

**METHODIST-CHINESE FRIENDSHIP:  
MR. & MRS. JOHN A. PILLEY IN PRE-1949 CHINA<sup>1</sup>**

Joseph K. S. Yick

Christian missionary work has played a significant role in Sino-American relations over the past century and a half.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the Methodist church, representing the largest denomination in Protestant America, dispatched the most active contingent of missionaries once it began its ministry in China in 1848. This essay focuses on the evangelical and humanitarian work and special military service of these Methodist educational missionaries: Muriel Caldwell (Lungtien, Fukien, 1907-Nashville, Tennessee, 2002) and her husband, John Allen Pilley (Shanghai, 1907-Sibu, Sarawak, 1960). Following the missionary tradition of their parents and grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. John A. Pilley accepted the challenge of serving and helping the Chinese people during the turbulent 1930s and 1940s. Despite obstacles to their educational and other activities, the accomplishments of the Pilleys in southeast and southwest China developed friendships that lasted for decades.<sup>3</sup>

**Tradition**

John Allen was the son of Rev. and Mrs. Edward Pilley. Edward was appointed missionary and went to China in 1895. In 1902, in Kobe, Japan, he married Emma Poteet. She was appointed a Methodist missionary a year

---

<sup>1</sup> I appreciate the comments of Ms. Marilyn Pilley, daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. John A. Pilley, on an early but longer version of this essay. I also thank Professor Philip F. Williams of Massey University in New Zealand for editorial assistance.

<sup>2</sup> The importance of the missions was reflected in an international conference held at Shanghai University from October 10-12, 2002. This has remained the largest academic meeting on mainland China in the past two decades on assessing the contributions of the missions to Sino-Western/American relations and cultural exchange. Nie Zilu, "Bai yu nian lai Meiguo de Jidujiao zai hai chuanxiao shi yanjiu" (A study of American Christian missionary history in China over the past hundred years), *Jindai shi yanjiu* (Studies on modern history), 3 (May 2000): 255-296.

<sup>3</sup> See the theme of friendship in Charles Tyzack, *Friends to China: The Davidson Brothers and the Friends' Mission to China, 1886-1939* (York: William Sessions, 1988); and Cristina Zaccarini, *The Sino-American Friendship as Tradition and Challenge: Dr. Ailie Gale in China, 1908-1950* (2001). Dr. Gale served as a Methodist missionary. See also Cindy Yik-yi Chu, *The Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921-1969: In Love with the Chinese* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

earlier and dispatched to serve in that country. She died in Huchow in 1909, leaving four children. In 1911, Rev. Pilley married a fellow missionary, Emma Steger, who became "Pilley Mama." Edward had been an evangelist like Rev. Harry Caldwell, but instead of walking the rounds through his districts, he had a houseboat and traveled the canals of northern Chekiang province. Yet like Harry, Edward accepted the challenges of politics, serving as an intermediary between one of the local Chinese warlords and the government of Huchow when an army was threatening to sack the city in the early 1920s. Edward died in 1925; he and his first wife were buried in the Shanghai area. After the Communist conquest, zealots of the People's Republic dug up all the graves in the old foreign cemetery. "Pilley Mama" lived to be 91, and was buried in Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>4</sup>

Keeping some distance from the adventurous tiger-hunting and intriguing diplomatic and military careers of her father and three brothers, Muriel Caldwell and her husband John Pilley nonetheless also contributed to Sino-American friendship by focusing on education. Graduates of Oberlin College and Washington and Lee University respectively, they taught at the Shanghai American School (SAS, 1929-1934) and were married in 1931. Muriel had taught at Hua Nan College for a year before SAS in 1929. The couple then served at Anglo-Chinese College (ACC, 1935-1939) in Foochow as "contract teachers." These teachers bore a greater resemblance to present-day Peace Corps workers than to "missionaries"; they received a minimal salary from the school that hired them.<sup>5</sup>

