[page 3]

**Travel in Korea:** Missionary Encounters at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Elizabeth Underwood, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Kentucky

The image of the traveler depends not on power, but on motion, on a willingness to go into different worlds, use different idioms, and understand a variety of disguises, masks, and rhetorics. Travelers must suspend the claim of customary routine in order to live in new rhythms and rituals. The traveler crosses over territory, and abandons fixed positions all the time (Said 1991).

North American missionaries in Korea at the turn of the twentieth century were not travelers, but resident expatriates. Missionary homes and communities, even when open to Korean coworkers and visitors, represented missionary space American space. Missionaries in those homes and stations lived lives that reflected, in many ways, their political, economic and social distance and relative power vis a vis Koreans. But missionaries frequently became travelers in Koreaㅡfor language learning, evangelism and restᅳ and travel made it possible for them to eliminate, on a temporary basis, much of that distance.

The distance between missionaries and Koreans was more that just a matter of space or life-style, but of culture and attitude as well. Yet the goals and ideals of missionary work required that missionaries find ways to overcome that distance and to identify with the people they wished to reach. Following Christ’s example of complete identification with humanity, St. Paul’s missionary standard to be “all things to all men” is the benchmark that has been differently interpreted by successive generations of missionaries. The writings of Korea missionaries reflect both the ideal and the difficulties of identification with Koreans. Experienced missionaries challenged newcomers to be open minded and overcome attitudes of superiority. Moreover they advised that only through close contact could missionaries establish the necessary understanding of, empathy with, and “real love” for Koreans necessary for meaningful communication and evangelism. In this excerpt from my forthcoming book, Challenged Identities, I examine some of the barriers to meaningful encounter experienced by the early Presbyterian missionaries to Korea, and the ways that travel often served to enable those missionaries to experience and ‘‘know” Korea and Koreans. [page 4]

Initial Impressions

Most missionaries arrived in Korea expecting to serve there for many years, if not a life-time. Moreover, many made an active decision, a priori, to adopt Korea and the Koreans “as their own.” Alice Fish, in a letter home after passing through Japan, speculated about what she would find when she reached Korea: “Korea, I know, will be very, very different— more degraded, filthy and repulsive, I expectㅡyet I am glad, so glad to go on, for it is Korea that has been given to me, and it is the one place where I want to be.” Soon after her arrival in Korea in 1888, Lillias Horton wrote Ellinwood, the Secretary of the Board, giving her first impressions of Korea. Like many newcomers to Korea, her description of the conditions she met and the Korean people were less than favorable: “This is par excellence a heathen land... everything in manners and customs (is) outlandish and primitive.” Nevertheless, she decidedly asserted that she was beginning to “like the people...because they are mine.” Mattie Ingold recorded her introduction to Korea in her diary:

I can never forget my first impressions on landing yesterday and seeing the crowd of wild looking people struggling to get our baggage and who had to be driven off in self-defense, such a hopeless pitiful looking lot of humanity brought the tears to my eyes and gratitude to my heart that God has not allotted me to such a life and that he brought me here to tell of his love and power to bless and save these people.

These early expectations of, and reactions to, Korea clearly reflect the patronizing nature of the commitment that many missionaries arrived in Korea possessing. Most, however, soon realized the inaccuracies of initial impressions. William Baird wrote home in 1891 after several months in Korea:

I should like to give you some idea of this people if it were possible but I am afraid you would have to see them to form any idea of their peculiarities. I suppose they are the most peculiar people on earth. At first they give one the impression of being very dull but that soon wears away. They are not so quick as the Japanese but much, a much more substantial sort of people I believe.

Time in Korea often changed the perspective of new missionaries. Writing after just two months in Korea, Moffett, like Ingold, expressed his “great gratitude to God that he has led me to this work in Korea.” Rather than emphasizing the [page 5] neediness of the people, however, he wrote instead of the “great possibilities before this country,” adding, “the people are intelligent and attractive.” Though missionaries could arrive in Korea fully intending to identify, actual identification with Koreans required first achieving contact with and acquiring accurate knowledge of Koreans. In this pursuit, missionaries not only had to overcome their initial impressions of Korea and their culture shock, but also had to acquire some use of the Korean language. Furthermore, many missionaries had to overcome social barriers created by their location in the foreign settlements.

