

## Article

# Bringing Chinese Christianity to Southeast Asia: Constructing Transnational Chinese Evangelicalism across China and Southeast Asia, 1930s to 1960s

Daowei (Joshua) Sim

Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences, Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong SAR, China; jdw-sim@hkbu.edu.hk

**Abstract:** This paper takes its cue from studies in Chinese religious transnationalism to offer an interpretation of how a group of Chinese evangelical leaders constructed their visions and versions of transnational Christianity across China and Southeast Asia through the 1930s and 1960s. Two representative organisations are examined. The first concerns the transnational network of Chinese evangelistic bands that the prominent revivalist-evangelist John Sung established across China and Southeast Asia in the 1930s and 1940s. The bands' sources reveal how they played a key role in imbuing a transnational landscape and communal sense of spiritual revival into the imaginations of the Chinese churches. The second case evaluates the cross-border institutional-building work of the Evangelize China Fellowship, a major transnational Chinese evangelical grouping founded by Sung's colleague Andrew Gih after World War II. The analysis reveals how the Fellowship utilised a faith-based developmental agenda to promote Christianity among the overseas Chinese communities across Southeast Asia, Taiwan and Hong Kong in the 1950s to 1960s. In all, paying attention to Chinese Christian imaginaries of Southeast Asia enables us to understand how they formed faith adherents across Asia into transnational ethno-religious communities.

**Keywords:** Chinese Christianity; evangelicalism; John Sung; Andrew Gih; religious transnationalism



**Citation:** Sim, Daowei (Joshua). 2022. Bringing Chinese Christianity to Southeast Asia: Constructing Transnational Chinese Evangelicalism across China and Southeast Asia, 1930s to 1960s. *Religions* 13: 773. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13090773>

Academic Editor: Dyron B. Daughrity

Received: 4 August 2022

Accepted: 21 August 2022

Published: 24 August 2022

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2022 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

In Tan Chee-Beng's volume on Chinese transnational networks, he highlights that transnationalism has been a 'very significant dimension' since the Chinese people began to migrate to non-Chinese lands as they created networks which allowed them to maintain ties and contact with their relatives in China. Scholars have only been able to recover these aspects of Chinese history when they began to adopt transnationalism as an analytical lens for their research.<sup>1</sup> According to Julia Huang, when research in Chinese transnationalism was still in its infancy during the 1960s, religion was one of its main areas of focus (J. C. Huang 2003, p. 214). By the 1970s, with the opening up of the sub-field of Chinese diaspora studies by Wang Gungwu, scholars shifted their emphases to secular issues such as patterns of migration and re-migration, networks, identity, and the political, intellectual, and cultural aspects of state-led transnationalism (J. Huang 2010, pp. 1–21).

Within these studies, although religion formed part of the analyses, it was not the central theme. It was only around the early 2000s that the study of religion re-emerged as a primary area of interest among scholars of Chinese transnationalism, many whom have drawn on 'dynamic', de-territorialised approaches to analyse Chinese religious transnationalism. Julia Huang explains that their focus was on the multi-dimensional aspects and consequences of religious border crossings rather than constructions of Chinese religions. Another concern was religious adherents who saw themselves as 'social actors' knowledgeable of 'transnational conditions [who] ... engaged themselves with border-crossing organisational and individual practice' (J. C. Huang 2003, p. 215). Tan, on the other hand,

has promoted the study of religious affiliations after migration and the transnationalising of these affiliations (Tan 2015, p. xxx).

A relevant study which exemplifies this dynamic approach is Bernard Formoso's examination of De Jiao ('Teaching of Virtues'), a syncretistic sect which emerged out of the Chaoshan region as a reaction against the Second Sino–Japanese war and secular materialism in China. Formoso shows how the sect adjusted its vision of the restoration of the Chinese civilisation through Confucian ethics to the Southeast Asian contexts by focusing on the preservation of the 'cohesiveness and the cultural identity of the local Chinese communities'. Application of this strategy however differed according to country, such as in Thailand, where De Jiao groups emphasised the retention of useful practices over the preservation of Chinese culture in order to adapt to the nation's assimilationist policies (Formoso 2010, pp. 1, 54 and chp. 2).

Some historians have also drawn on a dynamic approach to reconstruct the histories of different religious actors and their transnational networks. Kenneth Dean has surveyed the expansion of the Chinese temple network and the establishment of independent Buddhist monasteries from Fujian to Southeast Asia from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. He shows how these Southeast Asian Chinese institutions can be seen as 'informal, transpersonal, translocal, networked religious orders' due to their maintenance of ties with temples in Southeastern China and their 'provision of ritual frameworks' to the local Chinese communities (Dean 2019, pp. 104–12, 118). Jack Meng-Tat Chia's recent study of the transnational careers of three Chinese Buddhist monks in maritime Southeast Asia shows how they became 'agents of knowledge production' in localising and 'reconfiguring Buddhist ideas through contestation and negotiation'. One of the monks, Chuk Mor, became a prominent promoter of a 'this-worldly' and 'orthodox' version of Chinese Buddhism for postcolonial Malaysia that was 'based on the principles of Human Life Buddhism'. Chuk Mor's efforts were oriented towards reforming the syncretic, other-worldly practices of the Malaysian Chinese Buddhists and creating a new Chinese Malaysian Buddhist identity that was based on his version of Buddhist modernism (Chia 2020, pp. 3, 46–76, 158).

Over the last twenty years, studies on Chinese Christian transnationalism—which make up a small proportion of the largely China-centred scholarship on Chinese Christianity—have utilised similar dynamic approaches to re-construct the different ways in which the Chinese transnationalised their faith. They have focused on the autonomy and agency of Chinese Christians in actualising their faith in transnational spaces. These studies can be considered as a transnational correction of the dominant China-centred or 'particularist' approach in studies in Chinese Christianity (See, Lian 2013, p. 2; Cabrita and Maxwell 2017, pp. 7–14). This latter approach mainly examines Christianity as a local religion in relation to mainland China, with little attention to transnational interactions, connections and affiliations. Joseph Tse-Hei Lee and Jean DeBernardi have contributed to this dynamic interpretation through their investigations of nineteenth-century Chinese Protestant networks. In Lee's analysis, he shows how Chaozhou Chinese who had converted to Baptist Christianity while working in Siam returned home to evangelise their friends and relatives long before the Baptist missionaries arrived (Lee 2003, pp. 21–38). DeBernardi considers how evangelical ideas and practices were circulated through letters and publications in Singapore and Malaya, and how Brethren missionaries and their Chinese counterparts sought to strengthen transnational community ties for the disparate Brethren communities there. It was through these avenues that global news about revival and Pentecostal movements arrived, often stirring up revivals led by the diasporic Christians.<sup>2</sup> Some studies in the history of Catholicism in China have also examined the transnational movements and global imaginations of the missionaries and Chinese believers (Brockey 2008; Menegon 2009; Sachsenmaier 2018). Recently, new research has emerged on Catholic work among the diasporic Chinese during the Cold War (Taylor 2022, pp. 151–69; Tan 2022).

This paper therefore aims to advance the study of Chinese Christianity as a transnational movement by examining how individuals introduced and promoted their organisational models of evangelicalism in Southeast Asia during the 1930s to 1960s.<sup>3</sup> I analyse

the organisations which were founded by two of the most influential Chinese revivalist-evangelists in the twentieth century—John Sung (Song Shangjie, 1901–1944) and Andrew Gih (Ji Zhiwen, 1901–1985). The former has been characterised as the ‘single most powerful figure in Chinese revivalism in the mid-1930s’, while the latter enjoyed a long and successful career in the Chinese revival scene from the 1930s. After the Second World War, he became a ‘well-known revivalist in Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities until his death in the 1980s’ (Bays 1993, p. 172). Specifically, the paper looks at the transterritorial expansion of their institutions across Southeast Asia and argues that they attempted to contextualise their visions of Chinese Christianity in the region by constructing revivalist and developmental spaces to meet the needs of the Chinese communities living in the region. In particular, I draw inspiration from the studies by Formoso and Chia which demonstrate how the leaders of De Jiao and Buddhist modernism attempted to adapt their ideas and initiatives to the postcolonial Southeast Asian contexts that they became part of. For Sung, he sought to meet the hopes of spiritual revitalisation in China and Southeast Asia by introducing his version of revivalist-evangelism through his evangelistic band organisation. This organisational structure enabled him and the bands to establish an extraterritorial transnational revivalist space during the 1930s and 1940s. On the other hand, Gih’s emphasis on creating a multi-centred, de-territorialised transnational Evangelize China Fellowship (ECF, Zhongguo Budaohui) structure necessitated the production of an evangelical developmental agenda for the Chinese communities across Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan during the 1950s and 1960s. This was because this structure promoted the localisation of ECF’s activities, thereby encouraging a broader focus on developing local institutions that were concerned about religious, talent development, and social matters in their postcolonial contexts.

