western Solomons: the political rise of the Christian Fellowship Church," in *Made in Oceania: Social Movements, Cultural Heritage and the State in the Pacific*, ed. Edvard Hviding and Knut Mikjel Rio, Wantage England: Sean Kingston, 2011, pp. 51–90; Geoffrey White, "Chiefs, church, and state in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands," in *Christian Politics in Oceania*, ed. Matt Tomlinson and Debra McDougall, New York: Berghahn, 2013, pp. 171–97.

warfare probably emerged.<sup>22</sup> Islanders came into contact with European whalers on a regular basis in the early nineteenth century; a time of major epidemics due to introduced diseases. The introduction of iron tools seems to have lessened men's subsistence load, giving more time for other pursuits, including warfare which became more deadly with the introduction of iron and guns. Certain coastal chiefs in areas of high contact with Europeans were able to transform their relationships with Europeans into local prestige and power. The system was both at its peak and, because of depopulation, near collapse on the eve of British pacification in 1899–1900.<sup>23</sup>

Most *bangara* were men, yet mythic tales from Ranongga tell of female *bangara* who led or instigated war raids. This may reflect a practice in which a group (including men) are referred to by the name of a remembered clan ancestress (what Rumsey calls the “I” of discourse in the Pacific), whether or not she was directly involved in the raid.<sup>24</sup> Even if few women were actually involved in leading raids, early ethnography and oral accounts suggest a well-established role for women in welcoming successful expeditions home. Several lineage narratives I heard, told of women who intervened to prevent the sacrifice of a captive in order to adopt the person, often as a “sister” for a son.<sup>25</sup>

These gendered roles are evident in stories of the arrival of Christianity.<sup>26</sup> When young James Paleo of Pienuna accidentally boarded a mission ship and travelled to the headquarters of the Methodist Mission in Roviana Lagoon in 1914, his relatives took him for dead. Two years later, in 1916, he returned with fellow indigenous missionaries bearing the Bible. As these events are dramatised in Pienuna each year, Paleo was rebuffed by the male chiefs and ritual priests of the village who told him to leave and not “dirty” their sacred place. He was

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22 Peter J. Sheppard, Richard Walter and Takuya Nagaoka, “The archaeology of head-hunting in Roviana Lagoon, New Georgia,” *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 109(1) (2000): 1–37.

23 Judith A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago 1800–1978*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987, pp. 21–44, 112–15; Edvard Hviding, *Guardians of the Marovo Lagoon: Practice, Place, and Politics in Maritime Melanesia*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996, pp. 79–130; John M. McKinnon, “Tomahawks, turtles and traders: a reconstruction in the circular causation of warfare in the New Georgia Group,” *Oceania*, 45(4) (1975): 290–307; Geoffrey M. White, “War, peace, and piety in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands,” in *The Pacification of Melanesia*, ed. Margaret Rodman and Matthew Cooper, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983, pp. 109–40; Martin Zelenietz, “The end of headhunting in New Georgia,” in *The Pacification of Melanesia*, ed. Margaret Rodman and Matthew Cooper, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983, pp. 91–108.

24 Alan Rumsey, “Agency, personhood and the “I” of discourse in the Pacific and beyond,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* 6 (2000): 101–15.

25 A first-hand account of women welcoming ashore captives in Simbo in 1903 is to be found in A.M. Hocart, “Warfare in Eddystone of the Solomon Islands,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 61 (1931): 301–24. Discussed in Debra McDougall, “Paths of *pinauzu*: captivity and social reproduction in Ranongga,” *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 109(1) (2000): 99–113. For a comparative case, see Martha Macintyre, “Violent bodies and vicious exchanges: personification and objectification in the Massim,” *Social Analysis* 37 (1995): 29–43.

26 Debra McDougall, “Fellowship and citizenship as models of national community: United Church Women's Fellowship in Ranongga, Solomon Islands,” *Oceania* 74(1–2) (2003): 61–80.

championed by Takavoja, a chiefly woman of *butubutu* Vitu, which held the land of Pienuna. Standing up to the men, she welcomed her "child" home and ushered him ashore to her house, where the first Christian services were held. In doing so, she seems to have been enacting the traditional role of chiefly women upon the return of a war canoe and is now credited, along with Paleo, with bringing the gospel to the island.

Takavoja also seems to have had considerable influence over plans for clan succession.<sup>27</sup> Because she had no sisters, she is said to have been worried about the continuity of the Vitu clan—a worry that proved prescient because her only surviving daughter had no surviving daughters, so that her grandson (the current village chief) is the last Vitu man directly descended from the ancestress who established Vitu at Pienuna. According to the late Ruben Kiapio of Pienuna, Takavoja sent his father (a man of a clan named Kubongava whose land is in Choiseul) across the island to bring a sister back to Pienuna to act as her sister. There was an established relationship between Vitu and Kubongava that is linked to the original war raid that brought the first Kubongava woman as a captive to Ranongga. I was told that she was not taken as a "slave" but as a "replacement" for Vitu, which had called the raid. Kiapio's father and his cousins encountered Tuqetako with her mother in the bush harvesting taro and tricked the mother into allowing them to take her daughter. When they brought Tuqetako back to Pienuna, Takavoja is reported to have said, "If Vitu ends, then Kubongava can take over; she will be my clan replacement." In what must have been a marriage arranged to solidify this sibling-like relationship, the two women married two brothers. That means that the children of Takavoja and Tuqetako (including Simion Panakera, whose story I take up below) were siblings both because their mothers were (adopted) sisters and their fathers were brothers. Whatever the implications of such narratives will be for the chiefly succession at Pienuna,<sup>28</sup> the story indicates the central role that Takavoja is remembered to have played in the affairs of this chiefly lineage and the ways that the "domestic" realm of marriage helped to solidify political alliances.

Takavoja's son, Alphaeus Toribule, was the village chief throughout the colonial era; her daughter, Mary Atunauru, also had significant authority over land and village life. Atunauru is remembered for donating a large and well-sited plot of land to a mission in the 1930s for a primary school, now the site of a junior high

27 Accounts that I have collected from elsewhere in Ranongga, including one recorded in the 1970s that recounted events of the 1880s and 1890s, suggest that women were called together to affirm decisions about male chiefly succession.

28 A grandson of Tuqetako was reportedly chosen to succeed the current chief of Pienuna, but he died unexpectedly at sea. His sisters' children have not yet demonstrated qualities of leadership that have made them obvious candidates for the position. The Vitu clan is not, moreover, extinct—only the lineage descended from Takavoja. During the period of my fieldwork, a powerful Vitu chief living in Vella Lavella sent his sister's daughter to live in Pienuna in order to re-establish the larger clan on its land, but she left after a series of conflicts. The situation remains unclear.



school and teacher's houses. When Dunateko Panakera wanted to found the island's first women's Christian fellowship group—a story I take up in the next section—it was Atunauru whom she approached for permission. Importantly, though, this kind of female authority appears to have been completely invisible to both the colonial missions and the colonial administration, who saw only male authority. Toribule is visible in the archive as village chief and a member of the native court and council in post-World War II Ranongga; there is not a single reference to his sister. As women were excluded from the neo-traditional structures of native administration, their authority over land and people probably attenuated. At the same time, however, the church opened new spaces for women's collective action, not as sisters or chiefly women, but as *women*.

## Customary authority and a cult of domesticity

Gender roles were transformed in twentieth-century Western Solomon Islands with a consolidation of male customary authority and female domesticity. This consolidation of men's and women's roles went together with an increasing emphasis on the importance of marriage, rather than siblingship, as the defining relationship in women's and men's lives and in the emerging economy of household-based cash cropping.

At the centre of Pienuna village is a large stone column with a marble plaque in memory of Joyce Dunateko Panakera "who pioneered the work of the UCWF (MWF) in Ranongga Island." Born and raised in Marovo as a Seventh-day Adventist, Dunateko (1914–1977) was trained as a nurse and midwife prior to 1942 (Figure 19). She was undertaking further training at the Adventist school at Kukudu on the island of Kolombangara when the terrifying power of global war exploded in the quiet backwaters of the Solomons. Behind Japanese lines in 1942–43, Kukudu became a base for the Islander coast watchers who radioed reports of Japanese movements to Americans. Among them was Simion Panakera (1902–1996) of Pienuna village, already a widower. Against the wishes of Dunateko's family, she eloped with Panakera, returned to Pienuna village, and converted to Methodism.

Even before the War, Panakera was becoming a powerful local leader and a person of influence within what was then the Western District of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. As one of the first generation of young men educated through the Methodist Mission in Roviana, Panakera became a pastor-teacher and was posted throughout the Bilua circuit in the 1930s. After the War, the British Protectorate administration worked to involve villagers in government through native courts and native councils. The three leading figures of this era were men identified with territorial divisions of the island: Panakera

from Kubokota, George Hilly from Luqa, and Niquasasa from Ganoqa. Kubokota and Luqa were Methodist, but most of Ganoqa was Seventh-day Adventist and this area was sometimes referred to in government correspondence as the "SDA section." In 1948, a Native Administration and Native Court was established for the District Court of Vella Lavella District, which included Ranongga and Simbo, with Niquasasa as the founding Vice-President of both Court and Council. Toribule and Panakera alternated through the 1940s and 1950s as members of the council. When a separate court was established for Ranongga and neighbouring Simbo in 1957, Niquasasa was appointed its president, with George Hilly as the vice-president, and Panakera as one of the justices.<sup>29</sup> During this period, these emergent leaders were also involved in mobilising land and labour for the commercial production of copra on Ranongga, sometimes as allies and sometimes as competitors. The two Methodists, in particular, were active entrepreneurs who acquired large areas of land, purchased copra from residents, ran large retail stores, and owned ships they used in these ventures. Panakera drew on the labour of his kinspeople and hired labourers from the eastern Solomons.



**Figure 19. Pastor Joseph Sasapitu and members of the Ranongga United Church Women's Fellowship at the unveiling of a monument to the memory of Joyce Dunateko Panakera, 6 August 2000**

Source: Photographer Debra McDougall, 6 August 2000.

<sup>29</sup> BSIP 7/III/34/5, General Administration, Vella, 11 Nov 1948 and 9 Nov 1948. BSIP 7/I/DCW 124, Vella La Vella Native Council, 6 June 1957, National Archives, Honiara, Solomon Islands.

If Panakera was at the forefront of neo-traditional male leadership, Dunateko established a certain model domesticity on the island. Dunateko's children and grandchildren remember her at the head of a bustling household. She had seven children with Panakera (including Geoffrey, Marina and Charlie to whom I return below) and also looked after children and grandchildren from Panakera's first marriage. Their hamlet was full of visitors, coming to see Panakera. She combined customary hospitality with modern sorts of order and cleanliness. If missionaries' insistence on clothing increased women's burden, this was a burden that Dunateko seems to have embraced. A detail of her domestic management that seemed as remarkable to her descendants as it does to me is the image of her starching and ironing the family's Sunday clothing every week! As Ranongga's first female trained nurse, Dunateko transformed practices of birthing on the island—working with a local midwife named Suluana, she normalised clinic births among a population of women who had until then refused the assistance of male nurses.<sup>30</sup>

The ideals of domesticity that emerged in Ranongga during the middle twentieth century were multiply paradoxical. As in the Papua New Guinea case that Jemima Mowbray discusses in this volume, colonial officials shared missionaries' belief that women's work in food gardens prevented them from dedicating themselves to home and nuclear family and that this demonstrated that indigenous men treated them as mere beasts of burden. Far from reducing women's subsistence burden thus "freeing" them for more appropriate domestic labours, however, colonial economic policies that pushed men into wage labour or encouraged cash cropping actually shifted more agricultural work onto women. In light of such analysis, Dunateko's success in emulating a certain Victorian model of domesticity should be understood in relation to Panakera's success in harnessing the labour of kin, hiring employees and accumulating capital. In the same way that middle-class women in early industrial Britain found it easier to live up to ideals of domesticity than working class women did, I imagine that Dunateko found it easier than ordinary women of Ranongga whose husbands controlled less labour or capital than Panakera.

When Dunateko came to Ranongga, she became a Methodist, but it is tempting to understand her particular form of domesticity as bound with her education within the Seventh-day Adventist mission.<sup>31</sup> The "cult of womanhood" common to all Protestant missions seems to have taken root most strongly among Adventist

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30 The dramatic improvement that trained midwives brought to women's lives in the second half of the twentieth century is hard to overstate. It is illustrated by the contrast between the reproductive histories of Panakera's first wife and Dunateko—whereas only four of his first wife's seven babies survived past early childhood and she herself died in childbirth, all of Dunateko's seven children survived to adulthood.

31 On differences between Adventists and other Christian denominations to modernity, see H. Jebens, "Beyond globalisation and localisation: denominational pluralism in a Papua New Guinean Village," *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 12(1) (2011): 91–110; Hirokazu Miyazaki, *The Method of Hope: Anthropology, Philosophy, and Fijian Knowledge*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004; Harold M. Ross, "Competition

communities. In the era of missionisation, Adventist missionaries differed from those of other churches in their overt rejection of many aspects of tradition and, unlike other missions and the government, they encouraged converts to take on European manners, dress and behaviours. Although European Adventists seemed disinterested in local culture, they were much quicker than their Methodist counterparts to ordain indigenous pastors and grant them extensive responsibility for evangelising other areas within the Solomons and PNG, often accompanied by their wives.<sup>32</sup> As Dunateko's example suggests, by the 1930s even unmarried girls could undertake professional training, albeit in a field considered appropriate for women. On Ranongga today, Seventh-day Adventist villages appear neater than United Church villages, with a great deal of care taken in cultivating clover fields and flower gardens. Most have a higher proportion of timber and iron sheeting "permanent" houses to bush material houses than neighbouring United Church villages, signs of higher levels of participation in wage labour and investment of earnings into the household. Seventh-day Adventists regularly practise daily devotion in a nuclear family. An emphasis on education (with relatively high school fees) and greater degree of upward mobility has also made the nuclear family more important in Adventist communities than in United Church communities.<sup>33</sup>

Though an outsider, Dunateko seems to have quickly become a leader of Ranonggan women. In 1962, she was selected to attend a five-day training program for potential leaders of "women's clubs" led by an expatriate woman from the Honiara Women's Club and hosted by Marama Carter, the wife of the last expatriate New Zealand head of the Methodist Mission in the Solomons. Panakera paddled Dunateko across to the mission headquarters in Vella, where she joined three other women and travelled on the mission ship to Munda in Roviana. At the conclusion of the workshop, Marama Carter and the Methodist women decided to form not a women's "club" but women's "fellowship" and Dunateko returned with instructions to start such a group on her own island. As noted above, upon returning to Pienuna she consulted Mary Atunauru, the sister of village chief Toribule, who gave permission for this new enterprise. With the steadfast support of Panakera, who sometimes paddled and sometimes drove her in his new-fangled motorised canoe, Dunateko travelled around the island to spread the gospel of women's fellowship.

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for Baegu souls: mission rivalry on Malaita, Solomon Islands," in *Mission, Church, and Sect in Oceania*, ed. James A. Boutilier, Daniel T. Hughes and Sharon W. Tiffany, Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1984, pp. 163–200.

32 Dennis Steley, "Unfinished: the Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the South Pacific, Excluding Papua New Guinea, 1886–1986," Ph.D. thesis, Auckland: University of Auckland, 1989.

33 Although Methodists and Adventists are interspersed and were closely related in the generation prior to conversion, interdenominational marriage was rare in the 1940s and today. Panakera is said to have really accomplished something by "stealing" a woman from the Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs). But Panakera himself had (and his descendants retain) close ties to Adventists relatives in Mondo (from where both his mother, Tuqetako, and his father, had come).

In an earlier publication, I have described the foundation of Methodist Women's Fellowship, which became United Church Women's Fellowship (UCWF) in 1968, and the enormous importance it has in contemporary Ranonggan life.<sup>34</sup> Initially dismissed as a waste of time (*qurupu pavu goboro*, in Pijin *group taet nating*, literally the "group that makes you tired for nothing"), by the early 2000s the UCWF was considered by village men and women a model organisation, better structured than the male-led church as a whole. With its emphasis on housekeeping and the Christian family, the UCWF and other similar organisations are hardly radical feminist organisations aiming to overturn gender inequalities. Dunateko herself emphasised that husbands were the head of the household and women should aim to help them raise a Christian family.<sup>35</sup> But women's fellowship also drew women into a modern form of bureaucracy and new kinds of leadership that were not open to them through the path of male-only colonial native administration. Like Native Councils and Courts, Women's Fellowship had officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer), meetings, reports and formal training sessions. Women's fellowship accustomed women to public speaking, pushed them to take on formal leadership roles, motivated them to read, write and manage money.

Christian churches in many ways exacerbated existing patriarchal tendencies by reinforcing the power of husbands over wives and overlooking the other roles that women had in kin-based social organisation. Yet as Dickson-Waiko has argued, "It was churches which provided the opportunities and space for women to move out of their homes and into the public sphere"; women's church groups are thus "the missing rib" of indigenous feminism throughout the Pacific region.<sup>36</sup> Women's church groups are often more effective and less subject to accusations of being seen as elitist than many secular initiatives more directly aligned with global feminism, yet this global feminism has profoundly shaped the local women's groups. Women's church leaders meet their counterparts from around the world and, often with male church leaders present too, they discuss things such as the UN 1975 Convention Against all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The UCWF is a conduit for new sorts of ideas, which in the 1990s included ideas about human rights and women's rights. As I have documented, these global agendas are sometimes transformed dramatically in translation, but they nonetheless exist as discursive resources in discussions about the appropriate roles of men and women.<sup>37</sup> This bottom-up emergence of new kinds of female Christian leadership resonates with older

34 McDougall, "Fellowship and citizenship as models of national community."

35 Joyce Dunateko Panakera, "Autobiographical account of the origins of Women's Fellowship on Ranongga," n.d., manuscript received from Charlie Panakera in 2000.

36 Anne Dickson-Waiko, "The missing rib: mobilizing church women for change in Papua New Guinea," *Oceania* 74(1/2) (2003): 98–119, p. 103; see also other papers in Bronwen Douglas, Special Issue: 'Women's Groups and Everyday Modernities in Melanesia,' *Oceania* 74(1–2) (2003).

37 McDougall, "Fellowship and citizenship as models of national community."



forms of female traditional authority and, more recently, has dovetailed to some degree with top-down initiatives to include women as "stakeholders" in post-conflict nation building.

In the decades that women's fellowship groups were opening new avenues for women's collective action, colonial-era chiefs like Panakera increasingly lost control over the production of what remained the most important source of cash income well into the 1980s. The situation parallels that discussed at length by Robert Foster for Tanga Island in New Ireland. There, big men (whose authority was hereditary and affirmed through ritual) were instrumental in the mobilisation of labour and land for copra production.<sup>38</sup> In the years after the Second World War, however, the control of big men was on the decline as individual households, often with unequal access to land and labour, undertook copra production independently. In Ranongga, a similar shift seem to have been caused by the increasing awareness of the processes of commercial production by ordinary people, the rise of government supported co-ops much smaller than those of Panakera and Hilly, and the increasing indebtedness of these entrepreneurs. Writing of Marovo, Edvard Hviding and Tim Bayliss Smith suggest that copra production "'democratised' access to wealth and status earlier this century because there was no aspect of the copra industry that could be brought under the sole control of local leaders."<sup>39</sup> This was to change in the 1980s and 1990s as logging replaced copra as the most important source of cash income for many villagers and for the state as a whole. Male chiefs, and especially the savvy younger men who act as brokers in deals with logging companies and are increasingly acting as absentee landowners from positions in Honiara or overseas, have been able to consolidate power in a new way. The exclusion of women from realms of "customary authority" during the colonial era was reinforced in the context of the logging boom. In its uneven legislation and policy around logging, the independent government seems to have implicitly adopted colonially constituted understandings of traditional landownership. Most of the actual negotiations between companies and landowners occurred in male enclaves like hotels and often involved heavy drinking. Women were neither welcome nor would they have felt comfortable participating in such gatherings.<sup>40</sup>

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38 Robert J. Foster, *Social Reproduction and History in Melanesia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 42–50.

39 Edvard Hviding, and Tim Bayliss-Smith, *Islands of Rainforest: Agroforestry, Logging and Eco-Tourism in Solomon Islands*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, p. 232.

40 Hviding and Bayliss-Smith, *Islands of Rainforest*, pp. 205–40. See also Judith A. Bennett, *Pacific Forest: A History of Resource Control and Contest in Solomon Islands, C. 1800–1997*, Cambridge: White Horse Press, 2000.

## Gender, rights, and customary authority

In 2005, Dunateko and Panakera's daughter Marina Alepio became the head of her extended family and a "tribal" chief in the context of customary village politics, succeeding her brother Geoffrey following his untimely death. As a senior woman and long-standing leader of the United Church Women's Fellowship, Marina had experience of leadership that she says has helped her in taking on the work of a "tribal" chief. As a church leader, she has long been called upon to mediate disputes through Christian prayer and counselling.<sup>41</sup> Now she deals with different kinds of disputes—incest, adultery, swearing, threats of violence and fights about land—and helps to organise the exchange of money and valuables as compensation (*ira*) said in Ranongga to cool feelings and end disputes definitively. In the first years after Geoffrey's death, she had the unstinting support of a classificatory brother Jebeti Toribule (son of Toribule and grandson of Takavoja) who accompanied and supported her when she dealt with problems affecting the people for whom she was responsible. She participated in the work of the Pienuna Chiefs' Committee. Like other institutions of customary governance, this committee had been comprised only of men as chiefs but, in the processes of appointing new chiefs to replace those who had died, several women were chosen as chiefs, deputy chiefs or second deputy chiefs in the 2000s.

Like other apparently customary institutions, the Pienuna Chiefs' Committee is poised at the intersection of local and state forms of governance.<sup>42</sup> The "customary" here must be understood in contrast to a law that it supplements but from which it has been excluded. The chiefs' committee emerged out of native and then local councils that were part of a colonial system of indirect rule that sought to harness traditional authority and traditional rules to state authority and state rule, while at the same time maintaining institutional and discursive divisions between custom and law. As in the African cases cited above, these colonially constituted forms of "custom" have experienced striking revivals in the context of decreasing faith in and commitment to states. As Michael Goddard points out, much of the voluminous literature generated in the wake of RAMSI has focused to some degree on a perceived lack of fit between customary and traditional approaches and state legal approaches to conflict and governance, with many recommending renewed efforts to reinforce those traditional institutions that maintained a reasonable degree of social order

41 Debra McDougall and Joy Kere, "Christianity, custom, and law: conflict and peacemaking in the post-conflict Solomon Islands," in *Mediating across Difference: Oceanic and Asian Approaches to Conflict Resolution*, ed. Morgan Brigg and Roland Bleiker, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011, pp. 141–62.

42 A point that is well made in the introduction to an important volume on land tenure: James F. Weiner and Katie Glaskin, "Introduction," in *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Weiner and Glaskin, Canberra: ANU E Press, 2007, pp. 1–14, online: <http://press.anu.edu.au/apem/customary/html/frames.php>, accessed 16 May 2014.



in the face of state collapse.<sup>43</sup> While it is usually acknowledged in passing that colonialism reshaped customary institutions, they are still treated as essentially indigenous and independent from the state. I suggest, in contrast, an institution like the Pienuna Chiefs' Committee is better viewed as the last remnant of a colonial system of indirect rule neglected by a postcolonial state.

In the era around and following national Independence in 1978, customary authorities existed in parallel to newer forms of democratically elected authorities. The men who served on Native and then Local Courts and Councils were not elected but appointed by the British administration; those serving on chiefs' committee today are selected by a range of informal procedures. When people of Ranongga and Simbo had the chance to elect representatives to the Provincial and National governments, the most prominent were the sons of colonial-era customary authorities. Francis Billy Hilly, son of George Hilly, was elected to the first Parliament in 1976 and, with a short break, served until he finally lost his seat in 2010, having held many Ministerial portfolios and served briefly as Prime Minister. Charlie Panakera, the son of Simion Panakera and Dunateko, was also elected to serve in the Provincial Government in the 1980s before he moved to New Zealand to take up a position as a university lecturer in management. In addition to National and Provincial levels, the 1981 Provincial Government Act gave provinces the right to establish "local area councils" as the lowest level of government instead of the previously unelected local councils.

Approaches to customary institutions—that is, those that were outside of the new structures of elected representation—in this early independence era were complex and contradictory. The explosion of logging on customary land ensured that the neo-traditional forms of customary leadership that emerged in the colonial period would remain vital. It also thoroughly compromised most levels of state government as officials found themselves on one or other side of land disputes and logging contracts. Like their colonial predecessors, however, independent legislators sought repeatedly to re-instate divisions between "custom" and "law." The Local Court (Amendment) Act 1985, for example, was an attempt to keep land disputes outside of the formal court system. It required that complainants try to solve grievances through the mediation of chiefs before approaching the local court. If the decision of these chiefs was not accepted, complainants could then appeal to the local court. Among the many problems with such a set up was that in most cases the very same men served as chiefs and

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43 Michael Goddard, "Justice delivered locally Solomon Islands," *Literature Review, Justice for the Poor*, the World Bank, 2010, online: <http://www.worldbank.org/justiceforthe poor>, accessed 22 February 2013. Indicative of the turn to customary forms of governance is the fact that a major part of this World Bank program (undertaken in conjunction with Solomon Islands' Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs) is focused on "Justice Delivered Locally" and aims at "invigorating local-level justice and governance systems." See *Justice for the Poor*, the World Bank, 2010, online: <http://go.worldbank.org/PYYTF5A9K0>, accessed 22 February 2013.

local court justices. Although the legislation created the fiction that they were outside of government, they followed the same procedures that they, and their fathers before them, had learned to follow while serving on the local court.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the hybrid systems of customary authority developed over decades of colonial government were artificially spliced between the government local court and the customary Chiefs' Committee.

Amidst rhetoric and policies favouring devolution of responsibility to provinces and area councils (especially with regard to logging), the state in the 1980s and 1990s withdrew support and recognition from all forms of local governance, both customary and democratically elected authorities. Instead of stemming the flow of land disputes to the formal court, the Local Court Act of 1985 merely added another layer of process: almost all decisions on the part of the chiefs were appealed to the court system. Overwhelmed and unfunded, local courts in Western Province through much of the 1990s simply did not sit except in situations where logging companies funded and organised hearings. Whereas earlier instantiations of native and local courts dealt with personal offences and even organised labour within villages, local courts in the 1990s focused entirely on land. In the context of structural adjustment policies of the 1990s, area councils—which were never very effective and quickly were sucked into the corrupt politics of the logging boom—were eliminated entirely.<sup>45</sup>

The withdrawal of state support and recognition did not, however, lead to the immediate demise of the Pienuna Chiefs' Committee. Building on the legacy of their fathers, men like Geoffrey Panakera, Jebeti Toribule, and many others continued their work without recognition or support from the state. The formal procedures of "chiefs' hearings" and the structure of formal officers such as president, vice, secretary, treasurer reflect the institution's origins in colonial era local courts and councils. The work of straightening disputes, however, did not proceed in the fashion of court cases, with much more emphasis on restoring amiable relations between the sides, affirming that everyone was related, and organising reciprocal forms of exchange of cash or shell money. As one of the stronger committees on the island, the Pienuna Chiefs' Committee was called to settle disputes all around the island, especially those involving conflicts over boundaries of cultivated areas and settlement sites and disputes around incest and adultery.

Even before the collapse of the state in the context of the civil crisis, the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that sought to combat destructive logging

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44 "Chiefs' Hearings" (partial correspondence of Pienuna Chiefs Committee, 1986–1990), folder in possession of author.

45 John Cox and Joanne Morrison, "Solomon Islands Provincial Governance information paper," Canberra: AusAID, 2004.

sought solutions to modern crises through a supposed return to "custom." On Ranongga, WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) took an active role in attempting to reconstitute customary forms of community authority in the context of a conservation and development project commenced in 1997. An Australian consultant was retained in 1999 to produce a book of "custom law" and create a "peak body" of customary authorities (named the Ranongga Simbo Custom Council). Despite an overt emphasis within WWF's project on gender inclusion, the male consultant made no effort to include women, even those few who were recognised locally as clan leaders at the time.<sup>46</sup> The following year, in the months following the June 5 coup, secessionist sentiment was running high in Western Province, which was at one point declared an independent state. The Premier and other officials were seeking to recognise and bolster the customary power of chiefs in rural areas, including Ranongga and Simbo, wanted to constitute a recognisable body with which it could work. I alerted Provincial authorities to the existence of the Ranongga Simbo Custom Council (which had not met since it was constituted by WWF). The (all-male) executive the Custom Council met with Provincial (or, as they understood themselves at the time, "State") authorities and employees of WWF. Provincial authorities encouraged self-sufficiency and the delineation of a clear local agenda but questions from the Chairman and members of the Ranongga Simbo Custom Council focused mainly on how chiefs can gain recognition and financial support from the government. Like all the others, nothing came of that meeting, which was (as far as I know) the last meeting of the Ranongga Simbo Custom Council.

By early 2007, the Chiefs Committee seemed to be at a low point. Several leaders had died and the young men who were designated their successors were disinterested in taking up their work. Jebeti Toribule, the Chairman of the Chiefs Committee, said that only Marina, who had replaced her brother the previous year, seemed eager to be mentored in learning the art of dispute settlement. Jebeti persisted in his efforts to seek broader recognition of the committee and was working on community by-laws he hoped would be ratified by the Provincial government. Yet his efforts seemed unlikely to bear fruit, and later in 2007, he left Ranongga to live in his wife's home area on the island of Santa Isabel.

When I returned for further fieldwork in 2010, I was therefore surprised to see that the Chiefs' Committee was meeting actively again and that several senior women were centrally involved. Of the twelve named "tribes" of the village, Marina was the only woman listed unambiguously as "tribal chief," with her sister as her deputy and her eldest son as the second deputy. Marina was also designated treasurer of the Committee. Three other women were listed

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<sup>46</sup> Debra McDougall, "The unintended consequences of clarification: development, disputing, and the dynamics of community in Ranongga, Solomon Islands," *Ethnohistory* 52(1) (2005): 81–109.

as “deputy chiefs” for their tribes. Jebeti’s sister, Varina Lekevolomo, became heavily involved in chiefly business after he left and she took over as secretary during meetings I observed in mid-2010. She effectively ran the meetings on behalf of the soft-spoken chairman, Luke Irapio (Figure 20). The inclusion of women on this committee is partially a response to external pushes for gender equity. In one June 2010 meeting, Varina said that the staff at the Peace and Reconciliation Office in Gizo asked her why she was the only woman on the Committee. Former Western Province Premier Reuben Lilo had been saying that Ranongga and Simbo had always had female chiefs. Silas Besa, a member of the Committee, pitched in to support the idea, saying that if there were two women, there should be two men; gender balance is important because women and men have different ideas. Derek Alekera, well-versed in the language of governance, added that it was also important for “equal rights” because “if we are not equal, then people do not have their human rights.” In Pienuna, at least, there seems to be little resistance on the part of men to increasing the involvement of women, even an outspoken and ambitious woman like Varina.



**Figure 20. Luke Irapio and Varina Lekevolomo, Meeting of the Pienuna Chiefs’ Trust Board**

Source: Photographer Debra McDougall, 30 June 2010.

The nature of this chiefs' organisation had, however, changed even in the decades that I have observed it. When I first was doing fieldwork in the late 1990s, the men who comprised the Pienuna Chiefs' Committee did not have formal meetings; they were called together in order to deal with specific disputes. In contrast, the series of meetings I witnessed in 2010 were centrally focused on the task of constituting the organisation in a way that it could be recognised by external authorities like the Provincial Government, RAMSI, and funding agencies. In a May 2010 meeting, the Pienuna Chiefs' Committee had been renamed the "Pienuna Chiefs' Trust Board," officer positions were designated and tribal chiefs were chosen to be signatories to the bylaws they would enact. The tribal chiefs were seen as part of a hierarchy of authority—from the family, to church, to tribal chiefs, to the chiefs' committee, to ward chiefs, and finally to provincial and government law. In other words, rather than exercising an already existing authority within local communities, the women and men focused on constituting chiefly authority in a bureaucratic form that would be recognised by outsiders.

In two day-long meetings in June and July 2010, which I attended, the focus was primarily on debating the "custom laws" which consist of a set of offences and penalties, built on the "Book of Custom Law" compiled in 1999 through the WWF project. Many participants had a sophisticated understanding of the boundary between custom and law. As David Alepitu, a former head of the Local Court, explained at one point, "The law aims to punish, but customary dispute resolution involves the exchange of money in order to 'smother' the problem and restore harmony." Varina, along with Derek Alekera, had attended workshops in Gizo on domestic violence and the rights of the child, and raised questions in the discussion about situations in which those offenses would have to be dealt with by both custom and law. In a discussion of an adultery case between a married man and an underage girl, Varina stated that they would be punished according to custom (which involves presentation of shell rings or cash by the family of offenders to those who are offended) and the Trust Board would also then report the man to the law for what amounted to statutory rape. Hours of discussion turned on the question of how to put a cash price on the traditional shell valuables used in compensation, valuables that are no longer produced and are too scarce to be used in every dispute. John Pavukera reminded everyone that those valuables were used, in the past, as substitutions for people who were to be killed, raising the inevitable question of the value of human life. Others argued for a token price because if the price was too high, disputes would linger as people worked to collect money.

Not only are women and men invoking the language of human rights and gender equity, and working on ways to reconcile the contradictory imperatives of community cohesion and individual freedom, but there seems little resistance to

the increasing participation of women in what was formerly a male-dominated realm of neo-traditional authority. Yet even the brief overview provided here, however, suggests that an institution like the Pienuna Chiefs' Trust Board (like its predecessor, the Pienuna Chiefs' Committee) wields relatively little real power beyond local shores. In 2010 and prior years, much effort has been expended seeking recognition from more powerful authorities, a quest that has so far yielded little lasting success.

## The domestication of customary authority

More than a century ago, A.M. Hocart's informants lamented the loss of chiefly power following pacification—without warfare, chiefs “stopped nothing” just like ordinary people.<sup>47</sup> Chiefs like Panakera, Hilly and Niqu gained a new sort of power in the mid-twentieth century, but this power did not last more than a generation. In the 2000 meeting between the Ranongga Simbo Custom Council and representatives of the Provincial government and WWF discussed above, a member from Simbo said that the colonial government recognised chiefs and appointed them as headmen, but since independence, politicians have taken the real power and are antagonistic to chiefs. Chiefs are chiefs in name only, he said, without money or power to do their jobs. It was a lament I had heard frequently. “Tribal chiefs” in Ranongga have limited control over the labour of residents, limited power over land tenure and minimal engagement with multinational corporations seeking to undertake logging on the island.<sup>48</sup> Like church leaders, chiefs maintain harmony and good order in the village, which is now a fundamentally domestic sort of realm. In Ranongga at least, chiefs today manage the affairs of kin, but in a trans-local world where class divisions are coming to be more important than kinship ties, important decisions are often made far from the rural villages they affect. Marina occupies a very different sort of role than her father did fifty years ago, and not simply because she is a woman.

The emasculation of village chiefs is vividly depicted in a documentary, *Since the Company Came*, about the effects of logging on Rendova.<sup>49</sup> It focuses on a village meeting, called by an old chief, to find out what is being done with royalty money. He talks of how many other projects have failed, and says he hoped that the logging that is now being undertaken by Kalena Timber Company will not also fail. Over the course of the meeting, the Chairman of the tribal development

47 A.M. Hocart, “Warfare in Eddystone of the Solomon Islands,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 61 (1931): 301–24.

48 Debra McDougall, “Church, company, committee, chief: emergent collectivities in rural Solomon Islands,” in *Managing Modernity in the Western Pacific*, ed. Mary Patterson and Martha Macintyre, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2011, pp. 121–46.

49 Russell Hawkins, *Since the Company Came*, video recording, New South Wales Film and Television Office, SBS Independent, Journeyman Pictures, 2003.



corporation, a highly educated and articulate urban elite serving as Member of Parliament for the island, proceeds to harangue and humiliate this old chief, chiding him for being ignorant of modern accounting and accusing him of personal greed. The Chairman is briefly silenced by his father, who reminds him that it is not "customary" to fight over money and that the "company is not our brother." The meeting ends without any resolution, but the urban Chairman seems to emerge victorious, the village chief humiliated and disempowered. Women do not participate in the meeting, observing from the perimeter. The filmmaker interviews them about value of the land and their efforts to prevent logging on neighbouring Tetepare, which has been uninhabited for generations. One particularly articulate and apparently well-educated woman says, "Men are afraid to talk against other men. But we women can speak, on behalf of women and on behalf of men." The film conveys a sort of solidarity among the women but that overlooks the fact that women, as well as men, find themselves on different sides of land disputes, and many women are eager for forms of development that will lighten their subsistence burden. Insofar as they have been excluded from the nasty politics of land disputes in an age of logging and from the realm of formal government politics, however they are probably better empowered to speak for collective interests than men.

What may look like the movement of women beyond a colonially and mission-inculcated domestic, can also be seen as the expansion of a feminised domestic realm. As being a village chief holds less and less prestige and power, women are increasingly taking on the often tedious work of sitting in futile meetings and the often thankless task of mediating disputes involving their relatives. This work is added to the other work for which they are responsible—subsistence gardening, copra production, market gardening, church work. And yet it is remarkable, and perhaps encouraging, that the neo-traditional patriarchy of customary authority in the village seems to be changing more quickly than the entirely modern patriarchy of elite circles of power. Women are no longer excluded from wage labour as they were in the colonial period; they are gaining entry into the civil service and some professions and some women are able to achieve some of their modest aspirations for independence and equality through waged work.<sup>50</sup> Still, girls have far fewer opportunities for education, and therefore social advancement, than boys. Only two women have been elected to the Solomon Islands Parliament in the history of the nation (and the second was elected as a stand-in for her husband, jailed for criminal activities in the time of civil tension).<sup>51</sup>

50 Martha Macintyre, "Money changes everything: Papua New Guinean women in the modern economy," in *Managing Modernity in the Western Pacific*, ed. Mary Patterson and Martha Macintyre, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2011, pp. 90–120.

51 Solomon Islands, *Pacific Women in Politics*, online: <http://www.pacwip.org/future-elections/solomon-is/>, accessed 23 February 2013; "Woman MP for North Malaita," *Solomon Star*, 03 August 2012, <http://www.solomonstarnews.com/news/national/15560-woman-mp-for-north-malaita>, accessed 23 February 2013.



Increasing participation of women on chiefs' committees and other aspects of village politics is a positive development. There would be far more room for optimism, moreover, if the state would really extend itself into rural areas, engaging women and men, like Marina and others on the Pienuna Chiefs' Trust Board, in a sustainable and ongoing way to ensure that they are not really "tired for nothing." Whatever recognition of local leadership of men and women occurs, it is unlikely to amount to anything but a waste of time if it occurs only in donor-funded bursts of enthusiasm rather than the structure of a reliable state.

## Acknowledgements

This paper draws on long-term research on the island of Ranongga undertaken in 1998–99, 2000–01, 2005, 2006–07 and 2010. I am deeply grateful for the assistance and friendship of Marina Alepio and all of the other children of Panakera and Dunateko, as well as John Pavukera, Jebeti Toribule, the late Samuel Samata, other men involved in the Chiefs' Committee, and the leaders of the United Church Women's Fellowship. I thank Chairman Luke Irapio, acting secretary Varina Lekevolomo and participants for allowing me to observe 2010 meetings of the Pienuna Chiefs Trust Board. In addition to ethnographic field research, I draw on archival materials from the Solomon Islands National Archives, in Honiara, which was the source for materials on colonial native administration in the Vella La Vella District of which Ranongga was part (BSIP 7/III/34/5 and BSIP 7/I/DCW 124). I also draw on materials in a folder recovered in 2007 from the residence of the late Geoffrey Panakera, the former Secretary of the Chiefs Committee, cited here as "Chiefs' Hearings" (partial correspondence of Pienuna Chiefs Committee, 1986–1990). Research was undertaken with the permission of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development in Solomon Islands and with support from the Australian Research Council (DP0666652), travel grants from the University of Western Australia, and doctoral research funding from the Social Science Research Council and Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

## **Part Three**

# **The Architectonics of Home and Emotion: New Christian Families in Conversion Experiences**



# 8. Agency and Salvation in Christian Child Rescue in Colonial India: Preena and Amy Carmichael

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## Introduction

On 6 March 1901, a young girl insistently requesting “the child-stealing-*Ammal*” (mother) is brought before Miss Amy Carmichael,<sup>1</sup> a Keswick missionary with the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS) in the South Indian district of Tinnevely (Tirunelveli).<sup>2</sup> Unafraid, the young girl quickly declared, “My name is Pearl-eyes ... and I want to stay here always. I have come to stay.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the actual circumstances of Pearl-eyes’ (Preena’s) arrival,<sup>4</sup> she is consistently described as Miss Carmichael’s first rescued child, marking the beginning of her life-long fight for “little [temple] girls, who can never fight for themselves!”<sup>5</sup> The absurdity of this statement in light of Preena’s obvious efforts is one disregarded by both supporters and critics of Carmichael’s work, who insist on seeing only the blessing or violence in her project to “rescue children from temple danger.”<sup>6</sup> Drawing primarily from three of Carmichael’s most famous

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1 Amy Carmichael appended the additional surname Wilson to her name on request of her adopted father Robert Wilson when submitting her initial application to serve as a missionary. Despite Wilson’s death in 1905 she continued to use the hyphenated surname Wilson-Carmichael until 1912. I will refer to her throughout this paper as Amy Carmichael. Her works cited in this paper will retain the version of her name as published.

2 Amy Wilson-Carmichael, *Things as They Are: Mission Work in Southern India*, London: Morgan & Scott, 1903, p. 166. I was lucky enough to stumble across a copy of Amy Wilson-Carmichael’s *Things as they Are: Mission Work in Southern India* in the university library at The Australian National University. I was able to access Carmichael’s other texts though online digitised text archives such as Project Gutenberg and the Internet Archive. Similarly texts such as *India’s Women: The Magazine of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society*, as well as colonial documents such as *Indian Educational Policy, 1913* were accessed via Internet Archive, <http://archive.org/>.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

4 I have decided throughout my telling to use the name Preena as it the one used consistently in later publications. To retain the tone of Amy Carmichael’s voice I will however render all quotes faithfully. As such the reader may expect to encounter Preena, under the additional names of Pearleeyes or The Elf.

5 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things as They Are*, p. 234.

6 Alongside this successful escape Carmichael describes another, more arduous attempt made by Preena to return home to her recently widowed mother. Having escaped from the temple, Preena set out for her home town of Tuticorin two days journey by cart distant. Receiving help from passing cartiers she eventually arrives at her mother’s house. Having been followed by temple women, who threatened her mother, she was once again forced to return to the temple. On her return Preena overheard plans for her imminent marriage to the God. Again she decides to escape. This time hearing fellow temple-women describe a passing missionary

works, *Things as They Are: Mission Work in Southern India* (1903), *Lotus Buds* (1909) and *Gold Cord: The Story of a Fellowship* (1932), this chapter will paint a more nuanced picture of one girl's "rescue," "conversion," and "maturation."<sup>7</sup>

Before we begin "reading" Carmichael's texts it is worth considering the distances that inform my re-configuration of this textual and photographic material. Reading this and Carmichael's other works in a contemporary secular milieu, in which the boundaries of truth and prejudice have been dramatically re-drawn, Carmichael's arch confidence, unwavering convictions and recklessly catastrophic "rescue" attempts can be "extremely unsettling, even upsetting."<sup>8</sup> Yet, while acknowledging these legitimate reactions, a contextualised reading of these texts must acknowledge a resistance that plays out both within these texts and in circumstances external to them. Even within blatantly hagiographical texts such as Elizabeth Elliot's biography of Carmichael, a sense of resistance remains evident.<sup>9</sup> Elliot writes, "There arose during the early years of the Dohnavur work a fairly strong, "Get-Amy-Carmichael-out-of-India" movement among missionaries and Indian Christians."<sup>10</sup> Similarly a cross reading of Carmichael's own writing suggests an element of resistance yet to be acknowledged in post-colonial readings that see only the violence of "child rescue." In highlighting aspects of Preena's story that suggest resistance and agency I, following Jane Haggis, remain mindful of the undesirability of a frame in which "the colonized continue to be caught in the colonizer's gaze, now also overlaid with the contemporary reflection of First/Third World dissonance."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, I consider my choice of Preena's narrative indicative not of an egotistic predilection for "so-called rabble-rousers and gender trouble makers" that for Chad M. Bauman amounts to a "too-limited conception of human agency."<sup>12</sup> Rather, in charting

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as a "child-stealing Ammal," Preena formulates her second plan. See Amy Carmichael, *Gold Cord: The Story of a Fellowship*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932, pp. 20–23 and Wilson-Carmichael, *Things as They Are*, pp. 161–68.

7 Carmichael's most famous works are, *Things as They Are: Mission Work in Southern India*, London: Morgan & Scott, 1903; *Lotus Buds*, London: Morgan & Scott, 1909; and *Promoting Christian Knowledge*, 1932. To fill out Preena's trajectory I will also draw on *Overweights of Joy*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906, and *The Continuation of a Story*, London: Dohnavur Fellowship, 1914.

8 Jo-Ann Wallace, "Lotus Buds: Amy Wilson-Carmichael and the nautch-girls of south India," *Victorian Review* 24(2) (1998): pp. 175–93, p. 175. Here I quote Jo-Ann Wallace's reaction to Carmichael's 1909 book, *Lotus Buds*, of which she writes "I found the book extremely unsettling, even upsetting: its fifty photo illustrations, almost all of them highly aestheticised portraits of children, and its highly sentimentalised rhetoric of childhood (in which girls are invariably described as 'buds' and boys as 'teddies') seemed at odds both with its descriptions of the 'evils' of the Hindu 'temple system' and its narrative describing the virtual kidnapping of Hindu infant girls, many of whom, in the absence of a wet nurse, did not survive the 'rescue.'" See Wallace, "Lotus buds," p. 175.

9 Elizabeth Elliot, *A Chance to Die: The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael*, Grand Rapids: Revell, 2005.

10 Ibid., quoted in Dyron Daugherty, *Bishop Stephen Neil: from Edinburgh to South India*, New York: Peter Lang, 2008, p. 100.

11 Jane Haggis, "'Good wives and mothers' or 'dedicated workers'? Contradictions of domesticity in the 'mission of sisterhood,' Travancore, South India," in *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 81–113, p. 83.

12 Chad M. Bauman, "Redeeming Indian 'Christian' womanhood? Missionaries, Dalits and agency in colonial India," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24(2) (2008): 5–27, p. 8.

the shifting spheres of agency through the domains of rescue, conversion and maturation, my reading of Preena's life attempts to contextualise and expand the conceived scope of child and youth agency in the colonial mission field. Additionally, it is worth reflecting on the value of a reading of "Preena's life" that re-casts her at the centre of a narrative in which she has too long remained ancillary to Carmichael.

## Capturing "lively originals"

Amy Carmichael, reflecting on the act of writing would suggest, "Words should be like colours, each one a dot of colour supplying a need, not one over."<sup>13</sup> Her emotive prose, while in her mind "moderate," paints starkly black and white pictures of a mission field plagued and continually undermined by the horrors of Hinduism. Perhaps mindful of the broader colonial concerns that "to represent India by mere word-painting is almost an impossible task,"<sup>14</sup> she complemented her writings with numerous photographs. Describing the process of "catching" pictures for her early book *Things as They Are* Carmichael writes of her friend the "picture-catching Missie Ammal," so called for how "she struck the Tamil mind."

The pictures she caught were not so easy to catch. Reserved and conservative India considered the camera intrusive, and we were often foiled in getting what we most desired. Even where we were allowed to catch our object peaceably, it was a case of working under difficulties which would have daunted a less ardent picture catcher.<sup>15</sup>

This description has some interesting resonances with the words of Samuel Bourne's *Narrative of a Photographic Trip to Kashmir (Cashmere) and Adjacent Districts* published in *The British Journal of Photography* in 1863.<sup>16</sup>

From the earliest days of the calotype, the curious tripod with its mysterious chamber and mouth of brass taught the natives of this country that their conquerors were the inventors of other instruments beside the formidable guns of their artillery, which, though as suspicious perhaps in appearance, attained their objects with less noise and smoke.<sup>17</sup>

13 Frank Houghton, *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur: The Story of a Lover and her Beloved*, London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1953, p. 333.

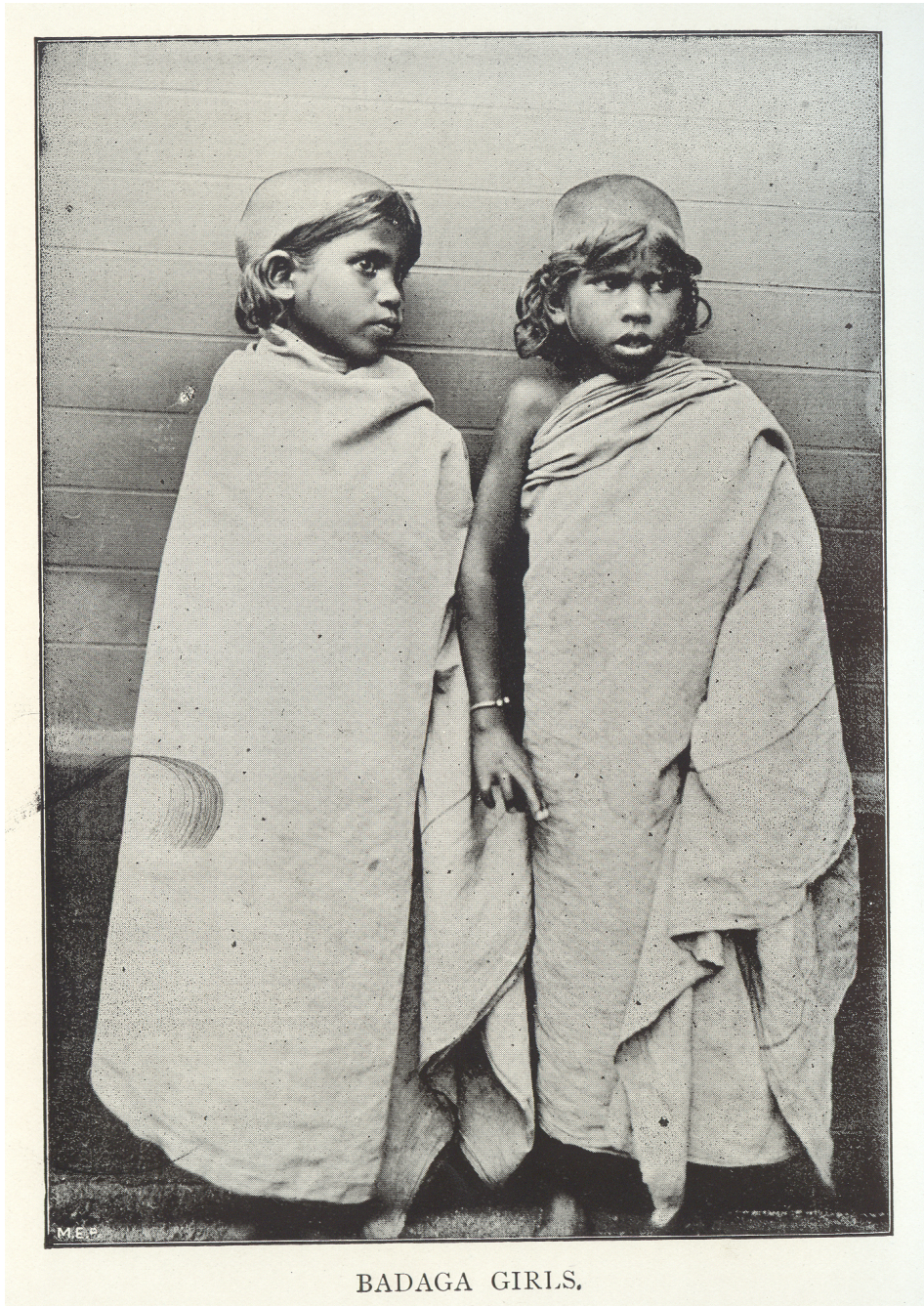
14 John William Kaye, "Preface," in William Simpson, *India Ancient and Modern: A Series of Illustrations of the Country and the People of India and Adjacent Territories; Executed in Chromo-lithography from Drawings by William Simpson; with Descriptive Literature* by John William Kaye, London: Day and Son, 1867, p. 1, quoted in Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*, Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 17.

15 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things as They Are*, pp. 2–3.

16 Samuel Bourne, "Narrative of a photographic trip to Kashmir (Cashmere) and adjacent districts," *The British Journal of Photography* xiii(335) (1866–1867), quoted in Pinney, *Camera Indica*, p. 75.

17 Ibid.





**Figure 21. Badaga Girls**

Source: Photographer Mr. Penn, in Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vol. 1, Madras: Government Press, 1909, p. 76.





Preena and Lavana—the Elf and the Flower—a year later.

**Figure 22. Preena and Lavana, “The Elf and the Flower”**

Source: Unknown photographer, in Amy Carmichael, *Overweights of Joy*, London: Morgan & Scott, 1906, p. 254.





**Figure 23. Preena and Preeya getting ready for a coming feast day**

Source: Photographer Mr. Penn, in Amy Carmichael, *Lotus Buds*, London: Morgan & Scott, 1909, p. 231.

In analysing both the pictures of Preena and those that surround her story, the resonances with ethnographic photography cannot be ignored. Of particular note is the picture included alongside the first iteration of Preena's story in *Things as They Are*. Rather than a picture of Preena, the caption admits, "This is not Pearl eyes [sic]. Pearl-eyes is tinier, and has more sparkle; but the Caste is the same; and as we have not got Pearl-eyes, we put this small girl here."<sup>18</sup> While the cause for Preena's photographic absence is not suggested, her easy substitution suggests an ethnographic lens capturing not individuals but "anonymous 'typical' representatives of particular categories": An "indexicality" in which "individual faces were largely displaced by generic masks rendered visible to the state."<sup>19</sup> Yet despite utilising the photographic services of Mr. Penn, known for his contributions to Edgar Thurston's seven-volume ethnographic profile *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (1909) (see Figure 21),<sup>20</sup> Carmichael's later books contain more personalised, portrait style pictures of her "family" (see Figures 22 and 23). Described by Miss Carmichael as "more accustomed to the dignified ways of mountains than to the extremely restless habits of children," Mr. Penn, visiting in 1908, took a series of photographs, fifty of which featured in Carmichael's book *Lotus Buds* as photogravure illustrations.<sup>21</sup>

These, Carmichael describes as "insipid as compared with their lively originals" suggesting that "an Oriental scene in print always looks sorry for itself, and quite apologetic. It knows it is almost a farce, and very flat and poor."<sup>22</sup> Carmichael's lament seems to betray a desire to move beyond illustrative shots to what in *Lotus Buds* resembles a family album. Jo-Ann Wallace noting that "All three editions are expensively bound and lavishly illustrated with professional photographs of very young Indian girls," suggests *Lotus Buds* is "clearly intended as a gift-book."<sup>23</sup> In contrast to this, Carmichael's images and descriptions of people and places outside of her compound retain a crudely focused ethnographic lens: essentialist, dismissive and overly damning. Let us consider her description of the Temple from which Preena escaped, which Miss Carmichael was, thirty years later, able to capture with emotive words and pictures (Figures 24 and 25):

It is not like our towered temples of further South. An immense wall surrounds it; but what can be seen from adjacent roofs, it appears a squat structure or conglomeration of structures clustered together, and reminds one of nothing so much as the monstrous Indian spider which hangs its web from branch to branch of forest trees, and lies in wait in

18 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things as They Are*, p. 162.

19 Pinney, *Camera Indica*, pp. 23, 97.

20 Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vol. 1, Madras: Government Press, 1909.

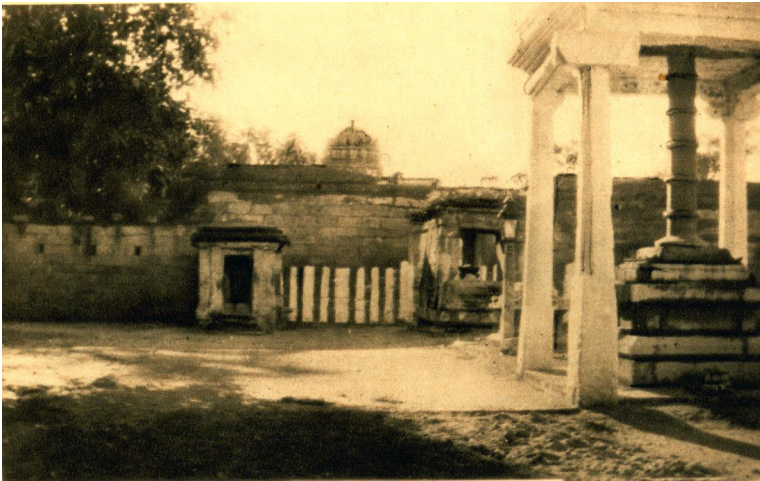
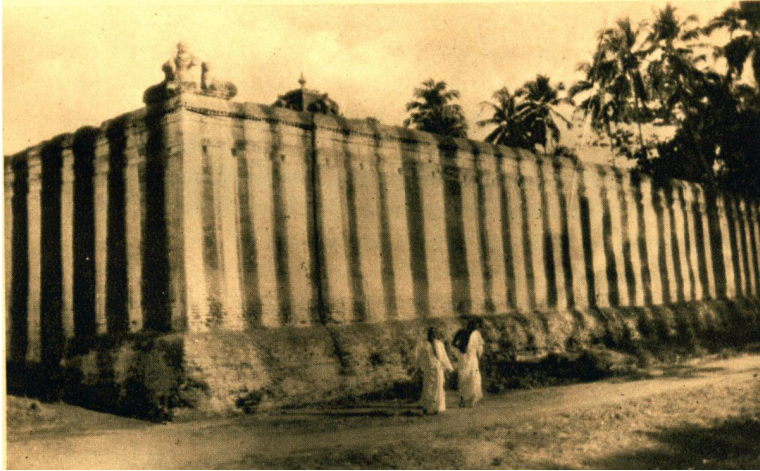
21 Wilson-Carmichael, *Lotus Buds*.

22 Ibid., p. 26.

23 Wallace, "Lotus buds," p. 178.



the middle. The web is strong enough to hold little birds and butterflies which are often bigger than little birds. From such webs our children are disentangled, bright birds and butterflies indeed.<sup>24</sup>



**Figures 24 and 25. The Temple**

Source: In Amy Carmichael, *Gold Cord: The Story of a Fellowship*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932, p. 21, unknown photographer.

<sup>24</sup> Despite this emotive language, an interesting footnote to this section reminds the reader of both the role of Indians in ending “the wrongs that still persist” and the problematic nature of throwing stones whilst inhabiting glass houses: “Nothing written here or elsewhere in this book or in any Dohnavur book is told in forgetfulness of the sins of the West.” See Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 20.

## Rescue

The webs in Carmichael's fantastical metaphor stand for the adoption practices of the "slaves of the gods."<sup>25</sup> Carmichael here, using a direct translation of the Tamil *Tevaradiiyals* (Slaves of the God), refers to women who more broadly were known as *devadasis*. These women who were often dedicated to the temple as young girls were trained in performance arts and married to a temple deity through a series of ceremonies, the last of which, taking place after puberty cemented their status as "*nityasumangali* ... one who is free from widowhood."<sup>26</sup> From then onwards, the *devadasi* would perform services in the temple, participate in village life-cycle rituals and were "free to choose her patron who could also act as her sexual partner without having to marry her."<sup>27</sup> These patronage arrangements often involved land or other financial exchanges over which the *devadasi* retained an inheritance right only so long as she could provide a female heir as her successor in the temple.<sup>28</sup> This practice described elsewhere by Amy Carmichael as "a great secret traffic in souls and bodies of young children,"<sup>29</sup> was in 1877, eighteen years prior to Carmichael's arrival in India, included in Whitley Stoke's explanation of the successes of the Indian Penal code of 1862:

Besides repressing the crimes common to all countries, it has abated, if not extirpated, the crimes peculiar to India, such as *thuggee*, professional sodomy, dedicating girls to a life of temple-harlotry, human sacrifices, exposing infants, burning widows, burying lepers alive, gang-robbery, torturing peasants and witnesses, sitting *dharof*.<sup>30</sup>

The premature nature of this declaration is noted by Parker who suggests "the legislative history of these provisions reveals no intention on the part of the framers of the Indian Penal Code of targeting temple dancing girls. The crime of "dedicating girls to a life of temple-harlotry" was, therefore, a pure judicial invention."<sup>31</sup> This invention required the representation of *devadasis* as "prostitutes," "not as participants in a sex trade but in terms of Hindu legal norms according to which all female sexual activity outside marriage was designated 'unchastity', 'incontinence' or 'prostitution'."<sup>32</sup> As Phillippa Levine explains,

25 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things As They Are*, p. 192.

26 S. Anandhi, "Representing Devadasis: 'Dasigal Mosavalai' as a radical text," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26(11–12) (1991): 739–46, p. 739.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., p. 740.

29 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 22.

30 Whitley Stoke (ed.), *The Anglo-Indian Codes. Vol 1.*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887, p. 71.

31 Kunal M. Parker, "A corporation of superior prostitutes' Anglo-Indian legal conceptions of temple dancing girls, 1800–1913," *Modern Asian Studies* 32(3) (199): 559–633, p. 562.

32 Parker, "A corporation of superior prostitutes," pp. 562–63.

“For the British, the *devadasi* was not the servant and wife of the gods, but a slave to unharnessed human desire and a profound threat to Victorian readings of the marriage contract.”<sup>33</sup>

Carmichael was by her own account virtually ignorant of this custom before Preena’s arrival, after which she dedicated her life to “rescuing” “children in temple danger” or those who “could not have grown up good if we had not taken them”—a mission made most explicit in her 1909 book *Lotus Buds*. “The little Lotus buds are His—His and not another’s. The children of the temple of South India are His—His and not another’s. So now we go forth with the Owner himself to claim His own possessions.”<sup>34</sup>

While Carmichael’s books are filled with tales of “rescued” children, many of whom are bought or secretly smuggled into missionary care,<sup>35</sup> others give glimpses into the other side of these “rescue attempts.” Carmichael recounts how, on returning several years later to Preena’s village, “the women interfered, and whispered to the children about our having come to catch them by magic, as we had caught the Elf.”<sup>36</sup> Speaking of another village she tells of “a story about magic which, say what we will, they imagine I dust upon children’s faces.”<sup>37</sup> Most evocative of these is Carmichael’s account of Rungi who happily tells the missionaries that she is going to be a servant of the gods: “The child’s hands were in ours, her brown eyes fixed on us filled us with surprise, then compassion. ‘Tears?’ she exclaimed. ‘Tears?’ Oh, Why? Am I not going to be just what you are? Are you not also servants of the Gods?”<sup>38</sup> Rungi’s confusion is a provocative and striking example of the dialogic encounters between Miss Carmichael and the objects of her “rescue” attempts. Just as Preena seems to have regarded her fortunes with the “Child-stealing Ammal” to be better than those in the temple, a quick look at an alternative trajectory forged by another *devadasi* of this period enables us to further contextualise these “rescue” attempts.

Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiya was born in 1883 into the same caste as Preena. From a very young age she was initiated and brought up in the “dasi”

33 Philippa Levine, “A multitude of unchaste women: prostitution in the British Empire,” *Women’s History* 15(4) (2004): 159–63, p. 161.

34 Wilson-Carmichael, *Lotus Buds*, p. 4.

35 By no doubt the most arresting of these is the story of Jewel. Jewel’s family, displeased with the removal of their daughter from the temple tried on numerous occasions to have Miss Carmichael prosecuted in court and their daughter returned to the temple. Finally successful, Carmichael rather than returning Jewel describes the events that followed: “the court of heaven intervened.” Jewel was passed from hand to hand until a missionary smuggled her out of India to China where she remained in missionary care for six years before returning to Dohnavur and Amy Carmichael’s mission where she married a fellow worker and raised her children in the mission, one of whom came to be one of the leading Indian members of the leadership team at the time of Amy’s death. See Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, pp. 99 and 231.

36 Amy Wilson-Carmichael, *Overweights of Joy*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906, p. 243.

37 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things As They Are*, p. 219.

38 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 174.



system.<sup>39</sup> In 1925 writing in *Kudi Arasu* (the official organ of the Self-Respect Movement) she recalled, “My parents forced me into this custom. It was during this time, I deeply thought about this custom as evil and read those religious texts which advocated it. I felt that men have forced certain women into this degrading profession to pursue their indiscreet pleasures for selfish reasons.”<sup>40</sup> Sure of her convictions she left her *devadasi* life, marrying her music teacher. Ostracised from her community, she continued her political activism, first with the Congress party and later in the Self-Respect Movement where she worked to encourage *devadasis* to break from the system, both through political movements but also individually “through marriages with someone of their own choice.”<sup>41</sup> Ramamirtham’s courageous story provides a useful frame for the consideration of Preena’s own exceptional story: suggesting subtly that the seemingly exceptional character of these two stories might derive from the dominant “discourse of rescue” rather than the actual exceptionality of individual self-assertion and agency. Re-thinking “rescue” in the context of Amy Carmichael’s work, we must also consider the way in which a dominant discourse of “rescue” acts as a filter both limiting the scope of surviving material but casting its shadow upon the stories that remain.

## Conversion

In 1930 a bill was introduced into the Madras Legislative Council to prevent the “dedication of women to Hindu temples in the Presidency of Madras.”<sup>42</sup> While the bill did not become law until after 1947 these legal incursions into her domain were dismissed by Miss Carmichael:

But what of the law? They will do as they choose ... we are thankful that some are working for a better law. It is a move in the right direction, but we put not our trust in princes or any powers of this present age. The coming of the Lord of Righteousness is the one hope, as we see it, for this land.<sup>43</sup>

Rescue from the temple was, for Carmichael, only one aspect of the greater mission of rescuing souls for Jesus; a process she understood as contextualised and embodied. Miss Carmichael scoffed at the request of a donor that his contributions be spent only on the winning of souls. Similarly, “To critics who accused her of focusing too much on humanitarian activities, she responded,

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39 Anandhi, “Representing Devadasis,” p. 741.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., p. 740.

43 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, pp. 253–54.

‘One cannot save and then pitchfork souls into heaven.... Souls are more or less securely fastened to bodies.’<sup>44</sup> Before I turn to a discussion of the particularities of Preena’s conversion experience I will briefly provide some background into the experience of conversion and Christianisation in the area, as well as the theological and contextual specifics of Carmichael’s place within this mission field.

From the initial Christian incursions into the southern Indian district of Tinnevely and the neighbouring princely state of Travancore mass conversions of low-caste groups contributed to a rapidly growing nominal Christian population. These, alongside the rapidly changing circumstances of colonial capitalism, pre-existing caste tensions and shifting Hindu religio-political norms, created a preponderance of land disputes and caste struggles in this region during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Christian missionaries and converts were implicitly bound up in these struggles for basic rights as well as disputes over the more symbolic aspects of caste status.<sup>45</sup> A visiting missionary travelling in Tinnevely in 1885 would describe the region as the field of “some of the most successful missionary enterprises the world has ever seen.”<sup>46</sup> By 1880 the CEZMS would record in its magazine five lady missionaries assisted by twenty Bible women and fourteen native helpers for the regions of Tinnevely, North Tinnevely and Palamcottah.<sup>47</sup> This number would continue to increase—the publication in 1893 recording five missions in home connection with forty-two Bible women operating in the Tinnevely district. Similarly in Tinnevely and Palamcottah the CEZMS were able to boast of entry to seven hundred and six houses and eight hundred and twenty-two pupils.<sup>48</sup> Raging against these “wonderful sums” Amy Carmichael would write, “According to the present rate of advance, it will be more than twenty thousand years before the Hindu towns of this district are even nominally Christian.”<sup>49</sup> This nominally Christian population drew much criticism from Carmichael,

Was it that the power to understand had been withered up within them?  
Was the soul God gave them dead—“sentenced to death by disuse”?

44 Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions*, Michigan: Zondervan 2004, p. 300.

45 Of particular relevance is the Shanar/Nadar community. See Hugald Grafe, *History of Christianity in India: Volume IV, Part 2, Tamilnadu in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Bangalore: Church History Association of India (CHAI), 1990; Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., “The breast-cloth controversy: caste consciousness and social change in Travancore,” *Indian Economic Social History Review* 5 (1968): 171–87; Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

46 Murray Mitchell, *In Southern India: A Visit to some of the Chief Mission Stations in the Madras Presidency*, London: Religious Tract Society, 1885, p. 152.

47 *India’s Women: The Magazine of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society*, London: James Nisbet & Co., 1886, pp. vi–vii.

48 *Ibid.*

49 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things As They Are*, p. 106.

Dead they are in apathy and ignorance and putrefying customs, and the false security that comes from adherence to the Christian creed without vital connection with Christ. These poor Christians are dead.<sup>50</sup>

The vehemence of this quote suggests the unique influences on Carmichael's Christianity. Most significant amongst these was her exposure to the "conservative evangelicalism"<sup>51</sup> of the Higher Life Movement through Keswick conventions. After an unsuccessful missionary posting in Japan, Miss Carmichael, a 28-year-old single missionary lady of Northern Irish origin arrived in India in 1895. From her "itinerating"<sup>52</sup> work in Tinnevely, she was ultimately lured to Dohnavur in 1900 by the "fiery preacher" Thomas Walker with the promise of Tamil lessons.<sup>53</sup> Preena's arrival in 1901, changes forever Carmichael's work in this region. Swiftly accumulating more children and "daily becoming more burdened" Carmichael, forced to abandon her itinerating work, settles with her ever-growing band in Dohnavur. In this early period, despite immediate and dire physical needs, Carmichael continually reflects on the state of the souls of her young "family." Reflecting on Preena's first few months in her care she frankly states, "Pearl-eyes, otherwise the Elf, because it exactly describes her, was very good for the first few weeks, after which we began to know her. She is not a convert in any sense of the term. She is just a very wilful, truthful, exasperating and fascinating little Oriental."<sup>54</sup>

In a later work she would describe Preena's initial reaction to her new community: "when Pearl-eyes came to us, a much fêted child of seven, she regarded the life of the village church and congregation to which we then belonged with a grave and wondering scrutiny. 'Christianity is a dull religion' was her first comment."<sup>55</sup> After a few months, Preena, not having seen any pictures or representations of Jesus, receives a picture of her "new Lord." Carmichael describes her reaction: "'Who is this? Our Lord Jesus?' She gazed at it for a moment dismayed then burst into tears. 'I thought he was far more beautiful than that.'"<sup>56</sup> Quickly accumulating biblical knowledge Preena questions a visiting Bishop about his

50 Ibid.

51 George Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American phenomenon, a comparison with English evangelicism," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 46(2) (1977): 215–32, p. 220.

52 Work in this area of southern India is frequently described as itinerating with lady missionaries carrying out their work within circles of forty miles or more, often spending three to four weeks on end travelling in bullock carts superintending schools and Bible women. Irene H. Barnes, *Behind the Pardah: The Story of C.E.Z.M.S Work in India*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1897, p. 114.

53 Dyron Daugherty, "A dissonant mission: Stephen Neil, Amy Carmichael and missionary conflict in south India," *International Review of Mission* 97(384–385) (2008): 103–15, p. 106. Dohnavur, a town named after the pious and wealthy Prussian Count Dohna of Scholdin who made a generous gift to the area for a church building in 1824 lies just outside the border of the Princely state of Travancore in one of the last curves of the Western Ghats, in what was then known as the Madras Presidency.

54 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things As They Are*, p. 171.

55 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 323.