### Challenge and Friendship

Scholars in Chinese studies often discuss the "Sino-American special relationship" in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On the missionary issue, it usually referred to the general support of American missionaries for the Nationalist government in combating communists and foreign imperialists. However, it is not true that *all* (American) missionaries opposed the Japanese invasion of China in July 1937: "Some thought it would be good to restore law and order."<sup>6</sup>

The moral and political challenge of dealing with the Japanese aggression confronted the missionary Caldwells and the Pilleys. In July, 1937, Rev. and Mrs. Harry Caldwell; Mr. and Mrs. John Pilley; and Oliver and Morris Caldwell had a vacation at the summer house of the Pilleys, built by Rev. Edward Pilley, on Mokanshan in Chekiang Province. On July 12, a debate concerning the Christian attitude toward the Japanese offensive in

---

<sup>4</sup> Muriel Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang: Forty Years in South China* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris Corporation, 2001), 10, 19-20, 134-136.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph K. S. Yick, "Methodist Missionary Contributions to Intercultural Understanding and Diplomacy: The Caldwell Family in Foochow and Central Fukien, 1919-1949," *Methodist History*, 33:4 (July 1995): 246, esp. n. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Creighton Lacy's letter to the author, September 28, 1993.

China erupted. Mrs. Pilley started it by stating that “Henry Hitt Crane has an interpretation of Judas that I like.”\* Dr. Crane (and Mrs. Pilley, too) was an uncompromising pacifist. “Jesus scourged the temple,” declared Oliver. “Weatherhead and others feel that it was His personality, not force, that drove men out of the temple,” Mrs. Pilley responded.\*\* Rev. Caldwell exclaimed, “I don’t think that God wants the Japs to conquer China and bring in their heroin and prostitution!” John Pilley entered the argument with these words: “The position in Palestine was much the same when Jesus said ‘Love your enemies’.” “And he said, ‘My peace I give unto you’,” Morris added. Mrs. Pilley said: “He was also talking about families like ours. And if we want China to fight, how can we call ourselves Christians?” “Well!” snapped Rev. Caldwell. “You may not call me a Christian, but I do!” “I’m sick of people who pick on one of Jesus’ sayings and interpret it alone,” Oliver said, apparently excluding himself. The (well-known) solidarity of the Caldwells was temporarily cracked with the tensions of war that morning on July 12.<sup>7</sup> John Caldwell was not present at the Pilley house that summer.

In perspective, the argument between “the doves and the hawks” among the Caldwells and the Pilleys over the Japanese aggressors in 1937 did not alter or diminish their fundamental sympathy and service for and friendship toward the Chinese nation and people. It was not surprising that after the Pearl Harbor Incident, both the hawkish Oliver Caldwell and the pacifist John Pilley became Office of Strategic Services (OSS, later CIA) agents to fight the Japanese. Above all, the pacifist Morris paid the ultimate price for helping the China’s cause when his warplane crashed in the Pacific War.

In September 1939, the Pilleys returned to America with their son, Robin. Mr. Pilley enrolled at Peabody Teachers College and Scarritt in Nashville, received a M.A. degree in Education in August 1940, and was accepted (together with his wife) by the Methodist Board of Missions for teaching at ACC at Yangkow in the mountains of Fukien—a temporary wartime relocation.<sup>8</sup>

The Pilleys were back in Shanghai in the fall of 1940. Together with Rev. and Mrs. Harry Caldwell, the Pilleys “ran the Japanese blockade” on a small ship that flew a neutral flag. Without incident, they reached coastal Fukien. The Pilleys then began the study of Mandarin in Foochow. Muriel could already speak the Foochow dialect and John had grown up speaking Shanghainese. Knowing one or another of the Chinese languages broke down cultural barriers and paved the way to friendships. Of course, having

---

Editor’s Note:

\* Henry Hitt Crane was a nationally famous Methodist preacher in the 1930’s and 1940’s and an outspoken pacifist.

