

The Radicalizing Power of Everyday Life

So this is Tiun Chhang-mia, {jianada nvxu} Canada's Taiwanese Daughter-in-Law, and the story of how she became radicalized, by this man, Reverend Doctor George Leslie Mackay, and helped to counter-radicalize him in return.

The RCMP define radicalization as, "the process by which individuals—usually young people—are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs towards extreme views."¹ The FBI address "Those who are emotionally upset after a stressful event also may be vulnerable to recruitment. Some people also become violent extremists because they disagree with government policy, hate certain types of people, don't feel valued or appreciated by society, or think they have limited chances to succeed."²

Tiun's radicalism never turned violent, but she was introduced to overt ideological overtures at a young age, and certainly had cause to feel devalued and unappreciated. During her first speaking tour of Canada she told the story of how, as a child her mother tried to smother her with a blanket. Luckily, her father saved her life so he could sell her to his cousin (she had just married one of the richest men in town and hoped to have a son of her own soon, so he reckoned she'd want to buy a girl for her son to marry soon enough).

Tiun lived with her birthparents until she was three years old, before she was transferred. At her new home, her yang-mu (her new mother-in-law) bound her feet to make her a more attractive (and valuable) for her son, a painful process that led to lifelong discomfort and deformity. Around the time Tiun turned ten, her child-husband died. Northern Taiwan was home to Malaria, Encephalitis, tuberculosis, small pox, and

influenza, all of which were notorious killers of children, so it's likely that Tiun's first husband's death had nothing to do with the evil spirits attracted by her disobedience, as her Yangmu asserted. Nevertheless, Tan Min was old-fashioned. She blamed Tiun for the death of her only son, and beat her and demanded that she do the "right" thing, and drown herself. Tiun dissented.³

The Yangmu, finding no value in keeping the virgin widow, opted to stop feeding her so much, which escalated into a fistfight over a bowl of peanuts. Tiun ran away to the her birthparents' home in a rainstorm and begged her father to buy her back, but apparently the price was more than she was worth...He carried her back to the Tans' house himself and returned her—though he did promise to stop by once a week or so to make sure she was still being properly cared for. Tan Thah, Tiun's Yangmu's Yangmu, began to take charge of her around this time, in the hopes that they could resell her and recoup some of their costs.⁴

That was the same year Canada's first foreign missionary, George Leslie Mackay, arrived at Tamsui—just across the river from Wugu. Mackay was a Scottish-Canadian Presbyterian, a biblical fundamentalist and a social conservative, but he came to Taiwan with a progressive ideological vision that included radically changing the religious and social beliefs of the people of China. He believed that any people, given the plain truth of the bible to read for themselves, would naturally build a society true to the word of God. All he needed to do, was to give people the bible and teach them how to read it.⁵

This turned out to be harder than he thought it would be because he couldn't speak Chinese, and most Taiwanese couldn't read it. Mackay spoke to everyone who

would listen but no one had any idea what he was talking about, at least not until Giam Chheng-hoa showed up to save him.⁶

Giam was Tiun's 2nd cousin in-law once removed (I think?). Tiun's Yangmu's Yangmu was Giam's mother's mother (or mother-in-law). His father was unknown to him, and Giam had been raised and taught by one of the priests at the Tan family temple. He had worked as a secretary to a Fukkien businessman and traveled as far as Beijing, before returning to Wugu, so he read and wrote Chinese very well, and was familiar with multiple dialects. Nine days after Mackay's arrival in Tamsui, Giam arrived and offered himself to Mackay as a servant. Giam could read Mackay's Chinese literature, and used it to teach Mackay Taiwanese.

Within a month, Tan-thah had come to Tamsui to see her grandson's teacher-student preach, and invited them to Wugu, where the village head Tan Pau (Tan-thah's brother in-law) posted a copy of the ten commandments, and dedicated an old-granary to be converted into Northern Taiwan's first church.