Foreign Settlements and Mission Stations

When Horace Underwcxxl arrived in Korea in 1885，missionaries were not only restricted in their residence options, but in their activities as well. Because the foreign community was at that time very small, and the “foreign settlement” was comprised only of a few homes, the social barrier that later missionaries faced was not yet a problem. Restriction from evangelistic work, however, and the need to secure the good graces of the Korean government meant that Underwood, though eager to begin “real” missionary work, found his days filled with work at the fledgling hospital, teaching English and other subjects at the government school and, by 1886，teaching at the newly founded mission orphanage. This left little time free for language study or social intercourse with Koreans, yet Underwood made rapid progress in learning Korean. Soon after his arrival, Underwood hired a man who had previously worked for French Catholic missionaries as his language teacher. As a bachelor, Underwood was free to spend most of his evenings with Koreans. Making use of a Korean practice of having an open room or “sarang” in the house where men could come and gather for conversation, “he regularly held a reception...for his teacher’s native friends, when he sat and drank in the strange sounds, trying to familiarize himself quickly with the language.”

In less than a year he asserted to the Board that he was ready and able to begin evangelistic work and also proposed working on writing a Korean language text. Having acquired a working knowledge of Korean, once he was freed of some of the competing mission obligations he not only spent more time in his sarang with visitors, but also began some cautious evangelistic work in the city.

We regularly went out into the lanes and byways and, sitting down under some tree near a frequented highway or beside a medicinal spring, to which the people were in the habit of flocking, we would take out a book and start reading, and when several gathered round us to ask questions, we would attempt to explain to them the book, its truths, and what it meant. But of course in all this it was necessary to find some[page 6] common ground on which we both stood and lead them gradually from what was to them the known to the unknown.

Through the friendships he made in his sarang and in his government work, Underwood not only was able to learn the language, but also able to begin finding that ‘‘common ground,” giving him the means of further communication and the beginnings of his own identification with Koreans.

As both mission obligations and the foreign population grew, new missionaries found making progress in language learning and finding contact with Koreans increasingly difficult. Moffett, who arrived in Korea in January 1890, was by November of that year frustrated by the interruptions regular mission affairs made in his attempts to learn Korean. Though the mission soon adopted a policy of freeing up new missionaries for language study, the tendency to assign tedious responsibilities to newcomers was never completely overcome. As late as 1928，in a tongue-in-cheek article, Southern Presbyterian William Parker warned new missionaries about mission distractions to language learning:

In the first place you will find that the new missionary has nothing to do and so he must take over all the odd jobs of the station such as secretary, superintendent of all local Sunday schools for foreigners and others, head of the foreign children’s school, all matters pertaining to finance, business, frivolity or entertainment, and sundry other odd affairs for which no one else consents longer to being the goat.

Though the mission and foreign settlement was much smaller in the early years of the mission, as early as 1890 Moffett found it difficult “to learn the language where so much English is spoken and social demands are numerous.” William Baird summarized the barriers to language acquisition facing newcomers in the capital in 1892: “they have found themselves enlisted in so many distracting things, building houses, preaching in English, attending to benevolent societies or literary circles, photography and what not, and the language was left in the lurch.”

When Eugene and Lottie Bell arrived in Seoul in 1895, they were assigned a home “completely surrounded by foreigners.” Living in a westernized home in the foreign settlement, they felt so comfortable they could “almost forget” that they were far from home, “except when we go out on the street and see the strange looking people and so many such queer things.” By 1895, many of the foreigners’ material needs in Seoul were met by Japanese and Chinese merchants: [page 7]

I got molasses at a new Jap. store just opened near us, and find they have macaroni, cheese, sardines, salmon etc, and talk good English. Both Chinese and Japanese are pouring into the country at a great rate, so we can hope that many things may be gotten here soon, like they can be in China and Japan.