56 Ibid., p. 151.

recent visit to the holy land asking, “Did you see Lot’s Wife?” To his negative answer she offers the practical retort, “Oh, I suppose the salt has melted.”<sup>57</sup> Relating a lesson about “how much Jesus had paid for us,” to an incident in which Miss Carmichael paid off a temple lady who had accused Preena of stealing, Preena replies “Oh yes, I understand! I know how much you paid for me—fourpence halfpenny!”<sup>58</sup> Disheartened on receiving a “negress” doll at Christmas, Preena implicates God in this wrong: “I thought God would have sent me a nicer doll!”<sup>59</sup> Likewise airing her frustration over a failed exam she sobs: “I asked God so earnestly to let me pass, and I didn’t pass! And I thought He had listened, but now I know He didn’t listen at all.”<sup>60</sup> These anecdotes from Preena’s first few years in the mission suggest what Miss Carmichael makes clear in her later work, “Pearl-eyes brought all her childish naughtiness to us direct, and sometimes they were serious. But we wrestled through together, again and again bringing her to Him who had redeemed her, and waiting for the full surrender which was so long delayed.”<sup>61</sup> While Carmichael never alludes exactly to how long Preena’s surrender was delayed, this comment written more than thirty years after Preena’s arrival betrays a sense of frustration persisting over time. Carmichael’s expectations of an extreme form of lived Christianity are brought out in her description of true conversion,<sup>62</sup> that “does not mean peace, but a sword ... [that] can cut to the quick.”<sup>63</sup>

Eliza Kent usefully illustrates two ways of reading conversion experiences in the South Indian context. The first describes conversion as an immediate inner transformation, the second “a gradual, continual process of change that was both revealed in and aided by changes in external behavior.”<sup>64</sup> Kent notes the way “written representations of conversion reproduce existing class distinctions by stressing the interior dimension for elite converts and the exterior dimension for low-caste converts.”<sup>65</sup>

In the gap between belief and the signs of belief manifested in practice lay the opportunity for massive intervention into the lives of Indian converts. The idea that the experience of conversion would be completed and perfected by changes in lifestyle led to the view that recent converts

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57 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things As They Are*, p. 179.

58 Ibid., p. 168.

59 Ibid., p. 183.

60 Ibid., p. 184.

61 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, pp. 151–52.

62 Many foreign missionaries did not live up to her expectations of a Christian life. At Dohnavur she did not allow furloughs to her missionaries, opposed marriage for her Indian girls, demanding of every worker a true “conviction of sin, a true repentance, honest confession and a change of life that lasted.” See Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 139.

63 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 304.

64 Kent, *Converting women*, p. 6.

65 Ibid.

needed a great deal of guidance before that initial, transformative experience could drive the changes necessary for new Christians' genuine conversion in behaviour, habit, custom, speech, and so forth.<sup>66</sup>

While not all of Carmichael's child converts were low-caste all were rendered diminutive by their age, and thus required the same intervention and guidance. Attempting to shape the behaviour of her children, Carmichael, a strict disciplinarian, matched punishment to crime.

A carelessly disobedient child would be sent to find a disobedient plant, one whose leaves ought to grow alternately or opposite or in whorls, and which disobeyed its law; a destructive one would be told to stick on the leaf it had plucked from pure wantonness—a deplorable habit too common here.... A quarrelsome child had a deer's horn tied round her neck, or, if very small, was put in a barrel out of which she could not climb.<sup>67</sup>

Known to put “quinine or ink on the rebellious tongue” or tie together the pig-tails of quarrelling girls,<sup>68</sup> Carmichael sought to lay the foundations of her children's character “in truth” always in “the hope that they would be part of the crown of flowers that our Lord would wear one day.”<sup>69</sup> But as her accounts of Preena's “conversion” suggest this was a constant and prolonged battle, questioned, resisted and manipulated by children with their own agendas, values, and beliefs.

## Maturation

Having begun her new life at the mission aged seven, Preena broke not only ties of religion, but of kinship and caste. Initially reluctant to surrender these, Preena on her first night away from the temple refused food from a low-caste Christian women stating: “Am I not a Vellala child? May you ask me to break my caste?”<sup>70</sup> Preena, whose recently deceased father had been “a thoughtful and

66 Ibid., p. 7.

67 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 80.

68 Daughtrity, *Bishop Stephen Neil*, pp. 107–08.

69 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, pp. 67, 80.

70 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things As They Are*, p. 167. Here Preena invokes her caste position as a Vellala (variously called Valluvars), a Tamil sat-sudra (clean shudra) caste group. “The early protestant missionaries called them ‘Shudras,’ but the caste name Vellalar could denote any of a number of generally well to do and Sanskritised castes (Piḷḷais, Mutaliyārs, etc.) who consisted the dominant, literate, property-owning class in the many Tamil speaking regions where the Brahman population was quite small.” See Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 16. John Pickford a CMS missionary at Pannaivelei, to the south-east of Tinnevely would, during the 1860s, describe the Vellala's insistence on caste superiority as irritating suggesting, “there is something particularly offensive to an Englishman's feelings in the ignorant pretensions of the Vellalas to superiority on account of their caste.” Quoted in Antony Copley, *Religions in Conflict: Ideology, Cultural Contact and*

scholarly Hindu landowner...famous as a reader and expounder of the religious poetry of his nation,"<sup>71</sup> here demands the respect to which her caste had accustomed her. Quickly having to readjust her expectations in the mixed-caste communally living band of mission workers, Carmichael records the persistence of Preena's caste attitudes. In the process of rejecting the aforementioned "negress doll" Preena did not hesitate to compare the "despised black beauty" to one of her peers remarking: "That black thing has a curly head just like Star's!"<sup>72</sup> Here the caste prejudice is overwhelmingly familiar, yet as Preena and her peers come into contact with Europeans, racial questions emerge that are far removed from their everyday expectations. Shocked to discover that all the people in England are white, Preena and her peers inquire as to how they manage without servants. The answer that people in England are served by their fellow whites is met scoffingly "White people as servants! White servants!"<sup>73</sup> This fact, irreconcilable with their lived experience of white people requires an explanation, one that is quickly provided by Preena. "At the beginning of the beginning of England, black people must have gone to be the white people's servants, and they gradually grew white. Yes that's it apparently; they faded."<sup>74</sup> For Preena whose only experience of white people occurred within a colonial frame premised on the superiority of white over black, the conclusion that white servants in England were blacks that had eventually faded is a creative reconciliation of views that importantly preserves the truth of her experience both within the mission and in her lived experiences of colonisation.

Despite these caste tensions a familial air pervades Miss Carmichael's account, children addressing her, fellow workers and their peers in Tamil kinship terms. All children and workers address Carmichael as Amma (mother). Indian female workers are linguistically positioned as mother's younger sisters. Paired with characteristic quarrels and cheek the picture while overwhelmingly familiar is deeply entangled within a Christian cosmology that speaks to a broader conception of family. This is the conjugal family at its most broad: a community of women workers wedded to Christ, raising children who will succeed them in this service. In this departure from a strictly biological model of kinship, both *devadasi* communities and Carmichael's mission, share a fundamental disinclination towards conjugality. Rather than responding with tears of pity, I would like to seriously consider Rungi's question to Miss Carmichael: "Are

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*Conversion in Late Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 153. During the 1880s the Vellalas increasingly challenged their position in the Hindu varna system, claiming that rather than sudras they should be considered as members of the Vaisya varna group. See Eugene F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795–1895*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, p. 197. See also Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700–1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

71 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 20.

72 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things As They Are*, p. 184.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 181.

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 181–82.



you not also servants of the Gods?"<sup>75</sup> Carmichael, who strongly discouraged marriage for her girls, training them to work for the Lord, reproduces a model of "constructed kinship" superficially very similar to that of the *devadasi* system:<sup>76</sup> one in which knowledge is transferred from older to younger female for the ultimate purpose of serving a non-physical male divinity. Yet while the ironies and paradoxes of these similarities may loom large in the post-colonial imagination, both the earnestness of Rungi's question, and the tears of pity shed by Miss Carmichael cannot fit in a picture that simply renders these reactions paradoxical. Similarly the tangible presence of God and other more malevolent super-natural forces alluded to both in Carmichael's and the children's use and manipulation of His authority too often escape acknowledgement in our secular age. Preena starting a quarrel with her "sister" Tangles invokes the following response from Tangles: "The devil has arrived in the middle of the afternoon to interrupt our unity and I won't let him!"<sup>77</sup> This unlikely retort suggests a "family" environment imbued with far more than just paradox.

Preena who arrived at Dohnavur aged seven is first captured photographically in Carmichael's 1906 book *Overweights of Joy* (see Figure 22).<sup>78</sup> Before Preena's eleventh birthday she shared the compound with seventeen other children,<sup>79</sup> five years later we catch a glimpse of Preena's maturation in one of Penn's photographs taken in 1908 (see Figure 23). Here we see Preena aged fifteen, adorned with flowers for a "Coming-Day Feast." These coming days which mark the arrival of Children to Dohnavur are celebrated yearly. Carmichael describes a feast scene as follows. "The feasters sit on the floor in lines or circles. Before each is a large smooth plantain leaf. On this shinning [*sic*] satin plate is heaped rice and little piles of curried vegetables, or cakes, if it be a feast of cakes."<sup>80</sup> Though some of Carmichael's books seem to suggest a uniform of blue for girls and red for boys, the majority of pictures capture the girls and women dressed in white. Eliza Kent suggests that this apparel, "drawing on widely recognized markers of virtuous widowhood in its ascetic and asexual mode," was adopted by South Indian Bible women in an attempt to "de-emphasize all traces of their sexual desirability or availability."<sup>81</sup> This Indian style of food, dress and manner of eating was insisted upon by Miss Carmichael who elsewhere suggested that "to be foreign in dress, food or ways would have been to lock those doors, the only door to knowledge."<sup>82</sup> Specifically referring to knowledge of the dedication

75 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 174.

76 Here I follow Hinchy's theorisation of "constructed kinship" (this volume Chapter 9).

77 Wilson-Carmichael, *Things As They Are*, p. 180.

78 The caption "a year later" is not clarified in the text providing little indication as to the exact date of this photo.

79 Eric Sharpe, "The legacy of Amy Carmichael," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20(3) (1996): 121–25, p. 123.

80 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 326.

81 Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 155.

82 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 23.

of girls to temples, Carmichael adopted these external signs of indigeneity to facilitate her specific goals. For many of the children, the ability to preserve dietary, clothing and other customs may have meant something very different.

Miss Carmichael's books each tended to feature a young, cheeky, newly rescued child whose journey to religious submission, like Preena's, was made all the more delightful on account of their childish antics. Of the latter stages of Preena's maturation we see only glimpses such as the following account In *Lotus Buds*:

In this peaceful room Classes B, C, and D have taken the young teachers in hand—Rukma, Preena and Sanda. Of the three Rukma (Radiance) has the clearest ideas about discipline; Preena (the Elf) knows best how to coax; and Sanda, excellent Mouse that she is has the gift of patience. These three (who after all are only school girls, continuing their own education with their Prema Sittie) are attempting to instruct the babies on the lines of organised play; but the babies feel they have much to teach their teachers.<sup>83</sup>

Five years later, in a compound now home to more than one hundred and forty souls,<sup>84</sup> Preena is listed with seven other girls described as “a band of keen and earnest workers.”<sup>85</sup> Preena here is no longer instructing “babies on the lines of organised play” as “things have gradually grown more scholastic though not less cheerful in the K.G., or rather what is now a transition school where mature people of nine and ten and eleven have ‘zaminations’ and do occasionally take things seriously.”<sup>86</sup> An image from *Continuation of a Story* (1914) captures Preena in her role as schoolteacher (see Figure 26). Around 1916, Preena aged roughly twenty-three pledges herself to a life of “celibacy and sacrificial ministry” in Carmichael's newly founded religious order, the Sisters of the Common Life.<sup>87</sup>

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83 Wilson-Carmichael, *Lotus Buds*, p. 204.

84 Daugherty, *Bishop Stephen Neil*, p. 101.

85 Carmichael, *The Continuation of a Story*, p. 16.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

87 Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, p. 158.



**Figure 26. Preena and her class**

Source: Unknown photographer, in Amy Carmichael, *Continuation of a Story*, London: Dohnavur Fellowship, 1914, p. 47.

To end Preena's story here, may seem like somewhat of disappointment, in terms of my stated goals of reconfiguring child and youth agency. I want to argue, that this is not the case. Rather, the disappointment lies in the absence of any record of Preena's own voice on this matter. This absence leaves the researcher with little option but to remain silent as to the configurations of agency and coercion in Preena's later choices to dedicate her life to the mission and the outcomes of these decisions. Conscious that my reconstruction of Preena's story cannot be separated from its place within Miss Carmichael's oeuvre, I do not suggest that Preena exerted agency in the exact tangible ways described by Miss Carmichael, but rather the possibility that she questioned, reasoned and engaged Miss Carmichael in similar and related ways. Reading and re-reading Miss Carmichael's description of Preena's rejection of the possibility of white servants I am continually struck with the simplicity and piercing nature of an insight that would put many post-colonial theorists to shame. Similarly Rungi's simple question pulses with the same intensity of insight. In choosing to define the space of these questions, comments, subtle manipulations and rejections as one of agency, I acknowledge it may well be one more easily occupied by younger children. The passage of time inevitably translates adorable child-like questions and behaviours into an unforgivable childishness incompatible

with “proper” adult participation in the “real” world.<sup>88</sup> Alternately without the charming innocence of early childhood the questions, resistance and manipulations of youth assume a more threatening guise at odds with the agenda of missionary publications. Karen Vallgård whose attempts to read beyond the fragmentary records of one young boy’s escape from a missionary boarding school in 1865 suggest that these disruptions to the missionary agenda, rather than necessarily infrequent, occupied very little official recorded space. That the absence of record does not amount to an absence of occurrence raises interesting questions for further investigations into the agency of those whose misdeeds are no longer forgivable as delightfully innocent. While Preena’s non-rescue and delayed conversion can easily be seen to disrupt a simple rescue and conversion model, her maturation, education and employment in the mission speak to the complexities of an actual life, in which coercion and opportunity often subtly intertwine. Without diminishing the very real power differentials of age, race, class and religion that marginalised Preena both in life and in the domain of “history,” this paper points to space in which children saw clearly, acted strongly, and reasoned wisely in situations where whiteness, authority and grace only met with locked doors and misinformation.

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88 Ashish Nandy, “Reconstructing childhood: a critique of the ideology of adulthood,” in *Traditions, Tyrannys and Utopias*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 65.

# 9. Deviant Domesticities and Sexualised Childhoods: Prostitutes, Eunuchs and the Limits of the State Child “Rescue” Mission in Colonial India

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## Introduction

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, colonial officials in north India argued that the British government had a duty to “rescue” girls and boys who were allegedly kidnapped and condemned to a “life of infamy” by eunuchs and women labelled prostitutes. Colonial officials claimed that prostitutes and eunuchs sexually “corrupted” girls and boys, respectively, and hired them out as child prostitutes. British administrators proposed to register and remove children who resided with prostitutes and eunuchs and to appoint “respectable” guardians. In India, unlike Australia, the removal of children was not a general technique of colonial governance.<sup>1</sup> These projects for the removal and reform of children who lived in brothels and with eunuchs were thus somewhat unusual colonial attempts at child rescue.<sup>2</sup>

The singular English-language colonial category of “eunuch” was internally diverse and encompassed a multiplicity of social roles. The term eunuch could be used to variously encapsulate male-identified and female-identified, emasculated and non-emasculated, socially elite and subaltern, politically powerful and relatively politically insignificant groups. The *hijra* community

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1 Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods: The Juvenile Periphery of India, 1850–1945*, London: Anthem Press, 2005, p. 57.

2 The research for this paper was conducted at several archives in India, including the National Archives of India (NAI) in Delhi and the Uttar Pradesh State Archives (UPSA) branches in Lucknow and Allahabad. At the Allahabad branch of the Uttar Pradesh State Archives I was able to access district-level records on the implementation of the Criminal Tribes Act, Part II, against the *hijra* community, including the reports of local police intelligence and district registers of eunuchs’ personal details and property. I also accessed the British Library (BL), London, India Office Records (IOR). Archival work for this paper was conducted as part of the author’s Ph.D. project at The Australian National University, Canberra, and was partly funded by an Endeavour Australia Cheung Kong Research Fellowship, awarded by the Australian Government.

was the focus of colonial concern in the nineteenth century and is the focus of this chapter. *Hijras* are a group of male-born emasculates or “born eunuchs”<sup>3</sup> who wear feminine clothing, adopt feminine names,<sup>4</sup> are associated with a power to bless or curse fertility, and perform in public and in households following births. Yet the British also classified several additional groups as “eunuchs,” some of whom were not in fact emasculated including: the *khwajasarai*, male-identified court officials and attendants of the female quarters who were slaves but could nonetheless rise to positions of political prominence; and the *zanana*, “effeminate men” who were not emasculated, often dressed as women, performed in public, and usually lived with biological and/or affinal kin.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, the boundaries of the internally diverse colonial category of eunuch repeatedly shifted as colonial officials disagreed on the classification of particular Indian social roles.

The colonial category of “prostitute” was similarly ambiguous. Prostitute was often used by colonial officials to describe a range of social roles for women outside of conjugal domesticity. These groups included: courtesans, or the *ta’waif*, who were highly educated, considered experts on social etiquette, and were often talented performers;<sup>6</sup> the *devadasi*, who were dedicated to a Hindu temple, symbolically married to a deity, performed ritual functions, and sometimes formed long-term sexual relationships with their benefactors;<sup>7</sup> and women who worked in brothels or *kotha* (brothels and courtesan establishments), who were usually of lower socio-economic status.<sup>8</sup> When the colonial government sought to regulate prostitution, for instance through the registration and

3 Many registered eunuchs described themselves as “born eunuchs” to colonial officials. S.A. Campbell, Officiating Superintendent of Police, Bulandshahr, “Register of eunuchs in the district of Boolundshuhur coming under Section 24 of Act XXVII of 1871,” 6 January 1873, Uttar Pradesh State Archives (UPSA), Allahabad, COM/29/8.

4 In the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, an area of northern India that is comprised of the modern states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, *hijras* adopted feminine names, although in the nearby Punjab they apparently kept masculine names. William Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, vol. 1, Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1896, p. 495; H.A. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, Lahore: The Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1911, p. 331. This difference in naming practices has continued into the post-colonial period. Kira Hall and Veronica O’Donovan, “Shifting gender positions among Hindi-speaking hijras,” in *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*, ed. Victoria Lee Bergvall, Janet Muelle Bing and Alice F. Freed, London: Longman, 1996, pp. 228–66, p. 247.

5 Somewhat confusingly, the Hindi/Urdu word *zanana* can refer to both the female quarters of households and to effeminate men.

6 On *ta’waif* see Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow: 1856–1877*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1894; Veena Talwar Oldenburg, “Lifestyle as resistance: the case of the courtesans of Lucknow, India,” *Feminist Studies* 16(2) (Summer 1990): 259–87.

7 On *devadasi* see Mytheli Sreenivas, “Creating conjugal subjects: *devadasis* and the politics of marriage in colonial Madras presidency,” *Feminist Studies* 37(1) (Spring 2011): 63–92; Kunal M. Parker, “‘A corporation of superior prostitutes’: Anglo-Indian legal conceptions of temple dancing girls, 1800–1914,” *Modern Asian Studies* 32(3) (1998): 559–633. Also see Annie McCarthy, “Agency and salvation in Christian child rescue in colonial India: Preena and Amy Carmichael,” this volume.

8 See especially Ashwini Tambe, *Codes of Misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Colonial Bombay*, New Delhi: Zubaan, 2009.



forced medical inspection of prostitutes under the 1864 Cantonment Acts and the 1868 Contagious Diseases Act, colonial officials debated which social roles could be defined as prostitutes.<sup>9</sup> Though colonial officials often disagreed on the boundaries of the prostitute category, they sometimes labelled all Indian women not confined to “respectable” domesticity as prostitutes, claiming that it was often impossible to distinguish prostitutes from “common” or low-caste Indian women and suggesting these were overlapping categories.

The proposal to remove children from *hijra* households eventuated in Part II of the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871.<sup>10</sup> This law provided for the registration of eunuchs who were considered “reasonably suspected” of kidnapping, emasculation and sodomy.<sup>11</sup> For colonial administrators, *hijras* were the archetypal “suspicious eunuch.” The registration of eunuchs was implemented in a single province in north India, the North-Western Provinces (NWP).<sup>12</sup> Police watched eunuchs and their movements, while eunuchs were prohibited from performing or cross-dressing in public and were denied several civil rights.<sup>13</sup> All children who resided with eunuchs were removed and eunuchs who “kept” a child were liable to prosecution. British colonial officials claimed this would not only facilitate the reform of children whom the *hijra* community had “corrupted,” but also prevent their emasculation and thus achieve the government’s broader agenda of causing *hijras* to “die out.”<sup>14</sup> Yet less than one hundred children were found with eunuchs, despite the expectations of the colonial government that kidnapping was rife.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the proposal to register children who lived with prostitutes never eventuated. The proposed rescue of children in brothels and *hijra* households is a story of failed plans

9 Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and Their Critics, 1793–1905*, London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 1980; Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*, London: Routledge, 2003; Judy Whitehead, “Bodies clean and unclean: prostitution, sanitary legislation, and respectable femininity in colonial North India,” *Gender & History* 7(1) (April 1995): 41–63.

10 “Criminal tribes” were targeted under Part I of the 1871 Criminal Tribes Act, Part II of which was aimed at eunuchs. Act No. XXVII of 1871, BL, London, IOR, V/8/42. See also, Rachel J. Tolen, “Colonizing and transforming the criminal tribesman: the Salvation Army in British India,” *American Ethnologist* 18(1) (February 1991): 106–25, pp. 113–22.

11 Under government policy, a “reasonable suspicion” of kidnapping, castration and sodomy against a eunuch was proved not by criminal convictions, but rather by whether or not the individual cross-dressed or performed in public.

12 The CTA applied to the Punjab, the NWP and Oudh. However, only the NWP government introduced registers across the province. The CTA Part II was enforced in Oudh from 1877 when it joined with the NWP. I will refer to the province as the NWP throughout (including post-1877) to avoid confusion.

13 “An Act for the Registration of Criminal Tribes and Eunuchs,” Act No. XXVII of 1871, Passed by the Governor-General of India in Council, British Library (BL), London, India Office Records (IOR), V/8/42.

14 R. Simson, Secretary, NWP, to all Commissioners, NWP, circular no. 32A–434A, 9 June 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

15 T. Dennehy, Officiating Deputy Inspector-General of Police, NWP, to Officiating Personal Assistant to Inspector-General of Police, NWP, 15 August 1871, BL, London, IOR, IOR/P/92.

and small experiments. Yet this case study highlights the tensions and limits of government-directed child rescue projects in colonial India and illuminates the relationship between the colonial government and the missionary project.

This chapter is motivated by three questions. First, what do proposals to rescue children in *kothas* and *hijra* households tell us about the colonial disciplining of domestic arrangements and childhoods in India? I argue that the proposed colonial regulation of prostitute and *hijra* domestic spaces reveals the fissures and limits of the colonial child-rescue project. The proposed removal of children from *kothas* and *hijra* households exposed the areas of overlap, and lines of tension between, the missionary project and the colonial administration. Although Christian ideologies often underpinned colonial government interventions into Indian childhoods and domestic arrangements, missionary-government cooperation was limited in practice. Moreover, different levels of the colonial administration came into conflict on the question of whether the reform of Indian children perceived to be sexually “corrupted” was possible, was a moral imperative and should be an administrative priority. Child rescue discourses underpinned by evangelism had limited sway amongst many British administrators.

In practice, the colonial administration circumscribed or abandoned interventions into the lives of Indian children perceived as sexually corrupted when this did not accord with broader policy priorities. The proposal to remove girls from brothels was defeated due to the practical difficulties this would involve and because the colonial government was invested in the existence of regulated prostitution. In the early 1870s, the discussion in colonial official circles of proposals to “save” girls in *kothas* transformed into a discussion of how best to protect the male clients of underage prostitutes, highlighting the tenuous hold of child rescue discourses in colonial official circles. Although the removal of children from *hijra* households was enshrined in law in 1871, the stated goal of reforming these boys through moral education was largely abandoned in practice. Instead, the government prioritised the removal of children and their ongoing surveillance to stop any contact with *hijras*, prevent their emasculation and cause *hijras* to die out. That is, the agenda of extermination was prioritised over the agenda of reform.

Second, what do colonial interventions into prostitute and *hijra* domestic arrangements tell us about broader historical transformations in domestic and kinship formations in India? Whereas histories of domesticity in modern India and elsewhere have largely focused on women and constructs of femininity—rather than children, childhood, men and masculinity<sup>16</sup>—this study highlights

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16 Swapna Banerjee draws attention to the need to expand the field of domesticity studies “to include men and children.” Swapna M. Banerjee, “Debates on domesticity and the position of women in late colonial India,” *History Compass* 8(6) (2010): 455–73, p. 455.

the significance of notions of childhood to constructs of domesticity. This chapter situates proposals to “rescue” children in the *kotha* and the *hijra* household in the context of the colonial and elite Indian privileging of conjugal familial forms and the marginalisation of diverse domestic formations over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I build upon the work of several historians, notably Indrani Chatterjee, who have recently shown the historical diversity of South Asian forms of domestic arrangements and notions of family and kinship,<sup>17</sup> and specifically highlight the need to broaden our analysis of domesticity to include non-biological kinship. Forms of kinship-making were evident amongst both elite and subaltern social sections in India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The dominant conceptual framework for non-biological kinship in the anthropological literature is “fictive kinship.”<sup>18</sup> However, this concept sets up a dichotomy between “real” and “fictive” kinship that does not account for the importance of kinship-making practices in the lives of both women labelled prostitutes and *hijras*. Instead, I use the term “constructed kinship”<sup>19</sup> to describe kinship-making practices including formal adoption, de facto kinship (performing the social obligations of a relative without formal adoption) and the discursive deployment of kinship terms to describe social relationships.

17 Indrani Chatterjee, “Introduction,” in *Unfamiliar Relations: Family & History in South Asia*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 1–59, p. 10; Sumit Guha, “The family feud as political resource in eighteenth-century India,” in *Unfamiliar Relations: Family & History in South Asia*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 73–94; Indrani Chatterjee, “A slave’s quest for selfhood in eighteenth-century Hindustan,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 37(1) (2000): 53–86; Michael H. Fisher, “Becoming and making ‘family’ in Hindustan,” in *Unfamiliar Relations: Family & History in South Asia*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 95–121; Indrani Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery and Law in Colonial India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999; Indrani Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013.

18 There have been several anthropological studies of non-biological kinship relationships in contemporary India. These studies use the term “fictive kinship,” although some anthropologists, such as Helen Lambert, have acknowledged there are problems with this term. Helen Lambert, “Sentiment and substance in North Indian forms of relatedness,” in *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, ed. Janet Carsten, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 73–89; Helen Lambert, “Village bodies? Reflections on locality, constitution, and affect in Rajasthani Kinship,” in *Culture, Creation, and Procreation: Concepts of Kinship in South Asian Practice*, ed. Monika Böck and Aparna Rao, New York: Berghahn Books, 2000, pp. 81–100; Geert de Neve, “‘We are all *sondukarar* (relatives)!’: kinship and its morality in an urban industry of Tamilnadu, South India,” *Modern Asian Studies* 42(1) (2008): 211–46. Also see Douglas Haynes’ oral history of textile workers. Douglas E. Haynes, “Just like a family? Recalling the relations of production in the textile industries of Surat and Bhiwandi, 1940–1960,” in *The Worlds of Indian Industrial Labour*, ed. Jonathan P. Parry, Jan Breman and Karin Kapadia, New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 1999, pp. 141–70. Amrita Pande’s study of surrogate mothers uses the framework of “everyday forms of kinship” to describe various non-biological and non-affinal kinship relationships, emphasising the “multivocality of kinship” and its openness to “manipulations and transformations,” and conceptualising kinship as a “process.” I take a similar approach to Pande by emphasising the practices through which kinship relationships are made and maintained. Amrita Pande, “‘It may be her eggs but it’s my blood’: surrogates and everyday forms of kinship in India,” *Qualitative Sociology* 32(4) (2009): 379–97, pp. 387, 393.

19 Akitoshi Shimizu has also used the term “constructed kinship,” although he uses this term to describe “[a]ll states of kinship ... transformed out of kinship-by-procreation,” that is, the cultural construction of forms of kinship more broadly (which includes both biological and non-biological kin). Akitoshi Shimizu, “On the notion of kinship,” *Man* 26(3) (September 1991): 377–403, pp. 395–99.

Constructed kinship relationships are ways of thinking about and describing relationships that are embedded in structures of social meaning and are enacted through *practices* of kinship-making.

Finally, in this chapter I ask how did marginalised children experience child rescue projects? Through the case study of the removal of children from the *hijra* community, I foreground the experiences and agency of children. At the same time, I analyse the politics of knowledge production underlining the recording of the stories and actions of children in the official colonial archive. Colonial discourse represented children in the *hijra* community as either victims who needed saving, or as corrupt and criminal. Yet the colonial archive contains fragments of their lives, which I reconstruct in the latter part of this paper. Moreover, colonial records reveal the ways in which the potential resistance of removed children threatened to subvert colonial agendas. The danger of the agency of children in *hijra* households—and the possibility that they would return to *hijras* following their forced removal—pervades official discussions. Most existing historical studies of modern Indian childhoods—for instance, Satadru Sen's excellent history of colonial juvenile reformatories as a site of colonial and nationalist politics<sup>20</sup>—focus on discourses surrounding children and projects to transform them in desired directions.<sup>21</sup> However, it is also important to analyse the experiences and agency of children themselves. As in Karen Vallgård's recent study of missionary schools and Annie McCarthy's chapter in this book, I analyse *both* the conceptualisation of childhood *and* the experiences of children.<sup>22</sup>

## The historical context

The proposed removal of children from *kothas* and *hijra* households needs to be situated in four interlinked historical contexts: transitions in domestic arrangements and family formations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

20 Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*. See also, Satadru Sen, "The orphaned colony: orphanage, child and authority in British India," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 44(4) (2007): 463–88.

21 See for instance, Ashwini Tambe, "The state as surrogate parent: legislating nonmarital sex in colonial India, 1911–1929," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 2(3) (2009): 393–427; Ishita Pande, "Coming of age: law, sex and childhood in late colonial India," *Gender & History* 24(1) (April 2012): 205–30; Padma Anagol-McGinn, "The Age of Consent Act (1891) reconsidered: women's perspectives and participation in the child-marriage controversy in India," *South Asia Research* 12(2) (1992): 100–18; Tanika Sarkar, "Rhetoric against the age of consent: resisting colonial reason and the death of a child-wife," *Economic and Political Weekly* 28(36) (September 4, 1993): 1869–78; Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003; Sanjay Srivastava, *Constructing Post-Colonial India: National Character and the Doon School*, London: Routledge, 1998.

22 Karen A.A. Vallgård, "Adam's escape: children and the discordant nature of colonial conversions," *Childhood* 18(3) (2011): 298–315.

India; colonial interventions into Indian childhoods; the influence of evangelism amongst British colonial administrators; and the colonial concern with kidnapping.

Partha Chatterjee has shown that for the Indian elite, the family, conceptualised as a conjugal and affective unit, was an uncolonised domain where Indian culture could be constructed and defended.<sup>23</sup> However, recent studies have suggested that the paradigm of the conjugal family obscures the complexities of domestic forms in the early modern and modern periods. Indrani Chatterjee has argued that the presence of large numbers of slaves and servants within the family—and the malleable distinctions between these groups and kin—calls into question the privileging of conjugal forms of family in early modern South Asia.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, a focus on biological forms of kinship obscures the kinship-making practices of both slaves and non-slaves in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century India.<sup>25</sup> Non-biological kinship relationships could be as crucial in political and social life as biological or conjugal relationships in the early modern period.<sup>26</sup>

My broader study looks at several groups of eunuchs in north India and their kinship formations. Although this paper focuses on *hijras*, conflicts over the families of *khwajasarais*, or harem and court eunuchs, highlight the existence of kinship-making practices amongst relatively elite social actors, as well as marginal groups. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Awadh, an Indian-ruled state that was formerly part of the Mughal Empire, *khwajasarais* formed networks and family households of non-biological kinship through formal ceremonies and informal or symbolic naming practices with fellow eunuchs, slaves, non-slaves and dependants.<sup>27</sup> *Khwajasarais*, though slaves, were

23 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

24 Chatterjee, "Introduction," pp. 13–14; Indrani Chatterjee, "Renewed and connected histories: slavery and historiography of South Asia," in *Slavery & South Asian History*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 17–43, p. 19. On domestic slavery see, Tanika Sarkar, "Bondage in the colonial context," in *Chains of Servitude: Bondage and Slavery in India*, ed. Utsa Patnaik and Manjari Dingwaney, Madras: Sangam Books, 1985, pp. 197–226, pp. 100–06.

25 Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery and Law*, pp. 36–57; Chatterjee, "A slave's quest"; Chatterjee and Guha, "Slave-queen, waif-prince."

26 On the political importance of family more broadly, including the symbolic deployment of kinship and adoption, see Guha, "The family feud"; Fisher, "Making family." On eunuchs' kinship-making practices in Murshidabad in Bengal, see Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery and Law*, pp. 48–57.

27 One of the most important sources on *khwajasarais* in Awadh is Faiz Bakhsh's Persian memoir *Tarikh Fakahbaksh*, which William Hoey translated as *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad* in 1888–89, which describes at length the relationships between prominent *khwajasarais*, their masters, kin and dependants. Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad, Being a Translation of the Tārīkh Farahbaksh of Muhammad Faiz-Bakhsh*, trans. William Hoey, vol. 1, Allahabad: Government Press, 1888; Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad, Being a Translation of the Tārīkh Farahbaksh of Muhammad Faiz-Bakhsh*, trans. William Hoey, vol. 2, Allahabad: Government Press, 1889. Both the Nawab and the Company acknowledged the family of Awadh's most powerful *khwajasarai*, Almas Ali Khan, in the late eighteenth century. J. Bristow, Resident at Lucknow, to Governor-General and Council, India, 13 February 1783, National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi, FD/SP 27/12/1783 no. 21; J. Bristow, Resident at Lucknow, to J. Cumming, 18 February 1783, NAI, New Delhi, FD/SP 20/01/1784 no. 3; Hibbert, Commander in Chief, to Governor-General and Council, India,

sometimes equal or senior kin of non-slaves.<sup>28</sup> Constructed kinship could be affective, as well as power differentiated, and was a conduit for *khwajasarais'* considerable political influence. In the mid-nineteenth century, *khwajasarai* kinship and social networks were derided by the British as an avenue for political "corruption," and the British Resident pressured the Awadh ruler, or Padshah, to ban the employment of eunuchs in administrative positions.<sup>29</sup> The Padshah signed an agreement banning *khwajasarais* from "official" posts, but not from "private" attendance on the Padshah.<sup>30</sup> This fundamentally misunderstood where *khwajasarais'* power lay: in the "inner" domain of the court, due to their physical proximity to the ruler. The Padshah creatively used the European public/private distinction to retain his *khwajasarais* in important positions of power defined as "private." Meanwhile, *khwajasarais* continued to exert political power through their networks of kin and dependants.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, it took the British annexation of Awadh in 1856 to dislodge the power of the *khwajasarais*.

The nineteenth-century privileging of the conjugal family unit is part of the story of why *khwajasarais* were labelled politically "corrupt," and why *hijra* households and *kothas* were derided as "deviant" domesticities. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, colonial law normalised certain elite Indian codes of domesticity, drawn from textual sources of Hindu and Muslim law, in the process marginalising diverse domestic arrangements, including

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16 February 1785, NAI, New Delhi, FD/SC 19/02/1785 no. 1; J. Ironside to Commander in Chief, 25 January 1785, NAI, New Delhi, FD/SC 19/02/1785 no. 2; G. Ironside to Commander in Chief, 26 January 1785, NAI, New Delhi, FD/SC 19/02/1785 no. 4; Almas Ali Khan to Governor-General, India, 19 April 1785, NAI, New Delhi, FD/SC 26/04/1785 no. 24; Edward Otto Ives, Resident at Lucknow, to Governor-General, India, 11 January 1789, NAI, New Delhi, FD/SPC 19/01/1789 no. 13; Edward Otto Ives, Resident at Lucknow, to Governor-General, India, 29 March 1789, NAI, New Delhi, FD/SPC 08/04/1789 no. 22.

28 For examples in Faiz Bakhsh's memoirs, see Faiz Bakhsh, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, pp. 215–19, 289 and 297–98.

29 A. F. Richmond, Resident at Lucknow, to Secretary, Government of India, 22 June 1848, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PC 08/07/1848 no. 64; A. F. Richmond, Resident at Lucknow, to Secretary, Government of India, 17 June 1848, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PC 15/07/1848 no. 51–4.

30 Wajid Ali Shah, Padshah of Awadh, "Written Agreement ... as an assurance of His Majesty's intention to prevent Eunuchs, Singers and other improper persons from holding Office under the Oude Government either directly or indirectly in the names of other parties," 22 June 1848, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PC 08/07/1848 no. 65.

31 On Mughal conceptions of political power and proximity to the ruler, see Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*, Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 142, 152; Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Kingdom, household and body: history, gender and imperial service under Akbar," *Modern Asian Studies*, 41(5) (2007): 889–923, pp. 893–94. For examples of the Padshah's correspondence on *khwajasarais* see: Wajid Ali Shah, Padshah of Awadh, to Resident at Lucknow, 25 June 1847, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PP 11/12/1847 no. 162; Wajid Ali Shah, Padshah of Awadh, to Resident at Lucknow, 30 May 1848, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PC 15/07/1848 no. 51–4; Wajid Ali Shah, Padshah of Awadh, to Resident at Lucknow, 21 June 1855, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PC 28/12/1855 no. 335. On *khwajasarais'* continued employment in positions of authority see J. Outram, Resident at Lucknow, to Secretary, Government of India, 21 June 1855, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PC 28/12/1855 no. 335. On networks of dependents and household establishments as means by which *khwajasarai* exercised power, see Richmond to Sec, GoI, 17 Jun 1848, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PC 15/07/1848 no. 51–4.



customary forms of marriage and divorce and matrilineal social structures.<sup>32</sup> Following 1857, colonial interventions into the domestic sphere occurred in marginal communities labelled “criminal,” the “deviant fringe” of Indian society.<sup>33</sup> In the early 1870s, the domestic spaces of regional and caste groups deemed “infanticidal communities,”<sup>34</sup> as well as the “criminal tribes” (caste communities the British regarded as hereditary criminals), were targeted through colonial legislation. Attempts to micro-manage *hijra* households and *kothas* through the removal of children are part of this broader history of the marginalisation of diverse South Asian domestic arrangements in the nineteenth century. The colonial concern with the domestic formations of *hijras* and prostitutes highlights the centrality of the “intimate” to projects of colonial modernity.<sup>35</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, the colonial government was also concerned with the reform of poor and “criminal” children. In the 1860s, the colonial government made its first forays into the upbringing of subaltern Indian children. Previously, the only government-administered orphanages were for the offspring of European men, while the only orphanages for Indian children were run by missionaries and private organisations.<sup>36</sup> Yet, following the 1860–61 Upper Doab famine, the colonial government established its first orphanages for Indians.<sup>37</sup> In 1876, concerns with the reform of “criminal” Indian children resulted in the passage of the Reformatory Schools Act.<sup>38</sup> These projects of reform and education were limited to subaltern children, since “respectable” Indian children were inaccessible to the colonisers.<sup>39</sup> However, the removal of children was generally considered an illegitimate policy and was rejected in the nineteenth century in other contexts, for instance, the regulation of “criminal tribes.” It was not

32 Radhika Singha, *A Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 122; Tambe, *Codes of Misconduct*, p. 5; Mytheli Sreenivas, “Conjugality and capital: gender, families, and property under colonial law in India,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63(4) (November 2004): 937–60, pp. 938–42.

33 Direct colonial intervention in “native” domestic contexts was generally considered illegitimate after the revolt against British rule in 1857. T.R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of the Revolt: India, 1857–1870*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964; Guha, “The family feud,” p. 91. However, at the margins of Indian society, colonial regulation actually increased. “Deviant fringe” is Radhika Singha’s term. Radhika Singha, “Colonial law and infrastructural power: reconstructing community, locating the female subject,” *Studies in History* 19(1) (2003): 87–126. See also, Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*.

34 Satadru Sen, “The savage family: colonialism and female infanticide in nineteenth-century India,” *Journal of Women’s History* 14(3) (Autumn 2002): 753–73, pp. 53–55.

35 Kathleen Wilson, “Rethinking the colonial state: family, gender, and governmentality in eighteenth-century British frontiers,” *American Historical Review* 116(5) (December 2011): 1294–322; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, p. 8; Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 2.

36 David Arnold, “European orphans and vagrants in India in the nineteenth century,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 7(2) (1979): 104–27; Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, pp. 206–45.

37 Sen, “The orphaned colony,” pp. 465–68.

38 Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, pp. 34–39.

39 Sen, “The orphaned colony,” p. 474.

until the 1910s that the government removed children from criminal tribe communities.<sup>40</sup> In this respect, the proposed removal of children from *hijra* households and brothels went beyond the usually acceptable boundaries of colonial governance, although such proposals occurred in the context of broader colonial interventions into the lives of subaltern Indian children.

Concerns about “deviant” domestic arrangements and children also intersected with anxieties about kidnapping. Throughout the nineteenth century, periodic moral panics over kidnapping occurred in official circles and brought together a range of colonial concerns.<sup>41</sup> From the early nineteenth century, there was an association between kidnapping, uncontrolled mobility and criminality,<sup>42</sup> all of which threatened British notions of political authority.<sup>43</sup> Both prostitutes and *hijras* were linked to “wandering tribes” who kidnapped children,<sup>44</sup> while *hijras*, who led semi-peripatetic lifestyles, were sometimes viewed as kidnappers themselves.<sup>45</sup> Thus, concerns with prostitute and *hijra* domesticities resonated with the inability to know and control mobile populations. The colonial government was particularly concerned with kidnapping for “immoral purposes,” or prostitution. In contrast, according to the colonisers, the kidnapping of girls for forced marriage was a “venial crime” that was in the interests of the girl, while there was no “shame” in kidnapping for “domestic slavery.”<sup>46</sup> The agency and welfare of the kidnapped child was irrelevant, so

40 Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, p. 57.

41 B. Harding, Acting Magistrate of Agra, “Report on Child Stealing in Agra District,” 9 December 1830, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PC 21/01/1831 no. 65.

42 Nitin Sinha, “Mobility, control and criminality in early colonial India, 1760s–1850s,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 45(1) (2008): 1–33. Wandering tribes, *thags* (or *thugs*), gypsies and the criminal tribes were associated with kidnapping. William H. Sleeman, *A Report on the System of Megpunaism, or: The Murder of Indigent Parents for their Young Children (who are Sold as Slaves) as it Prevails in the Delhie Territories, and the Native States of Rajpootana, Ulwar and Bhurtpore*, Srirampur: Serampore Press, 1839; C. Hervey, General Superintendent of Operations for the Suppression of Thuggee and Dacoity, “Extract, paras X and XXXIV, from a General report of the Operations of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department for the year 1862...,” 15 September 1863, NAI, New Delhi, FD/JB 11/1863 no. 9–15; H.D. Daly, Officiating Agent, Central India, to Secretary, Government of India, 31 March 1869, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PB 04/1869 no. 224–31; E.C. Bayley, Home Department Memorandum, 2 July 1870, NAI, New Delhi, HD/PB 19/08/1870 no. 12-9; C. Hervey, General Superintendent of Operations for the Suppression of Thuggee and Dacoity, to Judicial Commissioner, Central Provinces, 9 March 1863, NAI, New Delhi, FD/JB 11/1863 no. 9-15.

43 Sandria B. Freitag, “Crime in the social order of colonial north India,” *Modern Asian Studies* 25(2) (1991): 227–61; Sanjay Nigam, “Disciplining and policing the ‘criminals by birth’, part 2: the development of a disciplinary system, 1871–1900,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 27(3) (1990): 257–87, pp. 260–66, 272–74. On concerns with uncontrolled mobility and colonial policies towards slavery, see Andrea Major, “Enslaving spaces: domestic slavery and the spatial, ideological and practical limits of colonial control in the nineteenth-century Rajput and Maratha States,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 46(3) (2009): 323–29.

44 Inspector-General of Police, Central Provinces, to Secretary, Central Provinces, 24 January 1871, NAI, New Delhi, HD/Police 01/04/1871 no. 14.

45 R. Drummond, Officiating Commissioner of Allahabad, to Secretary, NWP, 9 August 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61; H.D. Willock, Magistrate of Bulandshahr, to Commissioner of Meerut, 9 January 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/29/8.

46 C.A. Elliot, Secretary to Government, NWP, to Secretary, Government of India, 5 September 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92; Bayley, Memo, 2 Jul 1870, NAI, New Delhi, HD/PB 19/08/1871 no. 12-9; C.A. Elliot,

long as they ended up in a “respectable” domestic context. Thus, kidnapping intersected with moral outrage at the premature sexualisation of children *outside* the context of conjugal domesticity, as well as moral rhetoric surrounding the abuse of children and “lost” childhoods.

In some cases, colonial government interventions into childhoods and domestic spaces were informed by evangelism. There were both areas of overlap and considerable tensions between government and missionary agendas towards Indian children. The relationship between the colonial government and missionaries was ambiguous and even conflicted.<sup>47</sup> However, the provincial government of the North-Western Provinces that initiated the proposed “rescue” of children from *hijras* and prostitutes, was particularly influenced by evangelism. The Lieutenant-Governor of the NWP in the late 1860s and early 1870s, William Muir, was the “leading lay supporter of missions” in Agra and a lay preacher.<sup>48</sup> The relationship of evangelical administrators to colonial power was highly problematic, since official policy mandated “neutrality” on religious matters.<sup>49</sup> Muir negotiated these tensions by espousing neutrality in official matters, although he supported a policy agenda of “moral improvement” with an “evangelical subtext,” while unofficially, though openly, expressing evangelical beliefs and supporting missionary work.<sup>50</sup> Muir was also a controversial critic of Islam, who attacked the apparent absence of an “idea of conjugal *unity*” in Islam, which he saw as typified by polygamy, divorce and concubinage.<sup>51</sup> In reference to the NWP, Avril Powell argues that “close identification with missionary interests was a particular mark of this province.”<sup>52</sup> This partly explains the greater resonance of child rescue discourses in the NWP, compared with other provinces. Although government and missionary projects targeting Indian children overlapped in key respects, even in the NWP, many British administrators at the district level were not persuaded by evangelical ideology of the moral imperative to “save” Indian children. The colonial child rescue project was therefore fractured and ambiguous.

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Officiating Secretary, NWP, to Officiating Secretary, Government of India, 18 July 1870, NAI, New Delhi, HD/PB 19/08/1871 no. 12-9; Joint Magistrate of Etah to Commissioner of Agra, 14 January 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92; G. Hutchinson, Inspector-General of Police, Punjab, to Officiating Secretary, Punjab, 5 August 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

47 See Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818–1940*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

48 Avril A. Powell, *Scottish Orientalists and India: The Muir Brothers, Religion, Education and Empire*, Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010, p. 92.

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

50 *Ibid.*, pp. 91–92.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 162–67. For the Muslim reaction to Muir’s comments, see also Avril A. Powell, “Indian Muslim modernists and the issue of slavery in Islam,” in *Slavery & South Asian History*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 262–86.

52 Powell, *Scottish Orientalists and India*, p. 93.

## To “rescue” boys from a “life of infamy”: Colonial interventions into the *hijra* household

In the late nineteenth century, the space of the *hijra* household, and particularly the presence of children therein, was the subject of considerable moral panic in official colonial circles. From the 1850s and 1860s, colonial discourse, particularly at higher levels of government, represented the *hijra* household as an environment in which boys were sexually corrupted and taught gender-deviant behaviours. British colonial administrators claimed that coercive and criminal means were used to replicate the *hijra* community: since *hijras* were incapable of procreative sexual intercourse, children in *hijra* households “in many cases, can be proved to have been, and in every case may be presumed to have been, kidnapped.”<sup>53</sup> *Hijra* households were characterised as an environment of sexual corruption and deviant socialisation. Since *hijras* were apparently “neither more nor less than professional sodomites,”<sup>54</sup> the *hijra* household was transformed into a mere brothel.<sup>55</sup> According to British administrators, children, often described as “pupils,” were “trained” to become “professional sodomites” in *hijra* households.<sup>56</sup> This sexual education was never described in detail, leaving its precise content to the imagination. The *hijra* household was also a dark and unknowable space for colonial officials.<sup>57</sup> British colonisers were concerned by lacunae in their knowledge of the *hijra* household, prompting efforts to discipline and render transparent *hijra* domestic space through police surveillance and registration. The opacity of the *hijra* household and the inability to fix and know its various, complex domestic relationships, fuelled moral panic and imparted associations of criminality onto the *hijra* community.

Yet the records of the lower levels of the colonial administration—including the reports of Indian police officers and intelligence collected from *hijras* and their neighbours—show a complex, if fragmented, picture of *hijra* domestic

53 C. Daniell, Magistrate of Farrukhabad, to Commissioner of Agra, 13 January 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92. See also, S.N. Martin, Magistrate of Muzaffarnagar, to Commissioner of Meerut, 15 July 1865, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/9/2.

54 R. Drummond, Sessions Judge of Shahjahanpur, “General remarks to cases No. 79 of 1864, and Nos. 16, 17, 18 and 19 of 1865,” ca. 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

55 R. Simson, Secretary, NWP, to Inspector-General of Police, NWP, 9 June 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61; C.A. Elliot, Officiating Secretary, NWP, to Secretary, Government of India, “Abstract of Replies,” 21 April 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92; C.A. Dodd, Officiating Personal Assistant to Inspector-General of Police, NWP, to all Superintendents of Police, NWP, circular no. 11, 30 June 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61; A.O. Hume, Magistrate of Etawah, quoted in J. Simson, Register to Nizamut Adalwut, NWP, “Replies to the Court’s Circular letter, No. 4, dated the 2nd September 1865,” 20 April 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.

56 E. Tyrwhitt, Inspector-General of Police, NWP, to Secretary, NWP, 26 June 1874, BL, London, IOR, P/96.

57 O.L. Smith, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, to Personal Assistant to Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, 6 July 1881, BL, London, IOR, P/1614; H.B. Webster, Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, to Secretary, NWP&O, 15 July 1884, BL, London, IOR, P/2208.

arrangements.<sup>58</sup> There were multiple axes along which power was organised in *hijra* households, including age, gender, occupation and positions of authority. Northern India was divided up by *hijras* so that each *hijra* household had a territory in which they would request alms and perform in the streets and bazaars and at households where births had recently occurred.<sup>59</sup> The permanent residents of a household usually numbered between three and eight.<sup>60</sup> Nineteenth-century *hijra* households were structured by two primary relationships amongst *hijras*. First, *hijra* households were ordered by hierarchical relationships between *gurus* (teachers) and *chelas* (disciples). Archived *hijra* life stories evidence that *gurus* had significant authority over their *chelas*<sup>61</sup> and that *gurus* and *chelas* lived and migrated together.<sup>62</sup> Yet *gurus* also imparted to *chelas* the art of singing and dancing; *hijras'* bawdy jokes, insults and parodies; *hijra* ritual practices and mythologies; and in some cases, medical expertise in the emasculation operation.<sup>63</sup> Second, *hijra* households also featured more affective, though nevertheless status-differentiated, relationships between *hijras*, which

58 Like Stoler, I have found the “surplus production [of official state archives], what defines their interior ridges and porous seams,” are sites where “out of place” opinions surface. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 2, 14. In particular, my research into *hijras* suggests that colonial knowledge was formed in interaction with the knowledge of Indian informants. This produced tensions in official knowledge at the district level, where colonial officials came into contact with local, vernacular knowledge. I have drawn on Rosalind O’Hanlon’s and Christopher Bayley’s work. Rosalind O’Hanlon, “Recovering the subject: subaltern studies and histories of resistance in colonial South Asia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 22(1) (1988): 189–224, pp. 215–17; C.A. Bayly, *Empire & Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 143, 161–78.

59 W. Oldham, Officiating Magistrate of Ghazipur, to Commissioner of Benares, 6 February 1875, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12; Simson, “Replies,” 20 Apr 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62; B. Sapte, Officiating Commissioner of Agra, to Secretary, NWP, 16 September 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

60 H.B. Webster, Magistrate of Meerut, “Register of Eunuchs in the Meerut District coming under Section 24 Act XXVII of 1871,” 7 May 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/29/8; Magistrate of Bulandshahr (signature illegible), “Register of property possessed by Eunuchs borne on the rolls of Register No. 1 zillah Bollundshuhur,” 9 January 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/29/8; Officiating Superintendent of Police, Meerut (signature illegible), “Register of the Eunuchs in the District of Meerut Coming Under Section 24 of Act 27 of 1871,” 23 April 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/29/8; H.B. Webster, Magistrate of Gorakhpur, “Register of property possessed by Eunuchs borne on the Rolls of Register No. 1 under Act XXVII of 1871 District Goruckpore,” ca. 1872–73, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12; Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes*, p. 332.

61 These life stories were relayed by *hijras* themselves and by their neighbours and were reported and selected by Indian subordinate police. W.A. Short, Superintendent of Police, Muzaffarnagar, “List of Eunuchs in the District of Mozuffurnuggur,” ca. January 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/29/8. We also know that *chelas* were expected to cook and clean for their guru. North-Western Provinces Nizamut Adawlut, “Government v. Ali Buksh,” *Decisions of the North-Western Provinces Nizamut Adawlut* 2 (1852): 1314–16.

62 James Amson, Magistrate of Azamgarh, to Commissioner of Benares, 16 November 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

63 On the training of *hijras* by their gurus, see: R.E. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, vol. 3, New Delhi: D.K. Publishers Distributors, 1997 [1922], p. 227; Bhimbhai Kirparam, “Pavávás,” in *Hindu Castes and Tribes of Gujarat*, vol. 2, ed. James M. Campbell, Haryana (India): Vintage Books, 1988 [1901], pp. 506–08; Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes*, p. 332. On the emasculation operation, see Amson to Comm Benares, 16 Nov 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12. In a given area, there was usually one *guru* who had authority over other *hijra gurus* and *chelas*. Short, “List,” ca. 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/29/8.



were described through kinship terms. H.A. Rose, a colonial ethnologist, reported that *hijras* in the Punjab “call one another by such names as *mási*, ‘mother’s sister,’ *phuphi*, ‘aunt,’ and so on.”<sup>64</sup>

The colonial archive suggests, despite colonial rhetoric, that the formation and reproduction of *hijra* households cannot be reduced to kidnapping. Nineteenth-century *hijras* joined the community as *both* adults and children,<sup>65</sup> while children joined *hijra* households in several circumstances: some children were kidnapped and then sold to *hijras*,<sup>66</sup> particularly in periods of political and social unrest, such as 1857–58;<sup>67</sup> relatives sometimes sold or gave away children due to financial distress, the death of a parent or a genital “deformity” in the child;<sup>68</sup> while in periods of famine, *hijras* adopted or took in children.<sup>69</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the average age of emasculation had been eleven or twelve, although a significant minority of *hijras* were emasculated in their late teens or adulthood.<sup>70</sup> However, by the mid- to late nineteenth century, the numbers of children in *hijra* communities were small (around 61 in 1871) and very few were emasculated—in 1871, police found only one child eunuch.<sup>71</sup> In sum, there were multiple paths into the *hijra* community, for both adult and child initiands.

*Hijra* households were also home to non-*hijras*. *Hijras* sometimes adopted children whom they intended to marry to a suitable partner, rather than initiate as *hijras*, and were thus invested in the formation of conjugal and reproductive domesticities through adoption.<sup>72</sup> Some of the children in *hijra* households were

64 Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes*, p. 332.

65 The colonial records mention several examples of the initiation of *hijra* as adults. Drummond, “General Remarks,” ca. 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61; R.F. Saunders, Magistrate of Ghazipur, to Commissioner of Benares, 30 October 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12; J. Woodburn, Secretary, NWP&O, to Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, 1 July 1885, BL, London, IOR, P/2460; E. Berril, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, to Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, 1 May 1896, UPSA, Allahabad, COA/18/5. However, officials emphasised instances of child castration over adult castration. Sapte to Sec, NWP, 16 Sep 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61; E.C. Bayley, Secretary to Government, Bengal, to Secretary to Government of India, 8 May 1865, NAI, New Delhi, HD/JB 30/07/1870 no. 53–54; Simson, “Replies,” 20 Apr 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.

66 North-Western Provinces Nizamut Adawlut, “Government v. Munsa and 4 others,” *Decisions of the North-Western Provinces Nizamut Adawlut* 10 (1860): 6 March 1860; Drummond, “General Remarks,” ca. 1865; Sapte to Sec, NWP, 16 Sep 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

67 Dalmahoy, “Report,” 9 Dec 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

68 Ibid.; Sapte to Sec, NWP, 16 Sep 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

69 F. Williams, Commissioner of Meerut, to Secretary, NWP, 31 January 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92; Magistrate of Muttra to Commissioner of Agra, 26 January 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

70 Webster, “Register,” 7 May 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/29/8; Campbell, “Register,” 6 Jan 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/29/8; B. Alone, Officiating Superintendent of Police, Azamgarh, “Register of Eunuchs in the District of Azimgurh,” 9 October 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

71 Dennehy to IG Police, 15 Aug 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92. Considering that the NWP government believed there were “at least 2,500” eunuchs in the NWP, this represents a relatively small number. Court quoted in Simson, “Replies,” 20 Apr 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.

72 For instance, a *hijra* named Goolbuddun in Azamgarh district “brought up a boy” who became a “married man, and the father of a family.” Amson to Comm Benares, 16 Nov 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.



the offspring of widows who took shelter with *hijras*.<sup>73</sup> The families of musicians who performed with *hijras* also sometimes lived with *hijras*, accounting for around one in five children in *hijra* households.<sup>74</sup> Some *hijras* also had long-term relationships with normatively masculine men who lived permanently or for periods with their *hijra* partner.<sup>75</sup> The complexities of *hijra* domesticities can be further seen in their mythology. On the one hand, *hijra* legends positioned *hijras* as impotent and infertile men who should be emasculated and dress as women, and thus place themselves outside procreative masculinities.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, *hijras*' association with infertility endowed them with power to bless and curse fertility and the right to collect alms and perform songs and dances following births, thus explicitly linking *hijra* existence to procreative sexualities. In sum, *hijra* households were complex and featured both non-biological and biological kinship, as well as various relationships of dependence. *Hijras* were separate to and yet linked to conjugal, procreative domesticities through their social role, mythology and adoptive practices.

Yet ethnological detail of *hijra* domesticities in colonial records was generally subsumed in a narrative that characterised *hijra* households as an environment that "corrupted" and victimised children. Much of the discursive power of moral panic concerning *hijras* was derived from the rhetoric of lost childhood and the figure of the kidnapped and abused child. For the legislator J.F. Stephen, "the depositions of the children who had been kidnapped and mutilated ... [were] as frightful stories as were ever told in the world."<sup>77</sup> Colonial officials sometimes voiced their moral duty in explicitly Christian terms, characterising *hijras* as a "reproach to any country under Christian rulers."<sup>78</sup> Thus, the government removal of children from *hijra* households was an experimental foray into the missionary agenda of rescuing "lost" children.

However, colonial officials also conceptualised the bodies of boys as crucial to the control of the *hijra* community. The articulated aim of government was the extermination of eunuchs, effected by the prevention of emasculation, and this

73 Short, "List," ca. 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/29/8; R.T. Hobart, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, NWP, to Inspector-General of Police, NWP, 28 June 1876, BL, London, IOR, P/839; Office of the Commissioner of Benares (signature illegible), "Abstract of replies of Magistrates of Districts of the Benares Division to Commissioner's Circular No: 39," 23 November 1875, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

74 J.J.F. Lumsden, Officiating Magistrate of Gorakhpur, to Commissioner of Benares, 15 April 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

75 NWP Nizamut Adawlut, "Govt v. Ali Buksh," pp. 1314–16.

76 The purpose of emasculation was to prevent rebirth as impotent in future lives. Thus, *hijra* mythology positioned fertility as a good, highlighting the paradoxical negation of conjugal and procreative sexualities and their reinforcement. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes*, p. 227; John Shortt, "The *Kojahs* of southern India," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 2 (1873): 402–07, p. 403.

77 J.F. Stephen, Member of the Council of the Governor-General of India, quoted in W. Stokes, Secretary, Government of India, Abstract of the proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, 2 December 1870, BL, London, IOR, V/9/11.

78 G. Couper, Secretary, NWP, to Member of the Legislative Council of India for the NWP, 12 February 1861, BL, London, IOR, P/235/33.

goal depended on the control of male child bodies. Colonial officials argued that it would not be possible “to eradicate this unnatural race,”<sup>79</sup> if more eunuchs could be created out of the bodies of unemasculated boys.<sup>80</sup> While in the Indian conception, *hijras* were endowed with power over the fertility of others and were therefore ambiguously linked to procreative sexualities, British colonial officials viewed *hijras* as entirely opposed to procreation. *Hijra* domestic arrangements, *guru-chela* hierarchies and kinship-making practices were viewed as perverse sites of the reproduction of *hijra* bodies.

According to the NWP government, the removal of children who resided with *hijras* would achieve the dual aims of: first, “rescuing” boys from the *hijra* household and reversing their deviant socialisation through reform; and second, preventing their emasculation and thereby causing the *hijra* community to die out. Children were first removed from *hijra* households in the NWP by executive order in 1865, although at this stage there was no legal basis for removal. The NWP argued legislation was necessary and pushed for the passage of Part II of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which provided for the registration of eunuchs. However, the NWP was the only government that registered eunuchs or removed children from *hijra* households, demonstrating the limited nature of this experiment in child rescue.

## “Prostitute” domesticities and a failed project of child “rescue”

The removal of children from *hijra* households opened up the question of whether children should be removed from another domestic space considered “deviant,” the *kotha* or brothel. As we have seen, prostitution was a term that encompassed a diverse range of economic, social and cultural practices. Below, I will examine two figures labelled prostitutes—the brothel worker and the courtesan—who were of concern in north and central India.<sup>81</sup> There is a considerable body of

79 S.N. Martin, Magistrate of Muzaffarnagar, to Commissioner of Meerut, 15 July 1865, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/9/2.

80 For example, W.G. Probyn, Magistrate of Shahjahanpur, to Sessions Judge of Shahjahanpur, 12 December 1864, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61; Simson to IG Police, NWP, 9 Jun 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61; Officiating Judge of Azamgarh, quoted in Elliot, “Abstract,” 21 Apr 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92; C. Robertson, Commissioner of Allahabad, to Secretary, NWP, 27 June 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62; C. Robertson, Officiating Secretary, NWP&O, to Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, 3 April 1877, BL, London, IOR, P/840; Tiernan, 2nd Grade Inspector of Police, Gorakhpur, to Superintendent of Police, Gorakhpur, 26 May 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92; C.R. Lindsay, Sessions Judge of Moradabad, quoted in Simson, “Replies,” 20 Apr 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.

81 *Devadasis* are evident largely in South India. The removal of girls from *devadasi* communities was considered by Madras Presidency, but was not considered advisable or desirable. Due to the constraints of

literature on prostitution in colonial India,<sup>82</sup> although few studies have analysed brothels, or *kothas*, as domestic contexts. Two studies stand out in this respect, but diverge in their approach. Veena Oldenburg argued in her study of the courtesans, or *tawa'if*, of Lucknow that the *kotha* was an alternative to conjugal respectable domesticity and courtesans' "lifestyle" constituted "resistance" to patriarchy.<sup>83</sup> Ashwini Tambe has recently challenged Oldenburg's argument, demonstrating that "commercial sex was an entirely domestic activity, performed in continuity with [women's] personal identities within the 'family.'"<sup>84</sup> Tambe notes the presence of multiple familial relationships in Bombay *kothas* ranging from procuring from within the biological or conjugal family to calling brothel mistresses "mother" and fellow brothel workers "sister." Brothels could function as an *alternate* family for women who escaped hegemonic family life, but were not an *alternative* to familial domesticity.<sup>85</sup> Kinship could also play a "mystifying function, hiding coercive relations."<sup>86</sup> Although Tambe's argument that brothels were experienced as families is convincing, she positions actual and fictive kinship as a duality,<sup>87</sup> adopting the approach of many anthropological studies that conceptualise non-biological kinship as fictive kinship. Based on my research into *hijras* and *khwajasaras*, I would posit constructed kinship as a more appropriate concept for kinship-making practices that encompassed formal adoption, de facto kinship and the symbolic or discursive deployment of kinship.

Whereas Tambe's study focuses on the early twentieth century, archival material from the nineteenth century suggests similar contours of relationships within *kothas*. Biological kinship was an entry point into prostitution, while mothers, daughters and other female relatives sometimes lived together in *kothas*. For instance, we learn of a widow and her daughter who together entered a brothel in Agra in the 1860s and of Mussamut Gujra, a powerful courtesan in the Indian-ruled principality of Bharatpur who had trained her daughter, Mussamut Beejan, as a courtesan.<sup>88</sup> Adoption within *kothas* was also common

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this paper, my greater familiarity with North India, and the origination of the proposal in the NWP, I focus on the social roles classified as "prostitution" that were the concern there. I also examine Rajasthan and central India, because this region was thought to be a major market for underage prostitutes in the north.

82 See for example Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class*; Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics*; Tambe, *Codes of Misconduct*; Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as resistance"; Whitehead, "'Bodies clean and unclean.'"

83 Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as Resistance," pp. 259–87.

84 Aswini Tambe, "Brothels as families: reflections on the history of Bombay's *Kothas*," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8(2) (2006): 219–42, p. 228.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 228.

87 Tambe does write that the "line between actual and fictive kinship blurs when one examines brothel relations more closely," but nonetheless equates "actual" kinship with biological kinship, suggesting all other forms were "fictive." *Ibid.*

88 Gujra's status as either slave-concubine or courtesan is obscure in the records, demonstrating the conflation of multiple social roles under the label "prostitute." C.K.M. Walter, Political Agent, Bharatpur, to Agent, Rajputana, 17 September 1868, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PB 10/1868 no. 218.

and brothel workers and courtesans often adopted the daughters of women in different *kothas*.<sup>89</sup> Young courtesans and brothel workers often called the brothel mistress their “mother.” Beejan lived with a young courtesan and “treated her as a daughter;”<sup>90</sup> while one girl who was sold to a *kotha* in Mahi Kantha (Gujarat) subsequently refused to leave the woman she was sold to, whom she called her mother.<sup>91</sup> One colonial official reported that girls were often unwilling to leave *kothas* because of biological or adoptive kinship, since “their natural protectors” were “their mothers.”<sup>92</sup> The deployment of biological and constructed kinship evidently had coercive effects, keeping girls in prostitution by creating ties of loyalty and obligation,<sup>93</sup> but it could also have affective aspects. Birth into prostitution, being given or sold to *kothas* by parents and entering prostitution in circumstances of distress (such as widowhood or poverty) were the most common avenues into brothels and courtesan establishments.<sup>94</sup>

Despite this evidence of biological and constructed kinship in *kothas*, most British administrators claimed criminal means were used to secure new recruits to *kothas*. One theory was that prostitutes were linked to networks of “wandering” tribes who provided a steady supply of kidnapped girls.<sup>95</sup> Thus, the complex relationships of both *hijra* households and *kothas* were equated with kidnapping and both domestic spaces were viewed as sites of criminality.<sup>96</sup> Whereas the Government of India concluded in 1871 that the “traffic in young persons, chiefly females” was “habitually practiced,”<sup>97</sup> colonial officials were divided on whether this was the case. Many argued that girls were given or sold

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89 T.W. Mercer, Deputy Commissioner, Jalandhar, to Commissioner and Superintendent, Jalandhar, 27 May 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

90 Walter to Agent, Rajputana, 17 Sep 1868, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PB 10/1868 218.

91 J. Black, Political Agent, Mahi Kantha, to Secretary, Bombay, 26 September 1865, NAI, New Delhi, FD/Police 19/08/1871 no. 13(e).

92 Mercer to Comm & SI, Jalandhar, 27 May 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

93 Tambe, “Brothels as families,” p. 228.

94 This conclusion concurs with both Oldenburg’s and Tambe’s findings. Oldenburg, “Lifestyle as resistance,” pp. 264–67; Tambe, “Brothels as families,” pp. 230–34.

95 The dominant colonial narrative was of a “respectable” Hindu girl kidnapped and condemned to life as a Muslim prostitute. Walter to Agent, Rajputana, 17 September 1868, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PB 10/1868 no. 218. However, orphans and street children were probably more susceptible to abduction. IG Police, CP, to Secretary, CP, 24 January 1871, NAI, New Delhi, HD/Police 01/04/1871 no. 14.

96 This resonated with a broader marginalisation of certain indigenous forms of adoption in colonial law and policy. For instance, the adoption practices of Indian rulers were rejected by the colonial government as a legitimate succession practice and rulers were forced to appoint successors who were biological kin. Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery and Law*, pp. 73–77.

97 George Campbell, Secretary of State for India to Government of India, 9 March 1871, BL, London, IOR, HD/PB 19/08/1871 no. 12–19.

by their parents or relatives, either because they were “voluntarily immoral persons”<sup>98</sup> with a “want of chastity,”<sup>99</sup> or because they were driven to do so by destitution and poverty.<sup>100</sup>

Both the kidnapping and sale-by-family theories assumed that girls were not the offspring of prostitutes and several administrators explicitly stated that prostitutes were usually barren women.<sup>101</sup> The Commissioner of Lucknow reported that “it is well known that native prostitutes hardly ever bear children,”<sup>102</sup> while one high-ranking NWP police officer concluded that “there are few children born to prostitutes—the race is not fruitful.”<sup>103</sup> Thus, both *hijras* and (less obviously) prostitutes were associated with infertility in colonial discourse. The assumption of prostitute barrenness highlights that the British conflated non-conjugal and extra-procreative sexualities with infertility and both were particularly associated with deviant forms of domesticity. Only a few colonial administrators argued that *kothas* were internally reproduced from prostitute offspring.<sup>104</sup>

The NWP government proposed changes to the Penal Code to make it easier to prosecute brothel-keepers,<sup>105</sup> as well as legislation for the registration of brothel inmates and the withdrawal of any minor whose “possession” was not satisfactorily explained “for the purposes of sending the minor to a reformatory or other institution appointed by Government.”<sup>106</sup> Draft legislation compiled in nearby Punjab made it clear that the purpose of “rescuing” girls was to place them in respectable, conjugal domestic environments: a removed girl could only

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98 Officiating Deputy Commissioner of Ajmere and Mairwarra to Commissioner of Ajmere and Mairwarra, 15 February 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

99 E. Tyrwhitt, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, NWP, to Secretary, NWP, 22 February 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

100 C.W. Moore, Officiating Magistrate of Etawah, to Commissioner of Agra, 29 January 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92; Daly to Sec, GoI, 31 Mar 1869, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PB 04/1869 no. 226; H.D. Daly, Officiating Political Agent, Gwalior, to Agent, Central India, 25 January 1869, NAI, New Delhi, FD/PB 04/1869 no. 227; Hutchinson to Sec, Punjab, 5 Aug 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

101 E.C. Bayley, Home Department Memorandum, 29 November 1871, NAI, New Delhi, HD/JB 04/1872 no. 109–111.

102 J. Reid, Commissioner of Lucknow, Memorandum, 21 June 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

103 Tyrwhitt to Sec, NWP, 22 Feb 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

104 This was the case even though the implementation of the Contagious Diseases Acts from the late 1860s demonstrated that hundreds of registered prostitutes gave birth each year. A. Mackenzie, Officiating Secretary, Bengal, to Officiating Secretary, Government of India, 17 October 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

105 It was argued that changes to the Penal Code were required to make it illegal to “retain” a minor for prostitution, since section 372 and 373 only criminalised buying, hiring or obtaining a minor for prostitution. Tyrwhitt to Sec, NWP, 22 Feb 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92; F. Henvey, Junior Secretary to Government, NWP, to Secretary, Government of India, 22 April 1870, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

106 E. Tyrwhitt, Officiating Inspector-General of Police, NWP, to Officiating Secretary, NWP, 1 July 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

leave her appointed guardian at sixteen, or when “married with the approval of her guardian” to a husband who “consent[ed] to ... keep her in a place other than a brothel.”<sup>107</sup>

Yet colonial officials across India were divided on whether the removal of girls was advisable, necessary and morally imperative. Within the central government, two high-ranking officials voiced opposing views. While E.C. Bayley emphasised the moral duty to rescue girls,<sup>108</sup> H.S. Cunningham, argued that since prostitution was a universal habit and a national practice in India, registering brothels was unthinkable; the Penal Code amendments were too harsh; and the liberty of thousands of girls to whom prostitution was congenial would be violated by their rescue.<sup>109</sup> Different provincial governments variously argued that Indian opinion was not yet sufficiently enlightened;<sup>110</sup> suggested that the problem of kidnapping and child prostitution had been exaggerated;<sup>111</sup> balked at the practical difficulties involved in taking responsibility for removed children;<sup>112</sup> or suggested that registration would be futile due to women’s resistance.<sup>113</sup> As such, the Government of India rejected the proposed removal of children from brothels.<sup>114</sup>

However, the discussion of underage prostitution mutated from proposals for a child “rescue” project—with all the assumptions about morality, femininity, respectable conjugal domesticity and criminality that this implied—into a debate about the best means of securing male access to young prostitute bodies. Ultimately, the colonial government prioritised the legal protection of male clients of underage prostitutes over the prevention of underage prostitution. This demonstrates the tenuous hold on British officials of discourses of “lost” childhood and the colonial moral imperative to “save” Indian children. Two recent court cases had raised the question of whether a client could be prosecuted for obtaining a minor for the purposes of prostitution.<sup>115</sup> There was consensus amongst British administrators that the Penal Code was intended to

107 “Captain Newbery’s Bill to Prevent the Prostitution of Female Children,” ca. 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706. See also, Hutchinson to Sec, Punjab, 5 Aug 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

108 Bayley, Memo, 29 Nov 1871, NAI, New Delhi, HD/JB 04/1872 no. 109–111.

109 H.S. Cunningham, Home Department Memorandum, 23 August 1871, NAI, New Delhi, HD/JB 04/1872 no. 109–111.

110 R.S. Ellis, Secretary, Madras, to Officiating Secretary, Government of India, 18 October 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706; J. Nugent, Acting Under-Secretary, Bombay, to Secretary, Government of India, 19 August 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

111 Mackenzie to Sec, GoI, 17 Oct 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706; Ellis to Sec, GoI, 18 Oct 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

112 Hutchinson to Sec, Punjab, 5 Aug 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706; Mackenzie to Sec, GoI, 17 Oct 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706; Ellis to Sec, GoI, 18 Oct 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706; Barrow, Officiating Deputy Secretary, Oudh, to Secretary, Government of India, 3 July 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

113 Hutchinson to Sec, Punjab, 5 Aug 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

114 C. Lyall, Secretary, Government of India, to Secretary, NWP, 4 July 1873, BL, London, IOR, P/96.

115 H. Wellesley, Officiating Under-Secretary, Government of India, to Secretary, NWP, 17 January 1873, BL, London, IOR, P/96.



prevent trafficking<sup>116</sup> and did not extend to “persons who get possession of minors for the gratification of their own lusts and passions.”<sup>117</sup> To clarify this, government considered that an amendment to the Penal Code was necessary. Male access to prostitutes, even underage girls, needed to be secured to “save ... innocent” men who might be unfairly prosecuted.<sup>118</sup> Several administrators also proposed that the age of girls protected under the Penal Code should be lowered from sixteen to twelve or fourteen because by sixteen a girl was in the “full swing of her trade”—especially since Indian girls apparently reached puberty earlier than European girls—and the prosecution of a brothel keeper in these circumstances would be “quite appalling.”<sup>119</sup>

While the proposal to remove children from *hijra* households was passed into law under the CTA in 1871, a government-directed program for the removal of children from *kothas* never eventuated, demonstrating the limits of both colonial government attempts at child “rescue” and the colonial governance of the domestic arrangements of colonised populations.<sup>120</sup> This was the case for a number of reasons related to: the practicalities and priorities of colonial administration; elite Indian opinion; and differing colonial attitudes towards male and female childhoods. First, the removal of children from the *hijra* community—which was thought to number 2,500 in the NWP—represented a more confined and practical site for an experiment in child rescue than the removal of girls from *kothas*, the scope of which would be enormous.<sup>121</sup> Second, government priorities did not accord with child removal from brothels. Through the Cantonment Act (1864) and Contagious Diseases Act (1868), the colonial government was invested in providing prostitutes for its troops, and more broadly, with racially segregating and controlling, rather than limiting, prostitution.<sup>122</sup> Third, whereas “respectable” Indians consulted on removal and registration in *hijra* communities did not oppose these measures, there was significant opposition amongst elite Indians consulted on prostitution.<sup>123</sup>

116 Acting Secretary, Madras, to Secretary, Government of India, 22 April 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706; H.B. Harrington, Officiating Secretary, Oudh, to Secretary, Government of India, 29 April 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

117 G. Couper, Judicial Commissioner, Oudh, to Secretary, Oudh, 12 October 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

118 J.H. Prinsep, Judge of Kanpur, to Secretary, Oudh, 14 March 1873, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

119 Couper to Sec, Oudh, 12 Oct 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/706. See also, B.W. Colvin, Officiating Sessions Judge of Allahabad, to Secretary, NWP, 19 February 1873, BL, London, IOR, P/96; H.B. Henderson, Judge of Shahjahanpur, to Secretary, NWP, 26 March 1873, BL, London, IOR, P/96.

