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Early Silk Road Photography: An Analysis of Dr. Maynard Owen Williams' Photographs taken during the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932)

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**Early Silk Road Photography: An Analysis of Dr. Maynard Owen Williams'
Photographs taken during the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932).**

Maeve Sisi Silvia Mulligan Nolan

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD/MPhil

2022



Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, Herat, Afghanistan, Private Owner, NOT PUBLISHED IN
THE NGM.

Abstract

This thesis provides the first overview of the genre of Early Silk Road Photography and the first in-depth study of a key figure who contributed to it, Maynard Owen Williams. It analyses Williams' photographs taken during the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition of 1931-32. The expedition sought to retrace and document the route taken by Marco Polo, whose travels are synonymous with the Silk Road. Williams' photographs taken during the expedition were published in the US-based National Geographic Magazine (NGM), which was a pioneer in the field of photojournalism. Williams was the Head of NGM's International Division at the time of the expedition. Research for the dissertation was undertaken at the Citroën archives in France, the NGM archives in Washington D.C. and at the Kalamazoo College archives in Michigan.

The first part of the thesis analyses the factors that shaped Williams' decisions about what objects and people to photograph on the expedition, and how he chose to photograph them. These involve influences that were common to the whole genre of Early Silk Road Photography (ch.1), including pre-photographic visual imagery, literary output relating to the Silk Road, perceptions of the Silk Road in popular culture, the impact of mass circulation magazines using photographs, the emergence of the 'science' of ethnography, and the growth of the 'salvage' concept in representations of the non-Western world. They also involve influences that were specific to Williams and his photographs on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition, including Williams' relationship with his employer, the NGM and the objectives that the parties involved had for the expedition (ch. 2). Moreover, they involve his own and the NGM's interactions with the interests and objectives of Citroën, as well as Williams' relationship with the members of the expedition (ch. 3).

The factors examined in chs.1-3 combined to shape the photo-journalistic outcome of the expedition and thus the NGM's presentation of Asia and the Silk Road to its audience. They provide the analytical framework for the detailed examination undertaken in the second part of the dissertation of Williams' photographs taken during the Citroën-Haardt Expedition. The photographs are examined around a set of themes: iconic images of the Silk Road, including means of transport, landscapes and commercial activity (ch,4); photographs that emphasise the difference between 'them and us', including photographs of religion and festivities, different "ethnic types" and the closely-related subject of their clothing and headdress (ch. 5); and photographs concerning the difficult subjects of opium and childhood (ch.6).

This dissertation provides the first in depth examination of Early Silk Road Photography. It contributes to a deeper understanding of Western conceptions and photographic representations of the Silk Road and the West's relationship with the region. Early Silk Road Photography helped to perpetuate and promote to a wide audience notions of Asia which had been created in previous centuries through non-photographic imagery. Unlike other visual media, photographs could be replicated on an infinite scale and distributed to a mass audience through numerous channels. Very few late 19th and early 20th century Westerners had travelled along the Silk Road. The wide availability of photographic material helped to shape Western perceptions of the Silk Road long after the era of Early Silk Road Photography ended in the 1940s.

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Introduction

Research problem.

The central research question of this dissertation is:

How and why did Williams decide to photograph the people and scenes encountered during his journey along the 'Silk Road' as the National Geographic Magazine's photographer on the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932).

This question was shaped with the intention of understanding not only Williams' work but with the aim also of recognising and deepening understanding of The Early Silk Road photographic genre as a whole.

A wide array of factors shaped Williams' decision about what people and scenes to photograph along the Silk Road and how to photograph them.¹ They include the cultural influences that shaped Williams' own perceptions of the Silk Road. This involves the history and identity of his own country, as well as the distinctive features of his personality and

¹ There is an extensive academic literature exploring the concept of 'agency'. The concept is used in order to analyse the degree to which individuals have autonomy in their decision-making and how far their decisions are influenced by the social structures around them. Emirbayer and Mische provide a much-cited survey of the issues involved in using this concept (Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, 'What is agency?', *Journal of American Sociology*, vol 103, No 4, January 1998).

personal history.² Other factors include his relationship with the NGM and the demands involved in working for them;³ his own and the NGM's interactions with the interests and perceptions of Citroën and its general manager, the businessman-explorer and expedition leader, George-Marie Haardt; as well as Williams' relationship with the diverse members of the expedition.⁴ This broad array of factors combined to shape the photojournalistic outcome of the expedition and thus the NGM's presentation of Asia and the Silk Road to its audience.

Maynard Owen Williams.⁵

Williams was born in 1888 into a strongly religious, academic and socially progressive family. Williams' father was Professor of Ancient Greek at Kalamazoo College (Michigan), which was founded by American Baptist ministers in 1833. The college followed a progressive but devoutly religious philosophy. It was a source of recruitment for Baptist missions in Asia. Williams attended the college and after graduation he spent three years as a missionary teacher at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut. The religious significance of the Near East was important to Williams. He was deeply moved that he was living in the Holy Land, where the Biblical stories had been enacted. In 1914 Williams moved to become a missionary teacher at the Wayland Academy in Hangzhou. The Academy was one of many American missionary schools set up in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

² These issues are examined in Chapter 1.

³ The factors that shaped the NGM's demands upon Williams are analysed in Chapter 2.

⁴ The role of Citroën, Haardt and the other members of the expedition, is analysed in chapter 3.

⁵ A full biography of Williams is provided in Appendix 1.

Williams returned to the USA in 1915, when he enrolled at Columbia University's School of Journalism. Upon graduation, he was employed by the Christian Herald Newspaper, which sent him to the Near East, Japan, China, Philippines, Turkey, Turkistan, Siberia, Russia and Armenia. He was a pacifist and in 1917 he joined the US Army as a First Lieutenant in the intelligence service. His service was spent as an assistant military attaché in Beijing. He travelled around Asia as a photojournalist, publishing his work in the Christian Herald and other magazines. In 1917 Williams undertook a mission to Russia where he witnessed the 1917 revolution. In 1917-18 he was placed in charge of relief work in Van, the historic capital of Armenia. He also spent time in Siberia as the only American correspondent with the Czechoslovak Legionnaires, a group of Czech prisoners-of-war who escaped and travelled along the Trans-Siberian railway attacking the Bolsheviks. In May 1919, he was released from military service. His military release papers included a note recommending that the USA military should keep in touch with him for intelligence work in the future.

After his discharge in 1919, Williams took up a post as field correspondent at the National Geographic Magazine. He was among the first photographers to be hired by the magazine. It is possible that he continued to have a role in intelligence gathering throughout his life. Indeed, it is thought that many NGM correspondents undertook intelligence work while employed at the magazine. The high quality of his work, his enthusiasm and dedication to his profession were recognised by the NGM in 1930 when Williams was appointed first head of the NGM Foreign Correspondent department, which sent around the globe NGS correspondents who combined photographic and writing skills. Under Williams' leadership, the Foreign department produced some of the most iconic NGM images. As one of the NGM's longest-running employees and head of this department, Williams had a lot of influence over the creation of these photographs, including the

selection of photographers and the stories that they covered. He helped to shape the magazine's distinctive photographic and writing style.

Williams took an academic approach to his work. When he had accepted an assignment, he would review assiduously the relevant literature, including information on local customs, government regulations and reports on the "temper" of the region's inhabitants. Upon arrival in the area he would acquaint himself with the scenes, with people of influence and passers-by until he had formed what he believed was a good understanding of the location, and of the topic he was to report on. Williams would then form a plan of action and commence taking large numbers of photographs and writing as much as half a manuscript to accompany them, before he commenced editing the material.

As a photo-journalist Williams had a close understanding of the evolution of camera technology. In 1922 it was decided the NGM would begin including colour photographs. Williams was appointed as one of the first of its staff to be trained in the new photographic technique of Lumiere autochromes. In order to do so, he and his family moved to Paris from 1923-1925. In 1925 he utilized his newly-learned colour photography skills as an NGM representative with the Byrd-Macmillan Expedition, which searched for new land in the Arctic Ocean using biplanes. Williams took the first colour photographs from inside the Arctic Circle. In 1926 he and his family moved to Beirut and two years later he moved to Istanbul. In 1931 he took up the position of NGM's representative on the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932), which forms the topic for this dissertation.

Williams retired in 1953 and settled in Turkey. He was one of the most prolific NGM photo-journalists. Over the course of thirty-four years (1919-1953) working for the NGM he contributed ninety-seven articles and amassed around 2250 pages of text and pictures for

the magazine, excluding the vast quantity of unpublished photographs that still sit on the NGS shelves.

Early Silk Road Photography.

Early Silk Road Photography depicts cultural and economic exchange along trading networks within the continent of Asia. The genre can be sub-divided into two broad categories: photographs taken within cities and towns, and those taken whilst traveling between trading centres. Those photographs taken within urban locations depict the presence of the Silk Road within that particular settlement. They frequently illustrate the cross-pollination of culture. These include Buddhist writings brought from India to Dunhuang; incense imported from South East Asia and subsequently used by Tibetan monks; camels loaded with tea from Yunnan in the streets of Beijing; Turkmen selling carpets in Samarkand's bazaars; and archaeological sites demonstrating architectural influence from distant locations. Photographs taken on the routes between urban centres on the Silk Road tended to focus on the lives of nomadic people or merchants. They often travelled through vast deserts or across treacherous mountain passes, living in transportable dwellings such as yurts and using various beasts that would have seemed exotic to Western viewers. Other examples of trade-route photographs include those taken of Mongolians, who were a key link in the trade of tea between China and Russia,⁶ traveling on these trade routes, and images of camels carrying bolts of silk on their backs.

⁶ Martha Avery, *The Tea Road, China and Russia Meet Across the Steppe* (Beijing: People's Republic of China: Intercontinental Press, 2003).

The title of this thesis reflects the fact that the photographs taken by Maynard Owen Williams on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition are part of a wider genre of Early Silk Road Photography. When research for this thesis began nothing academically or commercially that made specific reference to Early Silk Road Photography could be located. However, in recent years the subject has begun to be recognised as a genre in art history that deserves serious academic study. For example, under the auspices of the International Dunhuang Project⁷ the British Library (London) has begun to digitize what it describes as “Historical Silk Road Photography from the late 19th through into the 20th century”, with a focus on the archives of Sir Aurel Stein.⁸ The recent publication edited by Susan Whitfield, former director of the International Dunhuang Project, entitled *Silk Road: Peoples, Cultures, Landscapes* (2019) also explores the topic of photography on the Silk Road, although the discussion is very brief.⁹ This dissertation aims to build upon these preliminary investigations in the field of Early Silk Road Photography through an in-depth study of a single photographer on his journey along the Silk Road.

A diverse array of photographs was taken of the Silk Road between the 1870s and 1940s. They were taken for many different purposes and appeared in a broad range of publications.

⁷ An international collaboration to make information and images of all manuscripts, paintings, textiles and artefacts from Dunhuang and archaeological sites of the Eastern Silk Road freely available on the internet and to encourage their use through educational and reach programs.

⁸ In 2019 the British Library created a PhD research placement, which focussed on the subject ‘Historic Photographs of the Silk Road in the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century’.

⁹Susan Whitfield, ed., *Silk Road: Peoples, Cultures, Landscapes*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019). John Falconer’s chapter in this book addresses the topic of photography in Central Asia in a brief (three page) article.

The year 1877 was the year in which the term 'Silk Road' was first used, whilst the 1940s saw photographic technology advance into a new era, when it became a more predictable, reliable and easily transportable mechanism of visual reproduction.¹⁰ Movement along the Silk Road became progressively more restricted and by the late 1940s cross-border movement of people and goods had become extremely difficult across large swathes of the Silk Road.¹¹ Indeed, many borders became closed to foreign nationals or at the least very difficult to cross legally.

Early Silk Road Photographs were taken and utilized for a wide variety of purposes: geographical mapping,¹² nurturing popular support for government activity,¹³ recording missionary activity,¹⁴ government records¹⁵, illustrating scientific texts and other scientific

¹⁰ Photographic history and its importance in the development of Early Silk Road Photography is examined in Chapter 1.

¹¹ The reduction in ease of communication along the Silk Road between the 1870s and 1940s is analysed in Chapter 1.

¹² For example, much of Sven Hedin's activities along the Silk Road involved mapping the territories in which he explored. This is discussed in chapter 1.

¹³ Peter Hamilton & Rodger Hargreaves, *The Beautiful and The Damned, The Creation of Identity in Nineteenth Century Photography* (Lund, Sweden: Humphries Publishers, 2001), 87.

¹⁴ Jennifer Meagher, Department of European Paintings, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 2004, accessed January 2018, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/eur/hd_eur.htm

¹⁵ Charlotte Fiell and James R. Ryan, *Memories of a Lost World, Travels through the Magic Lantern* (Chipping Camden: Fiell Publishing Limited, 2011).

and pseudo-scientific purposes,¹⁶ public exhibitions,¹⁷ accompanying lectures,¹⁸ illustrating books, keepsakes for tourists, as personal mementoes, sold and collected by people in Europe as curiosities, used in magic lantern shows,¹⁹ for postcards,²⁰ exhibited in galleries and by the end of the 19th century, printed in magazines.²¹

Early Silk Road Photographs were taken by both professional and amateur photographers. These included government agents, journalists, missionaries, photographers working for photographic agencies, spouses of diplomats, scientists and independent wealthy explorers. A great number of Early Silk Road photographs are authorless. Those photographers who did sign their work include: John Thomson (1837-1921), Paul Nadar (1856-1939), Auguste Francois (1857-1935), Ole Olufsen (1865-1929), Susanna Carson Rijnhart (1868-1908), Charles Nouette (1869-1910), Beatrix Bulstrode (1869-1911), Stephane Passet (1875-1941), Joseph Rock (1884-1962), Joseph Hackin (1886-1941), Maynard Owen Williams (1888-1963), Heinz von Perckhammer (1895-1965), Ellen Thorbecke (1902-1973), Ella Maillart (1903-1997), Hedda Morrison (1908-1991), Ernst Schafer (1910-1992) and Bruno Beger (1911-2009), to name but a few.²² The famous Silk Road archaeologist-explorers Sir

¹⁶ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation, Essays on Photography and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 11.

¹⁷ Fiell, *Memories of a Lost World, Travels through the Magic Lantern*.

¹⁸ Fiell, *Memories of a Lost World, Travels through the Magic Lantern*.

¹⁹ Fiell, *Memories of a Lost World, Travels through the Magic Lantern*, 15.

²⁰ Fiell, *Memories of a Lost World, Travels through the Magic Lantern*.

²¹ Catharina Graf, 'The Birth of the Photo Essay: the first issues of Life and Look' (University of Zurich, 2014),

²² Appendix 2 provides a working list of Early Silk Road Photographers.

Aurel Stein (1862-1943) and Sven Hedin (1865-1952) were arguably the most influential figures shaping Western perceptions of the Silk Road. Their extensive publications contain a large number of photographs, which were used to illustrate their journeys of exploration and archaeological discovery.²³

Whilst a large quantity of Early Silk Road Photographs was created by people from the West, a large amount of Russian²⁴ and Asian photographic work also exists. This includes photographs by Khudaybergen Divanov (1878-?), the “Father of Uzbek Photography and cinematography”²⁵; the Russian photographers Sergey Prokudin-Gorsky (1863-1944), favourite of Tsar Nicholas II,²⁷ and Serge Vargassoff (1906-1965); as well as the Chinese photographer Zhuang Xueben (1909-1984), who each produced stunning work capturing the

²³ Their role in Early Silk Road Photography is examined in chapter 1.

²⁴ Whether to classify ‘Russia’ as part of the ‘East’ or part of the ‘West’ is an open question. By the eighteenth century, a large part of the Tsarist Empire was east of the Urals. However, the core of Russia was west of the Urals.

²⁵ Uzbekistan Airways, Uzbekistan, Aviareklama Advertising and Information, 2014.

²⁶ www.bonum-factum.uz/hudajbergen-divanov

²⁷ Victor Minachin, “The Splendors of Russian Collection”, Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky: A Selection from the Collection “The Splendors of Russia in Natural Color”—Color Photographs from the Years 1905–1916’, (Library of Congress: Šechtl & Voseček Museum of Photography, 2006).

Silk Road. Silent film cinematographers²⁸ from both West and East, also focused their lenses on the Silk Road.²⁹

These early films by Western and non-Western cinematographers as well as photographs taken by non-Western photographers depicting the Silk Road require further study, as does the impact that Western photographers and cinematographers' vision of the Silk Road has had on Asia's concept of, and relationship with, its Silk Road history. However, this would be too extensive to cover in a PhD dissertation. Therefore, this thesis analyses Early Silk Road Photography taken by Western photographers with a particular focus on the work of Maynard Owen Williams.

Contribution to the existing literature.

There is a plethora of photographic work of the Silk Road taken during the early era of photography. However, as we have seen, the photographs were taken for a wide array of purposes and appeared in a wide array of different outlets, ranging from postcards and popular magazines to government reports and archaeological investigations. The fact that there is such great diversity and such a great number of photographs of the Silk Road in this era may help to explain the neglect of this area of photography as a subject for scholarly study.

²⁸ See 'Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life', by Millet'in Yaşam Mücadelesi (1925), <http://alkislarlayasiyorum.com/icerik/73267/grass-a-nations-battle-for-life-bir-milletin-yasam-mucadelesi-1925>

²⁹ See 'Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life', by Millet'in Yaşam Mücadelesi (1925), <http://alkislarlayasiyorum.com/icerik/73267/grass-a-nations-battle-for-life-bir-milletin-yasam-mucadelesi-1925>

The study of Early Silk Road Photography is still in its early stages. This thesis provides the first overview of the genre and the first in-depth study of a key figure who contributed to it. Study of Early Silk Road Photography will contribute to a deeper understanding of the origins and development of Western conceptions of the Silk Road and the West's relationship with the region. These photographs helped to perpetuate and promote, to a wide audience, notions of Asia which had been created in previous centuries through non-photographic imagery. Unlike other visual media, photographs could be replicated on an infinite scale and distributed to a mass audience through numerous channels. Very few late 19th and early 20th century Westerners had travelled along the Silk Road. The wide availability of photographic material helped to shape Western perceptions of the Silk Road.

Williams' work during the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932) was selected as a case study not least because it presents some of the most technically proficient, romantic and painterly examples of Early Silk Road Photography.³⁰ There has been no extensive scholarly examination of Williams' work and, more specifically, no academic analysis of his photographs taken on the Silk Road. This is surprising, as his photographic output is considered important enough to be sold at auction houses such as Christies, kept safe in the National Geographic archives³¹ and even written about, though briefly, in Bendavid-Val, et al., *Odyseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*

³⁰ See National Geographic online archive for examples of Williams's work:
www.natgeocreative.com/photography/maynardowenwilliams.

³¹ Although all the negatives were destroyed in the 1970's and some works sold off in their entirety.

(2008).³² The fact that Williams' work on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition was created towards the end of the Early Silk Road Photography era, makes him an appealing topic of study. Looking at a photographer working during the latter half of the Early Silk Road Photographic genre requires contextual study which will provide an overview of the genre as a whole. This thesis not only provides the first in-depth study of a single Early Silk Road Photographer but also the first overview of the Early Silk Road Photographic genre as a whole, within which Williams' work was located.

Research resources.

Research for this thesis involved a variety of research materials. The early stages of formulating this research topic involved diverse sources, including those online, in print, attendance at lectures such as the London-based William Saunders lecture and exhibition (2016), through visits to fairs selling early postcards of Asia in London and a Sotheby's presentation of 'China in Print and on Paper' (November 2016). This presentation included a large collection of books such as 'Shanghai' by Kelly & Walsh Ltd (1934), 'Peking Studies' by Ellen Catleen (1934) and the work of Heinz Von-Perckhammer. I also visited Paris where I saw the Albert Khan Collection and exhibits of missionary photographers in China (December 2015). During visits to Kazakhstan (2011) and Uzbekistan (2014) I spent time in museums, collections and locations that were important to the rich cultural and trading history of Central Asia.³³ I visited the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation

³² Leah Benvanid-Val, Gil Grosvenor and Mark Jenkins, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men - Maynard Owen Williams, Volkmar Wentzel, Luis Marden, and Thomas Abercrombie*, (Washington DC: National Geographic, 2008).

³³ I visited the steppe districts in north Kazakhstan and visited Almaty in the south, each of which was on a different branch of the historic Silk Road. I also visited ancient trade locations in Uzbekistan, including

archives in London (2014). In Florence I visited the exhibition 'The Russian Avant-Garde Siberia and The East' (27th September 2013- 19th January 2014). Each of these resources helped me to identify recurring themes and styles within the Early Silk Road Photographic genre and identified specific photographers who worked with this subject matter, thereby allowing a better understanding of the genre as a whole and to situate Williams and his work within it.

My preliminary research involved an extensive exploration of a wide array of Early Silk Road photographers. I studied the work of several of these photographers in some depth, including the Scottish Photographer John Thomson (1837-1921), the American photographer, missionary and sociologist Sidney D. Gamble (1890-1968), the German photographer Heinz von Perckhammer (1895-1965), and the German photographer and diplomat's wife Hedda Morrison (1908-1991). Each of these persons took remarkable photographs. It was only after my exploration of the extensive genre of Early Silk Road photographers that I decided to focus on a single photographer, Maynard Owen Williams, and his work undertaken on a single expedition. This permitted an in depth analysis that would not be feasible with a dissertation that attempted to analyse a wide array of Silk Road photographers.

The primary materials for the dissertation were from Williams' archives located in three places: The Citroën Archives, Herimoncourt, France; The National Geographic Society

Samarkand and Bokhara. I visited madrassas, religious shrines, museums and art galleries in these cities. During two periods of study in China I became familiar with parts of China connected with the Silk Road. Although academic research was not the main motive for these visits, they helped to shape my thoughts about the topic of my PhD.

Archives, Washington DC; and Kalamazoo College, Michigan.³⁴ The materials in the Citroën archive in Herimoncourt revealed that the expedition was of great importance for the Citroën automobile company. The Citroën archives contained promotional material in the form of postcards, posters and maps, together with newspaper clippings and Tintin cartoons. The expedition was so famous that the people who took part in it became French celebrities. Even today the expedition is legendary. Indeed, Citroën invested so much money in the expedition that it is considered to have been a contributing factor in their bankruptcy in 1934.³⁵ The NGS archive in Washington DC contained a large quantity of written and visual material relevant to my research. The most important part of the archive was the vast photographic archive from the Citroën Expedition. The Kalamazoo archive contained large amounts of information on Williams' upbringing, as well as his experiences prior to and during his work at the NGS. Examples include personal diaries written by Williams before his work at the NGS, as well as those written during the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932). These personal writings were crucial to the attempt to understand Williams' feelings concerning the Silk Road and the personal significance for him of an expedition across Asia in order to 'retrace the footsteps of Marco Polo'. Whilst researching at the NGS archives, a good friend of the society became interested in my work and gifted me part of his collection of Williams' NGM publications.

³⁴ The question of how, why and by whom, archives are constructed was explored by Allan Sekula (Allan Sekula, 1983, 'Reading an archive: Photography between labour and capital' in Wells, ed. 2002), whilst the function of photographic archives as 'salvage' was examined by Behdad and Gartland (Ali Behdad & Luke Gartlan, *Photography's Orientalism, New Essays on Colonial Representation* (Hong Kong: The Getty Research Institute Publications Program, 2013). These themes appear throughout the dissertation.

³⁵ www.independent.co.uk/life-style/motoring/features/citroen-traction-avant-5529961.html

The photographs Williams took during this expedition appeared alongside articles he wrote for the National Geographic Magazine.^{36 37} The articles appeared in three editions over the course of a two-year expedition along the Silk Road from Beirut to Cambodia,³⁸ amassing a total of 167 pages of Williams' writing accompanied by 92 of his black and white photographs and 26 colour Finlay photographs.³⁹ However, the total body of Williams' photographic work from this expedition numbers in the thousands.

³⁶ From here onwards I will refer to the National Geographic Magazine as the 'NGM' and the National Geographic Society as the 'NGS'.

³⁷ Sr. Lawrence H. Conrad, 'Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963', (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Upjhon Library, Kalamazoo College, 1964), 6.

³⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir, Scientific Party Led by Georges-Marie Haardt Successfully Crosses Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Afghanistan to Arrive at the Pamir', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, July-December, Volume LX, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1931) and Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1932) & Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroën-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1932).

³⁹ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir, Scientific Party Led by Georges-Marie Haardt Successfully Crosses Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Afghanistan to Arrive at the Pamir', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, July-December, Volume LX & Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1 & Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroën-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII.

Detailed analysis of photographs taken on the Citroën-Haardt expedition forms the main body of chapters 4-6. Williams' diaries, letters and text accompaniments to photographs, in addition to other written materials, inform the detailed analysis of individual photographs. Appendix 1 presents a biography of Williams' life. It locates Williams' work on the Citroën-Haardt expedition within the context of a long professional life as one of the world's leading photojournalist photographers. Many aspects of his upbringing and working life are relevant to the detailed analysis of the photographs in chapter 4-6.

Research method.

As we have seen, there is a vast and hugely diverse array of photographic material within the genre of Early Silk Road Photography. This dissertation seeks to deepen understanding of the genre through the analysis of a single photographer, Maynard Owen Williams, and the work that he produced during the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932).

Williams' photographs on this expedition are of special interest within the genre of Early Silk Road Photography, as the expedition and accompanying photographs 'follow in the footsteps of Marco Polo' across Asia, from the Mediterranean to South East Asia.⁴⁰ The photographs taken by Williams on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition provide a remarkably integrated body of work concerning Western perceptions of the Silk Road in the latter part of early photography.

⁴⁰ The expedition planned to re-trace Marco Polo's journey back to Europe through Southeast Asia and South Asia, but the expedition was curtailed by the death of the expedition leader, George-Marie Haardt, in China. Williams continued to follow Marco Polo's return route from China as far as Southeast Asia, before returning to the USA.

The rich archival material provides a valuable opportunity for analysing the factors that shaped the photographs taken by a single individual within the genre of Early Silk Road photography. Taken together, these materials provide an invaluable opportunity for analysing the factors that influence the creative process for the individual photographer, shaping the environment within which the photographer's autonomy was exercised. They permit an in-depth analysis of the factors that determined the way in which the choice of photographic subject were selected and how they were photographed. Future research within the genre of Early Silk Road Photography may provide comparable examples of Early Silk Road photographers whose work can be analysed with a comparable richness of research material.

Thesis structure.

In order to answer the question 'How and why did Maynard Owen Williams photograph the Silk Road on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition', the main body of the dissertation is divided into two parts. The first three chapters analyse the factors that shaped Williams' perceptions of the Silk Road, including those arising from the representations of the Silk Road in Western culture; those arising from the requirements of his customer, the National Geographic Magazine and the mainly North American culture of its readers; those arising from the Citroën automobile company, its CEO and expedition leader, George-Marie Haardt; and those arising from Williams' complex interaction with the fellow members of the expedition.

Chapter One examines the concept of Early Silk Road photography, within which Williams' work on the Citroën-Haardt expedition is located. The chapter examines Western perceptions of the Silk Road before the term came into existence in 1877, when it was first used by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905). It analyses the contributions of Sven Hedin (1865-1952) and Aurel Stein (1862-1943) to Western

perceptions of the Silk Road. It examines the periodisation of Early Silk Road photography in relation to technical progress in photographic technology, technical progress in modes of transport and changes in the ease of movement of people and goods along the Silk Road. These considerations inform the use of the term 'Early Silk Road photography' in relation to the period from the 1870s to the 1940s. It analyses the diverse influences that shaped the way in which photographs were selected and taken by Western photographers during the era of Early Silk Road photography.⁴¹ These include pre-photographic visual imagery, literary output relating to the Silk Road, perceptions of the Silk Road in popular culture, the impact of mass circulation magazines using photographs, the emergence of the 'science' of

⁴¹ Use of the word 'influence' has been much discussed in the academic study of art history. Michael Baxandall's 1985 book (*Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, New York: Yale University Press, 1985) has affected on the way in which art historians use the word 'influence' in order to analyse the complex elements that shape the production of works of art and the impact that works of art have upon the viewer. Baxandall's book uses detailed analysis of paintings by Picasso, Chagall and Piero della Francesca in order to explain the variety of factors that 'influence, affect, shape, condition, determine' etc the way in which a work of art is produced. In the case of Piero's 'Baptism of Christ', the factors that that shaped the painting include the requirements of the customer; expectations of the people who would view the painting; stylistic influences from other painters; and the artist's professional training, as well as Piero's individual agency and creativity. Baxandall sums up the factors that shape the Renaissance painter's 'mental equipment' through which he 'orders his visual experience' as 'being culturally relative, in the sense of being determined by the society which has influenced his experience' (Michael Baxandall, *Paintings and experience in fifteenth century Italy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, second edition, 40). In fact, the word 'influence' has remarkably wide shades of meaning. Roget's Thesaurus lists over fifty synonyms for the word. The synonyms for the verb 'influence' include 'affect', 'determine', 'guide', 'control', 'condition', 'form', 'shape', 'govern', 'decide', 'regulate', 'sway', and 'decide', while those for the noun include 'effect', 'control', 'power', 'sway', 'mastery', 'domination', 'guidance', and 'authority'. Throughout this dissertation the word 'influence' is used in the sense that the word is defined in standard English dictionaries, where it is commonly defined as 'the power or capacity to exert an effect' and 'a person or thing that affects someone in an important way'. Synonyms for 'influence' will be used at different points in the dissertation where they are felt to be more appropriate.

ethnography, and the growth of the 'salvage' concept in representations of the non-Western world. This chapter concludes with an examination of the genre of Early Silk Road photography.

Chapter Two examines the role of the National Geographic Magazine in shaping Williams' decisions about what to photograph in the journey along the Silk Road and the manner in which to photograph them. His main responsibility during the expedition was to send back photographs and articles to the NGM that would serve the interests of the magazine. His autonomy as a photographer of the Silk Road during the Citroën-Haardt expedition was therefore exercised within limits. This chapter also analyses aspects of American culture and photographic history and its impact on the foundation of the NGM in 1888 and its later development into a 'tutor to the nation', where upon it aimed to form a bridge between the world of science and the world of popular culture. It examines the role that photography and the accompanying texts played in the magazine's impact upon Americans' view of the world by investigating the historical and political context, both domestic and international, of the era in which the NGM's character, as it is known today, were shaped. This chapter also examines the NGM's financial circumstances in the early 1930s when the Citroën-Haardt expedition took place and the impact this had upon the NGM's choice of photographs from the expedition. It analyses the relationship between the NGM and the US government. It examines the influence upon the NGM of American perceptions of Asia, including the commercial opportunities, the role of American missionaries and contradictory perceptions about Asian culture.

Chapter 3 investigates the expedition as a whole exploring such aspects as the impact that the expedition's financiers had upon Williams' choice of subjects and how he chose to photograph them. The expedition was financed jointly by the NGS, Citroën Automobile

Company, and the French government. This chapter examines the complex interaction of their motives. The expedition was ostensibly serving the purposes of scientific investigation, but there is little evidence that this was the case. The main impact of the expedition was through Williams' photographs, which cannot necessarily be considered as works of science. This chapter examines the factors that determined the choice of route along the Silk Road, which set strict parameters upon Williams' photographs. The objective of 'retracing the route of Marco Polo' was decided above all by the common wish to present a romanticised view of the Silk Road, rather than conduct scientific research. The chapter analyses the impact of the economic context. The expedition took place in the depth of the Great Depression, which heavily affected both NGM and Citroën. The bleak economic context in the USA reinforced the NGM's propensity to present a stylised, optimistic and romanticised perspective on the non-Western world. For Citroën, the expedition provided an opportunity to showcase its advanced off-road vehicles, advertise the company's technical achievements and help to stave off bankruptcy. There was a constant tug-of-war between NGM and Citroën, as to how far and in what manner to include photographs of Citroën's vehicles. Throughout the expedition, there was a contradiction between the modern means of transport, which made the expedition possible, and the common wish to present a romanticised, 'salvage' perspective on the Silk Road. Finally, the chapter investigates the international relations aspect of the expedition. The chapter explores the role that imagery from the expedition, notably Williams' photographs, played in nurturing French national pride in its colonies and technological prowess on the world stage. It examines also the relationship of the expedition to the 'Great Game' being played out among the Western nations in Central Asia.