Lottie wrote that a Japanese “meat man” and a Chinese “vegetable man” made deliveries to the home, and a Japanese laundryman would “do Eugene’s collars and cuffs and shirts.” While missionaries found it necessary to learn Korean in order to communicate with household servants and for evangelical work, with so many of their needs met by English-speaking merchants and with the social life of a growing English-language community of missionaries and other expatriates, “immersion” in the Korean language was difficult in the foreign settlement of Seoul.

Nevertheless, Lottie and Eugene Bell, like most other Korea missionaries, longed to be able to speak Korean. Learning Korean in the early years of the mission, however, was a difficult task even without the growing distractions missionaries found in Seoul. Lillias Underwood described the methods of language learning she employed in her first years in Korea:

We sat down with an English-Chinese dictionary (most scholarly Koreans know a little Chinese), a Korean-French dictionary, a French grammar and a Korean reader with a small English primer on Korean, the Gospel of Mark and a Korean catechism for textbooks. We were presented to a Korean gentleman knowing not one syllable of English, or the first principles of the constructions of any language on earth, or even the parts of speech, and without the glimmering of an idea as to the best methods or any method of teaching, who yet was called, probably ironically, “a teacher,” from whom we were expected to pump with all diligence such information on the language as he was able to bestow. With scanty knowledge of French, more than rusty from long disuse, I labored and floundered, trying now this plan, now that, with continual interruptions and discouragements.

Even for missionaries who were linguistically gifted and knew several languages，learning Korean was a new kind of linguistic challenge. For those like Graham Lee, to whom languages “came hard,” it seemed virtually impossible. In a letter to Ellinwood, Lee described the Korean language as “abominable”:[page 8]

I have heard men say they tho’t the devil invented the Chinese language to be an obstacle to Christianity. If that is so, I think Korean may be traced to the same source and be considered the last supreme effort of the same author. This may not be a hard language for a #50 caliber man but for a #22 it is hard digging.

The inability to engage in evangelistic missionary work immediately because of the need of language study was viewed by Annie Baird as “one of the greatest trials” facing missionaries in their first years, and it was the desire to begin evangelistic work that pushed most missionaries, including the Bells, to tackle the language.

Neither of us have yet gotten the language well enough to have had much personal experience in real active mission work but every day with an increasing facility to speak confirms us in the opinion that we will have greater joy and pleasure in this than all else combined.

Just weeks after her arrival in Korea, Lottie accompanied veteran missionary Mattie Tate on a visit with the women of a small village outside the city walls. While the visit left her feeling “creepy” and in “need of a bath,” the experience of contact with Korean women heightened her eagerness to learn Korean and to be able “to talk to them like Miss Tate does.”

As the numbers of not only European but also Japanese foreigners in Korea grew, missionaries found that Koreans were less willing to enter the settlement areas, furthering the difficulties of missionaries in establishing the contact with Koreans necessary for either language immersion or identification. In 1892, despite the resistance of both the Board and the American representatives in Seoul, Moffett started advocating a policy to move the centers of mission work “away from this foreign settlement where Koreans are loth to come.” William and Annie Baird moved from Seoul to the port town of Pusan in 1892, but found, even more than in Seoul, that they were virtually unable to associate with Koreans: “Being in Fusan does not mean being among Koreans but among Japanese.” Not only did they find that Korean women were “never allowed to enter the Japanese town,” but even Korean men “would seldom seek out a foreigner with whom they could not talk and with whom they seemed to have nothing in common.” Despite the difficulties Seoul missionaries were experiencing, Baird’s troubles in Pusan convinced him that new missionaries were better off in Seoul: “A few months stay in Seoul would give them an insight into Korean life such as they will not get for a long time if they remain in the Japanese quarters.” [page 9]

By 1894 a majority of the members of the Presbyterian mission in Seoul sought to establish both work sites and homes nearer to the Korean population. Graham Lee, struggling in his attempts to learn Korean, wrote of his intention to move “out among the people，” where he hoped he would be able to have more Koreans visit with him. Still facing resistance from the Board, Moffett wrote again to plead for permission to move out of the settlement area.