120 In the 1920s and 1930s, organisations such as the Bombay Vigilance Association and the League of Mercy attempted to remove and reform girls born into brothels but often met with significant opposition from the girls and their mothers. Tambe, “Brothels as families,” p. 227.

121 The determination of the parentage of girls in *kothas* also posed a significant practical problem, whereas boys were clearly not the offspring of eunuchs, who could thus be deemed illegitimate guardians more easily.

122 On the regulation of prostitution see, Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class*; Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics*; Tambe, *Codes of Misconduct*.

123 This was particularly since some groups classed as prostitutes, such as the *tawa'if* and *devadasi*, were patronised by powerful men. Moreover, *devadasis* were still viewed in this period as important to Hindu rituals and customs. Ellis to Sec, GoI, 18 Oct 1872, BL, London, IOR, P/706.

Finally, while the colonisers expressed concern about the premature sexualisation of both boys and girls, they were more willing to *do* something about the perceived corruption of boys during this period. In the 1860s and 1870s, the establishment of reformatories and the introduction of separate quarters for juveniles in jails were partly motivated by anxieties provoked by sexual relations between boys and adult prisoners.<sup>124</sup> For the colonial government, the loss of male childhoods to so-called sexual corruption was more concerning than female premature sexuality because “unnatural” sexuality between men and children was at stake in the moral panic over male child sexuality. Moreover, the British thought that Indian girls reached puberty much earlier than Indian boys or European children, and as such, their sexual behaviours in childhood were often regarded as a natural phenomenon.<sup>125</sup> The failure of the proposal to remove girls from brothels—and the transformation of this proposal into a discussion about how best to protect the male clients of underage prostitutes—highlights the limits of the colonial government’s child rescue agenda. The ambiguities of government projects targeting marginalised children also became evident when children were removed from *hijra* households.

## The removal of children from *hijra* households and the limits of reform

Although the imperative to “save” children from a “life of infamy” in the *hijra* community pervaded official discussion of eunuchs, British district administrators debated whether reforming such children and bringing them up according to notions of respectability was in fact possible. Colonial officials at different levels of the provincial government often disagreed on whether the removal and reform of children in *hijra* households was a worthwhile exercise. The fractures of the colonial child rescue project were further evidenced by the ambiguous role of missionaries in the removal of children from *hijra* households, demonstrating areas of tension between government and missionary projects targeting children. Despite the stated aim of reforming removed children, in practice the education and upbringing of children was deprioritised, highlighting the limits of the government-directed child rescue project and colonial interventions into indigenous domestic arrangements. Instead, the provincial government concentrated its efforts on the removal and ongoing surveillance of children to ensure their separation from *hijras*, prevent

124 For official discussion of sodomy, juvenile prisoners and prison reform see correspondence in NAI, New Delhi, HD/JB 19/06/1869 no. 14-5; NAI, New Delhi, HD/JB 24/07/1869 no. 36-7; NAI, New Delhi, HD/JB 11/10/1865 no. 35-6; NAI, New Delhi, HD/JB 11/05/1870 no. 59-60. See also, Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, pp. 69-70.

125 Pande, “Coming of age,” pp. 208-09.

the reproduction of the *hijra* community and thus cause *hijras* to die out. The surveillance of children was also considered imperative due to the threat of children's resistance and the possibility they would return to *hijras*. Official colonial records reinscribe the stories and experiences of removed children in terms of their victimisation, or in the case of the resisting child, of their criminality. Unlike the young "Pearl-eyes" in Annie McCarthy's study (this volume), the agency of children removed from the *hijra* household was not viewed as "innocent," but rather as subversive, dangerous and corrupting. Yet fragments of the wilfulness and agency of children nevertheless emerge from the colonial archive.

From the mid-1860s, British colonial officials disagreed on whether child rescue was possible and should be attempted, highlighting the fissures within colonial projects targeting the morality of Indian children. Colonial officials believed *hijra* deviance was partially biologically grounded. While past a certain age, the child would no longer be capable of responding to positive influence and moral improvement, the deviance of children was also apparently hardened by the physical changes of emasculation.<sup>126</sup> As such, officials argued that some children in *hijra* households could be transformed into moral and industrious adults.

The question of whether children in *hijra* households were capable of reform came to the fore in 1865 when NWP officials proposed the establishment of a reformatory asylum.<sup>127</sup> The Commissioner of Meerut, F. Williams, was optimistic that although removed children were "acquainted" with the "vicious habits" of *hijras*, "as minors, there are hopes of recovering them from ... degrading prostitution."<sup>128</sup> Children should be taught a "useful trade" (since labour had moral value), separated from *hijras* and kept under surveillance so they would "get to be ashamed of the lives they were being brought up to."<sup>129</sup> However, Court, the Inspector-General of Police, considered the emasculated boy *hijra* a contaminating agent and argued that the separation of emasculated and non-emasculated children in the reformatory was imperative "to prevent [emasculates] from spreading and continuing 'contamination.'" Whereas both should be "be taught some trade," only "entire males" should be allowed to leave when "full of age" and "eunuchs should never be allowed to leave such

126 On the one hand, according to colonial administrators, the plasticity of childhood had limits and past a certain age—sixteen for children in *hijra* households under law—the child was no longer capable of positive influence and their deviant socialisation would be frozen. Act No. XXVII of 1871, BL, London, IOR, V/8/42. Sen has noticed a similar discourse in relation to boys in the reformatory. Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, p. 55. On the other hand, the emasculation of the boy child apparently hardened their deviant character, produced physical effeminacy and a desire for deviant sexual behaviours, and made it inevitable that in adulthood they would become "addicted" to emasculating children. Norman Chevers, *A Manual of Medical Jurisprudence for India, Including the Outline of a History of Crime Against the Person in India*, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1870, p. 497; Probyn to Sess Judge, Shahjahanpur, 12 Dec 1864, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

127 Court quoted in Simson, "Replies," 20 Apr 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.

128 F. Williams, Commissioner of Meerut, to Secretary, NWP, 20 November 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.

129 Ibid.

asylum.”<sup>130</sup> Other officials argued that efforts to reform removed boys would be futile, whether they were emasculated or not, since “they will eventually join the degraded class for which they were intended.”<sup>131</sup> In sum, while some British administrators were optimistic about the capacity of children in *hijra* communities to reform, many officials did not view saving children as either an achievable goal or a moral duty.

A reformatory for children removed from *hijra* households never eventuated due to opposition from the central government.<sup>132</sup> Nonetheless, the NWP government proceeded with the removal of children from *hijra* communities, despite the ambiguous attitudes of many British officials in the NWP towards the “reform” and “rescue” of such children. The removal of children occurred in the NWP in two phases: from the mid-1860s, when there was no legal framework for child removal, and under the CTA from 1871. Only fifteen children were removed from *hijra* households between 1865 and 1871,<sup>133</sup> whereas several children were allowed to remain with eunuchs.<sup>134</sup> This was because removal was “not strictly legal” prior to 1871,<sup>135</sup> because few boys were found and because many British district officials were disinterested in, or opposed to, the removal of children.<sup>136</sup>

The preference of the NWP government was to appoint the biological parents of removed children as their guardian, or otherwise appoint a “respectable” Indian, usually a colonial official. However, the re-parenting of removed children presented several problems to colonial authorities. Concerns about the potential threat of moral and sexual contagion from children in *hijra* households were central to colonial administrative decisions about the appointment of guardians. At the same time, prospective Indian guardians—including both biological parents and Indians considered respectable—were often unwilling to take in children from *hijra* households due to the child’s loss of caste. In the 1860s, the government sent several children to the Church Missionary Society’s Sikandra Orphanage when biological parents or “respectable” Indians were unwilling to assume guardianship. The marginality of the removed children and the unwillingness of elite Indians to become their surrogate parents facilitated

130 Court quoted in Simson, “Replies,” 20 Apr 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.

131 Drummond, “General Remarks,” ca. 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

132 R. Simson, Secretary, NWP, to Secretary, Government of India, 3 September 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62; A.P. Howell, Under-Secretary, Government of India, to Secretary, NWP, 27 September 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.

133 In 1871, it was found that the order to remove children “was made operative in only 15 out of 61 cases.” C.P. Carmichael, Inspector-General of Police, NWP, to Officiating Secretary, NWP, 29 August 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

134 C.A. Elliot, Officiating Secretary, NWP, to Commissioner of Agra, 27 March 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92; Carmichael to Sec, NWP, 29 Aug 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92; North Western Provinces Government, 1873 NWP Judicial Proceedings, Part B Matters of Routine, July, no. 11, BL, London, IOR, P/95; Lumsden to Comm Benares, 15 Apr 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

135 Carmichael to Sec, NWP, 29 Aug 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

136 Dennehy to IG Police, 15 Aug 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

their placement in a Christian institution, which may have been controversial in other circumstances. While colonial government child-rescue discourses were often underpinned by evangelical ideology, from the mid-1860s, missionaries themselves became involved in the project of removal.

## Children's stories in the colonial archive

It is important to analyse not only the discourses and projects that surrounded nineteenth-century Indian childhoods, but also the experiences of children themselves.<sup>137</sup> The lives of children removed from *hijra* communities were often characterised by multiple displacements and upheavals of orphanhood, poverty, sale by relatives, or kidnapping, and finally, of government removal. Often, removed children were treated as unwanted burdens by the colonial state, their biological relatives and other prospective guardians. The official narratives of children's lives expose the presences and silences of the colonial archive: on the one hand, the statements of kidnapped, emasculated and exploited children were emphasised in the records; on the other hand, children frequently disappeared from the records when they were no longer of interest to the colonial government, frustrating attempts to tell their stories. Above all, the colonial records obscured the agency of children, who were represented as either victims or deviant agents of corruption. Nevertheless, for colonial officials the agency of children and their potential resistance to colonial projects was a threat that necessitated ongoing police surveillance over the child following their removal. Below, I examine the stories of three children who were refused by prospective Indian guardians and sent to missionaries.<sup>138</sup>

In 1864, after a tip-off from a *hijra* in Mainpuri, police found two emasculated boys with a group of *bugguttees*, performers who “represent[ed] Hindoo deities.”<sup>139</sup> The younger boy, Makhun, was thought to be six or seven. In a court statement—a document mediated by translation into English and the colonial legal context—Makhun told of the death of his parents and his sale by a relative:

My father and mother died, and I then went to my mother's brother in Muddoopore. One day at noon my uncle's son Murdan Singh fetched me ... and sold me to Ameera Eunuch for a handful of Rupees.... Three or four days after purchasing me, at night, Ameera and Zohura

137 As noted above, there have been several studies of nineteenth-century political and social debates about childhood, but the emphasis has generally been on constructs of childhood, rather than the experiences of children.

138 Relatively detailed records exist for eleven children removed from 1865–1871, though not all were sent to missionaries.

139 The *bugguttees* had “concealed the fact [of the boys' emasculation], because it would have spoilt their trade to have it known that they were employing Eunuchs to represent Hindoo deities.” P.C. Dalmahoy, Superintendent of Police, Etawah, “Report on a case of kidnapping and emasculation of two boys, named Agbega and Makhun, in the Etawah district,” 9 December 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

[another *hijra*], after worshipping, castrated me.... [T]hen I was made over to the Bugguttea Koondon, in Omereyree. The Bugguttea called me Motee, and said I was a Jat.<sup>140</sup>

The colonial government removed Makhun but his surviving uncle refused to assume the child's guardianship due to his perceived loss of caste,<sup>141</sup> highlighting the position of children in the *hijra* community on the very margins of Indian society. In any case, according to colonial authorities, two characteristics disqualified Makhun's uncle from being an appropriate guardian: first, his son's apparent complicity in Makhun's sale to a *hijra*; and second, the inability of the NWP police to keep the family, who lived in Gwalior, an Indian-ruled state, under adequate police surveillance. The ongoing surveillance of Makhun was considered essential because of the perceived threat of removed children's resistance to their re-parenting. Officials proposed to send Makhun to the Sikandra Orphanage at Agra, yet there is no record of whether the orphanage accepted Makhun.<sup>142</sup> He is one of several children who disappear from the colonial record after the moment of initial government intervention, and about his future we know nothing.

In 1865, Khyratee, another child removed from a *hijra* household, was seven or eight. He was uncastrated and lived with "an old eunuch" named Rae.<sup>143</sup> Rae "stated that, the boy was given to him 5 or 6 years ago by a Soldier ... belonging to some Infantry Regiment which was marching through [Aligarh] District."<sup>144</sup> The district authorities could not find Khyratee's relatives<sup>145</sup> and suggested an Indian considered respectable should be his guardian.<sup>146</sup> Yet a month later, no suitable Indians had been found willing to take responsibility for Khyratee since "the inference might be drawn by natives" that he was "taken for immoral purpose."<sup>147</sup> Having been rejected by the elite Indians of Aligarh, the Sikandra Orphanage eventually received Khyratee.

140 P.C. Dalmahoy, Superintendent of Police, Etawah, "Statement of Makhun Eunuch, 6 or 7 years old," ca. 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

141 Dalmahoy, "Report," 9 Dec 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

142 Ibid.; A.O. Hume, Magistrate of Etawah, to Commissioner of Agra, 14 December 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61; J.H. Batten, Commissioner of Agra, to Secretary, NWP, 23 December 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61; J.D. Sandford, Junior-Secretary, NWP to Inspector-General of Police, NWP, 13 January 1866, BL, London, IOR, P/438/61.

143 C. Mellor, Officiating Magistrate of Aligarh, to Commissioner of Meerut, 9 October 1865, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/9/2.

144 J.H. Prinsep, Magistrate of Aligarh, to Commissioner of Meerut, 10 November 1865, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/9/2.

145 Mellor to Comm Meerut, 9 Oct 1865, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/9/2.

146 F. Williams, Commissioner of Meerut, to Officiating Magistrate of Aligarh, 9 October 1865, UPSA, Allahabad, COM/9/2.

147 Williams to Sec, NWP, 20 Nov 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.



Moola was another uncastrated youth who was placed in Sikandra. A *hijra* named Fyeman adopted Moola in the Upper Doab famine of 1860–61.<sup>148</sup> Since Moola was not emasculated, authorities allowed him to continue living with Fyeman throughout the 1860s.<sup>149</sup> However, in 1871, when Moola was fourteen, the Magistrate of Muttra became concerned: “Enquiries proved that the boy sang and danced in women’s clothes, and grave suspicion arose that his [sexual] powers had been tampered with.” Two doctors, Pain and Playfair, concluded “that the boy [had] frequently been used for unnatural purposes,” suggesting that Moola had contagious potential. Yet considerable doubt surrounded Moola’s genital development: the doctors determined Moola was “only backward in development, but still uninjured,” but the Magistrate doubted this conclusion.<sup>150</sup> The Magistrate proposed Moola should be sent to the Reformatory at the Agra Jail for two years, by which time “if he is ever to have sexual development, it will have taken place ... and all doubt will be removed.”<sup>151</sup> Yet other officials considered the location of the reformatory within a jail a significant problem, since the jail was perceived to be a sexualised environment where sodomy was rife. Since it was considered “highly advisable to remove the boy from the associations he has been accustomed to,” Moola was sent to the Sikandra Orphanage.<sup>152</sup> Hence, the defining factor in Moola’s re-parenting was the perceived threat of sexual contamination he posed. In the case of all three children whose stories I have examined, placement in an orphanage was intended to stem any potential threats of moral contagion and prevent the potential resistance of the child to their removal from the *hijra* community through ongoing surveillance within the orphanage.

What would have these children’s lives at Sikandra have been like? The missionary, the Reverend John Barton, left an account of the orphanage in the early 1860s:

On Saturday ... I witnessed one of the prettiest sights one could ever wish to behold at Secundra [Sikandra]. All the children, boys and girls, were seated in long lines ... the boys at one end, and the girls at the other.... [O]ne of the boys, a little fellow ... stepped forth into the midst, and asked God’s blessing, as they do every day.<sup>153</sup>

Barton’s description of the orderly, godly and happy children at Sikandra, which was intended for a metropolitan missionary audience, probably deviated from

148 Mag Muttra to Comm Agra, 26 Jan 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

149 Ibid.; Carmichael to Sec, NWP, 29 Aug 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

150 Mag Muttra to Comm Agra, 26 Jan 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

151 Ibid.

152 F.M. Lind, Commissioner of Agra, to Officiating Secretary, NWP, 6 March 1871, BL, London, IOR, P/92.

153 Mary Ann S. Barber, *Sweet Childhood, and its Helpers in Heathen Lands; Being a Record of Church Missionary Work Among the Young, in Africa, the East, and Prince Rupert’s Land*, London: James Nisbet & Co., 1864, p. 256.

the lived experiences of children. Studies of orphanages and missionary schools have demonstrated the articulation of racial difference in these contexts.<sup>154</sup> Karen Vallgård has also highlighted the ideological purposes of the daily routine of mission children who: worked long hours, since labour was thought to have an inherent moral value; were made to wear uniforms to erase all signs of heathenism from their bodies; participated in physical and intellectual activities thought to inculcate appropriate gender norms; and were sometimes subjected to corporal punishment.<sup>155</sup>

The Sikandra Orphanage would have represented a very different environment than *hijra* households, and an entirely new set of norms of behaviour would have been enforced. Khyratee and Moola (and possibly Makhun) would have been subjected to the discipline and surveillance of the missionaries and the gendered segregation of pupils manifest spatially in straight lines. Considering the designation of gendered spaces, the missionaries would have enforced strict standards of masculine dress and normative gendered behaviour very different to the transgender *hijra* community. Moreover, Khyratee and Moola would have received a Christian education, and may have subsequently converted. It is probable that in this environment of clearly dichotomised gender expectations and Christian proselytising, Khyratee and Moola would have been made “ashamed” of the lives they had been brought up to in the *hijra* community.<sup>156</sup> We can only guess at whether they resisted missionary expectations and norms, since both children disappear from the historical record after being accepted by the Sikandra Orphanage.<sup>157</sup> Although the archive does not tell the stories of these boys at Sikandra, it is clear the missionary experience would have had profound effects on them, as they were inculcated with a new set of values and gendered behaviours.

## Removal, surveillance and the threat of children’s agency under the CTA

In 1871, the CTA provided a legal framework for the prosecution of any eunuch who “has in his charge, or keeps ... under his control” a boy under sixteen and empowered Magistrates to remove children and make arrangements for their “maintenance and education.”<sup>158</sup> The implementation of the CTA from 1871 exposed several fractures and ambiguities in government-directed projects of

154 Sen, “The orphaned colony,” p. 464.

155 Vallgård, “Adam’s escape,” pp. 302–07, 311.

156 Williams to Sec, NWP, 20 Nov 1865, BL, London, IOR, P/438/62.

157 Vallgård highlights that resistance to the missionary regime was evident amongst children, but this was a “necessary failure,” allowing the “fundamental difference between colonizer and colonized” to be continually reiterated. Vallgård, “Adam’s escape,” pp. 310–11.

158 Act No. XXVII of 1871, BL, London, IOR, V/8/42.

child rescue. First, under the CTA, the role of missionaries was relatively limited compared with the 1860s, exposing tensions within colonial projects targeting Indian children.<sup>159</sup> Despite the evangelical leanings of many NWP district administrators, missionaries had never been a first choice as guardians for removed children, in part because placing children with missionaries stretched the limits of the official policy of religious “neutrality.” Second, there were often tensions between the provincial government, which viewed the removal of children from *hijra* households as imperative, and British officials at the district level, who often did not regard significant interventions into *hijra* households and the lives of Indian children as an administrative priority or moral duty.<sup>160</sup>

From 1871, the provincial government prioritised the spatial separation of children from the *hijra* community through their removal and police surveillance over children’s education and upbringing. The administration stressed the aim of controlling boys’ bodies, preventing their emasculation and therefore causing *hijras* to die out. The agenda of reform was therefore deprioritised in favour of the agenda of the passive extermination of the *hijra* community, highlighting the limits of the government-directed child-rescue project. There is a pervading silence in the colonial archive on the fate of removed boys, which is itself revealing of government priorities. The moment of removal marks the disappearance of these (usually unnamed) boys from the colonial archive, frustrating any attempts to tell their stories beyond their separation from the *hijra* community.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the presence of the colonial government in these children’s lives following removal largely took the form of police surveillance. Although the CTA empowered Magistrates “to make such arrangements as may be necessary for [boys’] education and maintenance,”<sup>161</sup> the NWP government did not consider this imperative. The provincial government’s interest in these boys was largely confined to the prevention of contact between children and *hijras* by means of removal and surveillance. In contrast, details of the appointment of the new guardian and the child’s care are rarely mentioned in

159 When the Act was first introduced in Gorakhpur, two boys were “made over to the Mission as no relatives were forthcoming,” while a boy in Ghazipur was “made over” to a Reverend Lumsden to Comm Benares, 15 Apr 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12; R.L.F. McMullin, Officiating Superintendent of Police, Ghazipur, “Memo regarding 11 Minors who were said to be living with Eunuchs previous to enforcement of Act XXVII of 1871,” 5 May 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

160 In several districts, British officials resisted removing children: C. Robertson, Officiating Magistrate of Mirzapur, to Commissioner of Benares, 3 November 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12; Amson to Comm Benares, 16 Nov 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12; P. Wigram, Officiating Magistrate of Basti, to Commissioner of Benares, 21 September 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12; R. Waddington, Superintendent of Police, Basti, to the Office of the Inspector-General of Police, NWP, 15 February 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12; R. Waddington, Superintendent of Police, Basti, “List of Eunuchs in the Bustee District on the 1st September 1872,” ca. 1872, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

161 Act No. XXVII of 1871, BL, London, IOR, V/8/42.

the records,<sup>162</sup> and most British officials assumed almost no responsibility for the education or welfare of children following their removal.<sup>163</sup> Since the continued separation of the child from the deviant domestic context of the *hijra* household was considered crucial to the gradual extinction of the *hijra* community, police kept removed children, parents and guardians under surveillance. Appointed guardians also had to sign written agreements “binding” them to prevent the removed child from “return[ing] to his old associates.”<sup>164</sup>

The NWP government’s preoccupation with ensuring the spatial separation of *hijras* and children through surveillance is evidence of the perceived threat of these children’s agency. The colonial government was not only concerned that *hijras* might attempt to maintain their ties to these children—or in the idiom of colonial officials, “entice” children back to the *hijra* community—but also that children might return to *hijras* of their own accord. Written agreements between the government and new guardians acknowledged that the child in question might want to “return to his old associates” and would need to be forcibly prevented by a combination of parental and state power. Although colonial administrators read the wilfulness of removed children as evidence of their deviance and corruption and of the coercive power of the *hijra*-child relationship, the need to spatially separate children and eunuchs is perhaps evidence that these relationships could have affective aspects. Despite colonial discourses of victimisation surrounding children removed from *hijra* households, the resistance of removed children threatened to undermine the colonial project of the gradual extinction of the *hijra* community.

The colonial government did not succeed in passively exterminating *hijras* as a social category, in part because of *hijra* resistance to the CTA. *Hijras* are still a presence in north Indian society, though they are highly marginalised and stigmatised. Whereas *hijra* domesticities were the focus of colonial moral panic and experimental child rescue interventions, the domestic sphere and everyday life were also important sites of *hijra* resistance.

To evade the prohibition of performance and cross-dressing with decreased risk of prosecution, *hijras* sang, danced and wore feminine clothing in *hijra* households, away from the gaze of the police. On several occasions, police found musical instruments and feminine clothing in *hijra* households, suggesting

162 This was reflected in the classificatory system adopted for the annual reports, which required information on the “Presence of boys under 16, with eunuchs,” Hobart to Off IG Police, NWP, 28 Jun 1876, BL, London, IOR, P/839.

163 The annual reports mention a rare case of two “emasculated youth of ten years’ age” in Basti in 1877, in which a Magistrate “promised to endeavor to procure for [boys] some means of honest livelihood,” R.T. Hobart, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, to Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, 11 September 1877, BL, London, IOR, P/840.

164 C.P. Carmichael, Officiating Commissioner of Benares, to Inspector-General of Police, NWP, 24 March 1875, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

*hijras* “secretly” performed in “private” locations.<sup>165</sup> *Hijras* also resisted colonial intervention in *guru-chela* relationships. Whereas a chosen *chela* would inherit their *guru*’s share of property upon their death, the CTA prohibited the making of wills and introduced property registers. Consequently, *hijras* hid moveable property from the police to resist colonial interference in *hijra* inheritance patterns and *guru-chela* succession.<sup>166</sup> *Hijras* also continued to ask for alms from householders following births and thereby enacted their power over fertility as infertile persons and their somewhat paradoxical links to reproductive sexualities on an everyday basis.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, daily ritual practices in shrines and *hijra* households, in which *hijras* kept images of particular deities, evoked their mythology and the divine sanction of *hijra* existence, and thereby legitimised the *hijra* community in the face of criminalisation.<sup>168</sup> Thus, the domestic and quotidian were not only sites of colonial intervention, but also of *hijra* agency and resistance. The anticipated “gradual expiration of the eunuch class”<sup>169</sup> did not eventuate, and the *hijra* survived as a socio-cultural role.

## Conclusion

In the 1860s, British colonial officials characterised *hijra* households and *kothas* as environments in which children were sexually “corrupted”—as “deviant” domesticities. Several aspects of these domestic formations concerned officials, including: extra-procreative and non-procreative sexualities; the apparent absence of conjugal domesticity; and the inability to know and record transparently these domestic spaces. In particular, the blurred lines between non-biological kinship, biological kinship and various relationships of dependence were the subject of colonial anxiety. The domestic arrangements of both *hijras* and women labelled “prostitutes” commonly featured constructed kinship that included adoption, de facto kinship or treating a person as a relative, and the discursive deployment of kinship terminology. Forms of kinship-making and hierarchical relationships (such as *guru-chela* structures) were criticised as coercive and criminal relationships. Colonial discussion of, and projects targeting, these “deviant” forms of domesticity are part of the

165 E. Tyrwhitt, Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, to Secretary, NWP&O, 28 May 1878, BL, London, IOR, P/1138; Smith to IG Police, NWP&O, 6 Jul 1881, BL, London, IOR, P/1614.

166 Smith to IG Police, NWP&O, 6 Jul 1881, BL, London, IOR, P/1614; O.L. Smith, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, to Officiating Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, 15 May 1882, BL, London, IOR, P/1816.

167 Oldham to Comm Benares, 6 Feb 1875, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

168 Shortt, “The *Kojahs* of southern India,” p. 403; Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes*, p. 228; R. Annesley, Officiating Superintendent of Police, Benares, to Magistrate of Benares, 12 April 1873, UPSA, Allahabad, COV/119/12.

169 E. Tyrwhitt, Inspector-General of Police, NWP&O, to Secretary, NWP&O, 17 September 1877, BL, London, IOR, P/840. See also Berrill to IG Police, NWP&O, 1 May 1896, UPSA, Allahabad, COA/18/5.

broader history of the marginalisation and criminalisation of certain indigenous domestic formations by both the colonial government and the upper echelons of Indian society in the nineteenth century.

However, the colonial project to rescue children from deviant domestic spaces was fractured and limited. Despite rhetoric of the need to save children in *kothas* and *hijra* households, which was often underpinned by Christian ideology, missionary-government cooperation was circumscribed in practice. Moreover, although evangelical belief was particularly influential in the North-Western Provinces administration, many British administrators at the district level did not share this evangelical outlook and viewed the rescue of Indian children as neither a moral imperative, nor an achievable goal. In practice, the removal and reform of children was limited. Not only did the NWP government's proposal to save girls from prostitution fail, it transmuted into a discussion of how best to protect the male clients of girl prostitutes. Thus, the rhetoric of child rescue had tenuous influence on colonial officials in the face of the pragmatics of colonial rule and masculine sexual privilege. Although the removal of children from *hijra* communities was enshrined in law in 1871 under the CTA, the NWP government deprioritised the stated aim of reforming removed children and gave little attention to the education and upbringing of removed children. Instead, government policy called for the continued spatial separation of children from the *hijra* community through forced removal and ongoing surveillance in order to prevent emasculation and, therefore, the reproduction of *hijra* bodies. The agenda of passive extermination was prioritised over the agenda of reform.

The presences and silences of the colonial records make the narration of removed children's lives a difficult task for the historian. Children appear in the archive as either a contaminating force, or as victims. Yet the colonial archives contain fragments of these children's lives and their agency. The resistance of children to their removal and re-parenting was rendered in the colonial records as evidence of the criminality and sexual corruption of children in the *hijra* community. However, the concerns that children would return to *hijras* demonstrate that the agency of children to act against parental and state authority threatened to undermine the colonial agenda of causing the *hijra* community to "die out." In the space between the colonial tropes of victimhood and criminality, lie hints of a story of the wilfulness and agency of these marginalised children.

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# 10. A New Family: Domesticity and Sentiment among Chinese and Western Women at Shanghai's Door of Hope

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## Introduction

On a winter's eve in 1902, Wu Li-tsu arrived at the doorway of Shanghai's Door of Hope, a Christian rescue mission for Chinese prostitutes that had been opened a year before by an interdenominational committee of Western women.<sup>1</sup> Ten years before, Wu had been sold to a bad-tempered madam in a nearby brothel as a *shu-yu*, a high-class "sing-song" girl, and had been severely mistreated. Learning of a new place in the neighbourhood that took in women like her, she managed to escape and find it. Welcomed by its first resident missionary, Cornelia Bonnell, and a Chinese matron, Wu that night began her seventy-year association with the Door of Hope. One of the first five residents of the mission, she was protected, converted, educated and trained. She rose to fill nearly every position a Chinese woman could hold at the home and eventually founded her own refuge, extending her Chinese variant of the mission's work to the wider city of Shanghai.<sup>2</sup>

Like others who entered the mission home, Wu was cared for both physically and spiritually. By 1915, the missionaries regarded her as so pious that they

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1 The Door of Hope Mission was—and still is—well-known in Shanghai, China, and abroad through standard missionary and philanthropic networks, but many of its records were either destroyed or scattered and are difficult to access. I found general materials—annual reports and other publications by the mission—in the standard US Protestant mission archives, primarily those at New York's Union Theological Seminary, Yale and Harvard Divinity Schools, Chicago's Moody Bible Institute, and Shanghai's now-closed mission library. But to obtain personal details of those affiliated with the mission—its residents, Western and Chinese workers and supporters—I had to locate them or people who knew them, both in China and abroad. I also had to consult specialised archives, such as those of The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) in Wheaton, Illinois, and the Billy Graham Archives at Wheaton College, Illinois, and special files in the Shanghai Municipal Archives. Locating both people and materials was more difficult because by the 1910s the Door of Hope Mission was linked to informal faith and holiness networks rather than to more official mainline Protestant Christian denominations. The mission's public, often sensationalist, stories, on the other hand, were closely followed by the periodical press in Shanghai.

2 Door of Hope Annual Report 1915, p. 8; 1925 p. 5; 1937, p. 35.

often asked her to lead prayer meetings for the entire mission. Quick at her studies, according to Bonnell, within a decade Wu not only instructed children in the mission, she also helped the missionaries themselves in their constant struggles with the Chinese language. She served as matron of one of the six cottages set up for the smallest charges, many of them young girls sold into prostitution by relatives unable or unwilling to care for them. Realising early on that she was, in the missionaries' words, "not called to marry but to work for other souls instead," Wu acted frequently as a go-between, arranging and overseeing acceptable marriages for "girls" at the mission, making it truly a "door of hope" in a culture where nearly all women married and these women's choices otherwise would have been severely limited.

With all the wartime hardships of 1937 Shanghai, Eleanor Woo—the Christian name given Wu Li-tsu at her baptism—felt "called" to set up a refuge on her own for homeless women, even though she was then sixty-five years of age. Keeping in touch with the Door of Hope, she agreed to oversee both the mission and her own refuge during the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, when most foreigners were interned in camps. When missionaries were forced to leave Shanghai and the Door of Hope in 1951, eventually moving to Taiwan to open another mission, they kept in contact with her. As a result, she was denounced by the new Communist regime as a foreign lackey, removed from her job, and thrown out of her home. She had to live with her sister in what had been a one-family courtyard house now crowded with other families. The regular remittances the missionaries surreptitiously sent were the only thing that kept her from starving. In 1969, she died, age 93. The last thing Li-tsu requested, according to her sister, Li-the, was that she (Li-the) write a letter to the missionaries, inquiring about their health, and thanking them again for all they had done for her.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter focuses on women at the Door of Hope, both the Western missionaries and Chinese women like Eleanor Woo, and my attempt to understand their particular relationships within the mission home—the place to which they came, worked and together forged a new model of domesticity. In Mao's China, it was the formative memory of that model which sustained Eleanor Woo physically, spiritually, and most importantly for this chapter, emotionally, through her old age. Nothing I knew about Western imperialism or Chinese patriarchy had prepared me to understand the lasting power of the bonds within that place—what historian Sylvia Van Kirk calls "tender ties"<sup>4</sup>—which I nearly missed in my initial readings of the Door of Hope material.

3 Wu Li-the, Shanghai, China, to Beatrice Lawler, USA, October, 1969, in Door of Hope correspondence files, TEAM.

4 Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670–1870*, Winnepeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980, reprint, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983.

Focusing on the domestic aspect of the imperial project is not new. In earlier works like Patricia Hill's *The World Their Household*, Jean Gelman Taylor's *The Social World of Batavia*, Pat Grimshaw's *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in 19th-Century Hawaii*, Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly's edited volume, *Sites of Desire/Economies of Pleasure*, scholars extended and complicated the nineteenth-century notion of a "women's sphere" from the metropole to the colony as Anglo-American women increasingly went abroad, whether as missionaries, travellers, teachers, social reformers or companions to travelling men. Scholars have written about a "manifest domesticity" in American expansionism.<sup>5</sup> A whole genre of feminist scholarship has conclusively argued that constructing the domestic was not secondary but deeply implicated in the entire project of imperialism.

In exploring the new model of domesticity that developed at the Door of Hope, this chapter will focus particularly on the emotional bonds that were a key aspect of its new domestic arrangement. Fortunately, scholars of empire and gender have turned their attention recently to sentiment, emotion, feeling—those powerful but less visible bonds—that connected colonised and colonists in a wide variety of ways. Historians, anthropologists, psychologists, even neuroscientists, scholars like Ann Laura Stoler, Margaret Jolly, Catherine Hall, Lisa Loewe and Emma Rothschild have argued that, in Stoler's words, these "tense and tender ties" are only comprehensible when placed within the racialised hierarchies and their strict boundaries that are fundamental to political and political systems but exaggerated in colonial circumstances.<sup>6</sup> This "affective turn" in the literature comes at a crucial moment in my own work when I was challenged to make sense of life stories like those of Eleanor Woo.

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5 Building on earlier work on women's sphere by Mary Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity*, NY: Institute for Research in History and Haworth Press, 1982; and Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978. Scholars who applied this notion to women abroad include Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870–1920*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985; Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: Europe and Eurasian in Dutch Asia*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983; Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly (eds), *Sites of Desire/Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and Pacific*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997; Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989; Ian Tyrell, *Women's Work/Women's Empire: WCTU in International Perspective 1880–1930*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

6 The work of Stoler is relevant to my search for understanding the emotional bonds that connect at least certain of the Door of Hope former residents with the missionaries who worked among them. See especially her *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, especially chapters 1 and 7 and the Epilogue. Stoler's work adds the history of imperialism to the growing sub-field of "affective studies" encompassing history, anthropology, psychology and neuroscience. See, for example, Jan Plamper, "The history of emotions: an interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns," *History and Theory* 49 (2010): 237–65; and Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (eds), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. To the growing list of historians who examine the emotional life of empire, see also the work of Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011; and Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History*, London: Pantheon, 2007.

Searching out the literature that explores the bonds of empire is useful in many ways, yet the Chinese experience in general and the women at Shanghai's Door of Hope Mission in particular are distinct in a number of ways, and comparisons with women intent upon imposing new images of the domestic (and finding that they had to adapt to local realities) in Australia, Indonesia, the Pacific Islands, South Africa, even India, are not precisely equivalent. Not entirely colonised but what scholars call "semi-colonised," not a "settler" society but a millennia-old, still-powerful, extensive empire struggling under the combined challenges of internal turmoil and foreign penetration, China presented a complex case both for colonists and colonised, with its diversity, sheer size, and myriad levels of response and resistance.<sup>7</sup> Luckily, with increasing access to archives, memoirs and the voices of many of the actors themselves, we can begin to untangle the complex narratives of power and resistance—which is what I set out to do using the Door of Hope as my entry point. Applying these new ideas to the study of the Door of Hope can also bring into sharp relief the tensions and paradoxes inherent in the domestic missionary project.

## The Door of Hope and a new domesticity

For many years I have been fascinated by the story of the Door of Hope, founded by Western women who had been shocked to see prostitutes carried around the streets of the turn-of-the-century treaty port Shanghai advertising the brothels that owned them. Their responses grew out of nineteenth-century notions of urban reform, the power of Christian evangelism, and the civilising mission of enlightened (white) women removing (they called it rescuing) darker-skinned indigenous women from sinful, depraved conditions and transforming them in new domestic spaces, such as existed around the world from London, San Francisco, Buenos Aires to New York. Established at a missionary conference in Shanghai in 1900 and opened in 1901, by 1905 the Door of Hope housed seventy-four women and children. By 1910 it held 325, and even during the Japanese occupation from 1937 to 1945 it managed to stay open and house several hundred. It lasted postwar until the Communist expulsion of Western missionaries in 1951. Home to freed prostitutes (not always by their choice), mistreated concubines and servants, and cast-off "extra" women and children, the mission provided shelter and services generally unavailable to such marginalised females,

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Work on emotion and history in non-Western thought has just begun, see Joel Marks and Roger Ames (eds), *Emotion in Asian Thought: Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995; and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern studies, deconstructing historiography," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 1–34.

<sup>7</sup> For literature on Chinese missions, see especially Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Woman Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.



from health clinics, schools and tidy cottages, to the more regimented chapels and industrial workshops, and thus it was generously supported throughout its history by Shanghai governments, both Western and Chinese. Over a fifty-year span, it reached some 5,000 women and children directly and many thousands more through its neighbourhood day schools, revivals, and prayer services. The Door of Hope, I discovered, is familiar to scholars of missions and students of Shanghai, Chinese Christians and supporters abroad. Neighbourhood “grannies” in both the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan remember the Door of Hope and thus could pass their stories on to me. Furthermore, it was an institution that lasted, in part, for the ways it served multiple agendas, but just as much, I began to suspect, because of the less visible but more powerful social dynamics that operated inside its new kind of domestic space.

To mine the stories I collected for details of the lives of both Western and Chinese women like Wu Li-tsu (Eleanor Woo) and, furthermore, to attempt to understand their interior lives, is a daunting task. Most of the stories about them have been at several removes—in the pages of reports, pamphlets and newspapers,<sup>8</sup> both Chinese and Western, and in the memoirs of missionaries, businesspeople, authorities and reformers, both Chinese and Western. Furthermore, these narratives are incomplete. They relate one incident of rescue, of marriage, of conversion, of baptism, or of an unusual challenge or hardship. They describe a particular aspect of work, schooling or training. They recount wartime turmoil and trials, hasty moves and military attacks, the closing of homes and opening up of branches. And they are stories told for the purposes of fundraising, evangelism or even entertainment—for outsiders, not for those within.

By 1998, I had nearly resigned to telling the story of the women at the Door of Hope by proxy—and predominantly a Western one at that. That spring, I travelled to Shanghai for several months of research with the goal of better understanding the many worlds of Shanghai in which the mission had moved. I found extraordinary material in the Shanghai Municipal Archives: names of all inmates and their backgrounds, mission statements, lists of supporters, plus files of similar institutions both Western and Chinese in the years between 1937 and 1951. But I was predominantly limited to outsider stories about those at the Door of Hope Mission, and I could get no further in my attempt to understand their interior lives and the domestic bonds that held them.

Finally, careful networking within the Chinese Christian community led to an invitation by a local minister to meet “a few” women in his congregation who had been residents at the Door of Hope. In the upper room of an old church, around a table spread with memorabilia, he introduced me to eleven women—and a few men—in their seventies and eighties, all wearing the standard dark

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Shen pao*, 1910–40.

pants and somber tops preferred by older Chinese adults. On closer inspection, I saw that the women had added festive touches: a lighter blouse, a colourful scarf, a hand-knit sweater. It was Easter, one of two times each year when surviving Door of Hope alumnae still gather in Shanghai to catch up, enjoy each other's company, reminisce about the past, and witness for their faith. These former Door of Hope residents were eager to show me what they had managed to save from their years at the mission and to tell me their stories, even interrupting each other in their enthusiasm.

I spent perhaps twenty hours over a several week period with these women and men alumnae (plus many hours in subsequent years), collecting their life histories and listening to their individual stories—and those of others like Wu. For the first time I had evidence of the interior life of the mission and of the powerful ties that still bind them to the memories of the departed missionaries.

Afterwards, exhausted from recalling memories and sharing their emotions from the past, they walked with me to a nearby restaurant where we ate lunch and sang Methodist hymns familiar to me from my Illinois farm childhood. As we parted, a few of them offered to accompany me the next day to the mission's last sites: the larger refuge now a city middle school, while its smaller buildings that once served as chapel and clinic now home to multiple families. Shanghai's traditional architecture of long lanes off main thoroughfares has been remade and reordered, making old addresses difficult to find without the help of someone who has watched the city change. These Door of Hope alumnae served literally as my guides, and their stories shone new light for me on the mission's domestic space and the relationships within it—while presenting new paradoxes to ponder.

## Reconstructed stories

The stories I heard from these former residents modified, expanded and, frankly, complicated the earlier narratives I had constructed of lives at the mission. Not only do these narratives add crucial pieces of information, they also reflect emotional attachments that still endure. Hearing these elderly former residents recollect their lives forced me to imagine the world as they had perceived it—or, more accurately, the world as they now remember perceiving it.<sup>9</sup>

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9 Many historians are rethinking the connections between history and memory, especially those who rely extensively on oral history. See, for example, the work of Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993; Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, New York and London: Routledge, 1991; and Barbara Meyerhoff, *Remembered Lives: The Work of Storytelling, Ritual, and Growing Older*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992. Two anthropologists of Asia whose work is informed by this more reflexive approach

Their stories alter my earlier narrative in several key ways which underscore the importance of the mission, its residents, and its missionaries in their lives and they in the missionaries' lives both in the past and in the present. First and foremost, for all the rational reasons I had accumulated for authorities and families to place extra women and children there, I was unprepared for the reasons those elderly people in Shanghai themselves stressed: they had come—or had been brought—to the Door of Hope to be saved. For former residents, the missionaries at the Door of Hope had quite literally and without question saved them.

Christian conversion was always the most important goal for the missionaries, stressed in their literature, their stories, and the neon sign announcing “Jesus Saves” that illuminated their rescue room in the heart of the brothel district after 1929. Their shared Christian belief was undeniably important to each and every one of the alumnae I met who had kept their faith across decades of persecution by a state now turned relatively tolerant. Yet I was struck by how they stressed salvation of a different sort.

In interviews with me, former residents highlighted instead how the missionaries at their new home had saved them literally. They had saved them from neglect, abuse and even starvation. They had saved them from the grueling life of a peasant or the harsh work in textile mills. They had saved them from concubinage or marriage to a bad husband. One woman who had brought her hand-written life history interspersed with red-inked biblical quotes (like Jesus' quotes in her Bible) kept insisting that I take note of these details: at the Door of Hope the missionaries gave them three meals a day, and each meal always consisted of “three rices” plus biscuits and fruit. These former residents kept admonishing me: “Write that in your book.”

When I pressed them to tell me their first impressions of the mission home and those within it, certain that this line of questioning would extract some “pure” memories of surprise or fear, one woman without hesitation recalled her first memory: waking up to warmth, with a missionary coming into her room carrying a charcoal brazier. “It was the first time I had been warm in the morning in winter,” she said,<sup>10</sup> and more than sixty-years later she could still recall that sensation of warmth and the missionary who brought it.

The key realisation for me, then, was of the importance for these women of both the safe, secure and warm mission space and of the relationships they

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are Lisa Rofel in her study of Chinese women silkmakers, *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China After Socialism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999; and Dorinne Kindo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> From my conversations with former Door of Hope residents at the Moore Protestant Church in Shanghai, China, 19 and 25 of April, 1998.

formed within it. Coming from precarious lives, for most of them the mission's comforting, domestic space, literally a new home, was paramount. Equally so for the way they spoke of their Chinese "sisters," occasional "brothers," "cousins," older Chinese "aunties," and missionary "aunts" and "mother." From the perception of these elderly Chinese former residents, the people at this transplanted (and adapted) Western institution had quite literally become their family and the mission their new home, in theory to be replicated outside when they left. Most of them have memories of (and some kept links with) their natal Chinese families,<sup>11</sup> but at least for the younger ones at its Children's Refuge, this new mission family became their dominant kinship group. I was familiar with what anthropologists call "fictive kin" (which is more accurately recast as "constructed kin"),<sup>12</sup> but I had never tried to imagine those relationships from the perspective of the young Chinese. I now realise that I had limited my conceptualisation of the mission and its workers to the Western perspective of social welfare and control, looking at it as a "total" institution and, furthermore, as one among many in the city, from prisons and brothels to hospitals and schools. For the men and women in Shanghai who were children inside its walls, however, it was a family filled with "sisters," "aunties," and "cousins," all led by a "good mommy." It was these people, not some amorphous "institution," that had rescued them, given them food and shelter, clothes and dolls and education. "They," not "it," found husbands for them who, I was told, were even referred to as the mission's "sons-in-law." Mission reports hid the crucially important New Year's gifts these men dutifully gave the Door of Hope each year as filial Chinese husbands of the mission's "daughters." Like dutiful Chinese daughters, the women learned the lessons their family in this mission home had taught them, becoming good preachers and teachers, seamstresses and singers. But the stories of Eleanor Woo and the Shanghai alumnae suggest that the bonds between these women and those who worked at the Door of Hope were even deeper than I had imagined.

All manner of relations within the mission were expressed in kinship terms. For example, the elderly respondents spoke of three "generations" of women and children at the mission: those who had joined it pre-1927, residents from 1927 to 1945, and residents from after the war. Those with whom I spoke in Shanghai represented the second generation, with only one woman who had become

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11 It is a truism in the study of prostitution worldwide, however, whether in Shanghai (Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth Century Shanghai*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) or New York (Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987) that prostitutes generally kept contact with their natal families and in fact more often than not moved in and out of prostitution, depending on the vagaries of their families' economic health. The main support for this argument in the case of the Door of Hope is the contact that former residents seemed to keep with the mission.

12 See Jessica Hinchy, "Deviant Domesticities and Sexualised Childhoods: Prostitutes, Eunuchs and the Limits of the State Child 'Rescue' Mission in Colonial India," this volume.

another's adopted daughter coming from the third. Furthermore, these three generations hold special pride of place within the Shanghai Christian community. Like modern-day apostles they are seen as specially privileged because of their direct contact with the Western missionaries. That special relationship lends them an almost sacred esteem within their current community.

Looking at the history of the Door of Hope Mission in light of the importance of the familial relationships within it made other previously murky aspects more comprehensible. In times of turmoil, I knew, the mission had always been filled to overflowing, with little room for missionaries to accept the refugees that thronged into the relative safety of the city. I had interpreted this lack of receptivity as callousness. I now see it instead as the mission's inability to turn away its adult children who expected they could always come back to it for refuge—frequently bringing their husbands, children and mothers-in-law too. In other words, this Western mission gave priority in Chinese fashion to its obligations to its scattered kin who in times of hardship looked to it—their family in a new domestic space—for welfare and refuge.

In sum, I now realise that all connections, all reference to the mission for them was—and had always been—relational, a relationship, I must underscore, between Western women and Chinese women, but for them defined in familial Chinese terms. The language of family and filiality formed the basis of their ties: obligation, responsibility, respect. And for them—as for Eleanor Woo—the ties were powerfully binding across the years.

## Missionaries forging families

For the Western resident workers at the Door of Hope, by the same token, the mission offered similarly important relationships and a new community, defined for them, however, in Western kinship terms. Pious and poorer than many others in the missionary world, often older and relatively uneducated, the Western women who spent their lives at the Door of Hope were also drawn to rescue work by the relationships they developed within. They formed life-long friendships with their colleagues at the mission, and it was with these women that they lived, worked, travelled and often retired. Furthermore, it is the inherently unequal relationship within the mission between the Western missionaries and both their Chinese charges and helpers that suggests an even more powerful reason for these Western women's choice of rescue work: the attraction of working in an environment with such gratifying "relations of rescue," a concept described vividly in Peggy Pascoe's work.<sup>13</sup> In the language of

<sup>13</sup> Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West 1874-1939*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

the mission's reports and missives, the missionaries were the maternal rescuers and their "girls" at the mission were victims needing rescue—abused slaves, mistreated servants, and very young brothel inmates—those whose stories they selected for inclusion in their writings and speeches and who confirmed the vision of their work and their roles at the Door of Hope.

Nothing describes the way the missionaries viewed their "girls" better than the poetry composed especially for it. This poetry was standard mission practice, and several of the Door of Hope missionaries, like Gladys Dieterle and Winifred Burlinson, both at the Children's Home, proved adept at writing it. The 1924 and 1925 Annual Reports, sent out to the religious worlds in both China and abroad, are filled with poems by Burlinson that describe one young girl, renamed Precious Blessing by the missionaries. The rhetoric in these poems highlights the pervasive family tropes of the mission—along with their inherent racial, sexual and moral hierarchies.

### Precious Secrets

A little girl before me,  
With eyes aglowing stands;  
"O see what I am holding  
Dear Auntie, in my hands.

This is my share of peanuts,  
Today is "peanut day,"  
Will you not have some, Auntie?  
You may have some, you may."

"I thank you little Love-Heart,  
But then you have so few,  
Just give me one to taste by  
For they were meant for you."

Thus waiting in the garden  
Or 'neath the window pane,  
Are little hearts and voices,  
The touch of love to gain.

"O Auntie, I must tell you  
What Precious said today:  
I heard her tell the children  
While at their merry play

She would not mind if Jesus  
Would send her Christmas night.  
A little baby dolly  
With hair all fair and bright.



She said it would not matter  
If nothing else were given,  
Could only one real dolly  
Come down to her from heaven!"

And thus we see the longings  
Of little Chinese hearts,  
For joys we once have tasted  
In large or smaller parts.

"I like to sing dear Auntie,  
That song you taught today;  
It makes me feel so happy  
At home, at school, at play.

How strange that God should love me,  
Sometimes I am not good,  
And often I must grieve Him  
Not smiling when I should.

I heard you say this morning,  
That Jesus died for me;  
He must have loved me truly  
To bear that awful tree."

And thus the lambs are carried  
To Christ's own loving breast  
And thus we are rewarded,  
Entrusted, crowned, and blessed.

A hundred precious secrets,  
Our Love School daily tells,  
Of little loves and longings  
Of "if's" and "how's" and "well's;"

And feet that pitter-patter  
So often past our door,  
Have only come to tell us  
That love that's needed more.

A hundred tiny faces  
Each day uplifted so,  
We cannot help but love them,  
We cannot say them no.

God's little Chinese children,  
 Sweet flowerets of his care,  
 Some day you'll find them blooming  
 In Heaven's Garden fair.<sup>14</sup>

This poem aptly illustrates the familial relations of rescue as understood by Western women at the mission. Not only sentimentalising, it reduces all their charges to their children, all missionaries not just to superior benefactors, but more importantly, to older and thus authority figure relatives—to “aunties” and “mothers.” Full of imperial assumptions (all that a Chinese girl wants is a fair-haired doll which looks not coincidentally like her missionary “auntie”), the poem reduces the missionary-Chinese relationship to one of maternal Western women (almost all unmarried without children), serving child-like faces “uplifted” to them, without any sign of intransigence, ambivalence, or resistance.<sup>15</sup>

But was that the way in which the individual missionaries thought of their charges? The missionaries liked to think of those faces as belonging only to little children plucked from dens of vice. In point of fact, poems and pictures to the contrary, the “girls” they dealt with were quite often young women by either Chinese or Western standards, from ages twelve to eighteen and even beyond. The reasons they were brought to the mission were not only for purposes of rescue but were, increasingly, for urban removal, social control and refugee relief. Casting them all as needy “children” within a mission family both shortened and lengthened the distance between them and the missionaries. Making all the missionaries into relatives who were superior but familial to them—“mothers” and “aunties” (the same language used by the resident girls and young women, of course)—suggested a closeness, intimacy, yet generational hierarchy that justified the control they asserted over their charges.<sup>16</sup>

If relations within the mission were framed as involving mothers/daughters (and aunts/nieces), then it followed that for Western missionaries the sentiment most appropriate to those relationships was love. Given the Door of Hope's goal, articulated in 1901, “not to reform but to transform,” we might today better characterise its methods as “tough love.” “Tough,” because rescue work was physically arduous and frequently involved force and involuntary confinement, and “love” because it was informed with the nineteenth-century sentimental view which stressed the powerfully binding “cords of love.” This emphasis on

14 Door of Hope Annual Report, 1925, pp. 14–15.

15 See Barbara Brenzel, “A study of the socialization of wayward girls,” in *Harvard Educational Review* 50(2) (May, 1980): 196–213; and the articles in Mary T. Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (eds), *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

16 See Mary Louise Pratt's discussion in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 36. Identifying them as subordinate children also justified the imperial, imperious tone the missionaries affected, in their reports, in their work and, one suspects, in relating to “their girls.”

what Barbara Brenzel calls “compulsory love”<sup>17</sup> is clear in the names given to parts of the mission, from the “Love School” (the children’s home) to the “love friends” (donors who sponsored individual children).

It may seem paradoxical, but even during their most difficult times, with obstreperous youths, scarcity of funds, or turmoil in the city, the missionaries at the Door of Hope Mission in their reports and correspondence continued to stress the word “love.” The Annual Report in one particularly challenging year (1915) was filled with the word: its title was “The Story of Love,” the chapters were “Love Sought,” “Love Taught,” “Love Planned,” “Love Guided,” “Love Supplied,” “Love Multiplied,” “Love Saved,” “Love Kept” and “Love Filled.”<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, family “love” in a new domestic space was seen as the answer—for everything. But the “love” that the missionaries brought to the mission was characterised by the maternal feelings that one had for subordinate (and insubordinate) children. It was not accidental that the preponderance of biographies in the reports highlighted girls from the Children’s Home rather than older “girls” and former prostitutes. This “love” was never an emotion exchanged between equals; it was always offered from a superior to an inferior, from a parent to a child, from a saved to a sinner—from a coloniser to a colonised. It was not tender, neither was it unconditional or passive. If enough love was given, if the mission and missionaries within it were infused with it just as the reports and the correspondence were, then all the difficulties they encountered in the world could be overcome—and their charges would be both rescued and saved.<sup>19</sup>

Like the missionaries themselves, the language of their interior lives was forceful, powerful, transforming—and imperial. Through the power of their love as forged in this new mission family and within the new domestic space, the missionaries believed they could save all of China.<sup>20</sup>

## Families forged and reinterpreted

Domestic family affection, then, formed the dominant missionary discourse at the Door of Hope and the key to the relationships they developed—and maintained—within it. As is clear from the preceding discussion, however,

17 In her study of female reformatories, Brenzel addresses this issue, emphasising its unequal nature and its force. See Brenzel, “Study of Socialization,” p. 212.

18 Door of Hope, Annual Report, 1915, pp. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15 and 18.

19 In this regard, Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of “anti-conquest” is particularly instructive here, by which she notes the Western women’s fantasy that spiritual and material conquest could be achieved without violence. See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 7, 33.

20 Again, see Brenzel, “Study of Socialization,” p. 212. She sees evidence in this language of “love” of the nineteenth century sentimental view of rescue work which emphasised the strong “cords of love” binding rescued and rescuers together. She also emphasises its unequal nature and its force, calling it “compulsory love.”

Chinese and Western women framed and interpreted those relationships differently—each from their own cultural and historical perspective, with transcultural adjustments constantly being made.

Recognising that the Door of Hope is a textbook case of what Charles Hayford has called a “transplanted” institution<sup>21</sup>—run by working-class Westerners in alliance with elite Chinese—for poor, problematic Chinese women, all working from different perspectives and norms. Given that Door of Hope alumnae were severely persecuted in Mao’s China for their former connections with Western imperialists, how did these familial relationships survive for seventy-five years, with an impact and emotional power still felt, both in Shanghai and Taipei?

In the end, the Chinese women’s view of the stern, authoritarian Dieterle, the German missionary-director of the mission during much of its history, was the most difficult for me to reconcile. Nevertheless, their memory might hold the key to the paradox presented by the bonds of sentiment. At the end of my interviews with the elderly women in 1998, I finally understood my share of the bargain they had implicitly made: they were patiently waiting to question me and for me to tell them the end of the story that they had never heard: the fate of the Door of Hope missionaries after leaving Shanghai, especially that of Dieterle, the director, the woman they called “the good mommy.” And when I gently told them that she had retired to the United States and died in a missionary retirement community in Nebraska, they were shocked and silent. “Oh, she died!” they said collectively, several of them wiping away tears. I realised that to these former “girls” at the mission she had been frozen in time, forever the mother who had rescued and saved them. But their feelings for her went beyond filiality and obligation, and instead encompassed a profound, nearly limitless emotion.

In my reading of the documents, Dieterle came across as stern, cruel and perhaps even sadistic (reinforced by their stories of her withholding food, love and approval when they were “bad,” while doling out favours, including allowing girls to sleep in her bed at night, when they were “good”). By contrast, to them she was not just maternal and caring but was the ultimate *hao p’o ma* or good mommy.

Although their links to a foreign mission had caused them tremendous suffering, especially during the Cultural Revolution, in their view it had ultimately been the reason for their salvation and survival, and had, as their family, sustained them through both good and bad times, including giving them strong beliefs to hold onto in the otherwise alienating China of today.

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21 Charles Hayford, *To the People: James Yen and Village China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

I had expected to find gratitude and obligation, as in the last words of Eleanor Woo. I was unprepared for the powerful emotional bonds that stretched across the century. In their minds and memories, the missionaries' "former girls" in Shanghai were linked powerfully and emotionally to each other and to the missionaries, especially to the good mommy. Western missionaries, on the other hand, with their language of love and sentiment, paradoxically presented themselves as stern maternal rescuers, rigidly religious and morally upright. They had a language of love and sentiment, but their behaviour appeared to have no room for the overwhelming expressions of true sentiment I saw in Shanghai.

## Domestic bonds across time and space

In the fall of 2000, I had another experience with women from the Door of Hope that shed more light on these relationships and helped me understand the mission's complicated reworkings of Christian and Confucian, colonial and contemporary values and sentiments.

Kathryn Merrill grew up in an evangelical southern California family that had donated generously to the Door of Hope in the 1930s, and Dieterle became a powerful role model for the young Kathy. When the mission moved to Taiwan in the 1950s, Merrill became a missionary and followed Dieterle at the Door of Hope Children's Refuge in Taipei. It was a different kind of ministry—as much social work as Christian sermonising, given the turmoil of a rapidly modernising city<sup>22</sup> and by 1976, after the mission was disbanded, Merrill staffed the Door of Hope Center, doing missionary work while dealing with all manner of urban problems, staying close to the several generations of young women she had helped both spiritually and materially at the Door of Hope Children's Refuge.<sup>23</sup> Those who knew Merrill in Taiwan described the maternal relationship she had with her charges, "Her love for children suited her for mothering these girls."<sup>24</sup>

After retiring to her home town of Santa Barbara, California, in 1999, Merrill was diagnosed with cancer. I visited her there only a few weeks before her death and was able to talk with her at length, continuing the conversations and sharing of documents that had begun nearly ten years earlier. I was also able to observe Merrill interacting with her natal family, members of her home church

22 For an extensive discussion of the Door of Hope experience in Taiwan, see Sue Gronewold, "From Shanghai to Taipei: exile and identity," in *Women in the New Taiwan: Gender Roles and Gender Consciousness in a Changing Society*, ed. Catherine Ferris, Anru Lee, Murray Rubinstein, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004, pp. 59–75.

23 That Merrill's work was critical to the modernising state was made clear in 1999 when Taiwan's Ministry of the Interior honoured her for her work with Chinese girls. See "A brief sketch of Kathy's life" from the program "Memorial Service for Kathy Merrill," April 6, 2000. Personal gift to me from Lorna Chao, who was brought up by Kathy at the Door of Hope in Taipei, and who was active in organising the memorial service.

24 Quoted in "A brief sketch of Kathy's life."

and, most importantly, the unending stream of Chinese women “alums” who flew at great expense from Taiwan and other points abroad to be with her in her last days. Speaking and breathing with great difficulty, propped up in a special hospital chair, she had immense dignity and maintained total control over the situation. Her agenda with me was clear: she realised that she would not be able to write the history of the mission and was passing the baton on to me.<sup>25</sup> Merrill wanted to bring me up to date with the last stories of her “alums”—the most recent weddings and new babies named after her, new conversions and solutions found to problems with the law, with jobs, with cruel husbands, abusive boyfriends or wayward adolescents.<sup>26</sup> She let me select and photocopy from the stacks of photograph albums, personal letters and missionary missives she had carefully organised and brought with her. And she wanted me to meet the many women gathered around her, who graciously included me. Not once did Kathy waver. Warm, loving, and certainly maternal, her style was at the same time controlled and measured.

The women around her were the antithesis of such control. Kathy greeted each one privately as they arrived and hurried in to see her, spending long sessions behind the closed door. “Alums” who had not seen each other in years embraced and comforted each other. I was there for several days and the scene constantly repeated itself, with grief-stricken women coming and going. From time to time, one of the group would have to leave, returning to a demanding job or family. The outpouring of grief as they bid goodbye to Kathy, knowing it was for the last time, was difficult to bear. This was not mere obligation and respect that I was witnessing. For these women, Kathy was indeed their beloved mother to whom they owed so much and were forever attached by deep and profound personal connections.<sup>27</sup>

A hundred years, many miles, and many changes separate Eleanor Woo’s entering Shanghai’s Door of Hope from the goodbyes I witnessed in Santa Barbara. But there is much that is the same. Whether in Shanghai, the PRC, or in Taipei, Taiwan, whether in the last years of the Qing Dynasty or in the years of the

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25 Kathy Merrill was also very grateful to me for making the initial contact with the Door of Hope alumnae in Shanghai and for alerting them about her. After retiring from mission work, she had in fact been able to take advantage of my contacts and visit Shanghai in June, 1999, making the circle complete.

26 In addition, Merrill made one demand very clear. She had read some of my writings on the Door of Hope and quietly but firmly insisted that I make a crucial change: the young women and girls at the Door of Hope were not “inmates,” a word I had used throughout. To describe them in this Foucauldian manner reduced the relationship to one simply of jailer and jailed, which was completely unacceptable to her. In her view, the relationship was one of spiritual guide and wandering pilgrim, teacher and student, mother and daughter. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Random House, 1977.

27 Although it is now fourteen years since her death, as many of her beloved “alums” as possible still gather each year in Santa Barbara on the anniversary of her death, remembering the life and legacy of the woman they regard as their mother. Personal communication with Samuel Chao, May 2012, whose wife Lorna was brought up in the Door of Hope in Taipei.



Taiwan “miracle,” needy Chinese women and Western women missionaries—themselves often marginal and searching for meaning—created a new kind of family at the Door of Hope, using much the same language of rescue, conversion, salvation and kinship. The mission served a useful purpose for many in China: from individuals seeking an end to abuse or hunger, to families crushed by life’s demands or just plain greedy, to the city and state beset by unwelcome and unexpected challenges. It also served an important role for Western women, offering them a home away from their own often problematic ones, plus a sense of belonging, engagement and, yes, imperial power. It is also clear that for both Chinese and Western women, the Door of Hope was a new domestic space where they forged powerful, long-lasting emotional bonds: Chinese with Chinese, Western women with other Western women, but also Chinese women and “girls” with Western women, bound together in the language of family. Relationships were not equal; imperialism and the constraints of Chinese patriarchy handed Western women most of the power, but Chinese women and girls often struggled to negotiate the terms of their confinement, and the language of kinship and family gave them the tools to do so. In their time at the mission many of them developed abilities and attitudes that fit well into a new China, and for that they were eternally grateful to their missionary “good mommy.”

## Paradoxes of domesticity and sentiment

In the end, then, my understanding of the women and their relationships within the Door of Hope mission was rendered more complex than less, more nuanced than clear, and much more powerful than imagined. Door of Hope missionaries came to Shanghai to inculcate the ideals of Western Christian women toward domesticity and the family in their Chinese charges, but over the course of time, both they and their home in China became a hybrid constructed family which arranged marriages for their “daughters,” received filial New Year’s gifts given to parents, and gave refuge to their former wards’ Chinese families in times of trouble. In the process they all created a new model of domesticity in which the institution, paradoxically, became “home” for both the Western missionaries—most of them poor, unmarried, older, and thus without a home in the Western sense of what a home should be for women of their age and station—and home for their Chinese charges who had either become estranged from their Chinese homes or never had one, transforming the Door of Hope’s institutional buildings and halls into a domestic space in the process.

These relations of rescue paradoxically transformed the strict German director of the Door of Hope, Dieterle, into the “good mommy” the Chinese alumnae remembered, who allowed them to share her bed if they were good and whose

death they mourned as if it were the passing of their own mothers. In the process, both the mission and the missionaries became constructed kin in Chinese terms, replacing or supplanting their own families.

Finally, the mission that was to save souls for Christ paradoxically was most remembered by the women it saved for its bodily benefits, like three meals a day and a heated bedroom. Just as paradoxically, the unmarried and unwanted US missionary women who came to bring Western ways to the Chinese found status and love in newly constructed Chinese family roles.

Mothers and daughters, love and gratitude, control and devotion, but also imperialist and colonised, dominated and subordinated, sternness and sentiment—these were the paradoxes of domesticity that are revealed in examining the sentiments of empire and relations of rescue among the women—Western and Chinese—at a door of hope in China.

## Acknowledgements

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# 11. From Open *Fale* to Mission Houses: Negotiating the Boundaries of “Domesticity” in Samoa

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## The Samoan *fale*: Architecture, kinship and continuities in social relations

The traditional Samoan *fale* or house is a magnificent feat of Samoan architecture. Its intricate design involves specialised knowledge and skills that are passed down from generation to generation. Significantly, the architecture of the Samoan *fale* is more than just a building. Its design mirrors and constitutes the culture and life of Samoan people being deeply connected to the values of kinship, ancestral past, land and community. The spaces outside and inside of the *fale* are pivotal to cultural form, ceremony and ritual. Moreover, architectural concepts are incorporated in Samoan proverbs, oratory and metaphors, and linked to other art forms in Samoa, such as boat building and tattooing.<sup>1</sup>

*Fale* is the Samoan word for all types of houses from small to large. In general it is characterised by an oval or circular shape, with wooden posts holding up a domed roof. There are various forms of the *fale* depending on its uses. There is generally a *fale tele* or big house which is the main house, usually in the front and centre of the family’s ancestral land. This is where the *matai* or holder of the family’s chiefly title resides. It is a central place for the family where meetings, worship and other ceremonies like funerals and bestowal of chiefly titles are held. Scattered behind the *fale tele* are the smaller houses of various households of kin. Behind them are the cooking houses where meals are prepared.

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<sup>1</sup> The use of Samoan architectural patterns is seen in the art of tattooing where they represent the person’s ancestral and genealogical connections. Canoe patterns are also a central motif in male traditional tattoo which symbolises the young men’s ability to serve their families. As Albert Wendt writes, tattooing in Samoa is “not just beautiful decoration, they are scripts-texts-testimonies to do with relationships, order, form, and so on.” Albert Wendt, “Afterword: tatauing the post-colonial body,” in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, ed. Vilsoni Heneriko and Rob Wilson, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999, pp. 399–412, p. 403.



**Figure 27. A modern version of a traditional Samoan *fale* recently constructed at the National University of Samoa**

Source: Multimedia Unit, National University of Samoa.

