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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

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degree of

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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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List of Abbreviations

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