You cannot have failed to notice how nearly unanimous has been the desire of your missionaries here to get away from this section of the city and how impatient most of us have been when compelled to spend our first years here. An exceptional person like Mrs. Gifford is able to live in a foreign settlement and yet come into sympathetic touch with the natives but the majority are forced to reach after the Koreans with a “ten foot pole” and have a pretty hard time impressing the Koreans with the fact that they are in real sympathy with them. Refer to past letters please and see if the constant pleas and plans of Mr. Gale, Mr. Baird, Miss Doty, Miss Strong, Mr. Moore and myselfㅡnot to mention others, have not been to get away from this section in order to come into more intimate daily contact with Koreans.

The mission was finally given permission to establish a girls’ school several miles away from the settlement area in Seoul, and by 1895 a number of missionaries set up homes in other areas of the city where they found the increased contact they expected.

Late in 1894 Graham Lee and his wife moved to a small house two and one-half miles from the settlement at Cheong Dong. Away from other foreigners they were able to give more of tneir time and attention to Koreans:

The prospects for work over in this neighborhood are exceedingly good. The people are very friendly and seem to be glad that we came to live among them. We are all a deal more happy over here by ourselves where we feel that we can do some (more) work than when we were in Cheong Dong where we felt as if we were doing nothing.

Lee furthered his acquaintance with his new neighbors by opening up a sarang where, along with his language teacher, he visited with men “who happened in.”

Although the Bells and most other married missionaries stayed within the settlement, a number of single women missionaries took advantage of the new freedom to establish homes in Korean communities. In 1895 Linnie Davis and[page 10] Ellen Strong moved to a “nice little Korean house...in a part of the city where no other foreigners are.” After a visit with Davis and Strong, Lottie Bell commented on how happy the women seemed, adding: “At a house where there are no men the better class of women will sometimes come, and they have other visitors than those that most of us see.” Limited in her contact with Korean women by the location of her home, Lottie wrote almost enviously of the closer contact single women could have with Korean women by living near them:

I went with Miss Tate to see some of her Christian Korean friends and we had a very nice time even if I could say almost nothing to them, and understood very little more. The more I see of the women and children the more I find how many of them are lovable and attractive...Miss Jacobson hopes to go soon to live in a Korean house for a while to learn the language and eat and sleep with them. It will be fine for her if she can get off to go.

Though Lottie enjoyed her occasional opportunities to work with the single women, it often seemed to heighten her frustration with the lack of contact she and her husband had with Koreans in their Seoul home.

The Bells were planning to move with fellow Southern Presbyterians and set up a new mission station in the southern provinces, and Lottie was eager to “get down there and among the Koreans with whom we are to work/ As new stations were formed, however, many missionaries found that they were still unable to enter as fully into the lives of Koreans as they desired. In port areas, such as the new station in Pusan. social barriers kept the Koreans away. But even in the new rural stations formed in the late 1890s, in towns where the foreign population was almost non-existent, the process of setting up homes and mission work often formed barriers to the contact necessary for language learning and identification. Comparing the prospects of language learning in Seoul with other stations, Baird wrote:

There is no outstation in Korea to which a new missionary, unfamiliar with the language and customs, could go and fail to waste most of his time in the necessary preliminaries to starting a station, not to speak of the probable impossibility of his getting a house at all suitable for a family to live in.

Even with the business of building homes and establishing stations, however, when William Baird traveled from Pusan to Taegu in 1896, he found a welcome[page 11] difference. Baird elaborated on his impressions of Taegu in a letter to his brother:

I find the neighbors here very friendly indeed and have access here to a kind of Korean which I never met in Fusan where everything is under the evil influence of the port—and of the wicked port people — Japanese and foreign [presumably Western].