The *fale tele* is usually the most elaborate in design and its construction often involves all members of the family and broader assistance from the village community. The *tufuga fau fale*, or the master builder oversees the entire building project. The domed framework constructed by men is made up of long dried strips of flexible coconut and breadfruit wood. The roof is then thatched with dried sugar cane or palm leaves woven by women. The framework is then supported by posts of hard wood, usually with three in the middle and the rest surrounding the house. The whole house is then lashed and tied together with plaited sennit rope called *afa*, handmade from dried coconut fibres. The *afa* is woven tight in complex patterns around the wooden frame and binds the entire construction together. Blinds, woven from coconut leaves, surround the house and can be pulled up during the day and down at night, depending on the weather. This allows for the free flow of air which is ideal in a tropical climate, and the free flow of people of the family. The foundation of the house is made of rocks and coral with the floor covered with smooth pebbles gathered from the river. These are covered by mats woven from the leaves of the coconut and pandanus trees.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Detailed descriptions of Samoan *fale* can be found in works done by UNESCO, *The Samoan Fale*, Apia: UNESCO Office for the Pacific States and UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1992.



**Figure 28. The interior lashings and construction details of the *fale* at the National University of Samoa**

Source: Photographer Nikki Sloan, 2013.

One of the distinctive features of the *fale* is its openness (see Figure 27). There are no walls or partitions and people can enter and exit from any side of the building.<sup>3</sup> This embodies the idea of the Samoan family as large and extended. Just as the inner space of the house extends outwards, so does the Samoan family and its members in their social relations within the family and the wider community. The Samoan term for family is *āiga*, which is made up of the extended kin. This includes uncles, aunts, grandparents and children as well as those who are not biologically related but have been adopted into the family,

<sup>3</sup> The openness of the Samoan *fale* does not mean that there are no restrictions associated with family life. During family gatherings, certain areas within the *fale* such as the front and sides are restricted to chiefs and elders. Children are prohibited from these areas as well as untitled members. During meal times, the chief, his wife and sisters are privileged in the front part of the house while brothers with their spouses serve from the back. There are also certain taboos relating to gender relations, particularly between brothers and sisters whereby males are forbidden from entering the sleeping areas of their sisters. See Penelope Schoeffel, "The Samoan concept of *feagaiga* and its transformation," in *Tonga and Samoa: Images of Gender and Polity*, ed. Judith Huntsman, Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1995, pp. 85–106, p. 87.

including children and adults who have served the family well. The practice of adoption is common and is a way of maintaining and consolidating family relations.<sup>4</sup> Collectively, the family lives together with particular and shared responsibilities. Children are raised by adults, but mostly by the female members of the family, although at most times care for babies and toddlers is done by both boys and girls and gender separation of roles at this early stage remains blurred until children reach adolescence.<sup>5</sup> Meals are cooked by the adult men, and are shared together. The land upon which the family lives belongs to the family collectively. This land has been passed down from generation to generation. It has strong connections to past ancestors and in particular the family chiefly title. The holder of the family title is responsible as custodian of the land and the welfare of the family. The power of the title holder is not absolute, and any decision has to be collectively approved by the family members.

The openness of the *fale* also embodies the relation of the *āiga* to the village. The family is not an independent entity but an integral part of the community. The village which is the basic form of polity in Samoa is a group of extended kin. They have important historical connections which are captured in the honorifics of titles and collective genealogy of the village. Each family therefore has a say in the affairs of the village. This is expressed through the holder of the family title who represents the family in the village *fono a matai* or council of chiefs. The status and role of each family member thus extends beyond the boundaries of the home into the social organisation of the village. The chief, wives, sisters, untitled men and children within the kin group hold certain corresponding status and roles within the village.

The *fale* is thus an embodiment not only of the openness of the family but also the relational character of the Samoan person.<sup>6</sup> Like the intricate designs of the

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4 Samoans resorted to adoption for several reasons, as part of ceremonial exchange, to replenish human resources particularly when an heir failed to produce heirs, or to lay claim to higher nobility. Missionary George Turner also describes how adoption is seen as a way of accessing cultural wealth and property. For example a husband would give away his child for adoption by his sister in return for *oloa* or property. The adopted child was viewed as *ie-toga* or fine mat, and was, to the family who adopted it, a channel through which native property or *ie-toga* continued to flow to that family from the parents of the child. On the other hand, the child was to its natural parents a source of obtaining property from the parties who adopted it, not only at the time of its adoption, but as long as the child lived. See George Turner, *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago and Long Before: A Study of a Polynesian Society before the Advent of European Influence*, Papakura: R. McMillan, 1983, p. 78. Refer also to Unasa L. F. Va'a, "Samoan custom and human rights: an indigenous view," in *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* (Special Issue: *Human Rights in the Pacific*), 40(1) (June 2009): 239–50, p. 239.

5 Penelope Schoeffel, "Daughters of Sina: a study of gender, status and power in Western Samoa," Ph.D. thesis, Canberra: The Australian National University, 1979, p. 110. Also refer to Jeannette Marie Mageo, "Male transvestism and cultural change in Samoa," *American Ethnologist* 19(3) (1992): 443–59, pp. 450–51.

6 Debates on the relational nature of personhood in Oceania date back to Marcel Mauss and to Maurice Leenhardt in his work among the indigenous people of New Caledonia in the 1940s which contested the notion of persons there with the West "self" amongst the Kanak people. Later Marilyn Strathern stressed that in Oceania, people had a relational conception of personhood as opposed to the individual conception of the person in the West. Holly Wardlow, among others, however, has criticised such dichotomised views



dome framework of the house, with its interwoven rafters tied and fastened together into complex patterns with coconut sinnet (see Figure 28), the Samoan person is one who is deeply connected not only to the family, but past ancestors, the land and the community. The role and status of the Samoan woman exemplify this relational character of Samoans. Like the open *fale*, she is not confined to a domestic sphere, and as she grows and moves from place to place, her status is enlarged by contexts and circumstances of which she is very much aware and which she deploys strategically.

## The Samoan woman: From covenant keeper, to keeper of “wealth” and house of “wisdom”

According to Samoan belief, the woman is born a *tamasā* (sacred offspring). In Samoan theology, she is regarded as a sacred vessel of divinity with powers to attract the divine. This sacred valuation determines her status and roles within the family. She is called *feagaiga* which has been translated as “covenant.”<sup>7</sup> This refers to the sacred covenant of respect between a brother and a sister which gives special honour to the sister. In this relationship, the brother is obligated to serve and protect his sister. As the sacred child, the sister’s curse<sup>8</sup> is something to be feared, hence the brother’s service or *tautua*<sup>9</sup> is vital and must please his sister.

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of “us” versus “them” in relation to debates about personhood in Oceania and the West. She suggests the co-presence of dual modes of personhood, relational and individual. See James Clifford, *Person and Myth: Maurice Leenhardt in the Melanesian World*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982; Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Studies in Melanesian Anthropology, No. 6, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988; Holly Wardlow *Wayward Women: Sexuality and Agency in a New Guinea Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

7 George Pratt defines *feagaiga* as “an established relationship between different parties, as between brothers and sisters and their children; between chiefs and their *tulafale* (orators).” Pratt refers specifically to the special relationship between sister and brother, between the children of sister-brother pairs, and between chiefs and orators and heads of families. The term today is also used to refer to contractual agreements or treaties, but the older meaning in terms of a special relationship is still understood today. See George Pratt, *A Samoan Dictionary*, Samoa: London Missionary Society’s Press, 1862, p. 118.

8 Samoans believe that sisters held the power to curse the brothers with the blight of barrenness. This is still a common belief among Samoans today. See Irving Goldman, *Ancient Polynesian Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970, p. 252.

9 *Tautua* is a central concept in Samoa, expressed in the saying *O le ala I le pule o le tautua* (The path to authority is service). This service is broad and applies to all forms of social and kinship relations, between brother and sister, parents and children, chiefs and their kin, etc. For the brother it can be in the form of providing food and protection for the family and for the sister in the form of making valuables like fine mats and *siapo* or *tapu*. *Tautua* is thus an essential criterion for the selection of appropriate holders of titles which include one who was most prominent and diligent in service. However, today *tautua* incorporates the ability to provide financially for the family or being able to add prestige to the family by having a highly paid government job. Thus we see those living overseas contributing cash and material wealth and those in prominent government posts holding important family titles. See Serge Tchekézoff, “Culture, nation and society: secondary change and fundamental transformations in Western Samoa – towards a model for the study of cultural dynamics,” in *The Changing South Pacific*, ed. Serge Tchekézoff and Francoise Douaire-Marsaudon, Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008, pp. 245–302, p. 274, online: <http://press.anu.edu.au?p=90711>, accessed 22 May 2014; Schoeffel, “The Samoan concept of *feagaiga* and its transformation,” p. 104.

The Samoan proverb, *E mu mata o le tama i lona tuafafine* (The brother's face burns for his sister), speaks of the service of the brother. During the day he is usually in the garden planting or fishing in the ocean. When he gets home, he prepares the meals; he serves and is usually the last to eat. The sister is focused in the *fale* space and is privileged in only doing light chores in and around the house like cleaning and tidying, child care and weaving. She can also move beyond the *fale*, doing light gardening in the vicinity of the house and fishing within the safety of the lagoons.<sup>10</sup> This distinction between inner and outer differs from a Western segregation of feminised domestic and masculinised public spheres. In Samoa, the woman honoured as *feagaiga* refrains from doing heavy tasks as opposed to her brother. The Samoan gender division of labour is equal and complementary as opposed to the hierarchical nature of the Western segregation where the public is seen to eclipse the domestic.

The sister's venerated status comes with definite and serious responsibilities. In return for her brother's service, she becomes the "covenant keeper" by honouring the name of the family. She does this by maintaining her virginity. From a young age until she is married, she is under the protection of the brother, and is often not allowed out at night. The proverbial saying, *O le i'oimata o le tuagane lona tuafafine* (The sister is the pupil in the eye of the brother), refers to the strict surveillance by the brother of the sister. When she does venture out, especially at night, she is often accompanied by her younger siblings. The sister is also called *o le pae ma le aūli* which translates as "the shell and the iron"<sup>11</sup> referring to her role as peace maker, the one responsible for the peaceful relationship and happy co-existence between the brothers or relations of the family. She is the *faioa*, the "maker of valuables" like *ietoga* or fine mats and *siapo* or *tapa* which are extremely important and essential in the operation of the socio-cultural life of Samoans. She is the *taulāsea*, the healer whose knowledge of medicinal herbs is vital to the health and wellbeing of the family. Most importantly she is the *tausala* (the ransom) or *taulaga* (the offering) referring to her role as the redeemer who will be able to ransom or redeem the *āiga* in times of dire need.<sup>12</sup>

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10 In Samoa, women are not tillers of the soil or planters of crops. Their planting responsibilities are confined to plants used for medicinal purposes like herbs, as well as plants used to make items such as the fine mats, and the *siapo* or *tapa*, and plants like the candlenut used to make the *lama* or black soot used as ink for tattooing and for *tapa* print. As *feagaiga*, women are further removed from any manual work involved in the cultivation of the land. Refer to Aiono Fanaafi, "Western Samoa: the sacred covenant," in *Land Rights of Pacific Women*, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1986, pp. 102–09, p. 105.

11 This translation of *pae* was given to me by Seiuli Vaifou Temese during an interview, where she told me that this was a particular shell used by women to straighten the bark of the mulberry plant before it is used for the making of *saipo*. Personal interview with Seiuli Vaifou Temese, 5 April 2012.

12 The *ietoga* or finemat made by Samoan women were symbolic of sisters and daughters. This is illustrated in the rite of *ifoga* or ceremonial apology. The party offering the apology covers their heads with *ietoga* symbolising the protective powers ascribed to sisters.

This brother-sister relationship of covenant and redemption is vital when the time comes in selecting the heir to the family title. At such time, the sister may claim the title herself as every family member is an heir irrespective of gender.<sup>13</sup> However, on many occasions she gives the title to her brother as a sign of respect honouring his service.<sup>14</sup> This however does not devalue her status as *feagaiga*. She still receives equal respect to that of the chief. She is seen as the *se'ese'e talāluma* which translates as "the one who sits in the front part of the house." In a family gathering this is her rightful place embodying her esteemed status. During important decision-making apropos family matters her opinion is highly regarded and sought after. In many cases it is the sister who has power to veto decisions of the family based on her powerful curse. The Samoan woman as sister therefore holds an honorary and sacred status within her family, which gives her important power and influence.

Within the village setting, the sisters and daughters of the local men make up the social group called *aualuma* (front group).<sup>15</sup> This refers to its prestigious position within the village hierarchy, because it constitutes the *feagaiga* of the village. Here we see how the covenant relationship between the brother and sister is played out at the village level. Generally, there are two well-defined parallel hierarchies of distinct spheres of activities in the village known as the *nu'u o ali'i* or village of men and *nu'u o tama'ita'i* or village of women. The village of men refers to the council of chiefs while the village of women refers to the *aualuma*. In the village, the power of the *aualuma* is comparable to that of the council of chiefs. In a similar manner, they can confer rules and carry out punishments for those who breach them.<sup>16</sup> Hence, within the social structure of the village, we see the central status of women, who maintain semi-autonomous status through the *aualuma*. As a social organisation, they have a powerful position, complementary to that of the council of chiefs.

The *aualuma* also embodies the honour and respect of the village. This is because in the past, they were responsible for guarding the virginity of the *taupou* or

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13 In Samoa there are no commoners as everyone is an heir to a chiefly title irrespective of gender. Accordingly for a *feagaiga*, to claim a *matai* title means she has to relinquish her *feagaiga*-ship. This is because both statuses function as equal and complementary in terms of authority. It must also be noted that as a sister is to her brother, so is a female descent line (*tamafafine*) to a male descent line (*tamatane*). So every Samoan descent-group contains two categories of kin; the *tamafafine* and the *tamatane*. Both groups comprise female and male members, who should treat one another as though they were sister and brother respectively.

14 It must also be noted that a family has more than one chiefly title. However the main title called *sa'o* is the most important and is often given to the eldest in honour of his service if it has pleased the family. There are other lesser titles and these can be bestowed to other brothers or members of the family, or to one who is able to stay in the family as other brothers might move to their wives' families upon marriage.

15 *Aualuma* is made of two words; *au* (group), *luma* (front). *Aualuma* thus refers to a group of women or sisters of the village given the prestigious position of being in the front.

16 This practice is still present in several villages in Samoa where the village of women still has a strong influence. I was told during interviews that in some villages the *aualuma* is strong and very active. In some villages however, wives of chiefs have gained prominence over sisters of chiefs.

virgin daughter of the village high chief before marriage to a chief of high rank. This responsibility had crucial political significance.<sup>17</sup> The institution of the *taupou* was vital in linking families and villages all over Samoa through the multiple marriages of chiefs to high-ranking women. The failure of the *taupou* to remain a virgin would result not only in disgracing the honour and respect of the village but also in the withdrawal of the marriage betrothal.<sup>18</sup>

As we have seen, the Samoan woman as sister has a venerated status within her family and village. The situation however changes when she is married and moves to her husband's family and village. Here, her status shifts from a *feagaiga* to a *nofotane* or wife.<sup>19</sup> In her husband's family, her status is determined by that of her spouse. This is due to the relationship of covenant between her husband and his sister. As a *nofotane*, she supports her husband in carrying out this service. She accompanies him to the garden during the day, and in the evening assists him in the preparation of the evening meals. In her capacity as wife, she moves out of the *fale* and enters what is considered the sphere of her husband. Within her husband's village, she belongs to the group known as the *avā a taulele'a* "the wives of untitled men," who come under the direction of the *auauma*. They are often referred to as *o lima ma vae* meaning "hands and feet" referring to their roles in doing errands when the village women get together. All this is part of their service in honouring the sisters of their husbands. For the wife, this service can be difficult but all will be rewarded when her husband becomes a chief.

Once her husband's service is honoured with the bestowal of the family chiefly title, her position is elevated to being a *faletua* if the title is that of an *ali'i* or high chief, or *tausi* if the title is that of a *tulafale* or orator. *Faletua* literally means "the house at the back,"<sup>20</sup> referring to the "house" behind the main house in which food and gift presentations are prepared during family gatherings or

17 Niel Gunson, Penelope Schoeffel and Gavan Daws argue that women were crucial in the transmission of rank and the legitimisation of chiefly power in ancient Samoa. See Niel Gunson, "Sacred women chiefs and female 'headmen' in Polynesian history," *The Journal of Pacific History: Sanctity and Power: Gender in Polynesian History* 22(3) (1987): 139–72; Penelope Schoeffel, "Rank, gender and politics in ancient Samoa: the genealogy of Salamāsina O le Tafaiā," *The Journal of Pacific History: Sanctity and Power: Gender in Polynesian History* 22(4) (1987): 174–94.

18 A *taupou* was usually reserved to marry a high-ranking chief in order to gain status and political alliances. The *auauma* therefore, guarded with care the *taupou* until the wedding day where a public defloration would test her virginity, a practice that was severely condemned by the missionaries, and, by the beginning of the twentieth century, was clearly abandoned.

19 *Nofotane* is made up of two words; *nofo* (to sit or stay) and *tane* (husband). The term can be a derogatory one given to a female married into the family if she should err in the carrying out of her duties.

20 According to Fanaafi, *faletua* has been translated by Samoan feminists to mean "back of the house" since that is its surface literal translation: *fale* means dwelling; *tua* means back. Yet the real meaning of the term according to her is, "the adviser that the house depends on; the backing which a *matai* finds difficult to do without. Likewise the primary role of the wives of chiefs is to give good advice and to be suitable counsellors to their husbands who are the collective authority of the *āiga* and the village." See Aiono Fanaafi, "The social status and the economic roles of the female in traditional and modern Samoan society," unpublished paper, n.d., p. 5.

cultural ceremonies like funerals. The house at the back therefore plays a crucial role in the success of these events. Likewise the *faletua* is vital in the success of the high chief in carrying out his roles. She is the backing upon whom the chief depends for wisdom and advice. Thus as a *faletua* she is the “house of wisdom” and can influence decisions within the family and village through her husband. *Tausi* (to keep), refers to the orator’s wife’s role as keeper of the family wealth, taking care of *tapa* and fine pandanus mats, which are important valuables for ceremonial gift exchanges. Thus, as a wife of an orator, she is vital in keeping the good reputation of the family, as an orator’s ability to speak with conviction depends on the wealth he is able to distribute. As wife of a chief, therefore, the Samoan woman ultimately assumes an influential role within her husband’s family and village. Moreover, despite her lower status in her husband’s family, vis-à-vis his sister, her inherited rights as a *feagaiga* will never be denied within her own natal family. She remains a *feagaiga* in her natal family regardless of where she chooses to live. A negotiation made by her natal family in her absence can never be declared valid if her consent is not given.

The roles and status of the Samoan woman is therefore open, dynamic and complex. They shift as she moves from place to place, from inside the confines of the *fale* to open spaces around the home, from being a sister in her natal family and village to that of a wife in her husband’s family and village, and from being a wife of an untitled man to that of a high chief or orator. Her passage from “covenant keeper” to “keeper of wealth” and “house of wisdom” shows the expansiveness of women’s influence and the fact that this is in no way constrained by a “domestic” sphere. Although in certain contexts there are important structural and cultural constraints on women’s agency, there are always avenues in these places and spaces to assert their influence. When missionaries arrived, these spaces were more rigidly segregated as they advocated a status for women confined to the home as a wife and a mother. Thus the arrival of missionaries challenged Samoan ideals about the expansive status and high valuation of Samoan women.

## European missionary wives: The project to “uplift” Samoan women

The first European missionary couples arrived in Samoa in 1836; six years after John Williams of the LMS formally introduced Christianity in 1830.<sup>21</sup>

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21 The earliest letters used in this chapter by London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary wives who worked in Samoa were found at the following libraries. The letters by Mrs. Mills are found in Archibald W. Murray’s, “Memoirs of Mrs. Mills,” published in the magazine *The Illustrated Words of Grace*, Sydney, Melbourne: Colonial Publishing Company. Both the National Library of Australia and the Mitchell Library hold parts of the series, as follows: vols 4(9)–5, 1879–1880, Canberra: National Library of Australia (NLA);

During those early years, Tahitian missionary couples worked on their own, with Williams and other European missionaries from other well established missions in Tahiti and Rarotonga visiting intermittently.<sup>22</sup> The arrival of white missionaries and their wives meant that evangelisation became far more dispersed, with the establishment of mission stations throughout the Samoan islands, where they were able to exert more direct influence. This was a strategic move to quickly spread missionaries' sphere of activities to cover the whole of the archipelago.

European missionary couples arrived with much keenness to transform Samoa into a civilised and Christian society. The wives in particular saw their role as focusing on the conversion of women. Their early impressions of the state of local women made them more determined. In one of her first letters written soon after arrival in Samoa in 1836, Mrs. Liliās Mills wrote; "The women are in a lamentable condition – slaves to the tyranny of their masters. The Gospel will soon rescue them from their thralldom."<sup>23</sup> Mrs. Mills, like many of the early missionaries and their wives were too quick to judge the state of Samoan women. Later, writing by the missionary Archibald William Murray would correct her assessment. He wrote,

A more extensive acquaintance with heathen countries would have led Mrs Mills to form a different estimate as to the position and treatment of women in Samoa. Nowhere among the many islands, east and west, which I have visited, have I found woman so nearly upon an equality with man as in Samoa. Indeed, the treatment of women on that group was one of the most marked features of the milder type of heathenism that was found there.<sup>24</sup>

Early missionary wives however did not see this as a "milder type of heathenism," and were passionately determined to transform what they perceived as the

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vols 4(1)–6(1) (1879–1881), Sydney: Mitchell Library (ML). Mrs. Day's letters are found in William Day's *The Domestic Correspondence of the Rev. William Day and His Family in the Launceston Public Library*, transcribed by Phillip K. Cowie, Tasmania: Launceston Public Library, 1963. A copy of this is held at the Chifley branch of The Australian National University Library. Other letters used in this chapter by LMS missionary wives are published in the LMS mission magazine *The Samoan Reporter*, from its first issue in 1845, Number 1 to Number 23 in 1962. Copies of this series are held at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Also used was the Archive of the LMS Samoa District Committee microfilmed by the Pacific Manuscript Bureau, Canberra: The Australian National University, PMB 1278. This includes Minutes of Meetings and Administrative Records from 1851–1973.

22 The arrival of European missionary couples marked an important development in the evangelisation of the Samoans. The Tahitians' efforts were important, but they were often under the influence of local paramount chiefs who confined them under their protection and deployed them for local political purposes.

23 Liliās Mills, Apia, Upolu, to brother, England, June 13, 1836, in Archibald W. Murray, "Memoirs of Mrs. Mills," in *The Illustrated Words of Grace*, Sydney, Melbourne: Colonial Publishing Company, 4(9) (1880): 177.

24 Murray, "Memoirs of Mrs. Mills," p. 177. Murray's assessment was made around 1880, after spending several decades in Samoa in which he had gained a better understanding of the status of Samoan women. His view is also based on having visited other islands in the Pacific; in comparison he found the status of Samoan women greater than others.



low state of local women vis-à-vis their masters. Upon arrival, they quickly set out to educate women. There was a clear demarcation of the roles of missionary husbands and wives. The husbands would conduct regular visits to neighbouring villages and districts while the wives worked mainly from their homes. This separation was in terms of their distinct roles, the husband dealing in an enlarged public sphere while the wife was clearly confined to the private, focusing on her domestic and maternal roles.

Initially missionary wives conducted classes from their homes. Their schedules were intense, with classes running all week except Saturdays. The first lessons were basic literacy and catechisms on biblical knowledge and Christian principles. Soon, *faasā* (forbidding) classes were introduced for women who had decided to relinquish heathen customs. The methods included reading a portion of scripture, which was explained and practised in the catechism. Samoan practices like *poūla* or night dance, tattooing, polygamy, *taupou* (cult of virginity) and arranged marriages crucial to political alliances were prohibited.<sup>25</sup> Instead missionaries encouraged monogamous marriage and the idea of a nucleated family consisting exclusively of father, mother and their children. Samoan women were taught to be proper Christian wives to their husbands and good mothers to their children. Special classes were conducted to teach how to best do domestic chores and how to bring up children. Mrs. Day wrote to her son in 1843,

[P]apa and mama have a very large class of mothers, that they may get knowledge how to bring up their children. For instance they have no idea of the cleanliness we are accustomed to in England; but it is pleasant to see them now, with their bodies clean and shining; the only clothing they generally wear is a piece of cloth about their loins.<sup>26</sup>

Modesty was one of the first lessons that missionary wives attempted to instil in Samoan women. The nakedness of Samoan women exposing their breasts was abhorrent to many missionaries and their wives. When Williams first arrived he wanted such nakedness banned. On seeing the lack of progress in this area on his second visit in 1832, he questioned his Tahitian teachers but they replied,

They could not induce them to cover their persons of which they are exceedingly proud especially their breasts which are generally very

<sup>25</sup> Missionaries and their wives were adamant about prohibiting customs that were associated with “sex” which included the *pōula* or night dance. Williams described this form of dance as a “charged sexual expression of human nature.” See John Williams, *Missionary Enterprises*, London: John Snow, 1840, p. 89. Other practices like tattooing and traditional marriage which also involved sexual practices were greatly condemned by missionaries.

<sup>26</sup> Mrs. William Day, Sagaga, Upolu, to her son, England, April 5, 1843, in William Day, *The Domestic Correspondence of the Rev. William Day and His Family in the Launceston Public Library*, transcribed by Phillip K. Cowie, Tasmania: Launceston Public Library, 1963, p. 52.

large. They are continually wishing the teachers wives to lay aside their garments & “faasamoa” (*fā’a-Sāmoa*) do as the Samoan ladies do, gird a shaggy mat round their loins as low down as they can tuck up the corner in order to expose the whole front & side of the left thigh anoint themselves beautifully with scented oil, tinge themselves with turmeric put a string of blue beads round their neck & then faariaria (*fā’alialia*) walk about to shew themselves. You will have, say they, all the *Manaia* (*mānaia*) the handsome young men of the town loving you then.<sup>27</sup>

When Williams left in 1832 he told Malietoa Vaiinupō, the most powerful paramount chief in Samoa at the time, of the things that should be forbidden to Christians. They included war, theft, lying, cheating and dancing naked. Missionary wives thus assumed the responsibility of covering up Samoan women. One of the early lessons they taught was in millinery and dressmaking. Mrs. Mills wrote in 1837, “My trouble will be repaid by seeing the female body covered and the bunch of leaves laid aside.”<sup>28</sup>

Early missionary wives soon celebrated the success of their work and the enthusiastic response of Samoan women in attending their schools. This was often expressed in their letters as well as school “progress reports” that filled the pages of the missionary newspaper *The Samoan Reporter* in the 1840s and 1850s. Mrs. T. Bullen wrote in 1946, “Our female boarding school contains 32 pupils. They appear to prize the privileges they enjoy, and their progress in the various branches of education is, to the whole, satisfactory.”<sup>29</sup> This eagerness to learn spread to neighbouring villages and districts; some came from miles to be taught. Young girls were eager to learn and soon made good progress. Girls who became fluent in Samoan literacy were then used as monitors to teach others. Older women were desirous but were slower to learn.

The enthusiasm of Samoan women for collective education however, might be attributed in part to the pre-existing collectivity of women in social organisation. As mentioned, women in their status as sisters form the powerful and extremely well-organised *aualuma*. Conversion was communal and thus once the leaders of the *aualuma* decided to convert, all women including their daughters followed suit. Early conversion in Samoa is often attributed to the influence of paramount chiefs like Malietoa. This largely ignores the power of Samoan women in conversion. Consider this account by Williams on his second visit to Samoa in 1832,

27 Richard M. Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830 and 1832*, Canberra: ANU Press, 1984, p. 117.

28 Mills, Apia, Samoa, to her brother, 24 April 1837, in Murray, “Memoirs of Mrs. Mills,” p. 304.

29 Mrs. T. Bullen, “Mrs. Bullen’s School,” *The Samoan Reporter*, 4 (September 1846): 2.

Just as our conversation was about to end we were interrupted by the appearance of a line of females following each other in goose-like procession about seventy in number each bearing something in her hand. On entering the house ... she (the leader) had heard that I had come up to the settlement and fearing that I might not reach so far as hers she had collected the Christian females together and come to pay her respects to me as the Chief to whom she was indebted for the knowledge of Jehova.<sup>30</sup>

On this occasion, Williams witnessed a powerful demonstration of the unity and influence of Samoan women within the village. Mrs. Day also witnessed this in 1844,

This day all the Ladies of Sagaga came with their *alofa* (love gifts) to the *Faifeaus* [Missionaries] with a head of taro and one fish, each of them dressed alike, with a pretty native piece of cloth put over the shoulders and the bosom with a very fine mat put on so as to make a train behind, with a wreath of flowers round the head: they marched up to the front of the house singing a pretty native song. At the end of the procession one of the Ladies got up and made a suitable speech to the gentlemen. I could not help shedding tears.<sup>31</sup>

Samoan women were thus desirous of the new religion. Learning to read and write was linked to accessing the knowledge of the Europeans. Samoan women saw the values in accessing new skills, even of domestic duties, as beneficial to them. The wives of missionaries were seen as the source of this new knowledge.

From the beginning, the enthusiasm of Samoan women coupled with the resolve of missionaries and their wives to uplift women to their standards of the idealised Christian women, led to initial success in school attendance. However, as they soon realised, things were not as easy as it seemed, and conversion was largely nominal at this early stage. As the project to uplift Samoan women continued, the local context in Samoa provided new challenges that would complicate the work of missionary wives.

## The burden of the *fale* and domestic duties

Missionary wives began their mission from the domain in the home where women flocked in order to observe and learn. The emphasis was on the “home”

<sup>30</sup> Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, p. 146.

<sup>31</sup> Mrs. William Day, Upolu, to her son, July 7, 1844, in Day, *The Domestic Correspondence of the Rev. William Day and His Family*, p. 70.

or what Diane Langmore called the “object lesson”<sup>32</sup> for the local women, where the missionary wife would perform her domestic duties as a respectable wife and ideal mother. Yet initially the Europeans lived in Samoan *fale* given to them by village high chiefs. These houses which were open and usually at the centre of the village, provided a highly visible stage for the inquisitive audience of Samoans. This being a stage also hindered such performances.

First, early missionary wives struggled to deal with the different environment and the strange behaviour of the locals. They complained about the heat, humidity, insects and the lack of comfort in their living quarters. The open *fale*, exposed them not only to the harsh physical elements they were not accustomed to but also to the prying eyes of locals. Mrs. Mills once complained, “All the time my hands are busy with some domestic employments, and no one attempts to assist me in this. They all stand wondering at everything I do.”<sup>33</sup> She went on to write, “Often when my house has been full of noisy Samoans I have sighed for a quiet corner where I should shut my door and be alone.”<sup>34</sup>

The mission home, an important exemplar for instilling a civilised way of life to the natives soon became a place of discomfort as missionary wives constantly complained about the lack of privacy and expressed yearning for the comforts of an English home. Feelings of “homesickness” and yearnings for home comforts were perpetuated by the lack of letters or news from their relatives back “home.” Communication was hard at this stage as the mission ship, the *Camden*, only visited England once every two years and thus news of relatives and of broader British affairs did not reach them for months or even years.

Missionary wives also suffered greatly from diseases such as erysipelas<sup>35</sup> and dropsy<sup>36</sup> which caused them to be bedridden for weeks. Many of their letters expressed worry over their lack of usefulness to the mission project due to prolonged sickness. Some wrote of their anxiety that they would die without having achieved their mission. Some suffered from loneliness and mental depression. Such laments and ailments however, were often suppressed and seen as sinful, an obstacle to their calling to save the lost souls around them. As Mrs. Mills wrote, “The want of civilised, or the want of Christian society, the want of many precious ordinances I feel much; but when I put them in the balance with the wants of the souls around me, and the claims of my Saviour, the latter preponderate.”<sup>37</sup>

32 Diane Langmore, “The object lesson of a civilised, Christian home,” in *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha MacIntyre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 84–94, p. 86.

33 Mills, Upolu, to her sister, 24 June 1836, in Murray, “Memoirs of Mrs. Mills,” p. 178.

34 Mills, Upolu, to her brother, 25 September 1836, in Murray, “Memoirs of Mrs. Mills,” p. 210.

35 Erysipelas is a type of skin infection with symptoms such as blisters, fever, shaking and chills.

36 Dropsy is characterised by swelling of the body caused by a build-up of fluids in the body cavity due to internal organ failure. It is caused by exposure to poor water conditions, excessive use of salt and improper diet.

37 Mills, Upolu, to her brother, 25 September 1836.

In addition to their predicament was the increasing burden of both domestic and mission duties. Missionary wives were often regarded as “self-sacrificial helpmates” to the pastoral endeavours of men.<sup>38</sup> Their ongoing responsibilities included the instruction of village girls and women, as well as their customary household tasks. As their schools grew in number, the latter became increasingly burdensome. Servants and nannies were thus employed to attend to their domestic chores like washing, ironing and child care. Although they complained about Samoan women’s lack of knowledge about domestic work, this was an option they had to choose in order to commit time to their schools.

Furthermore, missionary wives were in constant worry over their children’s intellectual and spiritual development. Many were anxious about their education, as well as their spiritual wellbeing in a “pagan” environment.<sup>39</sup> Missionaries’ children were often vulnerable to illnesses in the tropics and there was the constant fear that if their children died, their souls would not be saved. Hence they were vigilant in observing signs of spiritual rebirth in their children. Mrs. Mills wrote of her son, “Since the end of March our dear William has been ill, and many a pang have I felt, as well as many a tear I have shed, chiefly on account of his soul. I have not yet had the evidence that he is born again, and this is the reason of my distress.”<sup>40</sup> She also wrote of her children, “They seem to me so far behind what children of their age are at home and this is one reason why I am so anxious they should be where they are likely to improve more rapidly.”<sup>41</sup> According to Murray such anxieties were common among missionary wives. Many feared that Samoa was not a place to raise their children, for fear of contamination. Murray wrote, “If they are to be saved from moral contamination, and fitted for positions of usefulness and respectability in life, the question of their removal to a civilised land must be entertained.”<sup>42</sup>

Thus on 2 December 1846, ten years after many of these women settled in Samoa, the mission ship the *John Williams* on its return voyage to England, witnessed a kind of a mass “evacuation” of many of the missionaries’ children. The farewell was a sad occasion and many wrote about the intense sorrow they felt when having to part with their children. Murray wrote,

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38 Sharon W. Tiffany, “Introduction: feminist perceptions in anthropology,” in *Rethinking Women’s Roles: Perspectives from the Pacific*, ed. Denise O’Brien and Sharon W. Tiffany, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 1–12, p. 10.

39 These concerns were often shared in “maternal meetings” where the wives discussed and prayed over their children’s early conversion to God. A special hour was also dedicated to the supplication of their children. Mrs. Day wrote to her son that “At our last maternal meeting all the eldest children were mentioned in a special manner for early conversion to God, and you my darling Benjamin are one of them. Our hour for that purpose is every Tuesday night any time from seven to nine.” See Mrs. William Day, Upolu, to her son, July 7, 1844, in Day, *The Domestic Correspondence of the Rev. William Day and His Family*, p. 70.

40 Mills, Personal Journal, 12 May 1846, in Murray, “Memoirs of Mrs. Mills,” p. 371.

41 Mills, Upolu, to her sister, 3 June 1845, in Murray, “Memoirs of Mrs. Mills,” p. 290.

42 Murray, “Memoirs of Mrs. Mills,” p. 290.

And the nature of that scene, only they who have passed through it can fully understand. Oh! The anguish of the parting moment! The writer has had personal experience of it; and he has been a sympathising witness of the scenes he describes on many occasions. In as far as his experience goes, there is but one thing that inflicts a deeper wound—viz., separation by death. And when the sad crisis is past, when the last fond words have been spoken, the last embrace given, the last lingering looks exchanged, and the ship has stood away out to sea, and been watched till all trace of it has been lost in the distance – what then! Ah! What then? <sup>43</sup>

Tragically many of these missionaries and their wives never saw their children again. Ironically some of the children died in England soon after.

Missionary ideas of physical and moral contamination were thus a major factor in the “evacuation” of their children. It must be noted that many of them came with a perception of the Pacific not as “a paradise” where “noble savages” live in perpetual harmony as popularised by eighteenth-century voyage accounts,<sup>44</sup> but as a place of savagery and sexuality which needed to be rescued from evil customs and practices. Exposing their innocent children to this world was thus seen as detrimental to their physical and spiritual growth.

Overall, the idealised project of domesticity was clear in the efforts of early missionaries and their wives. However, there was much paradox and poignancy in this project. The portrayal of missionary wives as ideal mothers and wives was often hampered by local conditions that made their early experiences extremely dangerous and uncomfortable. Their discomfort with the open *fale* reflects a clash of ideals about domesticity. This was further complicated by the employment of servants and nannies to perform their domestic duties, and by sending their children back “home.” As they taught Samoan women how to become proper wives to their husbands and proper mothers to their children, they themselves were living very different lives, often as full time teachers. This paradox continued with the establishment of more formal education for the wives of Samoan students at Mālua Seminary in 1844 and for girls at Papauta boarding school in 1892.

43 Ibid., p. 405.

44 Refer to Serge Tcherkézoff, *First Contacts in Polynesia: The Samoan Case (1722–1848) Western Misunderstandings about Sexuality and Divinity*, Canberra/Christchurch: The Journal of Pacific History/MacMillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 2004; Margaret Jolly, “Desire, difference and disease: sexual and venereal exchanges on Cook’s Voyages in the Pacific,” in *Exchanges: Cross-cultural Encounters in Australia and the Pacific*, ed. Ross Gibson, Sydney: Museum of Sydney/Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1996, pp. 187–217; Jolly and Lenore Manderson, “Introduction: sites of desire/economies of pleasure in Asia and the Pacific,” in *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 1–26; Margaret Jolly, “Imagining Oceania: indigenous and foreign representations of a sea of islands,” in *The Contemporary Pacific* 19(2) (2007): 508–45; Margaret Jolly, Serge Tcherkézoff and Darrell Tryon (eds), *Oceanic Encounters: Exchange, Desire, Violence*, Canberra: ANU E Press, 2009, online: <http://press.anu.edu.au?p=60461>, accessed 1 July 2014.



## Malua and Papauta: Shifting boundaries of domesticity

The establishment of Mālua was a strategic move to extend mission influence by providing a pastor and a wife for each village in the country. In Samoa, villages were autonomous, and thus the local context demanded that each village had its own congregation with its own missionary and wife. This meant that the initial establishment of mission stations which incorporated several villages and districts was doomed to fail. Mālua was thus set up to cater for the increasing need for trained pastors. The hope was that in a restricted environment, young Samoan men and their wives would be moulded into Victorian models of the perfect gentleman and lady, to be imitated by their Samoan counterparts in the villages.

The architecture and design of Mālua was constructed in order to serve this purpose, instilling English ideals of a civilised community. The compound was a replica of an English village, with limestone cottages lined in perfect order, surrounded with gardens and rolling green lawns enclosed with finely trimmed hedges. Samoan students and their families were introduced into a novel way of life, living in box-like cottages with a strict daily routine under the watchful eyes of missionaries. Missionaries and their wives lived in larger buildings with the trappings of an English home. Mālua was now a striking contrast to life back in the villages. No longer exposed to village life, wives of missionaries at Mālua felt more comfortable in their private dwellings away from open *fale*. Coincidentally, missionaries and their wives in the villages were also living in European-styled houses. Many of the missionary wives expressed elation at finally moving into their newly built limestone houses. The discomfort they once felt due to the lack of privacy of Samoan *fale* was now replaced by the comfort and security of their walled-up homes. The stage was now closed off and the foreign example of the large European home with huge limestone walls and glass windows now loomed large in the village.

The LMS Samoan mission saw the importance of training the wives of students at Mālua and in 1864, passed a resolution to give priority to the entrance of married couples rather than single men. In the words of missionary George Turner, "If we have the choice of two we reject the single man, and admit the married couple, for the simple reason that the wife needs education as well as her husband and, when instructed, is a great blessing to her sex in the village where he may be called to labor."<sup>45</sup> Missionary wives were thus responsible for the training of students' wives. The basic curriculum consisted of literacy,

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45 George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, London: John Snow, 1861, p. 126.

arithmetic, biblical instruction, needle work, geography and astronomy.<sup>46</sup> The expanded curriculum reflects not just domestic work but the more expanded role of pastors' wives as teachers to women in the local village. The establishment of Mālua was a great success and, by the end of the nineteenth century, the clergy in Samoa was largely indigenous. Graduates of Mālua and their wives took over the roles of foreign missionaries and their wives in villages altering the outlook of the mission. Foreign missionaries were still at the helm, but the day to day activities of the Church in villages were now mainly in the hands of Samoan teachers and their wives. Consequently, the localisation of the Church and the indigenisation of the clergy meant that evangelisation was now deeply ingrained in Samoan local customs and suffused with local structures and practices. This was deeply distressing for the missionaries as they complained about the persistence of heathen practices after decades of efforts to transform the Samoans. Missionary John Marriot for example wrote in a published sermon in the Samoan Church magazine *O le Sulu Samoa*, "I am shocked to hear various stories which show that many old practices are still alive, they are bad and they should be called pagan practices."<sup>47</sup> Then Marriot went on to condemn practices such as the adoption of children, of girls being prepared as *taupou* and couples not being properly married or looking after their children. Moreover, he suggested that their *fale* should have rooms; that boys and girls should sleep separately and that it was a shameful thing for them to sleep together. From these later published accounts, we see that the ideals propagated by missionaries often fell on deaf ears and that Samoan ideas about kinship and the roles of women endured for decades. Marriot's suggestion for houses to be partitioned off with closed rooms directly conflicted with the open and extended nature of the Samoan *āiga*, as embodied in the openness of the *fale*.

In 1887, a commission led by Sir Albert Spicer on behalf of the LMS directors visited Samoa where he noted a concern about the lack of progress in the project of evangelisation. Of particular concern was the state of Samoan women. As Hilda E.A. Small observed, "Although in Mālua the wives of the students were being taught, the women of the villages were ignorant and degraded."<sup>48</sup> On his return to London Spicer urged the directors to establish a college for the formal training of Samoan girls in the Christian life. Valesca Schultze and Elizabeth Moore, two single missionary women, then took on the task of establishing these inaugural schools for girls in Samoa. Papauta Girls' School was established

46 Valerie Margaret Carson, "The Samoan mission seminary 1844–1884: a study of the means of furnishing teachers in Samoa for educational and religious outreach by the London Missionary Society members in the nineteenth century," M.A. thesis, Wellington: Victoria University, 1983, pp. 117–21.

47 *O le Sulu Samoa*, July 1896, p.231. (I have used my own translation of the sermon excerpt here.)

48 Hilda E.A. Small, *Papauta: The Inland Rock, 1892–1967*, Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1967, p. 9.

in 1892 in Upolu and Atauloma Girls' School in 1900 in Tutuila. The vision of the founders of these schools can be summed up in the words of the German missionary woman Valesca Schultze, who wrote in 1892,

I see a day in the distance when there will be a new generation of Samoan mothers, who will have cast behind them those bad, low and degrading customs, whose highest ambition will be to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of Christ, and so be the means of raising the whole Samoan nation to a higher and purer standard of Christian life.<sup>49</sup>

The establishment of Papauta and Atauloma saw a more ambitious approach to educating local women in a much more confined and controlled environment. The schools provided a new pattern of living for girls but continued to propagate the domestic emphasis on women as mothers and wives in order to "raise" the Samoan nation. The range of subjects taught included arithmetic, hygiene, physiology, composition, music and singing, needle work, craft-making and English.<sup>50</sup> Young girls were taken from the villages to be trained with the purpose of one day becoming role models in local villages. Often the first educated women in villages were the graduates of Papauta and because of this, they "were sought after as wives for aspiring pastors and teachers."<sup>51</sup> In 1925, the Samoan District Committee encouraged single students of Mālua to find wives at Papauta.<sup>52</sup> Thus Papauta eventually became a breeding ground for wives of Samoan pastors. More than 70 percent of pastors' wives from the late nineteenth to the latter half of the twentieth century were ex-students of Papauta.<sup>53</sup> This created a special relationship between these institutions which is summed up in the words of a song composed by Mālua students for the centenary of Papauta in 1992. I have translated the first verse here:

The kingfisher flies, but continually yearns for the river,  
 Just like Papauta, which was born out of Mālua.  
 That is why my memory of you will never fade,  
 I have come to celebrate with you.  
 Ladies of the Rock, my darling,  
 Out of my rib you were created by God.  
 Forget not Jerusalem, the land where our covenant was made.

49 Valesca Schultze, *Report of Female Education*, South Sea Records, 1894, cited in Elizabeth Roach, "From English mission to Samoan congregation," Ph.D. dissertation, New York: Columbia University, 1984, p. 96.

50 Evelyn Downs, *Daughters of the Islands*, London: the Livingstone Press, 1944, p. 73.

51 Charles Forman, "Sing to the Lord a new song: women in the churches of Oceania," in *Rethinking Women's Role: Perspectives from the Pacific*, ed. Denise O'Brien and Sharon W. Tiffany, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 153–72, p. 159.

52 Samoa District Committee, Minutes of Meeting, London Missionary Society (LMS), May 20–30, 1925, London Missionary Society Administrative Records (1851–1973), microfilmed by the Pacific Manuscript Bureau, Canberra: The Australian National University, PMB 1278.

53 Fineaso T. Samuelo Faalafi, "An historical survey of the changing role and status of Samoan women," B.D. thesis, Suva: Pacific Theological College, 1982, p. 50.

The words of the song reflect not just the close bond between the two schools, but the emphasis on Papauta as a place where girls were trained for the purpose of becoming suitable wives for Samoan pastors. With this strong emphasis in mind however, a significant paradox was evident in the introduction of a new figure; the single and unmarried missionary woman in the form of its founders, Ms Schultz and Ms Moore. As the establishment of Papauta and Atauloma aimed at training future wives and mothers, paradoxically these missionary women portrayed a vastly different idea of woman as single, independent and professional.

Another significant change in the education of girls was also apparent in Papauta with the incorporation of traditional skills and knowledge. An example was the inclusion of “weaving mats and baskets, sewing thatch or making coconut leaf blinds for the Samoan dormitories, stamping bark cloth, carving new patterns, or cutting buttons and spoons from coconut shell.”<sup>54</sup> The girls were also involved in gardening and fishing expeditions, activities to which they were accustomed in village life and in their homes. In compliance with Samoan custom, men were also employed to prepare and cook their food. However, girls were also taught cooking and baking using European methods.<sup>55</sup> The change in curriculum at Papauta was perhaps due to the influence of Samoan pastors and their wives who came to dominate the mission church at the time as well as a change in the approach of European missionaries who now saw the importance of maintaining traditional knowledge and skills.

A far more important development in Papauta was the training of girls in feminised professions such as teachers, nurses and secretaries. In 1919 the Medical Department of Samoa commenced the training of nurses with girls from Papauta.<sup>56</sup> In May 1923, three girls from Papauta entered Apia Hospital as probationers. At the same time, girls at Atauloma underwent a similar program.<sup>57</sup> Coinciding with the setting up of women’s health committees in the 1930s, Papauta was used as a base for work amongst village women and therefore organised welfare services through the establishment of women’s health committees.<sup>58</sup> In 1938, the Educational Department of Samoa also established Samoa’s Teachers’ College with girls from Papauta amongst its founding students.<sup>59</sup> By the mid-twentieth century, typing and shorthand became popular subjects at Papauta, with many of its graduates leading the way as employed typists and secretaries

54 Downs, *Daughters of the Islands*, p. 30.

55 In contemporary Samoa, men still cook in the traditional way in outdoor kitchens but with the introduction of gas stoves and electric ovens, women are now doing lighter cooking inside the houses. Traditionally all meals were cooked in outdoor ovens.

56 Samoa District Committee, Minutes of Meeting, LMS, 3–12 June 1919.

57 Samoa District Committee, Minutes of Meeting, LMS, 21 May 1923.

58 Norman Goodal, *A History of the London Missionary Society, 1895–1945*, London: Oxford University Press, 1954, p. 363.

59 Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, *Tama’ita’i Samoa: Their Stories*, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1998, p. 68.

in government and church departments.<sup>60</sup> Papauta reached the height of its influence between the 1920s and the 1940s. The school was well respected and highly regarded, and it was considered an honour for many Samoan families to have a girl from their family educated there. Papauta thus ushered in a new type of woman in Samoa; one who was well educated, highly skilled and able to work professionally. The school allowed women opportunities in the workforce, and to have a career, earning a living on their own, something that was quite a novelty for Samoan women.

But these women would have a far greater impact on women at the village level where, as wives of pastors they were influential in the setting up of women's fellowships and health committees. These women's groups led to the amalgamation of women in the village blurring the distinction between sisters and wives. As mentioned, Samoan women as sisters or *feagaiga* held a highly esteemed status in the social organisation of *auauma* vis-à-vis their brother's wives. This amalgamation however, led to the increasing influence of wives of pastors in the village who became leaders of these groups, and the gradual rise of the wives of chiefs who were now able to sit together with the sisters of the village. The high status of women as sisters was thus challenged and the brother-sister relationship which was so important to the traditional structure of Samoan society was now confronted by the increasingly dominant relationship of husband and wife.

Overall, the establishment of formal institutions like Mālua in 1844 and Papauta and Atauloma in the late nineteenth century continued to exemplify the paradox in the project of domesticity. The shift from the homes of missionaries as places of learning to seminaries and boarding schools for girls, saw the shift of missionary wives from a private to a public sphere reflecting a shifting image of the missionary woman not purely as a wife and mother, but as a professional woman. The introduction of single missionaries at Papauta and Atauloma continued to further this dramatic move to a missionary woman as an independent person working largely in the public sphere. As these institutions continued to ostensibly propagate the dominant emphasis on woman in the domestic sphere, paradoxically these single missionary women were exemplifying a very different idea of "woman." Ironically, Atauloma was eventually closed and is now just a relic of LMS activities, while Papauta is on the verge of collapsing as Samoan women today no longer seek to be trained as wives or to confine themselves to feminine occupations but rather aspire to become independent professional women in the public sphere.<sup>61</sup>

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60 Forman, "Sing to the Lord a new song," p. 159.

61 Papauta is seen today as old fashioned and too restricted to a range of feminine professions. Samoan women are now venturing into occupations which were once considered for men alone. Public education thus provides

## Conclusion

The evangelisation of Samoa by the LMS saw European missionaries and their wives setting particular boundaries about domesticity and the roles of women. These boundaries were promoted in their propagation of the nucleated idea of the family exclusively as father, mother and their children, as well as in the clear separation of the roles of wives from husbands and males from females; the domestic was seen as feminine and the sphere of women, while the public was seen as masculine and the sphere of men. Such boundaries however clashed with Samoan ideas about domesticity and in particular the status and roles of women. In Samoa, the more expanded view of the family and the expansiveness of the roles and status of women blurred the boundaries between what is considered domestic and public in the West. This is embodied in the openness of the Samoan *fale* which reflects the extended notion of the family and the relational nature of the Samoan person. Thus, the missionaries' project to uplift Samoan women was misplaced in the sense that Samoan women were already highly valued and held esteemed status. In Samoa, gender roles were complementary and equal in terms of power and status. Women's expansive roles meant that they were not confined to a domestic sphere or merely as wives, even though as wives, they still held influential power. However, the missionaries' continual stress on the role of women in the domestic sphere challenged the high valuation of women as sisters and as keepers of the covenant, resulting in the declining emphasis on the brother-sister relationship and the rise in importance of the husband-wife relationship.

The clash in these opposing ideas was evident from the start by the discomfort felt by missionary wives in the openness of the Samoan *fale* and their later elation at having finally moved to the comfort and privacy of mission houses. With the construction of European-styled houses and the design of Mālua, missionary wives continued to propagate these domestic boundaries even as their portrayal of the ideal woman as wife and mother was suffused with many paradoxes, such as sending their children back to England and the employment of nannies and servants to take care of their own domestic duties.

Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, the project to transform Samoan ideas about domesticity and to uplift Samoan women was a major disappointment for the mission. But the failure of the Samoans to emulate such models was perhaps as much due to the paradoxes inherent in the lives of missionary wives as to the different values Samoans held dear in their own traditions and culture. The localisation of the Church and the indigenisation of the clergy have shown

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for these and thus the decline of such institutions. It is also interesting to note that these institutions are no longer places where prospective pastors find spouses, as many students enter the seminary already married. And in cases where students are single, they are no longer pressured to find a suitable wife at these schools.



the agency of Samoans in contesting foreign ideas. This is also clear in the role of Samoan women in Christian conversion, a fact that has largely been ignored in the history of conversion in Samoa. But, as we have seen, their collectivity as an influential and powerful social organisation was crucial in the conversion of women. Hence, there was a confluence between women's collective organisation in Samoan culture and in Christianity. This convergence not only exemplified the agency of Samoan women in collective conversion, but also in contesting the domestic ideals of missionaries.<sup>62</sup>

Significant changes were seen in the twentieth century with the introduction of single missionary women and the training of girls in feminised professions at Papauta and Atauloma. Although the schools were geared largely towards the training of women in domestic duties as wives and mothers, paradoxically they paved the way for women to forge independent careers in the public sphere and eventually opened the gateway for them to enter the masculine professions of men. The image of an independent woman was thus a significant change for women in Samoa. But a far more significant impact was seen in the role these schools had on the traditional status of women in the village particularly with the setting up of women's fellowships and health committees, which not only blurred the distinction between the status of sisters and wives, but challenged the power of the institution of the *aualuma* in the hierarchy of the village.

In contemporary Samoa, these contesting ideas about domesticity and the roles and status of women are continually negotiated by Samoans. Contrasting notions about the person, kinship and gender continue to be embodied in the persistence of the architectural design of the open *fale*, as well as the increasing presence of the enclosed structure of European houses. It is interesting that in Samoa today both these architectural forms and designs continue to co-exist reflecting how Samoans are continually negotiating between these divergent models (See Figures 29 and 30). With the rapid influence of modernisation however, traditional ideas about domesticity, gender and personhood are today being challenged more than ever by the more nucleated idea of domesticity and individuated notions of person derived from the West.

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62 This is a crucial point since in many other parts of the Pacific, no such female collectivities existed prior to the formation of Christian women's fellowship particularly in the Western Pacific. Except in places where matrilineal clans or lineages prevailed, most collectivities were extremely masculine. In the history of the Samoan London Mission Society missionary wives in the Western Pacific, the Christian women's fellowship was one of the legacies of their work, particularly in places like Papua New Guinea where these fellowships still play an active role in the Church. See Margaret Jolly, "Epilogue," in *Women's Groups and Everyday Modernity in Melanesia*, ed. Bronwen Douglas, *Oceania* (Special Issue), 74(1–2) (2003): 134–47; see also Latu Latai, "*E Au le Ina'ilau a Tamaitai: the history of Samoan missionary wives in the evangelisation of Papua New Guinea*," M.Th. thesis, Suva: Pacific Theological College, 2005.



**Figure 29. An old Samoan *fale* that still stands and is used today**

Source: Multimedia Unit, National University of Samoa.



**Figure 30. A Samoan *fale* that has been enclosed in European style**

Source: Photographer Anita Latai, 2013.

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# 12. Paradoxical Intimacies: The Christian Creation of the Huli Domestic Sphere

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## Introduction

It is tempting to imagine that the Christian missionisation project in the Pacific is a *fait accompli*—that is, that the missionary aims of conversion, and the consequent transformations of Pacific families and subjectivities, are not only events of the past, but also that Christianity itself was long ago indigenised and now is wholly something of the Pacific, not something that should be thought of as an external imposition. However, *conversion* is a term and process that encompasses a multiplicity of embodied and relational transformations. More than a matter of inner subjective faith, it also entails manifestations of one's religiosity—daily externalisations or practices that evidence (to others and to oneself) one's Christian identity. And, as is discussed in this chapter, such practices can, long after a community's conversion, continue to be a source of ambivalence and frustration—that is, they can continue to feel like external impositions—leading some individuals to see the organisation of their daily lives as a site of imperfection and as an indication of the failure to achieve a complete Christian identity. Specifically, this chapter discusses the ongoing painful paradoxes of spousal co-residence or co-habitation—the expectation that properly Christian spouses should live together in the same house—among the Huli of Papua New Guinea.

One way of framing this issue is to say that Christian missionaries among the Huli in the 1950s set out to create a Huli domestic sphere where, arguably, there previously was not one, or at least not one that was easily legible to colonial administrators, missionaries, census takers, or even anthropologists, who have wrestled productively and critically with how to define both “the household” as a bounded, countable unit and “the domestic sphere” as a particular kind of gendered social space. Pre-colonial Huli spatial organisation of spouses and their offspring posed a problem to Christian missionaries' notions of family and, conversely, the Christian imperative of conjugal co-residence generated problems that Huli couples continue to grapple with. In particular, I discuss

three inter-related problems posed by this imperative: “sexual pollution”—that is, the corporeal hazards of excessive spousal proximity; male anxieties about “being known too well” by one’s wife; and domestic violence.

## Christianity and spousal co-residence

The churches that have historically had the most adherents among the Huli—the Catholic Church, the United Church (formerly the Methodists), and the Evangelical Church of Papua (formerly the Asia Pacific Christian Mission)—all established their missions in the Tari area of Southern Highlands Province (now Hela Province) in the late 1950s or early 1960s, and they continue, along with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to have the most members, with the Catholic Church and the United Church being the most prominent and well-established. Although these churches differed theologically in many respects, they shared two specific, concrete objectives when it came to transforming the nature of Huli marriage: bringing polygyny to an end and promoting the adoption of spousal co-residence or co-habitation.

I should note that I have not carried out archival or oral history research about the early missions or former expatriate missionaries. Thus, I cannot speak to how the different missions went about achieving these objectives, the ways in which they might have collaborated or competed in trying to realise these aims, or how they might have differently understood and discursively represented the spousal relations and domestic forms they initially encountered. Rather, my research is based on ethnographic methods—including surveys, interviews with married men and women, and participant observation in a wide range of households—and my assertions derive from the fact that among Huli Christians (which would, in fact, be most Huli) these two interventions into the household (spousal co-residence and having only one wife at a time) are the ones that continue to be troublesome issues still much mulled over by many married couples.

On a global level, more scholarly attention has been paid to the practice of polygyny, which has perhaps seemed more exotic to Western scholars and has thus inspired more of a “will to know,” than to the practice of deliberate conjugal residential separation. Indeed, in anthropology, there is no simple gloss for the latter practice, and the analytical focus tends to be on gender separation or “sexual pollution” beliefs and practices. Moreover, the former is more often discursively figured as a problem, particularly in the current era when polygyny is often associated with HIV in the popular and public health imagination as well as with male dominance and male sexual privilege. Paradoxically, it is the issue of spousal co-habitation—or how spouses are supposed to *spatially* and *architecturally* arrange their conjugal lives—that has posed more of a



predicament for Huli couples (which is not to say that polygyny is not also a difficult predicament). That this issue is more prominent than concerns over polygyny is largely due to the fact that given the continual inflation and monetisation of bridewealth very few Huli men can actually afford to become polygynous.<sup>1</sup> However, *all* Huli married couples must decide whether they will share a house or whether they will maintain separate residences. And, this is how it is usually framed: as a decision that must be made and that typically requires consultation and discussion (though of course urban-based couples often have no choice given the shortage and expense of housing). Although there are certainly Huli couples who can each unproblematically assume of the other that living together is the “normal” and expected thing to do, and probably still couples, though far fewer of them, who can each unproblematically assume of the other that living separately is the best option, for many Huli the decision about marital residence represents a fork in the road where one path must be chosen. It is a decision shaped by myriad factors: the domestic arrangements that one’s parents had; specific pedagogical and admonitory messages imparted by parents, aunts, uncles and already married peers; how one met one’s spouse-to-be and how one assesses that relationship (i.e. modern and romantic or more traditional); and, of course, one’s Christian identity and what one believes is necessary for practising and manifesting that identity.

And, although the question of one house or two is the first and most fundamental one that has to be faced, each choice sets in motion an array of other questions and practices to be negotiated. For example, if a couple lives separately, how often should the husband come visit his wife in her house? When spouses choose residential separation, their houses may be quite distant from each other, and it is the husband who does the visiting unless he has specifically asked his wife to bring something to his house (a pig, an item of clothing he left with her to wash). Thus, will his visits be weekly, daily, twice daily? Will he join his wife for dinner and expect her to cook for him? If so, how often? Traditionally, Huli men cooked for themselves and, indeed, would not accept food from the hands of women,<sup>2</sup> so whether or how often a wife cooks for her husband is another related issue that must be negotiated. Also, how much freedom will he give her in shaping the composition of her household—may she invite her unmarried

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1 Holly Wardlow, *Wayward Women: Sexuality and Agency in a New Guinea Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006; Wardlow, “All’s fair when love is war: romantic passion and companionate marriage among the Huli of Papua New Guinea,” in *Modern Loves: the Anthropology of Romantic Courtship and Companionate Marriage*, ed. Jennifer S. Hirsch and Holly Wardlow, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006, pp. 51–77; Wardlow, “Whip him in the head with a stick!”: marriage, male infidelity, and female confrontation among the Huli,” in *The Secret: Love, Marriage, and HIV*, ed. Jennifer S. Hirsch, Holly Wardlow, Daniel Jordan Smith, Harriet M. Phinney, Shanti Parikh and Constance A. Nathanson, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2010, pp. 136–67.

2 Robert M. Glasse, *Huli of Papua: A Cognatic Descent System*, Paris: Mouton & Co., 1968; Stephen Frankel, “I am dying of man,” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 4 (1980) 95–117; Glasse, *The Huli Response to Illness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

or divorced sisters and cousins to live with her, or should this be prohibited? Conversely, if they decide to share a house, will they still maintain separate rooms? Will they divide the house into two sides, with one for the husband and one for his wife and young children? Will he continue to maintain a separate residence elsewhere, or spend much of his time in the clan men's house, or not?

These questions can be daunting for newly married couples, as can the later consequences of the choices they make, particularly since spousal co-residence continues to be described as "not Huli custom" and as inherently problematic. In the pre-colonial past not only did husbands and wives live separately, men often maintained multiple residences as part of a political-economic strategy of preserving social ties with a wide range of maternal and paternal kin and of exercising claims to many areas of land on different clan territories. Moreover, as Robert Glasse and Bryant Allen have shown,<sup>3</sup> Huli men tended to be highly mobile: they moved from one house on one clan territory to another house on another clan territory every few days or weeks; they were often mobile for purposes of trade, warfare or ritual; they resided for periods of time with other men in clan men's houses; and at other times they resided in their own houses, by themselves or with older sons. And there are some older men who still prefer to live in this highly peripatetic way: they keep a pot and spoon in each house, or carry these and a few items of clothing with them, and regularly move between different houses and territories, usually keeping their most important belongings (for example, the wigs made of human hair for which the Huli are so famous) in the safety of a clan men's house. Never, however, did they reside with their wives.

Thus, it is not surprising that older women in my various interview samples, whether from 1990s or 2000s, have typically responded, when asked about the nature of their relationship with their husband, "I don't know. I never saw him," or "I only saw him when he came to give me more children" (that is, he came to have sex), or "I only saw him when he came to take my pigs for a compensation payment" or, more happily, "I only saw him when he came to give me some pork from a feast he had attended." One should not necessarily take these assertions as transparent statements of fact; they can also be idioms for talking about the emotionally distant or strained quality of a relationship, and sometimes they are exaggerated performances intended to evoke laughter from other women. Nevertheless, these statements do correspond to older men's assertions about their highly mobile lives, and their lack of belonging to a single, intransitory domestic sphere.

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3 Bryant Allen, "At your own risk: studying Huli residency," in *Papua Borderlands: Huli, Duna and Ipili Perspectives on the Papua New Guinea Highlands*, ed. Aletta Biersack, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995, pp. 141–72.

Women, for their part, resided in a house their husband had built for them, often with the husband's mother, unmarried sisters, or their young children and not-yet-married daughters. This arrangement constitutes a kind of domestic sphere, but one in which the nucleus is composed of women and children, while men move about like electrons, forging bonds here one day, forging bonds there another day, and so on. From the perspective of an early missionary it could easily have seemed that there was no domestic sphere, or at least not one that was inhabited in any robust way by men. Thus, an initial *governmental* and *moral* project for Christian missionaries was to create a Huli domestic sphere that included an authoritative, fixed adult masculine presence. From a governmental perspective, a normalised household with a male head not only accorded with what expatriate missionaries found familiar and proper, but was also more legible, and more easily monitored and intervened in.

However, the project of creating the conjugally co-habiting Huli domestic sphere was also a moral undertaking intended to make Huli marriages conform to the ideal Euro-Australian domestic arrangements that missionaries considered both superior and necessary for creating properly Christian gender relations.<sup>4</sup> As Adele Perry notes of Christian missionary interventions into First Nations people's domestic arrangements in the Canadian colonial context, household organisation—indeed, the architecture of the housing itself—was thought of by missionaries as “an animate social force that was generative of proper gender roles, work habits, and domestic ways.”<sup>5</sup> Perry also discusses the ways in which mobility, and lack of fixed abode, was associated with primitiveness in the missionary imagination; thus, for example, she notes a missionary proposal to build a sawmill in order to supply “these nomads with building material, wherewith to erect houses and other buildings, and thus encourage them to settle down to domestic life.”<sup>6</sup>

In the Huli context, the fixed and settled nuclear family—with parents and children all living, praying, and attending church together—was considered the best suited for socialising children into the daily practices of being Christian and thereby transmitting Christian faith and its habitus from one generation to the

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4 See also Margaret Jolly, “Sacred spaces: churches, men's houses and households in South Pentecost, Vanuatu,” in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 213–35; Jolly, “Material and immaterial relations: gender, rank and Christianity in Vanuatu,” in *The Scope of Anthropology: Maurice Godelier's Work in Context*, ed. Laurent Dousset and Serge Tcherkézoff, New York: Berghahn Books, 2012, pp. 110–54; Diane Langmore, “The object lesson of a civilised, Christian home,” in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 84–94; cf. John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1997.

5 Adele Perry, “From ‘the hot-bed of vice’ to the ‘good and well-ordered Christian home’: first nations housing and reform in nineteenth-century British Columbia,” *Ethnohistory* 50(4) (2003): 587–610, p. 587.

6 Perry, “From ‘the hot-bed of vice,’” p. 597.

next. Moreover, because the Catholic Church was the first and best-established mission among the Huli, it is important to remember that the Catholic Church elevates the institution of marriage to a sacrament, citing the biblical verses John 2:1–11 about Jesus turning water into wine at a critical moment during a wedding at Cana. From this perspective, marriage is more than a social institution; it confers sanctifying grace on both spouses, and it is a symbol and manifestation of the divine union between Christ, the Bridegroom, and His Church, the Bride. Thus, carrying out marriage properly constitutes participation in the divine life of God Himself. Finally, if missionary discourse today is reflective of past perceptions and judgements, it is likely that Christian missionaries found Huli marriages affectively deficient and, in particular, insufficiently companionate, and it was probably hoped that co-residence, paired with Christian conversion, would eventually bring about more emotionally intimate marital relations.<sup>7</sup>

Huli people have taken this moral project to heart, even as they continue to find it difficult to put into practice. The passage in the Bible that I have most often heard cited by Huli men and women as evidence that God wants Christian spouses to live together is Matthew 19:4–6:

Haven't you read, he replied, that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.

In point of fact, this verse is Jesus' response to what seems to be a baiting question from some Pharisees about the permissibility of divorce and, in particular, under what circumstances it is justified and why Moses would have made a provision for divorce if God was so opposed to it, as Jesus seems to suggest. In other words, the verse is not addressing married couples' residential proximity; rather, it responds to the question of whether wives can be set aside and abandoned if a man wants to marry a substitute wife. However, I have most often heard Huli men and women invoke this verse not to condemn divorce, but rather to talk about conjugal co-habitation as the properly Christian way to conduct marriage and construct households. This usage leads me to surmise that expatriate Christian missionaries among the Huli deployed this verse to this purpose, and that Huli adherents subsequently replicated this interpretation, seeing it as proof that God wants married couples to live in one house.

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7 Wardlow "All's fair when love is war"; Wardlow, "Whip him in the head with a stick!"; Wardlow, "The task of the HIV translator: transforming global AIDS knowledge in an awareness workshop," *Medical Anthropology* 31(5) (2012): 404–19.

## Spousal co-habitation as *askesis*, or ethical practice

I have suggested that the above verse from Matthew has been interpreted and mobilised in the Huli context in a way that seems different from, but not antithetical to, its original biblical intent. It must be acknowledged, however, that this verse does, in fact, say much more than that men should not casually set aside one wife for another. For one, it says that men should leave their natal families, which perhaps suggests an argument for neolocal spousal co-residence. More significantly, it metaphorically asserts that a man's emotional and pragmatic loyalties should lie with his wife. It also uses evocative language about fleshly union to emphasise that married couples are no longer lone monads in the world (not that they ever were in traditional Huli conceptualisations of personhood), but should instead think of themselves as divinely bound to each other. Put succinctly, the verse suggests that marriage is much more than a social institution and should be approached as a moral undertaking or spiritual project.

This particular Bible verse has gained much traction in the Huli imagination, perhaps in part because the idea that marriage is a moral project—or at least a very specific kind of relationship that requires adherence to practices that have larger social or even cosmological ramifications—has affinities with Huli constructions of marriage (even as their actual practices depart markedly from missionary visions of wives as helpmeets of husbands). Thus, for example, the practice of spousal residential separation was never only about men's strategies for keeping up political ties and claims to land. It was always also about individual, social and territorial or environmental health and vitality. As Nicole Haley notes, the cultural groups in this region of Papua New Guinea “hold to the belief that moral behaviour conserves fertile substance, and that immoral behaviour sees it depleted and will ultimately bring about the world's end,”<sup>8</sup> and moral behaviour included the rigorous separation of the genders. Thus, in contrast to Christian missionary notions about the marital project, distance, not proximity, was the key to conducting marriage safely and properly.

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8 Nicole Haley, “Cosmology, morality and resource development: Southern Highlands Province election outcomes and moves to establish a separate Hela Province,” in *Conflict and Resource Development in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, ed. Nicole Haley and Ronald J. May, Canberra: ANU E Press, 2007, pp. 57–68, p. 60, online: <http://eprint.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/ch0511.pdf>, accessed 18 March 2013; see also Chris Ballard, “The centre cannot hold: trade networks and sacred geography in the Papua New Guinea Highlands,” *Archeology Oceania* 29 (1994): 130–48; Gabriele Sturzenhofecker, *Times Enmeshed: Gender, Space, and History among the Duna of Papua New Guinea*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998; Robert M. Glasse, “Time belong Mbingi: religious syncretism and the pacification of the Huli,” in *Papuan Borderlands: Huli, Duna, and Ipili Perspectives on the New Guinea Highlands*, ed. Aletta Biersack, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995, pp. 57–86.

The Huli have long used the management of social space, and especially distanciation, in order to facilitate adherence to moral dictates, called *mana*, and much of this deliberate social engineering of space is directed at controlling covetous desire, whether for things or for people. Key to Huli moral philosophy is that one is far less likely to covet that which one cannot apprehend with one's senses, and perhaps particularly, that which one cannot see or smell.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, one need not see or smell something in order to feel desire for it, but perceptual immediacy and physical proximity can trigger desire, exacerbate it, and make acting on desires much more difficult to resist. Thus, an important way to exert some control over immoral (and potentially cosmologically destructive) action is to shape the socio-material environment in ways that limits sensual apprehension of desirable things. Thus, Huli houses tend to be quite distant from each other, surrounded by deep trenches and tall stands of trees. People walking by cannot see into another family's property or smell them cooking, and people say that this spatial arrangement morally protects both those who live within and without: those who live within are less vulnerable to violations, such as theft; those outside are less vulnerable to dangerous desires that might inspire them to engage in immoral acts. Similarly, that husbands and wives live separately makes it easier to adhere to the *mana* that says that spouses should only have sex on days eleven through fourteen of a wife's menstrual cycle and should abstain from sex during pregnancy and until the child can follow simple instructions such as "go fetch that piece of firewood."

Thus, men live like electrons in continuous orbit in part so that they do not have to rely entirely on willpower and self-discipline to control sexual desire. Huli people say that in the past the carefully constructed socio-moral environment made self-discipline easier. In the idiom that I have heard from men and women for almost twenty years now, "We used to be fenced in, and we were healthy and thrived because we were fenced in. Now, with the coming of roads and stores and markets and towns, we are no longer fenced in." This, I should make clear, is always grimly asserted as a bad thing (although in other conversational contexts roads are consistently spoken of as good and necessary). In other words, one can contain and control desire through the proper habitation of space, and this proper habitation more often is about preserving distance than promoting proximity—whether between spouses, between neighbours, between other cultural groups,<sup>10</sup> or between my eyes and some object I might covet but should not consume. To be clear, what the missionaries were encouraging was an entirely opposite logic: where Huli spatio-moral logic dictated physical separation and emotional distance between spouses, the missionaries called for physical proximity and emotional intimacy. (Moreover, missionaries continue to make this call in the present: the insistence that married couples adhere to

9 Wardlow, *Wayward Women*.

10 Ballard, "The centre cannot hold."



the “B”—be faithful—of the HIV prevention ABC message may sound merely behavioural, but it is not. Rather, there is, I believe, an implicit assumption that marriages in Papua New Guinea, Africa and elsewhere are insufficiently intimate and companionate, and that if they were sufficiently so, HIV would not be as widespread as it is.)

