

## St Cuthbert's Mission Station:

Fragments of living heritage, the archive and documentary filmmaking – ‘the future of the past’<sup>1</sup>

Lieza Louw<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This paper offers a reflection on a research project undertaken over a period of nearly five years at the St Cuthbert's Anglican community near Tsolo in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. St Cuthbert' was established by Father Bransby Key, an Anglican missionary in the nineteenth century. On a site visit with art historian professor Anita Nettleton, we met elders who still remembered the missionaries and could relate to lay-worker Frank Cornner who collected beadwork made by the amaMpondomise even though the missionaries discouraged these practices. Cornner's collections are housed at the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town, the British Museum in London and at Pit Rivers in Oxford, in the United Kingdom. The importance of recording testimonies of elders underlines the value of 'living heritage' as an added research tool in attempts to contribute to the existing archive, especially as many of the elders have since passed away. The elders recall their experiences with fondness and it was only at a later stage that the researcher encountered dichotomous reactions to the missionary project in the area. For the researcher / documentary filmmaker this tension presented a dilemma as the value of the testimonies could in no way whatsoever be undermined despite the challenges faced by practitioners at this time in the history of our country. My research does, however, point to the importance of constantly adding to existing archival collections of historical records by recording the lived experiences of relevant individuals.

**Key Words:** Anglican Missionaries, St Cuthbert's Mission Station, living heritage, documentary film, Frank Cornner bead collections. 7.11.2021

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, I put forward an argument for the importance of expanding archives of historical intersections where fragments of living heritage still exist and can be fruitfully employed to expand and enrich existing historical archives. I suggest re-

<sup>1</sup> The title of a chapter written by Robert A. Rosenstone in Sobchack, V. ed. 1995. *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*. New York: American Film Institute.

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coding interviews and producing documentary films as one of the methodologies, which can be successfully used.

Pierre Nora argues that because of globalisation, “There are no longer sites of memory, because there are no longer real environments of memory”. He sees a gulf widening between on the one hand “a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition” and “memory constructed from sifted and sorted historical facts” (Nora 1989:7). To counter a reconstruction or re-interpretation of a memorial site, which consists solely of archival documents, is of importance. The researcher should, therefore, take cognisance of the historical traces, and the fragments of living memory to record contemporary testimonies attesting to these lived experiences to secure information beyond the existing archive.

## 2. Case Study

The case study for my research focuses on a formerly important mission station, St Cuthbert's, located near Tsolo in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The station also housed a convent and extended beyond the actual St Cuthbert boundaries as the priests and the nuns also maintained various outposts and provided a variety of community services and support, according to Broster (2009:272) and others. Today the premises still houses a vibrant Anglican community, and at the time of the research, a convent housing eight nuns and a few orphans.

I visited the site in 2014 with Professor Anitra Nettleton who has conducted extensive research and published papers on a beadwork collection from the St Cuthbert's mission station. The paper “Of Skulls and Severed Heads” focuses on beadwork “made and worn by Mpondomise peoples, isiXhosa-speakers living in the district of Tsolo in the Eastern Cape in South Africa” (2014:2), and according to Nettleton the particular collection she studied, was “collected by a lay mission-worker, an Englishman called Frank Cornner, and deposited in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (1926), the British Museum, London (1933) and the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town (1936-1948)” (2014:2). ‘Connor’ [Cornner] is also mentioned in Joan A. Broster's book *Transkei Heritage* (2009: 275) as “a devoted teacher-layman who spent forty-six years there, opened a post office and planted trees and orchards”.

According to Nettleton (2014) there is no clear date of when Cornner started his collection, but Althea Graham's letters, housed at the Iziko Social History Centre in Cape Town, indicates that a small “museum” of beadwork was still visible at St Cuthbert's in 1937, when she arrived at the mission and wrote in a letter to her mother, that: “Last year was a famine year and the red people sold their beads for money, so Sr Superior bought a number, giving the money to the people” (Nettleton 2014:2).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The term, ‘the red blanketed people’ has been used to refer to the Mpondomise who chose not to be Christianised and to continue wearing their beads and their red blankets.