Unlike in Pusan, he found that in Taegu he was able to purchase “Korean things” and live on Korean food Nevertheless, the Bairds sought even more contact with Koreans than they had living in the mission stations and toyed for several years with the idea of becoming “Korean farmers,” living in “Korean style and on a different financial basis.” Though they were never able to put this idea fully to the test, even in their homes in mission stations the Bairds immersed themselves in the Korean language by restricting their own English-language reading, inviting Koreans frequently to their homes and visiting with Korean Christians in theirs.

Travel

For the Bairds and most missionaries, trips away from mission stations and into the country proved not only to be of great help to language acquisition, but also provided close contact with Koreans, intimate experience with the culture, and their first moments of real identification with Korean. Although a few missionaries were unable, even in travel, to overcome their attitudinal barriers and prejudices, for most, traveling in Korea involved entering into Korean lives and life-style, thereby removing the social and cultural barriers experienced and erected in their mission homes. Almost all missionaries found such travel experiences not only practically useful, but pleasurable as well, and many spoke of their experiences traveling in Korea as the “best” times in their lives.

Horace Underwood, who had made both progress in the language and friendships with Koreans in Seoul, repeatedly wrote of his desire to travel into the country. In November 1887 he finally made the first of many trips into the “interior,” traveling by pony and by foot for one month and living “as a Korean with the exception of tea and coffee.”

I had a most delightful time out there. I found the village with a Christian feeling. I spent four days in a Korean farmer’s house. They had known that I would be down at some time or other, and had made and put aside a full set of Korean bed-clothes for my especial use. All the people in the village seemed to vie with each other in their efforts to make my stay pleasant. It was so good to be among the people. I think[page 12] that I got to understand the Koreans more in those few days than I could have done in months and almost years of any other way.

Underwood returned enthusiastic about the experience, but faced skeptical criticism from fellow missionaries. Concerned with the Korean official restrictions against evangelistic work, John Heron argued against the wisdom of “trips to the country,” labeling them “expensive, ostentatious” and “productive of very little good.” Underwood, however, experienced little resistance from either officials or local residents. Described in his biography as “social and genial,” Underwood in his country trips not only frequently met up with officials he had known in Seoul, but made many friends along the way:

He would get the packs unloaded...all the while making jokes, telling stories, petting the children, saying pleasant things to the housewife and the servants, and chumming up with the inn keeper. Then, after lunch or supper, he would sit down in the men’s sitting room with a crowd around him and talk with them by the hour.

Throughout his life in Korea, though he remained centered in Seoul, Underwood continued to make evangelistic “itinerating”(circuit) trips in the country on a regular basis. When in 1903 the mission voted to assign him solely to literary work, Underwood emotionally petitioned the Board for permission to maintain his own evangelistic circuit: “I have been gifted with a good constitution and with a liking for this sort of work and apparently with some adaptability to it...it seems hardly right for me to be withdrawn.” In Seoul the Underwood home was noted for being always open to Koreans, but in the country, often staying in the homes of Korean Christians, he enjoyed the opportunity to live in “Korean style” and partake more intimately in Koreans’ daily lives.