## **2. Production of a Chinese Revivalist Space: Transnational Chinese Evangelistic Bands (1930s to 1940s)**

The evangelistic bands started by John Sung in the 1930s developed as an extra-territorial transnational network. This meant that the bands were created on the basis of their own transterritorial logic of ethnic-based outreach and organisational format that emanated from the territorial limits of China to the extra-territorial colonial cities of Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. In other words, they can be considered a religious alternative to the ‘transterritorial discourses’ and institutions (such as Chinese-medium schools) that were utilised by statist actors and nationalistic professionals to ‘domesticate’ Chinese transnationals living outside China (Duara 1998, p. 667). Studies which have examined the revivalistic work of Sung have consistently placed the emphasis on the impact of his work but have paid little attention to his organisational genius.<sup>4</sup> The bands served as a long-term strategy for Sung to sustain the effects of his itinerant revival meetings by developing revitalised, independent Chinese churches. Moreover, this organisational model was utilised by hundreds and thousands of bands across China and Southeast Asia to catalyse a transnational Chinese revivalistic movement. Therefore, through these bands, Sung was able to produce a transnational Chinese revivalist space. We should note that the use of such an organisational model as a vehicle for long-term revivalism is not unprecedented in the Chinese context. The early twentieth-century revivalist Ding Limei (1871–1936) employed a similar model for the Chinese Student Volunteer Movement which he established across China (Lian 2010, pp. 37–39; Tow 1988, pp. 33–43). However, what is unprecedented is the way in which Sung’s evangelistic band model was able to become a successful entity in forming a transnational community of Chinese evangelists.

A key condition as to why Sung was able to propagate his model widely across China and Southeast Asia was due to the emergence of a critical mass of Protestants, who provided the crucial ‘infrastructure’ through which revivalist-evangelists could operate. In China, the mission churches experienced rapid growth. Although the total number of Christians represented less than one percent of the population of late imperial China, from 1889 to 1906 church membership grew by almost five times, from 37,000 to 178,000.<sup>5</sup> In the 1920s, it

had grown to about 500,000 and by 1949, church membership increased to approximately 835,000 members (Bays 2012, p. 94; Chao 1986, p. 53). Overall, Christians in the mission or denominational churches made up approximately 75 percent of all Protestants in China during the first half of the twentieth century (the independent churches had attracted about 200,000 people by 1949). The significantly heightened Protestant presence within China, although still fragmented and scattered, provided communities of believers to serve as ‘bases of operation’ for the different revivalist-evangelists.

The revivalist-evangelists were also able to extend their influence across Southeast Asia because they could access the extensive diasporic Christian networks—mainly denominational and independent churches that were already established—across both the urban and rural areas in Southeast Asia. Moreover, dialect and familial ties were often interconnected with particular denominations and were used by the missionaries and the Chinese themselves for the purposes of proselytisation and the establishment of Christian businesses.<sup>6</sup>

The development of these diasporic Christian networks came as a consequence of mass Chinese migration to Malaya and Singapore, especially after 1874, as well as the migration of substantial numbers of Chinese to the Dutch East Indies. For instance, from 1882–1932, more than 100,000 Chinese migrated to British Malaya annually, resulting in the creation of settlements with a high percentage of Chinese, such as in Singapore, Penang and Perak (Kuhn 2008, p. 148; Chia 2020, pp. 17–18). Missionaries and pastors who were sent from China managed to evangelise some migrants and establish a number of church congregations along linguistic lines for these new converts; there were also a few waves of Christian (mainly Methodist) migrants from Fuzhou to Sibiu (in Sarawak) and Sitiawan in British Malaya from 1901–1903, who created Chinese–Christian settlements in these two places (Sng 2002, pp. 145–49; See also Roxborough 2014, pp. 32–33).

Another condition for Sung’s capacity to extend his evangelistic band model to Southeast Asia was due to the openness and enthusiasm of the Chinese churches in Southeast Asia to receive, participate and promote his model of evangelicalism. As has been argued recently, the church leaders in Singapore were crucial intermediaries in enabling the popularisation of Sung’s evangelistic bands in Singapore, and by extension, across British Malaya and certain parts of the Dutch East Indies. Due to their desire to revitalise the Chinese churches in Southeast Asia during the mid-1930s, these leaders invited Sung to conduct his revival meetings in Singapore and British Malaya in 1935. This opened up the opportunity for Sung to replicate his China-based revivalistic successes in Southeast Asia and itinerate across over thirty cities in the region, establishing evangelistic bands for the diasporic Chinese communities in these locales. Crucially, the diasporic Chinese leaders of Sung’s bands became important figures in organising and extending the influence of the bands in the various locales through evangelistic and revivalistic work. One such leader was Leona Wu (Wu Jingling, 1898–1974), the President of the bands in Singapore and the overall pastoral leader of the bands across Southeast Asia. Wu played a crucial role ‘establishing’ the bands as the ‘integral extra-ecclesiastical structure that partnered with the churches [in Singapore] to sustain and augment the fervor of revivalism’ while also ‘expanding’ Sung’s band model by founding a theological seminary in Singapore as a formal training ground for members of the evangelistic bands across Southeast Asia (Sim 2018, pp. 38–65).

The openness to Chinese revivalistic models of evangelicalism was not limited to Sung’s work. Two other prominent revivalist-evangelists, Lim Puay Hian (Lin Peixuan, 1901–1975) and Timothy Dzaio (Zhao Shiguang, 1908–1973), though not as successful as Sung, also covered an extensive swathe of territory in China and Southeast Asia. Between 1933 and 1953, Lim travelled to over 230 cities and villages across South China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Siam, Malaya, Brunei, North Borneo, Burma and the Dutch East Indies. In these 20 years, the recorded number of people (mostly Chinese and Overseas Chinese nationals) that had converted at his revival meetings amounted to approximately 3900. About 2870 people also committed themselves to regular Christian work, such as evangelism, and

1379 evangelistic bands were formed by Lim across these regions (Lim 1953, pp. 16–95). Between 1936 and 1949, Dzao preached to at least 4500 people (both Chinese and Overseas Chinese nationals, as well as native Dyaks in the Dutch East Indies) and managed to oversee the conversion of about 1200, including a whole tribe of Dyaks (Dzao 1958, pp. 48–214).

A word should be mentioned about the publications produced by the evangelistic bands which were established by Sung after his revival campaigns. The bands were encouraged to publish their evangelistic experiences in nationwide magazines which were compiled and disseminated to bands across China and Southeast Asia. These magazines typically took the name of *Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Tuankan* or Nationwide Evangelistic Bands (or Leagues) Magazine. Three of such magazines were published from 1935 to 1936; they were usually compiled by the Band or League of a particular locality. For instance, the inaugural magazine in 1935 was edited by Hangzhou Evangelistic League after Sung conducted a month-long nationwide Bible study meeting in Hangzhou. Other extant magazines are publications of specific local evangelistic bands. These include the 1936, 1937 and 1946 magazines of the Singapore Christian Evangelistic League, and the 1937 magazine of the Sibiu Christian Evangelistic Band. Other relevant sources include reports of Sung's revival meetings and the Malayan evangelistic bands which were published in the Malayan Chinese Methodist periodical, *Nanzhong* (*Southern Bell*).

