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“Kiwis” in the Middle Kingdom
—— A Sociological Interpretation of the History of New Zealand Missionaries in China from 1877 to 1953 and Beyond

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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in
Sociology

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Abstract

Between 1877 and 1953, 254 men and women went to China as missionaries who were associated with Aotearoa/New Zealand in one way or another. This thesis presents a sociological interpretation of this historical phenomenon using Goffman’s Dramaturgy as a theoretical framework. The dramaturgical narration begins from the “back-stage” of New Zealand as a sending country and then extends to the “front-stage” of China as a mission field. Substantial space is dedicated to a scrutiny of the day-to-day life of “Kiwi” missionaries living in the arena of the “Middle Kingdom”, including adoption of Chinese names, language learning, clothing changes, dietary changes, compound accommodation, itinerant and residential evangelism, medical and educational works, summer retreats, racial and gender dynamics, romance and marriage, child-bearing and child-rearing, and the childhood of “missionary kids”. There were various interludes to their missionary career when their sense of self-identity was heightened and challenged. The change of government in China brought an abrupt end to all missions. Nonetheless, the closing of the “theatre” and the exeunt of the missionary actors/actresses did not bring a full ending to the drama. The researcher tracks the post-China developments of ex-China missionaries in both New Zealand and overseas through a variety of sources to come to the conclusion that the China experiences had a life-long impact on most of these missionaries, and that such impact has extended inter-generationally to their families. Personal interviews have been carried out with 21 available living missionaries and/or their descendants, which provide a unique perspective of missionary lives in China. The researcher’s own subjectivity as a Chinese immigrant who came to the Christian faith in New Zealand also comes into play in the construction of this academic analysis. One crucial element of her subjectivity is her reflection on her aunt’s life-story as an opera actress, running parallel with that of the China missionaries. The historical development of the Chinese immigrant community in New Zealand is interwoven into the story of New Zealanders’ missionary involvements in China at various stages.

Key words: missionary, missionary children, China, New Zealand, Goffman, dramaturgy
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# Table of Contents

Title page ........................ i  
Abstract ........................... ii  
Acknowledgements ............. iii  
Table of Contents .......................... 1  
List of Tables ............................ 3  
List of Abbreviations .................. 4  

Chapter I: Introducing a Dramaturgy of the Missionary Movement .................................. 5  
  1.1. Introducing the Researcher and the Research ........................................................... 5  
  1.2. Introducing Existing Literature and Current Methodology ...................................... 7  
  1.3. Introducing the Definitions and their Fluidities ........................................................ 9  
  1.4. Introducing the “Facts” ................................................................................................ 18  
  1.5. Introducing the Epistemological Orientation .......................................................... 22  
  1.6. Introducing Goffman’s Dramaturgy ........................................................................ 26  
      1.6.1. The “Back-Stage” – Getting Ready for Sailing from New Zealand ............... 33  
      1.6.2. The “Front-Stage” – What to Anticipate in China .......................................... 33  
      1.6.3. In the Arena – the China Experiences ............................................................ 34  
      1.6.4. Interludes – Furlough and Internment .............................................................. 35  
      1.6.5. Exeunt – the Withdrawal from China ............................................................... 36  
      1.6.6. Epilogue – the Post-China Days ..................................................................... 36  

Chapter II: The “Back-Stage” – New Zealand as the “Home-base” .................................. 38  
  2.1. Colonial Christianity and the Emergence of Missionary Interest for China .......... 41  
  2.2. The Spectacle of the Chinese Immigrants in Comparison with New Zealand  
      Missionary Recruits for China ............................................................................. 58  
  2.3. Intertwined Racial and Gender Politics .................................................................. 71  
  2.4. Efforts of Home Mission ........................................................................................ 75  
  2.5. The Gendered Culture of New Zealand .................................................................. 84  

Chapter III: The “Front-Stage” – China as a Mission Field .............................................. 103  
  3.1. A Brief History of Christianity in China ................................................................. 104  
  3.2. Mission Societies Prior to the Arrival of New Zealanders .................................. 112  
  3.3. Chinese Chronicle ................................................................................................. 124  
  3.4. The Country as the Setting .................................................................................... 127  
  3.5. Chinese People as the Audience ......................................................................... 134  
  3.6. China’s Earliest Awareness of New Zealand ......................................................... 142  