When Giam moved back to Wugu and became the Canada Presbyterian Church's first native teacher there, Tan Thah and Tiun both became regular students at the mission-school. But they were its only regular students. After all, what good was a radical new education if it couldn't help you pass Confucian Exams and get a job-- To get more students to enroll, Mackay began offering cash prizes for top students, and Tiun, became a regular winner earning a dollar or more a month.⁷

While Tiun was being radicalized at the Presbyterian Mission in Wugu, a tragedy struck in Tamsui that may have profoundly influenced the radicalization of her future husband. The Canada Presbyterian Church had sent Dr James Fraser and his family to

join George Leslie Mackay in 1875, but they were even less prepared than Mackay for what they would find. In addition to not knowing the language, they had three small children, and they had never lived in such poor conditions as those at Tamsui. Mrs Fraser was indignant about the Spartan lifestyle and lack of European society, and complained vigorously to the Foreign Mission Commission, demanding Mackay be disciplined for not providing more suitable housing given the funds at his disposal—She complained right up until the day she died, less than two years after her arrival, from an infection contracted during child birth (at the hospital Mackay had built in a converted pig-barn). Dr Fraser and his children went back to Canada, but left Mackay with the belief that no Canadian woman would ever be able to live and work in Taiwan.

In a letter written December 17, 1877 to the FMC, Mackay announced his intention to marry Tiun declaring, “as I in heart believe that Chinese and Canadian are exactly the same in the presence of our Lord, I act according...I am thinking now how can I do most for Jesus? This is a trying climate for foreign ladies as Dr. Faser knows...”⁸

Giam, and Mackay’s other students spent months trying to convince Mackay to marry, but he was reluctant. Finally he assented provided they could find a girl who was “healthy, easy on the eyes, upright, and didn’t have bound feet...” Alas there were no “upright” girls in Northern Taiwan with unbound feet, but Tiun agreed to take the bindings off of hers, and so Mackay paid her yangmu 30 silver dollars, and promised an additional \$3 a month for Tiun’s work teaching girls to read the bible. Tan Min consented and Tiun Chhang-a became “Minnie Mackay”

His brothers and colleagues in Canada tried to talk him out of the decision, but he did not waver. On May 27th, 1878, he was married to Tiun at the British Consulate, just weeks before Dr. Fraser's replacement missionary, Kenneth Junor arrived. Interestingly, Mackay, an ordained minister opted for a Chinese-marriage contract and a civil union rather than waiting a month and undergoing the ethical scrutiny of Canada in order to have a Christian wedding.

Several of the foreign men in Tamsui had "sleeping dictionaries" at home, but Mackay was the only one who insisted on a legal marriage. When he wrote up the legal contracts with Tiun's Yangmu, he wasn't sure how acceptable they would be back home, so he tracked down Tiun's birth parents and convinced them to sign their consent to the marriage as well. Tiun was a bit indignant at the idea of her father, who had refused to buy her back from her cruel yangmu, giving his permission for her to marry, so she wrote up her own contract granting herself permission to marry Mackay, as if she were no-one's property at all...

I cannot over-emphasize how disturbingly new this mixed-marriage was in 1878. "Going Native" was a strategy advocated by William Calmers Burns and Henry Hudson, the founders of the China Inland Mission, as a way of building rapport with the Chinese and ensuring the safety of their missionaries in potentially hostile neighborhoods. But neither advocated miscegenation.

Mackay was the first of only three Protestant Missionaries to marry a Chinese native in the 19th century. George Parker, of the China Inland Mission, announced his intent to marry Shao Mianzi less than a month after Mackay's nuptials had been publicized. Hudson threatened to remove Parker, but backed down when a dozen CIM

missionaries threatened to resign if He didn't allow the marriage. Still, no one tried it again until 1898 when Anna Jakobsen married the Chinese evangelist Cheng Xiuqi. By then, only a few missionaries supported the union enough to attend the wedding, and Jakobsen was forced to leave the CIM and start her own independent mission.⁹