### 3. Extra-Territorial Transnational Organisational Structure

The evangelistic bands were set up as an organisational model that was meant to be established and implemented in a particular locality after the end of a revival campaign. This model, which was replicated across China and Southeast Asia, was crucial in putting in place an institutional structure that enabled the local and trans-local production of revivalism across these regions. The genius of this model lay in its simplicity of delineating a comprehensive structure and template for the organisation of evangelistic work across multiple regions. This structure was likely derived from a three-part 'Spiritual Work Organisation Method (*linggong zuzhi fa*)' that the Bethel Worldwide Evangelistic Band (Boteli Huanyou Budaotuan) hoped to implement around China as part of its itinerant work (Gih 1963, pp. 80–87). Led by Andrew Gih for a good part of the 1930s and 1940s, the Band was formed under the authority of the Bethel Mission, an indigenous 'faith missions' organisation started by independent missionaries Shi Meiyu (1873–1954) and Jenny Hughes (1873–1951). The Band was meant to perform the function of on-demand itinerant evangelism and revivalism in order to meet the needs of spiritual revitalisation by churches across China. As Gih describes it, the bands could 'depart at anytime [and] go to any place' in order to meet the demands of revival.<sup>7</sup> Sung joined the Band in 1931, becoming its most popular member, before reportedly leaving in acrimonious circumstances in 1934.

The evangelistic bands were independently financed and managed teams of two to five persons who were grouped into a league or coalition, which would usually take the name of the city or area to which they belonged. In larger cities the bands would typically be sub-divided into districts (*qu*) each of which was usually under the oversight of a local church. For example, the 1935 report of the Beiping League explained that they had over 500 members who were spread across over 90 evangelistic bands and grouped into 14 districts.<sup>8</sup> An executive committee at the League level maintained oversight over all the bands, as well as committees at the district level, and sometimes at the level of each individual band. Typically, the Nationwide Evangelistic Band Magazines would provide details on membership and accounts of activities.<sup>9</sup>

Band membership was primarily drawn from churches and Christian institutions like schools and seminaries. New converts and revitalised believers were then incorporated into these bands. In Singapore and Sibiu, two of the major Southeast Asian centres for the evangelistic bands, mainline denominational Chinese churches provided the main sources of membership. From the mid-1930s to early 1940s, the popularity of the bands meant that they effectively became the 'lay evangelistic arms' of most of the Chinese churches that were divided along denominational and dialect lines.<sup>10</sup> Churches were also

important sources of band membership in China, but there was more variation. In Nanjing, band members came from a combination of churches and Christian schools, including the University of Nanking and Ginling Women's Theological Seminary. Churches were the main organising units for bands located in various cities across Fujian province, though Christian schools also provided members.<sup>11</sup> Crucially, two commonalities cut across the bands in China and Southeast Asia. Firstly, most people who joined the bands came from what Daryl Ireland identifies as the 'petty urbanite (*xiaoshimin*)' or the 'lower middle class' who had the leisure time and literacy levels to attend Sung's meetings. Secondly, many band members were women (Ireland 2020, chps. 5 and 6). Occupational and gender data gathered from the various publications confirm these observations. For instance, in the 1937 nationwide Bible Study meeting in South China, most of the participants were teachers, students, preachers, and medical personnel, with a small minority identified as farmers and artisans. There were also more female participants—627 and 311 female adult and student participants, in comparison to 544 and 197 male adult and student participants, respectively.<sup>12</sup> In Singapore, a list of band members who committed themselves to the prospect of full-time Christian work were mainly teachers, students, homemakers, and church workers. Women dominated this list. Out of the 58 members, 40 were women (Sim 2018, pp. 52, 54). Therefore, building on Ireland's thesis, the evangelistic bands were able to cut across denominational, institutional and dialect divisions in China and Southeast Asia as an alignment of interests occurred between this particular class-gender mix of Christians and the bands. Regular, team-based evangelism became the way to express their faith.

Having a uniform setup in many cities and rural villages across China, as well as in Southeast Asia (after 1935) meant that the evangelistic work of every locality was seen through similar eyes. Typically, the Leagues that reported their work in the Nationwide Evangelistic Band Magazines would provide a breakdown of their committee structure and leadership positions, the number of districts and bands, and accounts of the different types of evangelistic and training activities or spiritual meetings which they encouraged their members to participate in. For instance, in the 1936 report of the Shanghai Evangelistic League, the leader Zhu Qihuan gave a detailed report on the number of positions and people sitting on the executive committee, the five different types of meetings which were held regularly, and the ten types of evangelistic work which were undertaken.<sup>13</sup> Local evangelistic band magazines reported in more detail on the committee structure and work of the districts or individual bands. More broadly, what this meant is that through these publications, numerous cities and rural villages across China and Southeast Asia were being concurrently re-imagined as sites for evangelistic mission through the framework of the bands.

The rapid development and growth of the evangelistic bands during the John Sung revivals also led to the formation of an organisational structure which connected the different regions together. This occurred in the 1936 nationwide Evangelistic Band Bible study conference where representatives from the Leagues across China and Southeast Asia were in attendance. In this meeting, the main leaders of different Leagues met to formulate a plan to establish a central platform to facilitate easy communication across the two regions. This plan also came with a new extra-territorial geographical mapping. The different Leagues were grouped into eight macro-districts across China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia. The eight macro-districts were: North China, Central China, East China, Northern Min and Southern Min (both in Fujian), Hong Kong–Guangdong, Taiwan and Nanyang (the typical Chinese term used for Southeast Asia in that period). What this meant was that the local League structures were re-imagined on a transnational scale—the Leagues of various cities within a particular region were grouped into a macro-district. A leader from one of the Leagues in the macro-district was also appointed as the primary pastoral leader; this person was responsible for visiting, training and encouraging the Leagues in his or her macro-district.<sup>14</sup>

For the first time, then, a transnational mapping of the areas which were impacted by Sung's revivals was constructed, presenting the bands with a macro view of the whole evangelistic strategy around the region. This point is brought home if one scrutinises the 1937 and 1946 Singapore Christian Evangelistic League prayer guides, where readers are encouraged to pray for the work of various local and external evangelistic bands.<sup>15</sup> The prayer guides also presented a reinterpretation of the transnational areas mapped by the various Leagues and macro-districts: they were non-Christian spaces which required spiritual attention.<sup>16</sup>

This mapping is significant as it created new, religious 'corridors' that went beyond particularistic church, place-based and dialect ties to connect evangelistic bands across China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia. Chinese Christians with no prior relations became linked to each other as a result of their participation in local evangelistic bands with a similar class-gender mix. The concept 'corridor' is borrowed from Philip Kuhn's work of the history of Chinese migration. Corridors, in Kuhn's terms, explain how internal and overseas Chinese migrants remained connected to their hometowns even after emigration. As they were considered as temporary migrants or sojourners, they created and sustained corridors which contributed to their hometowns and prepared for the eventuality of their return. This included 'busy channels of money, social transactions, and culture'. Specifically, this meant that corridors 'served as extensions of the hometown that embraced compatriots far away, a realm of interests and affections that linked people over great distances' (Kuhn 2008, pp. 46, 49). With the help of writings and reports from various Evangelistic League publications which articulated ideas about what it meant to be a member of such bands across China and Southeast Asia, a corridor which shared information about team-based evangelism among transnational Chinese communities was created. In other words, these publications became a crucial tool that projected a new evangelistic band mapping and its concomitant connections over the members' particularistic ties to churches, denominations, educational institutions, and dialects. These older corridors would have only connected Christians in Southeast Asia to their hometown churches and families in South China. Together with physical avenues like nationwide or regional Bible Study meetings which facilitated movement across China and Southeast Asia, this new corridor enabled the creation of a transnational community, based on a similar class-gender mix, that was committed to team-based evangelism.