The issues examined in chapters 1-3 provide the concepts and historical context for the detailed analysis undertaken in chapters 4-6 of Williams' photographs taken on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition.

Chapter 4 analyses Williams' iconic images of the Silk Road, including means of transport, landscapes and commercial activity. The choice of subjects reflects the array of visual and non-visual factors that shaped Williams' view of the Silk Road, among which Marco Polo's Travels was foremost. Williams' photographs were almost exclusively of pre-modern means of transport. Photographs of trains, trucks, automobiles, buses, and planes are conspicuous by their absence. Williams took photographs of camels, yaks, donkeys, and horses, as well as people used as means of transportation of objects. As well as means of transport, the chapter examines a succession of Williams' photos of impressive landscapes, redolent of the Hudson River and Frontier photographs. They were strongly suggestive of the barren and inhospitable territories that Silk Road travellers had traversed over the course of human history. Williams took many photographs of vibrant market scenes, including food, carpets, embroidery and metal-ware. Williams' deep interest in engaging with people is reflected in the rich tapestry of people included in this sequence of photos. Williams' photographs in this chapter are quintessential 'salvage' photographs of a vanishing era. They encapsulate a perception of the Silk Road as stuck in an ageless time-warp, unchanging since the 'Ancient World'. The NGM chose to publish only a small selection of the photographs included in this chapter. They did not publish any of Williams' photographs of pre-modern means of transport other than camels, which are the archetypical Western conception of the means of transport along the Silk Road and were consistent with the expectations of NGM's customers. The chapter examines three remarkable photographs of the Citroën vehicles, that NGM decided to publish. The ambiguity of the photographs reflects the complex relationship between Citroën, NGM and Williams.

Chapter 5 analyses those of Williams' photographs that emphasise the difference between 'them and us'. The first category within this chapter concerns photographs of religion and festivities. Williams took numerous photographs of religious buildings along the length of the Silk Road, from Palmyra to Angkor Wat. They encompass Christian churches and mosques,

as well as Buddhist temples, monasteries and statues. They include both functioning religious buildings as well as ones that had been damaged or fallen into disuse. Williams' photographs of religious buildings almost always include people, reflecting Williams' fascination with human life. The 'festivities' include stilt dancing in northwest China, Turkmen horsemen, 'dancing boys' in Kashmir and Cambodian ballet dancers. This set of photographs almost all depict a world that was very different from that of the NGM's readers, not only visually, but in terms also of the belief systems. The second part of the chapter examines Williams' photographs of different "ethnic types" and the closely-related subject of their clothing and headdress. Williams took powerful portraits of people along the course of the Silk Road. Their clothing and headdress added to the 'exotic' nature of the photographs' subjects. Williams disliked taking photographs of people in modern dress, such as the Persian 'Pahlavi' cap, for which he had a deep dislike, in favour of 'traditional' head-ware and clothing. They reflect the influence upon Williams of ethnography and the categorising of different people into 'scientifically differentiated' ethnic groups. The photographs analysed in this chapter fall within the 'salvage' approach, representing the Silk Road as unchanging over a long span of time in its religious customs and modes of dress. NGM selected a wide range of photographs from this category to be published in the magazine. However, they conspicuously avoided selecting photographs that might be too challenging for their readers, such as images of smashed religious buildings, broken statues or impoverished children.

Chapter 6 examines some of the most challenging photographs taken during the Citroën-Haardt expedition. The first set of photographs concern opium, including poppy fields in Iran and opium consumption in China. Opium addiction in China was a part of the West's stylised view of China. Williams' photographs of opium production in beautiful poppy fields stand in sharp contrast with the harsh reality of opium consumption in China as presented in Williams' photographs. They include not only people consuming opium, but also the physical material involved in opium smoking. The second part of the chapter contains a sequence of

photographs of children. They range from a sequence of positive images of parent and child, to a deeply distressing photograph of an impoverished child in Gansu province in North West China. The photographs and the accompanying comments made by Williams, demonstrate the depth of his concern for the harmful effects of opium addiction and the condition of impoverished children in China. The NGM chose to publish only two from this group of photographs. Although Williams presented a romanticised view of an unchanging, timeless Silk Road, the photographs in chapter 6 demonstrate his sensitivity to the challenging aspects of life along its route. However, NGM clearly did not wish to present challenging, distressing images of the Silk Road to its readers.

Chapter 1: Early Silk Road Photography.

The central research question of this thesis is:

How and why did Williams decide to photograph the people and scenes encountered during his journey along the 'Silk Road' as the National Geographic Magazine's photographer on the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932).

Williams's photographs on Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition were taken towards the end of the era of Early Silk Road photography, which spanned the period from the 1870s to the 1940s. Williams' perception of the Silk Road was influenced by the work and lives of other people who had been closely involved with the Silk Road in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His perspective shared many common influences with them. Analysis of Williams' work on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition contributes to a deeper insight into the genre of Early Silk Road Photography.

During this era, only a small group of people from the West studied the region and few people from the West travelled across the Eurasian land mass. Williams was closely involved with the small circle of people who were professionally connected with the Silk Road, including government officials, scholars, journalists, and photographers. Williams was familiar with the work of famous figures such as Sven Hedin and Aurel Stein, and he admired the work of the German photographer Heinz von Perckhammer (1895-1965). He was friends with T.E. Lawrence (1888-1931), the famous archaeologist, soldier and diplomat; as well as with Joseph Hackin (1886-1941), the French archaeologist, and Owen

Lattimore (1900-1989), the leading Western scholar of Inner Asia. He personally selected and employed NGSM photojournalists and specialists on Asia.

This chapter examines four issues: (i) the origins of the concept 'Silk Road' and its impact upon Western perceptions of Asia; (ii) periodisation of Early Silk Road photography; (iii) the influences that shaped Western photographers' perceptions of the Silk Road; and (iv) the genre of Western photographers of the Early Silk Road, within which Williams was located. The topics examined in this chapter will be utilized in chapter 4-6, which analyse in detail Williams' photographs taken during the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition.

1. Origins of the concept 'Silk Road' and its impact upon Western perceptions of Asia.

The concept of the 'Silk Road' had a powerful influence upon the imagination of western travellers along the Silk Road. It helped to shape the way in which they took photographs and the way in which they presented those photographs to their public.

Trade within Asian and between Asia and the West has taken place along the Silk Road across Central Asia and the South China Sea for over 2000 years. Along with trade went the movement of people and ideas. In fact, the term 'Silk Road' is of recent origin, dating from the late nineteenth century. Photography along the Silk Road emerged in the 1870s. Williams' photographs came after several decades of Silk Road photography undertaken by other travellers. The era of Early Silk Road Photography came to an end in the 1940s.

Many Early Silk Road explorers from the Western world indicated that their decision to travel across Asia was inspired by historical figures like Zheng He (1371-1433), the commander of China's great maritime expeditions in the fifteenth century, or Alexander the Great (356BC-

323BC), who conquered a large part of Central Asia. However, it is Marco Polo's *Travels* (originally published c. 1300) that had, prior to the age of photography, the greatest single influence on Western perceptions of the Silk Road, even though the book does not use the term 'Silk Road'.⁴² The Citroën-Haardt Expedition set out to "re-trace the footsteps of Marco Polo's *Travels*". Indeed, as will be seen in Chapter 3, Williams took a copy of the *Travels* with him on his journey along the Silk Road.

Although there are doubts about whether Marco Polo did in fact journey to China,⁴³ the famous book provided Europe with the first comprehensive and detailed account of China and South East Asia. Marco Polo's accounts of South East Asia are often forgotten by commentators on the work. It is likely that this has contributed to the China-centric conception of the Silk Road that is commonplace in the West. Marco Polo's book made a huge impact on Europe's conception of the region.⁴⁴ The book described an era in which

⁴² J. Homer Herriott, 'Folklore from Marco Polo to Maabar', *California Folklore Quarterly*, Vol.2 No.2 (January, 1943), Western States Folklore Society, 4.

⁴³ Some scholars argue that the book may not have been written by Marco Polo himself, but by his prison mate, the professional French romance writer, Rustichello of Pisa. Frances Wood's *Did Marco Polo Go To China?*, (London: Routledge, 1998) goes much further and argues that, whomsoever the author might be, they did not make the journey described in the *Travels*. Wood demonstrates that successive editions of the text added a thick patina of additional descriptive material. For example, in the Penguin edition of the *Travels* the city of Fuzhou extends over 12 pages, but in the early editions of the *Travels* it occupies a single paragraph. Wood notes that there is no record of Marco Polo in Chinese sources. She notes that the *Travels* has some remarkable omissions: it makes no mention of tea, chopsticks or the Great Wall. A number of scholars have contested Wood's proposition. However, whether Marco Polo did or did not make the journey, and the extent to which the text was written by him, are irrelevant to the fact that the book had tremendous impact upon Western conceptions of the Silk Road.

⁴⁴ G.F. Hudson, 'Marco Polo', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 120, No.3 (September, 1954), 300.

trade along the Silk Road was thriving. The Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century across most of Asia wrought great destruction, including both Islamic and Buddhist artefacts. However, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries under the Mongols the vast territory from China to the Middle East was part of a unified empire. After the violence of the conquest was over, under Mongol rule Central Asia enjoyed relative peace and prosperity, benefiting from its position at the crossroads of civilizations in the heart of the Mongol empire. Indeed, it was the unity achieved under the “Pax Mongolica” that made Marco Polo’s journey across Central Asia possible.⁴⁵ In other words, a key influence on Western perceptions of the Silk Road was derived from a period in history that predated the creation of the term ‘Silk Road’ by many centuries, in which trade and communications across Eurasia were subject to less restriction than was the case at most other points in the Silk Road’s history.

The Travels of Marco Polo is centrally important in understanding the West’s fascination over many centuries with the Silk Road, long before the term was invented. Daniel C. Waugh (2007) asks the question whether; “...explorers and academics invented the Silk Road as a popular phenomenon or whether instead the impetus was public demand”.⁴⁶ Marco Polo’s book was not simply a travelogue but an attempt at a universal geography, filled with observations and information claimed to have been obtained through Marco Polo’s enquiry during his travels.⁴⁷ It provided detailed descriptions of the economy, customs, traditions, superstitions and religions of the places Marco Polo claimed to have visited.⁴⁸ Marco Polo and his family were traders. The central purpose of their journey across Eurasia

⁴⁵ Prajakti Kalra, *The Silk Road and the Political Economy of the Mongol Empire*, (London: Routledge, 2018).

⁴⁶ Daniel C. Waugh, ‘Richthofen’s “Silk Roads”’: Toward the Archaeology of a Concept, *The Silk Road*, *The Silk Foundation: The Bridge Between Eastern and Western Cultures*, Volume 5 Number 1, (Summer 2007), 16.

⁴⁷ Hudson, ‘Marco Polo’, 1954, 300.

⁴⁸ Herriott, ‘Folklore from Marco Polo to Maabar’, 1943, 1.

was to develop trade relationships between Venice and China. The *Travels* is filled with accounts of commerce along the Eurasian land mass. On his travels across Eurasia Marco Polo encountered a long sequence of vibrant commercial cities, including Baghdad and Basra (in today's Iraq), Tabriz, Yazd and Kerman (in today's Iran). He wrote in detail about economic and social life in the colourful oasis cities along the Silk Road in Xinjiang, including Yarkand, Pem, Charchan, Khotan and Kashgar. During the 19th and 20th century literary and visual depictions of Asia followed the same romantic and detailed canon as that presented in *The Travels of Marco Polo*.

The reality of extensive trade along the pre-modern Silk Road has become increasingly evident with the growth of academic research in recent years.⁴⁹ However, no overarching

⁴⁹ Xinru Liu (Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road in World History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and Barry Cunliffe (Barry Cunliffe, *By Steppe, Desert and Ocean: The Birth of Eurasia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) provide syntheses of the growing body of archaeological evidence of trade across and around the Eurasian land mass up until the thirteenth century. The maritime Silk Road became increasingly important relative to the land route as ship technologies progressed. Romaniello (2017) addresses the issue of whether the growth of seaborne trade was accompanied by a 'notable decline' in trade across Central Asia. He concludes: 'The perception of a decline is challenged by the robust intra-Eurasia trade among Russia, Central Asia, India, and China throughout the nineteenth century' (Matthew Romaniello, 'Transregional Trade in Early Modern Eurasia', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, published online 26 October 2017). There is an abundance evidence of vibrant trade across the South China Sea over the course of two millennia. Schottenhammer (2001) contains a compendium of articles that investigate trade across the South China Sea between 1000 and 1400 (Angela Schottenhammer, ed., *The Emporium of the World: Maritime Quanzhou, 1000-1400*, Leiden: Brill, 2001). Gerritsen (2020) analyses the role of Chinese porcelain in world trade in the Early Modern World (Anne Gerritsen, *City of Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and the Early Modern Period*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Porcelain from Jingdezhen was sold across the world and was arguably the world's first globally branded commodity.

term for long distance trade across Eurasia existed prior to 1877.⁵⁰ Nor was there a single maritime trade route or a single trade route across the land mass of Eurasia. Rather there were numerous diverse paths suited to different seasons, goods or political situations. Silk Road trade involved not only silk, but at different points included many other products, including precious metals, copper, tin, metal products, carpets, textiles, jade, tea, porcelain, horses, and medicinal products. Much of the trade involved sub-segments of the route rather than trade from one end of Eurasia to the other. Trade along the Silk Road was highly complex with an ever-changing network of trading routes that criss-crossed the continent and seas of Asia, and had existed since at least the second century BC.⁵¹ At the western borders of Asia these vast trading routes merged into other trading routes that stretched into Africa, Arabia and Europe weaving the world together through trade involving innumerable goods and cultural exchanges. The conception of trade along the Silk Road, involving merchants, distinctive means of transport, exotic goods and trading locations, was embedded deeply within western conceptions of the Silk Road. These images helped to shape the way in which people from the west photographed the Silk Road.

Despite the fact that there had been trade involving China across both the Eurasian land mass and the South China Sea for more than 2000 years, the term 'Silk Road' (*sichou zhilu*) is not believed to have been used in China until around 1949. The term itself is thought to have been imported from the West when articles using this term were published in *People's*

⁵⁰ Tamara Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 40, No.1, (University of Chicago Press, Autumn 2013),196.

⁵¹ Milo C. Beach, 'The Ear commands the Story: Exploration and Imagination on the Silk Road', *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*. Vol. 33, No. 1, *The Silk Road and Beyond: Travel, Trade and Transformation*, (The Art Institute of Chicago, 2007), URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20205542> 10.

Daily (Renmin Ribao) and translations of books on the Silk Road by Sven Hedin and others became available.⁵² Paradoxically, this was a point at which there was very restricted freedom of travel along much of the Silk Road.

There were many elements involved in the emergence of the concept of the Silk Road in the West during the late nineteenth century. These included the colonial ambitions of the Western powers, scientific interest in archaeology and botany, the excitement and fame involved in dangerous exploration, and individual commercial benefit. These interests often overlapped. Three individuals played a key role in shaping the concept of the 'Silk Road': Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), Sven Hedin (1865-1952) and Aurel Stein (1862-1943).

It is now widely accepted that the geographer Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen (1833-1905)⁵³ was the first person to use the term "Silk Road" ("die Seidenstraße") in respect to trade across Eurasia.⁵⁴ He used the term briefly in his multi-volume geological survey of China (1877).⁵⁵ His conception of the "Silk Road" does not entirely conform with the popular understanding of the term that later developed. For example, Richthofen's writing gives little attention to the ancient links between the East and West via the Silk Road. Instead he emphasises the significance of Inner Asia in the development of the Silk Road, differing from

⁵² Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 217.

⁵³ Richthofen was a student of the geographer Carl Ritter (1779-1859) (Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 208.)

⁵⁴ Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 169.

⁵⁵ Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 196.

the current China-centric outlook. Richthofen also maintained that “soon after the Han period (206 B.C -220 A.D) the Silk Road ceased to exist in any ‘significant’ form...”.⁵⁶ However, the balance of modern scholarship suggests that trade across Central Asia continued undiminished until the early 20th century.⁵⁷ When Richthofen did mention the Silk Road he did so in both the singular and plural. Moreover, he was aware that it involved trade not only of silk, but also spices, gold, precious stones, people and ideas.⁵⁸ It seems that the reason Richthofen adopted the term “Silk Road”, despite the wide diversity of goods traded along these routes was a response to his Ancient Greek and Roman sources.⁵⁹ These sources spoke of the “Serer” (the bringers of silk) and “Serica” (the land of silk), which were involved with silk trade from China.⁶⁰

There was a variety of motives behind Richthofen’s concept of the Silk Road. Chin (2013) suggests that Richthofen’s multi-volume publication, in which the term ‘Silk Road’ was first used, helped to support Germany’s seizure of Qingdao in northern China in 1897⁶¹ and was also part of a German blueprint for the construction of a commercial railroad linking China with Europe along ancient trading routes.⁶² Richthofen had close ties with the German government and served as an advocate of German Imperial expansion. He was a consultant when in the late nineteenth century Germany joined other European powers in forcing China

⁵⁶ Waugh, ‘Richthofen’s “Silk Roads”: Toward the Archaeology of a Concept’, 2007, 5.

⁵⁷ Romaniello, ‘Transregional Trade in Early Modern Eurasia’, 2017.

⁵⁸ Waugh, Richthofen’s ‘Silk Roads’: Toward the Archaeology of a Concept, The Silk Road’, 2007, 5.

⁵⁹ Chin, ‘The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877’, 2013, 201.

⁶⁰ Waugh, ‘Richthofen’s ‘Silk Roads’: Toward the Archaeology of a Concept, The Silk Road’, 2007, 8.

⁶¹ Chin, ‘The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877’, 2013, 3.

⁶² Chin, ‘The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877’, 2013, 196 & 211.

to open up to international investment.⁶³ His work between 1868-1872 consisted of geological surveys of China that were financed by European and American business corporations,⁶⁴ as well as by the German State.⁶⁵ During the late 19th century Western powers explored and mapped China so as to gain access to the country's rich mineral resources.⁶⁶ European and Chinese governments saw the construction of railways as closely connected with their imperialist ambitions.⁶⁷ It might be no coincidence that interest in and study of the Silk Road commenced on the eve of an international "scramble" for railway concessions by foreign governments and private enterprises within Asia.⁶⁸ Some critics have argued that the term 'Silk Road' was an ideological construct used to support the West's imperialist ambitions across Eurasia. Richthofen own place in the pantheon of Silk Road literature is extremely controversial.⁶⁹

⁶³ Waugh, 'Richthofen's 'Silk Roads': Toward the Archaeology of a Concept, *The Silk Road*', 2007, 3-4.

⁶⁴ Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 210.

⁶⁵ The German Empire was a world leader in industrial technology and science, with the third largest colonial empire after the Britain and France.

⁶⁶ Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 209.

⁶⁷ Ma Jianzhong, 'Tie dao lun (Discussion on Railways)', *Caixi xueyi*: Feng Guifen, Ma Jianzhong ji, ed. Zheng Dahua (Shenyang, Peoples Republic of China, 1994), 135–44, quoted in Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013.

⁶⁸ Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 210.

⁶⁹ Waugh, 'Richthofen's "Silk Roads": Toward the Archaeology of a Concept', 2007, 2-3.

Although Richthofen invented the term 'Silk Road', its popularisation owed more to the explorers and scientists who captured the popular imagination in the West, among whom Sven Hedin (1865-1952) and Aurel Stein (1862-1943) stand out.

Hedin had been a student of Richthofen, studying geography and topography under his supervision in 1889-90 at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. Between 1893 and 1908 Hedin undertook a series of expeditions funded by the Swedish Crown. The Swedish government could not compete with the leading colonial powers and build a large overseas empire. Instead, it sought to compete through establishing a leading position in world science, including overseas scientific expeditions, of which Hedin's were outstanding examples. Hedin's First Expedition of 1893-1897 investigated the Pamir Mountains, travelling through the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang region, across the Taklamakan Desert, Lake Kara-Koshun and Lake Bosten, proceeding to study Northern Tibet. During the expeditions Hedin mapped over 10,498 km of territory on 552 mapping sheets. The Second Expedition of 1899-1902 moved through the Tarim Basin, Tibet and Kashmir to Calcutta. It produced 1,149 pages of maps. The Third Expedition took place between 1905-1908. It investigated the Central Iranian desert basins, the Western highlands of Tibet and the Trans Himalaya. It took back geological samples that are in the State Collection of Geology and Palaeontology in Munich University. The Fourth Expedition took place between 1927-35. It involved archaeologists from Sweden, Germany and China, as well as astronomers, botanists, geologists, meteorologists, and zoologists. Much of their research was conducted independently of Hedin. During this period, Hedin also led separate expeditions. Hedin's Sino-Swedish scientific expedition of 1927-1928 was conducted on behalf of the German government and Lufthansa. He was tasked with finding the best airline route from Berlin to Beijing and Shanghai. He also led an expedition on behalf of the Guomindang (KMT) government under Chiang Kai-shek in Nanjing. It developed plans for major irrigation facilities along the Silk Road, as well as for roads connecting Beijing with Kashgar. By 1935

Hedin had accumulated large personal bank debts, which he repaid with royalties from his books and lectures. He was eventually forced to sell his library to meet the debts incurred during his various expeditions.

Hedin's relationship with politics and diplomacy was extremely complex. He had many meetings with Germany's leading National Socialists, including Hitler. He was given numerous awards by the Nazi regime. There is a large literature, mainly in German, analysing Hedin's complex relationship with Germany, both before and during Nazi rule.⁷⁰

Hedin was thought to have been involved in diplomatic collaborations between Nazi Germany (1933-1945) and Chinese Nationalists. He played a role in the Uyghur uprisings in Xinjiang during the 1930's,⁷¹ which involved a complex mix of Russian and European entities, as well as US governmental and private sponsorship. It also seems that Hedin had some kind of involvement in the Chinese Red Army's Long March (1934-1935) and was involved in other conflicts in East Asia and Europe.⁷²

⁷⁰ On political context around Hedin see: Tobias Hübinette, 'Asia as a Topos of Fear and Desire for Nazis and Extreme Rightists', *Positions* 15 (Fall 2007): 403–28 & Magnus Fiskesjö, 'Science across Borders: Johan Gunnar Andersson and Ding Wenjiang', in Denise M. Glover, ed., *Explorers and Scientists in China's Borderlands, 1880–1950*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 240–66 and Tamara Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 216.

⁷¹ The uprisings in Xinjiang are analysed in Owen Lattimore, et al, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers of China and Russia*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1950).

⁷² On Hedin's political involvement see, Tobias Hubinette, "Asia as a Topos of Fear and Desire for Nazis and Extreme Rightists," *Positions* 15 (Fall 2007), 403–28 and Magnus Fiskesjö, 'Science across Borders: Johan Gunnar Andersson and Ding Wenjiang', in Denise M. Glover, ed., *Explorers and Scientists in China's Borderlands, 1880–1950*, 2011, 240–66 and Tamara Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 216.

Hedin wrote prolifically. His writings include accounts of his extensive scientific research⁷³ as well as publications that reached a much wider audience.⁷⁴ His larger-than-life personality, including not only his dangerous expeditions, his dedication to research, even to the extent of personal insolvency, as well as his involvement in complex and contentious political relationships surrounding the so-called Great Game in Central Asia,⁷⁵ helped to shape popular conceptions of the Silk Road as a place of mystery and adventure. Moreover, according to Chin (2013), Hedin also helped to create the idea that the Silk Road originated in China. Still today many people think of China as the hub of the Silk Road.⁷⁶

⁷³ These included: Sven Hedin, *Through Asia vols I-II* (New York: Harper, 1899); Sven Hedin, *Central Asia and Tibet Vols I-II*, (New York: Scribners, 1903); Sven Hedin, *Scientific Results of a Journey in Central Asia 1899-1902*, (Stockholm, Lithographic Institute of the General Staff of the Swedish army, 1904); Sven Hedin, *Trans-Himalaya Discoveries and Adventures in Tibet*, Vols 1-2, (New York: Macmillan, 1909); Sven Hedin, *Southern Tibet: Discoveries in Former Times Compared with My Own Research in 1906-1908*, (Stockholm: Lithographic Institute of the General Staff of the Swedish Army, 1915); Sven Hedin, *Bagdad, Babylon, Ninive*, (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1917).

⁷⁴ These included: Sven Hedin, *Overland to India*, (London: Macmillan, 1910); Sven Hedin, *From Pole to Pole: A Book for Young People*, London: Macmillan, 1912; Sven Hedin, *My Life as an Explorer*, Translated by Alfhild Huebsch, (New York: Garden City Publish Co., 1925); Sven Hedin, *Across the Gobi Desert*, (London: Routledge, 1931); Sven Hedin, *Riddles of the Gobi Desert*, (London: George Routledge, 1933); Sven Hedin, *Jehol, City of Emperors*, (New York: Dutton, 1933); Sven Hedin, *A Conquest of Tibet*, (New York: Dutton, 1934); Sven Hedin, *To the Forbidden Land: Discoveries and Adventures in Tibet*, (New York: National Travel Club, 1934); Sven Hedin, *The Flight of Big Horse: The Trail of War in Central Asia*, (London: Macmillan, 1936); Sven Hedin, *The Silk Road*, (London: Routledge, 1938); and Sven Hedin, *The Wandering Lake: Into the Heart of Asia*, (New York: Dutton, 1940).

⁷⁵ Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*, New York: John Murray, 1990.

⁷⁶ Sven Hedin, 'The Silk Road' (1936), 223-234, quoted in Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', 2013, 217.

The archaeologist Aurel Stein was fascinated by the routes and exploits of both Alexander the Great and Marco Polo.⁷⁷ For example, during his expedition in Xinjiang ('Chinese Turkestan') he followed a 'dreary route along the southern edge of the great sandy desert'⁷⁸, the Taklamakan:

It had for me a special historical interest. It was undoubtedly, the ancient line that led from the Oxus region to Khotan and China...Hiuen-Tsiang [sic] who travelled this route on his way back to China, has well described this route. After him it had been Marco Polo and many lesser known medieval travellers to distant Cathay. Practically nothing has changed here in respect of their methods and means of travel, and thus my thoughts could wander back to the past more readily.⁷⁹

His first Central Asian Expedition (1900-1901) was supported financially by the Government of India, 'inspired by Lord Curzon's generous interest in the history and antiquities of the East'.⁸⁰ Most of Stein's subsequent scientific research was funded by the Government of India.⁸¹ Stein produced a large volume of scholarly reports and books on his archaeological

⁷⁷ Frank W. Ilkle, 'Sir Aurel Stein. A Victorian Geographer in the Tracks of Alexander', *Isis*, Vol.59, No. 2 (The University of Chicago Press on Behalf of the History of Science Society, United States of America, Summer, 1968).

⁷⁸ Aurel Stein, *Sand-buried ruins of Khotan* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1904), 181.

⁷⁹ Aurel Stein, *Sand-buried ruins of Khotan*, 1904, 168.

⁸⁰ Stein, *Sand-buried ruins of Khotan* 1904, xi.

⁸¹ C.E.A.W Oldham, 'Sir Aurel Stein', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no.1, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, April, 1944), 82.

expeditions, most of which were published by the Government of India.⁸² These had a wide influence within world archaeology and provided the foundation for the high respect in which he was held by British educated classes. He also published several books that were read by a wider public.⁸³ Unlike some of his contemporaries, Stein was not involved in mapping transport routes or in mineral exploration. However, in what is now regarded as a highly questionable practice, he did gather numerous objects from his excavations in Asia and

⁸² These included: Aurel Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini or Chronicle of The Kings of Kashmir: Sanskrit Text With Critical Notes, Vol I & II*, (1892); Aurel Stein, *Memoir on Maps Illustrating the Ancient Geography of Kashmir*, (1899); Aurel Stein, *Notes on The Monetary System of Ancient Kashmir*, (1899); Aurel Stein, *Report of Archaeological Survey Work in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan for the Period from January 2nd, 1904, to March 31st, 1905*, (1905); Aurel Stein, *Preliminary Report on a Journey of Archaeological and Topographical Exploration in Chinese Turkestan*, (1914); Aurel Stein, *The Thousand Buddhas: Ancient Buddhist Paintings from the Cave-temples of Tune-huang on the Western Frontier of China*, (London: Quaritch, London, 1921); Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia, Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-sun and Eastern Iran, Carried Out and Described Under the Order of H.M Indian Government*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923); Aurel Stein, *Kharosti Inscriptions Discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in Chinese Turkestan*, Transcribed and Edited by A. Boyer, E. J. Rapson and E. Senart, Published Under the Authority of HM Secretary of State for India in Council, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929); Aurel Stein, *Serindia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China, Carried Out and Described Under the Orders of H.M Indian Government*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921); Aurel Stein, *Wall Paintings from Ancient Shrines in Central Asia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), and Aurel Stein, *Sir Aurel Stein's Central Asia: Detailed Reports of Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-Su, China, Mongolia, Russian Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, Tibet, Oxus and Hindukush*, (New Dehli, 1988).

⁸³ These included: Stein, *Sand-buried ruins of Khotan*, 1904; Aurel Stein, *Mountain Panoramas from the Pamirs and Kwen Lun*, (London: Royal Geographical Society, 1908); Aurel Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China; Volume I, II & III*, (London: Macmillan, 1912); Aurel Stein, *Marco Polo's Account of a Mongol Inroad Into Kashmir*, (London, Royal Geographical Society, 1919); Aurel Stein, *On Alexander's Track to the Indus*, (London: Macmillan, 1929); Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central Asian Tracks*, (London: Macmillan, 1933).

brought them back to be exhibited in the British Museum, as well as in museums in Delhi, Calcutta, Lahore, U.S.A (Harvard) and Iran.⁸⁴ The British elite was impressed by his combination of scholar, explorer, geographer, archaeologist and art historian, and many looked upon him as the greatest traveller and explorer of modern times.⁸⁵ Stein's high reputation as a scientist alongside his popular works helped to shape perceptions of the Silk Road. The fact that he studied ancient physical remains added to the popular conception of the Silk Road as something unchanging over a long period of time.

Hedin and Stein became two of the most famous and influential Silk Road scientist-explorers of their time. Their exploits and findings along the Silk Road were extensively written about in their dense but popular books and reported upon in the press.⁸⁶ The physical difficulties that they encountered added to the mystique of the Silk Road in the popular imagination. Western Early Silk Road explorers had to contend with numerous hardships and dangers, including freezing cold, searing-hot temperatures, avalanches, floods, sand storms, malaria, physical accidents and diseases. The physical difficulties faced by Hedin and Stein added to their romantic appeal. Stein lost the toes on his right foot to frostbite in 1908 in the Kun-lun⁸⁷ mountain range (along the Xinjiang/Tibet border) and in 1895 Sven Hedin almost died during a crossing of the Taklamakan desert but "found" the lost ancient city of Loulan, a discovery

⁸⁴ Oldham, 'Sir Aurel Stein', 1944, 84-85.

⁸⁵ Ilkle, 'Sir Aurel Stein. A Victorian Geographer in the Tracks of Alexander', 1968, 149.

⁸⁶ Helen Wang, *Sir Aurel Stein in The Times*, (London: Saffron Books, 2002); and Waugh, Richthofen's 'Silk Roads': Toward the Archaeology of a Concept, *The Silk Road*, 2007.

⁸⁷ Ilkle, 'Sir Aurel Stein. A Victorian Geographer in the Tracks of Alexander', 1968, 148.

featured in the NGM in November 1901.⁸⁸ Such stories retold by Silk Road explorers were very popular amongst the Western public. For those reading or listening to the illustrated work and lectures that recounted such stories, the dangers of the journeys added further romance and excitement to their idea of the Silk Road. These were stories of real experiences that mirrored those that more often were found in fictional tales in books and in films.

Almost everyone travelling within and studying Asia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries would have heard of the term the 'Silk Road'. The ancient Silk Road as it appeared in Marco Polo's Travels is almost always present in the accounts left by explorers, scientists and photographers during the era of Early Silk Road Photography. Although they do not always mention the phrase 'Silk Road' Western travellers across Eurasia frequently employ terms commonly associated with the Silk Road. Early Silk Road Photographers' writings and the captions to their photographs often refer to the work of Hedin, Stein and other writers who do directly use the term 'Silk Road'. They also often use language that reflects the academic descriptions of the Silk Road. Williams makes numerous references to the 'Silk Road'⁸⁹ and on many occasions, he refers to the Citroën expedition as a 'caravan', including references to trade and the nomadic traders that he met or saw on the journey.⁹⁰ Williams

⁸⁸ <http://svenhedinfoundation.org/lost-cities-of-the-taklamakan-desert/>

⁸⁹ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroën-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', The National Geographic Magazine Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, (Washington D.C., United States of America: National Geographic Society, 1932), II.