The ambivalence that many Huli married couples continue to feel about marital proximity is reflected in their living arrangements. For example, a survey I conducted in the mid-1990s in order to obtain a sense of prevalence for these opposed ways of spatialising marriage showed that at that time two-thirds of the married men sampled were living with their wife in one house, while one-third were living in their own house and had built a separate house for a wife. This was a very simple survey, and did not filter results according to important variables, such as the age of the men or level of education; however, it did provide a rough sense of what couples were doing. At that time, there seemed to be a trend towards co-residence, with a number of men asserting that when they had to rebuild their house they intended to build one big family house. In 2004, however, I interviewed two married couples who had each been practising conjugal co-residence but had decided to try living in separate residences. Both husbands considered themselves devout Christians, but felt that living together in one house compromised, rather than enabled, their ability to be good Christians because, they said, it caused them to verbally and physically fight. They hoped that living separately would enable them to refrain from unChristian practices, such as swearing at each other, physically injuring each other, and deliberately trying to insult each other and hurt each other’s feelings. They firmly believed that good Christian spouses were supposed to live together in one house, and they cited the verse from the Gospel of Matthew as evidence, but felt they were not capable of it. In sum, my combined interview, participant observation, and survey data all suggest that 1) many couples believe that co-residence is something God wants of Christian spouses, 2) a majority of couples have adopted spousal co-residence, though not all have done this for explicitly or solely religious reasons, 3) nevertheless, not all couples strive for this domestic arrangement, and 4) this arrangement is still largely seen as something introduced, not normalised or ordinary, and it is still spoken of by men in particular, as unnatural and difficult.

Indeed, for a few men, marital co-residence has been undertaken as what could be called a form of *askesis*—that is, following Aristotle and Michel Foucault, a kind of ethical self-work that one undertakes in order to transform the self through embodied practice. According to philosopher Tamar Gendler, Aristotle asserts that a principal way to bring about ethical change in the self so that one’s actions come to be in line with one’s ethical commitments “is to make a

conscious effort to behave in the ways that our commitments dictate, so that these patterns of behavior become familiar and habitual.”<sup>11</sup> Quoting Aristotle, she says,

We learn a craft by producing the same product that we must produce when we have learned it—becoming builders, for example, by building, and harpists by playing the harp. So also, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions. A state of character arises from the repetition of similar activities.... It is not unimportant, then, to acquire one sort of habit or another ... rather, it is very important, indeed all-important.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, the deliberate rehearsal of practices—which may initially feel awkward and alien, but which one has deemed virtuous—can, with repetition over time, enable one to transform one’s acting, and perhaps feeling, self into the desired self of one’s ethical imagination. Some Huli men talk about efforts to achieve harmonious spousal co-habitation in ways that are reminiscent of Aristotle’s privileging of praxis (rather than contemplation or trying to persuade or convert oneself to an ethically desirable objective). In interviews and in informal conversations they spoke of deciding that co-residence was the properly Christian way to organise a household and, having made this commitment, they sought out priests or pastors (and, more recently, counsellors working for *Médicins sans Frontières* and *Population Services International*) in order to learn the required knowledge and skills of companionate, co-habiting marriage. In particular, they spoke of the importance of talk—that is, about learning and practising new ways of speaking to and with a wife. For example, some discussed engaging in deliberate and repeated acts of complimenting a wife, asking for her advice, and praising her skills. In interviews in 2004, a few men laughed at how awkward they initially felt complimenting a wife on her cooking or on how skilfully she divided up food so that everyone felt satisfied. However, as Aristotle suggests, these men said that such practices worked, both in the sense of achieving greater harmony in the domestic sphere and in terms of the men becoming more fluid and adept at these practices. Philosopher and scholar of Aristotle, Jonathan Lear, notes that, “Habits ... do not merely instill a disposition to engage in certain types of behavior; they instill a sensitivity as to how to act in various circumstances,”<sup>13</sup> and I think this also can be said of the few Huli men who talked about deliberately cultivating certain ways of speaking and acting in order to achieve the properly Christian domestic sphere. The practice of complimenting a wife made men more attentive to when a wife’s behaviour might merit particular acknowledgement.

11 Tamar Szabó Gendler, “Alief in action (and reaction),” *Mind & Language* 23 (2008): 552–85.

12 From Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, in Gendler, “Alief in action,” p. 573.

13 Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 166.

Engaging in *askesis*—that is, embodied ethical training or practice—particularly in the context of marriage, is not, in fact, a new idea to the Huli. As I suggested earlier, the idea that marriage is a difficult undertaking that requires specific knowledge, self-discipline, and the rehearsal and eventual habituation of corporeal and verbal acts is a long-held and deeply familiar one to Huli men. In the past, men paid ritual experts to teach them a variety of practices in preparation for marriage: they learned a particular position for having sex; they learned to drink water from mountain springs in order to purify the body after sex; they learned to both stay away from a wife’s house and to wash themselves frequently when a wife was menstruating; and they learned attentiveness to certain signs that a wife might be practising a magic intended to give her greater influence over him. And although all these practices were primarily directed at maintaining the man’s health, vitality and social efficacy, they were also thought to be important for maintaining the fecundity of clan land and the potency of the clan itself. So, much as Aristotle conceptualised *askesis*, this ethical self-work was in service not only of the individual, but also the health of the larger group or polity. Thus, we can see a kind of continuity here in the sense that in both the pre-colonial incarnation and the Christian version, marriage is an undertaking that requires knowledge, moral attention and praxis, though, of course, the profound difference is that the pre-Christian marital project required attention to the marital other at a self and community enforced distance, while the Christian marital project requires an *askesis*—an ethical exercise—that entails an almost constant dialogic interaction with the marital other.

## The challenges of marital co-residence

The men who feel that they are successful in marital co-habitation express a sense of accomplishment and pride. For example, in interviews that my four male field assistants carried out with Huli married men in 2004, interviewees were asked to discuss how their marriage and home-life was similar to and or different from that of their parents. The answers were often evaluative, even judgemental, and were typically phrased as: “I am a better husband and father than my own father was.” Evidence cited to support this claim were practices such as: eating with one’s wife, living in the same house with one’s wife, talking daily and at length and with a sense of pleasure with one’s wife, and spending more time with one’s children. The reason some men are so proud of their ability to carry out harmonious co-residence is not only because they feel more in accord with Christian ethical commitments or because they consider themselves more modern than previous generations, but also because they

fully recognise the difficulties of this enterprise and the problematic paradoxes of intimacy that can emerge because of spousal co-habitation.<sup>14</sup> So, what are these paradoxes or difficulties?

First and foremost, there is the problem of “menstrual pollution” or, more broadly, “sexual pollution”; terms meant to capture the idea that opposite-sex corporeal proximity, and particularly female reproductive fluids, pose a danger. These terms have been critiqued; however, they capture, to some extent, how many Huli men think and, more importantly, seem to phenomenologically feel about the consequences of excessive co-presence or intimacy with women, especially wives. Specifically, Huli men and women assert that there is a corporeal porosity or permeability between spouses;<sup>15</sup> thus, not only are a spouse’s sexual fluids potentially dangerous, but also his or her talk, emotions and actions can all constitute substances, of a sort, that can get into one’s body and affect one, often negatively.

One problem with the term “pollution,” then, to convey these ideas and experiences is its association with physical matter. Perhaps because of Western ontological distinctions between physical matter, emotion and sensual apprehensions (such as smells), the term pollution, and perhaps particularly sexual pollution, somewhat narrowly conveys defilement or damage caused by a *material* substance; it is, classically expressed, “*matter* out of place.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, when thinking about “sexual pollution,” the mind tends to jump to the idea that sexual *substances* (e.g. bodily fluids) are the source of danger. However, when it comes to the ways in which one spouse’s body is vulnerable to the intimacies of the other, the Huli do not make such rigid ontological distinctions. When men talk about the challenges of spousal co-habitation, for example, they say things like, “Breathing in each other’s exhaled breath, smelling each other’s bodies, hearing the same talk day after day, having to touch the things that I know she has touched, feeling that she is angry or hearing her angry words cut me like an axe cutting my foot. All of these things make your skin feel dirty and make you age faster.” In this quote, notably, there is no mention of sexual fluids or menstrual blood as particularly worrying or dangerous substances. Rather, it is the mere daily physical exposure to the other’s breath, smell, touch, emotion and other personal emanations that results in a phenomenological sense of defilement or erosion. All these sensory encounters or exchanges are like physical substances that penetrate the body and gradually damage it,

14 Holly Wardlow, “‘She liked it best when she was on top’: intimacies and estrangements in Huli Men’s marital and extramarital relationships,” in *Intimacies: Love and Sex across Cultures*, ed. W. Jankowiak, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, pp. 194–223.

15 Wardlow, *Wayward Women*; Wardlow, “‘She liked it best when she was on top.’”

16 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London and New York: Routledge, 1966; see also Rachel Jewkes and Katharine Wood, “Problematizing pollution: dirty wombs, ritual pollution, and pathological processes,” *Medical Anthropology* 18(2) (1999): 163–86.

suggesting that “sexual pollution” is (and perhaps always has been) not only about “matter out of place,” but also about emotions, words and gestures out of place.<sup>17</sup> Alternatively, sexual pollution does, indeed, concern *matter* out of place; however, what constitutes *matter* may be highly variable and may not entail the physical attributes (mass, weight) typically associated with that term.

One might be tempted to assert that these are *physical* idioms for talking about *emotional* states of distress or for expressing broader discontent with the relationship, and I think it is true that Huli men and women tend to feel more polluted or sullied by their spouses when there is marital strife, and tend not to worry about these issues so much when the marriage is harmonious. Nevertheless, I think it is important to take seriously the fact that men and women consistently talk about these experiences as physical—as processes that they can often *feel* happening to their bodies as they happen. And, although women use this kind of phenomenological, sensory discourse of corporeal porosity and pollution less than men, they do also use it. They say, for example, that they can feel it inside their bodies when their husbands have sexually cheated on them, asserting that such actions remain on the skin of their husband, and thus that simply being enclosed in the same house with those smells and past actions emanating from a husband’s body begins to make them feel weak and sick. Thus, rather than interpret these assertions as metaphors or idioms for talking about other experiential domains, they should be taken seriously as *bodily* experiences, and as experiences that continually constitute and help to define what it means for Huli married couples to be embodied and to have an embodied relationship with another.

Sara Ahmed’s discussion of the relationship between emotion and bodily boundaries in her article “Collective Feelings, Or the Impressions Left by Others” is both evocative and productive for deconstructing the ontological barriers one might erect between the emotions of others and the physically experiencing self. She asserts that

I become aware of my body as having a surface only in the event of feeling discomfort.... It is through the intensification of feeling that bodies and worlds materialise and take shape, or that the effect of boundary, fixity and surface is produced. Feelings are not about the inside getting out or the outside getting in, but that they affect the very distinction of inside and outside in the first place.... [The] contradictory function of skin begins to make sense if we unlearn the assumption that the skin is simply already there, [and] begin to think of the skin as a surface that is felt only in the event of being “impressed upon” in the encounters we have with others. To consider the way emotions are implicated in the

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17 Many thanks to Margaret Jolly for helping me to see this implication.

surfacing of bodies and worlds we can reflect on the word impression.... We need to remember the press in impression. It allows us to associate the experience of having an emotion with the very mark left by the press of one surface upon another.... The impression is a sign of the persistence of others even in the face of their absence.<sup>18</sup>

In Ahmed's evocation, much as in Huli conceptualisations, there is no *a priori* bodily exterior that keeps the (gendered) other out; rather, the self is constructed as vulnerable and as having a bodily boundary that is emergent, dialogic and porous. In this passage Ahmed seems particularly preoccupied with touch, and the emotions and bodily boundaries materialised and solidified by touch, but what Ahmed asserts about touch can equally apply to the sensations Huli spouses speak of, which tend to be more about smell, or about injurious words, or about the sensation of the other's angry emotion entering the body, causing it pain, and generating a reciprocal angry emotion in return, all of which resemble the way Ahmed describes touch in that they are spoken of as having or being a materiality that can be felt by the body.

This more phenomenological representation of the malaise of spousal proximity—the feeling of bodily surfaces constantly permeated by various emanations from the conjugal other—helps elucidate what a profound ethical undertaking it is to choose co-habitation. Not only do spouses engage in the previously discussed *askesis*—teaching oneself the praxis of complimenting a spouse, for example—they must also engage, I think, in a certain kind of bodily remaking, a re-embodiment of sorts in which one attempts to feel *not* so porous to the other and tries to turn one's attention away from bodily sensations of being sullied by the other. Writing about the somewhat different topic of the "placebo effect," Laurence Kirmayer emphasises the importance of both "attentional" and "attributional" mechanisms in mediating the sensations of the body—the former being the ability to focus attention on or away from a bodily sensation,<sup>19</sup> thus intensifying or lessening its experience, and the latter being the cognitive models or other interpretive frameworks that shape one's expectations of a situation (in this case, sustained proximity to a spouse), as well as the meaning one attributes to the situation. Thus, what I am suggesting is that the choice of co-habitation may, for some men, entail a deliberate attempt to modify their own attentional and attributional mechanisms so that their bodies feel less vulnerable or porous to the physical presence of the female conjugal other.

18 Sara Ahmed, "Collective feelings, or, the impressions left by others," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21(2) (2004): 25–42.

19 Laurence Kirmayer, "Unpacking the placebo response: insights from ethnographic studies of healing," *The Journal of Mind-Body Regulation* 1(3) (2011): 112–24.



But, of course, the conceptual and phenomenological remaking of the body is not so easy. More common, especially for men, is the attempt to escape the confines of the shared house by staying in clan men's houses or by frequenting the rapidly proliferating new public, and yet exclusively male, spaces in Tari, such as drinking clubs or snooker clubs.<sup>20</sup> Some men assert that now that they live with their wives and no longer have their own houses, they have no "room of their own," as it were—a paradoxical assertion for such a male dominant society—and that they must therefore spend more time drinking and talking with male kin and peers in the safety of clubs that wives are not permitted to enter.

But, of course, the challenges of spousal co-habitation are more than corporeal—they are also epistemological in a way. Indeed, both men and women—though, again, particularly men—talk about the problem of "being known too well."<sup>21</sup> As one man in the 2004 interview sample put it, "If you live with her, then she comes to know your habits, your ways of thinking, how you do things. Then, if you are arguing, she knows exactly what to say to hurt you and provoke you and make you really angry." And, according to another,

Some women are very clever. They will study a husband, listen to him, and come to really understand his thoughts and his ways. And then they can take advantage of him and manipulate him.... So I follow the wisdom of the older generation. If I have instructions for her, I stand in the doorway or outside the house and give her the instructions while she's sitting inside the house.... She cannot see my face or guess how I am feeling.... You can have fun, relaxed conversations with a girlfriend or a sex worker but not with your wife. If you do, she will use that knowledge to dominate you.

Or, as another put it, "My wife is not like my heart. I married her to have my children and take care of my pigs. My secrets are my secrets.... If I told her everything she would use this knowledge to dominate me—that's the way women are." Two of my four male field assistants asserted that self-exposure, emotional intimacy, and simply being too well known were the primary causes of marital strife in the contemporary context, and the other two agreed that these were problems, if not the biggest problems. As one of them said, echoing what we were learning through our interviews, "You get to know her too well, and she gets to know you too well, and you stop respecting each other, and it's too easy to end up fighting because you know what to say to hurt her and she knows the same about you." There are a range of anxieties bound up in this fear of being too well known—for men, these anxieties focus on the threats to male

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<sup>20</sup> Wardlow, "Whip him in the head with a stick!"

<sup>21</sup> Wardlow, "She liked it best when she was on top."

dominance and authority that are assumed to be inevitable once a wife gains knowledge of her husband's desires, vulnerabilities and foibles. For both men and women, there is a fear that the combination of self-exposure and the monotony of excessive familiarity will make the desire to say the perfectly hurtful thing to a spouse almost irresistible. Again, conjugal distance—emotional, physical and epistemological—represents a kind of safeguard.

This latter fear—of being too well known, and thus easily manipulated and verbally injured—leads to the final challenge of spousal co-habitation, a challenge raised by both men and women—that is, domestic violence. Indeed, assertions that spousal co-habitation led to increased physical fighting was often articulated in the same breath as assertions about co-habitation inevitably leading to verbal assault. In other words, the fear that one would not be able to resist saying the perfectly hurtful thing was accompanied by the conviction that once one had said the perfectly hurtful thing, physical violence was unavoidable.

The added concern, particularly for women, is that couples are now expected to fight in the domestic sphere—that is, at home. In the past, women say, when spouses lived separately, it was easier for women to make a point of airing their marital grievances in public. For one, precisely because spouses did not live together a wife was more likely to run into her husband in a public space—at a market, along the road—than in the domestic sphere. Public fighting could help a woman achieve a number of goals. First, public fighting decisively moved a grievance out of the private, often quite hidden sphere of a woman's house and into the public sphere where there were witnesses who might intervene to stop a fight from becoming too injurious and who might assist a woman in pursuing public mediation of the grievance.<sup>22</sup> Public fights were an almost foolproof means for a woman of both initiating a confrontation, but also limiting its potential damage. And public fighting almost always resulted in public discussion and mediation about the cause of the altercation, whether this was a husband's extramarital escapades, his accusing her unfairly of adultery, or taking her money, pigs or sweet potatoes without permission. Public fighting, according to most women, was better than private fighting: it made marital problems visible; it created a public memory of the dispute, which a woman could later refer to if necessary; and it tended to be less injurious than private fighting because no one had to give in and concede defeat—instead they could rely on others to pull them apart.

But, by all accounts, public fighting is less feasible and less common than in the past. With the adoption of co-habitation, much fighting gets sequestered in the private sphere, where often there are no other adults to intervene or bear witness. When Christian missionaries set out to create the spousally co-habiting

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22 Wardlow, *Wayward Women*, pp. 94–95.

Huli domestic sphere, I doubt they had in mind that domestic violence would become one of its defining features. Surely the missionaries were striving to bring about their vision of the intimate, loving couple characterised by precisely what many Huli people say they struggle with most—mutual self-exposure, enhanced psychological intimacy and greater emotional dependency. However, for many couples, the shared conjugal home not only generates more friction, it also makes each spouse a captive audience to the other, though this is more true of women, who are less able to exit the domestic realm.

Moreover, Christian notions of the properly monogamous and intimate household also include ideas about decorum and propriety—that is, how the Christian family should appear to others in public, and this vision does not include the spectacle of physical altercation.<sup>23</sup> Christian notions of the proper household also entail ideas about female forbearance—that is, the idea that women should be tolerant of men’s lapses in kindness or overt abuse. Indeed, some strains within Catholicism tend to valorise, or even glorify, women’s ability to suffer in quiet dignity. Such religious discourses contradict what Huli female dignity meant in the pre-Christian era: female dignity meant standing up for oneself and not tolerating abuse. Older and middle-aged women I’ve interviewed decisively stated that the reigning ideology was, and for some of them still is, that the failure to physically punish a husband—that is, to hit him, ideally with a stick or some other weapon—when he abuses you only encourages him to do it again and makes other people think you are a coward. To not physically chastise a wayward husband is to indulge and coddle him as if he were a child, and it is to invite future, perhaps even more severe, abuse. The idea that suffering in silence is somehow more virtuous was alien to these older and middle-aged women. However, such gendered ideologies of forbearance have taken hold, and women’s public fighting is now often labelled as unChristian, uneducated, “too traditional” and rural. In other words, not only is women’s public fighting coming to be seen as unseemly and undignified, it also now gets interpreted (by hospital staff, civil servants and other members of an emergent middle class) through a set of binary oppositions (educated/ignorant, urban/rural, civilised/savage, etc.) that quickly define a woman as ignorant and backwards.

## Conclusion

I conclude this discussion of spousal co-habitation with a final paradox—which is that it is women who most often advocate for the adoption of spousal co-habitation. This, I must confess, is something I originally found baffling. Having lived in women’s houses where the husband had his own house elsewhere,

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23 Wardlow, “Whip him in the head with a stick!”

I saw how women enjoyed the pleasures that come with the freedom from male surveillance: once the husband had made an evening check on the household and gone on his way, the women would often cook another meal just for themselves; they would gamble and smoke, knowing their husbands disapproved; they would invite female kin to visit; and occasionally they would even abscond from the house, moving quickly and quietly up and down the dark mountainside paths in order to visit female family and friends. So, pushing for co-habitation has seemed a paradoxical and sometimes bad tradeoff to me, or at least something that requires an explanation of what might be worth the profound increase in male surveillance and the potential for altercation.

There are a number of reasons why women support co-habitation, all of which relate to the ways in which the public sphere and domestic sphere have been transformed since the pre-colonial era, as well as the ways in which women's positionality within these spheres has changed. For example, the adoption of the nuclear family home often entails the exit of a man's mother and sisters. In other words, the increase in surveillance of a woman by her husband is often balanced by a decrease in surveillance by his mother, and co-habitation has the added benefit of increased influence over him, as well as an increased ability to monitor, at least a little, his own comings and goings. And importantly, data from Tari Hospital records show that mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law often fight physically and can inflict serious injury upon each other, such as broken bones or deep cuts.<sup>24</sup> Thus, vulnerability to violence is, and long has been, quite high for married Huli women, even if a husband is not a permanent or regular occupant of the household. Thus, while spousal co-habitation may, indeed, result in the increased frequency of marital physical altercations, it would be a mistake to think that married women were safe from violence in the separate living arrangements of the past. In other words, the bad trade-off in terms of vulnerability to physical aggression and injury may not be as acute as it first might appear.

Moreover, women may be drawn to spousal co-habitation because it can enable increased opportunities to position themselves as domestic-sphere experts through church-sponsored home-craft workshops. These workshops—which, if anything, seem far more pervasive today than they were in the past—have not changed very much in terms of content, and always seem directed at focusing women's attention narrowly on the domestic sphere. For decades now, for example, Huli women have been recruited into mission-sponsored classes to learn how to sew *meri* blouses and skirts; crochet colourful yarn flowers to ornament a room; plant decorative flowers around a house; plant “nutrition gardens” stocked with peanuts, beans and tomatoes; and cook meals that include foods from all three food groups. In other words, the unchanging content of

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24 Wardlow, *Wayward Women*, pp. 87–89.

these workshops would seem to suture women into a mutually constitutive relationship with the home, solidifying their identities as housebound home-craft experts through learning to aestheticise the home and make it a site of health production and monitoring.<sup>25</sup>

Worryingly, the one innovation to these home-skills workshops for women is more direct messaging about the importance of similarly taking the self as an object of aesthetic labour. As I heard one United Church women's group leader say in 2012,

Sometimes a woman is covered with dirt from caring for pigs and planting sweet potatoes, and so her husband finds her unattractive. Or she's had too many children and her body is no longer pretty. So women must think of themselves as their husband's flower. They must make time to wash themselves and put on nice clothing. Also, women get used up because they have too many children, and so wives should use contraception.

These new messages, originating in and spreading out from churches, about the importance of a wife's appearance and attractiveness are emerging in the context of, and I think as a specific Christian response to, the increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS. The concern, of course, is men's extramarital, extra-domestic sex, and the solution for married couples, as is now familiar, is the "B" in the ABC strategy—that is, "be faithful." What is relatively new in my experience is that the message for women now seems to be that men would stay at home and be faithful if only women worked harder at being more attractive.<sup>26</sup> Again, female subjectivity would seem to be ever more tightly sutured into the home through skill-building and "empowerment"—promoting discourses about aesthetics and disease prevention. I would add that it seems a hard message that married women's vulnerability to HIV is, by implication, blamed on them and their supposed failures to be aesthetically and affectively pleasing to their husbands.

Arguably, the missions are finally attempting to forge the specifically gendered subjects that they neglected to create when they first told husbands and wives they should live together. In other words, the message about the proper desirability of conjugal co-habitation came first, about fifty years ago, and the attempts to construct the gendered subjectivities and affective performances necessary for making intimate co-habitation work are only coming now in the wake of concerns about HIV. The creation of a domestic sphere characterised by

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25 cf. Bronwen Douglas, "Christian citizens: women and negotiations of modernity in Vanuatu," *The Contemporary Pacific* 14(1) (2002): 1–38; Susanna Küchler, "The poncho and the quilt: material Christianity in the Cook Islands," in *Clothing the Pacific*, ed. Chloë Colchester, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003, pp. 97–116; Margaret Jolly, "A saturated history of Christianity and cloth in Oceania," this volume.

26 Wardlow, "The task of the HIV translator."

an intimate spousal affective life was likely the missionary intent or objective all along, and what has changed is that because of HIV men and women may now be more motivated to cultivate the emotional, corporeal, and verbal gestures and demeanors—that is, the *habitus*—of intimate, faithful, spousal co-habitation.

But, I would close by pointing out that the ramping up of prevention and care efforts in the era of HIV increasingly brings women not only out of the home but often out of Huli territory for attendance at ever-proliferating workshops, courses and training sessions. Such workshops, which are intended to make women into experts of the domestic sphere, have consistently, and perhaps paradoxically, brought women into newly created public spheres, such as training centres or community centres, where, among other things, they spend whole days forging bonds of solidarity with other women and witnessing women act as confident, authoritative and assertive trainers and public speakers. Such workshops make women important elements of the public sphere and give them the moral authority and legitimacy to participate in it; thus, the spousal co-habitation promoted by Christian missions might, in the end, enable increased influence within the domestic sphere as well as create some avenues out of it.

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## **Part Four**

### **On and Beneath the Skin: Embodiment and Sensuous Agency**



# 13. Paradoxical Performances: Cruel Constraints and Christian Emancipation in 19–20<sup>th</sup>-Century Missionary Representations of Chinese Women and Girls

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## Introduction

In the 1850s, William Milne (1815–1863), who was sent to China in 1839 by the London Missionary Society (LMS), lamented that the stories in children's textbooks and magazines were “revolting” because they “pamper[ed] this greed for stories of the cruel and heartless features in heathen nations” and filled children's minds with “monstrous and hideous notions of their fellow-men.”<sup>1</sup> In his book *Life in China*, Milne attempts to present a more accurate portrait of China and banish existing misconceptions of the Chinese.<sup>2</sup> Half a century after Milne criticised children's texts for featuring the cruelty of the Chinese, children's performance scripts about China were still highlighting this characteristic through explications of footbinding, a highly-contested issue in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Elsie Jeanette Oxenham's *Queen Lexa's Chinese Meeting: A Missionary Recitation for Eight Girls and Three Boys* is one example. It begins with a group of children examining items that their parents had brought back from China. Among the collection is a dainty shoe. While trying to dress up in the Chinese things, they soon discover that the shoe is too small and conclude it must be meant for a big doll. However, Lexa informs them “real grown-up women” wore these tiny shoes and launches into a diatribe on the evils of footbinding, claiming that “mere babies” are subjected to this custom, eliciting sympathy from the audience while highlighting the horror of Chinese cruelty to children.<sup>3</sup>

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1 William Milne, *Life in China*, London: G. Routledge, 1857. The source material that forms the basis of this chapter was gathered from the missionary collections in the School of African and Oriental Studies Library, University of London in May 2007.

2 Ibid.

3 E.J. Oxenham, *Queen Lexa's Chinese Meeting: A Missionary Recitation for Eight Girls and Three Boys*, London: London Missionary Society, 1900, p. 12.

*Queen Lexa's Chinese Meeting* is just one of several missionary recitations, cantatas and dialogues published by the LMS in the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Adults hoped that during the process of rehearsing for these performances, children would be inspired to support missionary work or become missionaries themselves. The productions emphasised the notion of an extended family comprised of British children learning about the conditions of their "less fortunate" brothers and sisters abroad. Young British boys and girls were inculcated with the notion that they had a responsibility to improve the lives of these children in faraway lands. The songs in the performance scripts encouraged the audience to answer God's call, urging them not to make excuses because immediate action should be taken: "Let none hear you idly saying, / 'There is nothing I can do,' / While the souls of men are dying, / And the Master calls for you."<sup>5</sup>

Preparing for the performances was a multi-sensorial experience involving auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning. These productions engaged children on many more levels than text-based children's missionary magazines or books. If someone reads or skims through a book about Chinese children, they may easily forget the details. However, it is more likely that those involved in the missionary performances would remember the "facts" about China and the Chinese conveyed in the scripts because acting and singing for an audience requires memorisation of the lines and lyrics, handling the costumes and props, and following stage directions such as how to walk like a foot-bound Chinese girl. Performers in *Missionary Cantata: Every-Day Life in China* were literally putting themselves in someone else's shoes because in addition to dresses and head-bands, shoes were provided for the female actresses.<sup>6</sup>

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4 The London Missionary Society and other missionary societies published a number of programs and plays in the early twentieth century. See for example, London Missionary Society, *Boys and Girls of Other Lands: A Missionary Cantata*, London: London Missionary Society, ca. 1900. Other plays related to China include Phyllis M. Higgs, *Blind Chang: A Missionary Drama*, London: London Missionary Society, 1920; Edward Ferris Wills, *Mr. Hu, the Barber of Everlasting Prosperity: A Real Incident*, London: London Missionary Society, ca. 1912; Mrs. E. Campbell, *The Blue Bowl: A Simple Chinese Scene*, London: The Livingstone Press, 1920; H.D. Cotton, *The Case of Farmer Law, a True Story of a Chinese Hospital in Dialogue Form*, London: London Missionary Society, ca. 1920; H.D. Cotton, *Bao's Adventure: A Chinese Play in Two Acts and Six Scenes*, London: London Missionary Society, 1920; Anna Canada Swain, *Chee Moo's Choice: A Missionary Play about China*, New York City: Baptist Board of Education, 1929. In addition to China, India and Africa were introduced to young audiences in F.M. Saw et al., *A Missionary Cantata: The Rani's Sacrifice: A Legend of Chamba, Retold in Verse with Songs Adapted to Indian Melodies*, London: Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1912; and Alexander Chisholm, *In Dark Calabar: Missionary Cantata words by J.D.H. Reid and M. Bayne*, Edinburgh: United Free Church of Scotland Mission Study Council, ca. 1915.

5 J.M.B., *He and She from O'er the Sea: Missionary Recitations and Hymns for Twelve Boys and Girls*, London: London Missionary Society, ca. 1900, p. 2.

6 See for example, Charles W. Budden, *Missionary Cantata: Every-Day Life in China*, London: London Missionary Society, 1902; Michelle Elleray, "Little builders: coral insects, missionary culture, and the Victorian child," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 39 (2011): 223–38; See also John Tsz-Pang Lai, "Christian tracts in Chinese costume: the missionary strategies in translating *The Peep of Day*," in *Translating Others*, vol. 2, ed. Theo Hermans, Manchester: St. Jerome, 2006, pp. 460–82; Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-century England*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, pp. 118–20; Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire*,

These performances were also important for economic reasons because they provided opportunities to raise funds for the mission societies. For example, at the end of *He and She from O'er the Sea: Missionary Recitations and Hymns for Twelve Boys and Girls* a boy informs the audience that for one penny a week, they could provide funds to support the London Missionary Society's eighty-three missionaries in China who were involved in the work of "leper asylums, training homes, orphanages and schools for both boys and girls."<sup>7</sup> Programs such as *He and She from O'er the Sea* were held at weeknight missionary meetings or as part of Sunday services where Sunday-school students performed. The significance of Sunday schools cannot be overlooked because as early as 1851, there were over two million children enrolled in the 23,135 Sunday schools in Britain.<sup>8</sup> By 1907, approximately 15 per cent of the London Missionary Society's income came from Sunday schools.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, records reveal that by 1901, the Methodist Missionary Society received 20 per cent of its home receipts from children.<sup>10</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, there were over a thousand children's missionary societies, some with thousands of members.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore important to examine the content of these performances in greater detail considering their substantial audience of both children and adults such as teachers, parents and relatives who undoubtedly came to support the young people who were performing.

Judith Rowbotham argues that while it may be difficult to ascertain the concrete influence of British missionaries on the people they hoped to convert, "the most profound and lasting impacts were arguably on the British domestic scene."<sup>12</sup> The little-explored archives of missionary recitations, dialogues and cantatas shed light on how missionary discourse and images were consumed in the metropole and influenced the British "back home." Missionary performances were reported in local newspapers such as the *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, the *Weekly Standard and Express* and the *Essex County Standard West Suffolk Gazette*, and *Eastern Counties Advertiser*. The short notices included the name of the conductor, the amount of money raised and a description of the children dressed up in cultural costumes. If missionaries on furlough gave a talk as part of the event, their names were listed as well.<sup>13</sup> Despite the seeming endorsement of the missionaries who participated in these programs, paradoxically, the

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1840–1900, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 43; Frank Prochaska, "Little vessels: children in the nineteenth-century English missionary movement," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 6(2) (1978): 103–18.

7 J.M.B., *He and She from O'er the Sea*, p. 13.

8 Richard Brown, *Society and Economy in Modern Britain 1700–1850*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 126.

9 Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-century England*, p. 126.

10 Prochaska, "Little vessels," p. 107.

11 Ibid. pp. 103–18.

12 Judith Rowbotham, "'Soldiers of Christ'? Images of female missionaries in late nineteenth-century Britain: issues of heroism and martyrdom," *Gender & History* 12(1) (2000): 82–106, p. 83.

13 They did not provide descriptions of audience reactions.

content of the performances sometimes contradicted missionary writing from other sources such as diaries, private letters, newsletters, meeting minutes and other primary sources.<sup>14</sup> For example, the scripts are silent on the trouble female missionaries faced as “big-footed” women trying to engage in “woman’s work for woman.” These women found it difficult to be accepted not only because of their unbound feet but also because they were often taller and bigger than the Chinese men.<sup>15</sup> Gender confusion sometimes caused trouble for the female missionaries who taught Chinese women. Angela Zito notes that missionary women in China “lived a position of contradiction, like and not like the Chinese women they wish[ed] to save; like and not like the missionary husbands and leaders they wished to work beside; constantly uneasy about their ability to function in the Chinese world in which they lived.”<sup>16</sup> According to Jane Hunter, there was a saying in China that “a Western woman was ‘neither one nor the other.’”<sup>17</sup> The precarious position they held in Chinese society presented more obstacles for them than they previously anticipated. However, these difficulties were glossed over in the performance scripts because they aimed to create a pathetic portrait of Chinese girls and women to garner sympathy from the female audience and to spur them to “save” their “sisters.” But as I argue in this chapter, during the process of producing these missionary performances, the girls involved may have realised the constraints of their own customs and questioned gender expectations.

Because many children’s missionary associations were composed entirely of girls and girls were more involved in missionary work in general, it is worth examining what these performance programs taught audiences about the lives of Chinese girls in terms of domesticity, marriage, family and education.<sup>18</sup> In this chapter, I focus mainly on *Queen Lexa’s Chinese Meeting: A Missionary Recitation for Eight Girls and Three Boys* by popular children’s writer Elsie Jeanette Oxenham (1880–1960), *Missionary Cantata: Every-Day Life in China* arranged by Charles W. Budden, *He and She from O’er the Sea: Missionary Recitations*

14 For example, Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984; Lawrence D. Kessler, *Jiangyin Mission Station: An American Missionary Community in China, 1895–1951*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996; John Craig William Keating, *A Protestant Church in Communist China: Moore Memorial Church, Shanghai, 1949–1989*, Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2012; Wilbert R. Shenk (ed.), *North American Foreign Missions, 1810–1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004; Robert A. Bickers and Rosemary Seton (eds), *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1996.

15 For example, Alicia Little notes that as she travelled, the Chinese people were confused by her appearance: “I was altogether an anomaly. The hair seemed to be the hair of a woman; but, then, the feet were surely the feet of a man!” Alicia Little, *Intimate China: The Chinese as I have seen Them*, London: Hutchinson, 1899, p. 66.

16 Angela Zito, “Secularizing the pain of footbinding in China: missionary and medical stagings of the universal body,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75(1) (2007): 1–24, p. 15. According to Rowbotham, the image of women missionaries from the 1880s onwards became increasingly complicated because there were “dilemmas over the hagiographic presentation of women missionaries as useful exemplars of feminine greatness or heroism.” See Rowbotham, “Soldiers of Christ,” p. 91.

17 Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, p. 214.

18 See Prochaska, “Little vessels.”



and *Hymns for Twelve Boys and Girls* by J.M.B, and *Busy Bees: A Missionary Dialogue in Three Scenes* by “the author of ‘Grannie’s Golden Gift,’ ‘This Shall be Told’ and ‘Chinese Diamonds.’”<sup>19</sup> These materials were produced by the LMS in the early twentieth century and all purport to introduce audiences to life in China, highlighting issues such as arranged marriages, the low status of girls in China and footbinding. I explore the paradoxes surrounding the performances in terms of mother-daughter relationships, pain, and emancipation and point out silences and contradictions. Before exploring these paradoxes in more detail, I will first introduce the genre of missionary recitations, dialogues and cantatas.

## Missionary recitations, dialogues, and cantatas

At the World Missionary Conference of 1910 held in Edinburgh, 1,200 delegates discussed the “most efficient methods of interesting children in missions.”<sup>20</sup> “Missionary recitations and entertainments given by children” was listed among the answers.<sup>21</sup> Missionary recitations typically consisted of short scenes coupled with hymns from the *Congregational Hymnal* or original songs written to the tune of traditional hymns.<sup>22</sup> Children were sometimes asked to sing hymns in Chinese: an undoubtedly challenging task for many.<sup>23</sup> Performances usually comprised eight to fifteen children aged between six and sixteen. Some productions were larger, such as the missionary cantata, *Child Life on our Mission Fields*, which included a choir of fifty children.<sup>24</sup>

19 Elsie J. Oxenham, a Congregationalist best known for her Abbey Series stories for girls, wrote several missionary recitations. See for example, E.J. Oxenham, *Malagasy Boys and Girls: A Missionary Recitation for Three Boys and Seven Girls*, London: London Missionary Society, 1908; E.J. Oxenham, *Missionaries to Tea: A Missionary Recitation for Five Boys and Five Girls*, London: London Missionary Society, 1908; E.J. Oxenham, *Professor Lyttleboye’s Lecture: A Missionary Recitation for Four Girls and Four Boys*, London: London Missionary Society, 1908.

20 World Missionary Conference, *To Consider Missionary Problems in Relation to the Non-Christian World*, Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, F.H. Revell Company, 1910, p. 28, online: <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/1936337.0006.001>, accessed 24 July 2012.

21 World Missionary Conference, *To Consider Missionary Problems in Relation to the Non-Christian World*, p. 29. More conventional approaches such as instruction courses and missionary addresses were also listed.

22 Elias Nason (ed.), *The Congregational Hymn Book: For the Service of the Sanctuary*, Boston, MS: John P. Jewett & Co., 1857. Susan Thorne discusses briefly the appeal of singing and dressing up in costumes for special missionary services, especially among the British working-class. Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-century England*, p. 127. For discussion on missionary theatre, see for example, Raquel Chang-Rodriguez, *Hidden Messages: Representation and Resistance in Andean Colonial Drama*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1999; Diana Taylor, “Scenes of cognition: performance and conquest,” *Theatre Journal* 56(3) (2004): 353–72; Max Harris, “Disguised reconciliations: indigenous voices in early Franciscan missionary drama in Mexico,” *Radical History Review* 53 (1992): 13–25; Richard C. Trexler, “We think, they act: clerical readings of missionary theatre in 16th-century New Spain,” in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Steven L. Kaplan, New York: Mouton, 1984, pp. 189–227.

23 See for example, “Chinese Hymn – ‘Guide me, O thou Great Jehovah!’” in J.M.B., *He and She from O’er the Sea*, p. 9.

24 See “Wesleyan Juvenile Home and foreign missions,” *The Essex County Standard West Suffolk Gazette, and Eastern Counties Advertiser*, Colchester, England, January 20, 1894, p. 8.

The duration of *Missionary Cantata: Every-Day Life in China*, a fourteen-part program consisting of alternating recitations and “Confucian Odes,” was estimated to take one hour and fifteen minutes.<sup>25</sup> Most of the other recitations were shorter. The script of *He and She from O’er the Sea* is only fifteen pages long and the structure is simple: a boy or girl recites a monologue on stage, exits and a choir sings a hymn. Then a few children enact a scene and the choir performs another song. One to three characters speak in each scene, sometimes with non-speaking performers standing beside them. There are a total of seven hymns and six recitations. *Busy Bees* is the same length as *He and She from O’er the Sea* but does not contain any songs. In the beginning, Rosie invites her friend Ethel to the “Busy Bees” children’s meeting so they can learn about life in India and China through two question and answer sessions: first with Rosie and a nameless Chinese girl and second with an Indian girl called Shantamma (Patience). After the meeting is over, Rosie, who plans to become a missionary, gives Ethel more information about the Chinese and suggests some things that she can do for the Chinese women and girls (such as selling Christmas cards). Not all children were expected to become missionaries abroad, but the songs in the performances encouraged them to do what they could in the local community: “If you cannot cross the ocean / And the heathen lands explore / You can help them at your door.”<sup>26</sup>

These plays were priced at around one penny and with the purchase of the scripts, churches could borrow key props and costumes free of charge.<sup>27</sup> For example, the title page of *He and She from O’er the Sea* contains the following notice: “The costumes and curios can be borrowed for free, after due notice, from the Mission House for use at meetings held on behalf of the L.M.S.”<sup>28</sup> Items include a girl’s dress, boy’s dress, cap and pigtail, priest’s dress, mourner’s dress, doctor’s dress, spectacles, tongue-scraper, chopsticks, divining sticks and a Chinese book. These objects were most likely brought back to England by missionaries. Some of the plays suggest ages for the actors. For example, it was recommended that the scene “Dialogue between a Chinese Bride and a Christian Schoolgirl” in *He and She from O’er the Sea* be performed by two actresses between thirteen and fifteen years old—the age when British girls typically started wearing corsets.<sup>29</sup>

The program for *Every-day Life* contains very detailed instructions about costumes. Specific descriptions on how to wear the head-bands are included with imperatives such as: “The hair must be parted in the middle and rolled behind in

25 Budden, *Missionary Cantata: Every-Day Life in China*.

26 J.M.B., *He and She from O’er the Sea*, p. 2.

27 Some offered discounts for bulk purchases. For example, the London Missionary Society offered the price of 8d. a dozen for *Busy Bees*.

28 J.M.B., *He and She from O’er the Sea*, n.p.

29 See Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, p. 49.

a single knot” and “Girls *must* remove their own outer skirt as well as the bodice of their dress. The throat should be bare.”<sup>30</sup> Girls playing the foot-bound female characters were instructed to “walk on their heels and take very short steps” to achieve the effect of the “Chinese gait” but the girl, acting as the slave girl (with her face painted yellow), was supposed to walk “in the ordinary way” because she had unbound feet. Although the purpose of instructing the girls to walk on their heels was to give them the opportunity to experience for a short time the difficulty of walking with bound feet, the fact that the girls were freed from wearing their bodices and could wear the loose flowing Chinese dresses may have caused them to reflect upon their own custom of wearing corsets.

With the exception of Oxenham, a Congregationalist who had never been to China, little is known about the authors of these works. Some of them may have been missionaries while others may have consulted reports sent back from missionaries or other texts about China. Writing in the early twentieth century, they could choose from a plethora of texts as reference material, because, as a 1904 newspaper article entitled “The Flood of Books about China” notes, the two Opium Wars, the Sino-French War (1884–1885), the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), and “most of all the Boxer business of 1900 onwards, have been the source or fountain of a steady stream of booklets, volumes, and tomes in sets, running to a frightful aggregate.”<sup>31</sup> Curiously, although these performances were published at the turn of the twentieth century, there is no mention of the Boxer Uprising which raged in Northern China from 1899 to 1901. The Boxers sought to eradicate all foreigners from China and a great number of missionaries were killed during the Uprising. Chinese Christians were also targeted and many suffered horrific deaths. Fear about the safety of China mission work during this tumultuous period made mission societies reluctant to send more missionaries to the “Celestial Kingdom.” However, the dangers of the mission field are downplayed in these performance scripts that portray the Chinese girls who became Christians as happy emancipated children, freed from the bondages of footbinding—a practice condemned by both missionaries and other Westerner observers.

## Historical context: Footbinding in Western discourse

In 1833, an anonymous author declared in the world’s first major journal of Sinology *Chinese Repository* that “a nation’s civilization may be estimated by the rank which females hold in society. If the civilization of China be judged

30 Budden, *Missionary Cantata: Every-Day Life in China*, n.p.

31 “The flood of books about China,” *North China Herald and Supreme Court and Consular Gazette*, 29 July 1904, pp. 234–35, p. 234.

of by this test, she is surely far from occupying that first place which she so strongly claims."<sup>32</sup> Missionaries such as Young J. Allen (1836–1907) and Timothy Richard (1845–1919) conveyed this idea of using a woman's status in society as a measure of her country's level of civilisation (initially conceived in eighteenth-century France) via their writings in Chinese.<sup>33</sup> Many nineteenth-century writers concluded that because the Chinese females held a low status in society and were oppressed by the custom of footbinding, China as a nation was stagnant and unprogressive. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, British missionary and educator John Fryer (1839–1928) posited that the three major reasons holding back China's progress were opium, the literary examination essay and bound feet.<sup>34</sup>

The practice of footbinding can be traced back to the twelfth century and was only slowly discontinued after the establishment of the Nationalist government in 1912.<sup>35</sup> Explanations of the origins of this custom differ, but one commonality among the sources is that it started in the imperial court and with the elite before lower classes emulated the practice in an effort to raise their societal status. According to the historian Dorothy Ko, it was in the eighteenth century when footbinding began to be adopted by commoners.<sup>36</sup> Most historians assert that adults (mostly mothers) started binding a girl's feet when she turned six although others state that it began earlier around the age of four.<sup>37</sup> Bandages were wrapped around the foot to stunt growth and a few years later the wrappings were increasingly tightened so that the toes were bent under the sole. In addition to the physical pain inflicted by the tight bandages, other issues include the risk of gangrene, ulceration and paralysis. During the last years of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), when these performance scripts were written, the Manchu government issued many edicts in an effort to abolish the practice of footbinding. Despite the threat of heavy fines, many people still continued the custom because they feared that women would lose their docility and abandon morality if they unbound their feet. Some believed that women with "liberated" feet would be drafted into the army.<sup>38</sup> More importantly, footbinding was seen as a prerequisite for all aspiring brides because according

32 "Remarks, concerning the condition of females in China," *Chinese Repository* II (1833): 313–16, p. 313.

33 Denise Gimpel, "Freeing the mind through the body: women's thoughts on physical education in late Qing and early republican China," *Nan Nü* 8(2) (2006): 316–58, p. 317.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Some argue that it may have originated earlier in the tenth century. See Alison Drucker, "The influence of Western women on the anti-footbinding movement 1840–1911," *Historical Reflections* 8(3) (1981): 179–99; Sidney D. Gamble, "The disappearance of foot-binding in Tingsien," *American Journal of Sociology* 49(2) (1943): 181–83. For more detailed discussion on the history of footbinding, see Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005; Wang Ping, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000; Hong Fan, *Footbinding, Feminism, and Freedom: the Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China*, London: F. Cass, 1997.

36 Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, p. 132.

37 Drucker, "The influence of Western women on the anti-footbinding movement," p. 180.

38 Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, p. 57.

to one saying, “Bound-foot women became brides; the not-bound became bondservants.”<sup>39</sup> As Fan Hong puts it, the bound foot “was the passport to all that was good in life.”<sup>40</sup> Ko terms this concept the “marrying-up” thesis. As Mrs. Archibald Little (1845–1926) and other anti-footbinding activists observed, one of the difficulties they faced when trying to convince women to discontinue the practice of footbinding was the notion that women would not be able to find husbands if they had “natural feet.” A Chinese woman born in 1867 told American missionary Ida Pruitt (1888–1985) that “Match-makers were not asked ‘Is she beautiful?’ but ‘How small are her feet?’ A plain face is given by heaven but poorly bound feet are a sign of laziness.”<sup>41</sup>

## Missionary discourses on footbinding

The widespread opposition to footbinding among missionaries in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is not surprising considering the fact that the number of Protestant female missionaries outgrew the number of male missionaries during this time. For many missionaries, the practice of footbinding symbolised the cruelty, perversion and backwardness of the Chinese. According to one account, in 1860, Mrs. Macgowan, wife of the LMS’s John Macgowan (d. 1922), upon hearing the plaintive cries of the girl next door, rushed to stop her neighbour from binding her daughter’s feet. The woman refused, stating “But you are an Englishwoman, and you do not understand the burden that is laid upon us women of China. This footbinding is the evil fortune that we inherit from the past, that our fathers have handed down to us, and no one in all this wide Empire of ours can bring us deliverance.”<sup>42</sup> In 1874 John Macgowan tried to “deliver” the Chinese women by establishing the first English anti-footbinding society, the Heavenly Foot Society (*Tianzu hui*) in Amoy and other organisations advocating for the emancipation of Chinese women’s feet soon appeared, many led by women. Most notable among them was Alicia Bewicke, better known as Mrs. Archibald Little, who formed the Society for the Suppression of Foot-Binding (Natural Feet Society) in 1895. According to Zito, both Macgowan and Little “conceived of the body as a natural ally, whether in the cause of conversion or civilisation, against a Chinese culture that degraded, maimed, and even murdered it.”<sup>43</sup>

39 Cited in Hill Gates, “Footloose in Fujian: economic correlates of footbinding,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43(1) (2001): 130–48, p. 135.

40 Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism, and Freedom*, p. 48.

41 Ko, *Cinderella’s Sisters*, p. 3.

42 John Macgowan, *How England Saved China*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913, p. 26.

43 Zito, “Secularizing the pain of footbinding in China.”

## Pain and love

Patricia Ebrey posits that Westerners writing about footbinding from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century have approached the phenomenon from six perspectives: “fashion, seclusion, deformity, perversity, pain imposed on children and cultural immobility.”<sup>44</sup> In the missionary writing about footbinding, much emphasis is placed on the pain imposed on children by their mothers. For example, the Chinese pastor Reverend Ye in “Discourse on Quitting Footbinding” notes: “I see that during binding, the daughter often cries in pain, but the mother would strike her and make the pain even more unbearable.”<sup>45</sup> In another account, a girl recalls that because her feet hurt so much she cried and could not sleep but her mother struck her for crying. “On the following days, I tried to hide but was forced to walk. Mother hit me on my hands and feet for resisting.”<sup>46</sup> The foot pain is aggravated by the mother’s hitting. In commenting that “All pity from the heart of the mother for her little child ... was crushed out by the very bandages that were distorting the feet of her daughter,” Macgowan condemns Chinese mothers for violating their responsibility to lovingly care for their daughters and protect them from pain, implying that British mothers would not be so callous.<sup>47</sup> Another preacher asserts that parents are “hard-hearted. The ferocious tiger will not eat its offspring, the poisonous snake does not bite its young. Man, of such ability, why does he so torture his child?”<sup>48</sup> This statement situates the Chinese parents below animals.

Missionaries who protested against footbinding stressed the importance of having “natural” feet because they were meant to be unbound by God’s design; they also opposed the practice based on ideals of domesticity. Although women with bound feet were confined to the home, they were not good homemakers. The missionaries emphasised that these women were more restricted in movement, making it difficult for them to maintain the standards of cleanliness and sanitation around the house. At a conference of Protestant missionaries held in Shanghai in May 1877, an essay entitled “Feet Binding” by Sarah H. Woolston was read and discussed. In the paper, she wonders “how much of China’s poverty and dirt are owing to this cramping custom.”<sup>49</sup> Woolston’s comment reflects the Victorian obsession with the “cult of cleanliness” which emphasised sanitation

44 Patricia Ebrey, “Gender and Sinology: shifting Western interpretations of footbinding, 1300–1890,” *Late Imperial China* 20(2) (1999): 1–34.

45 Reverend Ye, “Discourse on quitting footbinding,” cited in Ko, *Cinderella’s Sisters*, p. 17, who, in turn cites Baozhuo zi, “Xiamen ji chanzu hui,” in *Jindai Zhonguo nuquan yundong shiliao* (Documents on the Feminist Movement in Modern China, 1842–1911), ed. Li Youning and Zhang Yufa, Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe, 1–75, pp. 839–40.

46 Quoted in Wang, *Aching for Beauty*, p. 5.

47 Macgowan, *How England Saved China*, pp. 30–31.

48 Quoted in S.H. Woolston, “Feet binding,” in *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China*, Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1877, pp. 132–37, p. 135.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 133.



and personal hygiene as “hallmarks of a civilized society.”<sup>50</sup> Societies that did not prioritise the importance of cleanliness were seen as inferior. Secondly, a mother’s ability to provide proper childcare for her sons and daughters was also hindered if she had bound feet.<sup>51</sup> What do the missionary recitations, dialogues and cantatas say about these issues?

## Pain imposed on children

Not surprisingly, the missionary performances for children focus mainly on the “pain imposed on children.” In *He and She from O’er the Sea*, Cherry Blossom explains that for the first two or three months the footbinding “gives us horrible pain, we cannot rest day or night, and we have many a good cry.”<sup>52</sup> Not only is the pain of footbinding unbearable, girls have to suffer the beatings of their mothers (and sometimes fathers) if they screamed too loudly during the process. In *Every-day Life in China*, the Chinese girl says:

When I was a very little girl, and could run about and jump, my mother called me one day, and sitting down took me on her knee and wound a long piece of calico all over my feet very tightly. I screamed and cried, and she cried a very little, but soon told me to be quiet and behave as all good girls should do; if not, she would beat me.<sup>53</sup>

Although the mother “cried a very little,” she quickly exchanges her tears for threats. The Chinese girl in *Busy Bees* tells Rosie, “Often they can’t sleep for the *pain*, and moan *piteously* hanging their poor little feet outside the bed ... they dare not cry very loud lest their father should come and *beat* them [original emphasis].”<sup>54</sup> The agony of the girls is clearly meant to arouse sympathy from the audience.

In some of the performances mothers are portrayed as heartless while in others they are more sympathetic. For example, Chinese mothers are compared to Western mothers in *Busy Bees*: “Eastern women like their children to be in the fashion, as Western mothers do.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore they follow the custom of binding their daughter’s feet from an early age and “though the mother does not mean to be unkind she persists in spite of the bitter tears.”<sup>56</sup> The fault is not with the

50 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*, New York: Routledge, 1995; Susan Schoenbauer Thurin, *Victorian Travelers and the Opening of China, 1842–1907*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999.

51 Drucker, “The influence of Western women on the anti-footbinding movement,” p. 184.

52 J.M.B., *He and She from O’er the Sea*, p. 5.

53 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, p. 7.

54 London Missionary Society, *Busy Bees: A Missionary Dialogue in Three Scenes*, London: London Missionary Society, 1902, p. 7.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

56 *Ibid.*

mothers; the unreasonable dictates of fashion are to blame. Cultural and societal expectations force women around the world to torment their bodies. A Chinese saying circulating at the time was, "A mother can't love both her daughter and her daughter's feet at the same time."<sup>57</sup>

## Marriage, love, and beauty

Although the origins of footbinding remain unverified and debated, Rosie in *Busy Bees* explains the history of footbinding to her friend Ethel with an air of authority:

You may be interested to know that centuries ago this practice was started. An Emperor of China made a special favourite of the one of his many wives who had small natural feet. The others were so jealous that they decided to pinch theirs and after many endeavours and much pain, succeeded in making them smaller than the coveted one's. And this cruel habit, so unsightly and injurious, became fashionable.<sup>58</sup>

Rosie's story suggests that women were naturally jealous and competitive and willing to suffer injury in order to gain attention from men even though footbinding was "unsightly."

Although a bound foot was "unsightly" in the eyes of British children, Chinese ideals of female beauty were inextricably linked to small feet. In the wedding scene in *Every-day Life in China*, one of the guests inspects the bride and comments disapprovingly, "What large feet she has."<sup>59</sup> Most women's feet measured between three to five inches long.<sup>60</sup> Small three-inch feet, known as *sancun jinlian* (three inch golden lily/lotus), were the source of pride for the Chinese girls in these plays. As one bride exclaims: "Just look at my new shoes [*holding up a shoe three inches in length*]. I'm so glad I've got 'golden lilies.' What big feet you have!"<sup>61</sup> Marriage prospects were closely linked to the size of a woman's feet and the girls in these missionary performances often inform the audience that their mothers warned them that they would not be able to find husbands or mothers-in-law if they did not have golden lilies. For example, in *Christ and the Children of China*, Jack, the son of a missionary, asks why ten-year-old runaway Little Bitterness had to submit to having her "awfully queer"

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57 Gerry Mackie, "Ending footbinding and infibulation: a convention account," *American Sociological Review* 61(6) (1996): 999–1017, p. 1000.

58 London Missionary Society, *Busy Bees*, p. 13. See Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, pp. 113–31 for discussion of the debates on the origins of footbinding.

59 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, p. 18.

60 Drucker, "The influence of Western women on the anti-footbinding movement," p. 180.

61 J.M.B., *He and She from O'er the Sea*, p. 10.

feet bound. She replies that her mother said “no one would ever marry me with big feet, and when I said I didn’t want to marry, she said I must.”<sup>62</sup> Marriage is presented as an obligation rather than a choice.

It is worth noting that mothers-in-law are mentioned more frequently than husbands in the performances. In *He and She from O’er the Sea*, Cherry Blossom informs the audience, “Of course, you have heard that we have a custom of binding a girl’s feet when she is five or six years old. They tell us that we shall never get a mother-in-law unless we have small feet.”<sup>63</sup> In another part of the performance, Bright Orchid does not express joy at the prospect of having a husband but rather says, “I am quite glad to have a mother-in-law of my own. Don’t you want one yourself?”<sup>64</sup> Because she is entering into an arranged marriage, she has never met her husband but knows that “he is rich.” Bright Orchid speaks happily about her pending marriage but the Matchmaker in *Every-day Life in China* describes the bride looking sad at the wedding feast because she “is going to live with complete strangers” and will not be able to see her family for the next four months.<sup>65</sup>

A bride’s happiness seems to depend more on the mother-in-law rather than the husband because a daughter-in-law probably spent more time with her mother-in-law than her spouse. For example, in *Every-day Life in China*, the Matchmaker explains, “should her mother-in-law turn out to be very bad tempered she knows that she will lead a thoroughly miserable life.”<sup>66</sup> She informs the audience, “Our Chinese marriages are based not upon love, but upon convenience.”<sup>67</sup> It was very important for the brides to maintain a good relationship with their mothers-in-law because, as Lung-kee Sun notes, “It is the mother who picks a daughter-in-law to serve herself, rather than the father who picks a bride for his son.... The personal satisfaction and happiness of the married couple are not top priority.”<sup>68</sup> Pleasing the mother-in-law would increase the chances of living in a harmonious household.

## Ideas of domesticity

In the missionary recitations, women with bound feet are presented as indulging in frivolous activities instead of focusing on important tasks such as working around the house. For example, in *Every-day Life in China*, the slave girl complains

62 M. Maude Hoatson, Florence Hoatson and Carey Bonner, *Christ and the Children of China: A Sacred Cantata for Young People*, London: Sunday School Union, 1918, p. 31.

63 J.M.B., *He and She from O’er the Sea*, p. 5.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

65 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, pp. 16–17.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

68 Lung-kee Sun, *The Chinese National Character: from Nationhood to Individuality*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 198.

that her mistresses “leave us to do all the shopping while they spend their time doing fancy work or playing cards and dominoes.”<sup>69</sup> As Hunter observes, some of the older missionaries in Shaowu were careful not to play dominoes or cards because they did not want their Chinese servants to misunderstand their games and think they were gambling.<sup>70</sup> In other performances, a character notes, “My mother said that all a woman needs to know is how to prepare her husband’s food and to obey him.”<sup>71</sup> Clearly the missionaries expected more than that. Although missionaries employed servants as well, they were not idle around the house. Managing a good home meant knowing how to manage the staff properly. The picture presented to audiences was that the Chinese ladies did not engage in useful work or meaningful activities around the house but historians have pointed out that even elite women were expected to ensure discipline was maintained in their homes.<sup>72</sup>

The performances purport that a Chinese wife’s responsibility was to her father, husband, and sons. The Chinese Slave Girl in *Every-day Life in China* asserts:

Some day a husband will be found for me, and I shall be sold to one that seems suitable. Then I shall have to obey him, for women are never supposed to be their own mistresses. We are bound by what we call the “Three Obediences.” When young we must obey our parents, when married we must obey our husbands, and when widows we must obey our sons.<sup>73</sup>

Although the girl mentions the Three Obediences, she fails to introduce the audience to the Four Virtues: “womanly work, womanly deportment, womanly virtues, and womanly speech.”<sup>74</sup> *Sancong side* (Three Obediences and Four Virtues) was advocated in Ban Zhao’s female conduct manual *Lessons for Women* (106 CE) written during the Han dynasty.<sup>75</sup> Qualities associated with womanly virtues include quietness, purity, chastity and modesty. Womanly work encompasses sewing, weaving and cooking while womanly speech focuses on speaking at appropriate times, refraining from speaking ill of others, and not taxing others with too much talk. Maintaining personal hygiene by washing regularly and ensuring that one’s clothes are clean are important features of womanly deportment.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps the author was unaware of the Four Virtues

69 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, p. 2.

70 Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, p. 169.

71 J.M.B., *He and She from O’er the Sea*, p. 10.

72 See Gates, *Footloose in Fujian*, p. 131.

73 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, p. 2.

74 Ryan Dunch, “Christianizing Confucian didacticism: Protestant publications for women, 1832–1911,” *Nan Nü* 11 (2009): 65–101, p. 73.

75 Ban Zhao, *Nü jie qian shi* (Lessons for Women), Shanghai: Sao ye shan fang Minguo 10, 1921.

76 Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (eds), *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, New York: Columbia University Press, 2nd ed., 1999, pp. 821–24.

but the silence may be more because the qualities sound strikingly similar to traditional Victorian values that an ideal woman should embody. By contrast, the Three Obediences are highlighted because they point to Chinese women's lack of agency: from childhood to old age, they are "never their own mistresses."<sup>77</sup>

In addition to the Three Obediences, *Every-day Life in China* mentions female suicide as a demonstration of virtue and chastity when one loses her husband:

I must tell you, too, that should a girl in China lose her betrothed, or a young wife her husband, she is highly commended if she takes opium, or in some other way contrives to follow him into the unseen world, and outside the walls of many Chinese cities, as well as in some of the public streets, there are monumental arches, erected by the command of the Emperor, to perpetuate the memory of young women who have killed themselves rather than outlive their betrothed."<sup>78</sup>

This is reflective of the chastity cult that was dominant in late imperial China (ca. 1368–1912), when "widow suicide became one of the most prevalent and widely praised expressions of chastity."<sup>79</sup> Suicide, according to the author, is treated lightly because "life is so lightly valued by them that the taking of it seems only a very little thing."<sup>80</sup> Although Christian wives were also supposed to be devoted to their husbands, suicide was not an option. The Chinese widows are portrayed as not cherishing the life bestowed upon them by God and the custom of erecting monuments in their honour is considered erroneous.

## Female education

In the performance dialogues, the second most oft-mentioned topic is education. Christian educators of women and girls saw a direct link between spiritual edification and education. This was a greater motivation for them to teach female students to read compared to the necessity of training girls to become capable wives and mothers.<sup>81</sup> In particular, Christian girls lament the fact that the foot-bound Chinese girls are illiterate and therefore unable to read books about God. At the Shanghai Missionary Conference of 1890, Arthur H. Smith remarked, "among the thousands of women who we have met, not more than

77 Scholars have often seen the text by Ban Zhao, *Nü jie qian shi* (Lessons for Women), as promoting female oppression. However, recently Lin-Lee Lee has argued that Ban Zhao was teaching women survival skills in this work. Lin-Lee Lee, "Inventing familial agency from powerlessness: Ban Zhao's *Lessons for Women*," *Western Journal of Communication* 73(1) (2009): 47–66.

78 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, p. 16.

79 Janet Theiss, "Female suicide, subjectivity and the state in eighteenth-century China," *Gender & History* 16(3) (2004): 513–37, p. 514.

80 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, p. 16.

81 Dunch, "Christianizing Confucian didacticism," p. 77.

ten had learned to read."<sup>82</sup> Female missionaries reported that Chinese women regarded learning to read as a novel concept and questioned their ability to acquire reading skills.<sup>83</sup>

The characters in the performances also pity the girls who believe that reading is only useful for boys, who are "worth ten times more than a girl."<sup>84</sup> For example, in the scene where Eternal Peace wants to give Bright Orchid a book about God, she forgets that her friend cannot read and exclaims "poor Bright Orchid!"<sup>85</sup> The reply is, "Read! Why that's only for men and boys to do. I don't want to read."<sup>86</sup> In another play, one of the Chinese boys shares his view on Chinese girls learning to read: "Why, I think it's stupid."<sup>87</sup> In *Busy Bees*, Rosie explains that the Chinese prefer boys because "a girl is supposed to be brainless, incapable of learning anything."<sup>88</sup> According to the Chinese boy in *Every-day Life in China*, girls "can cook our rice and cabbage and meat when we are hungry, and make our shoes and stockings and jackets; but they are not good for much else."<sup>89</sup> This condescending tone is designed to incite indignation from the audience: of course girls are capable of so much more!

The lack of schools for girls and the ignorance of illiterate mothers and grandmothers are cited as reasons most girls do not receive an education: "There was no girls' school in my village, and as mother and venerable grandmother couldn't read a word, it never entered their heads that I ought to learn."<sup>90</sup> Education instead of marriage was presented as a better option. Eternal Peace announces, "I go to the foreigners' school, and am learning so many wonderful things. It's ever so much nicer than getting married."<sup>91</sup> Although Eternal Peace makes

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82 Quoted in Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism, and Freedom*, p. 53.

83 See Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism, and Freedom*, p. 53. Alison Drucker notes that from the 1840s onwards, Christian missionaries, mostly women, started to oppose footbinding more vehemently and proposed that their churches and church-run schools stop admitting children with bound feet. See Drucker, "The influence of Western women on the anti-footbinding movement," p. 183. The first school to refuse foot-bound students was established by American missionary Mary Porter Gamewell (1848–1906) of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in Peking. Although Gamewell envisioned the students at her school running around happily and freely, in reality, she had difficulty with enrolment because mothers were unwilling to unbind their daughters' feet even though it meant a free education. In the first two years after the school opened, only seven girls were enrolled in the classes. For more information on Gamewell, see Ethel Daniels Hubbard, *Under Marching Orders: a Story of Mary Porter Gamewell*, New York: Young People's Missionary Movement of the United States and Canada, 1909.

84 J.M.B., *He and She from O'er the Sea*, p. 2.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

86 *Ibid.*

87 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, p. 10.

88 London Missionary Society, *Busy Bees*, p. 13.

89 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, p. 10.

90 J.M.B., *He and She from O'er the Sea*, p. 6.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 10. The Chinese girls and women who learned to read would have been encouraged to study books on domesticity written in Chinese by Protestant missionaries such as *Jiaxue jizhen* (The Christian Home in China) compiled by Ada Haven, and Helen Nevius' revision of the *Nü sishu* (The Four Books for Women). The three volumes in *Jiaxue jizhen* covered topics such as health and hygiene, childcare, household management, wifely duties, and includes a section against footbinding. Ryan Dunch notes that:



this statement, most of the mission schools taught girls “useful” skills to prepare them for work “in their own homes and in the spheres they must occupy in life.”<sup>92</sup> The Chinese girls in these performances are enthusiastic about attending a foreigners’ school but, according to Jane Hunter’s research on Chinese girls’ experiences at mission schools after 1900, some of the students found the schools gloomy and not as challenging as they would have liked.<sup>93</sup>

## Supporting missions

Because the purpose of the performances was to garner more support for missions, the positive influence of the missionaries must be brought forth in each. In *Every-day Life in China*, for example, the head-knocking during the wedding ceremony is abolished and “the happy pair, if they may be so called, simply bow. This change has been brought about by the influence of the missionaries.”<sup>94</sup> The positive influence of missionaries is also listed as a reason a girl called Kien-Ki was saved. She explains that her mother was so disappointed that she was a girl “that she threw me away, and declared she would not keep me.”<sup>95</sup> If it had not been for her father listening to English missionaries and telling his wife that Christians do not kill their baby girls, Kien-Ki would probably have lost her life. In emphasising the important role of missionaries campaigning against footbinding and changing the attitudes of Chinese parents towards their daughters, the authors of these scripts fail to acknowledge the role Chinese reformists such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao played in rallying against footbinding.

The performance scripts present overly simplistic views on Chinese girls in terms of familial relationships, marriage, footbinding and education. In terms of family, when Little Bitterness in *Christ and the Children of China* meets Jack and Ruth, they welcome her into their home and their missionary parents adopt her into the family as Jesus adopted them to be called “children of God.” Ruth invites Little Bitterness to play with her, excited that they can be friends and “tell each other all our secrets!”<sup>96</sup> Little Bitterness explains that her name reflects the story of her life because when her brother Little Precious died not long after he was born, she was blamed for his death and everything that went wrong in

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while *Jiaxue jizhen* certainly placed considerable emphasis on the domestic roles of women, and justified their education in terms of their domestic role (including their importance in rearing future generations)... It ascribed to women an essential role in ordering the world through their educated agency—moral, religious, practical, and scientific—and for bringing this new age about and putting it on a firm footing. See Dunch, “Christianizing Confucian didacticism,” p. 95.

92 Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*, Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997, p. 180.

93 Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, pp. 234–41.

94 Budden, *Missionary Cantata*, p. 19.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

96 Hoatson, Hoatson and Bonner, *Christ and the Children of China*, p. 31.

the family after that. When asked whether her parents will look for her and want to bring her back from the missionaries' home, she replies that they do not love her enough and that her father once said "he would be glad to know I was dead."<sup>97</sup> At the end of the performance, Little Bitterness's name is changed to "Little Happiness" to reflect her new attitude toward life.

In this short scene, the script writer emphasises the low status of Chinese girls, creating a heart-wrenching story of an unwanted child who needs a new family and presents an idealistic portrait of cross-cultural friendship and sisterly love between the Western children and Chinese children. In theory, missionary parents should have embraced Chinese girls into their family just as Jack and Ruth's father and mother eagerly did. However, as Jane Hunter points out, American missionaries at the turn of the century often discouraged their children from playing with their Chinese peers because they were afraid that Chinese children, who in their view were spoiled, undisciplined, and adept at deceit, would be a bad influence on their innocent ones.<sup>98</sup> Some of them sent their children back home to receive an education and to prevent them from being "corrupted" by the Chinese environment.

Many of the missionary cantatas and recitations juxtapose the Christian girls with the non-Christians, highlighting the emancipation of the girls in relation to their feet. Eternal Peace (a name reflecting the peace she enjoys because she is a Christian) is happy because her feet were never bound like Bright Orchid's and she can "run about the house and walk to school."<sup>99</sup> In *Busy Bees*, one character announces that Chinese Christian girls and women voluntarily unbind their feet because they "intend to glorify Him with their body."<sup>100</sup> This is a reference to 1 Corinthians 6:20 of the King James Bible: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." In *He and She from O'er the Sea* a girl comments that after her neighbour had the bandages taken off her feet, "she walked like a boy. I laughed at her; indeed, we all made fun of her because she had followed the 'foreign devils' and had big feet."<sup>101</sup> However, the girl probably would not move like a boy after unbinding her feet, because as Ko notes, women who unbound their feet after the bones were bent found it more difficult to walk.<sup>102</sup> The reality of the pain experienced by those living life with unbound feet is not considered in the performance. The embodied reality of the "unfettered" feet is not an issue for the script writers. It is assumed that the Chinese girls are able to adapt to unbound feet as easily as changing into another set of clothes or taking on a new name.

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97 Ibid.

98 See Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, pp. 108–09.

99 J.M.B., *He and She from O'er the Sea*, p. 10.

100 London Missionary Society, *Busy Bees*, p. 13.

101 J.M.B., *He and She from O'er the Sea*, p. 6.

102 Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, p. 11.