#### 4. An Imagined Community of Evangelistic Bands

This 'transnationalisation' of the evangelistic band imagination and connections served as a basis for them to build a community through their shared practices, values and beliefs. With a transnational structure in place, the bands were now able to view their own evangelistic work in light of similar work performed by other bands across the eight macro-districts. Band members could understand the significance of their work as one piece within a larger jigsaw of bands that were labouring simultaneously to evangelise their own localities. The effect that this created was one in which bands in Singapore would see themselves as participating in similar League organisational structures, adopting similar methods of evangelism, and working towards the same goals as their counterparts in Taipei or Guangzhou. This setup also gave them a concrete sense of being part of a transnational community of evangelists. This was well-expressed in the lines of a hymn titled 'Dedicated to all Comrades of the Evangelistic Bands at Home and Abroad (Xiangei Guoneiwai Budaotuan Zhu Tongzhi)' that was composed by a member of the Nanjing Evangelistic League. In the final verse of the song, he encourages sick band members to persevere in their Gospel work: 'Brothers and sisters! Are you physically weak!/?/If [you] are unable to go out and work, bear the responsibility of prayer at home!/?/Send "pamphlets" [and engage in] evangelism through publications[,] for this is what we are able to do.'<sup>17</sup>

This community was partially imagined through evangelistic reporting and visual images. All the evangelistic bands placed an emphasis on compiling their work experiences and methods for the purpose of sharing. As mentioned above, a commonly utilised method

was a general report about the status of a particular League and district that was published in either the nationwide or local magazines. Although there were standard items (such as the different types of evangelistic work undertaken) that were reported, writers had the leeway to write about other matters which were considered relevant. The 1935 Shantou Evangelistic League report, for example, complained that the churches in their region were preventing them from carrying out their evangelistic work due to the troublemaking of one or two unaffiliated independent evangelists.<sup>18</sup>

It was common to share the outlines and template of the evangelistic work of every single band in a particular locality. This enabled band members to get a broad sense of the repertoires of stock evangelistic practices which could be employed, as well as the type of responses one could expect. A perusal of the band reports in the 1936 and 1937 Singapore and Sibü magazines, respectively, conveys a sense of simultaneity and varied similarity on the locations they evangelised, the number and type of audiences, the topics which were preached and the varied responses of the audience. For instance, Band number one in Singapore reported that when they discussed some truths on Jesus Christ's Gospel to some Hinghwa Chinese people along Muar Street, they were met with disinterest because most of these people were 'vegetarians' (Poon 2015, p. 32). The Sibü evangelistic band magazine offered more terse reports. Band number one for instance reported that in Nancun (Southern Village), over 10 people listened to testimonies regarding salvation through Jesus Christ. It concluded that 'some believed [and] some did not believe'. Band nine managed to revitalise the faith of some Christians, saying that those who were 'previously lukewarm [in spiritual life] became full of life again' after hearing some parables, including one on the prodigal son.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, an account from the Xiamen band in China reported that the 'living' testimonies of two patients who were being ministered to by their members—one who recovered after prayer, and the other who experienced 'peace' before death—enabled the band to bring about approximately 180 conversions.<sup>20</sup>

Such reports served as evidence for the effectiveness of the bands' evangelistic methods. What bound their reports together, however, was the type of Cross-centred Gospel that they preached. This can be seen in John Sung's guide to evangelistic work which was published in *Nanzhong* in 1937. In this guide, Sung suggested that the band members should preach a set of topics that stressed men's sinful rebellion against the sovereign God and that salvation for men's sins is obtained through the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross.<sup>21</sup> This can be seen in the band reports of the 1937 Sibü magazine—quite a number of bands preached on topics such as the cross, salvation through Jesus Christ and the parable of the prodigal son.<sup>22</sup> In sum, by participating in the reporting of their evangelistic work, the bands played a role in creating a shared religious community. That is to say (by way of appropriation of Benedict Anderson's concept of nation as an imagined political community), though the members of the evangelistic bands across the eight macro-districts 'will never know most of their fellow-members' or even meet them, these reports provided an avenue for them to know and learn about each other's local evangelistic work and situations, thereby enabling the fostering of shared spiritual bonds (Anderson 2006, pp. 6–7).

Finally, visual images were another effective way to convey that the bands, though separated by geographical distance, were concretely part of the same religious community. The main way in which this was enacted was through the printing and publication of group photographs of the various Leagues in the magazines. For instance, large group images of a particular locality's League were a prime way of projecting this image. In these pictures, men, women and children carrying white triangular cross flags became a ubiquitous sign demonstrating the formation of a local League; different bands across China were also pictured using modern equipment like boats and loudspeakers to carry out their evangelistic tasks. On a broader level, it shows that these people had become part of a larger transnational movement which utilised the organisational structures set in place by Sung and the Bethel Band to engage in similar Gospel work and goals. The sameness in terms of the way they displayed their faith and carried out their tasks, as



visualised through the mosaic of pictures, became a way of projecting and constructing the imagination of one big transnational religious community.<sup>23</sup>

This sameness and transnational community did not last long. Sung died in 1944 and mainland China came under Communist rule in 1949. Connections with bands in China were thus quickly severed. Bands across Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia struggled to reconstitute themselves. With the loss of Sung's popular revivalism and the emergence of other Chinese revivalist-evangelists and evangelical groups, the evangelistic bands could not regain their pre-war impetus and momentum. Singapore and Sibu were two of the centres that managed to reorganise the bands as a cohesive movement after the Second World War, but they faced the challenge of attracting a younger generation of members and renewing their movement. Without strong leadership to re-start, reorganise and unite the bands under a renewed transnational structure that was fit for the times, the Sung-inspired model of Christianity could not regain its place as a popular religious movement (Ireland 2020, pp. 166–67; Sim 2018, p. 62).

### 5. Constructing a Chinese Evangelical Developmental Space: Evangelize China Fellowship (1940s to 1960s)

In the *Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Magazine* of ECF published in 1997, a graphic provided a visual summary of the Fellowship's history of transnational expansion. The graphic drew a contrast between 1947, when it was a children's orphanage in Shanghai, and 1997, when ECF had become a global enterprise with established work in nine Asian countries and the United States (Szeto [1997] 2001, pp. 6–7, 68). The ECF became multi-centred and de-territorial, with its institutional structure decentralised across the world, especially in Asia. The term 'de-territorial' refers specifically to the itinerant, cross-border thinking of revivalist-evangelists like Gih and the multi-national nature of their enterprises. The thinking and nature of these revivalist-evangelists and their organisations was increasingly conceived on discourses emphasising worldwide ethnic-based evangelistic plans that focused on reaching and equipping Chinese (and some non-Chinese) living outside China, and less on an imaginary which viewed China as the central source of theological, organisational and human resources for Chinese Christian communities across the world. Andrew Gih's style of leadership and itinerant revivalist-evangelistic work were important factors in the conception of ECF's thinking and work. Gih was the President (*huizhang*) of the Fellowship for 31 years, retiring in 1978. Despite his long years of leadership, Gih ensured that the Fellowship maintained a decentralised structure with authority in the hands of local workers. Gih's regular itinerant work also meant that he maintained a rather 'de-territorialised' career and was never really settled in a particular locale until he retired in 1978 (Gih 2001, p. 77). What this meant was that the Fellowship was focused on localising its operations right from the beginning and adapting its local bases to the socio-political environs of the different postcolonial countries or territories they were based in. This necessitated a broad developmental agenda which focused not merely on evangelism and church planting, but also on the building of educational and social institutions, particularly for the grooming of local Chinese talent to take over the reins of the local/national ECF operations.

From an organisational angle, Gih's de-territorialised and multi-centred thinking was reflected in two ways. The first was the creation of three different 'headquarters': Hong Kong (relocated from Shanghai), America, and Singapore. Gih made a strategic decision to establish an ECF headquarters in California in 1955 (Szeto [1997] 2001, p. 63). ECF probably became the first Chinese evangelical organisation to locate its main centre of administration in the West; by 1960, California became Gih's permanent home base until his retirement. Singapore, on the other hand, became ECF's 'field' headquarters in Southeast Asia.

Due to its proximity to mainland China, Hong Kong became ECF's publication nerve centre in 1949. Central to this was the creation of the Fellowship's Chinese-language organ *Shengming* (*The Life*) and its publication arm Sheng Tao (Holy Word) Press in Hong Kong. *Shengming* was originally published as three different quarterlies in 1949 and produced for the purpose of supplying churches and people inside China with regular Christian

publications from Hong Kong. *Shengming* was eventually circulated to Chinese Protestants across the world, becoming one of the few regularly published magazines produced by a Chinese evangelical organisation during the 1950s to 1970s (Gih 1975, pp. 60–61). In 1960, for instance, the magazine was sold from Hong Kong to distributors and supporters in parts of Southeast Asia, Taiwan, Australia, North America, France, and even the West Indies.<sup>24</sup> *Shengming* regularly reported about the activities of the different ECF branch organisations in Asia, building a sense of a multi-centred transnational ECF community. Sheng Tao, on the other hand, became one of the more prominent Christian presses in Hong Kong during the same period. Its books were advertised through *Shengming*, enabling it to sell its products—including the writings of Gih and his associates—to the transnational community of subscribers.