\*\* Leslie Weatherhead, through his teaching in the field of psychology and writings, was one of the best-known British Methodist preachers, and also a pacifist.

<sup>7</sup> See Pilley, *The Hills of T’ang*, 141-143.

<sup>8</sup> Yick, “Methodist Missionary Contributions,” 239; Pilley, *The Hills of T’ang*, 23, 25.

grown up in China, they also felt ties closer to the Chinese people:<sup>9</sup>

The Japanese occupied Foochow for five months (April-September 1941) and interrupted the Pilley's language studies. After the former withdrew, the Pilley's were able to rejoin the Anglo-Chinese College at Yangkow in late 1941. Until they left Fukien in 1944, the Pilley's shared hardships and lived in close contact with colleagues and students. It was a wonderful experience, which broke down cultural barriers and enhanced friendships. John worked with other teachers to persuade the mayor to deal in a scientific way with the ravaging bubonic plague. . . .<sup>10</sup>

After their arrival in India in August, 1944, the Pilley's were assigned by the Board of Missions in New York to work at Mt. Herman School, Darjeeling. In the following month, John Pilley volunteered to serve in the American Ground Army Service (AGAS), a part of the OSS, for fourteen months in Southwest China. He taught the people there about American fliers (who might be shot down). Later, Captain Pilley also traveled with Chinese coolies carrying essential war materials such as generators and radios over the mountains. As for Muriel Pilley and the children, they returned to Nashville in May 1945 via Melbourne and California. Mrs. Pilley studied at Peabody while waiting for the end of the Pacific War. Being a mother and a graduate student, she was also busy at church in Nashville. Having read a letter at the *Friendship* (emphasis added) Sunday School Class at McKendree Church about the many needs of ACC in Fukien, the Class members were happy to help. Since exchange at the time was a thousand Chinese dollars for one US dollar, it was easy to give a generous donation. Mrs. Pilley's Thousand Dollar Club was thus established and publicized at the *Tennessean*, the main local newspaper, through a good friend's introduction. Afterwards, donations poured in from other parts of Tennessee and other states. In June, 1946, she received her M.A. degree; in the following December, the Pilley's returned to Foochow and ACC. Donations to the Thousand Dollar Club helped purchase supplies, bibles, clothes for faculty and students at ACC, and other educational needs. The efforts of the Club (1946-1949) amounted to a concrete Methodist contribution to Sino-American friendship at ACC. At a personal level, Marilyn Frances, the youngest child of the Pilley's, was born in the fall of 1947. In May, 1949, the Pilley's fled Foochow because the Communists planned to arrest them. Mr. Pilley was denounced as "Public Enemy No. 1," for he had served in the OSS and was therefore assumed by the Maoists to be a spy. The China-born John was even condemned by the Communists as a "Han Gang," traitor to China!<sup>11</sup> Such a charge was also prompted by the general association of the Caldwells and Mr. Pilley with the United States government, army, and special service.

In Fukien, some colleagues, friends, and students of the Pilley's were

---

<sup>9</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, 18, 65, 72, 232-272.

<sup>10</sup> Yick, "Methodist Missionary Contributions to Intercultural Understanding and Diplomacy," 247; see also Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, chaps. 5 and 6.

<sup>11</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, 10, 395, 415, chap. 7.

