

readers (or parents of readers). This book could certainly be a great conversation starter for those who care about climate change, asylum seekers and the role of democracy, especially those who long for others to take such issues more seriously. That said, it is likely that many Australian readers will fail to recognise that some of the policy decisions being considered in 2015 could bring us ever closer to a world like Sannah's... in more ways than one.

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## Biography and beyond

### *View from the Faraway Pagoda: A Pioneer Missionary in China from the Boxer Rebellion to the Communist Insurgency*

Robert and Linda Banks  
(Acorn Press, 2013).

Book review essay by Audrey Grant

**V**iew from the Faraway Pagoda, the inspiring pioneer missionary story of Sophie Newton, Robert Banks' great-aunt, is dedicated to 'single female servants of God, who have risked all for the sake of Christ.' The unforgettable foreword confronts Australian readers today as *The Sydney Morning Herald* report, cabled from Shanghai, shocked ordinary Australians everywhere on Wednesday, 7 August 1895. The bold headlines read:

THE MASSACRES IN CHINA  
REVOLTING CRUELITIES  
LADIES HACKED TO DEATH  
CHILDREN IMPALED ON SPEARS

The foreword concludes: 'The news had the strongest personal impact on... those who were considering serving there as missionaries. Sophie Sackville Newton was one of these, and for her the news was to be of life-changing significance' (1-2). Within 18 months, Sophie began realising her dream of serving God in China's Fukien Province over 34 years between 1897 and 1933.

Robert and Linda Banks's compelling account of an inland trip in Fukien Province postdates their biography. This 2014 scene challenges world Christians to ponder the lasting impact of those who 'risked all' over a century ago:

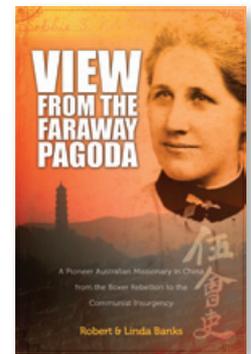
*Our final trip was the most amazing during our stay. A three and a half hour journey 165 km inland to the mountain village of Hwasang. This was the scene in 1895 of an horrific CMS missionary massacre in which 11 foreigners, including 3 young Australian single women and 2 children, as well as 250 local converts in the provincial city nearby, were hacked to death and burned by a group of 80 anti-Western militants. It was an extraordinary privilege to be there, walking where the women did, seeing traces of where they lived and sharing this with several of our Chinese brothers and sisters (Personal communication).*

Western news reports had made no mention of nearby massacres of southern Chinese Christians. Biographers, however, value local evidence and personal knowledge of those affected by events, those who gather to bear witness. If 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church', Christ's healing flows as twenty-first century Chinese and Western brothers and sisters stand together, acknowledging and remembering the bloodshed of countless Chinese Christians mingled with the bloodshed of numbered western missionaries.

*The church of Christ on earth has an altogether different face and an altogether different shape as the result of the events of the twentieth century... because missions were there... Missions have taken the history of Christianity in a new direction (Andrew Walls).*

Between 1900 and 1950, eight out of ten of the world's Christians lived in Europe and North America. 'At the beginning of the twenty-first century something like six out of ten professing Christians live in Africa, Asia, Latin and Caribbean America, or the Pacific' (Walls). Demographic transformations now reveal Christianity's resurgence as a world religion, the principal faith of the postcolonial, non-western world. Almost 50% of Africa's population are Christians. In China's Fukien Province, Christians account for nearly 15% (142).

This breathtaking new reality provides the dynamic context for the burgeoning field



View from the Faraway Pagoda

of World Christianity scholarship, including complementary contributions from western missionary biographies and indigenous revival histories. Timely indeed, *View from the Faraway Pagoda* will appeal to diverse Christian readers witnessing an age of Western disenchantment, vocal atheism and dramatic recession of Christianity from its traditional heartlands.