The second aspect of Gih's transnational thinking was his continued insistence on maintaining the organisation as a 'fellowship' instead of allowing it to evolve into a denomination with strong centralised powers. What Gih and his Board of Directors wanted to create was a non-paternalistic organisation that promoted 'administrative autonomy (*xingzheng zili*)' and 'financial self-support (*jingji ziyang*)' for all its local units across the world through a congregational-like model of property ownership, governance, and financing. They were essentially establishing an organisational structure that would encourage the development of independent congregations and religious workers (Gih 2001, p. 91). While the headquarters would provide transnational spiritual leadership and support, such as strategies and leadership training, local units were encouraged to practice administrative and financial independence by incorporating themselves as charities with their local governments, while ensuring that their properties were managed by a locally appointed Board (Gih 2001, pp. 91–93). As a result, the model facilitated the establishment and development of substantial local networks of ECF entities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Indonesia that were able to groom a high number of locally trained leaders.

Reports of these entities in *Shengming* provide a sense of what it meant to be part of ECF's transnational multi-centred community. As ECF's official Chinese-language organ, it compiled and published reports of the ongoing developments and work of the local entities in the different nations and territories. Regular reports about Gih's itinerant work, as well as updates on the transnational work of Gih's ECF associates and different Chinese revivalist-evangelists were also supplied.<sup>25</sup> The collation of individual reports about particular institutions, and combined reports and photographs of the different local work across Asia demonstrated that the organisation was a diverse transnational fellowship of like-minded ECF entities. Thus, unlike Sung's evangelistic bands which primarily followed a standard model originally deriving from China, the ECF model stressed the development of local entities that arose out of local needs and prioritised the development of local Chinese talent and control, while subscribing to the Fellowship's overall ethnic-based mission to reach the diasporic Chinese. To extend the notion of 'corridor', ECF's imagination of a corridor was not like the evangelistic bands—one which connected Chinese Christians across different territories with a set of similar practices and culture. Instead, it was more like an umbrella structure which oversaw, identified and addressed the specific developmental and evangelistic needs of various localities or territories under the ECF's broad agenda. This meant the recognition of a range of diasporic Chinese groups that became part of ECF churches or social institutions or were being ministered to by ECF-supported preachers or missionaries. These groups included socially disadvantaged refugees and orphans, new migrants, students, and existing Chinese churches in places like Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. In short, ECF became the corridor that connected disparate groups of Chinese Christians under its organisational brand.

A comparison of the work in Indonesia and Hong Kong allows us to see the diversity within ECF. The work in Indonesia was focused largely on the development of local Chinese preachers and students through the provision of theological training and education. In general, the work in Indonesia through the 1950s and 1960s can be divided into two

phases: the first phase (the 1950s) saw the establishment of theological and educational institutions; the second phase (late 1950s to late 1960s) brought an autonomous, locally trained leadership with a new emphasis on the establishment of church congregations and evangelism (Szeto [1997] 2001, pp. 63–64). The latter phase came partly as a result of political circumstances due to widespread anti-sinitism such as confiscation of non-Indonesian (mostly Chinese) properties and institutions by the Soekarno-led government in 1955, and the implementation of a discriminatory law against rural Chinese businesses in 1959 (Kuhn 2008, pp. 288–89).

During the 1950s, Indonesia represented one of ECF's most important areas of developmental work for the diasporic Chinese. Like many revivalist-evangelists of his era, Gih only became open to the prospect of evangelising the Chinese there after he was forced to take his work out of China. He visited Singapore and Indonesia in 1951 because he was considering the prospect of transferring his work from Hong Kong due to the fear that the Korean War—and thereby, communism—might spill over to the colony. By visiting Indonesia, Gih became aware of the large numbers of Chinese in the new nation-state; he also realised that the Chinese churches there were in need of theological colleges to train their pastors. Gih's newfound concern for the Chinese in Indonesia spurred him to establish the Southeast Asia Bible College in 1952 in Bandung, West Java (it moved to Malang, East Java in 1954) to train full-time workers for the Chinese churches and as missionaries to the unevangelised areas in the nation. A Christian high school was also started as a means to offset communist teachings which were proliferating in the Chinese school circles. Revival campaigns were conducted around Indonesia, not only for the purpose of spiritual renewal, but also to raise the required finances to fund the building of the College. According to Gih's later account, by 1970, 85 percent of Indonesia's Chinese churches would be 'manned' by graduates from this College. Twenty schools, two Bible colleges and 50 churches were also established in Indonesia by ECF during the same year.<sup>26</sup>

This evolution in trajectory of local development can be observed in *Shengming* through three individual articles about the Bible College. The first article, 'Shengdao Shenxueyuan Xunli [Official Visit of the Southeast Asia Bible College]', provided a historical account of the College's development since it was founded in 1952. It focused on the leadership of its first Vice-Principal Xu Gongsui, a Chinese foreign affairs officer who became a pastor. Xu was the de-facto leader of the College as Gih, who was the Principal, spent most of his time on his itinerant revivalist-evangelistic work across the world. The account described the contribution of the College in educating five batches of religious workers and stressed that it was admitting considerably well-educated students who had already attained a Bachelor's degree, or at least Junior High School level qualifications.<sup>27</sup> The further emphasis towards local development was captured by the next two articles. One reported on the ordination ceremony of Peter Wongso (Huang Bide, b. 1932), a graduate of the College's pioneering batch who went on to become its Principal by the late 1960s.<sup>28</sup> The final report focused on ECF's new strategy of sending College graduates to establish new churches in areas like central Java which had substantial Chinese communities but no presence of ethnic churches; sponsoring graduates to work in non-ECF Chinese churches in order to alleviate the lack of pastoral workers; and teaching their students Bahasa Indonesia in order to enable them to start evangelistic work among the indigenous people groups in the nation-state.<sup>29</sup> Gih also pursued a policy of decentralisation, placing all the ECF institutions in Indonesia under the charge of a board of directors who were all citizens by the mid-1950s. This was partly driven by political circumstances, as in 1955, the Soekarno-led government confiscated properties and institutions in Indonesia which did not belong to Indonesian citizens—many Chinese properties were confiscated as a result of this policy. ECF fortuitously survived the confiscation, thereby allowing Gih to move quickly to localise the control of the Fellowship's property (Gih 1975, pp. 84–87).

The stress on the development of local talent was less pronounced in the Hong Kong reports. As mentioned, Hong Kong was the first location that ECF relocated to, and it became the centre of the Fellowship's publication enterprise for the Chinese Christians

across the world. On top of that, during the 1950s and 1960s, ECF was active in establishing churches and schools in the British colony—a total of seven churches and schools were founded during the 1960s (Szeto [1997] 2001, p. 64). Unlike Indonesia, the Fellowship's first foray into educational work in Hong Kong in 1961 was not about the development of local Christian talent but about the provision of educational and social services to a poor area in Kowloon where residents—who were mainly refugees—were housed in public flats. A total of HKD 300,000 was borrowed from the government to build the campus.<sup>30</sup> The willingness of the state to act as a lender to ECF suggests that the opening of this school (and other ECF schools subsequently) could have also been in response to policies introduced by the colonial authorities to solicit partners from the non-state sector. This included churches, chambers of commerce and clan unions that were recruited to develop primary and secondary education institutions from the 1950s and 1960s because of the influx of refugees from China into the colony (Wong 2015, pp. 220–21). ECF's work in Taiwan also focused on the establishment of churches, mission chapels and orphanages—a total of nine such institutions were established by 1965 (Szeto [1997] 2001, pp. 63–64). The difference was that a group of ECF workers, including Paul Shen (Shen Baoluo, 1917–2011, a trusted associate of Gih from Hong Kong), was sent to Taiwan to establish these entities among new immigrants from the mainland (*waishengren*), the rural areas, and marginalised groups like the orphans.<sup>31</sup> While the training of local talent took place, it developed at a much slower rate than in Indonesia as the impetus was to expand its evangelistic and social work rather than to emphasise talent development.

In spite of ECF's multi-centred, deterritorialised, and de-centralised structure, the organisation would struggle to reform and reorganise the overall direction and structure of the Fellowship during the late 1970s. The leadership was held back by Gih, who wielded strong influence and respect as the founder and President of the Fellowship. Specifically, Gih's unilateral decisions to delay his retirement and appoint a successor as ECF President threw the Board's restructuring plans into disarray. This brought about a period of 'uncertainty' which left 'many on the [ECF] fields ... confused'. That was because Gih's successor, Richard Chen, resigned three months after proposing 'a series of new policies and programs.' These problems were eventually resolved in 1980 with the appointment of a new President and General Director, Paul Szeto (Situ Chaozheng, b. 1940), and the initiation of 'a major reform of structure and ministry' which was fully supported by the Board. This included plans to re-enter China to establish social and educational ministries, expand the scope of their publication work, and encourage the local ECF churches to develop their own missionary programmes (Szeto [1997] 2001, pp. 66–67).