memorable figures in terms of friendship and the challenges they faced. For example, Rev. Ling Ung Chung was on the faculty of ACC and served as its acting president from 1947-1948. One day in January of 1949, he visited the Pilleys to say “goodbye.” He was leaving China to work in far away Borneo. He had been invited to be principal of a school in Sibü, nicknamed “little Foochow” because of the numerous hardworking Fukienese immigrants there. “I’ll go first,” said Ung Chung. In late April, the political situation in Foochow deteriorated so much that Methodist Bishop Carleton Lacy asked each missionary family to decide whether to go or stay. Praying for guidance, Mrs. Pilley came up with the idea that they should “go to Borneo.” Mr. Pilley was told about the experience. “We would be still working with the Chinese,” he said. In early May, an imprisoned Communist student of ACC was suddenly released by the Nationalist authorities in Foochow. He advised the Pilleys not to leave. The “Go to Borneo” call prevailed, however. The Pilleys left by *SS Heinrich Jessen* on May 14, 1949. They arrived in Hong Kong on the 16th. There they received a cable from the Board of Missions that approved their suggestion of teaching in the new high school where Ung Chung was principal. Then came a telegram in response to the Pilleys’ letter to Ung Chung. “Welcome!”<sup>12</sup>

In Sibü, Mr. and Mrs. Pilley continued their work as educational missionaries. They also established an orphanage and a church. The Sino-American friendship between Rev. Ling Ung Chung and the Pilleys was inspirational. It helped the Pilleys to make the historic and wise decision of leaving Foochow in 1949 to serve and educate the Chinese in Sarawak. Just imagine what would have happened to the “Public Enemy No. 1” (announced after the Communist conquest of Foochow) and his family if the Pilleys had naively accepted a (Communist) friend’s assurance that “these people [the new masters] will treat you [the Pilleys] right.”<sup>13</sup> Consider the relatively moderate treatment of Bishop Carleton Lacy, who died under Communist detention in December, 1951.

Nguk Gi was a primary student at the Christian Herald Orphanage in Foochow. He became a top student at ACC. He subsequently graduated from Fukien Christian University at Foochow. During World War II, he served as an interpreter for American officers in Burma. Later, he taught at ACC and went to America for theological training. Mr. and Mrs. Pilley met this scholar and Christian leader. Their lives were intertwined not only in Foochow, but years later in Malaysia after Communists took over China. He became Chairman of the Sarawak Annual Conference, and retired after earning a Ph.D. from the Vanderbilt School of Divinity. He and the Pilleys had been longtime friends.<sup>14</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. Pilley were educational missionaries. They were serious

---

<sup>12</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T’ang*, 543-551.

<sup>13</sup> John C. Caldwell, *China Coast Family* (Chicago: Henry Regnery), 222.

<sup>14</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T’ang*, 124-128.

about trying to convert Chinese (students) to Christianity. On one occasion, however, Mrs. Pilley expressed her disappointment over her failure to convert (Kenny) Ke Cik, an intense and unpredictable student of hers at ACC in Foochow during the late 1930s. Ke Cik's mother had died when he was eleven. His father, a military man, had married a prostitute. He was a dreamer, a poet, and deeply concerned about justice. Influenced by an anti-foreign and anti-Christian classmate, Ke Cik resigned as the president of the school's YMCA. Violently patriotic, he declared the Japanese to be the arch villains of the universe. He had a special affection for Mrs. Pilley and called her "mother." She herself was especially drawn to him. She felt the heavy responsibility of attempting to lead Ke Cik to Jesus, especially as there was another teacher (Heng Ding), an avowed Communist at ACC, whom he greatly admired. Ke Cik and another student became at home with Mrs. Pilley in the summer of 1938. Later that year, he gave her a precious white porcelain vase with archaic calligraphy for her thirty-first birthday. Soon, the ACC evacuated to Yangkow.

The Pilleys saw him again in Foochow in 1946. By then he had suffered from an incurable stiff spine fused by arthritis. In 1989, Mrs. Pilley and her granddaughter, Andrea Jackson, visited China. In Foochow, she climbed the stairs to People's Liberation Army General Ke Cik's small fifth floor apartment. He was still unable to sit; had never married since the death of her girlfriend, Giong Si in Hong Kong in 1938. In spite of his loyalty to the Communist cause, the party had mistreated him (and numerous other cadres during the Cultural Revolution). When Ke Cik died in 1993, he left his "estate" to ACC, the school he had left before graduation—to become a young Communist.<sup>15</sup> In addition, before he died, Ke Cik had continually donated ten *yuan* a month to ACC. It was a deeply moving example of generous alumni giving, because the donation was five percent of his entire pension while he had to pay over half his monthly retirement stipend for a housekeeper/cook.<sup>16</sup>