Sam Moffett took his first trip outside of Seoul less than a year after his arrival in Korea. Hoping that time away from “foreign intercourse” would aid his language study, he gained even more: “I reached Seoul after a journey of some 500 miles having learned something of the language, considerably more of the people, the country and the customs.” On this and subsequent trips, Moffett, accompanied by a Korean teacher or evangelist，lived “almost exclusively on Korean food and in the Korean manner,” stayed in Korean inns, and met and preached to people along the way, in the villages and in his room. Additional travel only served to increase Moffett’s view of the importance of travel for gaining knowledge of Korea and insight into the lives of Koreans. Moreover, Moffett, who found conditions in Seoul a hindrance to identification, enjoyed the opportunity to be away “from the[page 13]monotony and strain of attention to innumerable details of mission affairs.” By 1894, after years of exploratory travel, Moffett was finally able to settle in a house in P’yongyang. Spending his days “gaining friends and preaching,” Moffett wrote: “I am situated just at present as I have long wished to beㅡin direct contact with the people, living in the midst of them, meeting them every day and all day, entering into their lives and having them enter into mine.” Though Moffett was only able to stay in P’yongyang for three months at this time and sometimes missed the company of other missionaries, he found many “advantages in being much alone with Koreans for whom one came” and formed life-long friendships with some of the Christians there. Moffett and other missionaries also formed friendships with and gained new respect for the Korean evangelists who accompanied them on these early trips. Especially before they had learned enough Korean to preach and instruct Christians on their own, the missionaries were dependent upon tneir “helpers” in their evangelical work Moffett’s three-month stay in P’yongyang in 1894 was shared with Han Su Chin. When Moffett became lonely for Western company after several months in P’yongyang, he “rejoice(d) that the Lord has given me one such helper as Mr. Han, who is a treasure and full of the spirit.” So Sang-yun and So Kyung-jo, favorite and much-sought-after companions, worked with Underwood and a number of the other early Presbyterian missionaries. Moffett, who along with James Gale traveled with So Sang-yun from Seoul to Manchuria and back in 1890 and 1891, described him as a ‘‘thorough Christian and a man who commands respect and attention everywhere.” William Baird became particularly attached to So Kyung-jo, with whom he worked in the areas around Pusan and in early trips to Taegu. In a letter to his brother, Baird likened So to a mutual acquaintance in America, adding: “He seems to be a thorough Christian gentleman and a man of great force of character:” Later, he was amazed at how comfortable he had become with So:

Mr. Saw (sic) is such a perfect gentleman that I often find myself turning to him to address him in English. It seems natural to think that he should know it instinctively. If I do so forget myself as to utter a sentence in English he looks at me out of his big eyes with great wonder, and I am brought suddenly back to a realization of the fact that it has been several millenniums since our forefathers were akin.

Baird pleaded with So to stay and continue his work in the south, and later Moffett asked So to accompany him to Fyongyang. On both occasions So declined and returned to his home province of Hwanghae.

Despite Heron’s earlier objections, as new missionaries arrived in the 1890s[page 14] travel outside of Seoul came to be viewed as an almost essential element of acculturation to Korea. In 1892 Graham Lee wrote that his planned trip north with Moffett would give him “a fine opportunity to study Korean and Koreans.” Similarly, in 1896, O. R. Avison took an extended trip with Underwood, combining his medical work with Underwood’s country evangelism. Avison expected that the trip would not only “broaden his knowledge of the country and of the people,” but also serve to increase his “usefulness” in his hospital work in Seoul. Missionaries, who in the stations and the foreign settlements, though working with Koreans, lived in Westernized homes and maintained Western life-styles, often had their only experiences in Korean life-style when traveling.

Even trips taken out of the city for rest brought some missionaries closer to Koreans than they were able to come in Seoul and gave them a taste of Korean life. Lottie Bell’s first summer in Korea was spent at a temple just outside of Seoul with fellow missionaries. There, she became quite attached to some of the women and children:

There are so many (Koreans) up here that we know and that come to prayers and read our books and are with us continually, that when we get back to the foreign settlement I think we will miss it very much. There are a number of children up here that I have made friends with, and I know I’ll miss them for I don’t think there are any children much in our neighborhood, for we are surrounded on all sides by foreigners.

Lottie returned to Seoul determined to find more ways of meeting with Koreans and with a conviction to “try eating” Korean food

Not all missionaries were willing to take the steps necessary to get closer to Koreans, however, and were content to stay within the comfortable confines of the settlement areas. Lottie Bell wrote in 1895 of a new missionary who “refuse(d) to go to the interior to live. “Similarly, worried about a fellow missionary’s lack of progress in learning Korean after a full three years in the country, Underwood wrote of his concerns in a letter to the Board:

He does not seem to me to be drawn to the Koreans and consequently has not the power to draw them. He does not go out among them and unless a decided change is made in this line I fear that he will never be able to make himself understood.