On our visit to St Cuthbert's we attended a Sunday service and met church officials, who included the Reverend Torcado Mkululeni Koloqa and the eight nuns still attached to the parish. We also met the nine-two-year old Mr R.S. (Richard Skubane) Madala who was born and educated at St Cuthbert's and who later returned to the mission as a schoolteacher. Madala still remembered Frank Cornner and his role as a lay missionary at the station. As a documentary filmmaker, I became intrigued by the intersection between Professor Nettleton's research and the fragments of living memory. I managed to secure funding to return to the mission station and record an interview with Madala as well as other relevant footage to visualise his testimony.

To underline the importance of producing a documentary film, in addition to the primary goal of conducting and recording interviews for the archive, I consider that this cinematic genre can make a contribution to expand the existing archive in a different way. The documentary filmmaking process becomes a tool for the filmmaker to 'voice' selected aspects of a historical event using artifacts housed in the archive, which very often have been collected and stored and which, often, are 'forgotten'. The filmmaker does this by tracking down participants who can illuminate facets of the found objects – the photographs, texts, film clips or video footage . . . and these elements are then combined to construct a narrative that recreates aspects of the historical events as a film.

Following Chanan (2012), I propose that, in this way, the documentary becomes an expansion of the existing archive by creating a new interactional space between the social actor and history, in which the film becomes, according to Michael Chanan, "a strange new form of historical evidence" (2012: 257). The film, therefore, uses traces of history (the archive) and the place where memories are stored (the psychic archive) and creates a filmic experience to "reconstruct the historical as a symbolic domain where the viewer is invited to identify with the social situation of the social actors pictured therein" (2012: 268). This is a rather important consideration for the case study as the recollections or testimonies of the participants could be interpreted from a number of different points of view. These possible perspectives are discussed in a later section of the paper.

In December 2014, I returned to St Cuthbert's with a small crew - Luke Worster, the cinematographer and Amy van den Houten, the sound recordist and editor, to record what we could over a four-day period. I set up interviews with R.S. Madala and his wife Nomzamo, the Reverend Koloqa, Church Deacon Dean Madala, Mother Superior Noyulanda<sup>4</sup> and Sister Agnes Efta and we recorded shots of the St Cuthbert's

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<sup>4</sup> Mother Superior Noyulanda did not offer a surname on the release form she signed on behalf of all the nuns. There is also no surname on her tombstone.

landscape, the various buildings at the mission station, activities at the nunnery as well as a consecration service at the cemetery and the Sunday Mass. At the church service, I was introduced to Fundiswa Somhlahlo, a family friend and former pupil of R.S. Madala at the mission school. She also remembered Frank Cornner and his fruit gardens as well as the bead collection and so I included her on the interview list.

At an IDFA (2015) Master Class, filmmaker Errol Morris shared his working hypothesis that documentary filmmakers set out to find the truth and then represent what they find. As such the documentary filmmaking process can never be as predictable as producing a fiction film where a scripted story world unfolds as the director sets out to record representations of the real world. And very often, even if the primary directorial aims are met, the ultimate authorial voice of the film often depends not on the expected, but on the unexpected revelations emanating from the recorded interviews and the other material collected for constructing the non-fiction narrative. Although we achieved the primary aim of interviewing R.S. Madala, many unanticipated elements arose as a result of activities at the mission as well as testimonies shared by the other interviewees. These unforeseen occurrences impacted on and determined the ultimate narrative outcome, and also presented unexpected challenges for the filmmaker.

The narrative which emerged from the production recordings, was not as much an exposition of Frank Cornner's collection, but rather a reflection of how the mission, now an Anglican Church parish, functions in the twenty first century. Through the testimonies of parishioners who were closely affiliated to the missionaries as well as the church leaders and the nuns, a nostalgic scenario of what was then and what is now, unfolded.

### **3. The Interviews**

The overall approach was for the interviews to start with autobiographical details related to the interviewees and their connectivity to the site, their experiences and their recollections.

R.S. Madala, born in 1922 at St Cuthbert's, completed his Standard Six at the mission station, before moving to St Matthews School, Keiskammahoek to complete his Junior Certificate (Standard Eight). Before returning to St Cuthbert's to teach at the Preparatory School, he completed what was known as a 'Native Primary Teacher's Certificate' in 1944.

Fundiswa Somhlahlo was also born, baptised and raised at St Cuthbert's. She recalls how growing up at the mission station the children were

being monitored by the Sunday school teachers. Our Sunday school was conducted by the sisters at CSJB [Community of St John the Baptist]. So, this helped us a lot.