## Conclusion

In the performances I have analysed, footbinding was equated with bad mothering. However, Chinese women probably thought they were being good mothers by insisting on subjecting their daughters to this pain. As Janet Theiss and others have pointed out, an important element of embodied feminine virtue in China during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was physical pain. In addition to bearing the pain of childbirth, a wife must endure the pain of bound feet if she wished to gain respect in the community and power in the family.<sup>103</sup> Because of their love for their daughters, mothers wanted them to marry well by attracting a rich husband. However, potential suitors would not consider young women without small bound feet. Whereas female missionaries felt they could accomplish more for God if they were single, Chinese women were not so inclined to think this way. In the women's view, the shame and stigma of being an unwanted single woman would probably be much worse than the childhood pain caused by footbinding.

Not only is the content of the scripts problematic, paradoxes revolve around the broader production. Paradoxically, while emphasising the excruciating pain caused by Chinese mothers while binding their daughters' feet, the authors were silent on the plight of British girls suffering under corsets tightly laced by their mothers.<sup>104</sup> In some extreme cases, waists were compressed to only thirty-three centimetres (thirteen inches) wide. In 1909 and 1910, a series of letters to the editor of the general medical journal *The Lancet* argued about the damaging effects of corseting versus the perceived benefits.<sup>105</sup> Detriments to health caused by corsets, such as poor circulation, headaches, indigestion and dizziness, have been well-documented.<sup>106</sup> In the act of performing foot-bound Chinese girls, the corset-wearing British young women may have questioned whether they themselves were glorifying their God with their bodies.

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103 Theiss, "Female suicide, subjectivity and the state in eighteenth-century China," p. 514.

104 According to Valerie Steele, "Older women, not men, were primarily responsible for enforcing sartorial norms," and that "the cultural weight placed on propriety and respectability made it difficult for women to abandon the corset, even if they wanted to." Steele, *The Corset*, p. 51.

105 See "Correspondence: civilisation and the corset," *The Lancet*, November 27, 1909, pp. 1630–31, December 4, 1909, pp. 1705–06; December 11, 1909, pp. 1774–75; January 15, 1910, pp. 203–05; February 5, 1910, pp. 397–98. Costume historian Patricia C. Warner argues that corsets supported the weight of massive skirts as well as the back and that tight-lacing was rare. Patricia C. Warner, "Feminism and costume history: synthesis and reintegration," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 18 (2000): 185–89.

106 Kathleen M. Torrens, "All dressed up with no place to go: rhetorical dimensions of the nineteenth century dress reform movement," *Women's Studies in Communication* 20(2) (1997): 189–210.

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# 14. Bibles, Baseball and Butterfly Sleeves: Filipina Women and American Protestant Missions, 1900–1930

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## Introduction

Sometime before April in 1922, a group of women in Mindanao posed for a photograph. Two of them had come to the Philippines as missionaries from the United States. Four were Filipinas associated with the mission. It is difficult to image what occasion befits the range of clothing they wear. The Filipina women's choice of fine attire—the elegant *terno*—denotes a formal celebration;<sup>1</sup> yet the youngest of them is dressed more casually and *a la americana*. The American women are all in white, one in almost the exact pattern of dress as the young Filipina, the other with a nurse's cap and uniform. Some eye the photographer warily, letting uncertainty or impatience or weariness show in their expressions. One of the missionaries twists her foot sideways. The painted backdrop is standard for a studio, but here its awkward distance behind the group creates the impression that these women are on stage. They seem self-conscious and unsure what we may make of their performance (Figure 31).

Gently but eagerly turning over the image in anticipation of a full caption, one meets with disappointment. The occasion is unidentified. What is pencilled on the back of the photograph reads only: "Miss Anna Fox and Miss Florence Fox with girls, Cagayan, Philippine Islands, 1924."<sup>2</sup> The date is certainly wrong, since *Life and Light*, a monthly magazine published by the Congregational Woman's Board of Missions, used it as the frontispiece of their September 1922 issue.

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1 Scholars vary in the grammatical point of whether one should use the feminine form 'Filipina' as an adjective in English language writing. In this essay I deliberately employ the gendered Spanish-derived language as a feminist practice to emphasise the significance of gender in the representation and identities under analysis here.

2 The "Cagayan" to which these missionaries referred is a city in northern Mindanao, also known as Cagayan de Oro. It is distinct from the province Cagayan in Northern Luzon. This chapter replicates the historical subjects' usage of simply Cagayan. I use the contemporary name "Cagayan" throughout the main text in order to preserve what I regard as contextual historical authenticity.

The anonymous caption writer did not know any of the subjects well, for everyone called “Anna Fox” by her middle name, “Isabel.” The names of the other women—the Filipinas—are not noted at all; they are simply, collectively “girls.”



**Figure 31. Anna Isabel Fox, unnamed Bible students, and Florence Fox, ca. 1921**

Source: By permission of Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ and Houghton Library, Harvard University (ABC78, box 15, folder “Fox, Florence”).

This photograph is emblematic of the colonial archive, an embodiment of the limits and possibilities of research therein. Its elements recur throughout archival documents, as well as early twentieth-century publications. Imperial power required an ideological erasure of indigenous peoples; they mattered in the aggregate, but did not figure as individual human beings.<sup>3</sup> Colonial records are part of the “spoils of rule,” as scholar Antoinette Burton eloquently puts it, wherein women’s experience is fragmented, and indigenous women’s voices prove most elusive of all.<sup>4</sup>

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3 This study draws from extensive archival research in the collections of the American Board of Commissioners to Foreign Missions, Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter abbreviated as ABC), as well as in a broader range of published primary sources, especially those of women’s foreign mission societies, such as *Life and Light for Woman* and *Woman’s Work for Woman*.

4 Antoinette Burton, “Archive stories: gender in the making of imperial and colonial histories,” in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 281–93. As Jeffrey Cox notes in frustration, “The missions recruited large numbers of women assistants of various kinds, classified under shifting categories in the statistical tables and often identified individually not by name [my emphasis] but as a ‘bible woman.’” Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818–1940*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 104. On the importance of visual representations, especially photographic images, to the United States’ imperial power in the Philippines, see David Brody, *Visualizing American Empire: Orientalism and Imperialism in the Philippines*, Chicago: University of Chicago



The visual image meanwhile persists. Its caption may not fill in the photograph's silences, but the photograph remains undiminished. It may be challenging to "read" but it should count as more than just ephemera or illustration.<sup>5</sup> Although anonymous, the Filipinas are compositionally and actually central to the scene. They provide the reason for the photo, the reason for the American missionary women's presence in their country in the first place. They are the subjects (in both senses of that maddeningly ambiguous word): subjected to missionisation, to imperialism, to our gaze; but also comprising the Subject, the topic and focus of the camera. The visual medium reveals their *individual* humanity, as perhaps only a photograph can; pictorially, these four Filipina women are no less individual nor human than their white American counterparts. The photograph also documents relationships among women, across nationality and race. The Americans enclose the Filipinas, but their bodies all turn in the same direction, forming a row. The Filipinas display different forms of adaptation to American fashion and culture, including a style of womanhood of their own.

Despite the near invisibility of Filipinas in the archival record, one may find traces of these women's significance to the missionary enterprise, of their agency and action, of the effect they had on American women, and of the influences and pressures that they felt in turn. A "ubiquitous anonymity" frames the experience of the Filipinas who visited or lived at the mission, sought education or medical care there, forged personal connections to the Americans, perhaps converted to Protestant Christianity, and sometimes became evangelists themselves. Though infrequently named or given a place to address United States audiences through missionary publications or official correspondences, Filipinas' significance to the mission enterprise means the surviving sources nevertheless register their presence.

To private correspondents and sometimes to public audiences as well, photographs attested to the importance and success of foreign missions. Letters and reports by Isabel Fox help identify the women who likely posed for this promotional image, though in sending the photograph to Woman's Board secretary Kate Lamson, Fox referred to them only collectively as "the group of Bible Students."<sup>6</sup> Elisea Eguia, Nicomedesa Miranda and Isabel Maandig had attended the Cagayan Women's Bible Training School since it began in 1919. There they learned about sanitation and "a true home ideal" as well as about theology, church history and sacred music. They served as models of Christian comportment to dormitory residents (who attended the regional public high

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Press, 2010; Benito M. Vergara Jr., *Displaying Filipinos: Photography and Colonialism in Early 20th Century Philippines*, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995; Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

5 Hyaewool Choi, "The visual embodiment of women in the Korea mission field," *Korean Studies* 34 (2010): 90–126, evocatively analyses depictions of women in missionary photography.

6 Anna Isabel Fox to Kate Lamson, 30 April 1922, Mrs. Isabel Fox Smith letters, ABC 17.9.2.

school) and to visiting girls' athletic teams. Eguia had accompanied Fox on a trip to promote the mission dormitory, journeying to remote villages where Fox declared herself to be "the first American woman to visit."<sup>7</sup> As a senior, Maandig taught Christian doctrine in the school and became an assistant matron. She and her peers then fanned out to teach over a span of 500 kilometres (310 miles) along the coast of northern Mindanao.<sup>8</sup> The fourth Filipina may be Miss Chacon, the station's secretary and native assistant.

Considered in context, this photograph reveals the complex ways in which American missionaries helped to shape Filipinas' ideas about modern womanhood. Scholars have begun to recognise that mission stations were important sites of exchange, spaces where Americans attempted to evangelise their culture, nation and gender ideology along with their version of the Gospel, yet found that they had to adapt to local circumstances to some degree.<sup>9</sup> This essay considers Bible women and dormitory residents, their pursuit of more public roles and the politics of dress in particular, and addresses the extent to which the Filipinas exercised agency within Protestant missions. Seen from the Filipina women's perspective, the chance to become Bible women represented a desirable change, especially compared to the subservience dictated for women during the Spanish colonial period. A broader spectrum of Filipinas used missions to gain greater access to education. While they seemingly embraced contemporary American definitions of gender, their concerns about feminine respectability influenced the development of girls' dormitories. And while Filipinas adopted American-style aspirations to participate in athletics and the professions, they also looked to particular arenas, such as dress and bodily practices, to remain culturally distinct from American women. Filipinas at the mission thus developed and enacted their own version of modern womanhood, with a range of meanings and results.

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7 Anna Isabel Fox to friends, 31 March 1922, Mrs. Isabel Fox Smith letters, ABC 17.9.2.

8 Woman's Board of Missions, Philippines, 1915–1927, Documents and Reports, ABC 17.9.2.

9 Studies of the U.S. occupation of the Philippines focus nearly exclusively on the military and the federal government as imperialist agents of "benevolent assimilation." Kenton Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986 and Susan K. Harris, *God's Arbiters: Americans and the Philippines, 1898–1902*, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011 are among the rare exceptions. Studies of the other colonial possessions that the United States won from Spain in 1898 similarly consider missionaries separate from federal interventions—if they consider missionaries at all. (Hawai'i followed a different model, perhaps because missionaries and merchants preceded annexation.) This overlooks how government and missionary enterprises worked in tandem, toward shared goals of Christianity and civilisation. Indeed, Christianity and civilisation are impossible to disaggregate from one another in America's imperialist rhetoric (and sometimes its policies). See Barbara Reeves Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Connie Shemo (eds), *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

## Gender and mission under occupation

American Protestant evangelism embarked for the Philippines after 1898, when the United States took possession of the archipelago.<sup>10</sup> The missionary enterprise thus accompanied and largely reinforced United States rule in the Philippines. Unlike in other places (such as China) where missionaries were reluctant to foment social change,<sup>11</sup> missionaries were in the Philippines for the *purpose* of change. The colonial context called upon them to help modernise and Americanise as well as “Christianise” the Filipino people.<sup>12</sup> As President William McKinley proclaimed in 1898, the United States saw its mission in the Philippines not as the rapacious colonisation of “invaders or conquerors,” but a “benevolent assimilation,” whereby the United States would inculcate native peoples in the “individual rights and liberties which [are] the heritage of free peoples.” While the United States refused to recognise Filipino independence in 1898, it simultaneously denied the intent to govern the Philippines “permanently as colonies.”<sup>13</sup> American women’s presence was crucial to conceptualising and representing United States’ imperialism and assimilation *as* “benevolent” in this manner. Like teachers, nurses and wives, women missionaries enacted a maternalist imperialism, pioneered in the American West, that tempered impressions of aggressive, rapacious territorial expansion.<sup>14</sup>

The planting of United States’ imperialism, and of American Protestant missions, in the Philippines coincided with a particular historical moment when gender ideals were under transformation on both sides of the Pacific. The ideology of domesticity had been central to “woman’s work for woman” in missionary work throughout the nineteenth century; American women around the world celebrated the exaltation of motherhood, homemaking and nurture that in their eyes Christianity conferred.<sup>15</sup> But American women’s participation in the public sphere had radically expanded since that earlier celebration of female domesticity. The New Woman was vivacious, physically active and confident in her own abilities. Heterosociality and other aspects of modern American culture

10 See Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines*.

11 See Leslie H. Flemming, “Introduction,” in *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, ed. Flemming, Boulder, San Francisco, and London: Westview Press, 1989, pp. 1–10.

12 I use quotation marks for “Christianise” because the majority of Filipinos were Catholic, thus already “Christian” at the time.

13 Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006, pp. 109–10.

14 Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990; Amy Kaplan, “Manifest domesticity,” *American Literature* 70(3) (September 1998): 581–606.

15 Jane Hunter, “The home and the world: the missionary message of U.S. domesticity,” in *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, ed. Leslie A. Flemming, Boulder, San Francisco and London: Westview Press, 1989, pp. 159–66, p. 159.

began to challenge the gender-separate women's missionary movement.<sup>16</sup> The increasing numbers of single women missionaries were themselves ambivalently domestic at best. Like other young women of their generation, they embraced new ideals of public engagement, advanced education, professionalism, wage earning and physical vigour. An advertisement for a teacher of religious education and music in the Philippines required not only "thorough knowledge of the Bible [and] special training in Sunday School work" but "a strong constitution," "a college education," and "executive ability." The Woman's Board flyer touted the "social life" available as an attraction of the position—"splendid opportunities for tennis, rides by automobile and horse, walks along splendid roads and by the sea, sea-bathing and boating, etc."<sup>17</sup> Along with the "wonderful opportunity to win the women of the Island, civilized, pagan, and Mohamman, to Christ," missionary women could apparently expect to enjoy themselves in athletic recreation.<sup>18</sup> They would hold positions of authority, earn wages and practise their professions.

It was this revised vision of femininity, rather than strict piety and domesticity, which American missionary women carried to the Philippines in the early twentieth century. "Modern womanhood" was itself offered as evidence of Americans' cultural superiority to "orientals" whose men sequester and dominate their women. According to the scientific racism still prevalent in the 1910s and 1920s, "primitive" societies oppressed women. "Savage" women were drudges who did all the heavy work (of agriculture, for instance) while their men lounged; or they were cloistered, denied any social role apart from motherhood, and hampered even in that by their enforced ignorance. As implicitly taught by the missionaries, "modern womanhood" encompassed by contrast a thorough education, including literature, social science and science. It fitted women to contribute to society more broadly as teachers or nurses, as well as to become better-informed mothers. It encouraged robust health through physical activity and the care of medical experts. It embraced consumer culture as an expression of American-ness.

Multiple historical developments shaped conceptions of gender in the Philippines in the same period. With its Malay origins, Islamic influence in the South, and centuries of Spanish colonisation, the Philippines' complex culture not only differed from the United States but from other parts of Asia. As the young Filipina ethnologist Ramona S. Tirona explained in 1920, "a sort of common law, based upon [Malayan] custom and tradition," long ago accorded Filipinas greater rights

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16 Another important change in the 1920s was the ecumenical emphasis on "World friendship" and social justice, as well as the encouragement of indigenous leadership. This last proved deeply compatible with the U.S. federal policy of "Filipinisation" of civil service on the islands.

17 "WANTED: Teacher of Religious Education and Music. Cagayan, Mindanao, Philippine Islands," folder 1:9 Special Papers: C, Box 1, ABC9.5.1.

18 Ibid.

and privileges than American or English women had.<sup>19</sup> Filipino men recognised women as social equals, even though women could not vote. Filipinas took responsibility in fiscal matters and owned property. Their authority was not only as mothers within their families, but over their tribes.<sup>20</sup> American missionaries noted too how women served as “the managers of the home,” and that the female sex was held in “high regard and respect ... far above the social status of women in all other Oriental cultures.”<sup>21</sup> Diverse native customs and religions persisted albeit to different degrees in the various provinces.

At the same time, Spain had left a strong legacy of patriarchy after three-hundred years of colonial rule in the Philippines. The coloniser’s culture particularly influenced the Filipino élite, whose sons were educated in the Spanish language and according to the Spanish system (and sometimes in Spain itself). Thus, the pious, virtuous feminine type exalted by Filipino nationalists in the late nineteenth century had more qualities in common with contemporary Spanish ideals of womanhood than with the *babaylan* (animist priestesses) who had wielded power in precolonial Filipino communities.<sup>22</sup> Despite a legal tradition according property and inheritance rights to women, Spanish ideology defined women socially and politically by their relation to their husbands and fathers. Anxiety over miscegenation from the mingling of Christians, Jews and Muslims in Spain had bequeathed a deep concern over “pure” bloodlines and a social imperative to control women’s sexuality.<sup>23</sup> A family’s honour was considered to rest upon the virtue of its female members. Catholicism—so prominent in Spain, and the basis of what public schooling existed in the Philippines before 1898—emphasised modesty, domesticity and a pure motherhood, in emulation of Jesus’ mother, the Virgin Mary.

Modernity revised notions of womanhood around the world in the early twentieth century, but took on a particular caste in the Philippine Islands due to the contemporary context of anti-imperialism, revolution and war. Though the wars for independence had called women to fill unfamiliar roles, even on the battlefield, Filipino nationalists saw politics and public life in masculine terms.

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19 Ramona S. Tirona, “The Filipino woman: what she is and what she is not,” *Philippine Herald* 1(2) (Dec 1920): 3–7. Tirona (1888–1947) wrote several ethnological studies of Tagalog customs and beliefs, now collected at the National Library of the Philippines. She studied in the United States and later at the University of London.

20 Tirona, “The Filipino woman.”

21 Charles Briggs, *The Progressing Philippines*, Philadelphia: The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1913, p. 150.

22 Barbara Watson Andaya, “Gender, warfare, and patriotism in Southeast Asia and the Philippine revolution,” in *The Philippine Revolution of 1896: Ordinary Lives in Extraordinary Times*, ed. Florentino Rodao and Felice Noelle Rodriguez, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001, pp. 1–30, pp. 6, 8–9; Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines*, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005, pp. 58–59.

23 Theresa Ann Smith, *The Emerging Female Citizen: Gender and Enlightenment in Spain*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, p. 23.

They did not write of women as potential citizens but rather as “symbolic mothers” and the keepers of tradition.<sup>24</sup> The popular icon of beautiful María Clara (from José Rizal’s novel, *Noli Me Tángere*) exemplified the ideal place of women in the nation, at least in the eyes of its male architects.<sup>25</sup> These ideas remained strong after the unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the United States’ colonial power there; pockets of armed resistance continued decades after the official end of the “Philippines Insurrection” in 1902.

As they worked alongside the federal goal of civilising and “Christianising” the Philippines, United States missions interlaced conventions of domesticity and separate spheres with more “modern” ideas about womanhood. Missionaries attempted to encourage both Filipina women’s domestic interests and their more modern ambitions. American domesticity resounded with the Spanish Catholic colonial legacy and with the Filipino nationalist ideal of femininity that sprang up from it. It was not the True Woman but the New Woman who corresponded to the urban development, educational system, progressive and professional ethos by which United States “benevolent assimilation” purported to “modernise” its colonial acquisition from Spain. Ideals of progress and modernity became inextricable from American culture. Being a modern Filipina in the 1910s and 1920s, explains historian Mina Roces, “meant speaking English, getting an education, and taking up new roles in the public sphere.”<sup>26</sup> As a consequence, wrote Ramona Tirona, “the representative Filipino woman of today is a curious combination of three influences—the Malayan, the Spanish, and the American.”<sup>27</sup> Within the crucible of empire, it rested with Filipinas to determine what sort of womanhood best suited their aspirations, their ideals and their pragmatic concerns.

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24 On gender and Filipino nationalism, see Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000 and *The Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation in the Spanish Philippines*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005; Raquel A.G. Reyes, *Love, Passion, and Patriotism: Sexuality and the Philippine Propaganda Movement, 1882–1892*, Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008.

25 José Rizal, *Noli Me Tángere*, Valencia, Spain: F. Sempere, 1887. For a comparative view, see Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert and Louise Ryan, “‘Mother India/Mother Ireland’ comparative gendered dialogues of colonialism and nationalism in the early 20th century,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 25(3) (May–June 2002): 301–13.

26 In the eyes of Spanish-identified critics, this sort of woman was a *sajonista* or “Saxonist.” Mina Roces, “Women in Philippine politics and society,” in *Mixed Blessing: The Impact of the American Colonial Experience on Politics and Society in the Philippines*, ed. Hazel M. McFerson, Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2002, pp. 159–89, pp. 161, 181.

27 Tirona, “The Filipino woman,” pp. 3–7.



## Bible women

Filipina women's ideas of modern womanhood aligned most closely with those of American missionary women in the role of Bible women. Strongly nineteenth-century cultural assumptions about "sisterhood" dictated that women made the best emissaries to other women, across lines of race, class, language and nationality. Foreign mission board officials, fundraisers and missionaries in the field all concurred that they needed not only American but also native women workers to spread the gospel in the Philippines, as they had elsewhere. Thus, trained native women evangelists, known as "Bible women," had been part of the Woman's Board's missiological vision since its inception in 1869. Bible women throughout foreign missions performed similar and vital tasks: the work of visiting, distributing Christian literature, teaching Bible and Sunday school classes, leading prayer and sometimes providing medical care.<sup>28</sup> They engaged in pastoral work in partnership with Euro-American women missionaries as well.<sup>29</sup> Indigenous women's evangelical work was considered so important that American women's missionary societies supported almost triple the number of native Bible women as they did American women in the field.<sup>30</sup> This reliance only increased with time.<sup>31</sup>

Bible women quickly became indispensable to American Protestant missionaries in the Philippines.<sup>32</sup> Filipina women reportedly exerted formidable influence over their husbands and children, and thus would make exceptionally valuable Bible women. Frederick Jansen of the Presbyterian mission in Cebu carefully noted that, "We need to reach the women of the islands very specially in order to make the work count most."<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, their indigenous culture

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28 A burgeoning body of scholarship addresses Bible women. See Hyaewool Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009; Mrinalini Sebastian, "Reading archives from a postcolonial feminist perspective: 'Native' Bible women and the missionary ideal," *Journal of Feminist Studies and Religion* 19(1) (2003): 5–25; and "Transnational Biblewomen: Asian and African women in Christian mission," special issue of *Women's History Review* 17(4) (September 2008): 489–500. Several of the earliest studies incorporating Bible women appear in Leslie A. Flemming (ed.), *Women's Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, Boulder, New York and London: Westview Press, 1989.

29 According to the initial organisation of "native female helpers" by the Woman's Board from 1869, "Each Bible-woman is under the superintendence of a female missionary, whose aim is to make this largely a work of love." Mrs. Miron Winslow, "Our Bible-Women," in *Third Annual Report, Woman's Board of Missions*, Boston: Rand, Aver and Frye, 1871, ABC 91.6.

30 Dana L. Robert, "Protestant women missionaries: foreign and home," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, vol. 1, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marie Cantlon, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 834–43, p. 837.

31 Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty Years of Woman's Work in Foreign Missions*, New York: the Macmillan Co., 1911, p. 117.

32 "Field Correspondents / Miss Anna Isabel Fox of Cagayan, Philippine Islands, writes," *Light and Life for Woman* 52(5) (May 1922): 197.

33 Jansen to Arthur Brown, 10 Dec 1910, quoted in Kenton Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898–1916*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986, p. 81; also see Frank Laubach to Kate Lamson, 28 January 1921, ABC 17.9.2. Missionaries made similar arguments about indigenous women's

made the mission work relatively easy for Filipinas to take on, especially in comparison with other Asian women. “Girls and women of the Islands have an unquestioned freedom and independence of action in daily business and social life,” unlike the “seclusion of the zenana,” commented Presbyterian missionary Anna Rodgers Wright.<sup>34</sup> Baptist missionary Charles Briggs agreed, “Single women can do effective work in the Philippines [because] there is little of the social prejudice against their sex, or of false ideas about womanhood that will hinder [them].” Even if “there is some prejudice against their preaching in public, yet some of them have even done this effectively.”<sup>35</sup>

Although donors and bureaucrats might insufficiently appreciate them, Bible women’s achievements were apparent to the missionaries in the field. “Without them the work could not have been carried on,” wrote Woman’s Board missionary Isabel Fox, pressing for increased salaries to sustain the Bible women.<sup>36</sup> Unlike missionaries, native women “go into the homes, and meet the people on a common ground,” Fox commented candidly. Bible women did not merely translate American missionaries’ messages; they put their own perceptions and skills to use in the field. As a result, even after Fox gained fluency in Visayan, she continued to tour with “our woman evangelist” (perhaps Elisea Eguia). In 1922, for example, the pair went on a long and successful trip to recruit dormitory and Bible School students.<sup>37</sup>

Religious faith was certainly the most powerful factor motivating Filipinas to become Bible women. Many felt their vocation strongly; one woman chose to become a Bible woman rather than continue pursuing medicine. They learned about inspirational figures like Isabella Thoburn and Pandita Ramabai from missionaries.<sup>38</sup> Yet the position of a Bible woman could afford other sorts of fulfilment and opportunity beyond the spiritual call. Bible studies meant an opportunity for literacy and education as well as mobility. Education in turn helped Filipinas find employment. In fact, public schools could be competition for employment. Isabel Fox returned from a tour to find all five of the girls she had lined up for evangelical work “scattered” to teaching positions elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> Filipinas themselves possibly regarded these teaching posts as interchangeable.

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influence over their families in other contexts as well. See, for example, Carol Devens, “If we get the girls we get the race’: missionary education of Native American girls,” in *The Girls’ History and Culture Reader*, ed. Miriam Forman-Brunell, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011, pp. 104–19.

34 (Mrs George W.) Anna Rodgers Wright, “What Christian women are doing in the Philippines,” part I, *Woman’s Work* (June 1918): 133–34, p. 133.

35 Briggs, *The Progressing Philippines*, p. 150.

36 [Isabel and Evelyn Fox], “The Cagayan Women’s Bible Training School,” ca. 1924, ABC 17.9.2.

37 AIF to friends, 31 March 1922, ABC 17.9.2; letter published as “Touring in tropical seas by Anna Isabel Fox,” *Life and Light for Woman* LII(10) (October 1922): 365.

38 (Mrs. J.L.) Rosalie Hooper, “Our young women’s conference,” *Woman’s Work* 35(6) (June 1920): 125–26, p. 126.

39 Anna Isabel Fox to Kate Lamson, 7 June 1920, ABC 17.9.2.

Others relished the opportunities for leadership and even sociability that Bible training entailed. For example, a Girls' Bible Conference began convening at Baguio in 1918. The ecumenical conference offered Filipinas a chance to represent their country in an international gathering. In 1920, sixty-one young Filipinas joined representatives from multiple countries (China, Siam and the United States) and denominations (Methodist, Presbyterian and United Brethren). Attendees also evinced "a genuine girls' love of the social" at the mountain resort of Baguio. Part of the thrill was being "the first girls that ever had a chartered coach in the Philippines," according to Rosalie Hooper.<sup>40</sup>

The mission could bring together young women with men from outside of their usual circles, men who would not conventionally gain family approval. But Bible women could count on missionaries' support and even intervention if they defied traditional ideas about marriage, to select companions out of romantic love or in service to their new faith. For example, "Miss Iligan," the matron of the Ellinwood Bible School and Dormitory in Manila, at first incurred "her father's displeasure" when she accepted the marriage proposal of "one of the young preachers" at the mission; but "relatives and neighbors" overcame his opposition, and the young woman was able to marry a husband of her choosing.<sup>41</sup> Another Ellinwood graduate, Maria Vidallon, likewise turned to the "judicious help" of her "missionary friends" when she decided to wed Matias Cuadra. Her family had multiple reasons to object: Vidallon was Tagalog, while Cuadra was Moro, and the marriage would uproot her from her community to become a preacher's wife in the South. Yet, missionary Charles Gunn proudly reported, "after a long discussion following the graduation exercises, the match was agreed to by the parents in true grudging Filipino fashion."<sup>42</sup> The first Filipino Muslim to convert to Protestantism, Cuadra became the first Moro minister, and Maria served alongside him as a home missionary.<sup>43</sup>

Marriage to a fellow convert shows how Filipina Bible women (like American women) tried to integrate domesticity with missionary work. Anna Rodgers Wright proudly noted how Emilia Saprid, one of the "bright girls from the provincial towns, who show capacity for leadership," graduated from the mission's school one day and married Domingo Cavan, "one of our strong Christian boys," the next. Emilia Saprid might "continue to help for another year," teaching music and Bible at her alma mater; after that, she would exert

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40 For the later history of this conference, see subsequent articles in *Woman's Work*.

41 Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Board of Foreign Missions, *Annual Report* 84 (1921): 351.

42 Charles A. Gunn, "Romance and education go hand-in-hand," *Woman's Work* 35(6) (June 1920): 130–31, p. 131. Such stories provided subtle evidence of missionaries' effectiveness in introducing more American ideals of marriage as well as rational discourse versus savage customs and superstition.

43 Frank Laubach, *Thirty Years with the Silent Billion*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1932, pp. 45–62. Also see Matias Cuadra, *The Problem of Presenting the Life of Jesus to the Moro Students of the Philippines*, New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1930; and Laubach, *Seven Thousand Emeralds*, New York: Friendship Press, 1929.

Christian influence only within the stricter compass of her home and family.<sup>44</sup> Missionaries were also ready to support Filipinas who forewent marriage entirely, however. Missionary wives certainly meant to serve as models but their families competed for their time and energy—indeed, the main example that missionary wives set was how to keep a Christian home and nurture children. Visiting and teaching beyond the confines of the mission station “can be done only by a woman not tied down to the home or classroom,” Wright admitted.<sup>45</sup> In fact, tensions erupted in the 1920s over whether missions “should” be training women to be pastors’ wives or to be Bible scholars.

Whether married or single, Bible women took on important work as teachers, evangelists, deaconesses and religious leaders. Beginning during their training, Filipinas taught Sunday schools, some leading multiple classes. Often the American women would initiate a woman’s class and then hand it over to the “older girls.” For example, Miss Chacón, the first Bible woman in Mindanao, worked first as Frank Laubach’s secretary, then as Isabel’s “companion and assistant,” and led evening prayers at the girls’ dormitory. Isabel Maandig began teaching Christian doctrine at the Carruth Bible School even before she graduated in 1924. The Woman’s Board then employed Maandig through 1927, regularly raising her annual salary during that time. She went on to organise her own Visayan Woman’s Bible Class and the majority of her students became members of the church.<sup>46</sup>

Bible women also travelled to other towns to evangelise, organise classes and women’s meetings, and recruit dormitory residents.<sup>47</sup> In Dipolog, Elisea Eguia organised and taught her own kindergarten, while her classmate Nicomedesa Miranda worked in Cabadbaran. The young Bible students at Jaro covered a large area on foot (“and barefoot at that”), having begun “two Bible classes for children, one in each town,” and baptising converts themselves. “We have a prayer meeting here three times a week. We go from house to house among the members and we all pray, every one of us. Then too, we go into the Catholic part.” They approached people both in their homes and in public markets, singing hymns to attract attention.<sup>48</sup> It was a small step from these initiatives to extended service on their own, without the companionship or supervision of a United States missionary. The Baptist Bible women in Iloilo, for instance, continued their work independently for a year and a half after the American

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44 (Mrs. George W.) Anna Rodgers Wright, “What Christian women are doing in the Philippines,” part II, *Woman’s Work* (July 1918): 157–58, p. 158.

45 Ibid.

46 G. Evelyn Fox, “Fourth Annual Report of the Woman’s Bible Training School,” 1923, ABC 17.9.2.

47 See Anna Isabel Fox to Kate Lamson, 19 October 1922, ABC 17.9.2.

48 Anna V. Johnson, “In training at Jaro,” *Helping Hand* (1909): 15.

woman missionary there fell gravely ill.<sup>49</sup> A Bible woman shepherded the “substantial congregation” at Buenavista, which was without a regular pastor.<sup>50</sup> Soon the missions were receiving requests for regular Filipina deaconesses (*Pastoras*) from Filipino churches.<sup>51</sup>

Not every mission granted Bible women such responsibilities and autonomy. Jaro closed its Training School during founder Anna Johnson’s furlough rather than leave it in the hands of a Filipina woman alumnae. But a number of Filipinas gained positions of authority as teachers and preachers in their own right. The periodical *Woman’s Work* reported on the electric effect of a Bible woman named Catalina. “In one of the Iloilo villages, Catalina has been instrumental in bringing many to the Saviour, she being the *maestra* or village teacher and a woman of great influence. Recognising the advantage of such influence, a class has been instituted for women and in every village as far as convenient some bright young woman has been selected to receive special instruction.”<sup>52</sup>

Women evangelists such as Josefa Abierta and Julia Sotto de Yapsutco epitomised the modern, Christian Filipina on these lines. Abierta’s death in 1922 cut short a brilliant beginning as a lawyer and founder of the Philippine Chapter of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. She had been one of the first Baptist converts in Capiz.<sup>53</sup> Yapsutco was also well educated, started a women’s club and worked ardently in her faith. She inspired her husband’s conversion, published a religious periodical, taught the Bible, and became a preacher after her husband’s death. Yapsutco eventually became a pastor of the United Evangelical Church of the Philippines in Iligan, Lanao, with a congregation of about a hundred, both American and Filipino.<sup>54</sup> She became, like the Woman’s Board of Mission workers, a woman with other women’s concerns at heart, but not limited to the domestic circle. She used her position as Bible woman assertively, demanding that the United States live up to the promises of benevolent assimilation. “Give us institutions and dormitories so as to produce people for Christ. While we cannot have this, you cannot expect the Filipino Christians to take care of the pagans in the Philippines,” Yapsutco exhorted in a letter to missionary Frank Laubach.<sup>55</sup> Clearly, in Yapsutco’s vision, the United States should provide the means, but Filipinos would do the work of Christ themselves.

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49 Perla D. Belo, “Anna V. Johnson: missionary pioneer, educator, and evangelist,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 12 (1993): 283–96, p. 286.

50 “Field Work September 15 to October 27, East Coast,” typescript manuscript, Folder 65:19, ABC 77.1.

51 Clyde Bartholomew, “The new generation in the Philippines,” *Woman’s Work* (June 1919): 125; Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., *Annual Report* 85 (1922): 384.

52 “Report of Philippines Mission,” *Woman’s Work* 20 (1905): 154.

53 American Baptist Historical Society, *The Chronicle* (1938): 172.

54 Photograph, “Iligan, P.I. Pastor – Mrs. Julia Yapsutco,” folder 20.8, box 20, ABC 78.2.

55 Letter to Frank Laubach; published as Julia de Yapsutco [sic], “Field Correspondents,” *Light and Life for Woman* 51(6) (June 1921): 234.

As with their male counterparts, education and authority led Bible women not simply to assimilation, but to the means of expressing resistance to prolonged rule by the American missionaries who acknowledged the unusual strength of independence movements.<sup>56</sup> Isabel Fox Smith came to advocate “cooperation” with Filipinos in the face of their “very strong nationalistic feeling.”<sup>57</sup> Missionaries would need to be partners, not directors, in order to instill loyalty in local populations. The prominence of native evangelists, including Bible women, mirrored the gradual “Filipinisation” of civil service, by which the United States federal government planned a gradual transition to self-government. Yet nineteenth-century Filipino nationalism had had a strong anti-clerical inclination. Just as Catholic friars had seemed the arm of Spain’s colonial power, so did some view missionaries as the embodiment of American imperialism. Indeed, prominent American Catholics lobbied hard to prevent the independence of the Philippines.<sup>58</sup> At its extreme, nationalism demanded separate, indigenous Christian churches.<sup>59</sup> More commonly, Bible women, male preachers, and congregations remained part of American church structures while resisting linguistic and cultural assimilation. For example, *Ang Dalan*, the weekly religious paper that Julia Sotto de Yapsutco edited, was in Visayan, not English, and she spent many years helping to translate the Bible into Visayan.<sup>60</sup> Bible women saw their task as that of converting their people to Protestantism, not to Americanism.

## A modern education

Becoming a Bible woman involved more than just vocation; education was the key to transforming Filipinas into beacons of Christianity. American and Filipina women both embraced education enthusiastically as a highly desirable facet of modern womanhood. Equally innovative women’s education, at Mount

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56 Anna Isabel Fox, “Summer work at Cagayan,” *Light and Life for Woman* 52(9) (Sept. 1922): 322–24, p. 323.

57 Isabel (Fox) Smith to Mabel Emerson, 25 May 1926, ABC FM 17.9.2.

58 Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, pp. 358–60.

59 In 1909, Methodist Episcopal convert Nicolas Zamora had broken with American churches to found *La Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en las Islas Filipinas* (IEMELIF) and thereby bringing “Christ to the nation the Filipino way.” See F. Albert Tizon, “Filipino Protestant faith in revolutionary times: historical elements in an evangelical theology of social transformation,” *Journal of Asian Missions* 4(1) (2002): 3–30, p. 9.

60 Frank J. Woodward to Luella E. Jones, 9 April 1942, Box 80 folder 66:7 – Yapsutco, ABC 77.1.



Holyoke for example, had transformed American Protestant women into foreign missionaries.<sup>61</sup> In turn, the United States' women's missionary movement had founded over 3,200 schools around the world by 1909.<sup>62</sup>

The novel prospect of education appealed to many Filipinas, not only those who sought preparation as Bible women, but also those who had yearned for secular schools and advanced study. In fact, some of the women who travelled to Iloilo to attend the new Women's Bible Training School decided the public school suited them better. The Spanish had not proscribed education for women; provincial parochial schools taught both boys and girls. But even after some reform and expansion starting in the mid-nineteenth century, the under-funded colonial education system reached only very small numbers of Filipino children (200,000 elementary students at its peak in 1898). *De jure* compulsory education did not reach the general population *de facto*. As a result, in 1900, only 30 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women in the Philippines were literate.<sup>63</sup>

Missions in the Philippines did not need to build their own system of schooling in reading and other basics, as they did elsewhere, because of the active attention that the United States gave to expanding education upon taking possession of the archipelago. This education was a cornerstone of "benevolent" imperialism,<sup>64</sup> that is, as a tool to "uplift, Christianize, and civilize" the Filipino, eventually paving the way for Filipino self-government. The federal commissioner of education proudly reported that "throughout the archipelago, the schoolhouse follows the flag."<sup>65</sup> He could as well have said that the schoolhouse followed

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61 On various aspects of education and women missionaries, see Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; Patricia Hill, *The World their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870–1920*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985; Jane Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984; Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Gael Graham, *Gender, Culture and Christianity: American Protestant Mission Schools in China, 1880–1930*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995; Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (eds), *Gendered Missions. Women and Men in Missionary Discourse*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999; Dana Robert, *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers: Missionary Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2002; Dana Robert, *American Women in Mission*, Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1996; Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, Religion and "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia, 1860s–1940s*, NY: Routledge, 1999; Ruth Tucker, *Guardians of the Great Commission*, Grand Rapids MI: Academie Books, 1988; C. Insun Yoon, "Civilizing mission for women," Ph.D. diss., Madison NJ.: Drew University, 2008.

62 Robert, "Protestant women missionaries: foreign and home," p. 837.

63 Carolyn Israel Sobritchea, "American colonial education and its impact on the status of Filipino women," in *Women's Role in Philippine History: Selected Essays*, University Center for Women's Studies, Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 2001, pp. 79–108, p. 81.

64 Benjamin Justice, "Education at the end of a gun: the origins of American imperial education in the Philippines," in *American Post-Conflict Educational Reform: From the Spanish-American War to Iraq*, ed. Noah W. Sobe, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 19–52, p. 35. Also see Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899–1903*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1984.

65 F.F. Hilder, "Education in the Philippines," Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior, Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1898–1899, LX; quoted in Justice, "Education at the end of a gun," p. 40.

the Army, since the United States military established schools in the wake of pacification—"poor," "aimless" and "chaotic" as the American Philippine Commission reported those schools were.<sup>66</sup> Act No. 74, the Organic School Law of the Philippines (1901), formed "a formal, civilian Bureau of Education" and established ten permanent school divisions throughout the islands. The United States' system of public education encompassed primary schools, intermediate industrial schools focusing on practical education, and one high school per province. The federal government built over 4,000 public schools by 1910, serving 355,722 elementary school students and 3,400 high school students: more than double the number under Spanish rule. Enrolment reached almost a million by 1920, though even this did not suffice.<sup>67</sup>

Scholars continue to debate the extent to which this colonial education was progressive, as well as, more recently, how Filipinos shaped and abrogated United States' educational policy.<sup>68</sup> The schools' curriculum emphasised vocational and industrial education, on the model of Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes in the United States, schools that, not coincidentally, also served racialised "others."<sup>69</sup> But such institutions met demands for educational reform within the Philippines, dating to the 1870s and 1880s, when nationalists called for free secular schools "including both vocational and technical education and physical education."<sup>70</sup> Schools prepared both civil servants and a professionalised middle class, that is a "Filipinised" government bureaucracy and a modernised, Americanised society in the Philippines.<sup>71</sup>

The new federal system dramatically expanded educational opportunities for Filipinas in particular. Before the United States' occupation, Filipina intellectuals like Graciano Lopez Jaena had begun to call for expanded education for women, so that women might also contribute to national life and independence. The

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66 Justice, "Education at the end of a gun," p. 41.

67 Alexander A. Calata, "The role of education in Americanizing Filipinos," in *Mixed Blessing: The Impact of the American Colonial Experience on Politics and Society in the Philippines*, ed. Hazel McFerson, Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2002, pp. 89–97, p. 91.

68 Justice, "Education at the end of a gun," pp. 21–22. A pioneering work that explored the place of public education within federal policy in the Philippines is John Morgan Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags: The United States Army in the Philippines*, Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1973.

69 Glenn Anthony May, *Social Engineering in the Philippines: The Aims, Execution, and Impact of American Colonial Policy, 1900–1913*, Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1980, pp. 124–25, cited in Justice, "Education at the end of a gun," p. 45.

70 David E. Gardinier and Josefina Z. Sevilla-Gardinier, "Rosa Sevilla de Alvero and the Instituto de Mujeres of Manila," *Philippine Studies* 37(1) (1989): 29–51, p. 36.

71 Vince Boudreau, "Methods of domination and modes of resistance: the U.S. Colonial State and Philippine mobilization in comparative perspective," in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives*, ed. Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, pp. 256–90, p. 266. Higher education played a role in this as well; an act of the legislature established the University of the Philippines in 1908, with colleges in Agriculture, Arts, Engineering, Fine Arts, Law, Medicine and Veterinary Science. See Roces, "Women in Philippine politics and society," p. 179.

few advanced institutions open to Filipina women as of 1898 were Catholic schools and newer normal schools for women, established by the Spanish colonial government in the late nineteenth century. These were largely limited to the élite classes in urban areas, and a total of only about a thousand women graduated from the normal schools in the thirty years before 1898. Even for the wealthy, women had no other options for higher learning; only the sons of élite families went abroad for education.<sup>72</sup> United States' policies opened law, medicine, journalism and other professions to Filipinas for the first time. Boys and girls followed the same curriculum except for the varied skills they learned through industrial work (such as woodwork vs. lace-making).<sup>73</sup> Although the American schools did not explicitly encourage sexual equality, the new education prepared native-born women for respectable, stable, well paid work in nursing and teaching, and a chance of upward economic mobility.<sup>74</sup> In the province of Misamis, the United States government employed 155 Filipino men and 119 Filipina women teachers, who greatly outnumbered the American teachers.<sup>75</sup> Thus nationalist intellectual Ramona Tirona praised the "wider possibilities" that the United States had opened to her and other Filipinas, vocations apart from that of wife or Catholic nun. Now, a modern Filipina "studies medicine, pharmacy, nursing, and even law with a zealous interest; and recently she is venturing into the study of journalism and engineering with unhesitating steps."<sup>76</sup>

Protestant missions in the Philippines saw themselves as partners of the federal government in education, filling in the religious components missing from a secular system. With respect to Filipinas, they established a range of institutions for female students. The many mission schools already educating thousands of girls in Japan, China, India and elsewhere, often emphasised domestic science, or perhaps preparation for teaching and secretarial studies, rather than "training as missionaries."<sup>77</sup> In the Philippines, some schools did have women as religious

72 Gardinier and Sevilla-Gardinier, "Rosa Sevilla de Alvero and the Instituto de Mujeres of Manila," pp. 33–35.

73 Sobritchea, "American colonial education and its impact on the status of Filipino women," p. 86.

74 Ibid., p. 79. "Felipa de la Peña and two other Filipino nurses were graduated in August 1909. They were the pioneer nurses in the Islands." See Amelia Pott Klein, "Nursing experiences in the Philippines," *Woman's Work* 25(7) (1910): 147–49, p. 149.

75 *Census of the Philippine Islands 1918*, vol. IV, part II, Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1921, p. 200.

76 Tirona, "The Filipino woman," pp. 3, 5. See also Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea*, p. 7. As in Korea (but not China and Japan), the majority of professional women, New Women, feminists were Christian, but in the Philippines these women were both Protestant and Catholic, and not necessarily a product of missions or mission schools.

77 R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980, p. 121. The Methodist women's missionary society and the Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society, for example, ran "numerous schools" of the less ambitious sort in Cuba, and almost all Anglican schools in Africa (even the "higher" boarding schools) stressed domestic training for girls. Jason M. Yaremko, "'The path of progress': Protestant missions, education, and U.S. hegemony in the 'New Cuba,' 1898–1940," in *American Post-Conflict Educational Reform: From the Spanish-American War to Iraq*, ed. Noah

leaders in mind. With the support of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Winifred Spaulding founded the Harris School (later Harris Memorial College) in Manila in 1903.<sup>78</sup> Spaulding was herself a deaconess who had been Superintendent of Fisk Bible and Training School in Kansas City, and specialised in nursing deaconesses. Presbyterian missionaries founded Ellinwood, another Bible school for girls in Manila, along with a Boys' Dormitory to meet what they perceived as local needs.<sup>79</sup>

The American Board established what was perhaps the most ambitious school for Bible women in Cagayan in 1923. Its founder, Isabel Fox, had visited several Bible schools on her journey from the United States to take up her missionary post in the Philippines: the Union Bible School in Yokohama, the Evangelistic School in Kobe, and Ellinwood and Harris in Manila.<sup>80</sup> Building on all of these examples, Fox conceived of a school for women in Mindanao with a rigorous three-year curriculum. Its graduates would become Bible women and constitute a vanguard to spread the gospel among their people. Someday the institution might even become a women's college. The Woman's Board embraced Fox's vision with an exceptionally large disbursement of \$13,000 in 1923 from the estate of an older member of the Woman's Board. Ellen Carruth's legacy enabled the construction of a building to serve as a Bible Training School and an enlarged girls' dormitory.<sup>81</sup>

The modern education provided by Carruth Bible School included "new ideas of sanitation and hygiene" along with "the ideal of a strong, pure, Christian girlhood" to lay the groundwork for "Christian motherhood" and a strong church. Such an education aimed to "transform the home, and best of all, transform the life."<sup>82</sup> Consequently, Christian study of Scripture shared space on the curriculum with practical education and liberal arts and sciences. "A practical

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Sobe, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 53–74, p. 68; Modupe Labode, "From heathen kraal to Christian home: Anglican mission education and African Christian girls, 1850–1900," in *Women and Missions: Past and Present, Anthropological and Historical Perceptions*, ed. Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener, Providence, RI: Berg, 1993, pp. 126–44.

78 Spaulding led the school from 1901 to 1903; in 1904 it was renamed the Kansas City National Training School for Deaconesses and Missionaries.

79 "Everything seems to indicate that the kind of school needed here is a Bible school." See "Educational branch of the Philippines mission," *Woman's Work* 22(7) (1907): 157. Ellinwood was founded in 1899 and Union in 1907.

80 "Miss Anna Isabel Fox, our new missionary to the Philippines, writes from Cagayan," *Light and Life for Woman*, 49(1) (January 1919): 35–38, p. 35.

81 Kate Lamson to Evelyn Fox, 8 October 1923, ABC 17.9.2. Ellen Carruth was an officer of the Woman's Board for 23 years, first as assistant treasurer then treasurer. The funding of this school was an exceptional event; as of 1925, the Woman's Board (of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) supported 29 girls' boarding schools, 300 day schools, and 20 kindergartens; but it sponsored only one other training school for Bible women. See Kate G. Lamson, "History of the Woman's Board for Missions," typescript manuscript, 1927–28, p. 85, ABC 88.

82 Marian Wells Woodward, "Conditions among the Filipina women," *Light and Life for Woman* 48(5) (May 1918): 211.

course of home nursing” for all Bible women would enable them to “help in the homes they enter,” planned Isabel Fox, incorporating an idea already in place at the Methodist Deaconess Training School in Manila, which Fox had visited upon her arrival in the Philippines.<sup>83</sup> The senior Bible scholars gained experience volunteering in the mission hospital.<sup>84</sup> Their “practical” instruction centred on medical knowledge, from nursing to “ventilation and sanitation”<sup>85</sup> but also included domestic science and gardening.<sup>86</sup> In addition, they studied health sciences (including obstetrics), sociology, English and history in conjunction with the Bible. Music instruction included piano, organ and choral singing. Composition, reading, psychology and pedagogy rounded out a course of study designed “to develop ... independence of thought and action.”<sup>87</sup>

While some American women missionaries like the Foxes envisioned Filipinas as evangelists in their own image, others saw female students primarily as future pastors’ wives. Filipinas’ experiences at Harris, Ellinwood and Carruth Bible Schools thus differed from what they could expect at Union Theological Seminary (1904) in Manila, where the emphasis was on producing male Filipino pastors.<sup>88</sup> In 1921, Congregationalists and Presbyterians in Dumaguete opened the Silliman Bible School, which became co-educational in 1924 mostly by taking in the wives of its male students.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, Jaro Industrial School in Iloilo City, founded for boys in 1905 by Baptist missionaries, began accepting girls in 1913 for vocational preparation. The curriculum was relatively limited at the Women’s Bible Training School at Jaro, but even there included nursing and religious music. One needed more than study of the Bible, founder Anna Johnson explained, to bring others “to a knowledge of the living God.”<sup>90</sup>

Filipinas saw an advantage to such diverse instruction. For example, training in both teaching and hospital work was popular, no doubt for pragmatic reasons.<sup>91</sup> The missions themselves might employ the women they had educated; Josefa Esteban became the office secretary at Ellinwood upon finishing her degree

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83 Anna Isabel Fox, “Summer work at Cagayan,” *Light and Life for Woman* 42(9) (September 1922): 322–24, p. 323; “Miss Anna Isabel Fox, our new missionary to the Philippines, writes from Cagayan,” p. 35.

84 Floyd O. Smith, “Philippine Mission of the ABCFM Mission Hospital, Cagayan, Misamis. Annual Report 1924,” 1925, ABC 17.9.2.

85 Florence Fox to Kate Lamson, 5 May 1921, ABC 17.9.2.

86 Mrs F.C. Laubach, “Our new Philippine task,” *Light and Life for Woman* 48(6) (June 1918): 251–54, p. 251.

87 Evelyn Fox to Kate Lamson, 4 November 1923, ABC 17.9.1.

88 Run cooperatively by Baptists, Congregationalists, Disciples of Christ, United Brethren, Methodists and Presbyterians, Union Seminary employed female teachers, including Ella Laubach. See Herbert E.B. Case, “History of the Philippine Mission, 1911–1942,” typescript manuscript, p. 11, ABCFM 88.

89 The decision to admit women to Silliman indirectly led to the closure of the Carruth Bible School.

90 Belo, “Anna V. Johnson,” p. 287; Anna V. Johnson, “In training at Jaro,” *Helping Hand* (1909): 14–15.

91 “Field Correspondents / Miss Florence Fox writes from Cagayan, Philippine Islands,” *Light and Life for Woman* 52(10) (October 1922): 365–68, p. 369.

there in 1921.<sup>92</sup> Others put their experience and knowledge to use elsewhere. Training in singing, fitted girls from Cebu for “increasing demand ... at school and outside functions.”<sup>93</sup> And those with a deep religious calling could begin the work of Bible women and deaconesses even as students by teaching, leading open-air prayer meetings and “sing[ing] the Gospel message” in the villages.<sup>94</sup> Congregationalist Bible students in Mindanao had charge of nine Sunday schools in 1922; in each one, as many as sixty-four children and adults would take up uncomfortable seats—“merely bamboo poles laid across stakes driven into the ground”—in the shade.<sup>95</sup>

## Dormitories and athletics

Missions provided Filipinas with expanded access to education in another way besides direct instruction. “Dormitory work,” as the missionaries termed it, represented an accommodation to local populations. Filipinos generally looked with favour on the expanded system of public schools under American occupation. Yet the distance, especially to a provincial high school, could be great, taking over a day’s travel in each direction. In addition, some Filipino families (“Moros,” or Muslims, in particular, who dominated in the south) were reluctant to send their daughters to school with boys.<sup>96</sup> This partly explains the low number of women who finished university degrees in the first two decades of United States’ rule; only twelve women graduated from the University of the Philippines between 1880 and 1920.

The mission-run single-sex dormitory developed in response to this situation. A girls’ dormitory appealed to Filipino parents as a protected space to board their daughters near schools with no suitable housing. Older unmarried women also chose to live in dormitories while completing upper level programs. In this way, missions brought the new system of public education within reach of the local population. For example, the dormitory in Cagayan made the local public high school an attractive prospect to areas some distance away, such as the strongly Catholic town of Mambajao, a “lovely spot” on a volcanic island, over a day’s journey from the mission. Girls might come from Mambajao to Cagayan to be educated, and in turn, “if we can get the school girls into a Christian environment” in the dormitory, its founder Isabel Fox calculated, some might

92 Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Board of Foreign Missions, *Annual Report*, 1921, p. 352.

93 Eda C. Bowman, “At the Emerson Dormitory for girls,” *Woman’s Work* 34(6) (1919): 131.

94 Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Board of Foreign Missions, *Annual Report*, 1921, p. 352.

95 A. Isabel Fox to Kate Lamson, 19 October 1922, ABCM 17.9.2.

96 Effa Laubach to Kate Lamson (Foreign Secretary of the Woman’s Board), 28 May 1918, ABC 17.9.2. Also see Effa Laubach, *Light and Life for Woman* 48(9) (September 1918): 374–77, p. 374.



eventually become Bible students.<sup>97</sup> The dormitory proved a successful venture; Fox herself found it a surprisingly easy and “splendid opportunity for doing personal work.”<sup>98</sup>

For missionaries, then, dormitories responded to a need in the community and brought possible converts into proximity with the missionaries. Further, they envisioned the dormitory itself as a self-supporting enterprise that would serve as a Christian home, supplementing and completing the girls’ education. The very architecture of the dormitory at Cagayan evoked American Protestantism; the building was “very much of a New England type,” with large windows and a “gray and white exterior.”<sup>99</sup> The dormitory could inculcate certain moral and religious values in young Filipinas—requiring, for example, that prayers would be said morning and night, and Bible verses and hymns learned. Yet its identity as a refuge and home was always central. In appealing for funds to support the enterprise, the Woman’s Board periodical *Life and Light* emphasised the “proper protection” and “personal care” that Miss Fox would take of the girls, and that the dormitory represented an “enlarge[ment] of the borders of her home.”<sup>100</sup> The magazine subsequently captioned a photo as “Miss Fox and Her Family of Girls.” The metaphor was not entirely misplaced since Isabel referred to residents as “a family of my own.”<sup>101</sup> Indeed, Fox appeared more as a matron than a teacher—ironically assuming a more domestic role in order to support Filipinas’ nascent professionalism.

From the creation of a domestic female space—so seemingly old-fashioned—the dormitories served as a starting place for modernisation and emancipation much as the female spaces of settlement houses and women’s clubs had done for American women. By improving home conditions among Filipinos, missions would augment the work of public schools “to enlighten the present generation,” Marian Wells Woodward commented.<sup>102</sup> “Aside from giving these girls ... a good home and proper care and chaperonage,” as Filipino families sought, dormitories taught them modern ideas about sanitation, Evelyn Fox reported.<sup>103</sup>

Filipina dormitory residents likewise were not confined to the domestic roles that would have ordered their lives with their families. The dormitory offered

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97 Anna Isabel Fox, “Touring in tropical seas,” *Light and Life for Woman* 52(10) (October 1922): 365–68, p. 365.

98 “Field Correspondents: Miss Anna Isabel Fox writes from Cagayan Station, P.I.,” *Light and Life for Woman* 50(2) (February 1920): 72–75, p. 72.

99 Evelyn Fox to Mabel Emerson, 24 September 1926, ABC 17.9.2.

100 Kate G. Lamson, “Editorials: another open door,” *Light and Life for Woman* 49(8) (September 1919): 360–61, p. 360.

101 “Field Correspondents: Miss Anna Isabel Fox writes from Cagayan Station, P.I.,” p. 73.

102 Woodward, “Conditions among the Filipina women,” p. 211.

103 Report of Fourth Year of Girls’ Dormitory [1923], Documents and Reports, ABC 17.9.2.

opportunities for Filipina women's leadership. The girls oversaw the Cagayan Dormitory through a Student Assembly and Student Council. Girls at other dormitories and schools likewise organised self-government with the approval of the mission.<sup>104</sup> In fact, missionaries saw the dormitory as a field for Bible School students to exert their Christian influence.<sup>105</sup> The mission station at Cagayan soon began requesting increasing funds to pay salaries to Isabel Maandig and Julia Yapsutco as "native assistants" in the school and dormitory. Evelyn Fox wished eventually to hand over leadership to one of these women, or to an unnamed third Filipina, "a young married woman, of such a beautiful nature, and with eight years [*sic*] experience in primary teaching." Fox urged the Board to provide these women with additional professional training, in the new Normal School in Manila or in the United States.<sup>106</sup>

By its fourth year, the Cagayan dormitory also accommodated Filipinas' enthusiasm for a very "modern" feminine pursuit: competitive athletics sports. Baseball, basketball and other sports were unknown to Filipinas prior to American occupation.<sup>107</sup> Now these pursuits became part of a modern vision of femininity. The enthusiasm for girls' baseball matched the contemporary celebration of physical vitality and recreational sports among American women. For Filipinas and Americans alike, athletics denoted a modern, active womanhood. "Muscular Christianity" was not utterly restricted to men anymore; in the 1920s, it proved expansive enough to enfold all youth, even girls.<sup>108</sup>

Athletic teams were organised by public schools at the local level, arranged into associations by the Director of Education, and toured for competitions. Mission schools too developed athletic programs for girls. The Ellinwood School in Manila offered female students calisthenics and indoor baseball. "We have some very good players," boasted Julia Mott Hodge, reporting on how the team had won its first match.<sup>109</sup> The players themselves showed quiet pride in their accomplishments. The ten fourteen- or fifteen-year-old girls on the baseball team from Oroquieta won over their parents' misgivings at participating in

104 Bowman, "At the Emerson Dormitory for girls," p. 131.

105 Evelyn Fox to Kate Lamson, 19 May 1924, ABC 17.9.2.

106 Evelyn Fox to Mabel Emerson, 18 October 1926, ABC 17.9.2.

107 Janice A. Beran, "Americans in the Philippines: imperialism or progress through sport?" *International Journal of the History of Sport* 6(1) (1989): 62–87.

108 On muscular Christianity, see: Donald Hall (ed.), *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Robert Higgs, *God in the Stadium: Sports and Religion in America*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995; Tony Ladd and James Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sport*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999; David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA and Their Forerunners, 1870–1920*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983; Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (eds), *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, NY: New York University Press, 1997; Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

109 Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Board of Foreign Missions, *Annual Report* 82–83 (1919): 338.

the championship in Manila; their fast pitching and strong hitting astonished the crowd. They proceeded to win the title and carry the banner back home. "Everybody said when they saw it, 'We all knew that Mindanao would someday be the greatest island of them all, but we did not suppose it would begin with baseball.'" The missionaries praised their home team for being so "healthy, and strong, and ... practic[ing] very, very faithfully," without indulging in "too many sweets." Their mothers "were as proud of their baseball daughters as they could be."<sup>110</sup>

While the American Board's mission at Cagayan did not directly organise girls' athletics, its dormitory hosted visiting athletic teams, especially girls' baseball teams. Inter-provincial athletic meets filled Carruth Memorial Hall beyond its capacity once or twice each year in the 1920s; with many of the visiting teams as their guests, missionaries lacked enough bedding. "The class room, ironing room, and *sala* will be sacrificed for bedrooms during this invasion," wrote Isabel Fox to the Board. Cots filled the Bible Class room. "This made a great deal of confusion but we think it paid and made us more friends."<sup>111</sup>

Like the dormitory work in general, missionaries saw an advantage to hosting young female athletes: gathering young Filipinas where they might come under religious influence. Baseball itself could be played in a Christian manner. For example, the champion Oroquieta team invited girls from Bukidnon, a town in the mountains, to play against them. The Bukidnon girls were astonishingly young, "so little and so thin," and used to the cool temperatures of a higher altitude. "Of course the other teams beat them as we all expected," reported Effie Laubach.

But the surprise came for us when Oroquieta played them. I saw the girls whispering around about something, but did not know what they planned. I found out when they played the game. They mixed their team all up and put the poorest player they had in as pitcher. The little Bukidnon girls found they could hit her slow balls all the way over the Oroquieta heads.<sup>112</sup>

Oroquieta entered the last inning one run behind—and a ten-year-old from Bukidnon caught a foul ball, to finish the game. "Bukidnon had won! The people could hardly cheer for laughing. They crowded around and praised the little girls for beating the champions of the Philippines. But the team that praised them the most was the Oroquieta team they had beaten. Think what it meant." Then the Oroquieta team taught them some Christian songs, and "some

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110 Effa L. Laubach, "Junior department / girl champions of the Philippines," *Light and Life for Woman* 50(10) (Oct. 1920): 463–69, pp. 464–67.

111 Report of Fourth Year of Girls' Dormitory (1923), ABC 17.9.2.

112 Laubach, "Junior department / girl champions of the Philippines," pp. 468–69.

of those little mountain girls heard the name of Jesus for the first time.... To this day we hear them singing the songs they learned at our house, when we go back among the mountains. And some of those girls we entertained then have since become sweet Christians."<sup>113</sup> The most powerful testament to the Oroquieta team's religious faith was not only how they practised Christian virtue but the fact that they acted on their own initiative. They had completely absorbed and understood the spiritual lessons of "dormitory work"—and those lessons were entirely compatible with athletic talent.

Missionaries did not perceive any serious resistance in their students and dormitory residents. The worst reported at Cagayan were "small fuss[es]," "liveliness," pranks and "naughty things."<sup>114</sup> There is no record of anything so overt or organised as the "revolt" of South African girls against doing eight hours of laundry per day at their mission school.<sup>115</sup> Filipinos and Filipinas were undoubtedly capable of dissent and revolt; the 1,500 parishioners who left the Methodist Episcopal Church with their pastor, Nicolas Zamora, in 1906, certainly included women. "The immediate cause seems to have been unequal treatment accorded Filipino pastors"—the "smug young men," as Zamora called them in a newspaper interview, "who place their national prejudices above the teachings of Jesus Christ [and] belittle our capabilities."<sup>116</sup> Why is rebellion missing from the mission archive? Was it a deciding factor that missionaries recognised Filipinos' needs and adapted to their aspirations (secular as well as religious)? Or is this silence a natural result of the voluntary nature of Filipina participation in Bible training and dormitory life? Filipinas could always persist in indigenous customs and traditions, with Catholicism, Islam and animism remaining strong throughout the islands.

## The politics of dress

Filipinas' embrace of the modern womanhood that American missionary women offered and modelled—through religious leadership, preparation for the professions, athletics and participation in public life—can be difficult to separate from assimilation. Yet dress and material culture most strongly suggest that in seeking and valuing a modern revision of femininity, they were not simply acquiescing to Americanisation.

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113 Ibid. See photographic illustration, "The champion team."

114 Isabel Fox to Kate Lamson, 29 August 1921 and 8 April 1921, ABC 17.9.2.

115 The laundry rebellion took place in 1877. Labode comments that "Revolts [by indigenous people] were not rare in missionary institutions" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though they tended to be small in scale. See Labode, "From heathen kraal to Christian home," p. 138.

116 Clymer, "The Methodist response to Philippine nationalism, 1899–1916," *Church History* 47 (December 1978): 421–33, p. 426.

Consumer culture, fashion and clothing in particular might seem a minor concern to a missionary enterprise. But the missionaries' preoccupation with clothing betrays the extent to which Christianisation and cultural assimilation were intertwined in their minds. In a letter to the home office, Effa Laubach praised a recently baptised Filipina, "one of our stars," for "reading my *Ladies Home Journal* and know[ing] what the girls in America are doing."<sup>117</sup> Consumer culture set the standards of beauty against which Americans measured Filipinas. As historian Kristin Hoganson observes, "U.S. fashion writing presented the spread of European fashion as an index of civilisation in Asia and the Middle East." Too much constriction or concealment (as with veils) and too much exposure of the body both "clearly called for Western sartorial intervention."<sup>118</sup>

Clothing could thus be a measure of imperial power and a site of conflict. Missionary women associated modern American aesthetics in dress with comfort, cleanliness and rationality. "My girls are sensible children and prefer simple American clothes as a rule," wrote Isabel Fox.<sup>119</sup> When faced with indigenous styles, they attempted to reform. Florence Fox judged that, "Filipino clothes are not very practicable," and tried to introduce the use of wraps.<sup>120</sup> Meanwhile Isabel confessed to a longing, "to do something to their hair. It does look so untidy and uncomfortable."<sup>121</sup> Home missionaries—supporters in the United States—often sent dolls to distribute to the Filipina girls; these dolls would have implicitly modelled Euro-American styles of dress. Class evidently played a part in who did—or could—adopt the assimilated clothing. "Little high class girls dress in dainty dresses with all the frilly underwear very like her [*sic*] little American cousin," Isabel observed. By contrast, the poorer "little girls that play about the thatch houses and in the market wear a single colored slip."<sup>122</sup> The missionaries proudly measured the declining "Moro" practice of staining one's teeth with betel. "They are fast learning the ways of civilisation, and are all proud of their white teeth now."<sup>123</sup> The equation of certain dress and bodily practices with "civilisation" also appears in the contemporary Indian boarding school movement, in which assimilating middle-class American dress, posture and so forth, was seen as a crucial sign of success in overcoming savagery.

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117 Effa Laubach to Kate Lamson, 28 May 1918, ABC 17.9.2.

118 Kristin Hoganson, "The fashionable world: imagined communities of dress," in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, ed. Antoinette Burton, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2003, pp. 260–78, pp. 268, 273. Also see Roces, "Women in Philippine politics and society," p. 171.

119 Anna Isabel Fox, "My Philippine girls," *Light and Life for Woman* 51(1) (January 1921): 22.

120 Florence Fox to Kate Lamson, 5 May 1921, ABC 17.9.2.

121 Anna [Isabel] Fox, "A vacation among the Moros," *Light and Life for Woman* 49(10) (November 1919): 469–71, p. 469.

122 A. Isabel Fox to Kate Lamson, 7 June 1920, ABC 17.9.2.

123 Anna Isabel Fox, "On tour and at home in the Philippines," *Life and Light for Woman* 52(2) (February 1922): 59–64, p. 63.

American styles of dress were not only taken as a sign of “civilisation” but in certain contexts a marker of modernity and professionalism, particularly in nursing. Florence Fox’s nursing uniform (worn for some formal photographs) designated her as a professional, the “superintendent of nursing.” Filipinas wore nurses’ uniforms too—as students and while working in hospitals.<sup>124</sup>

The mission documents do not record Filipinas’ reactions to American clothing, and almost never discuss dress as anything more complicated than cultural superiority and inferiority. “Sometimes I wish we could see ourselves through the eyes of our so-called heathen sisters,” mused Isabel Fox in a rare exception. “I wonder if we look as ugly to them as they do to us, if our white teeth and tight complex clothing and pale skin, and hair of all shades of brown seem curious and homely to them.”<sup>125</sup> Filipinas did not necessarily “read” American fashion or bodily practices *as* American. For example, most young Filipinas wore their hair bobbed with bangs, as did fashionable American women of the 1920s; choosing this style more likely seemed juvenile more than assimilationist. Elements of the “modern girl” style emerged around the world in the 1920s and 1930s, a “global phenomenon” whose many forms owed as much to local conditions as to international film and advertisements.<sup>126</sup>

Even the Filipinas most strongly associated with missions did not consistently choose American styles. Here the visual records speak to what the written documents omit. The Filipina women students at the Carruth Bible School wore with pride either American or Filipina dress; a formal photograph, probably of the graduating class of Bible scholars, shows three of the four Filipinas wearing the beautiful, elaborate *terno* (or “butterfly dress”), which had evolved in recent decades.<sup>127</sup> This was no traditional “native costume” but the height of fashion and modernity from the Filipina perspective. The *terno* became the favourite public attire of Filipina women suffragists in the 1920s and 1930s. Though it developed and became popular in the period of American colonisation, it did not derive its elements from American styles. Rather, the *terno* (sometimes also called *mestiza dress*) combined the Spanish-influenced *camisa* and *saya*.<sup>128</sup> The butterfly sleeves were particularly distinctive from contemporary Euro-American evening wear.<sup>129</sup> It evoked Filipino nationalism and, simultaneously,

124 All the personnel—nurses and attendants—who worked with Fox were Filipino and about half were women. See Smith, “Philippine mission of the ABCFM Mission Hospital.”

125 Fox, “A vacation among the Moros,” p. 469.

126 The Modern Girl around the World Research Group, *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

127 Paul Rodell, *Culture and Customs of the Philippines*, Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2002, p. 113.

128 The girls’ school uniforms at Harris Memorial Deaconess Training School comprised a blue cotton skirt and a white cotton *camisa*, “which is the stiff transparent jacket the Filipina women wear.” Norma Waterbury Thomas, *Jack and Janet in the Philippines*, West Medford MA: Central Committee on the United States Study of Foreign Missions, 1918, p. 42.

129 Rodell, *Culture and Customs of the Philippines*, p. 113.



femininity. It made a visual argument for Filipino sovereignty by making women into symbols of nationalism. Notably, the *terno* did not really position women as bearers of tradition, since it was a newly invented style. Unlike nationalist movements in other places, which privileged folkloric dress for women, the *terno* signalled modernity along with sovereignty.

It is striking to see Bible women in training choose such subtly but undeniably politicised clothing. Filipina “new women” wore the *terno* strategically as they laid claim to the public sphere; its nationalist meanings gave legitimacy to women’s presence there. Thus suffragist (and beauty queen) Pura Villanueva Kalaw praised her contemporary, María Paz Mendoza-Guazon, for her accomplishments as the first Filipina woman physician, for her active participation in the women’s suffrage movement, and—in the same breath—for “her elegant crimson Filipino *terno*.”<sup>130</sup> The *terno* connected women professionals, clubwomen, beauty queens and suffragists, making suffragists seem less radical, and beauty queens more progressive.<sup>131</sup> Its use on ceremonial occasions was respectable and not uncommon. A photograph from the 1930s shows all the girls at the Silliman Elementary School wearing the *balintawak* (a less formal version of the *terno*, also with butterfly sleeves) to march in the Founders’ Day parade.<sup>132</sup>

Most intriguingly, photographs show American missionary women in the Filipino *terno*. In a series of such images from Cagayan, the Fox sisters wear *ternos* at an unnamed special occasion, perhaps a wedding, perhaps of a Filipina Bible woman. In other photographs, American and Filipina women pose formally together in butterfly sleeves. Isabel Fox referred to “a picture of *us* all in *our* native dress” (emphasis added), meaning her with eight Bible scholars.<sup>133</sup> In 1916, the *Pearl of the Orient* (the newsletter of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, published in the Philippines) featured a photograph of the second graduating class of the Bible Training School at Jaro. In it, the seven women *and their teacher*, Anna V. Johnson, are all wearing “long flowing gowns” and “panuelo.”<sup>134</sup>

130 Pura Villanueva Kalaw, “Introduction,” in María Paz Mendoza-Guazon, *The Development and Progress of the Filipino Women*, Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1928, n.p.

131 See Mina Roces, “Gender, nation and the politics of dress in twentieth-century Philippines,” *Gender and History* 17(2) (2005): 354–77.