⁹⁰ There are numerous references in Williams' writings to the concept of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition as a 'caravan'. The following is a selection of these: Letter From Maynard Owen Williams to John Oliver La Gorce, Nisgar via Gilgit India August 29th 1931, National Geographic Archive, Washington DC, United States of America, 3.; Box 1, Folder 1 11-27.1, Folder of Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owen, 1931-1932, Alexandre

makes regular references to the great Western travellers of history, including Alexander the Great⁹¹ and Marco Polo⁹², as well as the Chinese mariner Zheng He. He frequently cites

Jacovleff, National Geographic Archive, Washington DC, United States of America; Letter From Maynard Owen William to John Oliver La Gorce, Sent Form Kashmir Gilgit, August 28th, 1931 File Number 11-3.45, National Geographic Archive, Washington DC, United States of America; National Geographic News Bulletin on Motor Caravan to Cross Least Known Asia, 1934, National Geographic Archive, Washington DC, United States of America; Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to Hildebrand, May 17th, 1931, Iran, File Number 11-3.45, National Geographic Archive, Washington DC, United States of America; Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to Grosvenor, April 28th, 1931, Grande Hotel, Teheran, Iran, 77/1 Field Notes; Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expeditor Across Asia, Box ¾, Kalamazoo College Archive, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America, 7 & 11; and Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroën-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', The National Geographic Magazine Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, (Washington D.C., United States of America: National Geographic Society, 1932), 536.

⁹¹ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir, Scientific Party Led by Georges-Marie Haardt Successfully Crosses Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Afghanistan to Arrive at the Pamir', The National Geographic Magazine, Index, July-December, Volume LX, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1931), 402.

⁹² Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir, Scientific Party Led by Georges-Marie Haardt Successfully Crosses Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Afghanistan to Arrive at the Pamir', The National Geographic Magazine, Index, July-December, Volume LX, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1931), 405.

Asian literature, including the *'Arabian Nights'*⁹³, *'Aladdin'*⁹⁴ and *'Omar Khayyam'*.⁹⁵ One of the most well-known and earliest photographers of Asia, John Thomson (1837-1921), even introduces his book *'Through China With a Camera'* with the following statement:

Had the great Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, been able to confirm by a series of photographs his story of the wonders of Cathay, his fair fame would have escaped the discredit cast upon it for centuries, and indeed until comparatively recent investigation confirmed his story.⁹⁶

In fact, alongside the Silk Road across Central Asia, there was also a 'Southwestern Silk Road'. Although *'The Travels of Marco Polo'* includes accounts of Southeast Asia, the region's significance in overland Silk Road trade is overlooked in most Silk Road studies.

⁹³ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroen Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir, Scientific Party Led by Georges-Marie Haardt Successfully Crosses Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Afghanistan to Arrive at the Pamir', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, July-December, Volume LX, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1931), 397.

⁹⁴ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir, Scientific Party Led by Georges-Marie Haardt Successfully Crosses Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Afghanistan to Arrive at the Pamir', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, July-December, Volume LX, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1931), 402.

⁹⁵ Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir, Scientific Party Led by Georges-Marie Haardt Successfully Crosses Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Afghanistan to Arrive at the Pamir', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, July-December, Volume LX, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society archive, 1931), 397.

⁹⁶ John Thomson, *Through China With a Camera*, (London: The British Council, 1991), 3.

Despite great logistical difficulties there existed over many centuries a significant trade between Yunnan, Tibet, Sichuan, South Asia and Southeast Asia.⁹⁷ Numerous archaeological findings confirm that overland trade between Southeast Asia and its neighbouring regions had existed over a long period.⁹⁸ Yunnan was the most important part of the overland trade. It had been a major tea-producing area over many centuries. It contained an abundance of metallic ores, including copper and tin, as well as precious metals, including silver and gold. It had a highly developed traditional mining industry.⁹⁹ It also had vibrant long-distance trade in valuable medicinal products, including both herbs and rhinoceros horns.¹⁰⁰ After 1914 it became China's largest tobacco-producing region. France established the colonial territory of Indo-China in 1887. A main reason for the construction

⁹⁷ The first written Chinese records of the Southwestern Silk Road date from around 138-125BCE (Bin Yang, 'Horses, Silver, and Cowries: Yunnan in Global Perspective', *Journal of World History*, Vol.15, No.3 (University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 286. Zhang Yan provides a detailed summary of the extensive evidence on the deep interpenetration of trade relations between Yunnan and southeast Asia over the course of two millennia (Zhang Yan, 'Review of Yunnan's pre-1949 trading history', Kunming: Yunnan University, unpublished manuscript, 2021).

⁹⁸ Other sources documenting the trade between Yunnan and southeast Asia include: Ian C. Glover, 'The Southern Silk Road, Archaeological Evidence for Early Trade Between India and Southeast Asia', 1991; C.P.Fitzgerald, *The Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972) ch 3; Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand, A Study of T'ang Exotics*, (London: University of California Press, 1963) and UNESCO (<https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/did-you-know-southern-silk-roads>).

⁹⁹ There was a large handicraft mining industry in Yunnan before the modern era (Shih Kuo-heng, 'Social implications of tin mining in Yunnan', *Pacific Affairs*, vol 20, No 1 (March 1947), 53-61; and Xu Dixin and Wu Chengming, eds, *Chinese Capitalism, 1540-1840* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), translated and annotated by C.A.Curwen, ch 17, 'Copper mining and smelting in Yunnan'.

¹⁰⁰ Up until the Second World War, 'buyers from all over China, and from Southeast Asia also, used to gather in Tali in western Yunnan at an annual fair held in April where these [medicinal] products could be bought at prices profitable to those who had collected them, and still very profitable to those who would sell them in the great cities of China and the south' (Fitzgerald, *The Southern Expansion of the Chinese People*, 1972, 45).

(1904-09) of the 885 km railway from Haiphong, in Vietnam, to Kunming was to gain access to the rich resources in Yunnan. Numerous expeditions, whose members included photographers, were sent out to border lands between China and Southeast Asia during the late 19th and early 20th century. By the late nineteenth century, the main body of Southeast Asia was under either British or French colonial rule.¹⁰¹ The two colonial powers exerted a tremendous economic and cultural impact upon the region. There were many photographs taken by Early Silk Road Photographers along the Southeast Asian Silk Road. These included Auguste Francois (1857-1935)¹⁰², Ernest Henry Wilson (1876-1930)¹⁰³ and Frederic William Carey (1874-1931)¹⁰⁴ took part in expeditions through Yunnan. James George Scott (1851-1935)¹⁰⁵ and Albert Khan's photographers¹⁰⁶ explored regions of South East Asia. Indeed the original plan for the Citroën-Haardt Expedition was to follow Marco Polo's route back to Europe from China, which meant travelling via Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁷ The expedition was abandoned following the death of George-Marie Haardt in Hong Kong. Although the

¹⁰¹ British colonial territories included Malaya and Burma. French Indo-China included today's Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

¹⁰² 'Auguste Francois: Yunnan, China', Video Taken in Yunnan in 1902 and 1904 (Oxford: Pitt Rivers Museum).

¹⁰³ Alfred Rehder, 'Ernest Henry Wilson (1876-1930)', *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol.70, No.10 (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, March, 1936).

¹⁰⁴ R.A.Bickers, J.Carstairs, P. Smith and P. Boere, *Historical Photographs of China*, (Bristol: University of Bristol, no date).

¹⁰⁵ James George Scott, *Burma and Beyond*, (London: Grayson & Grayson, 1932).

¹⁰⁶ Albert Khan Museum & Garden, Paris, France.

¹⁰⁷ Chapter 6 of Marco Polo's *Travels* is devoted to his voyage from China to India through the seas of southeast Asia. It includes a detailed account of trade across the southeast Asian region (Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 1974).

expedition was abandoned, Williams continued to journey and take photographs along the Southeast Asian segment of the Silk Road.

2. Periodisation of Early Silk Road Photography.

The period of early Silk Road photography stretched from the 1870s until the 1940s. The era of Early Silk Road Photography can be defined in relation to photographic technologies, transport technologies, and the degree of freedom of travel. Between 1877 and the late 1940s photographic technologies were fundamentally transformed. There were significant changes also in transport technologies along the Silk Road, which were represented by the advanced transport used on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition. Paradoxically, it was thanks to these ultra-modern transport mechanisms that Williams was able to travel the length of the Silk Road in such a short time and take the photographs that appeared in the NGM. However, alongside these changes, it is a further paradox that freedom of movement along the Silk Road became progressively more difficult while transport and photographic technologies made revolutionary progress. This combination of changes brought the era of 'Early Silk Road Photography' to an end in the late 1940s.

As we have seen, the romantic concept of the 'Silk Road' existed within western culture before the term was used by Richthofen in 1877. The *Travels of Marco Polo* was the key text that shaped popular imagination concerning trade and culture along the land route between Europe and Asia. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, the principle visual images of the Silk Road were, self-evidently, non-photographic. Arguably the earliest examples of the photographic process were developed in the 1830s by Fox Talbot in the UK and Hippolyte Bayard in France. The era of photography took a major step forward in 1851, when the English sculptor Frederick Archer introduced the wet glass plate negative process, which required immediate development in a darkroom. The process was relatively easy to use

when working in a studio but the need for immediate development meant that in the field photographers had to travel with a portable darkroom and the chemicals required for processing. These were cumbersome to transport and photographers had to contend with unpredictable natural elements, including temperature and humidity. There were occasions when temperatures were so cold that negatives would freeze and crack during the wash stage of processing. The earliest photographs taken along the Silk Road would doubtless have used this cumbersome technology, as is evidenced by the photographer John Thomson's accounts of travels through Asia during the late 19th century.¹⁰⁸

The formal use of the term 'Silk Road' by Richthofen in 1877 coincided with revolutionary developments in photographic technology. In 1879 Richard Maddox introduced the dry plate process which did not require immediate development of negatives. Glass plates could now be stored for prolonged periods and developed upon a photographer's return to their darkroom. This made photography in the field far easier. Further developments in photographic equipment used by photographers of the Silk Road continued thereafter. In 1889 George Eastman (1854-1932) released his invention of flexible and rollable photographic film which allowed for the creation of the mass-produced box camera. Roll film was particularly useful for field photographers. Roll films were lighter and smaller than glass plates which meant photographers could bring more with them and take more photographs. A single large, heavy glass plate could only take a single image whereas a single spool held 100 images. The cameras used for roll films were smaller, lighter and less fragile than glass plates. Film photography made photography accessible to larger audiences as it was less expensive and complex. It also contributed to the expansion of photojournalism as film cameras were easier to travel with. It meant that photographers along the Silk Road could

¹⁰⁸ John Thomson, *China Through The Lens Of John Thomson 1868-1872*, (Bangkok: River Books, 2010), 11.

take photographs much more easily than previously. Consequently, the number of photographs along the Silk Road increased greatly over the course of the era of Early Silk Road Photography.

However, many photographers continued to use glass plate methods. The result from glass plate and roll film photography differed in various ways. For example, if the photograph was taken under darker light conditions the photographer might use a glass plate negative as this tended to have a larger surface area and thus was more sensitive to light. However, a photographer often would use the film shot as a “safety image” in case the glass negative suffered damaged. The large surface area of a glass plate negative resulted in a much more detailed and otherworldly photograph than film, making it more atmospheric and amenable to editing and cropping. For these reasons and the fact that glass plates were far more expensive than film, glass plates would often be reserved by a photographer for a special shot.

In 1907 the Lumière brothers, announced the invention of the ‘Autochrome’. However, it was inaccessible to most people due to its high price and the requirement of cumbersome apparatus. It did become popular with wealthy amateurs and professional photographers with the financial means to use it. It was not until the revolutionary Kodachrome film, the first multi layered colour film, was produced in 1935 by Leopold Godowsky Jr. and Leopold Mannes, that colour photography became something that no longer required carrying around glass plates and tripods or enduring long exposures and a complex development process to create colour photographs. Not only did this film give colour to still images but also to the moving image. By the mid-1930s light and easy-to-use portable equipment had replaced the cumbersome equipment of the early days of Silk Road photography. This marked the end of the Early Era of Silk Road photography from a technological perspective.

Alongside the developments in photographic technology, by the 1930s the beginnings of modernisation were slowly changing the nature of economic and social life along the Silk Road. In the inter-war period, industrialisation and modernisation got under way in parts of the Silk Road, including the Middle East, Turkey and Iran. Transport by road and rail began to supplant the pre-industrial modes of transport and small numbers of people and small amounts of goods were even transported by aeroplane. These islands of modernity coexisted with predominantly traditional modes of economic life. Despite the beginnings of modern transport systems, it became progressively more difficult to travel along the Silk Road. In the 1930s Soviet planning, collectivisation and national security policies, resulted in large parts of the Silk Road in Central Asia being closed to the free movement of people and goods across national frontiers. From 1937-45 Japanese conquest of China and Southeast Asia deeply affected the Silk Road both by land and sea. The Vietnamese war of independence against the French (1945-54) heavily disrupted the Silk Road in Southeast Asia. The Chinese Civil War (1945-49) and the Revolution of 1949 erected even more serious obstacles to travel along the Silk Road.

3. Influences on Western photography of the Silk Road.

A number of factors helped to shape the way in which photographs of the lands along the Silk Road were taken. These include literary and non-photographic imagery of Eurasia; the popular market for romanticised cultural products connected with the Orient; Western conceptions of cultural superiority; and the wish to salvage idealised conceptions of vanishing pre-modern cultures. These elements helped to shape the nature of Silk Road photographs. Existing perceptions among publishers, consumers and the photographers helped to shape the way in which photographs of the Silk Road were taken, which reinforced existing perceptions in a symbiotic, mutually-interacting process. The NGM is an important instrument through which this process can be analysed, as it was a major influence upon American popular perceptions of the non-Western world. In the case of the photographs

taken by Williams on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition, as will be seen in chapter 2 and in the detailed analysis of Williams' photographs in chapters 4-6, a wide variety of factors helped to shape the NGM's demands upon Williams in terms of the choice of subject matter and the technical approach adopted (e.g. framing, composition, and lighting). The demands were shaped by NGM's own understanding of their educational role in American culture as well as by the demands of their readers and the implications these had for the magazine's commercial success.

(i) Non-photographic imagery.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Asia was an inspiration for a wide array of creative endeavours. The cultural products contributed to an artistic canon in which the existing depictions of Asia fostered expectations about what constituted a "correct" or "authentic" depiction of Asia. For example, the Romantic painterly movement (1800-1850) and the Pre-Raphaelite movement (founded in 1848) had a significant impact on Western visualisation and expectations of Asia. Common tropes that appeared in their works included: harems full of scantily clad beauties, flowing sumptuous fabrics, turbans, bazaars, smoking from opium pipes, lethargy, heat, spices and striding camels. These images leaned heavily on Western sexual fantasies about the East as well as stereotypes of Asia. Many of the Early Silk Road Photographs mirror the subjects, compositions and atmospheres found in these works. Not only do these photographs evidence this, but Early Silk Road Photographers often make direct reference to such work in their published and private writing.

The Pre-Raphaelite and Romantic movements both looked to a bygone age for inspiration, in particular the Romantic movement, which was stimulated by the idea of "returning to

nature”.¹⁰⁹ They often presented a vision of a pre-industrial world more beautiful and at-one with nature than that in which the viewer lived.¹¹⁰ It was not uncommon for this idyll to be located in the Eastern world.¹¹¹ Such work helped propagate the idea of the East as a pre-industrial paradise. One of the most famous of these works was the poem written in the summer of 1797 by Samuel Coleridge after it came to him in an Opium-fuelled dream, entitled “Kubla Khan”:¹¹²

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through Caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Carl Woodring, ‘Nature and Art in the Nineteenth Century’, *PMLA*, Vol.92, No.2 (Modern Language Association, Mar., 1977) DOI:10.2307/461940P, 193.

¹¹⁰ Woodring, ‘Nature and Art in the Nineteenth Century’, 1977, 193.

¹¹¹ Ralph Pite, ‘How Green Were the Romantics?’, *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol.35, No.3, Green Romanticism (Boston University, Fall, 1996), DOI:10.2307/25601179, 357.

¹¹² Bonnie G. Smith, ‘Decentered Identities: The Case of the Romantics’, *History and Theory*, Vol. 50, No.2, (Wiley for Wesleyan University, May 2011), 210-211.

¹¹³ Samuel Coleridge, *The Complete Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, (London: Penguin Books, 1997).

This poem explores nature and the East but also, like other Romantic literature, Eastern spiritual thought.¹¹⁴

'The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam' was written in Persian supposedly by the Iranian mathematician, astronomer and philosopher Omar Khayyam (1048-1131) and translated into English by Edward FitzGerald in 1859. Despite the fact that this epic poem seems to have been most likely set in Iran it has, for the Western reader in particular, come to encapsulate all of the allure, fantasy and rich hedonism associated with Asia and the Silk Road. Its influence can be easily seen across a wide spectrum of media from music, ballet, theatre, literature, fashion, advertisement and television. Indeed, a great number of Early Silk Road Photographers mention the text in their personal and public writing as having been a catalyst for their interest in the East. It is therefore, more than likely that this text also influenced their understanding of the East and subsequently their representation of the region in their writing and photography. It is even said that during WW1 soldiers in the trenches were regularly found to be carrying a battered copy of the work in their pockets.¹¹⁵ This epic poem is not merely appreciated for its dreamlike descriptions of the beauty of the Orient but also for its reflections on what it is to be a part of the cycle of life and also on the inevitability of death. 'The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam' connected with people on many levels during a time when people, particularly during the post war years and the Great Depression in the United States, were searching for psychological escape from their hardships.

¹¹⁴ Smith, 'Decentered Identities: The Case of the Romantics', 2011, 212.

¹¹⁵ Sandra Bill, 'The Rubaiyat in Ruhleben camp – Omar Khayyam in the First World War', 29 December, 2013, *Omar Kayyam Rubaiyat website*.

Interest in Eastern Spiritual thought and imagery is yet another layer of the fascination that Asia held for the West. For example, Buddhism and Yoga was drawn upon by various Western esoteric movements, which became increasingly popular in the West during the late 19th and early 20th century under the leadership of people such as Alistair Crowley (1875-1947), Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), and A.E. Waite (1857-1942).¹¹⁶

The popular Western China-centric understanding of the Silk Road was reinforced by the increasing amount of literature being published by foreigners working in China after the mid-nineteenth century. The volume of publications in Western languages about China accelerated in the early 20th century, including poems, journalism, novels, diaries and academic writings.¹¹⁷ “China” became one of the most popular and easily accessible literary destinations to which Western readers could escape.

(ii) Popular culture.

By the time that Williams took his photographs on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition the popular imagination of the Silk Road had already been shaped through a variety of channels. Early Silk Road Photographs appeared in a wide variety of literature, as well as in lectures and in exhibits with annotations. For the mass of the population in the Western world it was through popular media such as fairs, painting, literature and later photography, that they gained their formative experiences of the world beyond their own. Photographs of the non-Western world

¹¹⁶ Mark S. Morrisson, ‘The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival: Esoteric Wisdom, Modernity and Counter-Public Spheres’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (Indiana University Press, Winter, 2008), 2.

¹¹⁷ Lecture by Dr Frances Wood, ‘The lure of China: writers from Marco Polo to J.G. Ballard’, China Centre Seminar, Jesus College, Cambridge, 3 November 2021.

during this period were of great interest to people who for the most part never had the opportunity to visit distant lands. In fact, some of the “travel writers” who used these images as illustrations for their work about Asia had never actually been to the places about which they wrote. The public’s appetite for fresh exotica stimulated the production of visual material relating to the Silk Road.

Governments played a role in shaping popular views of the non-Western world, which helped to stimulate popular demand for romanticised photographic images of distant and exotic regions. The popular appetite was encouraged by government-organised events such as the World Fairs.¹¹⁸ During the late 19th and early 20th centuries World Fairs were a popular form of entertainment and a useful political tool for the promotion of colonial activities. Burton Benedict (1991) argues that the largest of these, The Exposition Coloniale de Vincennes, which was held in Paris in 1931¹¹⁹ and attracted an audience of 33 million from France and abroad,¹²⁰ served in part as an advertisement to encourage investment in and emigration to the colonies.¹²¹ World Fairs were portrayed as educational,¹²² showing Western audiences what was to be found in the world beyond their own. The exhibits on show at these fairs contained examples of produce and peoples from across the world

¹¹⁸ Benedict, Burton, ‘International Exhibitions and National Identity’, *Anthropology Today*, Vol.7, No.3, (Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, United Kingdom, June, 1991), 5.

¹¹⁹ Eric T. Jennings, ‘Visions and Representations of French Empire’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol 77, No 3, September 2005, 701-721, 702.

¹²⁰ Patricia A. Morton, ‘National and Colonial: The Musee des Colonies at the Colonial Exposition, Paris, 1931’, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, No. 2, (Published by CAA, June, 1998), 357.

¹²¹ Burton, ‘International Exhibitions and National Identity’, 1991, 8.

¹²² Burton, ‘International Exhibitions and National Identity’, 1991, 8.

displayed in pavilions in corresponding 'indigenous' architectural styles¹²³ or living in reconstructed "native" villages, allowing the public to watch the daily habits, arts, dances and ceremonies of these "imported persons".¹²⁴ Such display reinforced ethnic and national stereotypes¹²⁵ and often presented cultures, countries and people as exotic curiosities from the past.

Photographic images of the non-Western world were collected as mementos by the small number of people who travelled to these distant places. In addition, it was common for people to buy photographs of the distant world for display within their own home.¹²⁶ The Victorian middle classes were the main consumers of photography of the non-Western world. It was in the middle class drawing room that these photographs would be taken out, viewed and discussed, helping to shape consumers' views towards the subjects depicted.¹²⁷ These images allowed this generally conformist section of society to live out their fantasies and assert their superiority over the peoples and cultures of the colonies that their country presided over, or aspired to rule or have influence over.¹²⁸ The total population in the overseas colonial territories controlled by the six Great Powers increased from 274 million in

¹²³Burton, 'International Exhibitions and National Identity', 1991, 7.

¹²⁴ Burton, 'International Exhibitions and National Identity', 1991, 7.

¹²⁵ Burton, 'International Exhibitions and National Identity', 1991, 8.

¹²⁶ Peter D. Osborne, *Travelling Light, Photograph, Travel and Visual Culture*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), Ch.3.

¹²⁷ Osborne, *Travelling Light, Photograph, Travel and Visual Culture*, 2000, Ch. 3.

¹²⁸ Osborne *Travelling Light, Photograph, Travel and Visual Culture*, 2000, Ch. 3.

1876 to 523 million in 1914, which amounted to over one-third of the world's population.¹²⁹ In the case of Great Britain, which was the leading imperialist power, the colonial population in 1914 amounted to 393 million, compared with a population of just 47 million in the home territories. In Osborne's view, colonisation, the conscious expansion of capitalism, the invention of photography, scientific progress and the growth of the middle classes, coalesced during the Victorian period to create an 'economic space, a breeding ground for consumer fantasy and a site (the middleclass home) of consumption and consumer display'.¹³⁰ Travel photographs displayed in the middle class Victorian home were symbols of this.

Stereoscope images were marketed enthusiastically to the extent of being superior to the reality of the experience they depicted. They were part of the process of shaping western conceptions of the non-western world, including the Silk Road. "India Through the Stereoscope" came complete with a stereoscopic viewer and was published as part of the "Underwood Stereoscopic Tours" series. In his introduction to the Stereoscope, James Ricalton (1844-1929)¹³¹ claimed that such photographs offered the buyer "an experience of travel, free of heat and disease". It provided the buyer with access to "a wonderland you can reach directly from your fireside", thereby promoting the superiority of the simulation over the

¹²⁹ V.I.Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers (1968) (first published 1917), 75.

¹³⁰ Osborne, *Travelling Light, Photography, Travel and Visual Culture*, 2000, 53.

¹³¹ Ricalton was an American 'schoolteacher, traveller, and photographer', who reputedly circumnavigated the globe seven times. His passion was travel photography.

actual experience. Osborne noted: "Besides there is often a witchery and a charm in Stereoscopic images not found in the real presence of places and things".¹³²

Magic lantern shows also played their part in capturing public interest in the non-Western world from the 1890s onwards.¹³³ All strata of Western society had access to this medium either through showings in the privacy of their homes or in purpose-built public theatres. Showings were often accompanied by live music and orators reading out corresponding scripts. In the early days of this entertainment, drawings were projected but later photographs came into use, often including Early Silk Road Photography.

By the early 20th century numerous publications featuring photographs of distant places were being produced. For example, *NGM*, *Travel*, *World Outlook & Asia* magazine were filled with poems, stories and reports about the 'East', which stretched from the shores of the Mediterranean to South, East and Southeast Asia. These articles were illustrated with drawings and photographs. The front covers often featured striking photographs of the non-Western world. The majority of the articles reporting on Asia were written in a florid tone and conformed to popular ideas of Asia. Alongside the romantic aspect of these articles were references to Western concerns about Asia, including worries about industrialisation, female emancipation and education. Some of the publications had a Christian inspiration, and the Early Silk Road Photography featured in them reflected this. For example, many of them promoted American style 'democracy' and Christianity in Asia. This can be seen in the titles

¹³² Osborne, *Travelling Light, Photography, Travel and Visual Culture*, 2000, 61.

¹³³ Charlotte Fiell and James Ryan, *Memories of a Lost World, Travels through the Magic Lantern*, (Chipping Camden: Feill Publishing, 2013), 15.

and images in the magazines, presenting people in Asia living happily with Christ and in strife without Christ.

The imagery produced by fairs, lantern shows and the exploration of the non-Western world filtered into numerous aspects of Western society. The retail industry made extensive use of 'exotic' brand names, fashion adopted turbans and Asian fabrics, theatre drew inspiration from the Orient as seen in the various sexualized Asian-inspired performances including those at the Folies Bergere, music such as Stravinsky's the 'Rite of Spring' (1913) which drew upon ideas of pagan rites in Siberia, literature including poetry, science-fiction and futurist writings¹³⁴ like Jack Williamson's novelette 'Wizards Isle' in 'Weird Tales' (June 1934), architecture, food,¹³⁵ clairvoyants and magic shows¹³⁶ and films all drew inspiration from the non-Western world.

(iii) Ethnography.

A key element in the ideology of colonialism was a belief that the Western colonising countries were contributing to the progress of "backward civilisations". In 1897 Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914), Britain's Secretary of State for the Colonies, delivered his famous speech entitled 'The True Conception of Empire'. He argued:

¹³⁴ Betsy Huang, Pre-modern Orientalist Science Fictions, *MELUS* Vol. 33, No. 4, Alien/ Asian (Oxford University Press on behalf of Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS), Winter 2008), 23-43.

¹³⁵ Jennings, 'Visions and Representations of French Empire', 2005, 702.

¹³⁶ Wellcome Collection Exhibition, 'Smoke and Mirrors: The Psychology of Magic', 11th April - 15th September 2019.

You cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition, which over centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force'.¹³⁷

He continued:

[O]ur rule over these [colonial] territories has brought peace and comparative prosperity to countries that never knew these blessings before. In carrying out this work of civilisation we are fulfilling what I believe to be our national mission and we are finding scope for the exercise of the faculties and qualities which have made us a great governing race.¹³⁸

Such ideas were in part due to the impact of Charles Darwin's "theory of natural selection",¹³⁹ the "survival of the fittest", and the associated "degeneration" theory. This "Darwinist" framework helped to shape popular views of the world. Darwin's theory of natural selection explained the process of evolution. Those species with characteristics most suited

¹³⁷ Joseph Chamberlain, 'The true conception of Empire' (1897), in Elleke Boehmer, ed., *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature, 1870-1918*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹³⁸ Chamberlain, 'The true conception of Empire', 1998, 213.

¹³⁹ Charles Darwin expressed his theory of natural selection as follows: 'Owing to this struggle for life, any variation, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring' (Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, London: Penguin Books, 1985, (originally published 1859), 115.

to the environment in which they lived survived, whilst those who did not possess these attributes would die out. The theory of degeneration¹⁴⁰ promoted the fear that the human race was “polluted” by those who were at a “lower level of human evolution”, and might cause social degradation both intellectually and physically.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries these theories were widely influential in shaping perceptions of the non-European world. Non-Western peoples were placed in a hierarchy of “development” from the most- to the least-evolved. Presiding over the pinnacle of this pyramid was the white aristocratic European.¹⁴¹ This approach heavily influenced the way in which people in the West, including the working class, related to their non-Western colonial subjects. Photography was utilized in support of such theories, which resulted in it becoming closely intertwined with the sciences in general. The camera was not simply a neutral “fact-recording” device.¹⁴² Anthropology and ethnography used the camera to help justify social control not only within European society but also by Europeans over their colonial

¹⁴⁰ Christopher Lawrence, ‘Degeneration’, *The Lancet*, vol 375, 20 March 20 2010.

¹⁴¹ Charles Darwin had a clear sense of hierarchy within the human species, with a sense of morality as the key difference between segments of the human population. Darwin considered that the principal mechanisms through which superior moral standards would spread more widely were firstly, through the extension of the powers of the ‘civilised races’ so as to ‘take the place of the lower races’, and secondly, through an increase in the ‘number of men endowed with high intellectual and moral faculties’ (Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, (originally published 1871), 160 and 166). Francis Galton (1822-1911), half cousin to Charles Darwin, coined the term ‘Eugenics’ in 1883.

¹⁴² John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation, Essays on Photographies and Histories*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), chs 2 and 3.

empires.¹⁴³ Many of the photographs taken in the name of such scientific research were stock mug-shot style photographs, much like those taken of prisoners in jails. Such a stark photographic style was legitimised as serving a scientific rather than an artistic purpose. This supposedly “neutral” and “de-humanising” style allowed the viewer to look at and judge people from a distance, thereby reducing the viewer’s empathy for the human being in the photograph. Ethnographic photographs of the late 19th and early 20th century in this mug-shot style strongly influenced Europeans’ perception of the people and places recorded. Early Silk Road Photography seems to have been affected by these histories. Indeed, some Early Silk Road photographs have a rather objectifying and ‘scientific’ feel, including the documentation of Silk Road Ethnographic “types” in mug-shot style or labelling photographs simply as “Examples of XXX Type”. However, others took on a much more poetic depiction of their subject. Consumers of Early Silk Road Photographs were presented with a varying interpretation of the Silk Road depending upon the influences on the photographer or purpose intended for the photograph.

(iv) Salvage of pre-industrial culture.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, industrialisation and modernisation began to penetrate the non-Western world. Industrialisation was still a recent phenomenon in the West. Many people still had memories of their pre-industrial past and they were surrounded by vestiges of that era. They were concerned that “traditional” ways of life were disappearing, which stimulated a movement to record the pre-industrial cultures of the non-Western world. Concern to “salvage” fast-disappearing pre-modern modes of life was embedded in the discipline of social anthropology, which emerged in the late nineteenth

¹⁴³ Hamilton, Peter & Rodger Hargreaves, *The Beautiful and The Damned, The Creation of Identity in Nineteenth Century Photography*, (Lund, Sweden: Humphries Publishers, 2001).

century. Social anthropology was stimulated by the goal of recording pre-industrial cultures and photography constituted an important instrument in the discipline.¹⁴⁴

It is widely believed that the Silk Road had dwindled to insignificance by the end of the nineteenth century, due to advances in transport technologies by land and sea. In fact, alongside the development of modern means of transport, trade along the Silk Road using traditional technologies remained vibrant into the twentieth century.¹⁴⁵ In the popular imagination in the West, the Silk Road was associated with the idea of a pre-industrial economy and society. Early Silk Road Photography provided the viewer with a record of, and an escape to, a pre-industrial Orientalist fantasy, which helped to assuage Western anxieties about the loss of an “old way of life”.¹⁴⁶ The photographs, as well as other visual images, that were produced in response to this objective were executed with a nostalgia for a beautiful lost way of life, as well as with a mixture of fascination for the bizarre and condescension towards the people depicted in the images.