I had a privilege of learning at St. Cuthbert's primary school. [...] What I love about St. Cuthbert's is that the families here were doing the best for us (Interview December 2014).

Somhlahlo and R.S. Madala still retain a strong bond after all these years.

Mr Madala was my teacher in the early childhood. He was also a family friend. As a schoolteacher, he was very fond of all his students and wanted the best of them. He was very active, in sports, in singing, music. He used to conduct choirs for competition. And this attracted us as children.

Her sentiments are echoes by R.S. Madala

We called her Mouse, because when I came to St. Cuthbert's, she was very, very, young. And she was very active! She used to run this way and that way, just like a mouse. Nora Somhlahlo, her mother, used to call her Mouse. This is well known at St. Cuthbert's and now we still call her Mouse!

Younger than Somhlahlo and related to R.S., Dean Madala was also born and bred at the mission station. His parents were teachers at the St. Cuthbert's Primary School.

And my mother was a Sunday school teacher also. We grew up in this Church under the strict supervision of the missionaries and, of course, the Sisters at CSJB. And I think today I'm what I am because of this Mission (Interview December 2014).

Although a first wave of missionaries from the Order of St Augustine started a mission station in the Tsolo district in 1865, the station was burnt down during the Mpondomise War of 1880. The mission station was re-established in 1882 as St Cuthbert's and administrated by missionaries from the Order of St John the Evangelist. Nuns from the Order of St John the Baptist joined the missionaries in the early 1900s. According to Broster (2009) St Cuthbert's was the only Anglican mission station in the Transkei run by the community. Over the years the fathers, the nuns, lay missionaries and members from the community who were converted to Christianity worked together to establish places of worship, schools (academic and industrial), a clinic (that later became a hospital), vegetable gardens and orchards, a dairy farm and a post office. The community constructed a system of channels to bring fresh water from a spring in the nearby mountains (Wits Historical Papers).

Somhlahlo (2014) adds that the fathers created work as people were recruited from the outlying areas. The missionaries also created opportunities for the needy to educate their children. She recalls how "they were riding horses to all these

places. So, this allowed them to make home visits; seeing the people at their actual places, preaching to them". She comments that the newcomers had to rely on interpreters as they could not speak or understand Xhosa, but that by the time they left again (returned to the United Kingdom) they had learnt the language which enabled an improved communication system between the foreigners and the locals.

According to Broster (2009) the first sister superior of St Cuthbert's, Sister Euphemia, came to the station in 1908. Sister Agnes Efta, one of the eight nuns left at the St Cuthbert's convent in 2014, also grew up at the mission station. She commented on the variety of skills training offered there.

The weaving school offered a way of making the material with different things. We could make wool, cotton and then we also used mohair at the weaving school.

She adds that the children were also schooled in 'the eulogy and the scriptures and arithmetic' (2014).

Somhlahlo (2014) remembers the nuns as 'big sisters' who helped them with their handiwork. The girls were taught how to knit and sew from a very young age. These skills were developed from the production of basic things to 'a garment for the children at home, small dresses, blouses, and all those things – with their assistance'. She adds that the sisters were proficient in making wedding and bridesmaids' dresses. She recalls her special skills of baking cakes for these weddings.

For some of the girls who were educated at St Cuthbert's, schooling finished early as it was customary for girls to leave school early and get married for a dowry. This also meant that the family no longer had to provide for the girl. Nomazizi Ngongo Ndizana (2016) who turned a hundred in December 2018, remembers how she enjoyed life at school, but was forced to fit into the patriarchal practices of that time. According to her testimony, she started to feel very dishearted when she reached standard 5 (grade seven), "because your parents would tell you that you wouldn't go to secondary school even if you passed. 'What we want is that you get married and bring cows'. It was painful and I continued halfheartedly, but I got to standard 6 and I passed" (Ndizana 2016). Despite the influences and the impact of the missionaries, it seems that some of the older customs still had an impact in the community.

The missionaries offered formal education, skills training and sport for the young boys at the mission station. In addition to formal schooling, the boys could join carpentry and plumbing classes, as well as dairy and other farming classes. The woodwork teacher was a master carpenter and, with his students and other workers from the community, created all the woodwork for the sandstone church completed in 1906 by the missionaries and other members of the community

(Wits Historical Papers <http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/docs/FINAL-ACSA-Guide-0712-2018.pdf>).