It must be emphasized that although Ke Cik never converted to Christianity, his monthly donation and last act of giving a bequest to the Methodist/Christian Anglo-Chinese College could prove that the efforts of the Pilleys were not totally in vain. After all, Ke Cik did not forget his positive experiences at ACC and his friendship with the Pilleys. Indeed, he had been torn between Christianity and Communism. Superficially, Heng Ding, the Communist teacher, had won Ke Cik over. In the end, however, Ke Cik's disillusionment with Communism or the party or both seemed to confirm Mrs. Pilley's judgment that he "had been close to accepting Jesus."<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the Communist challenge did halt the Methodist and Christian missionary enterprise in China. The Chinese Communist Party

---

<sup>15</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, 167-170, 175, 185-188, 478, 482-483, 546.

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Donald MacInnis and Xi-an Zheng, "Anglo-Chinese College Begins a New Phase in a Long History," 4, n.p., n.d.

<sup>17</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, 175, 499, 546.

had been active in Foochow and Fukien in the 1930s.<sup>18</sup> Some students at Foochow's missionary schools such as ACC were either communists or else fellow-travelers. They became more active during the Civil War period (1945-1949). In March, 1946, a strike occurred at ACC because of trouble between the students and bus drivers and police. Most of the students paraded into the center of the city. The police were outnumbered and intimidated, and wound up fleeing the city center. The strike had been instigated by Communist and left-wing students. The "shadow of Communism was growing," according to Mrs. Pilley. In December, 1947, there was a great fuss at ACC about a "Democracy Wall," inspired by Communist dissidents, who wanted to plaster critical comments on one of the buildings dubbed "Freedom of Speech," their subversive opinions of the Nationalist Government! The school would close rather than give permission for such activities. On December 31, the faculty met at the Pilleys' house to discuss plans for school—whom to kick out and other such unpleasant matters. "The Red Tide was flowing swiftly." In the end, the advancing Communist threat (and the deteriorating economic situation) played a key role in the Pilleys' decision to flee Foochow.<sup>19</sup>

## Obstacles

Besides the Communist victory, there were other reasons for the failure of American missionaries to successfully respond to the challenges in China. According to Mrs. Pilley, a not insignificant reason was its own educational system in the host country. Until 1949, the best American school of Asia was the Shanghai American School, known as SAS to the thousands of Americans who attended it. The reputation of the school was such that its graduates (children of foreign missionaries, diplomats, businessmen, and Chinese, too) could easily enter the best American colleges and universities. But the SAS at first did not teach Chinese language or culture, because all students had to meet the requirements of U.S. colleges.<sup>20</sup> It was only during the last high school years that Chinese history was taught, and then only as an elective. It was even later in the mid-1930s that Chinese language courses were added to the curriculum, but still not as part of a required subject.<sup>21</sup> With such deficiency or lack of training in the language and culture of China even among some missionaries, the chance for them to convert "heathen" in the host country was slim. Worse still, nostalgic about their own culture, they created a little America about them, raising barriers between themselves and those they longed to serve.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Zeng Zhi, *Wo zai Gongchandang nei qishi nian* (I have been within the Chinese Communist Party for seven decades) (Hong Kong: Zhonghua ernu chubanshe, 1999), chaps. 5-6.

<sup>19</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, 489, 519.

<sup>20</sup> Mrs. Pilley's oral remark to the author.

<sup>21</sup> Caldwell, *China Coast Family*, 76-77; Creighton Lacy's letter to the author, September 28, 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, 15-16.