## 6. Conclusions

The evangelistic bands and ECF represent two different models of Chinese Christianity which were introduced into Southeast Asia during the colonial and postcolonial periods. I have shown that their organisational structures were pivotal components in shaping the visions and agendas of Sung and Gih in Southeast Asia; in the case of Sung through the use of a similar evangelistic band structure, which was replicated across China and Southeast Asia (and nested under a macro-district mapping), the evangelistic bands were able to create a transnational revivalist space and community. Moreover, the imagination of such a space was also produced and re-produced through their involvement in regular evangelistic activities, and the sharing of testimonies and outreach strategies through publications. Sung's bands can thus be considered as a popular Chinese force that arrived in Southeast Asia to teach the Chinese communities about Christianity through a brand of ethnic-based evangelicalism that was inspired by Sung and fully organised by the Chinese people. In sum, the revivalist space was created by what Mayfair Yang calls 'their own internal mechanism and definitions of boundaries and movements through space, which are not reducible to the political orders outside the ritual [or religious] polity' (Yang 2004, p. 228).

Gih's developmental agenda, on the other hand, developed organically along with his organisation of ECF as a multi-centred, de-territorialised structure across Southeast Asia,

Hong Kong, Taiwan and North America. The developmental thrust of his organisation's work fitted with the localising emphasis of ECF as it sought to establish useful institutions that developed local talent and addressed the social needs of the Chinese communities in specific postcolonial contexts. In a way, ECF faced a similar predicament to De Jiao and the modernist Buddhist monks. All these groups had to adapt their organisations to the evolving postcolonial contexts and shape different ways of implementing their work in the new Southeast Asian nation-states. While Chuk Mor saw the need to reform syncretic practices with his Buddhist modernism in Malaysia, Gih embarked on the construction of Christian schools and seminaries in order to supply locally trained leaders for the growing communities of Chinese Christians while also providing faith-based schooling alternatives. Both men, in the last analysis, sought to influence the Chinese communities with new religiously mediated ethnic-based affiliations that emerged from their visions but were fitted according to the postcolonial contexts.

Finally, the two cases presented here make a contribution to what has been called the 'polycentric history of world Christianity', that is, 'tak[ing] into account the variety of regional centers of expansion, plurality of actors, multiplicity of indigenous initiatives, and local appropriations of Christianity' (Koschorke 2016, p. 34). In many senses, the two organisations can be directly identified with this definition because they comprised multiple nodes or centres, and their work was driven by a diversity of actors who were mostly Chinese. While Sung's evangelistic band model can be seen more as a broad implementation of a China-centred version of Christianity across multiple sites in China and Southeast Asia, I have also illustrated that the various evangelistic band members and leaders articulated their agency through this model across different sites, while, concurrently, perceiving themselves as part of a transnational religious community. Importantly, they projected a religious corridor of evangelistic band practices, culture and connections that went beyond their particularistic denominational, hometown, and dialect ties. ECF, on the other hand, was able to maintain a sense of a transnational community through its umbrella structure and *Shengming*, as well as foster local versions of ECF's model in particular postcolonial contexts. To conclude, the two cases point to the array of transterritorial organisational models that arose out of Chinese Christianity during the twentieth century, and the need for scholars to attend to the integrity, sophistication and influence of these models in the context of different polities and an interconnected world.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the National University of Singapore Graduate Student Research Support Scheme for Thesis-Related Fieldwork. The APC was funded by Hong Kong Baptist University Start-up Grant (Tier-1).

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Acknowledgments:** Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 'Currents, Perspectives, and Methodologies in World Christianity' conference (18–20 January 2018), Princeton Theological Seminary and the 'Crossing the River by Feeling the Stones: Alternative Imaginaries of China's Presence in Southeast Asia in Contemporary Contexts' workshop (13–14 August 2020), Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Bruce M. Lockhart, Wang Zhixi, Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, Joshua Tan, Yang Yang and Shaun Lin who have provided constructive critiques and comments on different versions of this paper.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Tan (2007, p. 2). Broadly defined, transnationalism is 'an approach to history that focuses on a whole range of connections that transcend politically bounded territories and connect various parts of the world to one another.' Some examples of transnational history include the reconstruction of networks of businessmen, conservative thinkers or the analysis of 'processes' such as the creation of the working-class across different continents and countries. See (Bayly et al. 2006, p. 1446).
- <sup>2</sup> DeBernardi (2015, pp. 66–71). See also her recent monograph, DeBernardi (2020, p. 14).

- 3 Following David Bebbington, evangelicalism is defined by its key theological emphases: conversion (desire for all to turn to Jesus Christ), biblicism (Bible as highest authority in life), activism (evangelistic and social action) and crucicentrism (centrality of Christ's death and resurrection for salvation). See [Bebbington \(1989, pp. 1–19\)](#) and [Bebbington \(2005, chp. 1\)](#).
- 4 See, for example, [Bays \(2012, pp. 137–38\)](#); [Lian \(2010, pp. 144–45\)](#); an exception is the article and monograph by [\(Ireland 2012, 2020, chp. 6\)](#).
- 5 [Bays \(1996, p. 308\)](#). See also [Chao \(1986, p. 53\)](#), for the compiled statistics on number of Protestant communicants in China from 1876 to 1949.
- 6 See for instance [Cai \(2018, pp. 81–101, 105–17\)](#) and [\(Li 2018\)](#).
- 7 [Gih \(1963, p. 76\)](#). Faith missions was an independent, non-denominational missionary organisational model popularised the founder of China Inland Mission John Hudson Taylor. Its two distinctive features were its intense focus on direct evangelism and the 'faith principle' of not directly soliciting for financial help, believing that God would intervene and provide supernaturally. See [Carpenter \(1999, pp. 98–99\)](#).
- 8 'Beiping Jidutu Budaotuan Gongzuo zhi Qingkuang [The Working Situations of Beiping Christian Evangelistic League]', in *Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Chajing Dahui Tekan* [Nationwide Christian Evangelistic Leagues' Bible Study Conference], no. 1, 1935, 17–18.
- 9 See, for example Zhu, Qihuan. Shanghai Jidutu Budaotuan de Baogao [Report of the Shanghai Christian Evangelistic League]. *Jidutu Bu-daotuan Yuankan*, no. 1, 1936, 43.
- 10 [Sim \(2015, p. 49\)](#), and *Shaluo Yue Weili Gonghui Jidutu Budaotuan Sishi Zhounian Jiniankan* [The Fortieth Anniversary Commemorative Magazine of the Sarawak Methodist Christian Evangelistic Band], ed. (Sibu, Sarawak, 1973).
- 11 'Nanjing Jidutu Budaotuan Baogao [Nanjing Christian Evangelistic League Report]', *Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Chajing Dahui Tekan*, 1935, 24, Peng Xun and Cai Xuru, 'Fujian Zhangzhou Qu Jidutu Budaotuan Baogao [Fujian Zhangzhou District Christian Evangelistic League Report]' and Zhang Qinan, 'Fujian Huian Jidutu Budaotuan Baogao [Fujian Huian Christian Evangelistic League Report]', *Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Chajing Dahui*, 1935, pp. 16–17, and Sun Disheng, 'Fujian Minnan Yongcun Dehua Datian Qu Zong Budaotuan Baogao [The Overall Report of Fujian Minnan Yongcun Dehua Datian District]', in *Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Baogaoshu* [The Nationwide Christian Evangelistic Leagues' Report], no. 2, 1936, pp. 14–15.
- 12 'Zhuli Yijiu Sanqinian Huananqu Chajing Dahui Chuxi Huiyuan Tongjibiao [The Statistical Table of Participating Members in the 1937 AD South China District Bible Study Conference]', in *Zhonghua Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Huananqu Chajing Dahui Baogaoshu* [Chinese Nationwide Christian Evangelistic Leagues South China District Bible Study Conference Report], 1937, pp. 50–51.
- 13 Zhu Qihuan, 'Shanghai Jidutu Budaotuan de Baogao [Report of the Shanghai Christian Evangelistic League]', *Jidutu Budaotuan Yuankan*, no. 1, 1936, p. 43.
- 14 'Gequ Jidutu Budaotuan Yilan Biao [Overview Guide to Evangelistic Leagues of all Districts]', 'Gequ Zhengfu Weiban Tongxunchu [The Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs of the Working Committee of the Communications Point]', 'Weibanhui Yijue An [Decisions of Working Committee During Meetings]', 'Jidutu Budaotuan Zong Tongxunchu Jianzhang [The Constitution of the Main Communications Point of the Christian Evangelistic League]', *Jidutu Budaotuan Tuankan*, 1936, pp. 51–56. This information was also published respectively in the Zhuang Jiqing, eds., *Xingzhou Jidutu Budaotuan* [Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band Magazine], no. 2 (Singapore: Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band, 1937), 96–100, *Shaluo Yue Shiwu Jidutu Budaotuan Tuankan* [Sarawak Sibu Christian Preaching Band Magazine] (Singapore: Xingzhou Yinwu Gongsi, 1937), pp. 67–68 and *Nanzhong* 9, no. 10 (Oct. 1936), pp. 17–20.
- 15 'Haineiwai Budaotuan Liandaobiao [Combined Prayer Guide for Evangelistic Bands at Home and Bands At Home And Abroad]', in *Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band Magazine: Fifth Edition*, unpaginated.
- 16 Leona Wu, 'Qingyuan Zhunei Jingai de Budaotuan Yuan [May the Evangelistic Band Members in the Lord]', in *Xingzhou Jidutu Budaotuan Tuankan* [Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band Magazine], 1937, p. 54.
- 17 Zhou Jichen, 'Xiangei Guoneiwai Budaotuan Zhu Tongzhi [Dedicated to all Comrades of the Evangelistic Bands at Home and Abroad]', *Jidutu Budaotuan Tuankan*, 1936, unpaginated. See also Leona Wu, 'Fakanci [Foreword]', in Zhuang Jiqing et al., eds, *Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band Magazine*, 1936, p. 5.
- 18 'Shantou Jidutu Budaotuan Gongzuo de Baogao [Shantou Christian Evangelistic League Work Report]', *Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Chajing Dahui Tekan*, 1935, pp. 20–21.
- 19 'Shaolaoyue Shiwu Jidutu Budaotuan Gedui Baogaoshu [The Reports of Every Team in the Sarawak Sibu Christian Preaching Band]', in *Shaluo Yue Shiwu Jidutu Budaotuan Tuankan*, pp. 34–35.
- 20 'Fujian Xiamen Jidutu Budaotuan Chengchi Zhijin de Gaikuang [The General State of the Fujian Xiamen Christian Evangelistic League Since its Establishment]', *Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Chajing Dahui Tekan*, 1935, p. 27.
- 21 John Sung, "Budaodui Gongzuo Zhinan Shitiao [Guide to Ten Ways of Work for the Evangelistic Teams]," *Nanzhong* 10, no. 5, May 1937, p. 21.
- 22 'Shaolaoyue Shiwu Jidutu Budaotuan Gedui Baogaoshu', pp. 21–29.
- 23 See for example photographs in *Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Baogaoshu*, no. 2, 1936.