According to Dean Madala (2014), one of the sisters, Sister Lucy, started a clinic that developed into St Lucy's Hospital, probably as early as 1902 (AB815/Ca1.25, Nettleton 2013). Nomzamo Madala (2014) speaks with fondness of the many doctors and student doctors who came from England to work at the hospital. She mentions the relaxed and friendly way in which the visitors and the locals interacted both at a social level and at the hospital where she worked as a nurse: "It was nice mixing with these people. These people were nice, we were also nice to them" (Nomzamo Madala 2014).

To support the growing community, the missionaries started a dairy farm in addition to the fruit orchards and the vegetable gardens. Frank Cornner was in charge of the fruit trees and many of the participants recall him with fond memories. R.S. Madala recalls how the young people used to steal fruit from the orchards and adds that this was a totally unnecessary activity as

Corner used to get a big container on Sunday, fill it up with fruit. So, after the service, everybody would take some. So many of the young congregants came to church because they knew they were going to get fruit from Mr. Corner. Oh, he was nice, what you call a gentleman.

Somhlahlo (2014) also remembers the orchards and the mischievous youngsters. She recalls how Cornner would – in a laughing manner – say, *amasela egardinam* which means there are 'thieves in my garden' and pretended to chase them away.

Although the interviewees do recall Frank Cornner with great fondness and mention his beadwork collection, they do not comment on this aspect of his work. Some of their memories include the buying of beads in times of drought or to assist with paying for food and / or education and 'buying beads from the red blanketed people'.

In her paper, *Jubilee Dandies* (2013), Anitra Nettleton refers to the way in which the missionaries contrasted the colour white as an indicator of a connection to the spiritual world and the red-ochred blankets worn by some of the Xhosa people.

In an entry on the Thembu people in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the author argues that the work of the Christian missionaries "accelerated the erosion of the traditional Tembu way of life and their structures of authority". The process split the population into the more progressive or 'School' people, who favoured 'modernisation along western lines and the "traditionalists, or "Red" people, so named because of their use of red ochre in decorations, who spurned modern values and followed traditional ways'" (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tembu>).

What I did not expect to find was the way in which many of the participants reflected on their experience of the presence of the missionaries in the area and the impact that

their activities had played in their lives.<sup>5</sup> One of the factors that may have had an impact on how these emotions arose and were strengthened over time, was the resistance of the missionaries to the National Party government who came into power in 1948 and worked steadily towards enforcing the apartheid ideology on all aspects of life in the country. Another consideration would be the way in which the participants reacts to a white researcher conducting most of the interviews. The lack of rural infrastructure development in post-apartheid South Africa could be another factor that influences their recollections. It was only when I returned in 2016 with a new crew that some of the participants offered a more negative point of view regarding the impact of missionary work on the long term well-being of the indigenous population in the Eastern Cape.

An interview with M (2016), a participant who reluctantly agreed to participate only after we agreed to not speak about the issues of the believers and the non-believers and a court case against the Anglican Church regarding the St Cuthbert's property. He has fond memories of his life at St Cuthbert's, Frank Cornner and the other missionaries, but expresses ambivalent feelings about the impact of missionary work on his people. He recollects how two of his aunts were good at producing beadwork but "when they became Christianised, they looked down on it and it sort of died out which was a pity" (M 2016). In a reponse to the following question "Do you think it was a good thing that the missionaries came to the region", he retorts

Yes and no! Yes, they came. They brought us education and schools. It was unfortunate that when they came in they looked down on, you know, very few of them, if any ... yes, people like Bransby Key<sup>6</sup> were interested in what our people used to do, but ... they did a lot of harm. By hindsight now, I can say [...] they did not try to find out what our culture was [...] and what our spiritual life was about and what our spiritual beliefs were about ... and they broke down a lot of, actually all that was good in our culture' (M 2016).<sup>7</sup>

Ikenga-Metuh (as referred to by Masondo,1987)<sup>8</sup> argues that religious conversion should be seen as a socio-religious occurrence and that "the period of massive conversions to Islam and Christianity [which] corresponded with a period of rapid socio-

<sup>5</sup> Is nostalgic here the right word? Of course, memories of old people tend to be classified as nostalgic, but doing so takes away from the truth claims they make, and that takes the interviewees less than seriously. I propose to replace nostalgic by a descriptive term, which das not evaluate from the outset.