Underwood hoped that a trip to the country would both change this man’s attitude[page 15] and jump-start his language skills. Yet not everyone was cut out for the travel experience. Moffett, in thinking about whom in the mission would be suitable for opening up a new station in the north, wrote:

Not every man has tact enough to get along with the Koreans and gain their good will. Not every man has the health and constitution to go into the interior and live several months in a native house upon canned goods and such native food as he can get.

In writing this, Moffett may well have been aware of the problems that So Kyung-jo had experienced in 1890 working with independent missionary Malcolm Fenwick. So, who went with Fenwick to Wonsan, found that he was “unable to reconcile his differences” with Fenwick, whom he described as “disagreeable,” hard to work with, and less than fluent in Korean. Even among those who were willing to travel, rather than serving to overcome cultural barriers, the experience sometimes increased the sense of distance between missionary and Korean. Eugene Bell, on one of his first trips to the interior, vented his frustrations in a letter to his brother:

I have been here for about two weeks now out of the sound of anyone who could speak English. And I have not yet become proficient in the use of Korean that it seems anything like my mother tongue. A greater obstacle than that, however, to anything like an interesting conversation is the fact that the Koreans are so stupidly ignorant they don’t know anything to talk about. They don’t begin to know as much about the world as 10 year old children at home, and worse than that they don’t know anything about their own country. They don’t think and they don’t read anything, consequently it is rather difficult to strike an interest or subject of conversation.

Even Moffett occasionally found living for long periods of time without missionary company a trying experience. But for both Moffett and Underwood, to whom getting close to Koreans, whether through travel or other methods, was synonymous with “the missionary spirit” and most often a source of great pleasure, it was difficult to understand the resistance some members of the mission had to getting close to the Korean people. In 1894 Underwood wrote of his “shock” in finding that some mission members traveled across the country to the annual mission meeting and “never attempted to do any work” or meet with Koreans at all along the way. Furthermore, at the same meeting he learned that some missionaries[page 16] refused to take part in a communion service if it included Koreans “for fear of contracting disease.” Though he did not name the parties involved, Underwood wrote the Board, saying:

I do not say that (such missionaries) ought to be forced to stay away, but the question arises in my mind as to what good a mission that, as a mission cannot commune with the people among whom they work, can do; of what service can we be if we cannot sit down at the Lord’s table with these Koreans.

These experiences, though the exception and not the rule of missionary travel, nevertheless exemplify the difficulties some missionaries had in overcoming their own cultural backgrounds and prejudices.

Although not all missionaries lived “as Koreans” in their travels, and many carried provisions for food and sleep with them, travel required a certain amount of adherence to Korean “custom.” In letters to her supporting churches, Mattie Ingold described with great detail her visits to Korean homes and repeatedly stressed the importance of avoiding offense towards the Koreans. Some customs were particularly difficult for women, who chafed under the restrictions put on them in a Confucian society, but even these were carefully followed: “I know you cannot understand why we always strive to avoid meeting with the men in any way, but you would not have to live in Korea in the interior very long to understand it. We always try to be seen by the public as little as possible.”

Despite such restrictions, most missionaries, women and men, listed travel and itinerating trips among their greatest joys in Korea, especially as the numbers of Christian converts grew. Margaret Best, who was assigned to the Pyongyang station after her arrival in 1897, wrote the following year that she ‘‘thoroughly enjoyed” her three-week trip in the country among the Koreans whom she described as ‘‘thoroughly lovable.” She found it a “pleasure just to be with” the Korean people,” to become acquainted with them and their needs and to see the growth of the churches.” In a letter to her supporting churches in 1924 she wrote;

It may seem strange to our friends at home that the love and appreciation we get from the people of these Oriental lands, makes us happy, and satisfies some of the deep longings of the human heart, but strange as it is, it is true that we do find joy and satisfaction in the love of these people of another race who have come to know the same Savior

Best spent forty years in Korea, and though educational work eventually replaced[page 17] her evangelical itinerating, her years of travel and experiences in the homes of Korean Christians laid the base for a lasting identification with the Koreans, who, she wrote in 1931, became “more dear” to her each year she was with them.