Ali Behdad developed the concept of ‘salvage’ photography in his essay ‘The Orientalist Photograph’ (2013). He quotes Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), who pleaded with the poet

¹⁴⁴ Photographic plates constitute an important aspect of studies such as Evans-Pritchard’s famous account of the Nuer (E.E.Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940).

¹⁴⁵ S. Levi, ‘India, Russia and the 18th century Transformation of the Central Asian Caravan Route’, *The Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 42, No. 4, (1999), 519-523; and Romaniello, ‘Transregional Trade in Early Modern Eurasia’, 2017.

¹⁴⁶ Giorgio Riello & Patrick K. O’Brien, ‘Reconstructing the Industrial Revolution: Analyses, Perceptions and Conceptions of Britain’s Precocious Transition to Europe’s First Industrial Society’, (Department of Economic History, London School of Economics, May 2004), 3.

Theophile Gautier (1811-1872) in the 1850's: 'It is time to hurry. Before very long the Orient will no longer exist. We are perhaps the last of its contemplators'.¹⁴⁷ In his Introduction to his collection of *Holy Land Photographs* (1898) Adrien Bonfils expressed a similar view:

In this century of steam and electricity everything is being transformed.... even places: already in the ancient Plain of Sharon is heard the whistle of the locomotive...The moment is probably not far off, when the holy Mount of Olives and Tabor will each possess its funicular [railway] like Mt Righi (outside Lucerne)! Before this happens, before Progress has completed its destructive work, before this present-which is still the past-has disappeared forever, we have tried, so to speak, to fix and immobilise in a series of photographic views.¹⁴⁸

Bonfils suggests that 'salvage' was a significant motivation behind the late 19th and early 20th century increase in photography of the non-Western world, reflecting a concern that if this part of the world was not documented soon it would be lost forever to the rapidly encroaching "threat" of industrialization. According to Behdad (2013) the camera was viewed as an ideal tool for recording this rapidly disappearing "Oriental" world. He also points out that this concern was not only found in photography but was a canon of the Orientalist genre, found in painting, literature, poetry, design, travel writing, news reportage and the

¹⁴⁷ Ali Behdad, 'The Orientalist photograph', in Ali Behdad & Luke Gartlan, eds., *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation* (Hong Kong: The Getty Research Institute Publications Program, 2013), 20.

¹⁴⁸ Adrien Bonfils, Introduction to "Nouveau testament" (unpublished manuscript, Beirut, ca. 1898), quoted in Carney E.S Gavin, 'The Image of the East: Nineteenth-Century Near Eastern Photographs' by Bonfils (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982), 1.

economics of the age. The visual and literary images influenced popular perceptions of the Orient, which in turn fed consumer demand for such cultural products.

One of the largest collections of early 20th century autochromes is a notable example of the concern to 'salvage' disappearing cultures. It was sponsored by the wealthy French Banker Albert Khan (1860-1940) with the explicit purpose of recording the diversity of "culture" from across the world before it was destroyed by the ravages of war, or became homogenised due to globalisation. Khan sent photographers out across the world, and the resulting photographic collection is said to have been described by Khan as an '*Archive of the Planet*' and a number of those images could be identified as Early Silk Road Photography.

Walter Benjamin's essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936) provides additional insights into the unique role played by the photograph as an instrument of cultural salvage. In the essay he analysed the theoretical implications of mechanical reproduction of images, exploring the way in which mechanical reproduction of photographs, allowed a limitless number of people to set their eyes on an image and understand it through their own personal and cultural lens.¹⁴⁹ These ideas are particularly important when analysing Early Silk Road Photographs as a large number of these photographs were distributed as postcards to the general public to be gazed at by diverse individuals, as well as used by scientists and governments as supposedly objective evidence about the Silk Road. Although painting can depict the past, the image takes time to create and always involves a degree of distortion through the hand and eye of the painter. By contrast, a

¹⁴⁹ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, London: Penguin, 2008, originally published in 1936.

photograph captures the past in an instant. The resulting image is perceived to be objective and real in a way that a painting can never be. Photographs of the 'Silk Road', which were taken in an instant, but often are read as depicting a history and way of life that had been present on those roads for thousands of years. The viewers' belief in the trustworthiness of a photograph as a true representation of reality means that it is likely to have a greater impact than a painting or a work of literature upon people's understanding of a previous era or a particular subject.

While considering the salvage aspect of the West's relationship with the Silk Road and how this affected the West's representation of the Silk Road, it may be useful to compare how photographers from other regions depicted the Silk Road. Unlike their Western counterparts, Early Silk Road Photographers from Russia were photographing a world that was, for the most part, not foreign to them. This combined with a fundamentally different political context in Russia and the West adds a further dimension to representations of the Silk Road by Early Silk Road Photographers. The contrast affected the way in which people from the West and the East photographed the Silk Road, both before and after the 1917 Russian Revolution.

From the sixteenth century onwards Tsarist Russia entered a long era of expansion across Asia, including Siberia and the vast territories of Central Asia.¹⁵⁰ The latter contained important segments of the diverse strands of the Silk Road. Russia itself is a key part of the Silk Road. Its unique cultural history is a testament to that, with its fusion of Asian and

¹⁵⁰ Tsarist Russia's territorial expansion culminated in the final phase of the long, drawn-out conquest of Central Asia from the 1850s to the 1870s.

European heritage. For the Tsarist and Soviet-era Russian photographers, much of the Silk Road ran through the territory that their government ruled and knowledge of the Silk Road was far deeper in Russia than it was in the West. Long before Tsarist Russia existed and long before the Tsarist Empire began its Eastwards expansion, numerous Russians engaged with or consumed products from Asia and had travelled across its territory. Indeed, many Russians migrated to settle in Silk Road regions beyond European Russia. From the late nineteenth century onwards modern transport was centrally important to the integration of Asia into the Russian Empire. The Trans-Siberian railway, which was over 9,000 km in length, was constructed between 1891 and 1904. From the late 1920s to the late 1930s Central Asia was transformed under the Soviet five-year plans.¹⁵¹ At least five million people died during Soviet collectivisation (1929-31), with an especially severe famine in Central Asia.¹⁵² However, alongside the catastrophic loss of life, by the early 1930s, when the Citroën-Haardt expedition made its journey to the South of Soviet Central Asia, there were already considerable amounts of modern machinery, including trucks, automobiles, tractors, industrial machinery, and, even, aircraft in the region.

Photographers in both the late Tsarist era and the Soviet period combined romantic photographs of “traditional” life among the “indigenous” national minorities in Central Asia with positive and optimistic photographs of modernisation. Sergei Michaelovich Prokudin-Gorskii (1863-1944) was the most famous pre-revolutionary Russian photographer. His celebratory *Survey of the Russian Empire* was composed of photographs taken between 1909-1915. It contained vivid images of modern transport, including the Trans-Siberian

¹⁵¹ Alec Nove, *An economic history of the USSR*, London: Penguin Books, 1972.

¹⁵² Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror Famine*, London: Arrow Books, 1986.

Railway, alongside images of “traditional” life. During Soviet industrialization in the 1930s positive photographic images of Central Asia played a prominent role in government propaganda. Max Zakarovich Penson (1893-1959) was one of the leading Soviet photographers of this era. He was based in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) from 1926-1940. In a similar fashion to Prokudin-Gorskii he chronicled Soviet modernisation in more than 30,000 photographs taken between 1920 and 1940. He was prolific in recording photographic images of modernization, including propaganda images of collective farms, alongside stylized images of traditional life among the ‘minority peoples’ of Central Asia. These were circulated widely through TASS, the Soviet news agency, and were collected in the large collection of photographs entitled *USSR: Under Construction* (1933). Western photographic recordings of the Silk Road mostly side-step modernity along the Silk Road, whereas Russian recordings in both Tsarist and Soviet Russia actively engaged with it, while simultaneously producing romantic representations of traditional life along the Silk Road.

4. Early Silk Road Photographers.

The world of Early Silk Road study, photography and travel was small and intimate. The photographers were often aware of the work produced by other people working in this field. For example, Williams wrote to the Gilbert Hovey Grosvenor (1875-1966), editor of the NGM, with enthusiastic praise for the photographic work of Heinz Von-Perckhammer, suggesting that the NGM should be sure to acquire a copy of his work on China.¹⁵³ There

¹⁵³ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from Williams to Grosvenor, Peiping, China, Feb 21, 1932, 77/1 Field Notes & Letters, 1931-1932, Citroën-Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/5, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America.

¹⁵³ 77/1 Field Notes & Letters, 1931-1932, Citroën-Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/5, Letter from Williams to La Gorce, Peiping, China, Washington’s Birthday 1932, (Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America).

was often an element of competition among the archaeologists and photographers. Williams' diary records his conversation with the archaeologist Joseph Hackin, who was a fellow member of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition. Hackin had been a member also of one of Hedin's expeditions. He considered Hedin's archaeology and photography to be "over-rated".¹⁵⁴

Early Silk Road Photographers took their photographs for a wide array of purposes. They included photographs taken in order to sell commercial publications by Silk Road explorers; to illustrate archaeological expeditions; to promote the diplomatic and strategic objectives of Western governments; to illuminate anthropological research; as material for personal memories; and, not least, to serve the commercial purposes of professional photographers.

Sven Hedin's popular books contained numerous photographs and illustrations taken to illuminate his experiences and findings. Hedin not only took photographs but also collected photographs of the regions in which he carried out his explorations. However, on some occasions, such as the Sino-Swedish Expedition (1927-35), which carried out scientific research in North and North-Western China, he gave photographic responsibility over entirely to other members of the expedition, which included his Swedish and Chinese co-workers. Regardless of who took the photographs during Hedin's expeditions the work produced documents covering a wide expanse of Silk Road regions including: Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, China, Pamir Mountains, Tibet, Mongolia, Russia, Kashmir and India. The photographs are generally not as crisp and beautiful as some Early Silk Road Photography but rather present a rougher and possibly more "in the moment" or "realistic"

¹⁵⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Diary Maynard Owen Williams, Asia 1931 Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, October 12, 1931, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America, (Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America).

presentation of life navigating the Silk Road regions.¹⁵⁵ In photographs connected with Hedin's work one can often perceive the movement of life on the Silk Road: caravans, portraits of people from the regions he moved through, or the expedition members around a late-night bonfire for example.

Aurel Stein's numerous publications contained a large number of photographs. A collection of 5,000 images taken during his expeditions in Central Asia, Iran, China, India, and Kashmir, is primarily held at the British Library in London. It is unclear precisely who took the different photographs. The majority of them are credited to his expedition rather than to a specific photographer. It seems likely that it was not Stein who took them but rather members of his team at his request. The majority of his photographs concentrate on archaeological sites being excavated and explored by Stein and his team. These images include photographs of partially excavated findings rising out of the ground which not only capture fascinating discoveries but also the excitement of unearthing objects that has seemingly been forgotten for centuries. Such images may not be as adventurous as Hedin's or other Early Silk Road Photography, but they do present the viewer with a graphic insight into the process involved in the gathering of knowledge about the Silk Road. Photographs provided a powerful visual accompaniment to the rich scientific research undertaken by Stein and his team. Among other things, they shed new light on the influence of Buddhism in the era before the impact of Islam. Frederick Starr (2013) observed:

¹⁵⁵ <https://svenhedinfoundation.org/>

It is hard to imagine that Central Asia was for nearly a millennium as deeply Buddhist as it is Muslim today. But from the first or second century BC to the Arab conquest, this was the case.¹⁵⁶

The influence of Buddhism along the Silk Road is a central focus of Stein's research. The fact that Buddhism spread from North India to Central Asia and China was a motive for the Indian government's financial support for Stein's expeditions. In Stein's view:

The early spread of Buddhist teaching and worship from India to Central Asia, China and the Far East is probably the most remarkable contribution made by India to the general development of mankind.¹⁵⁷

Less well-known examples of Early Silk Road Photographers include: the American painter and photographer William Henry Jackson (1843-1942), American photographer Franklin Price Knott (1854-1930), American writer Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore (1856-1928), French photographer Auguste Francois (1857-1935), German Diplomat Philipp Alfons Friherr Mumm von Schwarzenstein (1859-1924), British ambassador Charles Alfred Bell (1870-1945), the British botanist Ernest Henry Wilson (1876-1930), American explorer Roy Chapman Andrews (1884-1960), American-Austrian explorer Joseph Rock (1884-1962), American photographer and missionary Sidney D. Gamble (1890-1968), German photographer Heinz von Perckhammer (1895-1965), American photographer Robert Moore

¹⁵⁶ Frederick Starr, *Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia's Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, 81.

¹⁵⁷ Stein, *Sand-buried ruins of Khotan*, 1904, xiv.

(1899-1968), British soldier Frederick Spencer Chapman (1907-1971) and German photographer and diplomat's wife Hedda Morrison (1908-1991).

Although these photographers may have travelled along the Silk Road regions for different reasons, they photographed many of the same or similar subjects. These include: pre-industrial travel, landscapes, markets, religion and dress as well as a darker side of the Silk Road expressed through images of poverty, prostitution and opium. Each Early Silk Road Photographer had their own style of recording such subjects. For example, Franklin Price Knott's work is luxurious and dreamlike and heavy with colour and attention to ornamentation, whereas, Heinz von Perckhammer's street photography is intimate, raw and seemingly spontaneous. Regardless of their stylistic differences in terms of use of mood, light, colour and texture they all tend to focus their lens on the same subject matter and often mirror each other's compositional choices. The fact that Early Silk Road Photographers were drawn to this region of the world and chosen to study and photograph, demonstrates a shared fascination with Asia and a common set of influences. Many of them seem to have read similar works of fact and fiction that focused on the region, with frequent reference in their written work to romantic poems such as the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* and Marco Polo's *Travels*.

Summary

This chapter has analysed the context and themes that will inform the analysis of Williams' photographs in the second half of the thesis. Williams' photographs on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition form part of the genre of Early Silk Road Photography. They share many of the same influences. It is hoped that the case study of Maynard Owen Williams' photographs in chapters 4-6 contributes to a deeper understanding of the genre of Early Silk Road Photography as a whole and shed light on the influences that shaped the way in which photographs were selected and taken.

This chapter has had four main objectives. The first objective was to identify the origins of the term “Silk Road”. Any consideration of Western perceptions of the Silk Road must begin with Marco Polo’s *Travels*. Even though it is possible that the book was not written by Marco Polo himself and the book does not use the term “Silk Road”, it is indispensable for understanding Western perceptions of the Silk Road. The Citroën-Haardt Expedition consciously “re-traced the footsteps of Marco Polo” across Eurasia. Indeed, Williams carried a copy of Marco Polo’s *Travels* with him on the Expedition. Although the Silk Road existed physically for at least 2000 years, the term was created in the late nineteenth century as a cursory reference within Richthofen’s tome on the geography of Central Asia. The popularisation of the term was heavily reliant upon the writings of the scientist-archaeologist, Aurel Stein and the famous explorer and self-promoting writer, Sven Hedin. In fact, the “Silk Road” across Eurasia consisted of many sub-branches and subsidiary routes that shifted over time. The increasing volume of research on trade along the Silk Road demonstrates that a wide array of products was exchanged and that much of the trade was within different segments of the route, rather than goods being shipped from one end to the other. Although the sea route became increasingly important, the land route remained active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The second objective was to provide a periodisation of the genre of “Early Silk Road Photography”. The era began with Richthofen’s first use of the phrase ‘Silk Road’ in 1877. This coincided with the development of technologies that made it easier to take photographs while travelling away from a studio. Photographic technologies continued to progress, with rollable film, colour film and increasingly portable and sophisticated cameras. By the mid-1930s they had moved into a revolutionary new era with the emergence of the movie film. Alongside the technological developments in photography parts of the Silk Road were undergoing the beginnings of modern industrial development. Revolutionary changes in modes of transport, including rail, motor and, even, air travel, were affecting the character of

social and economic life along the Silk Road, even though pre-existing forms of transport remained dominant. Alongside these changes, it is paradoxical that travel along the Silk Road became progressively more difficult due to political developments, including the disintegration of the Qing Dynasty, the Russian Revolution, Japan's invasion of China, the Vietnamese independence struggle against France, the Chinese Civil War (1945-49) and the victory of the Communist Party of China in 1949. By the 1940s the first era of Early Silk Road photography had drawn to a close.

The third objective was to investigate the multiple forces that helped to shape the way in which Western travellers chose to photograph the Silk Road. This will lay the foundation for understanding the way in which Williams selected his subjects for photographing and the way in which these photographs were constructed. These forces included the rich tradition of non-photographic iconography of the Silk Road. Western literature on the Silk Road, such as Coleridge's poem 'Kubla Khan' and *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* helped to shape romanticised perceptions of the Silk Road. Western painting, including both the Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite schools, helped the construction of exotic and sensual images, which were mirrored in many of the photographs. Colonial conquest reached a high-point in the decades before World War I. Popular culture was stimulated by government efforts to promote the virtues of colonialism including romanticization of the lands that had been colonised. There developed a mass market for photographs of the Silk Road, presented as postcards, framed scenes within middle-class Victorian households, public photographic shows and devices such as the stereoscope. The new era of popular magazines produced a deluge of interest in photographs from distant, exotic locations. None was more exotic than the Silk Road. There was a mass market for photographic images from the non-Western world, and these images in turn helped to stimulate demand for similar romantic images from these regions. Darwinism and colonialism came together to coalesce into racist perceptions of the population of the non-Western world. A sub-genre of photographs of the non-Western

world employed images that objectified the subjects in a fashion that treated them as if they belonged to a less developed sub-species of the human race. Finally, in the face of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation a species of cultural production emerged which was concerned with 'salvaging' the pre-modern cultures through the mechanism of photography. This revolutionary medium appeared to have a unique facility to capture in the blink of an eye with the opening and closing of a camera shutter a vanishing age which had existed for millennia, thereby preserving a visual record of a world that was disappearing.

The final objective of the chapter was to explore the different varieties of the genre of Early Silk Road photographs. Early photographs of the Silk Road were produced from a wide variety of sources and with a wide variety of purposes. Photographs of the Silk Road were taken by professional photographers for commercial sale, for publication in newspapers and magazines, and as postcards. They were taken by explorers to illustrate their exploits and include in their books and articles, or to accompany their lectures. A large number were taken by people who were themselves working along the Silk Road or were accompanying another person, whose work involved employment as a government official or businessman. Photographs were also taken by scientists, including archaeologists, botanists and anthropologists. These typically were used for scientific purposes. However, some of the photographs were not merely useful scientifically, but also had an impact beyond their scientific use in helping to shape perceptions of the Silk Road and help garner public support for Western military action or political interference in Silk Road regions. Some of these photographers' work became widely known. However, a great number of Early Silk Road Photographs are labelled 'Photographer Unknown'.

This chapter has explored the factors that shaped the way in which Western travellers photographed the Silk Road in the period from the 1870s to the 1940s. In the case of

Williams, his photographs of the Silk Road were influenced also by the specific demands of his employer, the NGM, which will be examined in Chapter 2. In addition, they were influenced by the interests of Citroën, NGM's partner in the expedition, by the French government, which was a partial sponsor of the expedition, as well as Williams' interaction with the other members of the expedition. These issues are analysed in chapter 3.

Chapter 2, The National Geographic, The Tutor of a Nation.

Whatever the changes in communication, our mission and purpose will stay as steadfast as it was in 1888 and is now: 'the increase and diffusion of geographic knowledge'.¹⁵⁸

Gilbert M. Grosvenor (1931-) former president (1980-1996) and chairman (1980-2011) of the NGS and editor of the NGSM (1970-1980).

Maynard Owen Williams' photographs taken on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition were published in the National Geographic Magazine, which was produced by the National Geographic Society. In order to understand the factors that shaped Williams' selection of scenes and people to photograph on the expedition, and the way in which he took them, it is necessary to analyse the world view of his employer, the NGM. Since the early 20th century the NGS has regarded itself as an educator for the American public through the entertainment medium of a magazine. The magazine has held the attention of the American people for over 100 years, through its reportage on a wide range of subjects at home and abroad, presented through a marriage of photography and the written word. This chapter analyses the extent of the NGSM's influence over the American people's relationship with the world and the impetus behind the style and content of the NGSM's reportage. To this end the following questions are addressed:

¹⁵⁸ Gilbert M. Grosvenor, 'A Hundred Years of the National Geographic Society', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 154, No 1, March, 1988, 92.

- What is the National Geographic Magazine, what is its scope of influence and what is the significance of photography in its reportage?
- What impact did the concept of a united American nation with a distinctive national identity have on the National Geographic's reportage?
- What was the National Geographic Magazine's relationship with the American government and to what extent did that relationship influence the magazine's content?

Answering these questions will contribute to a deeper understanding of the position of the NGSM within the Euro-American consciousness around the time of the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932). This will assist in understanding the way in which Williams decided which subjects to photograph on the expedition and how he decided to photograph them. Williams' photographs from the expedition helped in their turn to reinforce and shape the NGM's readership's perceptions of the Silk Road.

What is the National Geographic Magazine, what is its scope of influence and what is the significance of photography in its reportage?

In the late nineteenth and early 20th century, in both Europe and America reports and studies undertaken by missionaries, travellers, and traders, were being superseded by the studies made by the new academic sciences of anthropology, ethnography and geography, which were considered to be more "trustworthy".¹⁵⁹ "Amateurism" came under attack for inaccuracies, lack of in-depth research and scientific evidence.¹⁶⁰ It was in this atmosphere

¹⁵⁹ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture, Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), chp.1.

¹⁶⁰ Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture, Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, 1999, chp. 1.

that 33 “men of science”¹⁶¹ were inspired to create the NGS in 1888. The first issue of the NGSM was published by the NGS in the same year. The magazine made a point of advertising itself as scientific, not only through its choice of name, but also through its emphasis on the fact that many of its contributors were scientists, and that the NGS funded and recorded scientific field work. This reassured its readership and potential readership of the magazine’s scholarly nature, helping to popularise and secure the general public’s trust and respect for the institution. One might wonder why, during a time of growing enthusiasm for science, did the NGSM become far more commercially successful than other scientific journals?

Up until 1905 the NGSM was like any other academic scientific journal, with a wooden academic writing style, few to no photographs¹⁶² and catering to a small readership of professional scientists. That changed in 1905 when Gilbert Grosvenor (1875-1966) was appointed as the first full time editor of the NGSM (1899-1954). Grosvenor was brought on board at a time when the society had fallen into financial difficulties. His decisions fundamentally altered the character and course of history of the NGSM. Grosvenor succeeded in making it financially viable through transforming the NGSM into a more appealing publication for the general public.

Dr Grosvenor achieved this by making the NGSM a publication that bridged the gap

¹⁶¹ Mark Collins Jenkins, *National Geographic 125 Years Legendary Photographs, Adventures, and Discoveries that Changed the World*, (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2012), 21.

¹⁶² Jenkins, *National Geographic 125 Years Legendary Photographs, Adventures, and Discoveries that Changed the World*, 32.

between the academic and non-academic worlds, through the presentation of science in a language that a non-scientist could understand. The NGSM continued to support and sponsor scientific research but reportage on these expeditions was presented in a florid and dreamy fashion, that emphasized the adventurous aspects of expeditions. This allowed the magazine to claim legitimacy through science, whilst still courting public fantasy. As a result, the NGSM came to occupy a unique space, being neither fully academic nor fully popular, thereby appealing to a broad public. Grosvenor's decisions were forcefully opposed by the conservative-scientist members of the society, resulting in many resignations from the NGS. Regardless, Dr Grosvenor carried out his reforms with gusto, and nurtured a hugely successful publication.

More than any other factor, Dr Grosvenor's decision to make photographs a constant and pervasive feature of the magazine arguably secured the magazine's reputation. Grosvenor is often referred to as the father of photojournalism. The former president and chairman of the NGSM, and grandson of Grosvenor, Gilbert Melville Grosvenor (1931-) wrote about his grandfather's early inclusion of photographs in the NGSM in a paper entitled 'A Hundred Years of the National Geographic Society' (1988):

...The fact that National Geographic's window on the world would include photographs as well as words as a significant feature of each issue began in the early 1900s. Facing a printer's deadline for the January 1905 issue and still lacking text for 11 pages, Dr. Grosvenor found by chance in the morning mail a package of photographs of Tibet's mysterious capital, Lhasa. Taken by Russian explorers, they were presented to the Society by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society of St Petersburg. Taking a risk that he believed might cost him the editorship, he filled all 11 pages with Lhasa photographs. They were published without an accompanying

article, with only brief picture captions. Instead of being dismissed, he was congratulated by Society members. The next year, Dr. Grosvenor published 74 pioneering photographs of animals in the wild, taken at night using a remotely triggered flash. The Society's tradition of exploration has taken men to heights, depths, and places that had never before been reached.¹⁶³

The Russian explorers who took these photographs had disguised themselves in order to enter the 'forbidden' city of Lhasa. Such secretive acts became commonplace among NGSM reporters and photographers,¹⁶⁴ some of whom also conducted intelligence work. According to the NGS, Grosvenor would include images of Tibet whenever he could get hold of one.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, Tibet is still a very popular topic in the magazine to this day.

¹⁶³ Gilbert M. Grosvenor, 'A Hundred Years of the National Geographic Society', *The National Geographic Journal*, Vol. 154, No 1, March, 1988, 88.

¹⁶⁴ Jenkins, *National Geographic 125 Years Legendary Photographs, Adventures, and Discoveries that Changed the World*, 54.

¹⁶⁵ Jenkins, *National Geographic 125 Years Legendary Photographs, Adventures, and Discoveries that Changed the World*, 49.



Figure 1, Examples of NGM page design, Maynard Owen Williams 'Adventures with a Camera in Many Lands' NGM July 1921 (top left), Maynard Owen Williams 'Color Records from The Changing Life of The Holy City' NGM January 1927 (top right & bottom)

The NGM's style of presenting photographs in its pages was very much led by the text. The photographs were included so as to illustrate the text and to aid in creating an immersive experience for the reader. Photographs tended not to stand alone but were peppered throughout the article (figure 1). However, the NGM was not afraid of devoting the entirety of a page to a single photograph if the editorial staff deemed it a particularly evocative or arresting image. Sometimes two or more pages were even devoted to a collage-like wall of photographs, reminiscent of those found on the walls of teenage bedroom or dorm room

walls in colleges and universities. The photographs included in the NGM were not drawn from an archive at random but were more often than not taken during the same trip about which the text was written. In fact, many photographers employed by and featured in the NGSM were so called 'triple-threats': writer, photographer and explorer. Triple-threat reporters included Volkmar Wentzel and Luis Marden, as well as Maynard Owen Williams, the subject of this dissertation. These men and women wrote enthralling stories and took evocative photos in remote corners of the globe.¹⁶⁶

The vivid, first-hand nature of NGSM content helped greatly to establish the magazine's authoritative and trusted position. James Clifford explained the authority that such work established with its viewer: "You are there...because I was there".¹⁶⁷ During the early 20th century, and even to some extent today, photography was considered to be a "factual" medium. The use of such a medium helped the NGSM establish the credibility of its written work, whilst also dramatizing their reporters' first-hand experiences of lives lived in far-off places. Such photographs reassured NGSM readers of an article's authenticity, whilst also feeding into popular fantasy through their choice of subject matter and composition.

However, it was not only photography that fostered such romanticism:

¹⁶⁶ Exhibit at the National Geographic Society, (January-February 2018).

¹⁶⁷ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture, Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988) (page 1 of) chp.1.

...Our magazine writers and photographers are not faint of heart. Many have had to face physically demanding or threatening situations to get their stories¹⁶⁸.

And the NGSM promoted itself as providing:

... thrilling, first-hand accounts of daring adventures that pushed the boundaries of human possibility¹⁶⁹.

Such claims promoted the idea of the NGSM reporter as an adventurer or intrepid explorer. Indeed, the danger faced by NGSM journalists, many of whom risked life and limb in order to bring stories and photographs to their public, was often incorporated into their published articles. It was not only the places, events and people that the NGSM presented as exotic, romantic and exciting, but also the reporters themselves. One could go so far as to say the NGSM was playing upon the admiration that the American public had for exploration and adventure. This may have stemmed from the wide respect for their European forefathers, who created the United States of America with their explorative exploits from 1492 onwards. The NGSM promoted the notion of the “pioneer spirit”. The exploits of the NGSM reporters were so popular that they influenced the creation of such legendary film star sex symbols as Indiana Jones, and Lara Croft, the buxom polymath star of the Tomb Raider films and computer game series.

¹⁶⁸ Exhibit at the National Geographic Society, (January-February 2018).

¹⁶⁹ Exhibit at the National Geographic Society, (January-February 2018).

Under Grosvenor the NGSM became synonymous with providing the public with photojournalism about the non-Western world. The manner in which the world was presented to the public by the NGSM is renowned for being beautiful. However, a cursory survey of past numbers of the magazine demonstrates that throughout its life, most strikingly in its early phase, there is a self-evident preservationist or “salvage” aspect to its reporting. This can be seen in the way in which, during the early 20th century, the NGSM rarely reported on the modernity of countries beyond America, but rather presented them existing in a romanticized bygone age.¹⁷⁰ It is probable that such reportage by the NGSM contributed to the readership’s notion that we (America) are modern and they (the rest of the world) are not. The NGM’s focus on differences between the USA and the non-western world contributed to the NGM’s popularity. The NGM not only tapped into mankind’s natural curiosity for that which is different from themselves but did so by presenting the subject of a photograph as less “up-to-date” than the viewer, thereby providing a sense of security and comfort to the viewer. The NGM presented photographic images and articles about people and places that were “strange” but yet presented no threat to the “modern” viewer.

The procedures and rules regarding the type of photographs that were included in the magazine during the early 20th century appear to have deliberately fostered such representation. For example, in 1915 Grosvenor consolidated the guiding principles of the NGSM as followed:

¹⁷⁰ Exhibit at the National Geographic Society, (January-February 2018).

...absolute accuracy, permanent value and abundance of beautiful, instructive and artistic illustrations, avoidance of all topics of a partisan or controversial character and of everything unpleasant or unduly critical...¹⁷¹

This mission statement outlining the importance of accuracy and beauty in NGSM photography suggests that NGSM photographs were supposed to not only be truthful but should also be visually appealing to a Euro-American readership. However, as accuracy and beauty cannot always be reconciled, the NGSM would often put aside images that could be deemed the most representative of a given subject, in favor of those that were not so challenging for readers. This was the case for many of Williams' photographs analysed in chapters 4, 5 and particularly chapter 6. For example, in the case of photographs of areas of the world where women were bare-breasted, those women needed to be the 'best/most attractive specimens' of the peoples being reported on.¹⁷² Grosvenor is quoted in Joan Gero and Dolores Root (1990) as saying that:

..we (the NGSM) should give our members what they wanted, not what some specialists thought they should have...¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ C.D.B. Bryan, *The National Geographic Society: 100 Years of Adventure and Discovery*, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1987), 90.

¹⁷² Stephanie L. Hawkins, *American Iconographic, National Geographic Global Culture, and The Visual Imagination*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 8.

¹⁷³ Joan Gero and Dolores Root, 'Public Presentations and Private Concerns: Archaeology in The Pages of National Geographic' in Peter Gathercole & David Lowenthal, *The Politics of The Past*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 21.

In other words, don't "rock the boat" regarding existing ideas about the non-European world: the "customer wishes come first". These ideas set the magazine off on a trajectory of influence from the layperson membership rather than scientists, experts on particular topics of regions, or local people. The key development in the magazine's house style was influenced by the fact that Grosvenor took over the publication during a period of financial difficulty. Moreover, financial considerations became especially pressing during the years of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition, which took place during the Great Depression. Without its focus on work that was popular with the general public, the NGM might not have survived these difficult years.