<sup>6</sup> Father Bransby Key founded the St Cuthbert's Mission station at Tsolo on the banks of the Ncolosi River (<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/mission-stations-n-s>).

<sup>7</sup> Here I propose not to equalize the missionary intervention with the colonial intervention. [It looks as if M. agreed to a conception the researcher culled fom literature. That is not wrong, but I would like to know what M. really saw as the [negative] side of the missionary work.

<sup>8</sup> I propose to refer directly to Ikenga Methuh. The source should be generally accessible., and Masondo can be named after him. But maybe the reference to Masondo would suffice?

cultural change, i.e., colonialism, industrialisation, and modernisation". He contends that "African conversion is both a process of adaptation of elements of traditional beliefs and adoption of new beliefs" (1987:25). For Masondo this "arduous and controversial process was centuries in the making" and only happened because the way in which Africans adopted Christianity as an indigenous religion (Gray 1990: 80; Gray 1982: 61); and through this adoption, Christianity ceased to be solely a white man's religion" (Masondo 2015). He argues that although the missionaries were taken in by the conversions, they never realised that Africans had a different conception of their Christian faith.

These insights could offer a pathway to understanding the nostalgia expressed by the elders interviewed for the film. Nettleton (2016 interview) summarises the realities of the missionary history in South Africa as

they were terrible in many respects in that they undermined local culture, denigrated all sorts of things about local culture at the same time with this odd thing about trying to preserve aspects of it but they also gave people a kind of means for dealing with the modern world which people weren't given by Bantu Education and I think that's where the real problem lies.

R.S. Madala (2014) recalls how "the fathers were not in favour of the Bantu Education Act and after its introduction in 1953, it was decided that the St Cuthbert Schools could not operate under those conditions and had to move to premises outside the mission station".

The participants who were schooled at the mission share positive memories of the instruction they received. Somhlanhlo (2014) recalls how the children were taught to be confident and never feel ashamed of themselves, rather 'be free and speak with people'.

She concludes by saying

And you find that when we were at school, as compared to the present, you'll find that children are being sent to special schools so that they speak English and so on, but with us, that was not a problem, because it was a mixture of cultures, but, all those things collapsed. So, St. Cuthbert's is not the same as it used to be before, but we are managing.

Dean Madala remembers St Cuthbert's as a 'very conducive' environment, a comfortable place where there was access to food, fresh water from a spring in the nearby mountains and a functioning hospital<sup>9</sup>. He concludes

<sup>9</sup> Retired professor Nomfundu Luswazi, in a 2015 presentation made to the Anglican Synod in Grahamstown, argues for using the mission station model such as the one developed at St Cuthbert's to initiate and stimulate growth in rural areas of the Eastern Cape.

After the missionaries left this Mission, everything went down. The hospital was transferred to the government, and the standard of health became so poor.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

The research turned out to be really challenging. Working as a white researcher and filmmaker in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa has been challenging over the past number of years. I am acutely aware of the impact of being a white researcher recording the memories of black South Africans, a consideration that has to be examined from different angles. I discussed this in detail with professor Nettleton and we included this question in the interview I recorded with her. Another concern I had was that the interviewees were initially selected to speak to the working hypothesis that originated from Frank Cornner's bead collections and the very limited of funding that was available to record recollections and other material.

When I had a nearly completed draft of the film, I asked another colleague to view the film. She voiced a number of objections which included thoughts on how my whiteness could have / must have impacted the testimonies and how it would have been more realistic if the interviews were conducted in isiXhosa, the mother tongue of the interviewees.<sup>11</sup> In spite of the testimonies and the feedback, I felt strongly that I could and would not betray the elders who so gladly shared their lived experiences with me. I would not negate what they offered in any way. I worked through the transcribed interviews once again and found the following testimony by Dean Madala (2016).

[...] though people are saying negative things about the missionaries, about them colonising us, but they colonised us for a good cause... Wouldn't be having this mission if they were not here, and that is true!