Chapter IV: In the Arena – “Kiwis” in the Middle Kingdom ........................................... 147  
  4.1. Adoption of Chinese Names .................................................................................... 148  
  4.2. Language Learning ............................................................................................... 150  
  4.3. Everyday Life of a China Missionary ..................................................................... 153  
      4.3.1. Yi (衣) – Clothing ......................................................................................... 154  
      4.3.2. Shi (食) – Eating ......................................................................................... 160  
      4.3.3. Zhu (住) – Living ....................................................................................... 163  
      4.3.4. Xing (行) – Travelling ............................................................................... 173
List of Tables

TABLE 1: NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF NEW ZEALANDER MISSIONARIES IN DIFFERENT OVERSEAS FIELDS, 1850-1939. ...................................................................................................................... 19
TABLE 2: NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CHINA MISSIONARIES FROM NEW ZEALAND BY MISSION ORGANISATIONS........................................................................................................... 21
TABLE 3: DENOMINATIONAL BACKGROUND OF CIM MISSIONARIES FROM NEW ZEALAND, 1891-1949...................................................................................................................... 50
TABLE 4: THE DESTINATION OF PCNZ MISSIONARIES, 1866 – 1930...................................................... 52
TABLE 5: A BREAKDOWN OF PCNZ’S FOREIGN MISSION NON-CAPITAL EXPENDITURE, 1912/1913 -1934/1935............................................................................................................................. 52
TABLE 6: THE DESTINATION OF NZCMS MISSIONARIES, 1893 – 1930.......................................................... 55
TABLE 7: THE BREAKDOWN OF NZCMS MISSION BUDGET FOR THE YEAR, 1947-1948. ....................... 56
TABLE 8: THE DESTINATIONS OF NEW ZEALAND BRETHREN MISSIONARIES, 1896 – 1930. ............ 58
TABLE 9: MARRIAGE STATUS OF CHINESE IN NEW ZEALAND, 1874-1926........................................ 68
TABLE 10: NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CHINA MISSIONARIES FROM NEW ZEALAND BY MISSION ORGANISATIONS AND BY GENDER. ........................................................................ 70
TABLE 11: NON-MAORI SEX RATIO (MALE PER 100 FEMALES) BY SELECTED PROVINCES AND THE WHOLE OF NEW ZEALAND, ALL AGES, 1851-1901. ................................................................. 73
TABLE 12: CHINESE RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS IN 1936.............................................................................. 77
TABLE 13: NUMBER OF MISSIONARIES DEPARTED FROM NEW ZEALAND AT DIFFERENT PERIODS.125
TABLE 14: NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE MISSIONARIES SAILED FROM AUSTRALASIA EACH YEAR WITH THE CIM, 1890-1949......................................................................................... 206
TABLE 15: STATISTICS OF PRISONERS UNDER THE JAPANESE IN WORLD WAR II ........................... 249
TABLE 16: A LIST OF SUPPORTING LOCAL CHURCH ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR CVM “OWN MISSIONARIES”......................................................................................................... 295
TABLE 17: ITEMISED CONTRIBUTION MADE BY DIFFERENT PCNZ’S BUSY BEE GROUPS TOWARDS A. JAMES’ CAR. ................................................................................................................ 296
# List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABCFM</td>
<td>American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFBS</td>
<td>British and Foreign Bible Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEZMS</td>
<td>Church of England Zenana Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIM</td>
<td>China Inland Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORSO</td>
<td>The Council of Organisations for Relief Service Overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSM</td>
<td>Church of Scotland Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVM</td>
<td>Canton Villages Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAU</td>
<td>Friends Ambulance Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSU</td>
<td>Friends Service Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Red Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZCMA</td>
<td>New Zealand Church Mission Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZCMS</td>
<td>New Zealand Church Mission Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCNZ</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church of New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWTI</td>
<td>Presbyterian Woman Training Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POW</td>
<td>Prisoner of War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QKM</td>
<td>Queensland Kanaka Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCM</td>
<td>South China Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPFEE</td>
<td>The Society for Promoting Female Education in the East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPG</td>
<td>Society for the Propagation of the Gospel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNRRA</td>
<td>United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCTU</td>
<td>Women’s Christian Temperance Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWCA</td>
<td>Young Women’s Christian Association</td>
</tr>
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