132 Undated photo, “Edith Adele McKinley, age 8 years,” ABC 78.1, Box 29; “McKinley, James F. and family,” ABC 78.1.

133 A. Isabel Fox to Kate Lamson, 12 October 1920, ABCFM 17.9.2. Filipino culture infiltrated the American Board’s mission station in other subtle ways as well. For example, the dormitory “Carruth Hall” had a *sala*—referred to as such by the missionaries themselves in private correspondence. Remarkably they did *not* call this room for relaxation and study a “parlour” (which would have sounded horribly Victorian by the 1920s). Caption of photo #15, once part of a scrapbook; picture collection: Missions, Box 20, folder 4: Cagayan, ABC78.20.

134 Perla D. Belo, “Anna V. Johnson: Missionary Pioneer, Educator, and Evangelist,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 12 (1993): 289.

The mission records that remain do not comment on the thinking behind this choice of dress. While Americans often perceived of foreign attire as appealingly “exotic,” regarding their adoption of it as just imperialist appropriation, Filipino culture is an insufficient explanation. It is also difficult to imagine that the American missionaries wore *ternos* as public advocacy of Filipino independence. Perhaps it expressed a less political sort of solidarity. The same American women who at times condemned Filipina women’s dress, at other times admired it. Though she disapproved of their hairstyles, Isabel Fox praised Moro women’s “sorong” as “very modest.”<sup>135</sup> At times, cultural distinctions blurred in the missionaries’ eyes. When nine Bible women came to a meeting, Isabel noted “their simple home dresses” without further description—reading neither savagery nor civility in their style.<sup>136</sup> Even as missionaries strove to “modernise” Filipinas, they were attracted to traditional Filipino culture. Supporters back home urged them to send examples of native handicrafts, for use in building interest and raising funds among American audiences. Most commonly, the Board asked for locally made lace, *piña* fabric (made from pineapple fibre) and examples of indigenous “costumes.”<sup>137</sup> This keen interest from “home” legitimised missionary women not only in collecting, but wearing, local dress (the butterfly dress, or *terno*), habits which would seem to be the antithesis of assimilation and Americanisation.

But most pointedly (at least for me), the resplendent silk *terno* that Evelyn Fox wears with such joy in her studio portrait was a gift from her students. “The beautiful golden costume was given me by my girls in my Bible Class last January,” reads her note on the back of the image.<sup>138</sup> Fox did not insert herself into Filipino symbology; her students invited her in. Filipinas sought to share this part of modern womanhood so distinctively their own (Figure 32).

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135 Anna [Isabel] Fox, “A vacation among the Moros,” *Light and Life for Woman* 49(10) (November 1919): 469–71, p. 496.

136 Anna Isabel Fox, “Field Correspondents,” *Light and Life for Woman* 52(5) (May 1922): 197.

137 Rodell, *Culture and Customs of the Philippines*, p. 113 mentions this economic dimension; American colonial officials tried to nurture the domestic production of local fabrics to cultivate self-sufficiency.

138 Photograph, “Grace E. Fox,” box 15, ABC78.1.



**Figure 32. Grace Evelyn Fox, “The beautiful costume was given me by my girls...”**

Source: By permission of Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ and Houghton Library, Harvard University (ABC78, box 15, folder “Fox, Grace E.”).

## Conclusion

Colonial archives marginalise colonial subjects without being able to efface them. A consideration of Bible women, dormitory work, athletics and dress demonstrates two important, yet overlooked, facets of the effects of imperialism on culture. First, Filipina womanhood was not a wholesale American import. The “nearly 7000 in classes, including 600 women and girls” that the mission gathered by 1930,<sup>139</sup> did not simply assimilate and Americanise as the missionaries (and other American colonial agents) may have desired. Under Spanish rule, higher education and the professions were closed to women; women did not participate in sports, and chaperonage and early marriage curtailed women’s “public” activities of all sorts. Their involvement in United States’ missions, as Bible women or dormitory residents, helped Filipinas to forge new paths. But

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139 Herbert Case, “ABCFCM History, 1910–1943,” typescript, ABC88, p. 9.

whatever their devotion to the Bible and however strong their enthusiasm for baseball, Filipinas defined modern womanhood in their own ways. Butterfly sleeves rejected American interference in symbolic and highly visible terms.

Second, American women missionaries themselves were susceptible to influence from the culture surrounding them and the individuals with whom they had personal relationships. This fascination, however irregular and unequal, unsettled the very definitions of gender roles, savagery and civilisation that the missionaries had brought with them. As historians of empire have been starting to show, imperialism affected imperialists as well as their subjects. The contradictions within ideas of gender, of modernity, of imperialism itself open up a more complicated story than the official narrative ever openly acknowledged.

## Acknowledgements

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# 15. The Materiality of Missionisation in Collingwood Bay, Papua New Guinea

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## Introduction

Or Manua, perhaps the greatest transformation of all was Manua. She came to us because Samuel Siru, one of the South Sea Island teachers in Collingwood Bay, wished to marry her. Samuel was stationed at Sinapa, a place where we had made very little impression, but Samuel had won the affection of Manua, and he knew and she knew that he ought not to marry a raw heathen; so when he made arrangements with her people about the marriage he said he wanted the young lady to go to Dogura to be trained and taught, so that she could be baptized before they were married.<sup>1</sup>

The physical and mental transformation Henri Newton refers to was inscribed in Manua's body during her two years stay in Dogura.<sup>2</sup> At the centre of the expanding Anglican Mission, she would learn all the female duties involved in missionary housekeeping. When brought back to Sinapa village by Samuel, she was no longer the young Manua who had just been initiated into womanhood, which was designated by her fresh facial tattoo, her fully decorated body rubbed with coconut and her new *tapa* skirt (see Figure 33).<sup>3</sup> Decorations, oil and *tapa* cloth are an essential part of Maisin bodily strength and well-being but these attributes of Maisin health and beauty were stripped from Manua's body. In Dogura, as Newton so vividly describes,<sup>4</sup> Manua was transformed from

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1 Henri Newton, *In Far New Guinea*, London: Seeley Service, 1914, p. 266. Newton was head of Dogura Mission Station until he became Bishop of the Anglican Church.

2 The archival research on which this paper is based was carried out in the Michael Somare Library of the University of Papua New Guinea and at The Australian National University in 2004. I thank the Anglican Church for granting me permission to access and study their rich archives and the staff of the Michael Somare Library for their friendly assistance. In addition, I consulted the National Museum and Art Gallery of Papua New Guinea, the Museum der Kulturen (Basel), the National Museum of Ethnology (Leiden), the Australian Museum (Sydney), the Queensland Museum (Brisbane), the British Museum (London), the National Museum of Scotland, the Marischal Museum of the University of Aberdeen, and the Museum für Völkerkunde (Vienna).

3 Newton, *In Far New Guinea*, p. 266.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 266–69.

a frightened, dirty and smelly heathen girl into Sara—a nice-looking, clean, young Christian woman dressed in Western clothes. She would be the second Maisin to receive baptism.<sup>5</sup> In 1909, Sara married Samuel Siru, who had come from Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands) to work as a missionary and teacher in Sinapa. They lived together on Sinapa Mission station until 1911, when they were transferred to Wanigela station.<sup>6</sup>

Today, Sara and Samuel's descendants are living in the Maisin villages of Konyasi and Uiaku, and in the Wanigela villages of Collingwood Bay. Their version of Manua's conversion is somewhat different from Newton's story. Sara's grandson Kingston Imani (from Konyasi village) told me that Manua was sent to Dogura to learn how to be a "house-girl" for the missionaries. It was there that she met Samuel. When returning to Sinapa village, the two met again and married. Whether Manua was sent to Dogura to be trained and converted as a "house-girl" for the missionaries or as a "house-wife" for the Pacific Island missionary remains unclear. However, it seems likely she was to become both, since being a house-girl in the missionary's house was often an introit to becoming the Christian wife of a male convert. What becomes clear from both accounts is that Manua underwent not only a spiritual conversion, but also, crucially, a bodily transformation. As elsewhere, the regulation of indigenous women's bodies became the focus of missionary (and colonial) civilising missions.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, this regulation involved not just the physical body, but the alteration of various gendered bodily practices and adornments.

Newton's description of Sara reveals how her *tapa* cloth, necklaces and armbands were gradually removed from her body as her spiritual transformation took place. Among the Maisin, loincloths for both men and women are made by women from beaten strips of tree bark (barkcloth), or *tapa*, as it is locally called in English. The *tapa*, decorated with black and red clan designs, together with particular types of necklaces, feathers and other ornaments, visualise and materialise a clan's ancestral history and ownership of land. During a person's life cycle history, these clan regalia are ritually given, and removed, establishing not only a person's clan identity, but also his or her social status.<sup>8</sup>

5 John Barker, "An outpost in Papua: Anglican missionaries and Melanesian teachers among the Maisin, 1902–1934," in *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change*, ed. Peggy Brock, Leiden: Brill, 2005, pp. 79–106, p. 96.

6 Wanigela is a cluster of non-Maisin villages, relatively close to the Maisin villages of Uiaku and Ganjiga.

7 Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, "Postscript: bodies, genders, empires: reimagining world histories," in *Bodies in Contact. Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History*, ed. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, Durham and London: Duke University, 2005, pp. 404–23, p. 406.

8 Anna-Karina Hermkens, "The gendered performance of cloth, ritual and belief," in *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, ed. David Morgan, London and New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 231–46; Anna-Karina Hermkens, *Engendering Objects. Dynamics of Barkcloth and Gender among the Maisin of Papua New Guinea*, Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2013.





**Figure 33. Uiauku schoolgirls, showing their facial tattoos. Notice the shaved foreheads and eyebrows, indicating these girls had just received their tattoo. They all wear coconut armlets, short necklaces (*kokindi*), short earrings (*kauna*) and long earrings (*buoro*). Unfortunately, their *tapa* loincloths (*embobi*) are less visible**

Source: P.J. Money, 1908. Courtesy of the Australian Museum AMS 328, Percy Money Photographs V2649.

For Maisin people, gender and social identity is not self-evident but an “attribute which must be made known,”<sup>9</sup> predominantly through various performances, such as exchanges, festivities and life-cycle rituals, in which the decorated body is displayed.<sup>10</sup> Identity is thus dramatically constructed and constituted through things worn or inscribed on the body, such as barkcloth and necklaces. Cloth and necklaces embody beliefs and values about gender relations and identity, mediating relations between the individual and the social. As such, the wearing and corporeal experience of these regalia is not superficial, or restricted to the outer skin. They work “deeply into the bone,” as Ronald Grimes says about life-cycle rituals.<sup>11</sup> They have the ability to transform people’s identity and their

9 Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift. Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988; Cecilia Busby, “Permeable and partible persons: gender and body in South India and Melanesia,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3 (1997): 261–78, p. 271.

10 Maisin do not divide the internal body up into different gendered parts, as has been argued for Melanesian societies in general by, for example: Bruce Knauft, “Bodily images in Melanesia: cultural substances and natural metaphors,” in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body: Part Three*, ed. Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi, New York: Urzone, 1989, pp. 198–279, p. 206; Busby, “Permeable and partible persons,” p. 270. The internal constitution of Maisin bodies is mixed, but not to the extent that the body contains both female and male parts, which would allow “a conceptualisation of the person as non-gendered, or rather in Marilyn Strathern’s terms, as cross-sex.” See Busby, “Permeable and partible persons,” p. 271.

11 Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone. Re-Inventing Rites of Passage*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

social relations, and even determine people's physiology.<sup>12</sup> So for Manua, the removal of her regalia and her transformation into Sara, was very much akin to the experience of Maisin life-cycle rituals in which a person's new identity is signified by the removal of "old" regalia, and the dressing up of the body in a "new" one.

While Newton was not very interested in Sara's indigenous dress, which he describes and discards as a dirty and awkward thing, his colleagues and other colonial agents were extremely interested in *tapa* and ornaments.<sup>13</sup> They eagerly collected these objects as "curios," providing information about the people they tried to pacify, convert, educate, make business with and, most of all, understand.

In this chapter I show the relationships between colonialism and objects such as *tapa*. I describe the localised and subjective character of colonialism as practised by the British Colonial Government and the Anglican Mission in particular. I elaborate on this localised process of colonialism by describing how missionary-collecting activities were related to their efforts to pacify and convert the peoples of Collingwood Bay. In addition, I show how Anglican missionaries, but also South Sea islander teachers like Samuel, who were a crucial part of the missionary project, tried to regulate and discipline women's bodies by attempting to control their sexuality, punish "sinful" behaviour by removing women's personal adornments, and change female mourning and initiation practices. This elucidates the importance of both objects and gender in colonial encounters and practices, but foremost, it shows how unwritten histories of gender, and in particular colonial histories, can be recovered from oblivion. As other studies have shown, histories of gender can be discerned and explored by unravelling their hidden threads in colonial documents, missionary reports, personal letters and novels. Here, as elsewhere,<sup>14</sup> I want to emphasise unwritten but equally materialised traces of history, such as photographs and objects.<sup>15</sup> In particular, I focus on objects worn on women's bodies and the various stories these reveal.<sup>16</sup>

12 Hildi Hendrickson (ed.), *Clothing and Difference. Embodied Identities in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996.

13 The term "agent" is used to suggest that people could "surpass the political boundaries that ruled the encounters" contrary to what Susanne Legêne proclaims in: "Nobody's objects: early-19th century ethnographical collections and the formation of imperialist attitudes and feelings," *Etnofoor* 9(1) (1998): 21–39, p. 35. Moreover, indigenous people also worked as colonial agents.

14 Anna-Karina Hermkens, "Gendered objects. Embodiments of colonial collecting in Dutch New Guinea," *Journal of Pacific History* 42(1) (2007): 1–20.

15 Elizabeth Edwards, "Surveying culture: photography, collecting and material culture in British New Guinea, 1898," in *Hunting the Gatherers. Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s–1930s*, ed. Michael O'Hanlon and Robert L. Welsch, New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000, pp. 103–26.

16 In Hermkens, "Gendered objects," I focus on objects made by Papuan women—in particular a type of barkcloth, called *maro*. These cloths were and are still being produced in the Humboldt Bay and Lake Sentani area in Papua, a former colony of the Netherlands and now the easternmost province of Indonesia.

## The Anglican mission: Missionisation through exchange<sup>17</sup>

In 1890, the first missionary of the Church of England in New Guinea, Alfred MacLaren, accompanied British administrator Sir William MacGregor<sup>18</sup> on his first trip into Collingwood Bay.<sup>19</sup> During this trip, MacLaren was not only introduced to the inhabitants of British New Guinea, but also to the area of Christianisation that MacGregor had appointed for the Church of England. It was MacGregor's view that missions contributed to the pacification of the colony by preventing intertribal war and reducing the frequency of homicide, making the work of magistrates and policemen lighter.<sup>20</sup> In addition, he relied upon missionaries to establish schools and basic health care, which the state was not able to provide.<sup>21</sup> MacGregor allocated the northeast coast of Papua, which runs from Cape Ducie in Milne Bay to Mitre Rock near the German boundary, to the Anglicans. The Anglicans divided this coastline into three divisions and areas of extension, of which the second division ran from Cape Vogel to Cape Nelson, being Collingwood Bay (Map 2).

MacGregor advised that the Anglican Mission station would be most suitable in Dogura, a flattened hilltop site in Goodenough Bay, from which the missionisation of the northeast coast could be tackled. But, soon after the first buildings were completed, MacLaren died from fever. And it was Copland King who became the first missionary to be put in charge of this district. He tried to continue the work of MacLaren and extend the influence of the Anglican Church along the northeast coast. In 1892, almost a year after MacLaren's death, Copland King became head of the Mission in Dogura.<sup>22</sup> He made several expeditions, trying to implement law and order by preventing raids in the nearby area. In 1893 and 1895, he made two exploratory trips along the northeast coast, visiting amongst other places Collingwood Bay.

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17 John Barker has made extensive analyses of the impact of the Anglican Mission in Collingwood Bay, and the Maisin in particular, by focusing on the interactions and dialogues that took place between missionaries and Maisin. This paper does not seek to replicate this work but, instead, focuses on the contexts and motives of colonial collecting activities.

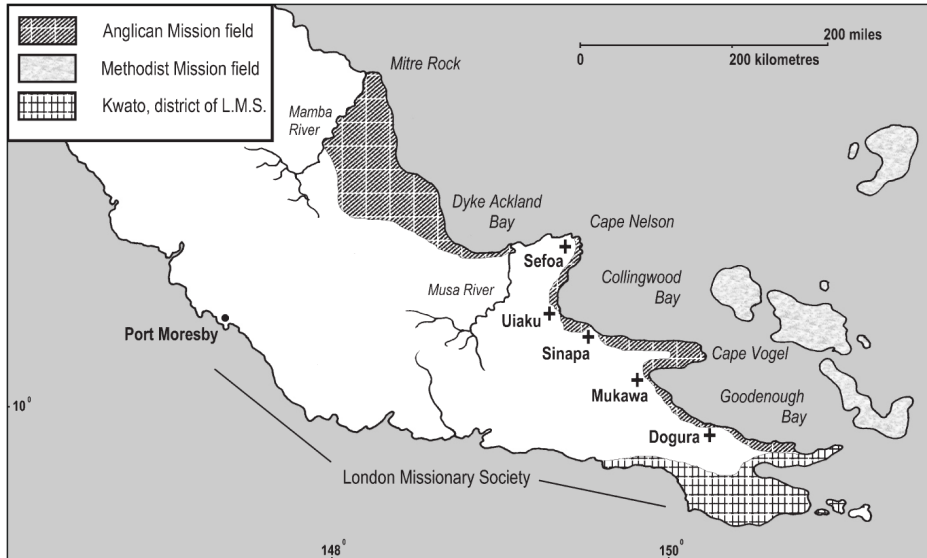
18 From 1888 till 1895, Sir William MacGregor (1846–1919) acted as administrator to become a lieutenant governor in 1895. Two years later he resigned and left New Guinea. He was succeeded by George Ruthven Le Hunte (1852–1925), acting as lieutenant governor between 1899 and 1903. See Sir Hubert Murray, *Papua or British New Guinea*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912, p. 87. In 1910, MacGregor became governor of Queensland, Australia, and remained there until he retired in 1914. He died in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1919.

19 William MacGregor, "Introduction," to F.M. Synge (author), *Albert MacLaren. A Pioneer Missionary in New Guinea*, Westminster: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel/University of Aberdeen Press, 1908, pp. ix–xxi, p. xi.

20 Sir William MacGregor, *British New Guinea. Country and People*, London: John Murray, 1897, p. 92.

21 John Dademo Waiko, *A Short History of Papua New Guinea*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, [1993] 2001, p. 34; MacGregor, *British New Guinea*, p. 92.

22 Arthur Kent Chignell, *Twenty-one Years in Papua: A History of the English Church Mission in New Guinea (1891–1912)*, London: A.R. Mowbray, Milwaukee: Young Churchman, 1913; pp. 34–35; J.W.S. Tomlin, *Awakening. A History of the New Guinea Mission*, London: Fulham Palace, 1951, p. 37.



**Map 2. Mission fields in the south and northeast coast of British New Guinea. The Kwato district was part of the London Missionary Society (L.M.S)**

Source: David Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission: the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea, 1891–1942*, St. Lucia: University Of Queensland Press, 1977, p. 331.

During these trips, King, who was probably encouraged by MacGregor's drive to collect as much as possible "before it has become too late,"<sup>23</sup> exchanged Western goods for indigenous artefacts with Maisin and other Collingwood Bay people. As King had found out, the exchange of things was a prerequisite for establishing relationships with the Papuans. In July 1895, King wrote:

It was an adventurous and exciting trip. We examined the coast carefully, and landed wherever we could find villages. At Uiaiku [the largest of ten Maisin villages] the excitement of the natives was intense. They waded into the water to meet the dinghy, and kept up a continuous roar of greeting. My boys, who landed with me, thought their time had come; but the natives were only shouting vigorously for iron, in the form of plane irons of which I had taken care to bring a good stock; and when they got me on shore they would not let me off again until I had exhausted the trade bag.<sup>24</sup>

23 Michael Quinnell, "'Before it has become too late': the making and repatriation of Sir William MacGregor's official collection from British New Guinea," in *Hunting the Gatherers*, ed. Michael O'Hanlon and Robert L. Welsch, New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000, pp. 81–102.

24 Chignell, *Twenty-one Years in Papua*, pp. 90–91.

In Wanigela, King experienced a similar desire for iron and trade. He was not allowed into the stockaded village because he had no iron to trade with.<sup>25</sup> “As the Wanigela men told him, a man without trade was no better than a dead man.”<sup>26</sup>

In October 1896, King visited Collingwood Bay once more, this time to explore the site MacGregor had chosen for the next Anglican mission station, Sinapa village. During this visit King and his colleague Clark met the elaborately dressed chief Wanigera. The missionary party and Maisin people engaged in exchanges, but Wanigera left the trading to his followers since he considered it beneath his dignity “to trade himself.”<sup>27</sup> Subsequently the party visited Uiaku, much to the pleasure of chief Wanigera, where they again traded with the local Maisin people, spending quite some time buying “curios.”<sup>28</sup>

Although King appeared to be satisfied with the spot chosen in Sinapa village, it would take two more years before the actual building started. In order to get funding for the Collingwood Bay extension, King had to go to Australia to collect money. The results were very poor, but since the Roman Catholic missionaries equally fancied Collingwood Bay, and MacGregor again requested information on the Church’s proceedings, the Anglicans, although having few financial resources, were urged to make haste with their extension. In 1897, King travelled to Sinapa, but he declined this new mission post only a few days after his arrival. He was succeeded by Wilfred H. Abbot, a high-spirited and somewhat extravagant missionary who had graduated from Oxford.<sup>29</sup> Having arrived just a few months earlier in Papua together with the new Bishop Montagu John Stone-Wigg,<sup>30</sup> Abbot became the first missionary to stay in Collingwood Bay.

## Wilfred Abbot (1898–1900)

When Abbot travelled from Dogura to Sinapa to continue his predecessor’s work, things were not as Abbot had expected. He found the mission house far from finished; only the pole holes had been dug. The earlier party, that was supposed to have built the mission house, suffered from fever, ulcers and depression due to the unhealthy and gloomy circumstances. It appeared to be

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25 Ibid., p. 91.

26 David Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea, 1891–1942*, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977, p. 32.

27 Chignell, *Twenty-one years in Papua*, pp. 94–95.

28 Ibid., p. 96. It is not known what kind of “curios” Clark managed to obtain in exchange for iron, beads and items like a looking-glass, nor is it clear what happened to the artefacts King and Clark collected.

29 Chignell, *Twenty-one Years in Papua*, p. 99.

30 Tomlin, *Awakening*, p. 50; Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 67.

impossible to build a house in Sinapa because the soil was too swampy, and the reluctance of local people to help the laymen contributed to the sense of desolation and misery.

Abbot immediately took charge of both the situation and the Sinapa villagers. Despite the fact that all holes were filled with water and the foundations felt like mud instead of sand, Abbot persisted in getting the mission house built, arguing that "Sir William MacGregor had chosen the site for us, and he must be right."<sup>31</sup> By promising a Sinapa chief a nice present "if he made the people do what they were told," Abbot obtained local labourers. And by shouting at the workers in the few Maisin words he had picked up, he kept them at work. According to Abbot, this shouting was exhausting, but the Sinapa people were also encouraged to provide work because they were given tobacco in exchange.

After literally having driven the Sinapa people into "Church," Abbot performed the first service among Maisin in his surplice and his "gaudy Oxford hood," which, according to Abbot, conferred a magical effect. "They probably thought I was an extra special wizard, and a very subdued 'sh-sh-sh' went through the crowd."<sup>32</sup> The Sinapa people had had a few previous brief encounters with white people, but were now faced with a man who compelled them into exhausting, day-filling labour and strange rituals. Although Abbot is described as an unconventional man whose eccentricities appealed to the laughter-loving side of the local people,<sup>33</sup> the Maisin people were not very charmed by "Mad Abbot," as he was later described by his fellow colleagues.<sup>34</sup> Sometime after Abbot had left Collingwood Bay, Maisin people confessed to Abbot's successor, Percy John Money, that they had been on the verge of killing Abbot and his mission party. Luckily for Abbot and his team, a Uiaku war leader averted the planned ambush at the last moment, by refusing to give the signal for his men to attack.<sup>35</sup> As John Barker suggests, this Uiaku chief was probably chief Wanigera, the elaborately decorated man with whom Copland King had made friends one year earlier.

Despite Abbot's confidence in Sinapa and the efforts of the local people in building Abbot's mission house, it proved to be impossible. Consequently, Stone-Wigg decided to establish a station at Wanigela.<sup>36</sup> Initially, the Uiaku chief Wanigera invited the missionaries to set up a station at Uiaku, but because the other men of his tribe objected, the missionaries decided to move to Wanigela

31 Chignell, *Twenty-one years in Papua*, p. 103.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

33 Tomlin, *Awakening*, p. 50.

34 Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 68.

35 John Barker, "Cheerful pragmatists: Anglican missionaries among the Maisin of Collingwood Bay, Northeastern Papua, 1898–1920," *The Journal of Pacific History* 22(2) (1987): 66–81, p. 72.

36 Chignell, *Twenty-one Years in Papua*, p. 106.



instead.<sup>37</sup> From 1898 till December 1900, Abbot “ruled” Wanigela. Continuing his Sinapa regime of “clearing grounds” and “managing” people by threatening them verbally and physically, Abbot got “the best out of the native labourers while the Mission Station at Wanigela was being built.”<sup>38</sup>

Abbot highly valued paternalist ethics, sexual morality and celibacy. He punished those who had “fallen into sin,” but he also tried to protect the local girls from being sexually abused by both South Sea islanders and white men, including those affiliated with the Government station at Tufi.<sup>39</sup> Abbot’s regime ended when he resigned after getting into trouble with the Bishop. Abbot was blamed for harassing his assistant, South Seas islander James Nogar, after suspecting him of having violated his state of celibacy, which was denied by the latter.<sup>40</sup> He had also ordered a large quantity of rum, as well as trade goods (amongst others axes and metal) from the Burns Philp merchants in Samarai.<sup>41</sup> Abbot felt the Bishop had misinterpreted his actions and the Burns Philp order, as he intended to use the liquor as a tonic only, while the goods were meant for trade with the local people.<sup>42</sup> Abbot did not leave Papua New Guinea empty handed. When he returned to London he had with him a considerable collection of Collingwood Bay artefacts, which he sold to the British Museum, as well as to the Horniman Museum in London, the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford and the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

As an Oxford Master of Arts, Abbot must have had a particular way of perceiving the value of the artefacts made by Wanigela and Maisin people. According to his writings to the British Museum authorities, he had been collecting during his entire three-year stay in Collingwood Bay. It is not known how many objects Abbot actually did collect and subsequently offered to the various museums in England, but the British Museum bought 131 items in 1901.<sup>43</sup> Among these items are thirteen pieces of decorated barkcloth attributed to Collingwood Bay. Although Abbot seems to have engaged in collecting artefacts less seriously than MacGregor, he was rather determined to sell his collection. Just a few months before Abbot resigned, his mother, to whom he had sent some of his collection, offered them to the British Museum. “My son the Rev. W.H. Abbot who is doing pioneer mission work under the Bishop on the N[orth] Coast of

37 Ibid., p. 107. Soon after, Doriri raided Uiaku and killed fifteen people, including the mission-favouring chief, Wanigera.

38 Tomlin, *Awakening*, pp. 50–51.

39 Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, pp. 246–50.

40 James Nogar to the Bishop, Wanigela, March 18, 1901, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 22, file 4.

41 Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, pp. 67, 109.

42 Wilfred H. Abbot, Collingwood Bay, to the Bishop, London, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 20, file 1.

43 Although some of Abbot’s artefacts have limited information on their particular use, the majority are almost entirely without any provenance or ethnographic information. Abbot’s failure to document any details of his artefacts becomes especially salient when one compares them with the collection of his successor Percy Money.

British New Guinea has sent home some curious bones & implements of the Cannibals there, & also fine specimen head-dresses in feathers."<sup>44</sup> A few months after his resignation and return to London, Abbot recommended to the museum that they acquire his collection. He sounds rather desperate and urges the museum to make a good offer as he writes:

I do hope the Museum authorities will take these facts into consideration when making their offer: That I have waited to allow them first pick out of my curios that they are taking all the plums—leaving the poorer specimens on my hands. That I was the first white settler in the Bay & that I have been collecting for three years in the Bay. That I have not yet sold or given away a single article. That several of the clubs especially the white & the knobby one are the only specimens I have ever seen. That they are the result of three years collecting, on the spot.<sup>45</sup>

A year earlier, the museum had received a donation by Lieutenant-Governor R.G. Le Hunte that consisted of three artefacts collected by Abbot in Collingwood Bay. So apparently, despite his protestations, Abbot did sell or give his collected artefacts to other people. Le Hunte, who was MacGregor's successor from 1898 till 1903, approved of the mission and acknowledged their work and importance for the government.<sup>46</sup> Abbot in turn, clearly identified with the colonial administration and its representatives, as he had promised Le Hunte to erect government buildings on Tufi, which eventuated through the intervention of James Nogar, who persuaded the local population to cooperate and build the station.<sup>47</sup> Abbot's gift to Le Hunte seems to embody this intimate relationship between mission and government.

## James Nogar (1898–1906)

Abbot did not rebuild and convert Wanigela on his own. He was assisted by an energetic and ambitious young man from the New Hebrides, named James (Jimmy) Nogar. Islanders from Melanesia, such as James Nogar and Samuel Siru (from Solomon Islands), were the first missionaries to live permanently amongst Maisin. David Wetherell, in his article on Queensland Melanesians in New Guinea, calls Nogar "The Exemplar," as Nogar seems to have been "extremely well fitted for interpreting Christianity to village people."<sup>48</sup>

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44 Henrietta Abbot, England, to the British Museum, London, 1900, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby.

45 Wilfred H. Abbot, Collingwood Bay, to the British Museum, London, 1901. Anglican Archives, Port Moresby.

46 Tomlin, *Awakening*, p. 51.

47 David Wetherell, "'The bridegroom cometh': the lives and deaths of Queensland Melanesians in New Guinea, 1893–1956," *Pacific Studies* 12(3) (1989): 53–89, p. 61.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 60–63. The New Hebrides is now independent Vanuatu.

Nogar, born in 1876 at Sonamlo, Tanna Island, had been working as a young boy at the Tweed River fields south of Brisbane, which had imported labourers from the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands to work on its sugar plantations.<sup>49</sup> When an Anglican parson offered Nogar a position, he accepted, becoming the supervisor of islander scholars at St. Barnabas' School in Bungalore. This school, and others, had been set up to minister to the plantation labourers, preparing them for baptism and providing a rudimentary education.<sup>50</sup> In order to fulfill his new position, Nogar was baptised and received Anglican confirmation, thereby renouncing his father's Presbyterian connection.<sup>51</sup> Nogar's life took an even more drastic change after proposing marriage to a young white lady who was part of the church choir. The sugar planters were resentful of Nogar's audacity and turned his fellow labourers against him, upon which St. Barnabas' School emptied. Opting to work in a more productive field, Nogar accompanied Stone-Wigg to New Guinea, teaming up with Abbot in Wanigela.<sup>52</sup>

It seemed that Nogar copied Abbot's vigorous handling of the Wanigela people. As Abbot wrote, "[James] has quite adopted my methods of dealing with unruly natives,"<sup>53</sup> which reflects their shared belief in using physical punishment when deemed necessary. In 1904, Nogar went (at least once) too far, severely thrashing a Wanigela girl, who died the day after. The mission held an inquiry about her death, but since the girl's father attributed her death to sorcery, Nogar got away with the assault and was only reprimanded by the mission.<sup>54</sup> Obviously, the white missionaries who were responsible for overseeing the work of "native" teachers like Nogar were not reprimanded, nor were their punitive actions critiqued.

Abbot's and Nogar's influence in local village life was clearly felt by some of the arrangements and rules Abbot introduced. They built a church and a school, which was attended by young male boarders who stayed at the mission station and village boys. Attendance was soon made compulsory day and night. The boys were instructed in the morning, after which the boarders were put to work on the station, and their fathers, after having done their hunting and fishing, were instructed in the evening.<sup>55</sup> The village layout was changed from

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49 The total number of Pacific labourers resident in Queensland and the Tweed River district of New South Wales is estimated to have been 6,389. See Clive Moore, "'Good-bye, Queensland, good-bye, white Australia; good-bye Christians': Australia's South Sea islander community and deportation, 1901–1908," *The New Federalist* (4) (2000): 22–29, n33; and Dorothy Shineberg, *The People Trade: Pacific Island Labourers and New Caledonia, 1865–1930*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

50 Barker, "An outpost in Papua," p. 90.

51 Wetherell, "'The bridegroom cometh,'" p. 60.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., p. 61.

54 Ibid., p. 62.

55 Chignell, *Twenty-one Years in Papua*, p. 110; Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 107.

traditional patterns into rows of houses, and a crude form of currency was introduced.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, churchgoing was made compulsory for the men, and adultery was prohibited.<sup>57</sup>

In addition, an Anglican business network was established facilitating the trade and circulation of ethnographic artefacts, which, of course, meant an extra income for the entrepreneurs involved. It appears that especially Nogar was involved with the collecting and selling of “curios.” By 1899, Nogar was conducting a flourishing trade in Maisin, and probably artefacts from other coastal regions, exchanging them for tobacco, axes and other trade-store goods, and selling them at £2.10 each, with a cut rate of £1.10 to trading partners.<sup>58</sup>

After Abbot had resigned in December 1900, Nogar seems to have been in charge of the Wanigela mission. When Abbot’s successor Percy Money arrived, Nogar was conducting the largest school in the mission, made up of seventy children and seventeen boarders, who as observed by Lieutenant Governor Le Hunte, “sang a hymn in their own language with their arms folded” (see Figure 33).<sup>59</sup> As Le Hunte stated in his Government report, written six days after Percy Money’s arrival. “There is a striking difference between the faces of the mission-taught children and those of other places such as Uiaku [which didn’t have a mission station yet]. They look as if they had no more knowledge of savagery or fighting than village children in our own country, yet it is still almost at their doors.”<sup>60</sup>

In August 1901, Nogar applied for a lay reader’s licence, arguing he would “knowingly teach nothing contrary to the Doctrine of the Church of England as contained in the Thirty-nine articles.”<sup>61</sup> And indeed, Nogar made a long-lasting impression in Wanigela and beyond, making “a major contribution toward the planting of mission Christianity in Collingwood Bay.”<sup>62</sup> In 1903, he married Mary Maniarun, from Kumarbun village of Wanigela who, like Sara, had been trained to be a proper housewife at the headquarters of the Anglican mission in Dogura. James and Mary would have at least one son, named Japhet. By marrying a local woman, Nogar became very much part of the local community. His acceptance and popularity is evident because when he died of fever in 1906,

56 Barker, “Cheerful Pragmatists,” p. 72.

57 Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 67.

58 James Nogar, Wanigela, to Mr. Johnson, “Concerning curios business,” August 23, 1899, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby: Box 22, file 4. James Nogar, Wanigela, to Mr. Johnson, “Concerning curios business,” August 24, 1899, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby: Box 22, file 4; Wetherell, “The bridegroom cometh,” p. 61.

59 Wetherell, “The bridegroom cometh,” p. 62; The posture of the children, sitting or as pictured in Figure 33, standing with their arms folded, may represent the success of the mission in having “domesticated” and converted them, the folded arms signalling respect. But the facial and bodily expression of the girls in Figure 33 seems to counter this interpretation, as they very much seem to contest and challenge the photographer, missionary P.J. Money.

60 Tomlin, *Awakening*, p. 51.

61 Wetherell, “The bridegroom cometh,” p. 61.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

he was buried in the midst of “the greatest lamentation and mourning from the whole population.”<sup>63</sup> According to Wetherell, Stone-Wigg’s epitaph for Nogar sums up the Anglican ideal for the Pacific islander teacher: “A herald of the Gospel, simple, unlearned, faithful unto death.”<sup>64</sup>

## Percy John Money (1901–1910)

In June 1901, when Money took charge of Wanigela Mission Station, the village had become “one of the best organised and most prosperous communities on the north Papuan coast.”<sup>65</sup> Money’s orders from the Bishop were to consolidate this good work at Wanigela and to open a new station among the Maisin in Uiaku.<sup>66</sup> In this way, the influence and civilisation of the Anglican Mission could be extended among the most unruly and “stubbornly heathen population” of the area, the Maisin (see Figure 34).<sup>67</sup>

Despite the fact that the leaders of Uiaku had rejected the Anglicans after their debacle in Sinapa and subsequently refused the mission’s periodic offer of teachers,<sup>68</sup> they agreed with Money’s offer to build a church and subsequently a school in Uiaku (the building commenced in 1902). This acceptance was perhaps due to their experience with the government in December 1900, when during a punitive expedition led by C.A.W. Monckton, three Maisin men were killed.<sup>69</sup> This act of force and violence against Maisin people, which coincided with a general increase of government activities in the area, likely convinced Maisin to cooperate with the mission.<sup>70</sup> The newly built government station in Tufi was permanently occupied and ruled by the Resident Magistrate and his constables, intensifying colonial influence and activities. Nevertheless, Maisin people gave Money a hard time as he wrote in a letter to Stone-Wigg, “You do not know what we had to put up with and fight against the first 18 months at Uiaku; the people were overbearing and annoying, they would hardly do a hands turn for us and I thought myself extremely fortunate in getting what I did done.”<sup>71</sup>

As a young Australian layman and a former “boxer, football coach, winner of bicycle races, and performer on the parallel bar,” Money represented the manly

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63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 106.

66 Barker, “Cheerful pragmatists,” p. 73.

67 New Guinea Mission 1902, *Annual Report 1901–1902*, Sydney, p.33.

68 Barker, “Cheerful pragmatists,” p. 73.

69 C.A.W. Monckton, *Taming New Guinea*, New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1927, p. 173.

70 Personal comment, John Barker, May 2013.

71 Percy John Money, Wanigela, to the Bishop. August 21, 1905, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 21, file 23. Money complains that Maisin refused to help him in any way with setting up a Mission Station in Uiaku.



vigour of the mission.<sup>72</sup> He was not only in the prime of his life and in good shape, he also had the capacity to act not only as evangelist, but also as “teacher, architect, carpenter, translator, journalist, photographer” and archaeologist.<sup>73</sup> In contrast to his predecessor Abbot, Money seemed to be a rather sympathetic and easygoing missionary. Instead of bullying the local people or using force, he actually worked with them and used his wits and charms to keep them motivated. At one point in time, probably after his retirement and apparently in the back garden of his Australian home,<sup>74</sup> he even dressed up as a native and had himself photographed, an act of mimicry that both demonstrates his fascination for native life as well as the distance between the two cultures.



**Figure 34. Money in “The Den,” the Uiaku missionary house. Notice the use of indigenous designed *tapa* cloth as a tablecloth and Western-designed strips of *tapa* cloth as a frieze**

Source: P.J. Money, 1902: “The Den, taken by flashlight.” Courtesy of the Australian Museum, AMS 328, Percy Money Photographs, M2066/1.

72 Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 59.

73 Barker, “Cheerful pragmatists,” p. 73.

74 Personal comment, John Barker, 23 May 2013.



However, Money's fascination and patience with regard to local customs did not extend to all spheres of Maisin life. Money lamented the "atmosphere of fornication" in Uiaku village, and strongly opposed adultery, widow mutilation, magic and sorcery.<sup>75</sup> But at the same time he also seems to have admired people's firm beliefs. After a suspected sorcery attack, he reflects, "Did they but believe as firmly in the True God as they do in their traditions, witchcraft and sorcery, they would indeed be noble Christians, for they live what they believe."<sup>76</sup>

Despite Money's frustrations with regard to the lack of Anglican guidance and support, his work in Uiaku seemed to have been rather successful. Statistics show that from 1903 to 1909 over a hundred students regularly attended Uiaku School, while church attendance was equally stable, as each Sunday about eighty to ninety individuals attended the service.<sup>77</sup> Whether these statistics show an actual acceptance of Anglican practices is difficult to tell. It seems Uiaku "oscillated between upholding Christian practices when Money was present and abandoning them when he was not."<sup>78</sup>

Under Money's "rule," two additional stations in Sinapa and Okein were built, thereby increasing Anglican presence but also missionary work and travel. From 1905 until 1911, the station in Sinapa was occupied by Samuel Siru. Just like Nogar, Siru had been recruited by the mission in Queensland. By 1910, Melanesians would make up 70 percent of the Anglican staff in Papua.<sup>79</sup> Barker notes that in comparison to the Samoans and Fijians in Protestant areas, the Melanesian teachers were very poorly educated.<sup>80</sup> According to the Anglican leaders, this was not a big problem as the Melanesian teachers were considered to be first and foremost missionaries. As Barker summarises, "Their main duty was to provide Sunday services, pray for those in need, set a good example in their daily life and instruct all in the basic beliefs and rituals of the church."<sup>81</sup> Samuel Siru's educational skills were also considered to be low, but he seemed to have learned Maisin easily and had attracted a large number of students.<sup>82</sup> According to Arthur Kent Chignell, who succeeded Money in Wanigela, this

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75 Percy John Money, Uiaku, to the Bishop, April 5, 1907, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 21, file 23. Money also mentions practices of infanticide and abortion, although it seems he experienced one case of infanticide only. Taking current Maisin validations of children into account, it seems that this representation of Maisin life is based upon "Western" presumptions regarding the immoral living of "heathen" people.

76 Percy John Money, Uiaku, "Notes and news from the staff," September 3, 1904, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 5, file 8.

77 Barker, "Cheerful pragmatists," p. 74.

78 Liz Bonshek, "Money, pots and patterns: the Percy Money collection of barkcloth and pottery held at the Australian Museum," M.A. thesis, Brisbane: University of Queensland, Department of Anthropology, 1989, p.19.

79 Barker, "An outpost in Papua," p. 90.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

was due to the fact that he was “intensively native.”<sup>83</sup> Siru spent quite some time taking care of his home, draining the swamp and planting coconuts and large gardens, and negotiating with the elders of the Virani clan for a bride—Manua.<sup>84</sup> Eventually, Siru left the mission after complaints about his work and accusations of stealing from the mission stores. He worked for a brief period in Tufi, returning to Sinapa in 1913, where he died one or two years later.<sup>85</sup> Sara and Samuel had two children, Simon and Mary. Only Mary, born in 1903, would survive. In 1916, the mission persuaded Sara to leave the man with whom she was then living and move to Wanigela with toddler Mary. However, Sara was brought back to Sinapa by her brother, where she remarried, leaving Mary behind at Wanigela in the missionary’s care.

In the meantime, Money had a hard time supervising the growing mission in Collingwood Bay. The Uiaku and Wanigela mission logs witness to the frequency with which Money travelled by either foot or boat between Sinapa, Uiaku and Wanigela villages in particular.<sup>86</sup> He seems to have hardly spent more than one week in one place, leaving the responsibilities of teaching and preaching to Siru, and other Melanesian teachers who worked among the Maisin: Timothy Gori (from Solomon Islands who left soon after arriving in 1903), Willy Pettawa (from the New Hebrides, who died in 1907), and the brothers Ambrose Darra and Benjamin Canae (from Nggela). The brothers arrived in 1907 and would be the “official face of Christianity to the Maisin” for the following twenty years.<sup>87</sup> Only occasionally Money would take the Sunday hearers’ class and services that were held on each of the stations. In addition, Money ministered to several other scattered villages in the area. These responsibilities probably undermined Money’s health. By 1903 he had suffered at least three malaria attacks and in 1905 and 1907 he was forced to leave Collingwood Bay because of serious illness.<sup>88</sup>

## Money’s collection

While in charge of Wanigela district, Money collected hundreds of objects for the Australian Museum. As a proto-anthropologist, he made ethnographic notes about the items he collected and the ceremonies he witnessed, often mentioning the local names in both Ubir and Maisin language. As a gifted photographer, he made various photographs of the environment, its people and their customs. His collection is therefore unique, giving an insight into the “daily” activities of Collingwood Bay life between 1903 and 1910. But someone else may have contributed to Money’s collection: Annie Ker. Money and Ker married on

83 Chignell, *An Outpost in Papua*, p. 65.

84 Barker, “An outpost in Papua,” p. 95.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

86 Uiaku and Wanigela Mission logs, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 25.

87 Barker, “An outpost in Papua,” p. 90.

88 Bonshek, “Money, pots and patterns,” p. 19.

22 April 1909 in Australia, returning (albeit briefly) to Wanigela before leaving the mission in 1910.<sup>89</sup> It is probable that Annie Ker contributed to Money's collecting of both data and artefacts, especially since she was the first Anglican missionary to publish a book in 1910, called *Papuan Fairy Tales* about Wedau (Milne Bay) myths.<sup>90</sup> Money does not refer to his wife's activities or contributions, but in 1934 she donated remnants of Money's collection to the Australian Museum. Among Collingwood Bay artefacts, there are several specimens from Wedau and the Trobiand Islands. It seems likely Annie Ker collected these objects herself while working as a missionary in Milne Bay.

Money collected foremost for the Australian Museum in Sydney, but he also collected for the Anglican Church. From 1905 onwards, Money was obliged to collect primarily for the Bishop and "his" "Mission Museum." Money was not very content with the Bishop's claim upon Money's discoveries, and felt his "wings had been clipped" but offered the Australian Museum duplicates of anything he found—an offer eagerly accepted.<sup>91</sup> In contrast to the Bishop, who was convinced "that a collection was far more valuable in a place like this where one could study the natives at the same time," Money "thought a collection more valuable where it could be properly cared for."<sup>92</sup> But he had no other choice than to adhere to the Bishop's wishes. In a letter to Stone-Wigg he wrote:

I confess that I thought specimens were better in a public museum where they are properly cased & cared for than in one such as ours & therefore send better specimens to the Museum in Sydney. I still think so in spite of what the scientists say, but in future you can rely on the mission being dealt with as you suggest.... You never gave me instructions to buy for the Museum & so I did not do so. If you will tell me what you want for the collection & and are willing to pay what the natives want for them, I shall get them for you.<sup>93</sup>

Not all the objects Money collected went into either the Australian or the Mission Museum. Some of the artefacts collected by Money were sent to the mission depots in Port Moresby, where the mission held "curios" sales (see Figure 35).<sup>94</sup> This sale obviously facilitated collectors of Papua New Guinean artefacts, at the same time providing some hard-needed revenue for the mission.

89 Personal comment, John Barker, 23 May 2013.

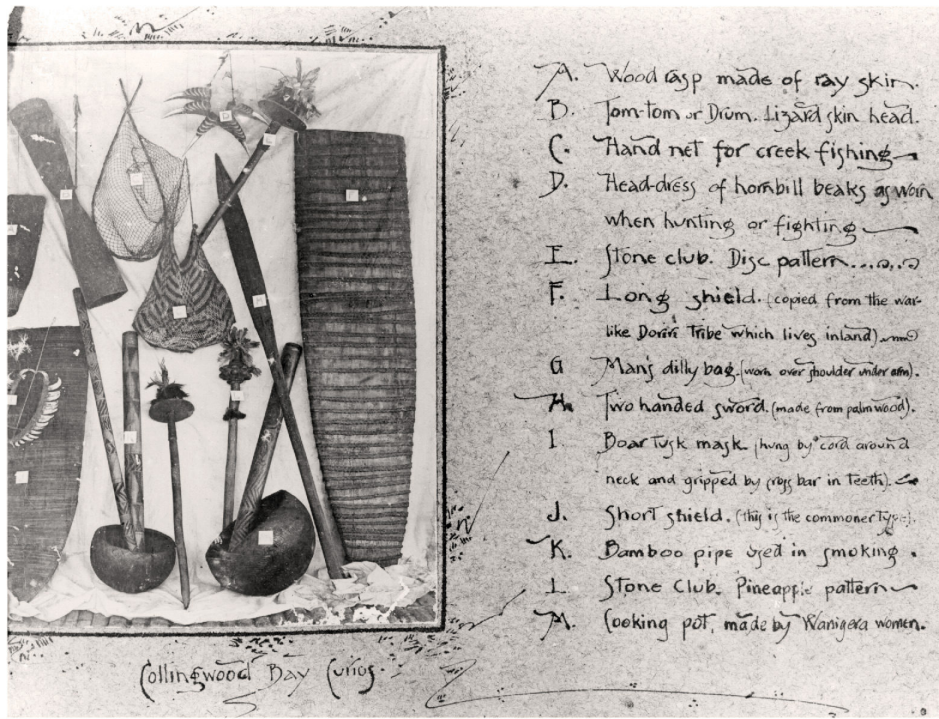
90 Annie Ker, *Papuan Fairy Tales*, London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1910.

91 Percy John Money, Collingwood Bay, to the Australian Museum, Sydney, 1906, Australian Museum Archives, Sydney, M23/1906; Percy John Money, Collingwood Bay, to the Australian Museum, Sydney, 1906 Australian Museum Archives, Sydney, M51/1906.

92 Percy John Money, Collingwood Bay, to the Australian Museum, Sydney, 1906, Australian Museum Archives, Sydney, M51/1906.

93 The scientists Money refers to were members of "the Major Daniels expedition," who influenced Bishop Stone-Wigg to set up his own Museum. Ironically, some of them would, probably due to Money's shipments of artefacts, be able to obtain several pieces of Collingwood Bay tapa. Percy John Money, Wanigela, to the Bishop, August 21, 1905, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 21, file 23.

94 Percy John Money, Uiaaku, to the Bishop, April 19, 1907, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 21, file 23.



**Figure 35. "Collingwood Bay curios"**

Source: P.J. Money, 1902. Courtesy of the Australian Museum, AMS 328, Percy Money Photographs, M2065/7.

As a collector, Money wanted to collect specimens before it was too late. As he stated in 1904, "much that is interesting about the natives of this part may soon be lost."<sup>95</sup> But, Money was not able to collect all the curios he wanted. In a letter to the Bishop he complained about the fact he was not able to obtain "certain of their more valuable things. They have some things which they will not part with even though you offer a fabulous price—they are heirlooms."<sup>96</sup> The heirlooms Money was talking about are pieces of clan *tapa*, and objects such as stone lime-sticks, particular shells and other valuables that are kept in clan elders' houses as *kawo*, clan emblems.

Money also made hundreds of photographs of various arts, crafts, games and customs, thereby documenting aspects of Collingwood Bay culture. He tried to sell these photographs to various museums and institutions all over the world, arguing they "are particularly valuable as they are the only ones of the kind in

<sup>95</sup> Bonshek, "Money, pots and patterns," p. 19.

<sup>96</sup> Percy John Money, Wanigela, to the Bishop, August 21, 1905, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 21, file 23.

existence, and it will not be long before European influence will affect native habits."<sup>97</sup> He did not reflect upon nor see as problematic his own role in initiating the demise of some of these customs. In fact, it seems that by documenting these objected customs, he also preserved them.

Money, for example, opposed various practices associated with mourning. But although rejecting these practices, he documented them by taking photographs and collecting objects. He accumulated some ornaments and clothes used in mourning and photographed various aspects of the life associated with being a widower or widow. These images show both men and women in various stages of mourning, wearing their matching mourning regalia. The most striking image is that of a widow completely covered with *tapa*, crawling on hands and knees through the sand. Another example of this paradox of collecting while denouncing is apparent in Money's collecting and, at the same time, destroying magic charms.

The mission Annual Report of 1902–03 states that Money asked if he could keep certain carved figures as "curios" when the Wanigela men decided to destroy them. The figures or charms were probably used in relation to sorcery and although the Maisin were very eager to get rid of them, their destruction was certainly triggered or encouraged by the presence of the Anglican missionary. Money received the mission's permission to keep the charms.<sup>98</sup> In Uiaku, Money had equally been involved in the destruction of charms, which people had either thrown away, or "given to the missionaries to destroy."<sup>99</sup> So ironically, some of these "tokens of heathen religion" were actually saved by the missionary who, either directly or indirectly, had instigated their destruction. Suzanne Legêne has labelled this the "paradox of colonial process" in which "religious symbols and systems were attacked and even destroyed on location, to reappear—out of context—in European showcases."<sup>100</sup> One can argue that local people also took advantage of the missionary presence, letting the missionaries destroy objects that were too dangerous to deal with by, in this case, Maisin themselves.<sup>101</sup>

97 Percy John Money, Collingwood Bay, to the Australian Museum, Sydney, December 1910, Australian Museum Archives, Sydney.

98 Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 177; John Barker, "Dangerous objects: changing indigenous perceptions of material culture in a Papua New Guinea society," *Pacific Science* 55(4) (2001): 359–75, p. 363.

99 Percy John Money, Uiaku, "Notes and news from the staff," September 18, 1906, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 5, file 8. The charms that were collected and burned were brought together by Melanesian teacher Willy Pettewa.

100 Susanne Legêne, "Nobody's objects: early-19th century ethnographical collections and the formation of imperialist attitudes and feelings," *Etnofoor* 11(1) (1998): 21–39, p. 36.

101 Barker, "Dangerous Objects," pp. 359–75.



## Colonial materialisations

It may be argued that a focus on materiality was intrinsic to the colonial project and to its failure or success.<sup>102</sup> As argued by Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles, objects were crucial to colonial relationships.<sup>103</sup> The network established by Nogar and Abbot was part of a larger colonial network and society that provided the framework for ethnographic collecting. Mission stations like Wanigela and Uiaku, and the government station in Tufi were spatial and geographical centres of white colonial rule, and, as so-called “advanced posts of civilization,” essential for the work of international ethnologists.<sup>104</sup> From the 1900s onwards, several “professional” collectors obtained Collingwood Bay artefacts through this network. Some, like Austrian ethnologist Rudolf Pöch, resided for a considerable length at the government station in Tufi.<sup>105</sup> His “stationary” and first-hand collecting contrasts with the method applied by scientific collectors, such as Charles Gabriel Seligman (1910) and A.B. Lewis<sup>106</sup> who engaged in more “mobile,” and sometimes even second-hand ways of collecting.<sup>107</sup>

Making use of the British colonial network, Lewis travelled by steamer along routes that linked missions, government stations and mining centres. Although he collected a large number of artefacts himself, about half of his Papua collection was brought about by helpful expatriates, missionaries, and other colonial agents.<sup>108</sup> Lewis’ entire Collingwood Bay collection (a total of 388 objects, including objects from Wanigela and Uiaku) was bought from the Reverend F.W. Ramsay,<sup>109</sup> who had obtained these artefacts from his fellow Anglican missionaries who worked there, such as Money and his successor Chignell.<sup>110</sup>

As discussed earlier, exchange was also crucial in the first interactions between the colonial government, missionaries and local people. As a matter of fact,

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102 Michael Rowlands, “A materialist approach to materiality,” in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller, Durham: Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 72–87; Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism. Material Culture and Colonial Change*, Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2001, p. 6.

103 Gosden and Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism*, p. 24.

104 Michael O’Hanlon, “Introduction,” in *Hunting the Gatherers. Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s–1930s*, ed. Michael O’Hanlon and Robert L. Welsch, New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000, pp. 1–31, p. 3.

105 Hermkens, *Engendering Objects*.

106 Seligman was a member of the Daniels expedition. During the Joseph N. Field South Pacific Expedition, which was conducted from 1909 to 1913, Lewis became the first American to conduct systematic ethnological field research in Melanesia. See Gosden and Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism*; and Robert Welsch, *An American Anthropologist in Melanesia: A.B. Lewis and the Joseph N. Field South Pacific Expedition, 1909–1913*, Two volumes, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998.

107 O’Hanlon, “Introduction.” Lewis would not be the last “famous” traveller in the area. In 1921, Frank Hurley visited Wanigela, photographing several daily activities and people during his one-week stay.

108 Welsh, *An American Anthropologist in Melanesia*, p. 488.

109 Ramsay had come to Papua in 1900 and worked as a rector in Samarai, where Lewis had met him. Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 80; Welsh, *An American Anthropologist in Melanesia*, p. 491.

110 Welsh, *An American Anthropologist in Melanesia*, p. 487.



the relationships which developed between colonial agents and local men and women were based upon the exchange of services, labour, goods and locally produced artefacts. These relationships were not as unequal as one might think. Nor were they “a series of experiments” due to the lack of norms and their unpredicted outcome.<sup>111</sup> I argue that the exchanges were actually not at all experimental, at least not to the people living in Collingwood Bay.

When comparing the types of objects collected by our Collingwood Bay collectors, it becomes clear that Collingwood Bay is foremost represented in these collections by stone tools, ornaments, (prehistoric) pottery and barkcloth.<sup>112</sup> As such, the social relationships established between government, missionary agents and Collingwood Bay people, has foremost been constituted through the exchange of these particular objects. Importantly, these objects were, and still are, part of extensive local and regional exchange networks. In fact, it seems that colonial exchange was incorporated into the local barter system, providing a context for Collingwood Bay people (and colonial collectors) in which things, ideas and images could be exchanged and appropriated. By merging colonial exchange into the “traditional” barter system, relations that for centuries had enabled Collingwood Bay people to obtain valuable goods (such as adze stones and red shell necklaces) were effectively extended. Thus, while collectors certainly had their preference for certain artefacts (MacGregor for example was very interested in stone clubs), they were very much directed in their collecting activities by the Papuans with whom they engaged in exchange. In the villages, the predominantly male collectors were subjected to Maisin agency. Maisin refused to deal with them if they did not have anything interesting to barter with, they refused to part with particular objects, such as heirlooms, refused to help colonial agents, or even thought about killing these *funa fwei* (white skins).

From a local perspective, the exchange of things created relationships with foreigners and their desired goods. These goods could be used locally, or enter exchange networks to obtain other objects, but they were also used in local politics as markers of status and power. The pieces of red cloth, iron and beads obtained from colonial agents in exchange for local artefacts may even have represented the “Big Chief” of Papua, MacGregor himself. Chief Wanigera from Uiaku village wore a shirt given by MacGregor’s party as a status symbol. In combination with his exuberant indigenous paraphernalia, this Western clothing signified his chiefly status, but also his relationship with the people who gave him this piece of clothing. It thus seems that both colonial and local agents perceived specific artefacts as tokens of particular people. But for Maisin, these objects also signified the relationship they had with each other.

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111 Gosden and Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism*, pp. 10, 22

112 Hermkens, *Engendering Objects*, pp. 249–88.

## Materialising the mission

In addition to collecting and exchange, the missionary project materialised through the erection of mission stations and schools, changes in village layout, the introduction of a crude form of currency and populations being counted. The first thing the Anglican missionaries did, was build, or try to build, a mission station, thereby materialising their project and goals. The fact that the Anglican Mission actually relied on the success of such material projects becomes clear when considering the debacle in Sinapa. As the building of a good mission station initially failed in Sinapa, the mission had also, symbolically, failed. In a similar way, the missionisation of Maisin people could only start as soon they accepted the building of a church and school in Uiaku. So, the materialisations of churches, schools and the changes of village layout, contributed to the ideological successes of the missionary project. This was particularly so for the Anglican Bishop Stone-Wigg, who urged missionary Money to make haste with the “expansion” of the Anglican mission by building missionary houses and schools in villages like Sinapa. These buildings not only materialised the efforts and ideals of the mission, they also made it possible to keep track of the progress the mission was making. By counting church and school attendants the missionaries got a “physical” grip on the local people and their commitment to the church and education.

As Barker argued, both government and mission identified villages “as the primary venues of control,” putting much effort in defining localities and the people living in them.<sup>113</sup> Due to colonial governance and the Anglican mission, not only were “new” buildings, or materialities, embedded in a local setting, local people were forced or encouraged to also change their own settlements. Both residential administrators and missionaries demanded settlement near the coast in order to facilitate colonial patrols and inspections. Under the guidance of missionary Abbot and teacher Nogar, the local village layout in Wanigela was changed from traditional patterns into rows of houses, although not all missionaries agreed with this change. In addition, all Maisin villages were restructured to create greater space between houses and with burial places outside the village in order to improve the hygiene and health of the people.<sup>114</sup>

From the early patrol reports onwards, the population of each Maisin village was counted, thereby making, as Michael Rowlands argues, the local people “visible.”<sup>115</sup> Moreover, these counts enabled physical control. For example, in 1960 it was reported that 50 percent of the Airara population was absent,

113 John Barker, “Village interventions: historical variations upon a regional theme in Uiaku, Papua New Guinea,” *Oceania* 66(3) (1996): 211–29, p. 213.

114 Patrol Report, Year 1948–1949, National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby; Patrol Report, Year 1967–1968, National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby.

115 Rowlands, “A materialist approach to materiality.”

leaving eighty-seven people in the village.<sup>116</sup> The large number of people absent led the Patrol Officer in charge to have people report when leaving Airara. As he noted, “This will allow a closer check to be kept on absenteeism within that village.”<sup>117</sup> As with the registering of church and school attendants, this counting materialised indigenous bodies in such a way that they, indeed, became visible.

## Materialising bodies

The notion of “materialising” bodies, of making indigenous people visible to the colonial enterprise, was in many other areas put into practice by dressing people. This preoccupation with clothing, or the lack thereof, focused in particular on local women and reflected European notions about clothing in relation to themes such as civilisation, morality, sexuality and the position of local women.<sup>118</sup> Viewed within colonial contexts, women’s bodies and their sexuality became central to representations of colonial dominance.<sup>119</sup> Although some missionaries, like Henri Newton, preferred Western dress, in general missionaries stationed in Collingwood Bay seemed not much concerned with “dressing up” local bodies. Only those living on the station and having married into the mission seem to have worn Western clothing, as evidenced by a photograph in the Wanigela log showing Sara Siru wearing a short shell-necklace, earrings and a blouse.<sup>120</sup> Mission boys are reported to have worn red or white calico during special occasions.<sup>121</sup> According to Wetherell, “Missionaries who clothed Papuans were the exception rather than the rule; and Anglican missionaries more frequently lamented the desire of Papuans for European clothes than complained about immodest dress.”<sup>122</sup> However, in North Vanuatu, where Anglicanism was strong, Anglicans were determined to re-clothe women’s bodies.<sup>123</sup> Among Maisin people, Anglican missionaries insisted on removing corporeal signs of women’s heathen identity. This was done by stripping *tapa* cloths and decorations from

116 Patrol Report, Year 1959–60, National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, p. 3.

117 Patrol Report, Year 1960–61, National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, p. 3.

118 Hermkens, “Gendered objects,” p. 12.

119 Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power. Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010 [2002].

120 Wanigela log book, April 1907–September 1916, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 25, File 4. Sara Siru’s photograph was placed between the entries of June and July 1913, mentioning only the heading “Sara Siru.”

121 Chignell, *An Outpost in Papua*, p. 89.

122 Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 202.

123 On this matter, Tom Harrison has commented: “The pastors made an absolute distinction between native and European clothing. A native could not be a Christian in his own clothes; no Christian woman could show her breasts, as every woman has done before.” See Harrison, *Savage Civilization*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1937, p. 153 and see especially quote from Bishop Selwyn of Melanesian Mission at p. 154. Felix Speiser also noted that “as clothing has increased, the areas of shame have also grown, so that Christian women dare show nothing of their bodies but the face, hands and feet.” Speiser, *Ethnology of Vanuatu: An Early Twentieth-century Study*, Spinger-Verlag, 1923, republished in English translation, Bathurst: Crawford House, 1990, p. 183. See also Margaret Jolly, “A saturated history of Christianity and cloth in Oceania,” this volume, chapter 16.

women's bodies, which occurred in specific instances, but more specifically, by trying to control female sexuality, and abolish corporeal customs that are very much part of women's sexual and social identity, such as facial tattooing and mourning practices.

Mission sites were arguably sites of collecting, but also "sites of desire," in which not only objects, but also modes of sexuality were cross-culturally exchanged.<sup>124</sup> In Collingwood Bay, the mode of the Anglican missionaries, with their emphasis on maintaining their own celibacy while promoting Christian marriage, contrasted strongly with local mores, which encouraged young people to have sexual relationships before traditional marriage. According to Wetherell, it was especially the South Sea islanders who were troubled by the state of celibacy in which Anglican agents were enjoined to live. However, Percy Money, in one of his letters to the Bishop also confesses to be troubled by the temptation of local women and how hard it must be, especially for the South Sea islander teachers, to maintain their celibacy. James Nogar seems to have been so plagued by local women that in November 1900 he appealed to Stone-Wigg, "My Lord remember me in your prayers to God because temptation [is] very strong."<sup>125</sup> In May 1903, Nogar decided to end his state of celibacy by marrying Mary, while Money ended his celibacy by marrying Annie Ker in 1909.

While the missionaries stationed in Wanigela and Uiaku strongly condemned adultery, often punishing both man and woman, they were also against sexual relations between unmarried men and women, especially when it concerned Christian people "falling into the heathen custom of sleeping together."<sup>126</sup> Both the Uiaku and Wanigela logs regularly mention unmarried couples running off into the bush, which, even after having settled in the area for almost twenty years, still managed to shock the missionaries in charge. Whenever possible, they would take measures against this behaviour and punish the lovers. In 1917, Maisin received their own priest, missionary Arthur Prout Jennings. Jennings especially seemed to have been strongly opposed to premarital liaisons. As the Uiaku log of 26 August 1917 tells us, "Six girls had to be punished today for fornication. One of the guilty boys was Louis, Mr. Jennings' houseboy. He was caned and will be sent back to his home at Wanigela. The six girls will be suspended from Communion for a time, probably till Christmas."<sup>127</sup>

However, the girls were not only suspended from Communion. A few days later, they "were ordered to have their heads shaved and to remove all ornaments

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124 Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly (eds), *Sites of Desire/Economics of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997.

125 Wetherell, "The bridegroom cometh," p. 63.

126 Henri Newton, Dogura, to the Bishop. May 31, 1902. Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 22, file 3a and 3b.

127 Uiaku logbook, entry on 2 September 1917. Anglican Archives, Port Moresby.

from their persons.”<sup>128</sup> Obviously, by removing their hair and decorations, their alleged immoral behaviour was made visible to the outside world. While one of the boys involved was caned, this punishment of girls was actually more severe. The pain of being hit (and in the boy’s case being sent home) is neither visible nor enduring, while it would take several months for the girls’ hair to grow to its normal length. The main reason for this act seems to have been to prevent these girls from attending the *mangu-via*, the moonlight beach dances, during which boys and girls would meet. The punishment would have been an incredibly shaming act, in which the shame was literally worn on the body for several months.<sup>129</sup> Likewise, the removal of personal regalia contributed to this public display of shame and, moreover, erasure of the girls’ identity. Maisin decorations communicate values of clan and gender identity, as well as notions of sexual attractiveness and health. But they do more than communicate or mediate; decorations define and establish notions of personhood, which are acted and performed within specific socio-cultural settings. As such, they do not just represent identity. Body decorations are not symbols that stand for something else; they are embodiments of cultural values, ancestral connections and specific identities. Removing ornaments from the body actually deconstructs a person’s social identity. So, the girls’ punishment was not just a temporary alteration of their bodies, but a profound deconstruction of their identity.

The practice of addressing girls’ or women’s bodies, display and conduct, was not entirely incidental. Various missionaries placed emphasis on girls and women, trying to change their conduct and especially their corporeal behaviour. In 1916, at a meeting held in the Wanigela Church, Chignell’s successor J.E.J. Fisher, declared that certain customs had to stop, and stated:

That the behaviour of women at funerals and deaths must be modified; That the puberty ceremony, both in the case of boys and girls, must cease; That there must be a ... case taken of maidens to prevent sin-behaviour; That mothers must take more care of young babies; That women must exercise their influence in the right direction; That women must try to realize more than they do, the part that Christianity has come to play in their lives.<sup>130</sup>

Fisher was directly instructing women to act as role-models for the Anglican Church and to use their influence to change society as a whole. Women’s behaviour, and especially their bodily conduct was placed under scrutiny, it had to be changed. The bodily changes Fisher urged, would refashion women’s bodies into silent, clean and disciplined bodies. If it were up to Fisher, women

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128 Ibid.

129 See also Andrew Strathern, “Why is shame on the skin?” *Ethnology* 14(4) (1975): 347–56.

130 Wanigela logbook, entry on 15 May 1916, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby.

could no longer wail and mutilate their bodies during mourning and funerals. They could no longer tattoo their daughters', or female relatives' faces as part of the female puberty-rituals. And women were ordered to take particular care of their daughters and other young girls to prevent immoral conduct. Although Fisher opposed puberty-rituals for boys as well, these rites did not entail the profound bodily transformation that girls' initiation did. As a consequence, boys' bodies were less "refashioned" by this ordinance.

While Fisher worked for physical and moral reform in Wanigela, Jennings, who was appointed as head of Uiaku station, likewise took measures to stop several customs he found offensive.<sup>131</sup> He was equally opposed to mourning practices, against the facial tattooing of schoolgirls, and as we saw earlier, ordered girl's heads to be shaven as punishment for sleeping with boys.<sup>132</sup> It thus seems that both Jennings and Fisher tried to reconstitute, in particular, girls' and women's bodies, "and through this, their moral constitution."<sup>133</sup> It must be noted that both missionaries faced considerable local resistance and were eventually forced to leave—Jennings after only three years. However, the notion of bodily reform as essential for inward or moral reform was central in Christian rhetoric.<sup>134</sup> Sara's story at the beginning of this paper already revealed the emphasis placed on physical transformation. Taking care of one's body, and thus being clean, clothed and confident, as well as neat and orderly, was indicative of a disciplined Christian. As Money mentions in relation to health and sickness: "Care of the body is closely akin to the care of the soul."<sup>135</sup> But, why this emphasis on women? As indicated by other studies concerning missionary practices, local women were often used to implement Christian morals and virtues, after which they could serve as Christian role-models.<sup>136</sup> Women, in their roles as housewives and mothers, provided a means for targeting society as a whole. "It was thought that when the women and girls had undergone a process of education leading to their moral improvement, this would lead to the moral re-generation of society as a whole, through their example."<sup>137</sup> In Collingwood Bay, such exemplary role-models of Christian housewives were to be found among the local women who had married into to the mission, such as Sara and Mary, whose "native" skills had been modified at Dogura.

131 Barker, "Cheerful pragmatists," pp. 76–78.

132 While initially Jennings' relationship with Uiaku villagers seemed to be fairly positive, relations became increasingly sour and stressed, resulting in Jennings' departure in 1920. See Barker, "Cheerful pragmatists," p. 78.

133 Richard Eves, "Colonialism, corporeality and character: Methodist missions and the refashioning of bodies in the Pacific," *History and Anthropology* 10(1) (1996): 85–138, p. 85.

134 Eves, "Colonialism, corporeality and character," p. 86.

135 Percy John Money, Wanigela, to the Bishop, August 21, 1905, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Box 21, file 23.

136 Eves, "Colonialism, corporeality and character"; Kathryn Rountree, "Re-making the Maori female body: Marianne Williams' Mission in the Bay of Islands," *Journal of Pacific History* 35(1) (2000): 49–66.

137 Eves, "Colonialism, corporeality and character," p. 103.



However, not all missionaries in charge of Uiaku and Wanigela station were concerned with the reformation of women's bodies to the same degree. Money, for example, never actually forbade women's wailing at a time of death, nor had he opposed facial tattooing. In fact, he made numerous photographs of Uiaku schoolgirls showing their newly obtained facial tattoos and seemed rather intrigued by them. However, like his successors, Money was equally opposed to various other practices associated with mourning, like widow self-mutilation and seclusion.<sup>138</sup>

While many of these intended reforms did not take place, as Maisin people were clearly not willing to give them up, some aspects regarding women's bodily behaviour did change. Customs of self-mutilation were indeed abolished and, as argued by Maisin today, the missionaries urged men to help their wives more, thereby easing some of the burden that was placed on women. Moreover, girls and women regularly sought help from the missionaries in order to get rid of an unwanted lover, to prevent an unwanted marriage and possibly abduction,<sup>139</sup> or even to help them move to the mission station so as to prevent male advances. "The girls of the hearers' class told Mr. Money that they were being troubled by the advances of young men, and asked him to write and ask for a lady to be sent so that they can come and live on the mission station. They do not wish to stay in their village."<sup>140</sup>

It seems that although attempts were made to change girls' and women's conduct in particular, the missionaries also seem to have liberated local women from "oppressive" gender relations. On the part of the colonised women, it seems that "education and conversion became technologies of self-control that enabled subordination at the same time that they structured resistance to colonialism,"<sup>141</sup> albeit not so much against Christianity as against local gender relations. This relationship between the Anglican Church and women's position in Maisin societies is still in process. Women are among the most loyal adherents of the church, both through their attendance at Sunday services and their work in the Mother's Union. Moreover, their organisation in the Mother's Union enables them to cross gender, clan and village boundaries that tend to restrict women's movement in Collingwood Bay, and beyond.

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138 Percy John Money, "Notes and news from the staff," Wanigela, 30 August 1905, Anglican Archives, Box 5, file 8.