The NGSM house style that developed during Grosvenor's stewardship is a distinctive and influential part of its identity. The NGSM wanted to take people on an adventure across space and time. As a result, there developed a proliferation of adjectives in its writing style that sometimes seems more at home in a novel than a science-based publication. There is a concentration on drama, sensationalism, a prevalence of stereotyping, idealism and American patriotism in both its writing and photography.¹⁷⁴

It was not only through the pages of the NGSM that the NGSM's images and ideas reached the people of America. The NGSM published and distributed the "Geographic School Bulletin" also. The Bulletins were not as large as the main publication in terms of content, but they were produced weekly and contained articles and photographs about the wider world in a similar vein to that of the magazine proper. By 1921 NGSM had implemented a policy of disseminating information by illustrating, printing, and sending to 41,000 public schools,

¹⁷⁴ The National Geographic Magazine, April 2018.

lessons on world geography for every school-day of the year.¹⁷⁵ Other NGSM publications included NGS maps, lecture program pamphlets and pamphlets focused on specific subjects. By the 1940's most if not all were illustrated with both colour and black-and-white photography. Such side projects ensured an even broader range of the American public had access to the work of the NGSM.

Throughout the 20th century the NGSM became extremely popular across a wide range of social strata.¹⁷⁶ From 1911 to the 1920's the advertisements for joining the NGS had the tag line: "Mention the Geographic—It identifies you."¹⁷⁷ Over the years, membership of the NGS became associated with a certain level of social status and became a marker of an intellectual and worldly mind-set. The advertisements within the magazine's pages were specifically chosen to suit what the NGSM felt would suit the interests and self-conception of their members. From 1903-1954 the organization became the most widely-read source of general scientific information in America. By 1918 its circulation exceeded 500,000¹⁷⁸ and it was on the path to becoming the largest non-profit scientific and educational organization in

¹⁷⁵ National Geographic Archives, Letter to Mr. Jules Henry (French Embassy Washington) from NGSM, May 27 1931, File Number 11-3.44, National Geographic Society, National Geographic Archives, Washington DC, United States of America.

¹⁷⁶ Julie A. Tuason, 'The Ideology of Empire in National Geographic Magazine's Coverage of the Philippines, 1898-1908', *Geographical Review*, 1999, No 1, 35-59, 36.

¹⁷⁷ Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America, 1880-1950*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 153.

¹⁷⁸ Philip J. Pauly, 'The World and All That is in It: The National Geographic Society, 1888-1918', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Johns Hopkins University Press, Autumn, 1979), 517.

the world.¹⁷⁹ Such wide circulation and the general public's respect for the magazine resulted in it playing a role in shaping America's collective memory of the world. In sum, the NGSM not only responded to its customers' demands but also played a significant role in shaping the American public's attitudes to the non-Western world.

What impact did the concept of a united American nation have on the National Geographic's reportage?

The NGS and the tone in which it would shape its audience's collective memory was formed during the late 19th century, a time in which the concept of the "United States of America" and what it meant to be an American was also being shaped and promoted. The NGS was established at the point at which the construction of the 'United States of America' was entering its final, explosive phase. This combined with the fact that the founders of the NGM, and their parents, had lived through some of key formative points in American history helps to explain why American identity, values and history have greatly influenced the NGM's style of reportage and outlook on the world.

The Mexican War (1846-48) resulted in the transfer of the main part of the west of the continent to the USA.¹⁸⁰ The American Civil War (1861-65) played a crucial role in shaping American identity. The war was ferocious, with over 500,000 people killed during its course. Between the sixteenth and the late nineteenth century the indigenous population declined

¹⁷⁹ Gilbert M. Grosvenor, 'A Brief History of the National Geographic Magazine', *A Hundred Years of the National Geographic Society*, *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 154, No 1, March 1988, 87.

¹⁸⁰ Under the Treaty of Hidalgo (1848) Mexico ceded the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Nevada and California to the United States.

precipitously.¹⁸¹ The Battle of Wounded Knee in 1890 brought the creation of the continental state of America to a conclusion. In that year, the US Bureau of the Census officially declared the frontier complete. In the late nineteenth century immigration from Europe grew rapidly.¹⁸² In the second half of the nineteenth century the USA became a “Pacific Power”.¹⁸³ In 1900 American forces were part of the international force that suppressed the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1900) and occupied Beijing.¹⁸⁴ The USA’s control over the Philippines was only accomplished after a prolonged and brutal war of conquest (1898-1902), involving great loss of life. Eric Foner (1998) described this period of American history as follows:

America’s triumphant entry into the Spanish-American War tied nationalism and American freedom ever more closely to notions of Anglo-Saxon supremacy...Without any sense of contradiction, proponents of an imperial foreign policy...adopted the language of freedom.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ The extent of the decline is the subject of fierce debate among demographic historians.

¹⁸² The population of the USA rose from 39 million in 1870 to 92 million in 1910.

¹⁸³ In the 1850s under the Guano Act it acquired numerous small Pacific Islands. In 1867 it purchased the vast territory of Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million. In 1898 the USA annexed Hawaii. In the same year it defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War. Under the Treaty of Paris (1898) Spain ceded control not only over Puerto Rico, but also the Pacific Ocean territories of Guam and the Philippines. In 1899 the USA took control of Eastern Samoa, which became ‘American Samoa’.

¹⁸⁴ The USA was the driving force behind the ‘Open Door’ policy under which the Qing government was compelled to ‘open up to all countries without distinction’.

¹⁸⁵ Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1998), 130.

Within the USA the era in which the NGSM was shaped was one of rampant free market capitalism. In the late nineteenth century the philosophy of “Social Darwinism” and the “survival of the fittest” was the dominant ideology. “Freedom” was equated with “freedom” of operation for property-owners and freedom to compete in the marketplace.¹⁸⁶ It was the era of the Gilded Age, with tremendous socio-economic inequality. Between 1880 and 1893 nearly 2000 injunctions were issued prohibiting strikes and labour boycotts.¹⁸⁷ In the 1890s there was fierce class struggle, including the massive 1892 strike at the Homestead Steel Plant, in which strikers fought pitched battles with Andrew Carnegie’s private police force.

In this turbulent process of nation-building, the American government made every effort to bring the diverse peoples and classes together with a single unifying national identity. To this end the American government promoted the concept of “Manifest Destiny”, the belief that the American people had a Christian destiny to settle America Westwards. The term was first coined by John L. O’Sullivan in 1845 when he wrote:

...the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole continent which providence has given us...for the great experiment of liberty.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 1998, 119-130.

¹⁸⁷ Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 1998, 123.

¹⁸⁸ John L. O’Sullivan, quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946), 427.

The NGS was created against this backdrop by learned men who lived in and were actively involved in the turbulent birth of the American nation, a time of excitement, optimism and uncertainty for the future of the country. The NGS, NGSM and the United States of America developed in tandem. The NGM's close association with the national identity forged in this tempestuous era helps to explain the magazine's remarkable longevity and high respect with which it has been viewed by the American public through to the present day.

Janet Buerger (1992) and Anthony Lee (2007) argue that the arrival and spread of photography U.S.A. between the 1840's and 1870's contributed to the US Government's effort to nurture national unity.¹⁸⁹ Within this newly unified country a tradition of photographic representation and the study of the "unknown" became hugely popular. Photography transmitted images of the new and vast nation to large numbers of American citizens, which helped to create a sense of kinship, pride and awe in the new nation they belonged to.¹⁹⁰ When photography was used to express the concept of Manifest Destiny, the photographer took on what Janet E. Burger (1992) describes as; "...the mantle of artist-priest".¹⁹¹ This description of the role of the photographer demonstrates the trusted position that photography held in the late 19th and early 20th century. This role was one that some

¹⁸⁹ Lee W. Anthony, 'American Histories of Photography, *American Art*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (The University of Chicago Press on Behalf of the Smithsonian Institution, Fall 2007), 2.

¹⁹⁰ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation, Essays on Photographies and Histories*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), chp.2.

¹⁹¹ Janet E. Buerger, 'Ultima Thule: American Myth, Frontier, and the Artists-Priest in Early American Photography', *American Art*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution, Winter, 1992), 87.

photographers in America assumed from the medium's beginnings, in particular those who worked in one of the earliest American photographic genres, Frontier Photography.¹⁹²

In 1893 the American historian Fredrick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) advanced the view that the character of the American civilization had been profoundly influenced, over the period of a quarter of a millennium, by the existence of an open frontier.¹⁹³ There was an assumption in the U.S.A that the Western frontier needed to be tamed by the American man for them to yield an earthly paradise, a paradise free from the vices and inequalities of the old world, and ripe for enterprise and democracy.¹⁹⁴ The Frontier Photographic genre proved extremely popular and played a vital part in the construction of American identity in the late nineteenth century.

Frontier Photography came in various forms. Some of the most enduring images of this genre were photographs of the “new” as yet “un-tamed: land or partially “tamed” landscape of the Western frontier that was being explored and inhabited by Americans.¹⁹⁵ Such photographs captured the majesty and variety of America, the vast land to which the American people now belonged. These showed the viewer a nostalgic and beautiful, yet

¹⁹² Buerger, 'Ultima Thule: American Myth, Frontier, and the Artists-Priest in Early American Photography', 88.

¹⁹³ Frederick .J. Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', *The Frontier in American History*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1920),1-38.

¹⁹⁴ John L. O'Sullivan, quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946), 427.

¹⁹⁵ John Szarkowski, 'Photography and America, Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies', *Vol. 10, The Art Institute of Chicago Centennial Lectures* (The Art Institute of Chicago, 1983), 241.

challenging, landscape. They helped to document the early days of the conquest and settlement of America.¹⁹⁶ Many of these images were sponsored by the U.S Government between the 1850's and 1870's as part of voluminous scientific studies, which included geological surveys, as well as documentation of industrial development and railroad construction.¹⁹⁷ Some examples of geological photographic surveys include work by William Henry Jackson and Vandiveer Hayden.¹⁹⁸ Other less-obvious examples of the genre include portraiture of children by photographers such as Alexander Hesler.¹⁹⁹ These photographs were not only metaphors for the future of the American Nation, but also gave their viewers a reason to work towards building a strong and prosperous America, as an inheritance for the children of America who were depicted in the photographs. Frontier photography also included images of how the U.S.A came into being. Especially significant were photographs of the civil war. They reminded Americans that the united nation had been forged through military strength, violence and sacrifice by their fellow citizens. These images record the ferocious battles that were fought in order for America to exist. Mathew Brady (1822-1896) and Timothy O'Sullivan (1840-1882) are two of the most well-known war photographers.²⁰⁰ Frontier Photographers felt that they had an obligation to the newly created United States of

¹⁹⁶ James S. Brust, 'Photojournalism, 1877: John H. Fouch, Fort Koegh's First Post Photographer', *The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 50, No. 4, *Frontier Military Issue*, (Montana Historical Society, Winter, 2000), 38.

¹⁹⁷ Lee, 'American Histories of Photography', 2007, 93-94.

¹⁹⁸ Lee, 'American Histories of Photography' 2007, 96.

¹⁹⁹ Buerger, 'Ultima Thule: American Myth, Frontier, and the Artists-Priest in Early American Photography', 84-85.

²⁰⁰ Szarkowski, 'Photography and America, Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies', Vol. 10, *The Art Institute of Chicago Centennial Lectures* (The Art Institute of Chicago, 1983), 241.

America not to simply produce work of science or romantic independent genius, but to create images with a serious socio-political objective.²⁰¹

The capacity of photography to influence social and political life is closely related to the perception that the photograph reflects reality in a neutral, objective and scientific fashion. The photograph was widely considered to be trusted and factual. However, the photograph was far from a neutral instrument in its shaping of perceptions about the forging of the American nation. For many, photography was considered a useful instrument for establishing the veracity of a particular view of America's history, "holding...up a mirror of truth in the place of deception", offering "a new order of reality".²⁰²

In his analysis of 19th century Britain, John Tagg (1988) argues that the photograph is far from neutral.²⁰³ Tagg uses Foucault's analytical framework to study the role of photography in social control during early capitalist development. According to Tagg's seminal study (Tagg, 1988), there is more to a photograph than meets the eye: "...photographs are never evidence of history; they are themselves the historical".²⁰⁴ The camera may have a neutral gaze, but the representations it produces are coded objects, exerting power over their viewers. The power inherent in the camera as an instrument belongs to the person who is

²⁰¹ Buerger, 'Ultima Thule: American Myth, Frontier, and the Artists-Priest in Early American Photography', 87.

²⁰² F.R Gemme in his introduction to Stephen Crane, *Maggie and Other Stories*, (New York: Penguin Random House 1968), 5, quoted in Buerger, 'Ultima Thule: American Myth, Frontier, and the Artists-Priest in Early American Photography', 85.

²⁰³ Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988).

²⁰⁴ Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 11.

directing it. In order to understand a photograph one must analyze the reasons for a given photograph's creation and the discourses generated by it. The fact that a photograph is considered by the viewer to be the product of an objective, mechanical instrument of truth places power in the hands of the photographer as well as the institution which employs the photographer and publishes their photographs. The photograph has the potential to serve the purposes of the individual photographer and/or the institution that uses their photographs. The photograph may serve either to reinforce or to challenge the viewers' perceptions of the world.

Tagg argues that photography was used as a mechanism of social control by the dominant social class and by the state that, in his view, represented the interests of the dominant class. He examines the way in which during the late 19th and early 20th century, European governments penetrated every social sphere from the asylum to the workplace. The role of government greatly expanded as it attempted to construct a sense of national identity across countries composed of diverse regions, languages and cultures, as well as class interests.²⁰⁵ Photography had a significant role to play in that process. According to Tagg, the camera was vested with an authority of surveillance, under whose gaze subjects were obliged to submit to minute scrutiny of their gestures and features. The camera assumed a "burden of subjection". He emphasises that the manner in which a photograph is taken or presented has a great impact upon how its subject matter is read by its viewer. It results in the power of a photograph lying in the hands of those who decide upon how it will be presented and those who capture or sponsor its creation.

²⁰⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

One reason why photography could be used as a tool of authority is its science-like processes. Unlike painting which captures the world as the artist sees or feels the subject, a photograph, no matter who takes it, generally has some kind of uniformity in its rendering of the photograph's subject. A photograph captures the likeness of its subjects in a way that is far closer to the way in which the human eye sees shape and form. Consequently, people are inclined to trust a photograph's rendering of reality more than a painting. A photograph's style of depiction appears to be close to reality and therefore felt to be trustworthy.

The photographic process requires equipment and conditions similar to those found in the sciences, and science is associated with the search for finding and understanding the truth. Scientific studies are often aided in their explorations by machines, laboratories, chemicals and processes that are not understood by most laymen. The creation of a photograph parallels this as it requires machines, including the camera, enlargers and chemicals, as well as the lab-like setting of a dark room during the development and printing process. Most lay people have little knowledge of either the scientific or the photographic process. Science and photography both acquire authority in part due to the complex and seemingly mysterious manner of producing their results.

These factors reinforce the perception that the 'camera never lies' and provides a truthful window upon reality. Photography became so trusted that it was and is used as a recording tool by the sciences.²⁰⁶ During the late 19th century, interest in the science of ethnography increased, and photography became an important part of its research process. The American bureau of Ethnology was established in Washington D.C in 1879, as were other

²⁰⁶ Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 1988.

scientifically focused ethnographic institutions such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, established in 1824. The American bureau of Ethnology's first director was John Wesley Powell (1834-1902) who, with his survey photographer John Karl Hillers (1843-1925) at his side, documented the first subject of American ethnography, Native Americans.²⁰⁷ ²⁰⁸ With the support of the American government, the fields of anthropology, ethnography, linguistics and archaeology developed in the late nineteenth century.

The Native American people were a particular focus of ethnography, a subject that stimulated great public interest.²⁰⁹ By the late 19th and early 20th century, Native Americans were no longer considered a threat to the young American nation, and therefore could be studied and preserved as relics of America's past. The Native Americans were now looked upon as a race of people who needed to be preserved before they disappeared.²¹⁰

Photography came not only to be seen as an instrument of truth but also as an archival tool for posterity. One could consider this new fascination with creating photographic records of Native Americans not only as a form of "salvage photography" but also as Orientalism. Just as European Orientalism helped to shape European views of Asia, the Orientalist gaze directed at Native Americans helped to produce and popularise particular ideas about Native Americans. The imagery created through these studies contributed to a craze for the

²⁰⁷ Fatimah Tobing Rony, 'Victor Masayesva, Jr., and the Politics of "imagining Indians"', *Film Quarterly* Col. 48, No. 2 (University of California Press, Winter, 1994-1995), 20.

²⁰⁸ Lee, 'American Histories of Photography', 2007, 98

²⁰⁹ Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century*, (Chicago: University Press Chicago Press, 2014), 17.

²¹⁰ Rony, 'Victor Masayesva, Jr., and the Politics of "imagining Indinas"', *Film Quarterly* Col. 48, No. 2 (Winter, 1994-1995), 22.

production and consumption of products containing Native American imagery, whilst also allowing the non-Native Americans to understand themselves in relation to the Native American people. One of the most celebrated of these photographers was Edward Curtis (1868-1952), whose work featured in the July 1907 issue of the NGSM²¹¹. However, it was not only the still image that presented the Native American people to the world. Film, and in particular the cinematic genre of Westerns, had a powerful impact on the popular vision of the Native American people, often in a negative light. The cinema presented the public with the dangerous Native American of “yesteryear”, whilst Curtis presented the public with a nostalgic image of the “quelled” Native American people. Both aspects are found in the depiction of Asia and explored further in chapters 5 and 6.

Interest in exploration and study of the “other” by the NGSM seems likely to have grown out of an American tradition of study and recording people within the USA, especially the Native Americans. However, few magazine publications during the early 20th century published the kinds of stories and the large number of images of people outside the USA as the NGM did. The NGM seems to have established a near-monopoly over this type of magazine story, which gave it a significant commercial advantage over potential competitors. Many of the subjects covered in the NGSM were those that its readers never even knew existed. Rather than present nations and peoples as barbaric, the NGSM showed them as exotic curios from the past, in much the same way as early photography of Native Americans did. It seems that the study of the Native Americans, deemed to be less civilised and culturally developed than the White Man, laid the foundations for how Americans would portray the cultures outside their own country.

²¹¹ The National Geographic Society, *High Adventure, The Story of the National Geographic Society*, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society, 2003), 24.

What was the National Geographic Magazine’s relationship with the American government and to what extent did that relationship impact upon the magazine’s content?

Since the NGS’s beginnings, the NGSM has had a close relationship to the American Government. This relationship helped shape the way in which the NGSM viewed and represented the ‘other’. The NGS has always been located within walking distance of the White House in Washington DC. Many of its founders and, during the early years of the magazine, its editorial staff, contributors and members worked for or had worked for the U.S. Government.²¹² This close connection to the government is reflected in the content of the NGSM, which has always been “in tune” with the American political climate. The themes of “democracy”, “manifest destiny” and “American exceptionalism”, the cornerstones of American ideology, have consistently been a feature of its house style since the first magazine was produced in 1888.

The NGSM came into being at the same time that the American government’s attention began to move beyond America’s western land frontier:²¹³ As John King Fairbank (1971) wrote:

[A]s we moved westwards across North America, we began in the 1840s to see our trans-Pacific contact as a natural extension of America’s “manifest destiny”. Orators pictured the westward course of empire, from the ancient Near East Greece, Rome,

²¹² Robert M. Poole, *Explorers House, National Geographic and The World it Made*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 2-3.

²¹³ Lee, ‘American Histories of Photography’, 101.

Western Europe, and on across the Great Plains...The American frontier in Asia was very different from that of the Great Plains: instead of open spaces and natural resources, we found Cathay. This new and strange type of human society aroused our curiosity and eventually our sympathy quite as much as our greed or avarice. Towards it we began to apply attitudes developed at home. These were expansive, adventurous, and acquisitive. They included conceptions of progress, growth, and improvement as the law of life.²¹⁴

At the end of the nineteenth century the pace of the USA's international expansion accelerated. By the early twentieth century the USA had become a major power in the Asia-Pacific, controlling a large body of overseas territories, including the Philippines, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, and numerous small Pacific islands,²¹⁵ and it had developed a strong commercial and missionary interest in China. The USA's territorial, commercial and missionary expansion in the region was supported by an ideology that promised simultaneously to raise the less developed world out of poverty, bring the civilizing mission of Christianity, while making money from commercial interactions.²¹⁶ In the view of

²¹⁴ John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, third edition, 1971), 286.

²¹⁵ These are collectively referred to as the USA's 'minor outlying islands'. They include Baker Island, Howland Island, Jarvis Island, Palmyra Atoll, and Kingman Reef (all acquired in 1856), Johnston Atoll (acquired in 1858), and Wake Island (acquired in 1899). They are still part of the overseas territories of the USA.

²¹⁶ David Brody, *Visualizing American Empire: Orientalism and Imperialism in the Philippines*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 83. In fact, the relationship of missionaries' motivations, the strategic goals of governments and the commercial objectives of business people, is a complex field of enquiry. Brody views the missionaries as cynically supporting American strategic and commercial interests, providing a smokescreen for economically-driven take-over of foreign territory (Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 1-2). However, in

President McKinley (president 1897-1901), Asia was unfit to look after itself, and the USA had a duty to civilize the population through Christianity.²¹⁷ The press formed a key element of the ideology of this era, enthusiastically supporting McKinley's belief in the USA's moral and intellectual superiority, and the concept of "benevolent assimilation" of other nations by the USA.²¹⁸ The press reported on American activities in Asia in a manner that fused together ideas of "Christian benevolence" with the promise of rich commercial opportunities for US business.

Although the NGSM was not established for the explicit purpose of serving the USA's international relations interests, the attention of the American government and the NGSM often focussed on the same places. The NGSM reported on the Philippines and other parts of Asia in which the USA had colonial interests. In David Brody's (2010) view the visual experience of the Early American colonial project in Asia (1898–1913)

...played a large part in Americas relationship with and understanding of the Orient as well as [being] integral to the machinery that helped run the "colonial engine".²¹⁹

Fairbank's view, missionaries 'have been the seedbed of our humanitarianism towards China' (Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 287).

²¹⁷ David Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 1-2.

²¹⁸ Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 61.

²¹⁹ Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 3.

The NGSM was a major contributor to this project. Moreover, the NGSM proudly promoted itself as being in a unique position to gather and report on geographical intelligence from other countries, due to its strong Federal Government connections.²²⁰ The USA's relationship with Asia was further complicated by the emergence of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which was founded in 1921. By the time of the Citroën-Haardt expedition in the early 1930s, communist rule was firmly established in the Soviet Union and the CPC was engaged in fierce military struggle with the KMT. As we will see in chapter 3, there was a strong military element among the composition of the Citroën-Haardt expedition.

Public demand for information about the non-Western world, and in particular Asia, expanded in America alongside the growing interest of its government in the Asia-Pacific region. The American public viewed Asia predominantly through an Orientalist lens, which fed a public desire for fantasy and knowledge about the world outside Europe-North America.²²¹ This new interest in Asia resulted in the U.S.A transposing to Asia those forms of study, recording and control that it had executed within its own territory. Scientific studies of Asia were made in much the same vain as had been conducted within the U.S.A, involving anthropology, ethnography and geography, including drawings and photography. Orientalist art work depicting Asia was also being produced. The images and writing produced often presented a stereotyped and sexualized representation of Asia to consumers. Numerous images of geishas circulated around Euro-America and a thriving market for consumer goods inspired by, and reportage on the Orient, developed, which as examined in greater detail in Chapter 1. The large amount of representations of, and general discussions about,

²²⁰ Tuason, 'The Ideology of Empire in National Geographic Magazine's Coverage of the Philippines, 1898-1908,' 36.

²²¹ Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*.

Asia during the 19th and early 20th century contributed to the shaping of the West's understanding and visualization of the Silk Road and Asia, a continent within which they could find both their fantasy as well as their fears. The way in which Asia was presented to the public, through all manner of media, honed the manner in which the Silk Road was understood by the public.

David Brody (2010) argues that in the eyes of most Americans, Asian people were heathen, dangerous and less civilized than themselves, but had great talents in art and design.²²² He describes American Orientalism and its motives behind representing Asia at the turn of the century as:

...the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.²²³

J.K. Fairbank (1971) emphasizes that alongside the romantic and Orientalist view of Asia, there existed a persistently contradictory aspect to American attitudes towards Asia:

Our folklore and public attitudes concerning China have included several discordant images – exotic, idealized, or disillusioned – which have coexisted but remain

²²² Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 37.

²²³ Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 3

unreconciled in our inherited thinking...In the United States the picture of Chinese drug addiction, prostitution, footbinding, concubinage, and unspeakable vices excited the morbid, while heathen idolatry and sin appalled the devout.²²⁴

This ambivalence towards the Orient increased at the turn of the century as the US became more deeply involved in Asia. Newspapers and magazines devoted large segments of their publications to promoting not only pro- but also anti-imperialist articles and views.²²⁵ Many Americans believed that the government's attention should be focused within America. The nation still had larger problems to solve. The country was still emerging and had a living memory of the civil war, war with Native Americans and slavery and there was tremendous social tension due to growing socio-economic inequality.

Negativity towards Asia grew ever stronger in America, stimulated by fact that during the late 19th century and early 20th century Chinese, Japanese and South Asians migrants came to the U.S.A in increasing numbers.²²⁶ Unease about immigration grew among the white population of America. Scores of Chinese were killed in the anti-Chinese riots in California and other western states in the 1870s and 1880s. The Chinese exclusion acts of 1882 and later years were widely supported across the USA. These laws expressed many fears:

²²⁴ Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 292-4.

²²⁵ Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 61

²²⁶ Erika Lee, The "Yellow Peril" and Asian Exclusion in the Americas', *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 4, (University of California Press, November 2007), 538.

That Chinese were culturally and racially unassimilable, that their lower living standard was a positive menace to public health, that their presence would promote the spread of slavery, as well as the new labour union' fear of their economic competition.²²⁷

One of the most popular forms of American literature, the “Future War” genre, drew inspiration from what many believed were the negative aspects of the USA’s relationship with Asia. This genre thrived amid an early 20th century American atmosphere of paranoia about homeland security and apprehension about the strategic intent of Eastern nations like Russia, Japan and China. Such fictional works were not the only negative response to American relations with Asia. In 1901 Mark Twain wrote the essay ‘*To the person sitting in darkness*’ for the *North American Review* in which he described American colonial interests in the Philippines as; “...a pity; it was a great pity, that error; that one grievous error, that irrevocable error...”²²⁸

The images accompanying articles similar in sentiment to Twain’s often contained highly politically, derogatory, damning and racially charged representations of Asia.²²⁹ Such rhetoric in image and word played into the public’s fear of Asia being a place of barbarism, moral bankruptcy, violence and danger.²³⁰ There was fierce public debate on the subject. Many people claimed the United States should walk away from the “messy business” of

²²⁷ Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 294.

²²⁸ Mark Twain, *Tales, Speeches, Essays, and Sketched*, (Penguin Literary Collections, 1994).

²²⁹ Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 61.

²³⁰ Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 68.

overseas empire, while others argued that the creation of such an empire would bring with it new economic possibilities and it was the Christian thing to do as the people of Asia needed “saving”.²³¹

Through the use of romantic photographs of Asia and beyond, the NGSM provided an opposing image to the negative perceptions of Asia that had developed in the USA. Images of the Orient opened up a dialogue about Empire amongst Americans that words alone could not.²³² By the early 20th century the NGSM was awash with beautiful images of Asia. Numerous articles appeared in the NGSM on the topics of geography, and commercial possibilities in America’s new geographical ‘possessions’ According to Tuason (1999) the NGMS contributors:

...played a vocal role in justifying and disseminating the ideology of U.S. commercial expansion to the magazine’s growing readership, which at the time comprised influential, educated members of the American upper and upper middle classes...²³³

The editor and chief of the NGSM, Gilbert Grosvenor (1875-1966, and President of the NGS 1920-1954), was a supporter of the segment of the Republican Party that advocated a

²³¹ Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 1.

²³² Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 3.

²³³ Tuason, ‘The Ideology of Empire in National Geographic Magazine’s Coverage of the Philippines, 1898-1908’, 35.

“muscular foreign policy”.²³⁴ In 1905 Grosvenor met with William Taft, who shortly afterwards became US President (1909-1913). On Grosvenor’s request, Taft allowed the NGSM to use government collections of photographs of the newly acquired US territory of the Philippines, in the magazine.²³⁵ This photographic spread included 138 photographs. The powerful imagery can be viewed as an attempt to gain the support of a reluctant US public for American exploits in the Philippines. Similar use of government photographs within the NGSM occurred at other points during the early 20th century. Not only did this result in the NGSM having access to additional exclusive visual content, which pleased the readership, but it also gave government agencies that supplied the photographs a public-facing outlet for their work.²³⁶

Summary

In order to understand the way in which Williams selected and shot the photographs on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition it is necessary to investigate the world view of his employer, the National Geographic and the flagship magazine that carried its name. There was a close but complex relationship between Williams and his employer, the National Geographic and between the National Geographic and the world on which it reported. The interaction between the political climate of the time, the institution itself and the photographer helped to shape the nature of photographs taken by Williams on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition.

²³⁴ Mark Rice, ‘Dean Worcester’s Photographs, American National Identity, And “National Geographic Magazine”’, *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 2, Special Issue: *The Materials of American Studies*, (Australia-New Zealand American Studies Association, December 2012), 48.

²³⁵ Robert M. Poole, *Explorers’ House*, 67.

²³⁶ Rice, ‘Dean Worcester’s Photographs, American National Identity, And “National Geographic Magazine’’, 48.

The NGSM began as an austere scientific journal. Under Grosvenor's stewardship it was transformed into a world famous and highly respected science-led commercial magazine. Grosvenor felt that the readership of the NGSM should encompass all people interested in learning about the world, rather than a small group of academics. This was achieved through publishing engaging and supposedly factually written content illustrated with romantic, escapist, evocative and carefully selected photography. The high quality and broad-ranging content set the NGSM apart from other publications. The magazine's inclusion of work by talented photographers captured and held its readership's attention, presenting stunning windows into worlds they often knew little about. According to Grosvenor, the NGSM intended to fill its pages with the: "*The world and all that is in it*".²³⁷

It was the photograph that made the biggest impact on NGSM reader's conception of the world beyond their own. The distinguished scientist and inventor, Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922), who was president of the NGS from 1898-1903, declared; "...judging by myself the pictures are the first thing looked at...".²³⁸ Photography became the main conduit through which the NGSM communicated with its public. This is what it is best known for and which has had the most enduring impact on its public. Even today, many people who consume the NGSM read little or nothing of the articles, but instead are mesmerized by its photographs. The NGSM developed trust among its readers. It was widely regarded as providing truthful and insightful content. Trust in the magazine was underpinned by its scientific name and its ability to report on parts of the world and subject matter that many knew little about. Photography is the key mechanism through which the NGSM established its credibility in the

²³⁷ 'High Adventure: The story of the National Geographic Society', (*National Geographic*, 2003), 20

²³⁸ Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions*, (U of Minnesota Press, 1993), 61.

eyes of its readers. The high-quality photographs gave evidence of the real-life experience of its reporters in the field and substantiated the claims made in the text.

The NGS came into being in 1888. The following decades were crucial in shaping the NGM's character. The people who set up the society had lived through the Civil War (1861-1865) and were in the midst of the era in which key aspects of the American national identity were established. This period also saw photography develop technically. Cameras became increasingly simple and portable. Photographs became more easily duplicated and distributed. The influence of photography greatly expanded in this era, which permitted it to become a vital mechanism for participating in the forging of a unified national American identity out of a young, diverse and fragmented society. Frontier Photography was an important part of this process. Through its recording of the 'unknown and untamed' parts of America it reinforced the concepts of the 'pioneer spirit' and 'manifest destiny' as fundamental components of American identity. During this era, there was increased use of photography as a recording tool in the sciences, including archaeology, geology, geography, ethnography and anthropology. These disciplines and their fieldwork were often supported financially by the U.S.A government in furthering their understanding, taming and exploitation of America's diverse natural resources. They also included extensive studies of Native Americans, who were often recorded in an Orientalist manner as foreign curiosities. The same photographic approach was employed by the NGSM in its studies of people beyond the U.S.A.

Although the education provided by the NGS/NGSM was motivated, in part, by science and universal friendship. It was also not politically a neutral institution and nor did it ever claim to be. During its formative years, a close relationship was established between the NGM and US government. The magazine has always been patriotic. The NGS headquarters have

always been located close to the White House. In its formative years, many of the NGM's senior officials were closely connected to the U.S. government. The NGSM included information gathered by, and photographs produced by, the American government. Its content often focused on regions in which the U.S. government had strategic interests. This helped nurture public support for US government activities in those regions. The NGSM, whether consciously or not, helped to influence its readers' political outlook, especially in regards to empire building and the notion of American superiority. The notion of American superiority was encouraged through the publication of photographs and articles that typically showed developing countries as living in bygone time. The content of the NGSM helped to perpetuate ideas of the non-Euro-American world existing in the past, by focusing on the "strangeness" and "differences" between the Euro-American and the non-western world. The way in which the NGSM explored and recorded the "other" outside the USA grew out of the American tradition of study and recording those lands within the USA that were still "untamed". The NGSM's perspective on the world outside the USA grew out of the conception of the westward extension of the US frontier and the 'manifest destiny' of the American people to explore and exert influence over other people.