In 1880, when Tiun arrived in Canada with her husband for the first time, Mackay set her to the work for which he had married her—delivering sentimentalist speeches to stir the people of Canada to reach into their pockets to save the heathen Chinese. Tiun, with her carefully tailored story including slavery and physical abuse, and a near-scrape with infanticide offered a message whose impact was profound. In the year they spent touring Canada, nearly half of the donations they gathered for the mission in Taiwan were dedicated to expanding women's education. Within a year of their return to Tamsui, this number more than doubled with matching funds from the women's foreign mission society of the Canada Presbyterian Church, and had been dedicated to the building of the first girls' school in Taiwan.

It was a shrewd bit of politics on the part of a number of activist women to get the money earmarked for a girls' school. When the Canada Presbyterian Church commissioned the women's foreign mission society in 1878, they were given the authority to meet, and to talk, and to raise money, and to forward their efforts to the (Men's) Foreign Mission Committee to oversee its distribution.

Mackay's mission was famous, not merely because it was the first, but because the large number of Taiwanese preachers who had established mission stations under Mackay had made it one of the fastest growing missions in history. So the FMC promised all the money the WFMS had collected to Mackay. The WFMS wanted the

money to be dedicated to a cause that specifically benefitted women, but most of it had already been spent. The WFMS held a meeting and voted not to release the funds unless they were going to be used to build a school for girls. It looked like it was turning into a stand-off for women's autonomy in the Canada Presbyterian church, but then Maggie Hall died.

Maggie was a forty-year-old dowager suffering from consumption when she saw Tiun and Mackay speak in Acton in 1881. She died in the winter of 1882, leaving most of her assets to her siblings and their daughters, but in the final distribution, was left with two-hundred fifty dollars more than she thought she had. Her sister and executor, Barbara Gowen, a member of the WFMS, dedicated \$25 of this to be held in account for the building of a Girls' School in Taiwan. Once the account had been so established, with a dying woman's last wishes behind it, the FMC assured Mackay that he had to build the school. Most of the money had already been spent, but they promised more would be sent, and in 1884 the school was built, just in time to be hit with a shell during the French invasion of Taiwan in the Sino-French war.

The war didn't last long. The Brits decided to stay neutral and the French lost the war, and within a year the Canada Presbyterian Mission opened Taiwan's first school for Girls. Tiun, became its first headmatron. She also involved in the teaching at the male division—Oxford College (named after Oxford County Ontario, Mackay's native home) and so it can be argued that she was the first women to hold a post as a college professor in Qing China---and twenty years before a woman had been allowed to profess in Canada for that matter.¹⁰

The WFMS, was pleased and wanted to arrange sending Canadian women over to teach at the girls' school as soon as possible but Mackay resisted. He had dozens of reasons why native women were infinitely more effective (and cost-effective at three dollars a month) than a Canadian woman missionary could hope to be, to which Mrs. Harvey, the Secretary of the WFMS wrote in a letter to Annie Jamieson, who with her husband had replaced the Junor's as Mackay and Tiun's partners in the Tamsui Mission, "we cannot, from the distance at which we live, and from the want of knowledge, understand the special circumstances which make North Formosa the only field where the work of the foreign lady missionary cannot be employed," She went on to blame it on the belief that "the methods of Dr. Mackay differ from those of ordinary missionaries," and in fact his methods were preventing other missionaries from doing God's work (and specifically God's women's work...) ¹¹

In December, 1887, Tiun forwarded a letter rejecting a proposal to send Canadian women to help teach the girls at the girls' school how to sew clothes and knit stockings. "Knitting stockings here would not help the mission. The Pi-po-hoan don't wear such. Chinese with bound feet don't need such...Do you think Canadian ladies could do better teaching the above [daily living skills in Taiwan] better than our trained people here? I KNOW they could not."¹²

Taiwanese women, according to Tiun, were already excellent embroiderers, instead of sending women who thought they could teach them to sew, it would be more helpful to send sewing machines instead....They did end up getting 14 Singers sewing machines, which were later confiscated and duplicated by Japanese engineers, but that is a different story...