Travel, then, was one opportunity that encouraged entrance into Korean life and thought. Freed from the routine of home life and regular activities, these temporary travelers were more able to suspend even the cultural restrictions they brought with them to Korea. But the opportunities to travel were not equally available to all. Neither were the routines of home and mission station life equally restricting to all. Travel was only one (albeit a favorite) way that the bridge between missionaries and Koreans was crossed.

In Challenged Identities I examine these processes of cultural identification through the case of North American Presbyterians in Korea from 1884 to 1934. Missionaries in Korea, like those in many nations, emerged from a culture sure of its superiority. Like in other nations, their entrance to Korea was made possible by the gun-boat diplomacy of developed nations. Unlike most other Protestant missions, however, Korea missions are seen as a “success story,” having participated in the creation of a strong and vibrant church. Unique too, is that Korea missions history has for the most part been spared critical analyses. This is largely attributable to the idea that history afforded them the “right” side of Korea’s colonial history; it was Japan, not the West, which held Korea in its control. The Korean case, therefore, presents an ideal opportunity to examine the encounter between missionaries and local culture free of the complications of overt colonial complicity. Locating missionaries within the structural frameworks, institutions, ideologies and relationships from which they emerge in North America and with which they interact in Korea，I uncover and explain the variation in missionaries’ experiences in Korea, particularly in their ability to overcome the constraints of their culture, gain cross-cultural understanding and come to identify with Koreans. This examination reveals an ongoing process of negotiation among three often conflicting forces: first, the ideologies of “progress,” civilization,” and ‘‘Christianization” central to missionary identities; second, the institutional and personal activities and policies of missionaries; and third, the identifications made between missionaries and Koreans through their daily interactions and friendships. Intertwined with these is a narrative of the emergence of “Christian Korea” both in the minds of missionaries and in the activities and structures of Korean Christians.

[page 18]

REFERENCES

Baird, Annie. Inside Views of Mission Life. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1913.

Baird, Richard H., comp. William M. Baird of Korea: A Profile. Private print, 1968,

Baird Papers. Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of Foreign Missions. Dept. of Missionary Personnel. Records, (RG 173), Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

Bell Papers. Private letters and papers in the possession of V. Somerville.

Best Papers. Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. Board of Foreign Missions. Dept. of Missionary Personnel. Records, (RG 360), Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA,

The Korea Mission Field. Seoul

Ingold Papers. Private letters and papers in the possession of V. Somerville.

Moffett Papers. Private letters in the possession of Samuel H. Moffett.

PHS. Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. Board of Foreign Missions, Missions Correspondence and Report, Korea, 1897-1911 (MF 10 F761a). Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

Said, Edward “Identity, Authority and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler.” Transition (1991)，54.

So Kyung-jo. 1925. “The followers and preachings of So Kyung-jo and the history of the establishment of Sorae church.” Sin Hak Chi Nam [Theology Review] 1925.10: 88-106.

So Sang-ryua. “West-Studies Teachers So Sang-ryun’s Biography.” Kuristo SinMun [Christian Newspaper] 1901.9.19.

Underwood, Horace G. “A Powerful Appeal from Korea.” The Missionary Review of the World (March 1888). 209-211. [page 19]

ㅡ. The Call of Korea. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1908.

Underwood, Lillias H. Fifteen Years among the Top-Knots, or Life in Korea. New York: American Tract Society, 1904

ㅡ. Underwood of Korea, being an intimate record of the life of the Rev. H. G. Underwood. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1918.

Underwood Papers. Private letters in the possession of J. Underwood