More than any other magazine the NGSM captured the world's attention through its striking photography of "the world and all that is in it".²³⁹ The NGSM's choice of what to present to the world and how to present it affected the manner in which Americans understood the rest of the world and their place within it. In a sense the NGSM was, indeed, the USA's "tutor" during the nation's age of self-discovery, informing the American people about the world beyond its borders. The photographs that appeared in its pages were key to the popularity of its classroom "lessons".

²³⁹ 'High Adventure: The story of the National Geographic Society', (*National Geographic*, 2003), 20

Chapter 3. In the Footsteps of Marco Polo.

This chapter provides an account of the motivations for and the events that took place during the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition. To this end the following questions will be examined:

- What was the expedition's purpose?
- Where did the expedition travel and what happened on the way?
- What was the legacy of the expedition?

Answering these questions will provide insight into Williams' decisions about what objects and people to photograph on the expedition and how he took the photographs.

What was the expedition's purpose?

The Citroën Asiatic Expedition took place from April 4th 1931- April 18th 1932,²⁴⁰ and was intended to be the first to cross Asia - from the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea - by half-track motor. The expedition party was made up of thirty-five men,²⁴¹ all of whom were French bar Williams, who was American, and the Russian painter Alexandre Iacovleff (1887-1939).²⁴² The expedition leader was the professional explorer George-Marie Haardt (1889-

²⁴⁰ Eric Deschamps, *Croisiere Jaune, Chroniques 1929-1933*, (ETAI, France, 2003), 143.

²⁴¹ The National Geographic Society, Letter to Grosvenor from Maynard Owen Williams, Urumqi, Sinking, November 7th 1931

File Number: 11-3.52 (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive), 11.

²⁴²Alexandre Iacovleff had left Russia for Paris prior to the revolution. Iacovleff was active in the most fashionable Parisian art and social circles. These elements together with the fact that he had travelled on other Citroën expeditions probably contributed to him being chosen for the expedition. (National Geographic Magazine, Box 1, Folder 1 11-27.1, Folder of 'Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owen, 1931-1932', Iacocleff (Washington DC: National Geographic Archive).

1932), and the whole enterprise was financed jointly by the Franco-Belgian automaker M. Andre Citroën (1878-1935),²⁴³ the French Government and the NGS.²⁴⁴

The Expedition was inspired in part by the exploits of Alexander the Great (356BC-323BC), Xuan Zang (602AD-664AD), George Barrow (1853-1932)²⁴⁵, Albert von Le Coq (1860-

²⁴³ Prior to the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931- 1932) Citroën had financed expeditions by Citroën motor across the Sahara Expedition Touggourt-Timbuctoo-Touggourt (17th December 1922-7th March 1923) and the “Croisiere Noire” (28 October 1924- 26 June 1925) which crossed from North to South, traveling from Colomb-Bechar to Cape Town.

²⁴⁴ Georges-Marie Haardt (Leader of the mission), Louis Audouin-Dubreuil (Assistant mission leader), Lieutenant de Vaisseau Victor Point (China Group leader), Capitaine de Corvette Henri Pecqueur (Assistant to mission leaders), Andre Goerger (Secretary General), Vladimir Petropavovskiy (Assistant to China group leader), Dr Maynard Owen Williams (National Geographic Reporter), Joseph Hackin (Archaeologist, curator of the Guimet Museum, Pamir Group), Jean Carl (Assistant archaeologist, China Group), Pere Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Geologist, China Group), Charles Brull (Engineer, China Group), Georges Le Fevre (Historiographer, Pamirs Group), Andre Reymond (Naturalist, China Group), Alexandre Iacovleff (Artist-painter, Pamirs Group), Doctor Robert Delastre (China Group Doctor), Doctor Pierre Jourdan (Pamirs Group Doctor), Andre Sauvage (Film Director, Pamirs Group), Leon Morizet (Camera operator for the Pamirs Group), Georges Specht (Camera operator for the China Group), William Sivel (Sound Recordist Pamirs Group), Varnet (Interpreter Pamirs Group), Yves Gauffreteau (Camp cook Pamirs Group), Eugene Schuller (Wireless operator Pamirs Group), Quartier-Maitre Maurice Laplanche (Wireless operator Pamirs Group), Roger Kervizic (Wireless Operator, China Group), Antine Ferracci (Chief mechanic, Pamirs Group), Marcel Bourgoïn – Andre Cecillon – Georges Collet – Marcel Corset – Henri Jocard – Charles Leroux – Andre Normand (Pamirs Group Mechanics), Maurice Penaud (Chief Mechanic, China Group), Clovis Balourdet – Joseph Remillier – Maurice Piat – Andre Dielmann – Jean Gauthier – Fernand Chauvet – Robert Conte – Eugene Nuret – Gustave Kegresse (China Group Mechanics).

²⁴⁵ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroën-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey’, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, 553.

1930)²⁴⁶, Aurel Stein (1862-1943), Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) and Sven Hedin (1865-1952), all of whom had traversed Asia's trading routes. However, it was Marco Polo's (1254-1324) travels during the 13th century²⁴⁷ that were the expedition's primary stimulus. Indeed, the expedition's declared intention was to "follow in the footsteps of Marco Polo". Mention of him is made in almost all of the literature connected to the expedition. The central role of the *Travels* of Marco Polo together with the wish to record the expedition visually makes clear that one of its core purposes was to recapture the distant past by means of a thoroughly modern expedition, including its mode of transport and photographic equipment.

The NGS described the expedition's purpose as providing a scientific study of the terrain and people of Asia.²⁴⁸ Despite such claims and the fact that the expedition's members included many French scientific specialists, including geographers, archaeologists, ornithologists, botanists, geologists, cartographers and anthropologists,²⁴⁹ there is little evidence within the Citroën, NGS or Kalamazoo archives of such scientific studies. The information these specialists gathered may be stored in the archives of the institutions to which they belonged. However, due to time constraints and the need to have boundary to the PhD I decided not to access these archives. Nevertheless, it is still surprising that there is no record of their scientific findings at the NGM, as the publication and society were proud of their science-led reportage. It could be argued that the visual output from the expedition's painter, photographers and cinematographers constituted a "scientific record", which

²⁴⁶ Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, (July-December, 1932), 517.

²⁴⁷ Marco Polo, *The Travels*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2004).

²⁴⁸ *The Sydney Mail*, April, (1932), 25.

²⁴⁹ National Geographic Society, *Geographic News Bulletin on Motor Caravan Cross Least Known Asia, 1934* (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive), 2.

contributed to ethnographical, geographical and archaeological knowledge. Seen from this perspective, the Citroën, NGS and Kalamazoo archives are full of “scientific” work. However, although the articles that accompanied these photographs in the NGSM - as well as letters – often make reference to ancient geological sites of importance, they do not constitute a serious archaeological, geographical or ethnographical scientific contribution. Williams’ writing bears little relationship to the research of archaeologist-explorers such as Stein or Hedin. His writing functions more as a means of providing ‘tone’ to his photographs, rather than serious scientific comment. Equally there are a number of references to different “ethnographic types” in the commentary on the photographs, but these make a negligible contribution to anthropological understanding of the lands through which the expedition passed. In sum, insofar as the expedition’s findings were reported in the NGM, they do not make a serious contribution to scientific knowledge of the Silk Road but rather provide an atmospheric and engrossing travelogue.

The largest output from the expedition was visual material, which the NGSM and Citroën considered vital to the success of the expedition. For Citroën it was intended to provide evidence of the capabilities of their cars and associated technology, while for the NGSM it provided documentation of the societies, geography and art of the continent of Asia,²⁵⁰ with which its pages could be filled to the delight of its readership. The NGSM claimed that the expedition would make studies of: “...the influence of past civilizations on the present

²⁵⁰ *National Geographic Society Archive*, Trans Asian Expedition Starts, File Number: 20-1844 June 1931, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society, National Geographic Archive), 9.

condition of Asiatic people will be studied”²⁵¹ and observed that in Asia: “...some of the earliest phases of mankind’s history transpired”.²⁵²

These quotes, and the importance of photographic documentation of Asia to the NGS, suggests that this expedition was in part motivated by the concept of salvage. The NGSM’s presentation of the region relied heavily upon early 20th century Euro-American fantasies in which Asia existed in a mysterious and idyllic pre-industrial time capsule.²⁵³ The expedition was presented as a romantic adventure across ancient lands, within which the members would encounter all the beauty and danger that Asia had to offer. In the July-December 1931 NGSM, Williams wrote that the purpose of the expedition was:

...to study this interesting old continent; to follow pilgrim and trade routes older than idols or money; to record the sights and sounds of the changing East by methods unavailable to former expeditions; to share our results with millions - this is no mere mechanical treadmill...Only through the help of Kublai Khan could Marco Polo “see wonders.” Only through Marco Polo did the shadow of “the lord or lords” reach to the Western World. The changing East has messages we cannot with impunity ignore.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ The National Geographic Society, June 1931 Trans Asian Expedition Starts, *File Number: 20-1844*, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive), 9.

²⁵² The National Geographic Society, News Bulletin on Motor Caravan to Cross Least Known Asia, 1934 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive), 3.

²⁵³ Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, (July-December, 1931), 392.

²⁵⁴ Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, (July-December, 1931), 392.

The pairing of Citroën and the NGSM may have occurred through Williams himself, as he lived in France from 1923-1925.²⁵⁵ At first sight the pairing seems hard to explain, as they operated in different countries and different commercial spheres – publishing and automobiles. In fact, the NGSM and Citroën had some objectives for the expedition. Most notably, commercial objectives were centrally important for both Citroën and NGSM.

The expedition took place in the midst of the Great Depression of the early 1930s. For the NGSM this resulted in a decline in subscriptions and income. For the NGSM, involvement in the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition constituted a potential path to rekindle audience interest at a difficult time for the magazine. For Citroën, the expedition provided a potential not only expand automobile sales in Europe, but also help the company break into the American market. Press coverage of the expedition was of great importance for both organizations and the fact that the expedition's photographs and paintings appeared in wide array of press outlets benefited both parties. The NGSM supplied news of the expedition to more than 600 US daily newspapers, with a circulation of more than 14,000,000 copies, while bulletins were issued to around 5,000 other smaller dailies and weeklies with a circulation of around 5,000,000.²⁵⁶ Citroën did not rely entirely on the NGSM for coverage, as they had their own European press connections.²⁵⁷ Citroën also produced their own publicity material in the form of postcards and maps. The large amount of press coverage,

²⁵⁵ National Geographic Archives, Washington DC, United States of America, File Number 11-3.47, Letter from Haardt to LaGorce November 13th 1930.

²⁵⁶ The National Geographic Society, Letter to Mr Jules Henry of the French Embassy in Washington on May 27th 1931, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

²⁵⁷ The National Geographic Society, Letter from G.H.G from J.O.L, September 9 1930, File Number 11-3.47, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

distributed by the NGS and Citroën, suggests that this expedition was at least in part an effort to attract publicity.²⁵⁸

The colonial objectives of the respective national governments, which were interwoven with commercial interests, may also have played a part in the decision of Citroën and NGSM to work together on the expedition. France built its first colonial empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but it subsequently lost most of these territories.²⁵⁹ From the 1830s onwards it re-built its overseas empire, including large parts of Africa and South East Asia, as well as making extensive Pacific Ocean acquisitions.²⁶⁰ France's conquest of Indo-China took place between 1858-1907. The colonial territory of French Indo-China was established formally in 1887, embracing Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. At the Versailles Conference in 1919-20 France was given the "mandate" for the territories of Lebanon and Syria, which thereby became *de facto* French colonies. The expedition therefore may well have been intended to demonstrate France's colonial strength by successfully traversing "wild Oriental lands" through the ingenuity of French engineering. Evidence in support of this includes the fact that the French government helped to finance the expedition, thereby providing a possible colonial dimension to the expedition. Such objectives are also reflected in the

²⁵⁸ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-3.49, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

²⁵⁹ The British defeated the French in the Seven Years War (1756-63) resulting in the loss of a large part of its overseas empire. In 1803 France sold the 'Louisiana' territories to America. The vast territories occupied most of the central part of North America.

²⁶⁰ Benedict, Burton, 'International Exhibitions and National Identity', *Anthropology Today*, Vol.7, No.3, (June, 1991, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland), 5. In the Pacific Ocean, France acquired French Polynesia in 1842 and New Caledonia in 1853.

rhetoric surrounding Citroën's previous expeditions. Haardt described the purposes of the 15,000 mile journey in 1924 from French Algeria to its colony in Madagascar as follows:²⁶¹

Our original purpose was to demonstrate the feasibility of motor transport in these wild regions, and to trace a route which might later enable the French Government to project a railroad that would connect two of its greatest provinces, now operated by thousands of miles of desert and jungle. This was soon broadened, however to include official missions for the Colonial Office, the Air Ministry, the French Natural History Museum, and the French Geographical Society.²⁶²

Colonial interests were also of concern to the American government. The USA had built a large overseas empire in the late nineteenth century, including the purchase of the vast territory of Alaska from Russia in 1867, the annexation of Hawaii in 1898, the conquest of the Philippines between 1898-1902 and the annexation of various other Pacific territories, such as Guam, American Samoa, North Marianas and the "guano islands".

²⁶¹ France had conquered Algeria in the 1830s and 1840s, and Madagascar in the 1880s and 1890s. From 1848 until independence in 1962, Algeria was a constituent department of France.

²⁶² The National Geographic Society, 'Through the Deserts and Jungles of Africa by Motor, Caterpillar Cars Makes 15,000-Mile Trip From Algeria to Madagascar in Nine Months, By George-Marie Haardt, with Illustrations from Photographs by Members of the Citroën Central African Expedition, *National Geographic Magazine*, Volume XLIX, Number Six, June 1926, File Number: 21-1890, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive), 651.

The main part of the expedition directly traversed France's overseas colonial territories in the Middle East and South East Asia. The expedition had a wider significance in relation to the global interests of France and the USA. It produced a proliferation of visual material, which had a strong impact upon the popular imagination. It helped to reinforce the sense that these two industrialised countries were bringing progress to the non-Western world, which was presented in the NGM articles on the Expedition as stuck in a time-warp. Citroën openly referred to its intention to open up Asia to trade, to Euro-American thought, and to help China achieve mechanical progress.²⁶³ Citroën also spoke excitedly about how the expedition would help to exert moral influence on the continent of Asia and contribute to the re-establishment of order in areas experiencing civil war.²⁶⁴

Although many of the regions crossed by the expedition were neither French nor American colonies, they were of great strategic interest to both powers. It is possible that the expedition was partially an intelligence gathering exercise. Most of the regions that the expedition travelled through were of great interest to Western colonial powers. Moreover, almost all of the members of the expedition were current or former members of their respective military forces. As discussed in Chapter 2, many early 20th century explorers and NGSM reporters had connections to the US government and even conducted intelligence work. For example, Williams, a pacifist,²⁶⁵ had been a First Lieutenant in the United States intelligence service from 1917-1919,²⁶⁶ and written on the back of his release papers is a

²⁶³ The National Geographic Society, "Trans Asian Expedition Starts", (File Number: 20-1844 June 1931).

²⁶⁴ The National Geographic Society, "Trans Asian Expedition Starts", June 1931.

²⁶⁵ Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America, LIX 77/1 Miscellaneous Correspondence, Box 14 F.6, Pre-National Geographic.

²⁶⁶ Kalamazoo College Archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America, Diplomas Certificates, Item

note that recommends the US military keep in touch with Williams for intelligence work in the future.²⁶⁷ The Kalamazoo archive contains a collection of Williams' medals, some of which he gained during his service in WW1 and WW2.

Williams' not only had experience in the intelligence service but also had an extensive professional history working as a missionary teacher and journalist across Europe and the Near, Middle, and Far East as well as Central Asia before and during his time with the NGM (see Appendix 1 for Williams' biography). In October 1917 Williams was residing in Harbin, China when he got news of the Russian Revolution. He immediately travelled to Petrograd, and began reporting on the revolution for the Christian Herald Newspaper.²⁶⁸ Williams was not only an observer of the Revolution but took part in it when from 1917-18 he became in sole charge of relief work in Van, historic capital of Armenia. He also spent time in Siberia as the only American correspondent with the Czechoslovak Legionnaires, a group of Czech prisoners-of-war who escaped and travelled along the Trans-Siberian railway attacking the Bolsheviks.²⁶⁹ France, Britain and America all provided money and supplies to anti-Bolshevik troops, which may have been why the Legionnaires allowed Williams to travel with them. Such experience, combined with the Russian painter Alexandre Iacovleff's knowledge of

XXXII. ITEM XXXII.

²⁶⁷ Kalamazoo College Archives, Diplomas Certificates, Item XXXII. Item XXXII.

²⁶⁸ Kalamazoo College Archives, Item XXXVIII MOW, Scrapbook Clippings and Photos From 1913 Through His Artic Trip with Macmillan 1925 Plus Subsequent Interviews, Lectures, etc in Numerous Places Around The World (collected first by his mother and then by his wife), Kalamazoo College Archives, Kalamazoo College, Michigan, United States of America.

²⁶⁹ Conrad, *Sr.*, Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963,5.

Russia, would have been useful for successful navigation of the expedition's first planned route through Russian territory and may have contributed to their selection for the expedition. Williams wrote about his experience during the Russian revolution in an article titled "Justice Amidst Anarchy":

The greatest sin of the Old Regime was the willful neglect of education among the sodden mass of widely varied peoples, and those peoples, staggering under the unwonted burden of responsibility after patriarchal mastery, should not be blamed too much for discrepancies which they have long had, but which were formerly hidden under the cloak of Romanoff authority. Un-specialized Russia has not only failed to build in a day a satisfactory republic from the wreckage of autocracy but has also failed in the grim game of war, which requires organization and discipline to an unusual degree. In drinking too deeply of unaccustomed liberty, the untaught Russian has poisoned himself with the dregs of anarchy and his aimless struggles for self-mastery have received perhaps too hasty judgment on the part of his older brothers in self-government. But it must not to be thought that in the things which he understands the Russian has lost all reason. Quite the reverse is true.²⁷⁰

This article demonstrates Williams' somewhat contradictory politics. Judging from Williams' writings it seems that his political views straddle American Free Capitalism and democracy on the one hand, while sympathizing with the Communist Revolution in Russia on the other. This ambiguity runs through all of his work. Throughout his writing he frequently says one

²⁷⁰ Kalamazoo College Archives (Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America, Box 5/10, Item XXVI, Williams Early Articles in Manuscript, 'Justice Amidst Anarchy', p.1.

thing only to later contradict it. His frequently contradictory positions seem to stem from well-intentioned sympathy with different points of view.

Upon meeting Williams for the first time, Monsieur Citroën requested Williams send him an account of his life (see Appendix 1).²⁷¹ Williams' experience working and living in many of the regions that the expedition planned to navigate, helped to secure his selection as photographer-correspondent on the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition. Moreover, Williams was one of the NGM's longest running employees, first appointed in 1919, and he was selected as the first head of the NGSM's Foreign Correspondents department in 1930. Consequently, he had a great deal of influence within the NGM. This would have further added to the rationale behind his appointment to the expedition. In fact, it may well have been Williams who, as the head of the NGSM's Foreign Correspondent department, had sway over his own appointment to what was predicted to be a prestigious expedition.

Where did the expedition travel and what happened on the way?

The route selected for the expedition had a fundamental impact upon the photographic possibilities available to Williams. As was seen in chapter 1, there were many different, shifting "Silk Roads" across Central Asia, rather than a single pathway. The Citroën Asiatic Expedition involved meticulous two year preparations made by Haardt, Citroën and the

²⁷¹ The National Geographic Society, Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to Monsieur Citroën, Paris France, January 26th, 1931, Box 1, Folder 2, File 11-27.2, Personal Papers Maynard Owen Williams, Citroën Andre, 1931-1933, (National Geographic Archive, The National Geographic Society, Washington DC, United States of America).

NGS.²⁷² Choice of the route was a vital part of the preparation.

From the late 1920s onwards it was almost impossible for non-Russian photographers to travel along the Silk Road's extensive routes in the Soviet Union, which included ancient Silk Road cities such as Samarkand and Bokhara, in today's Uzbekistan, both of which were visited by Marco Polo.²⁷³ Few, if any, Western photographers were able to record the tremendous transformation that was taking place along the Silk Road in the vast territories of Soviet Central Asia. The Citroën-Haardt expedition of 1931-2 coincided with Soviet collectivization in which at least five million people died, including hundreds of thousands who were executed and a much larger number who starved to death. One of the worst-affected regions was Central Asia, especially Kazakhstan.²⁷⁴ It was impossible for the expedition to travel along these ancient routes. The romantic images of the "unchanging Silk Road" stuck in a permanent "time-warp" recorded by Williams in 1931-32, were far removed from the tragic reality that was unfolding in Soviet Central Asia, to the north of the route taken by the Citroën-Haardt Expedition.

The original route planned for the expedition cut North of the Hindu-Kush and drove East through Central Asia. However, Russia refused the expedition entry,²⁷⁵ which resulted in

²⁷² Joseph Hackin, 'In Persia and Afghanistan with the Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition.' *The Geographical Journal* 83, no. 5, (1934), 23.

²⁷³ Marco Polo, *Travels*, 1974, 35 and 81.

²⁷⁴ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine* (London: Arrow Books, 1986), ch. 9, 'Central Asia and the Kazakh Tragedy'.

²⁷⁵ Maynard Owen Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, (July-December, 1932), 513.

Citroën modifying its plans,²⁷⁶ splitting the single expedition into two groups. The first travelled West from Beijing under the leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Point, leaving supplies to aid the second group's journey in its wake. The second group, of which Williams was a member,²⁷⁷ was under the leadership of Haardt. It travelled through Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Kashmir and over the Himalayas²⁷⁸ via the Burzil pass to Urumqi, through Xinjiang where the two groups united, then through the Gobi Desert, Mongolia and Beijing.²⁷⁹ It was planned that the expedition would then board ship at Tianjin to Vietnam, and from there travel through French Indo-China²⁸⁰ and on through Burma, Bangladesh, India (via Calcutta, Allahabad, Agra and Delhi), Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria and finally back to Beirut, which re-traced the return route to Europe taken by Marco Polo in his *Travels*.

In the early 1930s, when the Citroën-Haardt expedition took place, substantial regions of the Silk Road were under the direct control of Western countries. These included the 'mandated territories' in the Middle-East, administered by France and Britain: Lebanon and Syria were under French rule from 1920-1946 and Iraq was under British rule from 1920-1932.²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ Hackin, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 83. No., (5, May, 1934), 353.

²⁷⁷ Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 323.

²⁷⁸ Hackin, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 83. No., 5, May, 1934, 23.

²⁷⁹ *The Sydney Mail*, April, 1932, 25.

²⁸⁰ Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, (January-June, 1932), 321.

²⁸¹ Under the Versailles Treaty (1919), Britain was granted the mandate to Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Iraq, while France was granted the mandate to Lebanon and Syria.

Kashmir was ruled by Britain from 1858-1947. France also controlled Indo-China, while Britain controlled South Asia and parts of South East Asia. However, the West's main relationship with the central part of the Silk Road in China and Central Asia, was not through direct colonial rule. Rather, it was through the 'Great Game', which centred on diplomatic manoeuvring and military actions in and around Afghanistan.²⁸² Furthermore, Western countries had no direct relationship with the long sections of the Silk Road inside China, through which much of the Silk Road trade ran. Western photographers, such as Williams, were therefore recording a distant, romantic and far-off territory, which had no direct present or historical relationship with the photographers' home country. Although goods and culture from the Silk Road found their way into Europe markets and society throughout Western history, Asia and the Silk Road were still very much understood by the West as something distant and unconnected with the Western world.

Permission was easily granted by most countries however the Chinese government had reservations about the expedition. Permission was granted on the condition that the expedition collaborate with the Geological Service of China.²⁸³ The expedition only received general permission from the Nanjing government, which required the expedition to obtain separate permission from each provincial government as they moved through them. Although Nanjing was the capital of China, the Kuomintang (*Guomindang*) did not control the whole country as China in the early 1930s was in the grip of a brutal civil war.²⁸⁴ Between 1927 and 1935 the Guomindang held control of most of Central and Eastern China. In

²⁸² Britain was defeated in three wars in Afghanistan (1839-42, 1878-80 and 1919).

²⁸³The National Geographic Society, June 1931 Trans Asian Expedition Starts, File Number: 20-1844, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive), 16 & 17.

²⁸⁴ Owen Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia*, (New York: AMS Press, 1975), 52-69.

September 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria (North east China). At that time the main base for the Communist Party (CPC) was in South Eastern China in the Jiangxi Soviet founded in 1931. Much of Northern and Western China was under the control of War Lords. The country was fractured, dangerous and in chaos during the Citroën-Haardt Expedition's time there. This was especially so in the areas through which the expedition passed in Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia and Inner Mongolia. As is evidenced, by the fact that upon arrival at any city the expedition became nervous as they braced themselves for the inevitable lock in by city or town governors, and the bartering that would follow in order to be allowed to leave.²⁸⁵ Williams had his own views on why China should let the expedition enter its territory:

China must not only rigidly exclude those who would make her path more difficult but also welcome those who can win wider appreciation for the high qualities which the best Chinese possess, but which cannot be held if a radical element gains control. Chinese exclusion may meet our economic needs. But exclusion of friendly foreigners from China cannot - as far as I can see - advance the cause of a China which has avowedly forsaken the old for the new. The fact that we [i.e. the NGSM] have some thousands of Chinese members shows our responsibilities.²⁸⁶

It seems that Williams was aware of the power that his photographs, writing and the NGSM

²⁸⁵ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroën-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine Index*, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII.

²⁸⁶ Kalamazoo College Archives: Letter form MOW to Grosvenor, Bunji on the Gilgit road, August 2, 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College Archives, Kalamazoo College, Michigan), 1.

had to affect Euro-American views about the world. He would also have been aware of the impact that China's reluctance to allow foreign expedition parties into the country had on the value of the expedition's output.

It was not only global politics that caused turbulence during the expedition, the internal politics of the expedition party also proved difficult, notably the day-to-day interactions between Williams and Haardt. Their relationship had deteriorated upon leaving Beirut. Williams felt that Haardt was stopping him from doing his job, primarily due to his refusal to acquiesce to Williams' requests to stop the cars for photographic opportunities.²⁸⁷ Relations became so bad that the NGSM agreed to fabricate an excuse for Williams to be released from the expedition,²⁸⁸ though he eventually chose to stay. Nor did Williams find it easy to fit in with the other members of the expedition. The fact that he was an American,²⁸⁹ a Baptist among Catholics, and that he did not drink, smoke, gamble, swear or womanize marked him out as prudish amongst the rest of the expedition members.²⁹⁰ He was often teased by the expedition and in response to this he wrote in his letters home that; "...sex as a steady diet is not my idea of table talk. A little spice I don't object to. But the pepper should be used with

²⁸⁷ The National Geographic Society, Radio received by Amateur Stations, Washington, By Cornerman W3BEG AND Darne W3BWT, From MOW: JAN 17TH 1932 Mingshia, File Number: 11-3.52, (The National Geographic Society Archive, Washington DC, United States of America), 1.

²⁸⁸ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-10015.467, (The National Geographic Society Archive, Washington DC, United States of America).

²⁸⁹ The National Geographic Society Archive, Letter from MOW to La Gorce, Sinisgar Via Gilgit India, (August 29th 1931).

²⁹⁰The National Geographic Society, (The National Geographic Society Archive, Washington DC, United States of America).

discretion”²⁹¹ and that; “I get tired at times of being flippantly accorded of Sodomy, but such periods pass”.²⁹² At some points Williams would refuse to eat with the rest of the expedition members due to their choice of conversation and on one occasion at an official dinner in Urumqi in Xinjiang:

One of our men drank enough that he invaded my [Williams’] bed-room, broke the bed, cut my foot, got a salutary slap on the face [given by Williams] and we have been better friends ever since.²⁹³

In order to deal with these frustrations, he would turn to the copy of Marco Polo’s *Travels*, given to him by the geographer and cartographer Professor J. Paul Goode (1862-1932), in order to calm down.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Kalamazoo College Archives, A Letter from MOW to La Gorce, A charming room in the Former Italian Legation Kabul, Afghanistan, June 11, 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën-Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America), 2.

²⁹² Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to Bob, Nedou’s Hotel, Srinagar June 23, 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America), 1.

²⁹³ The National Geographic Society, Letter from Grosevnor from Maynard Owen Williams, Urumchi, Xinjiang, November 7th 1931, File Number: 11-3.52, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive), 7.

²⁹⁴ The National Geographic Society, Letter to Grosvenor Form Maynard Owen Williams, Urumchi, Xinjiang, (November 7TH File Number: 11-3.52), 16 & 21.

The Photographs

Williams' considered the lavish ceremonial events the expedition were obliged to attend to be a waste of time, which would be better spent exploring and photographing.²⁹⁵ The rapid pace at which Haardt insisted the expedition move also irked Williams. He much preferred wondering around a location with his camera, getting to know people and capturing photographs of them and other things he saw.²⁹⁶ Time meandering around a new place was a vital part of Williams' approach to photography. He felt he needed this time in order to get a sense of a place and decide what and how to photograph. To get the shots he wished for he would also dress in the:

...least conspicuous manner, to set up as few differences as possible between myself and my models. To wear a costume which is quick to put on quick to take off and comfortable all the time....²⁹⁷

It is possible this method was inspired by his time spent with his good friend Lawrence of Arabia, who also used such methods.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ The National Geographic Society, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive).

²⁹⁶ The National Geographic Society, Letter to Haardt from National Geographic Society, August 19th 1931, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive).

²⁹⁷ Kalamazoo College, Letter from MOW to G (NGSM), Baghdad, Iraq, Rutz Hotel, April 18th 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America).

²⁹⁸ Kalamazoo College, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6., (Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

Williams made extensive preparations for the expedition. However, the choice of photographic equipment was not his own. Citroën provided the majority of the funds for the expedition and they had the deciding voice in the choice of photographic equipment.²⁹⁹ They allowed him to use his Graflex Series B black and white film camera, the model most commonly carried by NGM photographers. The Graflex Series B is a large format camera that was usually mounted on tripods in the field and used to shoot black and white photos.³⁰⁰ It is likely that he also brought along the twin lens reflex medium format Rolleiflex camera, otherwise known as the “belly button camera”, which was also a popular camera amongst NGM photo-journalists.³⁰¹ Williams’ request to use autochromes was rejected as Citroën insisted he use Finlay colour plates. Williams was displeased with the Finlay plates as he disliked their colour quality.³⁰² In a letter sent to Iacovleff from Williams after the end of the expedition Williams wrote that:

My colour plates, on first inspection, were a vast disappointment after the high anticipation raised by the black-and-white prints. The Finlay process is constantly

²⁹⁹ The National Geographic Society, File number: 11-3.53, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁰⁰ The National Geographic Society Exhibition Hall, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archives).

³⁰¹ Mark Collins, *National Geographic 125 Years: Legendary Photographs, Adventures and Discoveries That Changed the World*, (Washington DC: National Geographic, 2012), 127.

³⁰² The National Geographic Society, Box 1 File Number: 1 11-27.1, Folder of ‘Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owen, 1931-1932, Iacocleff, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archives).

changing and the filter was not of the right type for the screens. But we are hoping to correct the preponderance of green.³⁰³

Another downside of the Finlay process is that over time, due to their nature and not to the fault of the NGM or Williams, the plates lose all colour. The only Finlay colour prints that survive today from the expedition are those that were created early on in the plates' creation. Although Citroën decided the choice of photographic equipment, the NGS held all the American rights to Williams' work³⁰⁴ and wrote the photographs' legends.