This biography is easy to read, engagingly written, historically rigorous, and thought-provoking. The empathetic narrative imaginatively crafts Sophie's predominantly twentieth-century life story with historical integrity, while bringing readers alongside the biographers, as fellow travelers or sojourners 'in Sophie's footsteps'. Engaging us in 'our journey of discovery,' the unfolding narrative illuminates ways of seeing what continues of lasting significance in mission; biographical views currently available from twenty-first century vantage points.

*View one* reveals Sophie's pioneering missionary life as a journey of discovery. Through poetic imagery, nine chapter titles evoke and map formative experiences, settings and milestones across Sophie's life story, 1867-1958; for example –

Inner-City Deaconess to Middle-Kingdom Missionary

A Little Band of Sisters in No-Man's Land

Higher Service in the City of the Banyan Trees

Passing the Lantern and Lighting the Way.

The biography's title celebrates the 'splendid view of the plain' discovered by three single Australian coworkers, who CMS appointed, against colonial expectations, to found a mission station in Lieng Kong City. Sophie wrote:

*We went on a long walk to a pagoda on a hill opposite our home... We could hardly get a more extensive view as we stood on that old and broken-down pagoda, such a view makes us feel, 'What are we among so many?' Thank God it is not by power, but by his Spirit, souls are won.'*

'[Recalling] the vision God gave Abraham of the new land spread out before him... this little band of sisters had to trust God for the work he was now calling them to do' (41).

Thirty years later, bidding farewell to faithful Chinese coworkers across Lieng Kong District, Sophie recalled the extensive vision

and small beginnings: 'three of us, one Bible Woman, a few baptised women [in] the District, here and there one who had unbound feet. No Hospital, no Women's or Girls' School' (117). Uppermost now, thanksgiving to God for faithfulness:

*God was with us, the work grew by prayer, the trials drove us more to Him. In spite of all [our] mistakes, often through ignorance... Now after 30 years we see all over the District little churches with small congregations, ministered to by a Catechist or... teacher... [Nine] Bible Women... doing faithful work... with whom we are in real touch as colleagues and can hold fellowship in work and prayer (118).*

'The status of women has been raised a hundredfold,' she notes, through Girls' Boarding School graduates, 'while our Hospital continues to flourish and many grateful patients go home having heard the gospel' (118). Emancipatory education helped generate a social revolution, overcoming oppressive cultural practices of infanticide and foot-binding.

The narrative illuminates Sophie's deepening relational discoveries: called and transformed by the love of God in Christ—the Incarnate Word, missionaries were empowered by the Spirit. Who and What brought the missionary is of lasting value, rather than what missionaries brought.

*View two* sees translation and cross-cultural diffusion as crucial to Christianity's survival. 'Translation is the church's birthmark, as well as the missionary benchmark,' Lamin Sanneh observes. Missionaries saw their primary task as translating the Word of God, assisted by indigenous people, thereby making it available in their vernacular language. 'In the end the greatest debt owed by Chinese Christians to Western missionaries was the Bible; when the Bible became a Chinese book, Christianity became Chinese' (Gloria Tseng).

Heading up Fochow Girls' Middle School, 1920, Sophie observed: 'Girls today are full of questions and argument... Teaching the Bible, one realises that this is an Eastern book, for much of it is clear to them so quickly.' Passing ancient banyan trees, 'she reflected on how deep her roots now reached into her adopted homeland.' Retiring early on medical advice, Sophie longed 'to be with the Chinese... my heart goes out in longing to return—such a homesick feeling for China.' Soon 'a letter came from the church in Lieng Kong City,

pleading with CMS to send Sophie back for one more term.' On five previous returns, 'she had been 'sent', now the call had been 'come'!

Missionaries became border-crossers, recognising issues of culture at the heart of the Christian faith and conversion. Translation empowered Chinese to become Christians for Chinese reasons. For Views 1-3, the complementary back story of *Chinese* Christianity and church history, different from *Western* missionary and church history, needs to be told by Chinese Christians.

*View three* glimpses how churches planted by Western missionaries became indigenized. Overall, what Chinese, turning to God 'in [their] own idiom', 'have done with the Gospel has endured and become an indigenous Christianity' (Tseng).