139 Percy John Money, Wanigela, to the Tufi Resident Magistrate, 3 September 1903, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby, Wanigela letterbook 1902–1907, Box 25, file 3, AL C563. 6A3.

140 Uiaku logbook, entry 25 October 1908, Anglican Archives, Port Moresby.

141 Peter Pels, "The anthropology of colonialism: culture, history, and the emergence of Western governmentality," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 163–183, p. 172.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have engaged with colonial representations, not so much by focusing on textual strategies, but by elucidating the visual and tangible dimensions of colonial encounters and their social practices. As argued by Peter Pels in his review of the anthropology of colonialism, such a perspective enables us to fully grasp “the contradictions and paradoxes of specific microphysics of colonial struggle, encounters, (knowledge) production and exchange.”<sup>142</sup> Here, I have focused on the interplay between colonialism, collecting and the exchange of objects, at the same time illustrating how missionaries materialised new forms of domesticity through the arrangement and disposition of bodies, ornaments and clothes, and the erection of churches, schools and mission stations.

Since the first documented encounters between colonial agents and Collingwood Bay people around the 1890s, objects have been continuously exchanged. The majority of Maisin objects collected at the end of the nineteenth century ended up in museums in England and Australia, but also in other countries, such as the Netherlands and Switzerland, and even in the United States of America. I think it is no coincidence that the main agents involved in the colonial project of pacifying and Christianising Collingwood Bay people and Maisin in particular, were engaged in the collecting of objects.

The exchange of goods was essential in establishing relationships, both between colonial agents and between Europeans and indigenous people. The collecting of *tapa* by Western colonial agents, but also by South Sea islander teachers such as James Nogar, were part of an ongoing exchange between colonial and local agents and events. In fact, colonialism implied a dialogue and exchange of both goods and ideas between the various men and women involved. Importantly, by collecting material culture, missionaries not only collect physical artefacts. As shown by several scholars, the act of collecting can be regarded as a primary means of producing knowledge.<sup>143</sup> But by collecting objects from others, we are also “collecting ourselves.”<sup>144</sup> Indeed “collecting and display” have come to be seen “as crucial processes of Western identity formation.”<sup>145</sup>

For MacGregor, effective colonisation entailed a familiarisation with the colonised subjects, and one way of knowing these subjects was through the

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142 Pels, “The anthropology of colonialism,” p. 169.

143 Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991; Quinnell, “Before it has become too late”; Fred R. Myers, “Introduction, *The Empire of Things*,” in *The Empire of Things. Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, ed. Fred R. Myers, Oxford: James Currey, 2001, pp. 1–60.

144 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988; John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, “Introduction,” in *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, London: Reaktion Books, 1994, pp. 1–6.

145 Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, p. 220.

extensive collecting of objects. Since MacGregor wanted to rule foremost in peace, his pledge to know the people of Papua embodied an extensive exploration of both country and people. By collecting their artefacts, MacGregor tried to understand them, but he also wanted to document their culture before, ironically, it would be affected and changed by white civilisation. Stone-tools, weapons and pots were collected as “tokens of industry,” or rather as a vanishing “archaic” technology.<sup>146</sup> It seems that by collecting stone tools and weapons, MacGregor’s effort of pacifying Papuan men was visualised, and as such at least materially accomplished. In a similar way, Money’s collection of charms and other attributes related to customs to which he objected seem to both document and thereby visualise the change that had taken place precisely due to his own efforts of Christianisation. By collecting body decorations such as ornaments and decorated *tapa*, indigenous bodies were in a sense appropriated by the collectors, and re-contextualised.

Anglican Bishop Stone-Wigg, for example, not only set up a missionary museum, urging his missionaries to collect artefacts, he also used these so-called “curios” from areas such as Collingwood Bay to display to his audiences in England the benefits of civilisation and Christianity. King Edward VII was very interested in the artefacts and fancied the British Museum as a suitable place for their display.<sup>147</sup> However, the British audiences were far more interested in the contents of a black bag brought by the Bishop to his presentations, which contained the bones of a boy killed and eaten during a raid. His jawbone symbolised the savagery of the Papuans and the need for mission work in New Guinea. “Congregations told that there would be more jawbones unless the work of the New Guinea mission was supported.”<sup>148</sup>

According to Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, colonialism was a manly act, while “the missionary enterprise was gendered as ‘feminine’.”<sup>149</sup> The way MacGregor ventured into Collingwood Bay, travelling and being aided by Papuan and white men, and moreover, mainly encountering and trading with local men, does indeed suggest that colonialism, as put into practice by the Government representative, was a manly act. However, what about the Anglican Mission in Collingwood Bay; was this indeed a feminine enterprise? In Collingwood Bay, this seems partially to have been the case. While government efforts were mainly targeted towards pacifying men by either force or Christianisation, missionaries in Collingwood first targeted young boys, who were trained and housed on the mission station. Efforts to bring moral reform,

146 Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, p. 175.

147 Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 38.

148 Ibid.

149 Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, “Introduction: gendered missions at home and abroad,” in *Gendered Missions. Women and Men in Missionary Discourse*, ed. Huber and Lutkehaus, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 1–38, p. 12.

however, seem to have been especially addressed to women. As we have seen, missionaries' "ideals of domesticity,"<sup>150</sup> entailed in Collingwood Bay in particular ideals about morality and women's bodily constitution. For some missionaries, this ideal entailed the abolition of facial tattoos, self-mutilation and wailing, while for others, this ideal meant that mainly "oppressive" customs, such as self-mutilation, had to be stopped, especially in relation to women's bodies.

What this chapter foregrounds is the paradox of colonial collecting. While for some collectors, their collection of Collingwood Bay artefacts and photographs were part of an effort to document a vanishing culture, at the same time, their collecting activities introduced new forms of materiality that were part of the colonial project to exercise control over native subjects and "domesticate" them. Collecting can actually be seen as a project of domestication through which Collingwood Bay and its people were pacified through the removal of weapons and the creation of new Christian selves focused on families. Women were domesticated by removing their "dirty" dress and regalia, and moreover, by trying to abolish other corporeal signs of women's native, heathen identity, such as facial tattoos and self-mutilation.

Although the collectors considered here and their collections are embedded within a political colonial discourse, a close look at their personal (and often unpublished) writings and photographs reveals a more subjective, localised, point of view. Thus a distinction can and must be made between private and public propagandistic accounts. The prior anecdotes reveal how colonialism was not just a political discourse, but rather, a cultural process with a particular localised character. The biographies of the missionaries discussed in this paper are specific accounts that give insight into the vanished articulations of colonising and counter-colonial representations and practices.

As Sara Manua's genealogy shows, colonialism was not just an abstract power that interfered with people's lives. Colonialism was made up of embodied gendered agents, acting and responding to various people, events and contexts. Moreover, as shown earlier, colonial interactions were not one-directional but mutual.<sup>151</sup> According to Newton, Sara begged him to let her stay some extra months at Dogura as she was eager to learn more.<sup>152</sup> Other girls requested the missionary in charge to protect them from advances posed by local or other men, or asked them to arrange their marriages. These examples show how missionaries to a certain extent liberated local women in the process of Christianising them,

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150 Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Huber and Lutkehaus, "Introduction: gendered missions at home and abroad," p. 12.

151 See also Bronwen Douglas, "Slippery word, ambiguous praxis: 'race' and late 18th-century voyagers in Oceania," *Journal of Pacific History* 41(1) (2006): 1–29.

152 Newton, *In Far New Guinea*, p. 269.

but they also exemplify how local women (and men) were willing to incorporate new ideas, and even use the missionaries to protect their interests and have their desires fulfilled.

## Acknowledgements

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# 16. A Saturated History of Christianity and Cloth in Oceania

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## *Tupela i marit?*<sup>1</sup>: Christianity and cloth

Cloth and Christianity have long been seen as intimate partners in Oceania. The introduction of manufactured cloth—cambric,<sup>2</sup> calico, chintz, linen, serge and silk—from the mills of Manchester and New England and the workshops of China, the cultivation of the arts of sewing, quilting and embroidery and the adoption of Western-style clothing: modest dresses for women, demure trousers or laplaps for men, have all become iconic of Oceanic Christianity. Integral to the “before and after” story of indigenous conversion is the narrative of how Oceanic Christians “covered up” beautiful bare breasts, exposed bottoms or penises previously proudly displayed. In the eyes of some scholars and popular observers Oceanic people thus succumbed to the colonial power of a Western Victorian model of gender and sexuality, characterised by heterosexual monogamy, modesty and sexual repression and the celebration of a novel form of domesticity focused on the faithful wife and good mother. She was allegedly both creator and creature of a “home,” bearing and nurturing children, cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing. Many scholars have challenged and complicated such stories from the perspective of Europe, North America, Africa and Asia: revealing the class, national and regional specificities in the emergence of ideals of “domesticity”; demonstrating how the realities of working women’s lives differed markedly from any idealised demarcations of a masculine public sphere and a feminine domestic sphere; arguing that these spheres were leaky rather than hermetically sealed.<sup>3</sup>

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1 This is a Bislama phrase which can be literally translated as “are the two married?” but which is used metaphorically to ask whether two things are conjugated. All words in Bislama, the pidgin lingua franca of Vanuatu are marked B., while those in Hawaiian are H. and those in Sa, the language of South Pentecost, S.

2 This fine, dense cloth also called batiste, was originally from Cambrai in Northern France, and was made from linen and later cotton.

3 For example see Lenore Davidoff, “Gender and the ‘great divide’: public and private in British gender history,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15(1) (2003): 11–27; Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987; Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds), *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998; Hyaewool Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009.

Resonating with such critical histories of domesticity in Europe, North America and Asia, there have been several attempts to interrogate the relevance of the Western concept of domesticity in Oceania and to subvert any simple story of Christian missionaries “domesticating” Pacific women.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, since the early studies of Patricia Grimshaw, Christine Ward Gailey, Martha Macintyre and myself, the poignant paradoxes of the missionary project have been exposed.<sup>5</sup> Foreign missionary women although promoting a cult of “true womanhood”<sup>6</sup> hardly embodied an idealised figure of dedicated wife and mother, as Latu Latai persuasively argues for the earliest London Missionary Society couples in Samoa.<sup>7</sup> Moreover Samoan Christians did not so much *adopt* these models of domesticity but, as they converted and evangelised, *adapted* Christianity as part of *fa’a Samoa*.<sup>8</sup>

So too, in Vanuatu, I have argued that Christian missionary wives failed to embody the idealised figure of the wife-mother: indigenous women and girls assisted them as maids and nannies (B. *haosgels*); their children were often separated from them in hopes of sustaining their physical and spiritual health and purity; and they were focused on “uplifting women” not just through

4 Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, “Introduction,” in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 1–18; Marilyn Strathern, “Domesticity and the denigration of women,” in *Rethinking Women’s Roles in the Pacific*, ed. Denise O’Brien and Sharon W. Tiffany, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 13–31; Holly Wardlow, *Wayward Women: Sexuality and Agency in a New Guinea Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006; Wardlow, “Paradoxical intimacies: the Christian creation of the Huli domestic sphere” (this volume).

5 Patricia Grimshaw, “New England missionary wives, Hawaiian women and the ‘cult of true womanhood,’” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 19 (1985): 71–100; Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawai’i*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989; Grimshaw, “New England missionary wives, Hawaiian women and the ‘cult of true womanhood,’” in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 19–44, updated version of 1985; Christine Ward Gailey, *Kinship to Kingship: Gender, Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands*, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1987; Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Margaret Jolly, “‘To save the girls for brighter and better lives’: Presbyterian missions and women in the south of Vanuatu: 1848–1870,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 26(1) (1991): 27–48; Jolly, “Divided mothers: changing global inequalities of ‘nature’ and ‘nurture,’” in *The Globalization of Motherhood: Deconstructions and Reconstructions of Biology and Care*, ed. Jane Maree Maher and Wendy Chavkin, London and New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 154–79; Latu Latai, “Changing covenants in Samoa?: From Brothers and Sisters to Husbands and Wives?” forthcoming in *Gender and Person in Oceania*, ed. Anna-Karina Hermkens, Rachel Morgain and John Taylor, *Oceania Special Issue*, projected March 2015; Latai, “From open *fale* to mission houses: negotiating the boundaries of “domesticity” in Samoa” (this volume).

6 Grimshaw, “New England missionary wives, Hawaiian women and the ‘cult of true womanhood.’”

7 Latai, “Changing covenants in Samoa”; Latai, “From open *fale* to mission houses,” (this volume).

8 See Latai, “From open *fale* to mission houses,” (this volume); and Latai, “Changing covenants in Samoa”; contra Gailey, *Kinship to Kingship* (for Tonga). See also Serge Tcherkézoff, “‘On cloth, gifts and nudity’ regarding some European misunderstandings during early encounters in Polynesia,” in *Clothing the Pacific*, ed. Chloë Colchester, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003, pp. 51–75; Tcherkézoff, “Culture, nation, society: secondary change and fundamental transformation in Western Samoa: towards a model for the study of cultural dynamics,” in *The Changing South Pacific: Identities and Transformations*, ed. Serge Tcherkézoff and Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon, Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005, pp. 245–301.

classes in domesticity but through literacy and education towards the vocations of teaching and nursing.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, although Christian missionaries and indigenous converts early transformed patterns of gendered segregation of men's houses and domestic dwellings and ended male initiations and ancestral cults, extended patterns of kinship, rather than nucleated families, perdured and Christian women continued to work hard gardening tubers, nurturing pigs, hauling wood and water, and plaiting pandanus alongside the "domestic" work of child care, cleaning, cooking, sewing and washing clothes.<sup>10</sup>

In this chapter I explore the domestic paradoxes of the missionary project by concentrating attention not on foreign missionary women but on indigenous women converts. I hope to further unsettle the simple story of the Christian "domestication" of Pacific women by looking at that icon of conversion: cloth. Through scrutinising the materiality of cloth, its threads and textures, its colours and patterns we can weave a far more interesting and nuanced narrative about Christianity and domesticity in Oceania. I highlight three threads in this narrative.

First, I stress how introduced cloth was related to several pre-existing textile traditions across Oceania—felted barkcloth (*tapa/kapa*), plaited pandanus and a myriad of other fibres including flax, banana leaves, bush lianas, bog irises and feathers. These cloths, typically created by women (but sometimes dyed or decorated by men), were variously used for clothing, bedding and baskets and most importantly as valuables in gift exchanges linked to life-cycle rituals or ceremonies to celebrate or elevate rank. The diverse histories of how making indigenous cloth was abandoned and later revived, moved from quotidian to episodic ritual use, was creolised and layered with introduced cloth are fascinating and complex.<sup>11</sup> In earlier writing, I have explored transformations in

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9 Jolly, "To save the girls for brighter and better lives"; Jolly, "Divided mothers: changing global inequalities of 'nature' and 'nurture'."

10 Margaret Jolly *Women of the Place: Kastom, Colonialism and Gender in Vanuatu*, Chur and Reading: Harwood Publishers, 1994; Jolly, "Divided mothers: changing global inequalities of 'nature' and 'nurture'"; Jolly, "Material and immaterial relations: gender, rank and Christianity in Vanuatu," in *The Scope of Anthropology*, ed. Laurent Dousset and Serge Tcherkézoff, Oxford: Berghahn, 2012, pp. 110–54.

11 I prefer to use this word, analogous with its use in studies of language rather than "hybridity" which is the concept deployed in a special issue of *Pacific Arts*. See Ping Ann Addo, Heather E. Young-Leslie and Phyllis Herda (eds), *Hybrid Textiles: Pragmatic Creativity and Authentic Innovations in Pacific Cloth*, Special Issue in Honor of Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk, New Series, 3–5, 2007. Yet several contributors to that volume including Herda and Kamehiro critique the term. Like Kamehiro I think hybridity carries many racial and racist associations and that it locks interpretation into organicised models and binaries rather than more fluid processes of translation and power. It is paradoxical that it became so popular in some postcolonial celebrations of multiculturalism. See Pnina Werbner, "The limits of cultural hybridity: on ritual monsters, poetic license and contested postcolonial purifications," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute New Series* 7 (2001): 133–52.

several indigenous forms of cloth: *doba* in the Trobriand Islands, *bilums* in Papua New Guinea, and pandanus textiles and barkcloth across much of Oceania.<sup>12</sup> Here I focus on introduced cloth.

Second, the adoption of introduced cloth and clothing was *not* simply a colonial imposition by foreign missionaries on passive Oceanic peoples, a repressive disciplining of the savage bodies of the heathens.<sup>13</sup> Without denying the semiotic chainmail which linked nakedness, sexuality and sin in Christian conceptions, we need to acknowledge how introduced cloth was actively *sought* by Oceanic peoples; its very materiality a sign of the spiritual efficacy and power of foreigners. Fervent desire for foreign fabrics can be seen on early exploratory voyages; for example during Cook's three voyages (1768–1779). Oceanic peoples from Tahiti to Vanuatu (Cook's "New Hebrides") enthusiastically exchanged food and artefacts for soft sheets and crimson comforters, fabrics of lustrous beauty and sensuous efficacy and emblems of *mana* or divine power.<sup>14</sup> Greg Dening relates the wonderful story of how the red British naval flag with which Tobias Furneaux had taken "possession" of Tahiti in 1767 was woven by Tahitians into the sacred red and yellow feather belt used in the installation of high chiefs, a symbol of indigenous sovereignty.<sup>15</sup> The imbrication of the material and spiritual potency of the foreigners was perhaps even more obvious in the early stages of Christian conversion. Converts eagerly appropriated, wore and fashioned this new cloth as a sign of their adherence to this new God whose power eclipsed that of ancestral spirits and indigenous deities. Indigenous alacrity for introduced cloth is pervasive across Oceania attested not just in the fabrication of modest, modern clothing (such as the "Mother Hubbard"<sup>16</sup> or island dress) but in innovative and creative textile arts such as the *tivaevae/tifai fai* of the Cook Islands and Tahiti and the Hawaiian quilt.<sup>17</sup>

Third, the dominant forms and the hegemonic meanings of introduced cloth were dramatically transformed in such appropriations by Oceanic women. They were not *just* materials for and signs of cosy domesticity and Christian modernity.

12 Margaret Jolly, "Of the same cloth: Oceanic anthropologies of gender, textiles and Christianities," invited distinguished keynote lecture for the Association of Social Anthropology in Oceania, Canberra: The Australian National University, 14 February 2008. See also, Anna-Karina Hermkens and Katherine Lepani's edited collection on Women's Wealth in preparation.

13 Richard Eves, "Colonialism, corporeality and character: Methodist missions and the refashioning of bodies in the Pacific," *History and Anthropology* 10(1) (1996): 85–138.

14 See Jennifer Newell, *Trading Nature: Tahitians, Europeans and Ecological Exchange*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011.

15 Greg Dening, "Looking across the beach – both ways," in *Discovering Cook's Collections*, ed. Michelle Hetherington and Howard Morphy, Canberra: National Museum of Australia Press, 2009, pp. 11–24, p. 16.

16 Mother Hubbard refers to a comic character in an English nursery rhyme from 1805. The link to the dress form is obscure, as is the reference to a form of camelback locomotive.

17 See my paper, "Matisse between North Africa and Oceania: Orientalism, Modernism and Métissage," for a discussion of the influence of Tahitian *tifai fai* made by women on Matisse's late works, *Oceania the Sea and Oceania the Sky*. Being revised for journal submission.

They were and are fabrics saturated with the values of indigenous sanctity and rank, anti-colonial resistance, cultural pride, women's collectivities, national identities and transnational connections in an increasingly globalised world.

I now trace these three interwoven threads through two exemplary fabrics which have both been the subject of much recent scholarly reflection and popular debate: the Hawaiian quilt and the "island dress" of Vanuatu. Hawai'i and Vanuatu are very different Oceanic archipelagos, typically segregated by the culture area labels inherited from Dumont d'Urville: Polynesia and Melanesia.<sup>18</sup> Despite the dubious, racial origin of such enduring distinctions, there were important indigenous differences between these island groups in the situation of women and the salience of hereditary rank, and in how the Hawaiian islands were united by a common language before their unification as a kingdom whereas Vanuatu was characterised by extreme cultural and linguistic diversity (110 indigenous languages are still extant). Both archipelagoes were subject to intense and contesting colonial influences from the early nineteenth century, in Hawai'i, primarily British and American, in Vanuatu, British and French. In Hawai'i, the indigenous monarchy was overthrown in 1893 by a cartel which combined American missionary and mercantile interests. The islands were annexed by the United States in 1898, declared a state in 1959, and despite strenuous struggles for indigenous sovereignty, remain so today. Vanuatu was subject to the conjoint control of a British and French condominium from 1906–1980 (as New Hebrides/Nouvelles-Hébrides) in which colonial agents were far more divided by diverse metropolitan interests in land, labour and Christian missions. Vanuatu became an independent state in 1980 despite French-backed secessionist movements on Tanna and Santo. Despite these differences of indigenous culture and colonial history, there are striking affinities in the histories of Christianity and cloth, as exemplified in the Hawaiian quilt and island dress.

## The Hawaiian quilt

The history of the Hawaiian quilt is typically traced back to an originary moment in April 1820 when Protestant missionary couples of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) arrived in Honolulu on board the brig *Thaddeus*. They were warmly welcomed by high-ranking Hawaiians, including four women of high rank, two widows of King Kamehameha, the *ali'i nui* (high chief) who had united the islands in one

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18 See Margaret Jolly, "Women of the east, women of the west: region and race, gender and sexuality on Cook's voyages," in *The Atlantic World in the Antipodes*, ed. Kate Fullagar, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012, pp. 2–32.

kingdom ca. 1795, and the wives of two of his senior advisors. The interaction between the missionary wives and these Kanaka Māoli women was recorded by Lucy Thurston in her memoirs:

MONDAY morning, April 3d, the first sewing circle was formed that the sun ever looked down upon in His Hawaiian realm. Kalakua, queen-dowager was directress. She requested all the seven white ladies to take seats with them on the mats, on the deck of the *Thaddeus*. Mrs. Holman and Mrs. Ruggles were executive officers to ply the scissors and prepare the work. The four native women of distinction were furnished with calico patchwork to sew,—a new employment to them.<sup>19</sup>

Because of the reference to patchwork, this oft-quoted passage is frequently deemed to be the moment when Hawaiian women were taught to quilt. Yet, as Phyllis Herda suggests it was likely a far more modest sewing lesson, since “patches” at that time referred to small pieces of fabric used to instruct novices on how to use a needle and thread.<sup>20</sup> And, as Herda observes, the broader textual and discursive context makes it plain that the first cloth sought to be fashioned was not a complicated quilt but a modest dress. The sentences in Thurston’s memoir immediately preceding this passage tell us that “Kalakua brought a web of white cambric to have a dress made for herself in the fashion of those of our ladies, and was very particular in her wish to have it finished while sailing along the western side of the island before reaching the king.”<sup>21</sup> The sentences immediately following describe the Queen’s dress:

The dress was made in the fashion of 1819. The length of the skirt accorded with Brigham Young’s rule to his Mormon damsels,—*have it come down to the tops of the shoes*. But in the queen’s case, where the shoes were wanting, the bare feet cropped out very prominently [emphasis in original].<sup>22</sup>

Kalakua’s keen desire to wear the new fashions from New England were no doubt matched by the fervent enthusiasm of the missionary wives that Hawaiian women of all ranks cover their bodies with something less revealing than barkcloth (even if like many missionary women they were inclined to searing satire at the expense of Kanaka Māoli when they wore their new clothes

19 Lucy G. Thurston, *Life and Times of Mrs. Lucy G. Thurston. Wife of Rev. Asa Thurston, Pioneer Missionary to the Sandwich Islands, Gathered from Letters and Journals Extending Over a Period of More than Fifty Years*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Ann Arbor/Honolulu: S.C. Andrews/The Friend, [1882] 1934, p. 32.

20 Phyllis Herda, “Hybrid identities and the transference of Hawaiian quilt imagery,” in *Hybrid Textiles: Pragmatic Creativity and Authentic Innovation in Pacific Cloth*. *Pacific Arts*, ed. Ping Ann Addo, Heather Young Leslie and Phyllis Herda, Special Issue in Honor of Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk, New Series, 3–5, 2007, pp. 37–45.

21 Thurston, *Life and Times of Mrs Lucy G. Thurston*, p. 32.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.



ineptly).<sup>23</sup> As Grimshaw, Herda and others insist, the missionaries equated Hawaiian “nudity” with spiritual depravity<sup>24</sup> (but see Tcherkézoff on Tahiti and Samoa).<sup>25</sup> This is patent in Bingham’s quotation from another missionary wife who ran in startled horror to her cabin with the words:

O, my sisters, you cannot tell how the sight of these poor degraded creatures, both literally and spiritually naked, would affect you! I say naked. They have nothing but a narrow strip, which they term a marrow, tied around them.<sup>26</sup>

Although covering the nakedness of Kanaka Māoli was doubtless urgent, teaching Hawaiian women to quilt would, as Herda adjudges, hardly have been a priority in the balmy climate of islands far removed from the cold winters of the eastern United States.<sup>27</sup> Yet quilting soon became central in the social interaction between high-ranking Kanaka Māoli women and foreign missionary wives, and in the creolisation of indigenous and introduced textiles.<sup>28</sup>

Lucy Thurston may have thought this was the first “sewing circle” in God’s Hawaiian realm but Hawaiian women had long collaborated in the collective creation of indigenous textiles: barkcloth (H. *kapa*), pandanus (H. *lauholo*, *makaloa*) and featherwork (H. *ahu’ula*, *mahiole*). This was similarly stratified by rank.<sup>29</sup> Although all women made barkcloth from the paper mulberry tree only high-ranking women of the *ali’i nui* (H.) class had the prerogative to make fine, decorated barkcloth. Women were responsible for creating the brilliant red and yellow feather cloaks, capes and helmets worn by male high chiefs, which figured so prominently in early Western paintings of Hawai’i and in museum collections of Oceanic things.<sup>30</sup>

23 See Jolly, “To save the girls for brighter and better lives.”

24 Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*; Grimshaw, “New England missionary wives”; Herda, “Hybrid identities and the transference of Hawaiian quilt imagery.”

25 Tcherkézoff, “On cloths, gifts and nudity.”

26 A *maro* was a waistband of *tapa*. Bingham quoted in Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*, pp. 26–27.

27 Herda, “Hybrid identities and the transference of Hawaiian quilt imagery.”

28 Stacey L. Kamehiro, “Women, quilts and chiefly aesthetics: self-representation in nineteenth-century Hawai’i,” M.A. thesis in Art History, University of California at Los Angeles, 1991.

29 Herda, “Hybrid identities and the transference of Hawaiian quilt imagery”; Stacey Kamehiro, “Hawaiian quilts: chiefly self-representation in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hawai’i,” in *Hybrid Textiles: Pragmatic Creativity and Authentic Innovation in Pacific Cloth*. *Pacific Arts*, Special Issue in Honor of Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk, ed. Ping Ann Addo, Heather Young Leslie and Phyllis Herda, New Series, 3–5, 2007, pp. 23–36.

30 Commoner men and women were involved in the collection of the feathers but only women fabricated them according to Jocelyn Linnekin, “Who made the feather cloaks? A problem in Hawaiian gender relations,” *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 97 (1988): 265–80; Adrienne Kaeppler (ed.), *James Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific* London: Thames and Hudson, 2009, pp. 250–51, for Adrienne Kaeppler’s recent appraisal.

## ***Kapa*: The intimate affinity of barkcloth and quilts**

In the Hawaiian language, *kapa* denotes both barkcloth and quilts. As Stacey Kamehiro has so consummately argued their linguistic identification is mirrored in myriad ways: in material, formal design properties, in their uses and in the meanings and values which saturate the cloth.<sup>31</sup> The best Hawaiian barkcloth was soft like linen; its felted fibres sometimes resembled lace. Barkcloth such as the *kapa moe* (H.) used for bedding was layered; several undecorated sheets were covered by a decorated top sheet, which had both a textured watermark design beaten into its surface and a design applied centrally and to the borders. They were often filled with fern mulch, *pulu* (H.), as batting. Quilts similarly had several conjoined layers, were filled with hair or padding and the top layer was decorated with distinctive designs, stitching and embroidery, which secured the layers together.

Both barkcloth and Hawaiian quilts are described in very similar terms, using an aesthetic imagery drawn from the legendary origins of the paper mulberry tree which grew from the body of the ancestor Maikoha, beside a flowing stream where the land met water. The underside of both barkcloth and quilt is *pili* (H.) that which clings to the body of a person, the upper surface is *kahua* (H.) the “ground,” while the *pulu* (H.) is the moist space between, akin to the soft ground where land meets water. On a canonical Hawaiian quilt, the rows of patterns, of stitches and embroidery from centre to the edges are perceived as a series of breaking waves as they approach the “shore,” the borders of the cloth.

From the 1820s New England missionary women taught high-ranking Hawaiian women the art of quilting in sewing circles in their homes and from 1830 in mission schools. They hoped that thereby all Hawaiian women would learn the art, but chiefly women maintained a monopoly not just on the art of quilting but the materials of sewing: thread, needles, thimbles and cloth. This perpetuated the dominance chiefly women had earlier attained in controlling the import of foreign goods not just vis-à-vis low-ranking women, but vis-à-vis chiefly men.<sup>32</sup> High-ranking women had been prominent in early conversions to Christianity; indeed several had urged the overthrow of the *kapu* (H.) of the ancestral religion in 1819. This had forbidden men and women from eating together, had proscribed women from eating some delicious foods (including pork, coconut and banana) and from engaging in certain activities such as deep sea fishing, canoe building and war.<sup>33</sup> These divine taboos had already been

31 Kamehiro, “Hawaiian quilts.”

32 Ibid.

33 Caroline Ralston, “Changes in the lives of ordinary women in early post-contact Hawaii,” in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 45–64, p. 48.

eroded by the seeming immunity of foreign men such as those on Cook's third voyage who infringed *kapu* by eating with women, survived the experience and were thus credited with extraordinary *mana* (H. divine power).<sup>34</sup> Unlike Cook's *Resolution*, the ABCFM missionary ship *Thaddeus* had landed not just foreign missionary men but women. High-ranking Hawaiian women forged an early alliance with these Christian women from New England but also challenged their *mana*, through the materiality of their quilts (Figure 36).



**Figure 36. Left to right at the quilting horses: Adelaide Gifford carding wool; Mrs. Milia Kaiawe, Mrs. Leialoha Kanoho, Mrs. Akao Lock, Mrs. Louisa Malina, Mrs. Kalei Montgomery, working collectively on an appliqué quilt, 1933.**

Source: Senda Photos, "Mokihana Club 1933 Exhibit," in Robert J. Schlek, *The Wilcox Quilts in Hawaii*, photographs by Hugo de Vries, Kauai, Hawaii: Grove Farm Homestead and Wailoi Mission House, 1986. Courtesy of Kaua'i Museum.

The distinctive "Hawaiian quilt," a layered appliqué quilt which emerged in the 1840s–1860s is radically different from the American prototypes not just in form and design but in meanings and values. The dominant form of quilt made by New England missionary women was "patchwork" or "piecework," composed of many small pieces of diverse fabrics sewn together to make an overall design of harmonious colour and pattern, usually of rectilinear forms such as triangles or hexagons. In collections of early quilts made by Kanaka Māoli women (called H. *kapa pohopoho*) the influences of New England piecework (patchwork) are obvious but so are the transformations. American design blocks were used but

<sup>34</sup> I cannot here enter into the very complex debate between Marshall Sahlins and Gananath Obeyesekere as to whether and how Hawaiians identified Cook as a manifestation of the god Lono.

were invested with local meanings: e.g. the bear's paw became human fingers; the "drunkard's path" the "coconut knife."<sup>35</sup> Some more abstract, geometric designs replicated both New England models (like the "Log Cabin") and earlier *kapa* patterns, indented on barkcloth with beaters, such as the zig-zag patterns of "Bent Knee." Such geometric patchwork patterns were used on some very famous quilts such as that attributed to Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop and two which were laid on the floor of the Honolulu Catholic Cathedral in 1866 in a funerary mass on the occasion of the death of Spain's King Alphonso.<sup>36</sup>

In Hawai'i, New England piecework forms were soon surpassed by an appliqué technique. This involved folding a single piece of fabric into eight parts and then cutting a design so that either four or eight identical motifs were created in a symmetrical pattern. The source of this innovative technique is disputed. Some see it as inspired by the "snow flake" cutting of paper, popular as a pastime for Euro-American children in this period. Some see it as practical indigenous innovation: "to cut new materials into bits to be sewn together (for a patchwork quilt) seemed like a futile waste of time."<sup>37</sup> Some suggest that since Hawaiian gowns (H. *holoku*) worn by high-ranking women were full-cut rather than tailored like Western dresses, there were no small pieces left over to sew patchwork quilts. Others have queried such utilitarian explanations, rather seeing the innovation as high-ranking Hawaiian women appropriating the "aura and prestige associated with the Western appliqué technique."<sup>38</sup>

Kamehiro has developed this argument in a sophisticated interpretation of the history of the Hawaiian quilt. She suggests that Kanaka Māoli women early discerned the rarity and the higher value which American women invested in the appliqué technique. In their creation and celebration of this form they invested the quilt with indigenous values of sanctity and rank and with hidden meanings (H. *kaona*) which reinscribed their *mana* as high-ranking women.<sup>39</sup>

Design elements and motifs in Hawaiian quilts swiftly changed, privileging local flora and fauna: snowflakes and grapevines were supplanted by breadfruit, coconut and pineapples, *pikake* (jasmine), *lehua* (red flower) and tuber rose, dracenas, fish and coral. Sometimes motifs celebrated the perfumed, sensuous appeal of specific locales such as the bombax trees, growing in the grounds of the Queen's Medical Center, in Honolulu. Most Hawaiian quilts have a strong bipolar contrast between layer and ground, at first primarily red on white, blue

35 See Joyce Hammond, *Tifaifai and Quilts of Polynesia*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986, Table Two, pp. 38–39.

36 Kamehiro, "Hawaiian quilts," p. 17.

37 S. Jones, *Hawaiian Quilts*, Honolulu: Daughters of Hawai'i, Honolulu Academy of Arts, Mission Houses Museum, 1973, p. 10.

38 Hammond, *Tifaifai and Quilts of Polynesia*, p. 14; Joyce Hammond, "Polynesian women and *tifaefae*: fabrications of identity," *Journal of American Folklore* 99 (1986): 259–79.

39 Kamehiro, "Hawaiian quilts."

on white or yellow on white and in later decades an expanded palette such as black on yellow or khaki on deep turquoise. Appliqué quilts often have a pronounced symmetry around the central point or navel, the *piko* (H. which, Kamehiro suggests, refers to Maikoha's navel). Hawaiians distinguish between two types the *kapa lau* (H. leaf) where a single design is appliquéd and the *kapa apana* (H.) where two pieces are appliquéd, one centred on the navel and another around the border or *lei* (H.).

There are several variants of a Hawaiian story which tell of how a Hawaiian woman was inspired to create this new design when the shadow of a breadfruit tree was cast upon her sheet drying on the grass. Kamehiro links this idea of the design as a "shadow" or "silhouette" with the origin story of the paper mulberry tree and with the notion of *mana*, described by Marshall Sahlins as a divine power, a creative force "which makes invisible things visible."<sup>40</sup> Flows of *mana* were especially concentrated in the persons of high-ranking people; high chiefs were enjoined to walk around only at night so that their dangerous shadows would not fall on common people and sicken them or require their execution. Aristocratic beauty and efficacy were likened to the rays of the sun, shining brilliantly and creating life from the darkness and chaos of the night (H. *po*). Clearly missionary tropes about Christianity bringing light into heathen darkness found fertile ground in Hawaiian imaginaries of rank and cosmogony. And some quilts celebrated that other bright light of modernity: the chandeliers which hung in the royal palaces of King Kalākaua and later Queen Lili'uokalani.

Kamehiro highlights how often motifs which celebrate the natural beauties of Hawai'i, were simultaneously affirmations of chiefly power over the fertility of the land.<sup>41</sup> Many of the flowers imaged were known to be the favourite blossoms of queens and princesses, e.g. the milkwood blossoms or the imported roses growing in the gardens of Queen Lili'uokalani. Emblems of *ali'i* power abounded and, especially during the reign of the nationalist King Kalākaua (1874–1891), icons of royalty (Figure 37).<sup>42</sup>

Such quilts then were not just benign, sentimental celebrations of Hawaiian nature, but claims to custodianship of place and articulations of Hawaiian sovereignty through celebrations of rank and royalty: for example, the comb of Princess Ka'iulani, her fan and feather plume, and more overt articulations of support for the monarchy in a series of quilts dating from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, imaging the Hawaiian flag, the coat of arms, the crowns

40 Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1981, p. 31.

41 Kamehiro, "Hawaiian quilts."

42 Ibid.; Stacey L. Kamehiro, *The Arts of Kingship: Hawaiian Art and National Culture of the Kalākaua Era*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.



and feather cloaks and feather standards (H. *kahili*) of Hawaiian royalty.<sup>43</sup> On occasion flags were imaged upside down to signal the distress and suffering of foreign occupation. Writing was early incorporated to commemorate historical events. And, under the seeming simplicity of symmetrical surfaces, lay *kaona* (H.) or hidden meanings, often with political import.



**Figure 37. Appliqué quilt (1886) with red design on white background featuring both Hawaiian flowers and images of feather standards associated with royalty.**

Source: Reiko Mochinaga Brandon and Loretta G.H. Woodard, *Hawaiian Quilts: Tradition and Transition*, Tokyo: Kokusai Art, 2004, p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> Joyce Hammond, "Hawaiian flag quilts: multivalent symbols of a Hawaiian quilt tradition," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 27 (1993): 1–26.



Kamehiro suggests that the common image of the sea urchin, evoked associations with an opened eye and the rays of the sun, and thus with aristocratic brilliance in making the invisible visible.<sup>44</sup> Following Kaeppler, she observes how a series of stacked parallel chevrons mediated by a central line referenced not just the backbone of a sea eel but the seriation of chiefly genealogical succession.<sup>45</sup> For the most part Hawaiian designs, unlike those from New England, were not rectilinear but curved and arched, imaging crescent moons and rainbows, both strongly associated with chiefly power. The predominant palette also signalled their *mana*: red for sacred power, yellow for political authority and white, the colour of Lono, the god of rain and fertility.

As Kamehiro notes, Hawaiian quilts were not just generalised evocations of indigenous sanctity and rank but were associated with particular persons and genealogies.<sup>46</sup> The particular woman who created a new named quilt design had rights to be known as its creator and to prohibit other women from using or stealing that pattern. Although other women collaborated in creating quilts, they could not sit on the basting or the design nor complete the final stitching before the quilt's public display. Quilts were so suffused with the *mana* of their maker that they were sometimes burnt on her death. Throughout life such valued creations were only rarely used as bed coverings; as with decorated barkcloth it was forbidden to sit or to sleep on such a quilt. They only rarely adorned double beds; less prestigious piecework quilts sufficed for that.<sup>47</sup> They were rather stored in sealed boxes, annually aired, used in display for special occasions and were occasionally offered as extremely valuable gifts at weddings and funerals. Nineteenth-century photographs show Hawaiian royals sitting in front of exquisite quilts and their bodies in death, draped in quilts, as they would have been swathed in barkcloth in the past.

Thus Hawaiian quilts were not so much icons of cosy Christian conjugality but embodied the *mana* of *ali'i* nobility and ultimately the monarchy. Rather than a sign of Hawaiian peoples succumbing to the fatal allure of Christian gods and capitalist commodities, Hawaiian quilts might rather be read as appropriations of valued foreign things for indigenous purposes, as a willing and passionate embrace of Christian modernity and even as a resistance to colonial power, especially on the part of high-ranking Hawaiians. Quilts became potent icons of Hawaiian monarchy and anti-colonial resistance particularly in the context of the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani by a cartel of American missionaries and businessmen in 1893. As well as signing petitions for the return of the monarchy, as Noenoe Silva has so consummately analysed, Hawaiian women gathered

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44 Kamehiro, "Hawaiian quilts."

45 Adrienne Kaeppler, *Kapa: Hawaiian Barkcloth*, Bay: Boom Books, 1980.

46 Kamehiro, "Hawaiian quilts."

47 Reiko Mochinaga Brandon and Loretta G.H. Woodard, *Hawaiian Quilts: Tradition and Translation*, Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts and University of Hawai'i Press, 2004, p. 18.

around the Queen to create a giant silk patchwork quilt, emblazoned with their names and declarations of loyalty to royalty.<sup>48</sup> While she was incarcerated in the Iolani palace for ten months after her overthrow in 1893, the Queen and her Ladies in Waiting sewed a “crazy quilt,” with irregular shapes and bright colours, and adorned with exquisite embroidery, which in part details the events of those months. It is now known as the “Queen’s Quilt” and, as Marata Tamaira has eloquently evoked in a recent paper on contemporary Hawaiian art, is a cherished and potent reminder of American occupation.<sup>49</sup>

Deborah (Kepola) U. Kakalia’s stunning gold and purple quilt from 1993, displayed as part of the fifth Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane, Australia, titled simply *Lili’uokalani* evokes the poignant moment of the overthrow a century later, with central images of crowns and feathered standards, and an eight-point star representing Kakalia’s husband, all framed by the Queen’s favourite flowers of milkwood and her fluttering fans.<sup>50</sup> This quilt is not just a nostalgic lament for a lost past but an affirmation of sovereignty sentiments in opposition to the United States in a contested present. Curator Maud Page affirms, “Techniques originally taught by American missionaries have been adapted to create inimitable textiles that appear to pulsate.”<sup>51</sup> The pulsation is simultaneously aesthetic and political. The revival of Hawaiian quilt-making in the 1980s–1990s coincided with the reanimation of the Hawaiian sovereignty struggle and a cultural renaissance. As Herda avers, “During the Hawaiian cultural renaissance in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hawaiian quilts were embraced as an icon of indigenous culture, just as they had been part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s indigenous patriotic expressions of Kanaka Māoli.”<sup>52</sup>

Yet, as the catalogue of an exhibition mounted in 2002 documents, contemporary quilt-makers include not just women identifying as Kanaka Māoli but those with mixed and foreign ancestry and a Japanese-American man.<sup>53</sup> The authors of that catalogue insist Hawaiian quilt-making is still a vibrant art. Herda

48 Noeoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

49 Marata Tamara, “Visual sovereignty and indigenous countervisuality: picturing contemporary Kanaka Māoli art practice in Hawai’i,” Ph.D. thesis proposal presentation, Canberra: The Australian National University, 10 April 2012.

50 Maud Page and Ruth McDougall, “Pacific textiles project, Pacific threads,” in *The 5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, ed. Lynne Seear and Suhayana Raffel, Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery Publishing, 2006, pp. 172–75. See also Margaret Jolly, “The south in southern theory: Antipodean reflections on the Pacific,” *Australian Humanities Review* 44 (2008): 75–100, online: <http://eprints.anu.edu.au/ahr/044/pdf/essay05.pdf>, accessed 4 July 2014.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

52 Herda, “Hybrid identities and the transference of Hawaiian quilt imagery,” p. 19. See also Phyllis S. Herda, “The political nature of quilting in late 19th century Hawai’i,” *Baessler Archiv* 45 (1997): 223–33.

53 Brandon and Woodard, *Hawaiian Quilts*.

suggests that Hawaiian quilts are now rare and expensive to create and their exhibition in the Honolulu Academy of Arts suggests they are now a high art form for wealthy connoisseurs.<sup>54</sup>

The final rather poignant and perhaps paradoxical chapter in the story of Hawaiian quilts ends in the shopping centres of Ala Moana and Waikiki. Indeed most quilts being sold there as “Hawaiian” are manufactured in the Philippines. Yet the image of the Hawaiian quilt, the shadow of its afterlife perhaps, is everywhere: on T-shirts, pillow slips, coffee mugs, pot holders, coasters, key rings, greeting cards and computer mouse pads. As Herda observes these circulating images of quilts adorn not just the favoured souvenirs of the six million or so tourists who flock to Hawai’i annually but are regularly consumed by locals, Kanaka Māoli and others alike.<sup>55</sup> Such circulating images of Hawaiian quilts have in Herda’s view become signs of a benign even safe “local” identity, far removed from their earlier associations with Christianity, nobility and struggles for sovereignty.

## “Mother Hubbards” and *aelan dres*

Across Oceania, forms of women’s clothing introduced by Christian missionaries have been both satirised and deplored by foreign observers in a lineage from early twentieth-century lady traveller Beatrice Grimshaw to late twentieth-century feminist art historian Griselda Pollock. In Tahiti, Grimshaw described the huge wardrobe of long muslin gowns of her hostess as “night dresses,” evoking her “dreamworld” *In the Strange South Seas*.<sup>56</sup> Pollock in her critical account of Paul Gauguin was more scathing about “the shapeless sack inflicted on Tahitian women by missionaries.”<sup>57</sup> In a stinging rebuttal of Pollock, Nicholas Thomas writes: “these garments have not been inflicted but adopted by entirely dignified women who had found ways of making ... Christian colonial modernity ... their own.”<sup>58</sup> Most scholars working on clothing in the Pacific over the last decade echo this view, insisting on the agency of Islanders rather than the colonial power of missionary impositions: that introduced clothing was eagerly adopted by Oceanic Christians not inflicted and that these new clothes were not just icons of Christian conversion and signs of a new sexual culture of modesty but

54 Herda, “Hybrid identities and the transference of Hawaiian quilt imagery.”

55 Ibid.

56 Beatrice Grimshaw, *In the Strange South Seas*, London: Hutchinson and Co., 1907, pp. 14–15.

57 Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits: Gender and the Colour of Art History*, London: Thames, 1992, figs 25–26.

58 Nicholas Thomas, “Preface,” in *The Art of Clothing: A Pacific Experience*, ed. Susanne Küchler and Graeme Were, London: UCL Press, 2005, pp. ix–xi, p. ix.

worn as objects of beauty, dignity and power in an embrace of modernity.<sup>59</sup> But these scholars also suggest rather more complex local stories in the relationship between indigenous and introduced clothing, the gendered and racial salience of such clothes and the way in which women's agency, collectivity, religious and ethnic identity was engaged in the arts of sewing and in wearing these "new clothes." I now focus on some stories from the archipelago of Vanuatu and in particular the work of Lissant Bolton and Maggie Cummings.<sup>60</sup>

But I start with a more personal vignette. During my doctoral fieldwork in South Pentecost, Vanuatu in the 1970s I lived with people who were strenuously anti-Christian, who portrayed their way of life as following *kastom* (B. the ways of the place) rather than *skul* (B. Christianity, modernity).<sup>61</sup> This was daily signalled in their clothes: for women *rais* (S.), grass skirts they fashioned from ivory pandanus or, for special occasions, lustrous silky banana spathe fibres; for men the pandanus penis wrapper, *bipis* (S.) plaited from pandanus and dyed with red stripes, tucked up in a bark belt. Women's breasts were bared, men's testicles exposed. And yet when these fervent adherents of *kastom* crossed the fast flowing river which separated them from their Christian kin at the Catholic mission station of Baie Barrier, they stopped at the hamlet of Sai and changed their clothes, men donning shirts and shorts, women island dresses, in respect of the sartorial codes of their Christian kin.<sup>62</sup> As a young white woman and, following the advice of a protective supervisor, I routinely wore modest dresses, although my hosts knew I was not a practising Christian. I wore a grass skirt only for major rituals celebrating life crises or elevations of rank. This delighted my hosts but I found it rather uncomfortable, only partly since it chafed my ample hips. A couple of friends and colleagues who visited me in Bunlap village photographed me so dressed but I was wary of such a display of immodesty or "going native" and never dared show such photos to my late father or mother. This was wise since when I gave my father a copy of my book *Women of the Place* he was visibly shocked by the photos of bare-breasted women and men with penis wrappers with testicles exposed and turned the pages in relief to a photograph of me in a modest T-shirt.<sup>63</sup> Intriguingly, a later ethnographer and

59 Colchester, *Clothing the Pacific*; Susanne Küchler and Graeme Were (eds), *The Art of Clothing: A Pacific Experience*, London: UCL Press, 2005.

60 In the conference version of this chapter I also alluded to the cognate arguments of Anna Paini in New Caledonia apropos *la robe mission*. See Anna Paini, "Rehabiliter les symboles: les femmes kanak et la robe mission à Lifou (Nouvelle-Calédonie)," *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 117 (2003): 233–53.

61 *Skul* is now almost obsolete and has been replaced by *fasin blong waetman* as Christianity has been progressively embraced as part of *kastom* (by Christians at least) and especially since the period of national independence in 1980.

62 In April 2013 when I walked from the *kastom* village of Bunlap to the Church of Christ village of Ranwas in South Pentecost, men from Bunlap changed into shorts before entering Ranwas, while women, clad only in *rais*, remained sitting down on the edges of Ranwas and did not enter.

63 Jolly, *Women of the Place*, pp. 4, 12.

film-maker in the region, a German man Thorolf Lipp, was not so restrained, wearing the *bipis* throughout his fieldwork in the 1990s–2000. He says that local men applauded his thus embodying *kastom* (B.)

I tell this story since it reveals how deeply many of us have imbibed and embodied the associations between nakedness, sexuality and sin in Western imaginaries and according to Webb Keane, a particularly Christian sense of the indexicality of signs, between the outer surface of the body and the inner moral state of the person.<sup>64</sup> Serge Tcherkézoff has written persuasively about the misrecognitions in early encounters in Tahiti and Samoa such that Europeans saw nakedness when women's breasts were bare, whereas in indigenous opinion they were clothed.<sup>65</sup> And there is no doubt that the same argument could be made for Vanuatu: there were indigenous codes of respectable clothing which exposed breasts, bottoms and testicles but which Europeans, most consequentially Christian missionaries, saw as "nakedness." How did these contrary codes interact in the process of Christian conversion?

Since the arrival of the London Missionary Society in the southern islands in 1839, Presbyterians who spread from the island of Aneityum in 1848 throughout the southern and central archipelago, the Anglicans in the north from 1849, the Catholics from the 1880s, the Church of Christ and Seventh Day Adventists from the 1920s, and a plethora of new evangelical churches more recently, ni-Vanuatu have become pervasively Christian and, for the most part, well-covered. All denominations urged their converts to adopt the new clothes, although with varying degrees of zealotry. Indigenous clothes are worn only by a tiny minority of those who still adhere to the ancestral religion, or by Christians on rare ritual occasions, in museum displays or for tourists (see below).

Bolton offers an exhaustive overview of indigenous clothing in Vanuatu; I distill only the main contours here. Like the languages and cultures of the archipelago, clothing was regionally diverse.<sup>66</sup> Men wore either plaited pandanus textile skirts from waist to thigh or passed through their legs, or bark belts with pandanus penis wrappers (B. *nambas*). Women wore either a "grass" skirt, plaited from pandanus or other fibres, or a plaited pandanus textile passed between their legs or wrapped around their hips. Uniquely in east Santo women wore only a single leaf at the front and a bunch of leaves behind, both suspended from a fibre

64 Webb Keane, "The hazards of new clothes: what signs make possible," in *The Art of Clothing: A Pacific Experience*, ed. Susanne Küchler and Graeme Were, London: UCL Press, 2005, pp. 1–16.

65 Tcherkézoff, "On cloths, gifts and nudity."

66 Lissant Bolton, "Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu," in *Clothing the Pacific*, ed. Chloë Colchester, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003, pp. 119–39; Bolton, "Dressing for transition: weddings, clothes and change in Vanuatu," in *The Art of Clothing: A Pacific Experience*, ed. Susanne Küchler and Graeme Were, London: UCL Press, 2005, pp. 19–32; Bolton, "'Island dress that belongs to us all': mission dresses and the innovation of tradition in Vanuatu," in *Body Arts and Modernity*, ed. Elizabeth Ewart and Michael O'Hanlon, Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2007, pp. 165–82.

band. Clothing styles as much as language defined local identities for both ni-Vanuatu and foreign observers, including anthropologists. Early anthropologists like Rivers and Layard distinguished between “mat” and “skirt” cultures,<sup>67</sup> speculating about their associations with matrilineal and patrilineal descent and the historical sedimentation of cultures.<sup>68</sup> On Malakula groups were classified as Big or Small Nambas depending on the size of the men’s penis wrappers.

As Bolton suggests indigenous “clothing” can be seen as far more than cloth since it included a range of ornamentation and corporeal modification which marked both gender and status: necklaces, ear-rings, bracelets and anklets of shells, fibres and seeds; tattooing, tooth evulsion, nose piercing, head-binding, body painting, coconut oiling and hair-bleaching.<sup>69</sup> Clothing, ornamentation and body modification was not a matter of individual personal style but tightly specified by collective codes about gender, rank and life course.<sup>70</sup> So, in Erromango a girl’s fibre skirt was lengthened when she was betrothed while widows who were available to remarry shortened theirs. On special ritual occasions Erromangan women wore beautiful decorated barkcloth, trailing to the ground in long streamers when they were married (Figure 38). On Tanna men grew their hair at puberty, bleached it and bound it in long strands which, lengthening with age, signifying enhanced masculinity and seniority. (This hairstyle, remarkably similar to later Jamaican *rasta* style, was recorded in a drawing by the artist William Hodges on Cook’s second voyage).<sup>71</sup> In the northern islands elevation in rank for both men and women was marked in rituals with body painting and the wearing of leaves like cycas, dracaenas and crotons, or in islands like Ambae more precious, fine and elaborate pandanus textile costumes. These emblems of rank elevation were closely restricted to those who had earned the right to wear them.

As Anna-Karina Hermkens suggests, Christian missionaries not only persuaded people to discard their old clothes but also to eschew such ornamentation and modification of the body (and often collected clothes and artefacts as curios and testaments to “heathen savagery” for museum collections).<sup>72</sup> Thus as well as “covering up” perceived nakedness there was a desire on the part of both European and Pacific missionaries in Vanuatu to refashion the Christian body.

67 William Halse Rivers, *The History of Melanesian Society*, two volumes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914; John Layard, *Stone Men of Malekula*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1942.

68 See Haidy Geismar and Anita Herle, *Moving Images: John Layard, Fieldwork and Photography on Malakula since 1914*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press / Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2009.

69 Bolton, “Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu.” Hermkens (this volume) following Wetherell, suggests that clothing the Maisin people was not such a priority for the Anglicans operating in that region.

70 Bolton, “Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu,” p. 122.

71 See Margaret Jolly, “‘Ill-natured comparisons’: racism and relativism in European representations of ni-Vanuatu from Cook’s second voyage,” *History and Anthropology* 5(3–4) (1992): 331–64.

72 Hermkens “The materiality of missionisation in Collingwood Bay, Papua New Guinea” (this volume).



The journals, memoirs and magazines of Protestant missionaries in particular are laced with textual and visual exemplars of the “before and after” story of Christian conversion. So in the Presbyterian journal, *Quarterly Jottings from The New Hebrides South Sea Islands* reports, there are many photographs of recent male converts fully clothed in shirt and trousers, although this may have been only occasional attire worn to please the missionary visitor photographer.<sup>73</sup> But an anonymous author in that Presbyterian journal makes much of the ironclad association of clothing and Christianity, “Thirty dressed natives carries little meaning to our minds at home. But it should be realised that a savage prides himself on nudity as a badge of heathenism. He needs the courage of conviction to adopt dress. Persecution follows.”<sup>74</sup>



**Figure 38. Erromangan woman in a dress of decorated bark cloth, worn on ritual occasions such as marriage, ca. 1880s. Photographer H.A. Robertson.**

Source. H.A. Robertson, *Erromanga: The Martyr Isle*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903, facing p. 448.

<sup>73</sup> Bolton, “Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu,” p. 128.

<sup>74</sup> *Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides, South Sea Islands. 1895–1961*, Woodford, England: John G. Paton Mission Fund, 1895, p. 10, cited in Bolton, “Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu,” p. 128.

Apart from the confident indexicality between clothing and religious conviction,<sup>75</sup> this imputation of “persecution” from local heathens suggests two opposed camps of clothed converts versus naked savages, but as we know from the broader history of Christianity in the archipelago, conversion could be a slow and fitful process and there was much “backsliding.”<sup>76</sup> Moreover, introduced clothing was not immediately and exclusively adopted but often worn layered and creolised with indigenous clothes. Here is the Reverend H. A. Robertson writing in *Erromanga, The Martyr’s Isle* (1903):

In their heathen state the men of Aneityum had been dressed like the other New Hebridean savages, if dress it was. The women however, wore and still do wear, skirts made of the *pandanus* leaf.... These skirts with the addition of a short print jacket, formed a woman’s week-day attire; while on Sundays and on all state occasions, a wonderful head gear, in the form of a large barrel shaped bonnet made of plaited *pandanus* leaf surmounted all. These bonnets were cut into shape and sewed by Esther [the widow of a local man Lazarus who had been an early convert and assistant to the Inglises, a missionary couple]. The hair on the woman’s head being thick and woolly, the bonnets were usually worn on their shoulders, the strings being tied securely in front, and the Aneityumese belle thus equipped was, to herself and her admirers, a thing of beauty. The men, as Christians, were clad in shirts and short kilts or *lava-lava*, no covering being worn on their heads [*italics in original, insert mine*].<sup>77</sup>

Creole clothes, which are often satirised by the very missionaries who were trying to change the clothes of ni-Vanuatu, appear in photographs of mission stations and plantations throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Women in the southern islands often wore their fibre skirts over Mother Hubbard-style European dresses as late as the 1940s,<sup>78</sup> a pattern of layering witnessed in many parts of the Pacific.<sup>79</sup> By comparison the photographs of the British anthropologist John Layard from 1914 show women at a Catholic mission station on Vao consummately and exclusively clothed in early versions of “island dress” while women of non-Christian villages on Atchin are seen barebreasted but wearing a loincloth and headdress of trade “calico.”<sup>80</sup> Increasingly island dresses became iconic of the good Christian woman. The Presbyterian journal *Quarterly Jottings* published a description of the preferred style with a wide yoke and puffy elbow sleeves, adorned with red frills and

75 Keane, “The hazards of new clothes.”

76 See Margaret Jolly, “Devils, holy spirits and the swollen God: translation, conversion and colonial power in the Marist Mission, Vanuatu, 1887–1934,” in *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, ed. Peter Van der Veer, New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 231–62.

77 H.A. Robertson, *Erromanga, The Martyr’s Isle*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903, pp. 100–01.

78 Bolton, “Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu.”

79 Colchester (ed.), *Clothing the Pacific*; Jolly, “Of the same cloth.”

80 Geismar and Herle, *Moving Images*, pp. 97, 166 and 294.

braid: “the natives dearly love bright colours.”<sup>81</sup> The Anglicans in the north rather promoted blouses and skirts and these two dress styles are still seen to distinguish these respective denominations in Vanuatu.<sup>82</sup>

Such dress styles were clearly seen by European missionaries as distinct from their own; their voluminous rather than tailored shape meant an “ordinary native dress” was “something like a lady’s nightdress.”<sup>83</sup> Although we might perceive racialisation in the missionary promotion of this form of dress, ni-Vanuatu Christian women, in both villages and towns, “grassroots” and elite women, up to and beyond national independence in 1980 seemed to eagerly embrace the sewing and wearing of such dresses. Bolton’s several publications on *aelan dres* (B.), associated workshops with women fieldworkers at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and a film on the subject evince the pleasure and pride of women in such dresses. Details such as the colours and patterns of cloth, the addition of “wings” or “ears” at the side, the quality and abundance of lace and braid on the bodice mark the island, the denomination and even the village of origin. And collectively *aelan dres* also came to be seen as a generic national dress.<sup>84</sup> The generation of women who lived through the struggle for independence from the conjoint colonisers, Britain and France, were urged to see it as iconic not just of their Christianity but their nationality. Like the Hawaiian quilt, a material form which was introduced as part of a colonially and racially inflected Christianity, *aelan dres* has been appropriated as indigenous. But significantly there is no marked masculine counterpart,<sup>85</sup> an asymmetry which might occasion more reflection.

Bolton has both explored and animated the revival of indigenous forms of cloth, and especially the pandanus textiles of Ambae.<sup>86</sup> These textiles are being made and worn by women on important occasions such as life crisis and grade-taking rituals, although often with bras and some layers of cloth. They signal a new phase in the creolisation of clothes, a new and visible conjunction of *kastom* and Christianity. And in the sequestered context of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and its museum in August 2006, at the conclusion of the *Women’s Filwoka Workshop* led by Jean Tarisesei and Lissant Bolton I was the privileged witness to a number

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81 *Quarterly Jottings*, 1896, p. 7.

82 Bolton, “Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu”; Bolton, “Island dress that belongs to us all.”

83 *Quarterly Jottings*, 1896, p. 7.

84 Bolton, “Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu”; Bolton, “Island dress that belongs to us all.”

85 See Bruce Knauff, “From self-decoration to self-fashioning: orientalism as backward progress among the Gebusi of Papua New Guinea,” in *Body Arts and Modernity*, ed. Elizabeth Ewart and Michael O’Hanlon, Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2007, pp. 88–107.

86 For example see Bolton, “Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu.” For an appraisal see Jolly, “Material and immaterial relations.”

of older women *filwokas*, the vast majority of whom were practising Christians, daring to bare their bodies in a public fashion parade of what *kastom dres blong yumi* (our indigenous dress) looked like.<sup>87</sup>

## Trouble with *traosis*

As Bolton acknowledges and Maggie Cummings documents in detail, not all ni-Vanuatu women are comfortable with *aelan dres*.<sup>88</sup> Younger women and especially those in urban centres like Port Vila and Santo are rejecting this style of dress as old-fashioned and uncomfortable. Maggie Cummings quotes many younger women who prefer more tailored clothes, shorter dresses and even *traosis* (B. loose wide pants like culottes or surf shorts).<sup>89</sup> They see the *aelan dres* as hot and oppressive and suggest they would only wear it to hide a pregnancy or when they were married and became a mother. *Traosis* are especially celebrated as comfortable, but as in many parts of the western Pacific have become the subject of fierce debate.<sup>90</sup> Opponents say, since *traosis* show the contours of the body they are immodest and thus invite rape and violence from men, or that such women are usurping the right of men to wear the trousers. Cummings' young women interlocutors retort that they can run faster from men's unwanted sexual advances in trousers and that they offer a layer of protection from rape. They even suggested that voluminous island dresses which billow in the wind made them feel naked. Yet, on several islands of Vanuatu, such as Paama, chiefs have banned women from wearing trousers in public places in the last decade. Such bans have been supported by some older Christian women's groups but denounced by NGOs like Amnesty International who have suggested to the UN that such bans, like associated bans on women's mobility, constitute a denial of a basic constitutional freedom and of women's universal human rights.

More than pleasure and national pride are involved in this sartorial struggle. In their desires to "look good," young women are not just embroiled in debates about local fashions in a global world of consumption but a moral and political economy about clothing which associates modest dress and comportment with

87 Maggie Cummings, "Looking good: the cultural politics of island dress for young women in Vanuatu," in *The Contemporary Pacific* 25(1) (January 2013): 33–65, makes an important distinction between this concept and *stret fasin blong dresap*, "the proper way to dress."

88 Bolton, "Gender, status and introduced clothing in Vanuatu," p. 36; Bolton, "'Island dress that belongs to us all,'" p. 177; and Maggie Cummings, "The trouble with trousers: gossip, *kastom* and sexual culture in Vanuatu," in *Making Sense of AIDS: Culture, Sexuality and Power in Melanesia*, ed. Leslie Butt and Richard Eves, Honolulu. University of Hawai'i Press, 2008, pp. 133–14; Cummings, "Looking good."

89 Cummings, "The trouble with trousers"; and Cummings, "Looking good."

90 See Deborah McDougall, "Fellowship and citizenship as models of national community: United Church Women's Fellowship in Ranongga, Solomon Islands," *Oceania* 74(1–2) (2003): 61–80; Martha Macintyre, "Police and thieves, gunmen and drunks: problems with men and problems with society in Papua New Guinea," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 19 (2008): 179–93.



women's sexual virtue.<sup>91</sup> In choosing not to wear *aelan dres* young women say they invite violent retribution from men, including from jealous boyfriends and controlling husbands, and severe criticism from older women. Bolton herself reports the case of a woman from Pentecost who married a man and lived in Port Vila, but refused to wear the *aelan dres* characteristic of his island.<sup>92</sup> He subjected her to violent abuse and a *kastom* court (community hearing) which ordered her to pay a fine on several occasions. But she persisted in wearing her preferred jeans.



**Figure 39. Ni-Vanuatu women marching together on the streets of Port Vila wearing identical *aelan dres* to celebrate women in business, July 2009.**

Source. "Open Day 2009," VANWODS Microfinance, 17 July 2009, online: <http://microfinance.vanessasuen.com/2009/07/open-day-2009>, accessed 5 August 2013.

It would be hard to deny that notions of *rispek* (B. respect) and sexual modesty are at play here, along with notions about the right of men and of male-dominated *kastom* courts to control women's comportment, clothing and sexual behaviour. Such adjudications simultaneously engage *kastom* and Christian values in reinscribing patterns of male control. Yet increasingly younger women are resisting such imputations and adjudications and wearing what "looks good." As Cummings suggests, "looking good is both an aesthetic and a moral

91 Cummings "Looking good," 2013.

92 Bolton, "Island dress that belongs to us all," p. 177.

imperative.”<sup>93</sup> So even though older ni-Vanuatu women and some scholars have insisted that the wearing of *aelan dres* is primarily about women’s collective pleasure and religious and ethnic identity rather than about Christian sexual modesty and shame (Figure 39), the spurning of such dress styles by younger women might suggest that it is not a question of either / or but of both / and.

## Some missing threads?

Scholarly approaches to Christianity in Oceania have lurched between the clichéd polarities of treating Pacific peoples as victims of the colonial power with which Christianity was palpably if tensely articulated<sup>94</sup> and seeing them as eager agents embracing new gods and foreign goods.<sup>95</sup> The history of cloth has been an integral part of such narratives. For too long the adoption of Western clothes and women’s sewing classes were seen simply as part of a colonially imposed discipline of domesticity. Over the last decade scholars have consummately queried such verdicts stressing the indigenous agency at work in acts of appropriation, translation and transformation of cloth and clothing. As we have seen the histories of both the Hawaiian quilt and of *aelan dres* are imbued with Oceanic meanings and values which often go unappreciated by the casual observer.

Yet in our discursive stress on indigenous agency and appropriation it is important not to completely lose sight of the colonial power and capitalist modernity which *was* part of the saturated “light” of Christianity as it penetrated “heathen darkness,” nor the way in which novel Christian values about “sexuality” which associated bared bodies with sin, which indexically connected the surface of the body and the inner person or the “soul” were internalised by generations of Pacific peoples.<sup>96</sup> Hawai’i and Vanuatu are places where Christianity has so long prevailed that it is now seen as an inherent aspect of indigenous culture. But in the high valleys of Papua New Guinea (PNG) evangelical Christianity has only recently triumphed. Here sexual cultures characterised by secret male initiation, the insemination of boys and gendered segregation have been supplanted by companionate heterosexual marriage, greater female autonomy and perceptions of homosexuality as a foreign import only in the decades since the 1970s.<sup>97</sup> Some ethnographers of PNG are reporting a sense of “humiliation” about past

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93 Cummings, “Looking good,” p. 34.

94 For example see Roger M. Keesing, *Custom and Confrontation: The Kwaio Struggle for Cultural Autonomy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

95 For example see Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

96 Keane, “The hazards of new clothes.”

97 Gilbert Herdt, “From ritual sex to sexual individuality: tradition and modernity in Sambia sexual culture,” Public lecture, Canberra: The Australian National University, 11 July 2012.



practices or a state of “moral torment” among Christians.<sup>98</sup> Gilbert Herdt has recently spoken of denial, shame and even “aphasia” about past sexual cultures among the Sambia given the force of the novel Christian fabric of “sexuality,” as married women and men nestle down under one blanket.<sup>99</sup> Holly Wardlow rather evokes the continuing struggle and self-discipline of Christian couples living and sleeping together.<sup>100</sup>

Foreign Christian missionaries too often assumed the binaries of naked heathens and clothed Christians clearly distinguished sexual lasciviousness from chastity and modesty. Yet diverse indigenous patterns of clothing were never indexical of sexual cultures. Women’s grass skirts and men’s penis wrappers were dignified forms of dress in sexual cultures which practised long periods of heterosexual abstinence (as in South Pentecost, Vanuatu)<sup>101</sup> or where heterosexual relations were suffused with anxious fears of mutual pollution (as in parts of Highlands PNG). Women’s breasts might be routinely exposed in a culture where female virginity was sacralised but then ritually deflowered, as in Samoa. And the clothing introduced by Christian missionaries was surely no guarantor of greater sexual modesty or monogamy. As Webb Keane has suggested in his brilliant essay “The Hazards of New Clothes”:

Herein lies a persistent tension in missionary efforts to clothe the naked. For in covering our nakedness and directing attention to our artificial surface, clothing threatens to supplant us. Mission history across the colonial world shows a persistent and troubling tension between the hope that clothing will change people, and the danger that people once clad will invest their clothing with too great a significance.<sup>102</sup>

He situates this tension in the strenuous efforts by Christian moderns and especially Protestants to radically distinguish persons and things, subjects and objects and thereby to extinguish the animated materiality, the sensuous embodiment of cloth which characterised ancestral religions.<sup>103</sup>

But, he does not and we cannot say that these “new clothes” had *nothing* to do with new Christian values about sexuality, bodily comportment and

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98 Joel Robbins and Holly Wardlow (eds), *The Making of Global and Local Modernities in Melanesia: Humiliation, Transformation and the Nature of Cultural Change*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005; Robbins, *Becoming Sinners*; Wardlow, *Wayward Women*.

99 Gilbert Herdt, “From ritual sex to sexual individuality”; see Wardlow, *Wayward Women*; Wardlow, “Paradoxical intimacies,” (this volume).

100 Wardlow, “Paradoxical intimacies,” (this volume).

101 See Margaret Jolly, “Damming the rivers of milk? Fertility, sexuality and modernity in Melanesia and Amazonia,” in *Gender in Amazonia and Melanesia: An Exploration of the Comparative Method*, ed. Tom Gregor and Donald Tuzin, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, pp. 175–206.

102 Keane, “The hazards of new clothes,” p. 3.

103 Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

domesticity. The Hawaiian quilt may have been appropriated enthusiastically and imbued with the values of indigenous sanctity and rank, but practices of royal incest and the Hawaiian hula were abandoned (but the latter revived) and the chants which celebrated the sexual organs of the *ali'i nui*, their virility and fertility, gave way to Christian hymns praising Jehovah's creation. The fabric of the *aelan dres* may now be imbued with women's pleasures and collective ethnic and national identities, but it also signals sexual modesty, gendered *rispek* and the crucial significance of being a married mother. The repressive control and sexual violence experienced by some young women who prefer not to wear it should make us pause.

There is a tendency for either/or explanations of Oceanic cloth which perhaps unduly associate indigenous values and things with continuity and agency and exogenous values and things with rupture and oppression. We need to get beyond these ideologically charged antinomies and pursue a both/and approach. I have advocated the writing of a history of Oceanic cloth which is "saturated." This is not just a metaphoric play with "Oceanic," suggesting clothes which are soaked, but imagines a cloth which is imbued with both indigenous *and* exogenous values, impregnated with continuity and rupture and saturated with ongoing struggles about embodied gendered persons and sensuous, beautiful things.

# Contributors

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**Jessica Hinchy's** research examines the ways gender and sexuality intersected with colonial governance, criminology and law in British India. She is interested in the historical experiences of groups British colonisers labelled "criminal" due to their social, domestic and gendered practices. In particular, Jess has investigated the history of the *hijra* community, eunuchs who adopt feminine names, wear feminine clothing, and perform and ask for alms at births and marriages. She has also examined a number of other groups that were marginalised in the nineteenth century, such as court eunuchs, prostitutes, courtesans and women of itinerant communities labelled criminal. She is interested in how the everyday experiences of such criminalised groups illuminate broader questions about the nature of colonial governance. Jess's research has appeared in *South Asian History and Culture* (2013), *Asian Studies Review* (April 2014) and *Gender & History* (November 2014). In 2013, she received her Ph.D. from The Australian National University in South Asian History and joined the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at NTU in Singapore, as Assistant Professor in History.

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**Debra McDougall** is an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Western Australia. Since 1998, she has conducted fieldwork in Solomon Islands, primarily in the Western Province island of Ranongga, which is the basis for a monograph entitled *Engaging with Strangers: Love and Violence in the Rural Solomon Islands* (Berghahn Books, forthcoming). With Matt Tomlinson, Debra co-edited *Christian Politics in Oceania* (Berghahn Books, 2013)

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