- <sup>24</sup> Gih (1961, pp. 49–51), and ‘Shengming Shuangyuekan Gedi Dailichu [Representative Offices’ of The Life Bi-monthly Magazine In Different Locales]’, *Shengming*, Jun 1960, back page.
- <sup>25</sup> See for instance, ‘Shuling de Shijie [The Spiritual World]’, *Shengming*, no. 54–5, Jul 1958, p. 37.
- <sup>26</sup> Gih (1973, pp. 22–27, 33–37). The narrative in this paragraph closely follows Sim (2020, p. 286).
- <sup>27</sup> Wu Enbo, ‘Shengdao Shenxueyuan Xunli [Official Visit of the Southeast Asia Bible College]’, *Shengming*, no. 50, Mar 1958, pp. 28–29.
- <sup>28</sup> ‘ECF de Xishi [A Happy Event for ECF]. *Shengming*, no. 58, Nov 1958, pp. 28–30.
- <sup>29</sup> Xu Gongsui, ‘Shengdao Shenxueyuan yu Yinni Huayu Jiaohui [Southeast Asia Bible College and the Indonesian Chinese-speaking Churches]’, *Shengming*, no. 78, May 1971, p. 9.
- <sup>30</sup> Zhu Jianji, ‘Shengdao Xuexiao Jianjie [A Brief Introduction to Holy Word School]’, *Shengming*, no. 94, Dec 1963, p. 40.
- <sup>31</sup> See Sun Xuxian, ‘Zhongguo Budaohui zai Taiwan Shinian Shigong Gaiyao [A Summary of Evangelize China Fellowship’s Ten Years of Ministry Work in Taiwan]’, *Shengming*, no. 73, Apr 1960, pp. 14–17, and ‘Zhongguo Budaohui Gefang Huiwen [News of the Local Associations of Evangelize China Fellowship]’, *Shengming*, no. 79, Jun 1961, pp. 32–34.

## References

### Primary Sources (Chinese Periodicals)

- Hang, Paul, ed. 1946. *Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band Magazine: Fifth Edition*. Singapore: Xingzhou Zhongying Gongsi.
- John Sung. 1937. Budaodui Gongzuo Zhinan Shitiao [Guide to Ten Ways of Work for the Evangelistic Teams]. *Nanzhong* 10, no. 5, May 1937, 21.
- Lim, Kai Cheng, ed. 1937. *Shalao Yue Shiwu Jidutu Budaotuan Tuankan* [Sarawak Sibu Christian Preaching Band Magazine]. Singapore: Xingzhou Yinwu Gongsi.
- Nanzhong* (Southern Bell) (1934–1939).
- Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Chajing Dahui Tekan [Nationwide Christian Evangelistic Leagues’ Bible Study Conference]. 1935. no. 1. Hangzhou: Taichang Yinwu Ju.
- Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Baogaoshu [Nationwide Christian Evangelistic Bands Report]. no. 2, 1936.
- Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Tuankan [Nationwide Christian Evangelistic Magazine]. no. 3, 1936.
- Sun, Xuxian. Zhongguo Budaohui zai Taiwan Shinian Shigong Gaiyao [A Summary of Evangelize China Fellowship’s Ten Years of Ministry Work in Taiwan]. *Shengming*, no. 73, Apr 1960, 14–17.
- Shalao Yue Weili Gonghui Jidutu Budaotuan Sishi Zhounian Jiniankan [The Fortieth Anniversary Commemorative Magazine of the Sarawak Methodist Christian Evangelistic Band], ed. Sibu, Sarawak, 1973.
- Wu Enbo. Shengdao Shenxueyuan Xunli [Official Visit of the Southeast Asia Bible College]. *Shengming*, no. 50, Mar 1958, 28–29.
- Xu Gongsui, ‘Shengdao Shenxueyuan yu Yinni Huayu Jiaohui [Southeast Asia Bible College and the Indonesian Chinese-speaking Churches]’, *Shengming*, no. 78, May 1971, 9.
- Zhongguo Budaohui Gefang Huiwen [News of the Local Associations of Evangelize China Fellowship]. *Shengming*, no. 79, Jun 1961, 32–34.
- Zhonghua Quanguo Jidutu Budaotuan Huananqu Chajing Dahui Baogaoshu [Chinese Nationwide Christian Evangelistic Leagues South China District Bible Study Conference Report], 1937.
- Zhu, Qihuan. 1936. Shanghai Jidutu Budaotuan de Baogao [Report of the Shanghai Christian Evangelistic League]. *Jidutu Budaotuan Yuankan*, no. 1, 1936, 43.
- Zhu, Jianji. Shengdao Xuexiao Jianjie [A Brief Introduction to Holy Word School]. *Shengming*, no. 94, Dec 1963, 40.
- Zhuang, Jiqing, ed. *Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band Magazine*. 1936. Singapore: Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band.
- Zhuang, Jiqing, ed. *Xingzhou Jidutu Budaotuan* [Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band Magazine]. 1937. no. 2. Singapore: Singapore Christian Evangelistic Band.
- Shengming* (The Life) (1958–1965).