Mrs. Harvey styled herself a radical Canadian Feminist. For her, positions for Canadian women missionaries meant the professionalization of women's roles in Canada. It meant teacher colleges and women in medical schools, and strong new avenues for the advancement of the lives of Canadian women. But although she was radical enough to believe that Canadian women deserved access to similar opportunities to men, she was not radical enough to realize that Taiwanese women were just as capable as Canadian ones...

By the time Mackay and Tiun returned to Canada for their second furlough, now with three young children, the Presbyterian Community was deeply conflicted between their heroification of the Mackays' miraculous mission on the one hand, and their disapproval of some of their radical social (read racial) views. They decided to name him moderator for the twentieth General Assembly (moderators maintain the calendar and decorum, but don't usually get to say much) and attempted to pair him with Rev McGilifry, a missionary on furlough from Honan China for his speaking engagements, in hopes of moderating his voice a bit. But it all backfired when their ship made landfall in Vancouver, and a customs official wouldn't let his wife or children disembark without paying a \$50 per person head-tax because "they were definitely of the Chinese extraction,"¹³

The fee was eventually waived, but Mackay had been irreversibly triggered. He broke with convention and handed over his gavel to his predecessor so he could deliver a fiery diatribe at the General assembly denouncing Canada's anti-Chinese immigration policies. A complete record of the speech he gave has evaded preservation, but an article he published in the Toronto Star not only defended Chinese immigrants, but

argued that their contribution to North American Society was more beneficial than all of the other nationalities there. "San Francisco has a population of 300,000...Of this there are 21,000 Chinese and 16,000 Irish adults...Last year the number of Chinese sent to the almshouse is marked, "none.: In the County Hospital there were ten Chinese. Arrested for drunkenness, Chinese, none. Other nationalities, 8,655." He had lived amongst the Chinese for a long time and known many shrewd businessmen and government officials, and would readily admit that *some* Chinese could be just as unscrupulous as Canadians...but in general, the Chinese were harder working, complained less, and were of a superior moral character...¹⁴

No one spoke against him, and his motion to bring political pressure against the Canadian government to change their policy was carried with a standing vote.

Standing votes are funny things. In Presbyterian meetings when a vote is called for, it is generally done by a show of hands, yea and nay. In matters of little controversy, the moderator can generally declare the fate of the motion by a simple viewing of the show of hands, the majority being apparent. If it is too close for the moderator to call, voters are asked to stand and be counted. The rules of assembly, however forbid anyone who did not vote in the show of hands to stand during the standing vote, and it is the authority—nay the duty—of every member of the assembly to police the members near to him, to make sure that they did not stand to vote if they had not raised their hand to vote earlier. A majority is not necessary to carry a standing vote, merely a majority of those who did not abstain from the vote. The actual vote on June 19th, 1894 was not recorded, although it was reported in the Presbyterian Record that many delegates who abstained thought it was not the place of the church to

interfere in governmental politics. The Acton Free Press humored Mackay's eccentricity, saying it had to be expected that one who had been away in the jungles of Formosa for so many years would be a bit out of touch with Canadian politics.

Back in Taiwan, William and Margarett Gauld, the fourth missionary couple to come join Mackay in Taiwan, had been given a special commission to try to reign in Mackay and his wife. William, a mathematician took over the mission books, and Margarett the girls' school. When Mackay died of a cancer in 1901, they attempted to shift the mission back toward more conservative policies, but their powerplay backfired. Tiun, was relieved of her position, and kicked out of the mission house. Some say that she came all the way back to Canada, intent on establishing her citizenship here, or perhaps being appointed a missionary herself so that she could at least keep her home, but she was sent back, told she was no longer necessary. The result was an unofficial Taiwanese boycott of the school.¹⁵

The Presbyterian ministers, led by Giam and Mackay's two sons-in-law established a corporation and formed their own Presbytery, and formally breaking away from the Canada Presbyterian Church. They allowed the Canadian missionaries to stay; but deprived them of control of the organization. Tiun was asked to return to the girls' school and train the Canadian women who (for the first time) had arrived but been unable to gather enough students to open the school.