Williams' choices about how to depict his subjects were influenced by various factors, including his own expectations and aesthetic sense, as well as his understanding of what would appeal most to the NGS audience and their conception of the Silk Road and East Asia. Williams' works were not only supposed to report upon but, according to the NGSM Editor and Chief, transport the NGS reader around the world. In his personal diaries and letters to the NGS Williams wrote about the pressure to satisfying his readership's expectations. According to Williams what the NGSM readership demanded of a photographer and writer in Asia were "visions of ancient splendor, veiled women, camels, biblical charm" and that; "...my camera facing the more modern aspect of Oriental life

³⁰³ The National Geographic Society, August 2 1932, Folder of 'Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owen, 1931-1932, Iacocleff, Box 1, Folder, File 1 11-27.1.

³⁰⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter to to La Gorce from MOW, Nedou's Hotel, Srinagar June 25 1931, Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

whispers to me “your picture editor won’t like this”.³⁰⁵ Although modernisation was still at an early stage, the Silk Road regions across Eurasia did have cinemas, planes, trains, trucks and automobiles. However, Williams chose not to photograph them. The Silk Road and the regions through which it passed were presented in Williams’ photographs as existing in an unchanging pre-industrial time warp, just as they had been presented to him in literature and art.

Like most artists, Williams seems to have been a perfectionist, never satisfied with his work.³⁰⁶ As a result, he made it clear to the NGS that only the best photographs should survive and be shown to Citroën. In a letter from Williams to the NGSM (Sari, North Persia, May 6th 1931) he wrote: “PLEASE HAVE ALL [of the photographs] BUT THE CLASS STUFF DESTROYED AND UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES FORWARDED TO THE PARIS HEAD QUARTERS OF THE EXPEDITION”.³⁰⁷

Williams’ writing and photographs were published while he was still on the expedition.³⁰⁸ He wrote his articles in the field on a typewriter that he lugged about with him. In order for

³⁰⁵ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, BOX 7/6, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

³⁰⁶ The National Geographic Society, Letter to Grosvenor from Maynard Owen Williams, Urumchi Xinjiang, November 7TH File number: 11-3.52, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive), 13.

³⁰⁷ The National Geographic Society, Letter from MOW to NGSM, Sari North Persia, May 6th 1931, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive),

³⁰⁸ Kalamazoo College, Letter written in Doyan on the Gilgit Road Gilgit 53 miles Bandipur 140 miles July 28 1931, to John La Gorce from Maynard Owen Williams, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4, (Kalamazoo College Archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 3.

Williams to receive his films and plates, and for the NGSM to receive his work for publication, the two would communicate using telegrams and letters. Williams would tell the NGSM what he needed and they would ship his supplies to the locations he suggested. Williams tended to pick these up in month-load bulks at major cities. The NGSM received Williams' articles and undeveloped photographs by various methods including those dispatched with people returning to the USA, as well as through shipping and airmail. This was worrying for Williams.³⁰⁹ Not only was he entrusting weeks of irreplaceable work to strangers who would travel with it over thousands of miles, but the photographic work he sent would be undeveloped, which meant he could not be sure that he or the NGSM would be happy with the results of his work.^{310 311}

The Expedition

Beirut to Kashmir (April 4th 1931-June 24th 1931)

Distinction can be drawn between the first half of the expedition, from Beirut to the foot of the Pamirs, when the expedition lived in relative luxury, and the tumultuous and sometimes disturbing second half of the trip from the Pamirs to Tianjin.

³⁰⁹ The National Geographic Society, Letter to La Gorce for Maynard Owen Williams, February 18th 1931, Personal Papers Maynard Owen Williams, Maynard Owen Williams Retirement, 1951-1953, Box 1 Folder: 9 File Number: 11-27.9 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³¹⁰ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-3.46, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³¹¹ The National Geographic Society, Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to Gorce, Nedous Hotel, Srinagar June 25th 1931, File Number: 11-3.52, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

The first half of the expedition was so “uneventful” that Williams and the NGS were irritated with the lack of exciting adventure-style content. Rather than tales of adventure and death escaped by a hair’s breadth, which was the kind of content the public “lapped up”, this half of the expedition saw its members entertained with sumptuous receptions³¹² by numerous important leaders and royalty. Williams wrote a description of how, during this half of the expedition, he and the other expedition members camped in the Governor of Kandahar’s garden. Apparently, the governor gave them a “splendid tea”. The “lush and beautiful” garden was full of fruit trees and vines, and had a square pool with albino fish swimming about.³¹³ Williams wrote:

...In that wide-spreading garden, with its reflecting pools, hollyhocks, laurel bushes and apricot trees, Firouz, the pet monkey, lay in the shade with two wolf cubs, while a big eyed gazelle, tied to the same bush, was nursed by a goat. Our garden seemed more of a paradise than ever. We might lack a lion and a lamb, but wolf cubs and a thin legged gazelle fair substitutes.³¹⁴

This evocative description would have appealed to NGSM readers’ fantasies about Asian decadence. It is representative of Williams’ writing style, which seems to draw stylistically

³¹² The National Geographic Society, Letter from Haardt to National Geographic Society, June 12, File Number: 11-3.45, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³¹³ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter form MOW to Grosvenor, Herat Afghanistan, May 23 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4), Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

³¹⁴ Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, (July-December, 1931), 423.

from the large amounts of poetry and literature he consumed as well as by his enthusiasm for living out his fantasies in reality, although the description of languid idylls such as these are not what compels a reader to wait on tenterhooks for the next instalment.

The expedition was given other special treatments during this half of the expedition, including being escorted through countries by official state guards.³¹⁵ Williams complained to the NGS about this, as some of the escorts insisted that he only photograph modernity. This irritation passed upon his arrival in Afghanistan. In Williams' personal writings he often talks about how pleased he was with the photographic subjects "on offer" at the border between Afghanistan and Kashmir. Here the expedition lived out Euro-American fantasies, staying with nomadic groups in yurts where they feasted on yak cream³¹⁶ and watched Kyrgyz women milk yaks and roll felt for yurts.³¹⁷

Despite these intermittent episodes of decadence and beauty, the majority of the expedition's time was spent in boredom, travelling through seemingly endless and empty desert. The day-to-day travel proved difficult for the expedition members, as they spent hour upon hour cooped up inside the Citroën vehicles. Inside the cramped interiors of the vehicles air would fill with choking sand and dust whilst the car's internal temperature swung between boiling hot or freezing cold. The expedition would only stop its forward movement for meals three times a day or to set up camp in the evening. Consequently, the expedition members

³¹⁵ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-10015.467 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³¹⁶ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-10015.467.

³¹⁷ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-10015.467.

were forced to keep gruelling hours, often only sleeping a few hours each day. Williams referred to the cars as “moving prisons” and described the majority of the expedition members’ physical and mental state by the time they were in Baghdad as being a “half coma”.³¹⁸ He described the conditions during their travel through Iraq thus:

These desert nights are cold. Touch the roof of the low tent in the morning with your bare shoulder and the condensed moisture feels like ice. But the days are hot, and with a following breeze of the same speed as our own, very dusty and breathless. On the lee side of each car dust hangs on in an invisible way, seemingly defying the laws of gravitation. Bread dries while one holds it in his hand, its rough edges are hard on cracked and bleeding lips. But we grin and bear it and push on under a hazy sky, which seems supercharged with heat...Shaving in the desert breeze is purgatorial. Starting out with a raw face, and a layer of dust against which the soap seems powerless, one finally succeeds in producing a lather which dries while one reaches for his razor.³¹⁹

Kashmir to China (June 24th 1931-20th August 1931)

Whilst in Kashmir the expedition were hosted in the houseboats of the Maharaja of Jammu

³¹⁸ Kalamazoo College Archives, Baghdad, Ritz Hotel, April 18th 1931, To G from MOW, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

³¹⁹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Baghdad, Ritz Hotel, April 18th 1931, To G from MOW, 77/1, Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32. Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4.

and Kashmir³²⁰ which Williams described as; "...a fairyland...".³²¹ This was one of the few points of rest the expedition experienced during this section of the expedition. However, their arrival in Kashmir marked the beginning of what was to be the most physically taxing part of the expedition. The Himalayan crossing saw many members suffering from illnesses such as heat exhaustion, complications due to below freezing temperatures, fatigue,³²² diphtheria and altitude sickness.³²³ Williams believed he had contracted leprosy whilst in Kashmir.³²⁴ The mental and physical exertion experienced by the party caused them to make seemingly simple and incredibly dangerous mistakes. For example, Haardt and some others accidentally nearly gassed themselves to death with a stove.³²⁵

³²⁰ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to La Gorce, Nedou's Hotel Srinagar, June 27 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

³²¹ The National Geographic Society, Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to Gorce, Nedous Hotel Srinagar June 27th 1931, File Number: 11-3.52.

³²² Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter to Hilde from Maynard Owen Williams, June 20 1931 Dean's Hotel, Peshawar, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

³²³ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter to Hilde from Maynard Owen Williams, Nedou's Hotel, Srinagar, July 3 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

³²⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter to Gorce from Maynard Owen Williams, Doyan on the Gilgit Road Gilgit 53 miles Bandipur 140 miles July 28 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 3.

³²⁵ National Geographic Society Archives, Letter from MOW to Ralph, Hanoi, Tonkin, French Indo-China, March 17th 1932, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

Crossing the Himalayas via the Gilgit trail began on the 12th July 1931.³²⁶ Before the Citroën expedition no other motor vehicle had navigated this route successfully. This trail was not recommended by locals.³²⁷ Due to its steepness, narrowness and hairpin turns, it was not thought capable of navigation by motor.³²⁸ The difficulty of the route was enhanced by the fact that the worst landslides and floods in years had eliminated essential stretches of road,³²⁹ and that the snow was starting to melt causing the ground to be untrustworthy. There were numerous occasions when avalanches or melted snow hampered their movements.³³⁰ At some points the cars had to be dismantled and carried in pieces by the expedition members and their local hired help, only to later be re-assembled. The Citroën cars may have been the first to cross the Himalayas, but they did not do this entirely under their own motorized propulsion. Throughout, the expedition relied upon hired local manpower and beasts of burden. During the Himalayan crossing this help could be hired for a low cost, due to the fact that the Pamirs region were in the grip of a famine.³³¹ Williams writes in his diaries and letters of how the expedition's horses were dying, and it was not

³²⁶ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to Hildebrand, June 20 1931 Dean's Hotel, Peshawar, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

³²⁷ Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, (January-June, 1932), 321.

³²⁸ Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, (January-June, 1932), 321.

³²⁹ Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, (January-June, 1932), 321-322.

³³⁰ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-10015.467, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³³¹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to La Gorce, Dashki on the Gilgit Road, July 27, 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

uncommon to find dead bodies on the roads.³³² “Even the horses are dying. The one I rode up on last night is dead today. Famine and death stalk about these beautiful mountains”.³³³ None of these distressing images appeared in his NGSM articles or in his photographs. This is almost certainly due to the fact that such photographs did not correspond with the NGSM’s guidelines for what constituted an appropriate photograph for publication, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Kashgar to Beijing (20th August 1931-February 12th 1932)

Before Williams’ group arrived in China, Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Point was taken prisoner in Xinjiang³³⁴ after being accused of attacking a member of the Chinese military.³³⁵ Williams was very irritated at having missed this event and others experienced by the China group, as he felt that his journey to China had been dull in comparison. So much so, that he suggested that his story should be held back from publication until an “adequate story” could be written

³³² Kalamazoo College Archives, Gilt Kashmir India, August 5th 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box 3/4, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America), 1 & 2.

³³³ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter to La Gorce from Maynard Owen Williams, Dashki on the Gilgit Road, July 27th, 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box 3/4, 1.

³³⁴ The National Geographic Society, Telegram sent on August 7th 1931, File Number: 11-3.43 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³³⁵ The National Geographic Society, 6/18/31 Read over the telephone by Paul Weir, of the associated press, 11:30, AM Peiping, June 18 Associated Press, File Number: 11-10015.467, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

by him after the Srinagar-to-Kashgar pictures could be finished.³³⁶ In fact Williams wished to publish Point's story instead, which he described:

...personally I think captain Point's story could well be the best illustrated and most thrilling account of the whole lot, - much nearer the dramatic account of the Trans - Asiatic exploration than anything we have so far been able to have.³³⁷

Points' story was included in the final instalment of the expedition entitled '*From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey*', which featured in the July-December 1932 edition of the National Geographic Magazine.

Point's position in China meant it was very tricky for the expedition to gain permission to enter or photograph the country. The reason for this, according to Williams, was not only Point's aforementioned position in China, but also the fact that Citroën refused to change their advertisement of the expedition in Europe as the "The Yellow Journey"³³⁸ despite the

³³⁶ The National Geographic Society, Maynard Owen Williams, File Number 11-3.45, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³³⁷ The National Geographic Society, Maynard Owen Williams to The National Geographic Society, File Number 11-3.45, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³³⁸ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Bunji on the Gilgit road, August 2 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, 1

NGSM having tried to dissuade Citroën from using this title.³³⁹ According to Williams one reason for this name's unpopularity in Asia was because "the Asian populace disliked being referred to as being dark but wished to be white".³⁴⁰ Such a statement by Williams may appear a strange one, but it is indicative of deeply-rooted racial attitudes of the time. Such a statement by Williams discounts the likelihood of the Chinese government and people being knowledgeable about the sensationalist and negative connotations that the word yellow had when used by the West in reference to Asia. Terms like 'Yellow Peril', which promoted the xenophobic notion that the West must fear or look down upon Asia, were rampant in the West at the turn of the century, as discussed in Chapter 1 and explored further in Chapter 6. To assume that China was not aware of the connotations that the term "yellow" carried is an example of Williams somewhat shallow understanding of the subjects of his work.

Upon arrival in China the expedition had to wait in Kashgar for permission to be granted to carry on their journey. The expedition ran into difficulties whilst in Kashgar, which is reflected in the lack of photographs from the city. In his letter to the NGM and Citroën Williams wrote:

I am not planning to write an article covering the section Kashgar-Urumtchi as we were not allowed to take photographs and it is extremely unlikely that Captain Sheriff's photographs or other photographs taken in Central Asia could properly illustrate such an article. It seems highly desirable therefore that in an editorial note

³³⁹ The National Geographic Society, Letter form MOW to Grosvenor, Urumtchi, Sinking, 7th November 1931China, File Number 11-3.52: 3 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁴⁰ The National Geographic Society, Letter form MOW to Grosvenor, Uremtchi, Sinking, 7th November 1931China, File Number 11-3.52: 3 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

this section of the voyage be briefly connected with the stretch from Beyrouth to Srinagar - 3445 miles according to the official estimate.³⁴¹

Eventually the expedition was allowed to proceed and photograph in China, on the condition that the expedition dispose of its machine guns and paint over the French flags emblazoned on the cars.³⁴² Despite agreeing to this, the expedition was prohibited from doing “scientific work”. On the last day of their wait in Kashgar a rather dramatic event occurred, during dinner when the expedition’s doctor had to perform an emergency surgery on a young Turkic girl.³⁴³

After this event the expedition proceeded onwards through China. This stretch of the journey proved the most unsafe. Besides the below freezing temperatures, the expedition was viewed with great suspicion³⁴⁴ and there were reports that their communications were being censored and listened in to by the Chinese government. Apparently, this was because they were accused of seeking minerals and archaeological treasure. Such suspicion is unsurprising considering the fact that at this period European expeditions were stealing artefacts from Chinese historical sites. They were also suspected of fostering a pan-

³⁴¹ File Number 11-3.45, La Gorce, John Oliver Citroën-Haardt Central Asian Expedition, File 05, Box 3 Inclusive dates 1931: Telegram from Haardt June 12 Communication Number 48 Bivouac Number 46 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive,).

³⁴² The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-10015.467, GHG Collection 1930-1936 National Geographic Society Expedition, Citroën-Haardt Expedition, The National Geographic Society, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁴³ The National Geographic Society, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive), 24.

³⁴⁴ Maynard Owen Williams, *The National Geographic Magazine Index*, (July-December, 1932), 513.

Turanian plot, of interfering in Chinese politics, including trying to unseat the governor of Xinjiang and were even mistaken for being Japanese armoured cars advancing on Beijing, resulting in a short shoot-out with Chinese soldiers.^{345 346} Williams also claims that at one point, whilst in North Western China, the expedition members had to sleep in a room of frozen dead bodies to avoid being murdered by bandits.³⁴⁷

Violence and destruction was a constant accompaniment throughout their time in China. Williams claims that their whole journey was plagued by the possibility of attack from warlords and bandits, and that the KMT General/Warlord Ma Chung Ying (1910-1936)³⁴⁸ pursued them through China after taking their provisions in Xinjiang. Another Early Silk Road photographer, Sven Hedin, also had “run-ins” with this man. Sven wrote of Ma Zhongying in the following passage:

He was like the rider on the pale horse, which appeared when the fourth seal was broken: ‘And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth

³⁴⁵ *Maynard Owen Williams, The National Geographic Magazine Index, (July-December, 1932), 513.*

³⁴⁶ The National Geographic Society, Report from Robert Moore to Mr. Fisher, February 1 1932, File Number:11-3.45, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁴⁷ *Maynard Owen Williams, National Geographic Magazine, (July-December, 1932), 543.*

³⁴⁸ *Maynard Owen Williams, National Geographic Magazine, (July-December, 1932), 536.*

part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger and death, and with the beasts of the earth'.³⁴⁹

One might wonder if this particular warlord, or the notion of warlords in general, had a certain fascination to Euro-Americans, as it seems odd that both expeditions encountered the same individual. It is debatable whether the Citroën expedition were “pursued” across China, as the only mention of this general is in the NSGM and not in any of Williams’ letters or diary entries. Despite Williams’ claims regarding Ma Chung Ying, theft of expedition supplies was a common occurrence during their time in China.³⁵⁰ The ravages of war were also a constant backdrop to the expedition and a large proportion of places the expedition set up camp bore the marks of violence. Many of the temples the expedition stayed in were covered in bullet holes, their icons had been shot at and smashed to pieces whilst signs of murder and poverty were common. There were even reports from the expedition that numerous walled towns were crenelated with severed heads.³⁵¹ To choose to travel through a country in a chronic state of violence, extreme poverty and upheaval with the supposed rationale being exploration and study is strange one at best.

Beijing to Paris (February 12th-May 2nd 1932)

³⁴⁹ Andrew D. Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republican Sinkiang 1911-1949*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986) 97.

³⁵⁰ The National Geographic Society, Letter to National Geographic Society from Maynard Owen Williams, Jan 19, 1932, File Number: 11-3.43, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁵¹ Mark Collins, *National Geographic 125 Years: Legendary Photographs, Adventures and Discoveries That Changed the World*, (Washington DC: National Geographic, 2012), 127.

Once the expedition reached Beijing Williams spent time with his friend Owen Lattimore and his wife.³⁵² The expedition was then supposed to travel South through China and into Vietnam. Instead the expedition boarded a boat at Tianjin to Vietnam, apart from Haardt who went to Hong Kong. On the expedition's way they stopped off at Dairen³⁵³ and were entertained by Geishas.³⁵⁴ Williams wrote:

We had a splendid sukiyaki feed in the best restaurant and it was a great delight to me to see how cowed were some of these Frenchmen, who regarded a woman as a sexual apparatus, in the presence of the Geishas. When the fluttering of a finger in one's hand is wild flirtation, the grab 'em and bruise 'em methods slow up. We had a great time.³⁵⁵

³⁵² The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-10015.467 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive)

³⁵³ 'Dairen' (Dalian) was occupied by Japan from 1898-1945.

³⁵⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter to Frank from MOW Darren Manchuria Feb 29 1932, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan,), 2.

³⁵⁵ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Frank, Feb 29 1932 to Frank from MOW 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan,), 2.

Williams was excited about the time he was to spend in South East Asia. He had been provided with his own new car³⁵⁶ and believed that he was to produce some of the greatest work of his career.³⁵⁷ Unfortunately, the expedition was cancelled due to the unexpected death of Haardt from double pneumonia on 16th March 1932. Williams objected strongly to the cancellation,³⁵⁸ but he was over-ruled and the expedition was ordered to return to France by boat, the 'Felix Roussel'. Part of the expedition boarded this boat on the April 4th 1932, whilst the other half of the expedition conducted filming in the region, boarding a second boat, the "Metzinger" on the April 18th 1932.³⁵⁹ Williams, on the other hand, elected to go on his own travels around South East Asia,³⁶⁰ returning to Paris by plane to attend the funeral of Haardt on the 2nd May 1932.³⁶¹ This plane journey required he take a few stop off through India, unfortunately he did not have any film and thus was unable to take photographs.

³⁵⁶ The National Geographic Society, Radio Received by Amateur Stations, Washington, By Cornerman W3BEG and Darne W3BWT, From MOW to Ralph, Hanoi Tonkin French Indo-China, March 17th 1932, File Number: 11-3.52, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive)

³⁵⁷ The National Geographic Society, Radio Received by Amateur Stations, Washington, By Cornerman W3BEG and Darne W3BWT, From MOW to Ralph, Hanoi Tonkin French Indo-China, (March 17th 1932, File Number: 11-3.52).

³⁵⁸ The National Geographic Society, Folder 4 Box, File Number: 1 11-27.4 Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owens, 1931, Grosvenor, Gilbert H. (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive) and The National Geographic Society, MOW and Citroën Haardt 1: Letter from MOW to Dr. Grosvenor, Hanoi Tonkin, Indo-China, March 7th 1932, File Number: 11-10015.466, GHG Collection, 1931-1932, NGS Expeditions, Citroen-Haardt Trans Asiatic Expedition, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁵⁹ Eric Deschamps, *Croisiere Jaune, Chroniques 1929-1933*, (2003), 143.

³⁶⁰ The National Geographic Society, Letter to Grosvenor from MOW, Phnon Penh, Cambodia, April 13th 1932 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁶¹ Eric Deschamps, *Croisiere Jaune, Chroniques 1929-1933*, (2003), 143.

What was the legacy of the expedition?

Despite the trials and tribulations it experienced by the expedition the expedition was a success. Not only did Williams produce a significant amount of photographic work,³⁶² little of which has been seen by the public³⁶³ but The New York Times (1931) stated that the expedition was; "...one of the outstanding expeditions of the age".³⁶⁴ On the expedition's return to France, Williams and the other members of the expedition were presented with the Chevalier of the Legion of Honour by the French Government,³⁶⁵ to the applause of four thousand people.³⁶⁶

Around June 20th 1932 in Paris, at 43 BIS boulevard des Batignolles, an exhibition, paid for by Citroën³⁶⁷ and dedicated to the Citroën Expeditions, was presented under the name 'Les

³⁶² The National Geographic Society, File Number: 20-1844 June 1931 Trans Asian Expedition Starts, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive,), 12.

³⁶³ The National Geographic Society, Letter from MOW to Gorce, Garishk Afghanistan May 31 1931, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁶⁴ Kalamazoo College, Letter to La Gorce form MOW, Nedou's Hotel, Srinagar June 25 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroen Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4, (Kalamazoo College Archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

³⁶⁵ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-10015.467, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁶⁶ The National Geographic Society Archive, Letter from C to G, 12/3/32, File Number: 11-10015.467 (National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁶⁷ The National Geographic Society, Letter form National Geographic Society to Citroën, June 9 1932, File Number: 11-3.48 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

Expeditions Citroën Centre Asie et Centre Afrique'.³⁶⁸ The Citroën Company was in financial difficulty and this exhibition was a way to promote itself in the public consciousness.³⁶⁹ The exhibition occupied a series of rooms, each devoted to a specific aspect of the expedition, including ethnographic and archaeological collections, presentations of the naturalists' findings, the wireless outfits, objects collected, camp equipment and Citroën vehicles.³⁷⁰ Williams and Iacovleff each had a room for their work.³⁷¹ The exhibition proved extremely popular³⁷² and many important people visited it,³⁷³ including the president of the Republic.³⁷⁴ Williams' photographs and Iacovleff's paintings were even viewed by the famous designer Schiaparelli and inspired a whole collection of her work. An NGSM employee at the exhibition wrote to the NGSM headquarters that:

³⁶⁸ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-3.50 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁶⁹ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-3.48 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁷⁰ The National Geographic Society, Letter from La Gorce May 19th 1932; File Number: 11-3.48 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁷¹ The National Geographic Society, Letter between Grosvenor and the National Geographic, 19th May 1932, File Number: 11-3.48 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁷² The National Geographic Society, Letter from National Geographic to Citroën, August 4 1932, File Number: 11-3.48 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁷³ The National Geographic Society, Letter from H to J, July 9 1932, File Number: 11-3.50 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁷⁴ The National Geographic Society, Letter from H to J, July 19 1932, File Number: 11-3.50 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive)

... Schapereille's winter collection - shown with much gusto on August 4 - to hundreds of buyers and fashion writers, was based on the Geographic excellent documentation of Chinese costumes etc. At my instigation the great Schiaparelli studied the Museum photographs and then I deposited a stock carefully marked National Geographic Magazines on her desk for additional perusal. The result is, the collection was quite Chinese in influence and all new colours were given a Chinese name. Even the hats carry such cute names as "Yak", "Amban", "Chalap", etc all boldly lifted from the magazine.³⁷⁵

The exhibition proved so popular and lucrative that it became a permanent museum named "Musée Citroën".³⁷⁶

Many people beyond France were also interested in the photographs and other visual material produced by the expedition. In a letter from the NGSM to Citroën was written; "... Miss Earhardt was very much interested in looking over the pictures of the Citroën Expedition which we have on the walls of our new offices".³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ The National Geographic Society, Letter from H to J, (1933 August 13; File Number: 11-3.50).

³⁷⁶ The National Geographic Society, Letter to La Gorce from H McDonald, February 16 1933, File Number: 11-3.50, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁷⁷ The National Geographic Society, Letter from National Geographic to Citroën, June 27th 1932; File Number: 11-3.48, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

Interest was so strong that in 1934 the NGS put on an extremely popular exhibition in its Explorers' Hall of Alexandre Jacovleff's paintings under the title 'Paintings and Drawings of Asiatic Lands and Peoples by Alexandre Jacovleff'.³⁷⁸ The NGM even purchased two of Jacovleff's paintings from the "Roof of The World" series³⁷⁹ whilst Town & Country Magazine editor Mr Henry A. Bull expressed interest in having some reproductions of Jacovleff drawings and paintings.³⁸⁰ In a letter to Williams, Mr George Harris of Harris & Ewings, which was the largest photographic studio in the USA in the 1930s, wrote that; "...Jacovleff's drawings have said to have lifted anthropology and ethnology into the realm of high art".³⁸¹ Jacovleff's work evidently went down very well in the USA. So much so that after this exhibition Jacovleff became successful in the U.S.A. and from 1934-36 became Director of the Department of Painting and Drawing at the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.³⁸²

³⁷⁸ The National Geographic Society, Box 1 Folder 1, 11-27.1 Folder 1, Alexandre Jacovleff, Personal Papers MOW, Document written April 11- 29th 1939 by The Grand Central Art Galleries, 15th Vanderbilt Avenue, N.Y.C, Comprehensive Memorial (Exhibition) of the Works of the Alexandre Jacovleff Grand Central Art Galleries, 15 Vanderbilt Avenue, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁷⁹ National Geographic Magazine, Box 1, Folder 1 11-27.1, Folder of 'Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owen, 1931-1932, Jacovleff: November 15 1935, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁸⁰ Letter sent by Town & Country Magazine editor Mr Henry A. Bull to The National Geographic, March 29th 1935, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁸¹ Letter sent to Mr. Harris of Harris and Ewings from Maynard Owen Williams, March 18th 1935, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁸² The National Geographic Society, Box 1 Folder 1, 11-27.1 Folder 1, Alexandre Jacovleff, Personal Papers MOW, Pamphlet for the exhibit, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive)

The expedition lived on in numerous other ways. For example, a film of the expedition was shown in France and America and around January 1935 came to Washington and was presented by Williams and Iacovleff.³⁸³ Williams also gave independent lectures accompanied by his photographs³⁸⁴ and his photographs appeared in Le Fevre's book.³⁸⁵ Audouin-Dubreuil also wrote a book about the expedition.³⁸⁶ Fortune Magazine wished to feature Williams' colour plates from the expedition³⁸⁷ and in 1935 the Royal Geographic Society of London requested enlargements of photographs from the "Croisiere Noire" and the "Croisiere Jaune" for an exhibition.^{388 389} The expedition was even immortalized by the NGS in the creation of a large bronze NGS emblem that featured one of the tractor cars from

³⁸³ The National Geographic Society, NGSM to Fredrick form NGSM, January 14 1935, File Number: 11-3.47, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁸⁴ The National Geographic Society, Box 1, Folder 1, File Number: 11-27.1, Folder of 'Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owen, 1931-1932, Iacovleff, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁸⁵ The National Geographic Society, Letter from H to J, July 19 1932, NGS, File Number: 11-3.50, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁸⁶ The National Geographic Society, Box 1, Folder 1, File Number: 11-27.1, 'Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owen', 1931-1932, Iacovleff, November 15 1935, (The National Geographic Society, The National Geographic Society Archive, Washington DC, United States of America).

³⁸⁷ Letter to Miss Eleanor Treacy of Art Editor of Fortune Magazine, Herat Afghanistan May 23 1931, File Number: 11-3.52, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁸⁸ The National Geographic Society, Letter from Washington to Fredrick, January 11 1935, File Number: 11-3.47 (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁸⁹ The National Geographic Society, Letter from NGSM to Fredrick, January 14 1935, File Number: 11-3.47, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

the expedition.³⁹⁰ The more recent commemorations of the expedition was in a 1975 Franco-German television series titled “La Cloche Tibétaine (The Yellow Caravan)”. Such events all evidence the wide impact the expedition and its imagery had.

In considering the legacy of the expedition it is worth reflecting upon the nature of archives and the significant effects that chance discoveries can have in the understanding of events or bodies of work. For example, if I had not come across a large bound book of pastel drawings by Alexandre Jacovleff containing portraits from South East Asia, and two small un-archived boxes filled with negatives of photographs of negatives of Williams’ South East Asia work taken during the expedition, this thesis’s conception of the geographical extent of the expedition and its work would be quite different. Williams’ South East Asia work has mostly been forgotten. Despite the fame of the expedition and the high regard in which Williams’ work is held by the archives where it is housed, none of the archivists spoken to during the field work stage of this thesis knew that the expedition had originally planned to travel beyond China, nor that they had reached South East Asia and produced worked depicting that segment of the Silk Road. This makes sense considering that the April 1932 edition of the NGSM in which Williams’ South East Asia work was supposed to be published seems to have been replaced by Williams’ with Herman H. Kreider’s article entitled “Looking in on New Turkey”.³⁹¹ In a letter to Jacovleff dated March 15th 1933, Williams wrote that:

³⁹⁰ The National Geographic Society, Letter from National Geographic to Citroën, August 6 1932, File Number: 11-3.48, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

³⁹¹ *National Geographic Magazine*, April 1932.

...there was no immediate need for an article on Indo-China and I have been taking time to run through the literature, prominent among which is the "Marshal Lyautey's Intimate Letters from Tonkin".³⁹²

Evidently Williams was working on an article to accompany the significant number of photographs he had taken and was trying to gain greater knowledge about South East Asia by exploring the work of others who had lived and worked there. Williams' South East Asia story from the Citroën expedition was published some years later in a short article in the October 1935 edition of the NGM under the title 'By Motor Trail Across French Indo-China'. It is possible that this was the article he spoke about in the quote above.

Possible reasons for forgetting the expedition's South East Asian work might be because official NGS permission was never given to Williams to continue on through South East Asia. It is also of worth considering the impact that death had on the expedition. Not only had the expedition leader George-Marie Haardt died. But upon the expedition's return to Europe the leader of the second group, Lieutenant de Vaisseau Victor Point (1902-1932), committed suicide on 8th August by shooting himself in the mouth in a boat in a lake in Agay, after finding out that his fiancé, the French actress Alice Cocéa, was unfaithful to him and now refused to marry him.

³⁹² The National Geographic Society, Box 1, Folder 1, File Number: 11-27.1, Folder of 'Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owen, 1931-1932, Iacovleff, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

These were not the only dark clouds to draw shadows over the memory of the expedition. By the expedition's end the NGSM's and Citroën's relationship had soured due to various disagreements including the way in which to promote the expedition. Moreover, they each felt that the other company was disrespectful towards them. On Saturday 3rd March 1934 The *New York Times* reported that Citroën was in serious financial difficulty. This was a shock considering Citroën was one of the world's leading motorcar manufacturers, the largest employer of labour in France and its founder, Andre Citroën, one of the wealthiest men in Europe. Citroën was bankrupt and was taken over by its principle creditor, Michelin. In 1935 Andre Citroën became ill and died of stomach cancer.