### Primary and Secondary Sources (Chapters, Articles and Books)

- Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised ed. London and New York: Verso.
- Bayly, C. A., Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed. 2006. AHR Conversation: On Transnational History. *American Historical Review* 111: 1440–64. [CrossRef]
- Bays, Daniel H. 1993. Christian Revival in China, 1900–1937. In *Modern Christian Revivals*. Edited by L. Blumhofer and Randall Balmer. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp. 161–79.
- Bays, Daniel H. 1996. The Growth of Independent Christianity in China, 1900–1937. In *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Edited by Daniel H. Bays. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 307–16.
- Bays, Daniel H. 2012. *A New History of Christianity in China*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bebbington, David W. 1989. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Bebbington, David W. 2005. *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic.

- Brockey, Liam Matthew. 2008. *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Cabrita, Joel, and David Maxwell. 2017. Introduction: Relocating World Christianity. In *Relocating World Christianity: Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Edited by Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood. Leiden and Boston: Brill, pp. 1–44.
- Cai, Ellen Xiang-Yu. 2018. Christianity and Needlework Industry in Chaoshan. In *Christianizing South China: Mission, Development, and Identity in Modern Chaoshan*. Edited by Joseph Tse-Hei Lee. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 81–103.
- Carpenter, Joel A. 1999. Propagating The Faith Once Delivered: The Fundamentalist Missionary Enterprise 1920–1945. In *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions*. Edited by Joel A. Carpenter and William R. Shenk. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Chao, Jonathan T'ien-En. 1986. The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement, 1919–1927: A Protestant Response to the Anti-Christian Movements in Modern China. Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
- Chia, Jack Meng-Tat. 2020. *Monks in Motion: Buddhism and Modernity across the South China Sea*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dean, Kenneth. 2019. Whose Orders? Chinese Popular God Temple Networks and the Rise of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist Monasteries in Southeast Asia. In *Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southern Asia: Comparative Perspectives*. Edited by R. Michael Feener and Anne M. Blackburn. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 99–124.
- DeBernardi, Jean. 2015. Circulations: Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in Nineteenth-Century Singapore and Penang. In *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism*. Edited by Simon Coleman and Rosalind I. J. Hackett. New York and London: New York University Press, pp. 57–74.
- DeBernardi, Jean. 2020. *Christian Circulations: Global Christianity and the Local Church in Penang and Singapore, 1819–2000*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Duara, Prasenjit. 1998. Transnationalism in the Era of Nation-States: China, 1900–1945. *Development and Change* 29: 647–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Dzao, Timothy. 1958. *Mengzhao Sanshi Nian [Called by God for Thirty Years]*. Hong Kong: Xianggang Lingliangkan Sheyinhang.
- Formoso, Bernard. 2010. *De Jiao: A Religious Movement in Contemporary China and Overseas: Purple qi from the East*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Gih, Andrew. 1961. *The Church Behind the Bamboo Curtain*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott.
- Gih, Andrew. 1963. *Fuxing de Huoyan (The Flame of Revival)*. Hong Kong: Sheng Tao Press.
- Gih, Andrew. 1973. *Revival Follows Revolution in Indonesia*. London: Lakeland.
- Gih, Andrew. 1975. *Wushi Nianlai Shifengzhu (Serving the Lord for Fifty Years)*. Hong Kong: Sheng Tao Publishing.
- Gih, Andrew. 2001. *Dongya Changzheng [The Long Expedition in East Asia]*. Monterey Park: ECF International Headquarters, p. 77.
- Huang, Jianli. 2010. Conceptualizing Chinese Migration and Chinese Overseas: The Contribution of Wang Gungwu. *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 6: 1–21. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Huang, Julia C. 2003. Wings of Belief: Modern Chinese Religious Transnationalism. *European Journal of East Asia Studies* 2: 205–16. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Ireland, Daryl R. 2012. Becoming Modern Women: Creating a New Female Identity through John Sung's Evangelistic Teams. *Studies in World Christianity* 18: 237–53. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Ireland, Daryl R. 2020. *John Song: Modern Chinese Christianity and the Making of a New Man*. Waco: Baylor University Press.
- Koschorke, Klaus. 2016. Transcontinental Links, Enlarged Maps, and Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity. *The Journal of World Christianity* 6: 28–56. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kuhn, Philip A. 2008. *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Lee, Joseph Tse-Hei. 2003. *The Bible and the Gun: Christianity in South China, 1860–1900*. New York: Routledge.
- Li, Qiyao. 2018. Missionaries as Developers: Industry and Real Estate Under the American Baptists. In *Christianizing South China: Mission, Development, and Identity in Modern Chaoshan*. Edited by Joseph Tse-Hei Lee. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 105–21.
- Lian, Xi. 2010. *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lian, Xi. 2013. Introduction: A New Journey in the Study of Christianity in China. *The Chinese Historical Review* 20: 187–92.
- Lim, Puay Hian. 1953. *Lin Peixuan Zhengdao Ji [Lim Puay Hian's Collection on Preaching]*. Singapore, Unpublished manuscript.
- Menegon, Eugenio. 2009. *Ancestors, Virgins, & Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Poon, Michael Nai-Chiu. 2015. *Song Shangjie yu Nianshiji Xinjiapo Huaren Jidujiao de Lingcheng [John Sung and the Spiritual Pilgrimage of the Twentieth Century Singapore Chinese Church]*. Singapore: Trinity Theological College.
- Roxborough, John. 2014. *A History of Christianity in Malaysia*. Singapore: Genesis Books.
- Sachsenmaier, Dominic. 2018. *Global Entanglements of a Man Who Never Traveled: A Seventeenth-Century Chinese Christian and His Conflicted Worlds*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sim, Joshua Dao Wei. 2015. Captivating God's Heart: A History of Independent Christianity, Fundamentalism and Gender in Chin Lien Bible Seminary and the Singapore Christian Evangelistic League, 1935–1997. Master's thesis, National University of Singapore, Singapore.
- Sim, Joshua Dao Wei. 2018. Chinese Evangelistic Bands in Nanyang: Leona Wu and the Implementation of the John Sung-Inspired Evangelistic Band Model in Pre-War Singapore. *Fides et Historia* 50: 36–65.
- Sim, Joshua Dao Wei. 2020. The Formation of Global Chinese Christian Identities. In *Routledge International Handbook of Religion in Global Society*. Edited by Jayeel Cornelio, François Gauthier, Tuomas Martikainen and Linda Woodhead. London: Routledge, pp. 277–91.



- Sng, Bobby E. K. 2002. *In His Good Time: The Story of the Church in Singapore 1819–2002*, 3rd ed. Singapore: Singapore Bible Society.
- Szeto, Paul, ed. 2001. *Higher Ground: ECF 50th Anniversary Jubilee Celebration (Zhongguo Budaohui Chuangli Wushi Zhounian Jiniankan)*. Monterey Park: Evangelize China Fellowship, pp. 6–7, 68. First published 1997. (Bilingual).
- Tan, Chee-Beng, ed. 2007. Introduction: Chinese overseas, transnational networks, and China. In *Chinese Transnational Networks*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 1–19.
- Tan, Chee-Beng, ed. 2015. Introduction: After Migration and Religious Affiliation. In *After Migration and Religious Affiliation: Religions, Chinese Identities and Transnational Networks*. Singapore: World Scientific, pp. xvii–xxxii.
- Tan, Joshua. 2022. Beyond the “Chinese Problem”: Diasporic Chinese Christians and “Cold War Religion” in British Malaya and Singapore, 1950s–1960s’. Paper presented at Yale-Edinburgh Group Conference on ‘World Christianity: Legacy and the State of the Field’, Online, June 28–30.
- Taylor, Jeremy E. 2022. Visiting the “overseas Chinese”: Vatican engagement with the Chinese diaspora in Cold War Southeast Asia. In *Chineseness and the Cold War: Contested Cultures and Diaspora in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong*. Edited by Jeremy E. Taylor and Lanjun Xu. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 151–69.
- Tow, Timothy. 1988. *Ting Li Mei: The First Chinese Evangelist*. Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press.
- Wong, Ting-Hong. 2015. Social Foundations of Public-Private Partnerships in Education: The Historical Cases of Post-War Singapore and Hong Kong. *History of Education* 44: 207–24. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui. 2004. Goddess across the Taiwan Strait: Matrifocal Ritual Space, Nation-State, and Satellite Television Footprints. *Public Culture* 16: 209–38. [[CrossRef](#)]