I also met with Musa Dandala to glean opinions from a younger generation whose family has been connected to St Cuthbert's since Diniwe Dandala, Musa's great grandfather joined the mission station in the late nineteenth century. Musa agreed to an interview and shared some of his family history and his views on the impact of the missionary project. He expands on the Madala legacy as follows

I think we [the Madalas] have been with the church for over a hundred years and my grandparents and my great-grandparent have grown up in the church and

<sup>10</sup> St Lucy's Hospital is in the process of being rebuilt by the Eastern Cape Provincial Government

<sup>11</sup> What I marked grey here is a very common statement, and probably true. I do not want that to be deleted, but I would like to know, beyond the general statement of principle, how that affected the research and/or the outcomes. Maybe that can only be shown in the film itself.

at the mission. So it has had a big impact in our life and I think it also had a big impact in other homes and on the lives of other families in the community of Tsolo and St Cuthbert's.

Musa's views about the impact of the missionaries on the people of St Cuthbert's include an understanding that the history has happened and that there were challenges. He continues to offer a more positive outlook

I do believe that the impact and the important lessons that came from the missionaries did a lot of good and maybe it is now about understanding those differences and coming up with . . . ways of co-existing with one another and formulating solutions and respect and mutual understanding.

I propose that as filmmakers and researchers, we have a responsibility to record 'rare materials', traces and fragments of past lives and as Hamilton (2011:114) argues 'the worthy ancestor must remain vigilant in the protection of the freedom to transcend the past, and endlessly engage the archive' (Hamilton 2011:144).

This was a challenging project on many levels; struggling to find funding to make and to complete the film as well as the contesting opinions held by participants and colleagues. As a working hypothesis for her book Coombes (2004) uses the premise

all memory is unavoidably both borne out of individual subjective experience and shaped by collective consciousness and shared social processes, so that any understanding of the representation of remembrances and of the past more generally must necessarily take into account both contexts (2004, p.8).

I concur with Alexander, quoted by Coombes (2004), who writes about the 'strategic-political and ultimately moral-historical question' as how to progress "towards understanding without ever forgetting, but to remember without constantly rekindling the divisive passions of the past" (2004, p.1) and often, as in this case, the present.

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## Interviews

December 2014

Dean Madala interviewed by author at the St Cuthbert's Anglican Church, Tsolo Eastern Cape

Fundiswa Somhlahlo interviewed by Author at the St Cuthbert's Anglican Church, Tsolo, Eastern Cape

Mother Superior Noyulanda by author at the St Cuthbert's convent, Tsolo, Eastern Cape

Nomzamu Madala interviewed by author at the Madala home in Tsolo, Eastern Cape

Reverend Torcado Mkululeni Koloqa interviewed by author at the St Cuthbert's Anglican Church, Tsolo, Eastern Cape

R. S. Madala interviewed by author at the St Cuthbert's Anglican Church, Tsolo, Eastern Cape

Sister Agnes Efta interviewed by author at the St Cuthbert's convent, Tsolo, Eastern Cape

January 2016

Anitra Nettleton interviewed by author in Linden and Braamfontein, Johannesburg, South Africa

December 2016

Dean Madala and Fundiswa Somhlahlo interviewed by author at the St Cuthbert's Anglican Church, Tsolo, Eastern Cape

December 2016

Linda Njebo Mbabhama interviewed by author in Mthatha, Eastern Cape

December 2016

Nomazizi Ngongo Ndizana interviewed by Fundiswa Somhlahlo near St Cuthbert's  
December 2016

Musa Madala interviewed by the author in Johannesburg, Gauteng  
December 2020

**My assessment:**

As an honest report about a solid piece of fieldwork (filmmaking being an unusual way to document it), the paper warrants publication.

It should be made clear early that it is a paper at a transition point: after doing the fieldwork, but before doing the interpretation (by the intended film.)

I have made a number of detailed comments. Please take them for what they are worth for the project, use or discard them. The comments were made while reading, before having read the whole paper.

As with so many other papers and dissertations I read, I had the feeling, in some sections of the interpretation, of an “ideological overload”. This may be my particular bias, as even the external examiner of my first PhD commented that I had not done much on the theoretical framework.

As a historian (who did similar interviews for his research, though never attempted a film), I was happy reading the report and following the author in the interview process. – That certain things were better in the missionary days may be not just nostalgia, but facts (though old age may have glorified them a bit. . .)

Klaus Fiedler