Furthermore, it was certainly difficult to convince Chinese of the superiority of Christianity during the wartime years. In the early 1940s, a naval air intelligence officer asked the Methodist Rev. Carleton Lacy this question: "How does it feel to devote one's life to teaching Christian love to the Chinese and then have Christian Germany and Christian Italy engage in a brutal war with Christian Great Britain and Christian United States?" Lacy answered sadly, "If you will think for but a few moments, you can answer your question as well as I can."<sup>23</sup>

Other problems also aggravated American missionary work in China. For instance, until 1949 the home church, by its racial discrimination and its uncertain utterances concerning the important issues of civil rights, negated the message of the missionary. As for the missionaries, they were, after all, people subject to stresses. They also had human frailties; they were sometimes mutually critical, jealous, and unforgiving. According to Mrs. Pilley, however, spiritual power, God's love, and guidance could bring understanding and healing.<sup>24</sup>

In the November, 1936, issue of *Asia Magazine*, Pearl Buck published a negative article about missionaries. (Buck, a Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winning author, grew up in China in a Presbyterian missionary family and was an educational missionary from 1914 to 1933.) It was entitled "The Giants are Gone." She was referring to the missionaries of her father's time, whom she apparently disliked. She also criticized the "Weaklings" who followed. "The giants are gone. . . . that race of men and women with their leathery skins and hard mouths and bitter determined eyes. . . [those interminable mission meetings waged by] proud and quarrelsome and brave and intolerant [men and women shouting their] bitter words. . . weaklings [there is no taste in them]. . . ." Thinking of the hard work done by her father, Dr. J. E. Skinner and others, Mrs. Pilley answered her accusations in the *China Recorder* of Shanghai. She, professing as one of those "weaklings," did believe in what Buck advocated: "liberalizing education and *friendly* [emphasis added] relations and all such gentle, feeble things." Above all, she agreed with Buck that "The real story of life in a mission station has never been told. When it is told, it must be told with such vast understanding and tenderness and ruthlessness." Unfortunately, Buck did not tell such a story, Mrs. Pilley declared in December, 1936. Later in her 2001 memoirs, Mrs. Pilley admitted that her response to Buck's article was too bitter.<sup>25</sup>

Paradoxically, the emphasis on social, educational, and medical work, characteristic of liberal Protestant concerns beginning in the 1920s, was discernible among women missionaries in China. For women, piety and service were synonymous. Although most missionaries were astounded by Pearl Buck's highly critical remarks about the missionaries, they actually shared

<sup>23</sup> Byron R. Winborn, *Wen Bon: A Naval Air Intelligence Officer Behind Japanese Lines in China* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 1994), 122.

<sup>24</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, 15, 538.

<sup>25</sup> Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, 119-122.



many of her values, viewing their missionary goal to be the improvement of understanding between East and West.<sup>26</sup>

In her memoirs, Mrs. Pilley occasionally expressed her weaknesses in faith and spirit and the guilt of peace and enjoyment while the world around her was miserable and unhappy with the phrase, “Fiddling while Rome burned.” In the end, concrete work proved that she (and her family members) had been “assertive, social-reform oriented, Christ-centered” Methodist educational missionaries. In addition, according to Professor Cristina Zacarini, Dr. Ailie Gale provided exemplary service to the Chinese people in the name of female piety. Gale devoted her life to the Methodist ministry in China from 1908-1950, building her work around educational and medical projects in three locations. She draped her activities in the public sphere with the respectability of female piety and Christian evangelism. Mrs. Pilley was not a medical missionary, but she also demonstrated the union of female piety and Christian evangelism in her educational work.

Like the Caldwells, the Pilleys were “country missionaries” determined to spread the Gospel and to win souls, but they did not adhere to the doctrine of separation of church and state, and carried out the strategy of “Social Gospel.” Through educational and humanitarian efforts, good civic behavior, and special military service, the Pilleys created a positive image of Americans. The legacy of the Pilleys was that like the Caldwells, they were trusted missionaries and were welcomed as Americans and friends by numerous Chinese.<sup>27</sup> In the end, even Japanese aggression, the Communist challenge, and other obstacles to the Christian enterprise still could not prevent the traditional missionary and educational work of the Pilleys from fostering friendship in pre-1949 China.