From 1919, the visionary missionary Bishop of Fukien, Irishman John Hind, began decolonizing mission and church structures to make 'Chinese Christians feel the Church was their own'; and to redress the idea amongst non-Christians 'that the Christian church was a foreign organisation' (89). Changes included: 'loosening Western control of nearly 300 churches'; 'giving greater control to the Chinese nationals'; and insisting only the Chinese language be spoken at diocesan meetings. Increasingly missionaries worked alongside Chinese leaders in churches. Appointed the first deaconess in Fukien, Sophie ably assisted Archdeacon Ding Ing-ong in Foochow cathedral ministry. Ordinations of six missionary deaconesses followed. Archdeacon Ding became the first Chinese Assistant Bishop of Fukien. Ordinations of two locally-trained nationals soon followed, 1928; each, as Sophie prayed, 'called by God, willing to give her life for her sisters in China, as a fully ordained deaconess'. Former pupil and teacher at Foochow CMS Girls' School, Deaconess Ding exercised a far-reaching ministry.

Martyrs indigenized the church by dying for it. John 12:24 proved prophetic: 'Unless a seed fall into the ground and dies'. After the Hwasang massacre in 1895, Kucheng county supplied many clergy, catechists and teachers to the new Diocese of Fukien, including a pastor for Lieng Kong City's main church where Sophie ministered and the first Chinese Diocesan, Bishop Chang (pp. 55, 57).

Historical sources document the ways that translation, the processes of indigenous assimilation of Christianity, and indigenous revival were foundational in building independent 'three-self' churches, not

European imports. During the wave of revival sweeping through Chinese churches in the late 1920's and the 1930's, homegrown revivalist preachers like Fukienese John Sung 'indigenized the Chinese Church by reviving it.' They 'embraced the faith by embracing the book.' Such revival movements 'operated largely outside the Protestant missionary orbit' from which they had grown.

*View four*, the challenge of an extraordinary heritage, engages World Christians on cross-cultural journeys of discovery. The Banks biography invites 'a missionary encounter with our own culture' and beyond. Westerners need the witness of Christians from the Global South to correct our Enlightenment readings of the Bible, and our post-Christian culture. As Lesslie Newbigin said, 'We imperatively need one another if we are to be faithful witnesses to Christ,' to share together in His friendship and humanity.

## Winter Sleep (Kis Uykusu)

A film by Nuri Bilge Ceylan

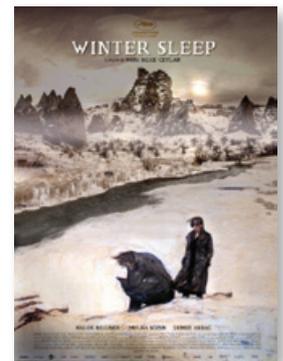
Reviewed by Darren Mitchell

*When Chekhov saw the long winter, he saw a winter bleak and dark and bereft of hope. Yet we know that winter is just another step in the cycle of life.* (Phil Connors in *Groundhog Day*)

After the nearly three hours of searching exploration of masculinity and power in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (2011), Turkish film maker Nuri Bilge Ceylan returns to his themes and setting in *Winter Sleep*, as if an even lengthier second chapter of life in the extraordinary centre of his nation awaits to be prised open.

In a year that the Australian Government has officially declared the Year of Turkey in Australia and the Turkish Government has reciprocated, it is an ideal time to experience a contemporary Turkish examination of a nation with which we will share in the Gallipoli Centenary. (Russell Crowe's *The Water Diviner*, set largely in Turkey after the war, will ensure we do not neglect the war itself.)

*Winter Sleep* presents a retired actor Aydin (Haluk Bilginer), now operating the isolated Hotel Othello nestled amidst Cappadocian cave-pocked pinnacles, and various encounters with his young wife Nihal (Melissa Sozen), recently divorced sister Necla (Demet Akbag), assorted international tourists, as well as neighbours to whom he is also landlord. The film is primarily



Winter Sleep (Kis Uykusu)