Two years later, when the school was operating at full capacity again, Tiun retired gracefully, returning once and again to make a public appearance at the opening of the new seminary and the hospital. The Taiwanese had made their position clear—

Canadian teachers couldn't presume to teach them, until they had been properly trained by Taiwanese masters.

Neither Tiun, nor her Canadian husband grew up radicals—rather they were both conservative members of the elite society of their respective homelands. In fact, they were both carrying out the conservative agendas of their superiors who told them to build what they built and change what they changed. But the life that they were asked to lead, was progressive if not radical, and when the societies they were from took a conservative turn toward the end of the century, they found themselves more radicalized than they had ever intended--not because their values or beliefs had changed so much over time, but rather because the values of their societies had changed around them.

¹ The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Guide on Radicalization, "Radicalization for the Perplexed," Canada, June 2015, <https://publicintelligence.net/rcmp-radicalization/>

² "Why do People Become Violent Extremists," FBI Teen Website, <https://www.fbi.gov/cve508/teen-website/why-do-people-become-violent-extremists>

³ Zhang Yuehan, 張約翰. Shang Zhu Da Neng gujin Xian Xianzai Xin Zhu ZhiJia. 上主大能古今顯現在信主之家. [The Story of Our Family's faith in God, from ancient times to today] April 1987 Handwritten manuscript courtesy of Jaffa Chang, granddaughter of Zhang Yuehan. 1-3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mackay, George Leslie, D.D. *From Far Formosa: The Island, its People and Missions*. Ed. Rev J. A. MacDonald. London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1900. 3rd ed. 142-152

⁶ Mackay, *Diaries*. 19 April, 1872.

⁷ Forsburg, Clyde R. "Pan Celtic Anglo-Saxonism, the Polar Eden, and Crossing Racial Divides: The Interesting Case of George Leslie Mackay." *The Life and Legacy Of George Leslie Mackay: An Interdisciplinary Study of Canada's First Presbyterian Missionary to Northern Taiwan*. ed. Forsberg. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012. p 113-4.

⁸ G. L Mackay, Letter of December 17, 1877 in *North Formosa Mission Reports: G.L. Mackay's Life in North Formosa 1868-1878 Series I Vol I*, ed. Louise Gamble and Chen Kuan-cho, Toronto: Presbyterian Church of Canada, 2012. 175.

⁹ Xue Li, *Making Local China a Case Study of Yangzhou 1853-1928*, Zurich: Zwierniederlassung, 2018. 182-3.

¹⁰ Carrie Derick became Canada's first female professor when McGill appointed her as associate professor in 1907. She had been teaching and conducting research there since 1898.

¹¹ L. J. Harvey, Letter of July 14, 1886 excerpted in "Some Things That Should be Known to the Ladies of the Women's Foreign Mission Society in Canada," (1888) in *North Formosa Mission Reports: G.L. Mackay's Life in North Formosa 1868-1878* Series I Vol III, ed. Louise Gamble and Chen Kuan-cho, Toronto: Presbyterian Church of Canada, 2012. 234-5

¹² Minnie Mackay, "Mrs. Mackay's Letter in Full" in *North Formosa Mission Reports: G.L. Mackay's Life in North Formosa 1868-1878* Series I Vol I, ed. Louise Gamble and Chen Kuan-cho, Toronto: Presbyterian Church of Canada, 2012. 240-1.

¹³ Stainton, Michael. "George Leslie Mackay and the Poll Tax." In *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*. Volume 6 No. 2 (July, 2010): 49-69.

¹⁴ United Archives Scrapbook, 1885?

¹⁵ Wilma Welsh, "History of the Tamkang Girls' School 1905-1975." Unpublished paper courtesy of Aletheia University Archives.