## Epilogue

Like many other American and Western missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. John Pilley never returned to serve as missionaries in Communist China.<sup>28</sup> After Mr. Pilley’s tragic death in 1960, Mrs. Pilley left with her younger daughter Marilyn for Nashville, where she taught English at Tennessee Preparatory School and at Belmont College until her mandatory retirement at age 65. Mrs. Pilley had received many letters of deep appreciation from her former

---

<sup>26</sup> Cristina Zacarini’s review of Lian Xi’s *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1997) in H-Net Book Review (July 1997), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Caldwell, *China Coast Family*, back flap.

<sup>28</sup> The parents of Mrs. Pilley could not return to China. The respected Claude and Margaret Thomson of the Presbyterian Church shared the same experience; see Winthrop Knowlton, *My First Revolution* (White Plains, New York: EastBridge, 2001), 2, 140. The Methodist enterprise in Fukien and elsewhere did not end in 1949, however. Scores of American missionaries, including Bishop Carleton Lacy and his son Rev. Creighton Lacy, stayed and continued work until late in 1950. The outbreak of the Korean War in the summer of 1950 precipitated the withdrawal of most remaining missionaries.

students in Foochow. The writers expressed their gratitude for her and Mr. Pilley's noble endeavor in religious and secular activities in the pre-1949 period. For example, Do Bing, a doctor and a former president of Canton Medical College, wrote to Mrs. Pilley in the 1980s: "Dear Muriel—my beloved teacher—I can remember many nice things at our school [ACC]. We often went to your home to take tea and biscuits. Life goes like a dream. I hope earnestly you may come back to China." In 1989, Mrs. Pilley and her granddaughter, Andrea Jackson, visited their "roots" in Fukien. Such are the proofs of mutual friendship.<sup>29</sup>

Since the late 1970s, Chinese Communist authorities have become more tolerant of Christianity and its missions as a result of the "opening" of China and the necessity of learning from the West about how to strengthen China's economy. In 1989, Mrs. Pilley observed that there were more Chinese Christians (Methodists) in China when it "opened" again than there were in 1949. The underground Christian church had grown through forty years of repression and it is still expanding.<sup>30</sup> (The open Christian churches are still under the control or supervision of the Communist Bureau of Religious Affairs in Peking.)

In 1993, the American public became familiar with sensationalized news about the illegal Chinese "boat people." Most of these Chinese came from coastal Fukien, especially Foochow and Futsing as reported by the Fukien government and Foochow's newspapers. In other words, these illegal Fukienese were residents in the districts where the Pilleys (and the Caldwells) had served in the pre-1949 period.<sup>31</sup> Besides, New York City has been a well-known concentration point of such illegal immigrants from Fukien. According to statistics compiled by the Chinese authorities in Foochow in 2003, about 300,000 out of a total of 450,000 legal and illegal immigrants from Foochow and the surrounding areas reside in New York.<sup>32</sup> It can be argued that the American presence and its missionary work has played a significant role in making the Fukienese regard the United States as a haven for escapes from poverty and injustice in Communist China. At any rate, it seems to be very meaningful for American (Methodist) missionaries to return and carry on evangelistic and secular activities in Fukien and elsewhere in order to renew or to establish new friendships with the Chinese people. Such friendships would help enhance cultural understanding.

---

<sup>29</sup> Mrs. Pilley's letter to the author, n.d., received in August of 1993; Pilley, *The Hills of T'ang*, 185-186.

<sup>30</sup> Mrs. Pilley's letter to the author, n.d., received in March of 1993.

<sup>31</sup> *Sing Tao Daily* (San Francisco, CA), July 10, 1993.

<sup>32</sup> *Sing Tao Daily*, September 5, 2003.