This series of unhappy occurrences must certainly have brought unpleasant feelings regarding the ending of the expedition. It may have been seen as poor taste by the NGSM to publish anything to do with the expedition after the death of so many who were involved with it. However, forgetting or side-lining the South East Asia visual material meant that the true story of the expedition was never fully told. Omitting mention of the South East Asia work affected the NGSM readerships' conception of the extent of the Silk Road by land. It fed into the popular narrative of the Silk Road being a "China centric" concept. Indeed, a large portion of the Citroën and many other Silk Road expeditions from this period, such as those of Sven Hedin, focused on China.

In *'Reading an Archive, Photography between labour and capital'* (1983) Sekula observes: "Archival projects typically manifest a compulsive desire for completeness, a faith in an ultimate coherence imposed by the sheer quantity of acquisitions".³⁹³ However, he notes that

³⁹³ Sekula, *'Reading an Archive, Photography between labour and capital'*, (1983).

archives are not inherently neutral assemblages but wield the power to shape the legacy of the subject presented.³⁹⁴ The archivist has the power to include or leave out material, and thereby has the ability to transform or obliterate the original meaning of an archive to suit a particular purpose.³⁹⁵ Archives by their very nature are selective in drawing boundaries, deciding what is included and what is left out, as well as the way in which it is organized. One-half of the Citroën-Haardt expedition's intended route was not covered. However, the expedition did reach South East Asia and produced a significant amount of visual material whilst there. The fact that this has been forgotten, is a good example of Sekula's cautionary observation about archives. The archivists may have excluded the material from South-East Asia as part of the 'Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition' due to the fact that the expedition was canceled at that point. Compounding the problem is the fact that during the 1970's the NGS threw out most of Williams' negatives, only keeping prints of his photographs. Some of the prints from the South East Asian portion of the Citroën expedition are missing from the NGSM archives. Moreover, many prints from the expedition are not well printed and as they are prints this restricts the size and quality of re-prints. Sadly, the decisions that archivists have made has resulted in a large amount of a very interesting body of work being hidden for a long period of time and has resulted in some works being lost in Washington's bins and landfill, forever.

³⁹⁴ Allan Sekula, *'Reading an Archive, Photography between labour and capital'* (1983), in *The Photography Reader*, ed Liz Wells, (New York, Routledge, 2003), 444.

³⁹⁵ Sekula, *'Reading an Archive, Photography between labour and capital'*, 444-445.

Summary

This chapter examined three questions, each of which played a role in the choice of objects and people that Williams photographed on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition and the way in which he chose to photograph them.

What was the expedition's purpose?

The Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition was presented to the public as an expedition of scientific research. However, little evidence of the work of the expedition's scientists can be found in Citroën and NGSM archives. The only substantial amount of material in these archives that could be considered as anthropological or ethnographic in nature is the work of the expedition's photographers and cinematographers. However, the writing that accompanied Williams' photographs in the NGM cannot be considered seriously as a contribution to science. Furthermore, the expedition's route was not selected with scientific considerations in mind. Rather, it was chosen in order to "retrace the steps of Marco Polo".

The principal motivation for the expedition was commercial. Publicity seems to have been a primary goal for Citroën and the NGM. The fact that the expedition took place during the Great Depression acted as a spur to commercial considerations in undertaking the expedition. Both NGSM and Citroën wished to boost their sales. Indeed, Citroën became bankrupt in 1934, only two years after the expedition finished. Prior to this expedition, Citroën had not courted the NGSM to take an active role in its expeditions and the NGSM had never financed an expedition organized by a European commercial company. However, their joining forces was mutually beneficial in the face of an economic crisis. For Citroën, it provided a showcase for their vehicles in the U.S.A. and a means to sustain sales in Europe. For the NGSM, the expedition meant that they could fill their pages with tales of adventure that could entice new readers and retain existing ones through the monthly instalments

produced during the course of the expedition. Such articles gave “exotic windows” of escapism from the hardships of the Depression for its readership. However, the NGM did not need to foot the whole bill for the expedition. They shared this with Citroën. Moreover, Citroën provided the state-of-the-art vehicles that made the expedition possible. Citroën benefitted from the NGM’s sophisticated magazine production skills, wide readership and high reputation as a ‘serious’ magazine journal. Not least Citroën benefitted from the skills of one of the NGM’s top photographers, Maynard Owen Williams. The romantic adventure style of the NGM’s photographs and writing is well suited to generating publicity. The NGM house style and reputation internationally was likely seen by Citroën as a highly effective means of displaying the strength of Citroën’s French engineering. Unfortunately for Citroën the NGM’s non-commercial advertisement policy got in the way of this somewhat, though not completely. Not only were articles on the expedition published in the NGM but they were also distributed to a large number of American and European news outlets. As a result, the audience courted by the NGM and Citroën was much larger than most of the other expeditions the NGM or Citroën had been involved with in the past.

Where did the expedition travel and what happened on the way?

Global politics seem also to have played a part in the decision to undertake this expedition. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century both France and the USA constructed large scale overseas empires. The main part of the expedition directly traversed France’s overseas colonial territories in the Middle East and the final part of the expedition was in France’s colonial territories in Indo-China. The expedition aimed to capture and memorialize the lives of the people along the Silk Road. A key theme of Williams’ photographs for the NGM was ‘salvage’ of the ancient cultures along the Silk Road. It was their exotic nature that helped the images to achieve their impact. They stimulated the viewers’ interest in the non-European world, including not only the formal colonies but also the vast areas of the developing world about which most viewers had little knowledge. The expedition provided a

channel through which not only could ancient civilizations along the Silk Road be celebrated, but could also attract public interest in regions that were in the process of being transformed by Western investment. The latter objectives were openly acknowledged in Citroën's observations on the 1924 trans-Africa motor expedition. They were also evident in the NGSM articles on the USA's colonial territories in the Philippines, through their use of U.S government photography of the region. The fact that the French government helped to fund the expedition was self-evidently connected with French national geo-political and commercial objectives. The wider strategic objective was reflected in the fact that almost all of the expedition's participants had served in the army or army intelligence. Many of the regions through which the expedition travelled were volatile or of great interest to the governments in Europe and the USA. For example, the expedition originally wished to travel through Soviet regions but later settled for traversing the regions that bordered the Soviet Union. Afghanistan was also of special diplomatic interest as it was the primary location in which the 'Great Game' was being played out. Choosing to conduct a "science-based" expedition in China during this time is particularly strange as the region was extremely unstable politically, not least in the areas of north-western China through which the expedition passed. The expedition armed themselves with machine and hand-held guns indicating that they were fully aware of the threats posed by such an itinerary yet they conducted it regardless. These considerations suggest a motivation beyond mere exploration and scientific research.

Besides the threats posed by political instability along the Silk Road, the expedition experienced many other facets of Silk Road travel, from decadence to hardship. The mental and physical taxation that parts of the expedition exerted on the party included boredom, exhaustion, weather extremes, diseases, landslides etc. and death. The difficult aspects of travel experienced by the expedition were often reported about in the NGM with a sense of romantic danger. However, the NGM and Citroën considered it inappropriate to report on

numerous aspects of the expedition. For example, the expedition was advertised as having surmounted the Himalayas by their own motorized power, when in fact they had relied heavily upon the strength of local hired help. The famine that was taking place in the Himalayas and the sheer scale of death, poverty and violence in China were also left out. These selective reporting decisions, as well as the style of language used in the articles, provide insight into the complex and often contradictory relationship that the expedition had with these regions and its people. On one hand, much of the written content of the articles sound almost like poetry whilst on the other, there are points when racist and superior tones are struck. A significant part of the expedition was excluded entirely from the narrative. The Southeast Asian segment fell completely out of view, which distorted the original purpose of the expedition, to 'retrace Marco Polo's footsteps'. This helped to reinforce the idea that China was the focal point of the Silk Road.

The fact that Russia was ruled by the Communist Party of Soviet Union and Central Asia was in the throes of collectivisation directly affected the choice of route. Important parts of the pre-modern Silk Road passed through Central Asia, including ancient trading cities and cultural centres such as Samarkand, Khiva and Bokhara. The political situation in Russia and the disastrous impact of collectivisation in Central Asia meant that travel through the northern branches of the Silk Road in Central Asia was impossible. Even the limited entry into the eastern part of Soviet Central Asia that the expedition initially planned had to be abandoned.

What was the legacy of the expedition?

Despite the exclusion of a large part of the story and work of the Citroën expedition narrative the expedition still had a significant impact on its public. The visual material produced by Williams and others had a powerful impact on the general public's conception of the Silk

Road. The visual work ensured that the expedition lived on beyond its abrupt termination, by means of exhibitions, fashion, books, and magazines. The expedition's story was also later captured in cartoons and television series. Williams' photographs in the NGM were, arguably, the most important legacy from the expedition.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the way in which Williams photographed the Silk Road was strongly affected and constrained by the purposes and nature of the expedition. Commercial considerations were of great importance to both NGSM and Citroën, each of which was under heavy financial pressure due to the Depression. This led to a comprehensive emphasis on romanticised images of the Silk Road, to the exclusion of images of modernity, war, poverty and human suffering. The purposes of the expedition were shaped also by the political objectives of the French government and, to some degree also, by the US government's strategic objectives in Eurasia. The rapid pace of the expedition was determined by the expedition leader, George-Marie Haardt, the general manager of Citroën, which restricted the depth of Williams' interaction with the places along the route. Even the choice of Williams' photographic equipment was decided ultimately by Citroën. The choice of route across Eurasia was affected strongly by the fact that significant parts of the ancient Silk Road were inaccessible due to the closed nature of the Soviet Union and the fact that Soviet Central Asia was in the midst of collectivisation and experiencing a disastrous famine. Finally, Haardt's untimely death meant that the return journey to Europe, which would have completed an expedition that "followed in Marco Polo's footsteps", was drastically curtailed. The role of the return journey in Williams' photographic record was further curtailed by the decisions taken by the expedition's archives in France and Washington DC.

Chapter 4: Iconic Images of the Silk Road

This chapter investigates those themes in Williams' work reflecting the popular Western perception of the Silk Road that was analysed in chapters 1 and 2. To this day iconic images of the Silk Road typically correspond closely to the main body of photographs featured in this chapter. They are repeatedly copied and distributed in connection with almost anything associated with the Silk Road.³⁹⁶ The chapter is divided into three sections each of which analyses Williams' photographs taken on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition in relation to a particular aspect of the iconic images of the Silk Road. These include: (i) transport, (ii) landscapes and (iii) trade. The following questions will be explored in each section: What are the origins of, and influences behind, these iconic images and their style of presentation in Williams' photographs? Why were these topics of interest to Williams and his readership? What ideas about the Silk Road did these images capture and promote?

Transport

In chapter 1 it was observed that the deep, long-term relationship of Russia with the Silk Road in Central Asia was reflected in the nature of the photographs taken by Russian photographers of Central Asia in both the Tsarist and the Soviet period. They present a

³⁹⁶ In the past few years study of the Silk Road has changed considerably. Eurasia remains at least as important in global geopolitics as it was at the time of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition. A large amount of investment has been devoted to the construction of a New Silk Road, led by Asian governments and institutions such as the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). People from the West no longer dominate the field of academic research and popular representations of Eurasia and its history. Increasing numbers of people from the Silk Road regions are themselves becoming involved in the promotion and study of the Silk Road. It is likely that newly-produced imagery of the Silk Road will augment the existing canons alongside the creation of new representations of the Silk Road that provide a fresh perspective on the history and culture of Silk Road.

sharp contrast to the photographs of the Silk Road taken by Western European and North American photographers. In the Tsarist and Soviet period the leading Russian photographers of each era, Gorskii and Penson respectively, produced a huge volume of photographs that included romantic imagery of 'traditional' life along the Silk Road, especially among 'minority peoples', alongside images that celebrated modernisation. By contrast, Williams' presentation of the Silk Road is firmly rooted in a pre-industrial idyll. The way in which he chose to photograph means of transport is arguably the most striking example of this. His consistent lack of interest in modern forms of transport in favour of images of camels, yaks and donkeys, can be explained to a considerable degree by the demands of his employer, the NGM (examined in chapter 2), and the expectations of their customers, who demanded high quality photo-journalism that provided a romanticised view of life in the non-Western world. The NGM was a highly successful commercial business and acutely aware of its customers' expectations. If the Citroën-Haardt expedition had been given permission to travel through the Soviet Union it is unlikely that his employers, the NGM, would have been pleased to have images of collective farms, tractors and industrial machinery in the USSR's Central Asian republics. In fact, at the time of the expedition (1931-32) Central Asia was in the midst of a disastrous famine. There is little point in further speculation on the photographs that Williams might have taken had the expedition been allowed to travel through Central Asia.

Throughout the history of trade across Eurasia, camels were by far the most important instrument for transport along the Silk Road.³⁹⁷ They can carry heavy loads over long distances and they are hardy creatures that can survive better than other beasts of burden in extreme climatic conditions. For centuries camels were not only used for transport of goods

³⁹⁷ Daniel C. Waugh 'Horses and Camels', <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/horcamae.html>

but were also important in the movement of armies. Camels were also items of trade in and of themselves.³⁹⁸ These animals' importance in the lives of many of the people living and working in the Silk Road regions are demonstrated by the innumerable references to camels found in Asian literature and art.³⁹⁹ The fact that writers and artists devoted such a large amount of time to the creation of beautiful imagery depicting these creatures is testament to the high regard in which they were held. For example, the Persian poet Jalal ad-Din Mohammad Rumi (1207-1273) wrote a highly evocative description of a camel in his poem 'Your Golden Cup':

See that caravan of camels

Loaded with sugar? - -

His eyes contain that much sweetness.

But don't look into His eyes

Unless you're ready to lose all sight of your own.

As was discussed in Chapter 1 and 3, translations from poets such as Rumi and Omar Khayyam were extremely popular in the West at the turn of the century. The interest of Western artists in Eurasia developed apace after the mid-nineteenth century as Western interest in the Silk Road grew. Camels became a popular decorative motif on clothes, textiles, furnishing, sculpture. Williams makes regular references to such literary and artistic work about and from the Silk Road regions.

³⁹⁸ Daniel C. Waugh 'Horses and Camels', <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/horcamae.html>

³⁹⁹ Daniel C. Waugh 'Horses and Camels', <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/horcamae.html>

The camel was the most iconic image that photographers could choose if they wished to 'salvage' the romantic past of the Silk Road. During the early 20th century most Westerners who considered the subject, tended to think about the Silk Road as existing in a pre-industrial time capsule. From the late nineteenth century onwards, modern forms of transport gradually advanced within the transport structure across the non-Soviet segments of the Silk Road. However, throughout the first half of the twentieth century traditional forms of transport co-existed alongside the modes of transport that had carried goods and people along the paths of the Silk Road for as long as trade had taken place. Means of transport were one of the most potent symbols of a pre-industrial way of life along the Silk Road. Popular images of the Silk Road have almost always depicted camels, as well as yaks and other pre-industrial forms of transportation. Right up until today, Western representations of the Silk Road rarely use images of buses, trains, tractors and cars. It is a rich irony that the photographs Williams took of traditional forms of transport were taken by someone who was himself travelling in an expedition that was only feasible due to state-of-the-art transport vehicles supplied by Citroën. As was seen in chapter 3, from Citroën's point of view the main purpose of the expedition was to demonstrate the technological prowess of their vehicles. . At the insistence of the expedition leader, George-Marie Haardt, the state-of-the-art Citroen vehicles crossed Eurasia at a rapid pace, that frustrated Williams in his wish to engage more closely with the people and landscapes of the Silk Road. The Citroën-Haardt Expedition took one year to travel the length of the Silk Road across Asia.

Williams was fascinated by trade along the Silk Road and the role that the camel played. Williams carried a copy of Marco Polo's *Travels* with him on the expedition. The *Travels* contains numerous references to camels and their key role in transport along the Silk Road. As we saw in chapter 1, the book was written not only as an entertainment, but also as a form of guide-book for European merchants, informing them of the nature of trade along the Silk Road. From the early woodblocks of the thirteenth century onwards, illustrated editions

of the Travels typically included imagery of camels. Williams credited camels with a key place in world history, crediting them with facilitating the travel and trade to which Asia 'owed its past prosperity'.⁴⁰⁰ Williams was impressed by the camel's ability to traverse terrain that would be impossible to cross with other modes of transport. He emphasised that camels were often superior to modern forms of motorised transport for crossing deserts; "The sands which blocked the Romans were no barrier to the Arab. The camel may advance where a motor becomes derelict on the sea of sand".⁴⁰¹

Williams regretted the fact that traditional forms of transport along the Silk Road had been increasingly replaced by modern forms of transport, which in his view lacked the 'charm' of traditional transportation. In his private writing Williams makes clear that he was deeply concerned about what he regarded as the negative impact of modernisation on Asia. Williams' writing about the expedition is peppered throughout with his observations about traders and their camels, which he refers to by the romantic label 'Ships of the Desert'.⁴⁰² Unlike cold and unfeeling mechanical forms of transport, Williams emphasizes the fact that camels are "faithful beasts of burden", with a close relationship to their masters. In Williams' eyes, the traditional forms of transport, notably the camel, were intimately connected with the traditional livelihood of merchants along the Silk Road, including the "proud Bedouin".

⁴⁰⁰ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

⁴⁰¹ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor', The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine* Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society Archive, 1932), 580.

⁴⁰² Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

None of his camel photographs contain a camel without the presence of its “master” or the objects that denote the presence of humans, thereby emphasising the camel’s close relationship with the people who used them for trading goods along the Silk Road. The merchant and the camel constitute an organic, closely-connected unit, which has facilitated trade along the Silk Road for millennia. Regardless of the demands of the NGM and the expectations of its customers, Williams had his own personal purpose in “salvaging” a photographic record of traditional forms of transport along the Silk Road:

... to be blind to the awkward camel and donkey is to rob them of the very elements which give the Oriental picture much of its charm...Why then this current viewing of such faithful beasts of burden? Because propaganda has made them symbols not of international commerce, triumphing over the desert, but of backwardness. It is not enough that the modern world, with its swift strong trucks, should beat the camel at his own games and so not the proud Bedouin of a major source of wealth... In the very lands where the glories of antiquity were first known, the animals which helped man progress have become symbols, not of progress but of lack of it.⁴⁰³

In addition to his personal motivation in photographing traditional modes of transport, he was also acutely aware that NGM readers regarded the camel as a key image in their visual journey along the Silk Road. He referred to the camel as the “bread and butter” of Silk Road photography. He was aware that NGM readers would much prefer to see a stylised image of traditional forms of transport along the Silk Road than a symbol of modernity:

⁴⁰³ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 3-4.

A professional photographer not only needs a subject but an audience and like the Jewish tourist in Israel his audience is more intrigued by a bay camel or a (?) donkey, almost hidden beneath a load of fodder, than it is by a picture of the agricultural bank in (?) or the offices of the electric light company in Damascus.⁴⁰⁴



Figure 2, Neg.55487, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Camels Halt Just Outside South Gate', May 22nd 1931, Herat, Afghanistan, Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

⁴⁰⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Williams photographs portray the role of the camel in a wide variety of settings. Some of the photographs show camels at rest, while others show them moving through vast desert landscapes. Figure 2 shows a caravan at rest. The camels sit on the ground staring into the distance while their riders wander around them. It is likely that all the men and camels in this image are from the same caravan, as people tended to travel in large groups for protection and for the purpose of transporting large quantities of goods. However, it is the two men in the foreground and the two camels just behind them that are the focus of this photograph. Everything else is blurred. Williams was a seasoned photographer and such technical decisions were almost certainly a deliberate choice. The elements in the photograph that are out-of-focus serve the purpose of providing atmosphere and enhancing the viewer's experience through concentration on the in-focus subjects. There is no atmosphere of unease. Everyone is relaxed and calmly going about their business. This is everyday life for the camels and their masters. The men seem to feel no danger of being bitten or kicked by the giant animals around them. For Williams' audience this photograph was probably viewed as evidence of the close bond with "nature", in the form of the camel, that the two men had.⁴⁰⁵ They sit at the front of the photograph sipping from teacups whilst the camels around them are comfortably recumbent. The men in the photograph seem to be drinking tea, which was a major product traded and consumed along the Silk Road. Tea-drinking is associated with calmness, in contrast to alcohol, which is associated with excitability. The 1930's NGM photographer and the NGM reader might have viewed this image as an example of the supposed tranquillity of life as an "Eastern" traveller and their "oneness" with nature, "unspoiled" by the West's modernity and industrialization, which had separated people from the natural world.

⁴⁰⁵ In fact, camels did not stay with a single rider for the entirety of a journey but were hired and changed at different stages (Martha Avery, *The Tea Road, China and Russia Meet Across the Steppe*, Beijing: Intercontinental Press, 2003).

The expedition's journey through Afghanistan was highly significant for Williams and he took numerous photographs in succession of ancient trading cities across the country. The location in which figure 2 was taken is of special significance. It was captured in front of one of the gates in the walls of Herat, a city through which Marco Polo passed on his journey through Afghanistan. Herat dates back to the sixth century BCE. For almost two millennia Herat was a major trading centre along the Silk Road. Its advantageous location contributed to its desirability and prosperity. It remained an important terminus of Silk Road trade between Uzbekistan, Iran, China and Turkey until the building of the Tran-Caspian Railway around 1880 weakened its position in trade across central Asia. Even during the 19th century people from across Central Asia could be found in Herat alongside Hindus, Armenians and Jewish persons.⁴⁰⁶ They almost all found their way there due to trade along the Silk Road.

The city was taken and lost by different empires during its history. In 330 BC Alexander the Great built a citadel in the city and the citadel still retains his name. Williams' father was a university professor of Greek and the location may have had a special significance for Williams, as it formed a key part of the Hellenistic era in Central Asia. In 1380 the city was captured by Timur (Tamerlane, Tamburlane) (1336-1405). Between 1405-1507 Herat was the capital of the Timurid Empire. At its peak the Empire stretched from Delhi in Northern India to Aleppo in Syria.⁴⁰⁷ Herat thrived under Timurid rule. The city not only prospered economically, but also produced works of lasting intellectual significance in both the arts and sciences, including astronomy.⁴⁰⁸ Under the rule of Husayn Bayqara (1438-1506) the

⁴⁰⁶ <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/herat>

⁴⁰⁷ Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The rise and rule of Tamerlane*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴⁰⁸ Jurgen Paul, 'The Rise of the Khwajagan-Naqshbanduyya Sufi Order in Timurid Herat', in Nile Green, ed., *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 71.

Timurid court was filled with poets, scholars, musicians and painters. The period is widely referred to as the Timurid Renaissance.⁴⁰⁹ Most of Persia was contained within the Timurid Empire. Shia-Sufi Islam remains a key element in the culture of Herat, with close cultural and religious connections with Iran.

The geographers, travellers and writers Istakhri (850AD-957AD) and Ibn Hawkal (?-c.978) described the multicultural nature of the city. They described how the city housed a large Friday Mosque, a Christian Church and a Fire Temple. They also referred to the fact that the city was protected by walls with four gates.⁴¹⁰ One wonders if those walls are what can be seen in the background of this figure 2. The crumbling walls shown in the image not only suggest the ancient nature of the city but are also indicative of the romance of “decay” of the East that was often portrayed in Western Romantic Asian-focused paintings and poetry. One needs only to read Percy Bysshe Shelley’s famous poem “Ozymandias” (1818) to recognise that such romantic sentiments about the East existed in Western society long before Williams’ took his photographs:

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: ‘Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

⁴⁰⁹ Stephan Frederic Dale, ‘The Legacy of the Timurids’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, Vol. 8. No. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, April, 1998) 43.

⁴¹⁰ <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/herat>

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the Heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty and despair!
Nothing beside remained. Round the decay
Of colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

The crumbling walls in the background of the photograph reinforce the idea of the Silk Road being something from the past, the crumbling surroundings of city that was once a jewel on the Silk Road now in a state of apparent demise. The image of camels and their masters sitting in front of the crumbling gates of Herat conjures up a powerful image of Silk Road trade and the cultural diversity it facilitated, whose pre-industrial strength had waned and whose “traditions” were under threat from modernisation. Whether unconsciously or by design, the location and subject matter of figure 2 emphasises the ancient roots of the Silk Road, with trade as its *raison d’être*, and pre-industrial transport as its main instrument. Through such a photograph viewers can feel that they are engaging with thousands of years of history at the heart of the Silk Road: camels, merchants and the products they transported and traded are all combined in the set of images. The following images present the dynamic aspects of the camels’ role in Silk Road life.



Figure 3, Neg.56295, Maynard Owen Williams, Beylik, Xinjiang, China, 1932, Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive, The National Geographic Society, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 3 shows a large group of camels ready to be packed up and commence their journey through the seemingly impassable landscape towering behind them. The large number of camels demonstrates the nature of travel via caravan. The yurt in the bottom right hand corner illustrates the kind of portable dwellings that people lived in when traveling. Camels are working animals who, as can be seen from the yurt situated next to them, live in close proximity with their handlers. The loads have not yet been placed upon the camels, which provides viewers with the opportunity to see the tack that these creatures are outfitted with and provides an insight into the practical mechanics of long-distance transportation.

This photograph was taken at the Beyik Pass, which connects Tajikistan with Xinjiang. It has an elevation of almost 5,000 metres and is difficult to traverse for much of the year. Camels find it difficult to negotiate high altitudes so it is possible that this photograph was taken on the way up or down the Beyik Pass. In order to cross over the highest point on the Pass the loads would almost certainly have been moved to ponies, which were able to work at high altitudes, or onto men. The desolate landscape shown in this image has no trees, flowers or shrubs. It is open and unprotected apart from the cliff face. The only water that can be seen is frozen in snow and ice whilst the only animal life comes in the form of domesticated animals. The environment seems inhospitable for human life, yet here people are surviving despite the difficulty and without the “luxuries of modernity” enjoyed by the Westerners who might have looked at this photograph. It would have provided the NGM viewer with a sense of the harshness of life along the Silk Road over the millennia during which the camel was the main form of transport.

The Beyik Pass was a significant place on the Silk Road. It is said that the legendary Chinese Silk Road traveller, the Buddhist monk Xuan Zang (602-644) travelled through the pass on his way to India and Aurel Stein travelled through it in 1907.⁴¹¹ It does not seem that either Williams, the expedition or the NGM knew these facts or found the location particularly interesting. The photograph was not published and Williams has seemingly not taken much time over the shot. For example, the mountains in the background are cut off whilst the camels in the foreground are blurred, there does not seem to be any particular focus to this image. It almost seems as though Williams had little interest in taking it and did not take

⁴¹¹ Surprisingly, Aurel Stein reported that the Beyik Pass was the ‘most frequent and easiest’ pass connecting Afghanistan with Xinjiang (M.Aurel Stein, *Ancient Khotan: Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907) 31.

much care over the image. The exact reasons for this image not being published are unknown. It could have been that Williams requested it not be published. Indeed, as was discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 he was a perfectionist and wielded a lot of influence at the NGM, so it is perfectly plausible that this could have been the case. One should also remember that the NGM's reputation for dynamic and exciting photography is one that the magazine wished to uphold. It was this reputation that had helped save the publication from financial ruin in the 1900s. Figure 3 therefore may not have been seen as up to standard by the NGM editorial team: the photograph does not have a clear focus or narrative and may have been regarded as simply showing animals waiting around. It may possibly have been regarded as neither romantic nor dynamic, and therefore lacking in the transportive power that the NGM wished to yield over its audience.



Figure 4, Neg.56245, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Tokhtai to Tashmalik Two Days from Kashgar. Transition from Mountains to Plain Camels Fording the Gez (Gaz) River', 1932, Xinjiang, North Western China, Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive,

NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 4 demonstrates the camel's strength and versatility in the face of adverse conditions. In the title of Figure 4 it states that the expedition had transitioned to "plain camels". The expedition had come from the mountains where cars, horses and men had been used. Figure 4 demonstrates that even the Citroën-Haardt Expedition with its ultra-modern means of transport still could not successfully traverse Asia without aid of pre-industrial forms of transport. The Citroën vehicles had been abandoned in the Pamirs by the expedition. Horses and (later) camels took their place until they picked up new cars in TashKurgan in Xinjiang.⁴¹² Successful travel along the Silk Road required knowledge of the variety of geographical conditions that could be encountered, even within small sub-sections of the route, let alone over longer distances. In the absence of such knowledge, disaster would follow. Over most of the Silk Road, the camel was the most important transport vehicle, but even they had to be replaced by other animals at certain points. Figure 4 depicts camels battling against the fast-moving current of a wide river. This is a dramatic image that illustrates how much Silk Road travel owed to such animals. It is likely that it would have been a far more arduous crossing without the camels. Indeed, looking at this image one wonders whether the expedition could have succeeded in crossing such a fierce stretch of water without the aid of these powerful animals. The subjects are in dynamic poses, striding forwards. The camels are lined up moving towards the viewer and forcing their way out of the photograph's vista. This caravan is moving with purpose, it has a place to get to and it is doing what it needs to get there. The photograph's label states that the caravan is two days away from Kashgar (Xinjiang) an important stop on the Silk Road. It is likely that this is where they are headed.

⁴¹² Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 357.

Camels were not the only exotic animal photographed by Williams. The yak, which was not a native of the West, also caught his eye. It was vital to many living and traveling along the Silk Road. Like the camel the yak would have been seen by Western viewers as a bizarre animal, which emphasised the exotic nature of the Silk Road. In the legend of one of Williams' photographs of a yak he wrote:

It has the head of a cow, the tail of a horse, and the grunt of a pig. Its meat and milk are food and drink and its dung a fuel. It is a beast of burden, a sometimes spirited charger, and a household companion. Le Fevre, of the expedition, remarked that it seemed to be able to do everything except lay eggs...⁴¹³

⁴¹³ Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 360.



Figure 5, Maynard Owen Williams, Neg.56294, 'Yaks', 1931, Beylik, Xinjiang, China, Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 6, Maynard Owen Williams, Neg.56299, 1931, Beylik, Xinjiang, China, Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Like the camel⁴¹⁴ the yak not only provided a form of transportation but it also provided milk, leather, wool and meat to its owner. For example, yak wool was used to make felt which was used for clothing and inside yurts to prevent their owners from freezing to death!⁴¹⁵ Williams was aware of these aspects of yaks as he commented on them during the expedition's time on the Afghan borders; "...where women milk yaks and roll felt for yurts under low-row forearms..."⁴¹⁶ Yaks like camels had been chosen by their riders over the centuries due to their physical attributes that allowed for successful travel through difficult terrain. These animals ensured the success of Silk Road trade and Williams recognised this legacy. This is evidenced by the fact that at the start of the expedition in June 1931 he wrote that "... in Afghanistan and parts of China it expects to encounter trails which have been trod for centuries only by camels or yaks".⁴¹⁷ Figure 5 and Figure 7 show the manner in which yaks were used by their owners for transportation of goods. Figure 5 shows a yak with what seems to be the belongings required for erecting a tent or yurt on its back. Whilst in figure 7 we see awkward and uncomfortable looking boxes strapped to the yaks' bodies. Like figure 3, figure 5 and 7 was also taken in the Beylik Pass. Unlike camels, yaks are far more naturally suited to high altitude travel so it is possible that this photograph was taken higher up in the pass than figure 3.

⁴¹⁴ Ilse Kohler-Rollefson, Camels and Camel Pastoralism in Arabia, *The Biblical Archaeologist* Vol. 56, No. 4, *Nomadic Pastoralism: Past and Present*, (The University of Chicago Press on Behalf of the American Schools of Oriental Research, December 1993), 180-188.

⁴¹⁵ Susan Whitfield, *Life Along the Silk Road*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 88.

⁴¹⁶ National Geographic, File Number: 11-10015.467, Washington DC.: National Geographic Society Archive.

⁴¹⁷ National Geographic, 'Trans Asian Expedition Starts'. He goes on to talk about the Asian expedition, June 1931, File: 20-1844, Washington DC: National Geographic Society.



Figure 7, Maynard Owen Williams, Neg.56221, 'Khirghiz Types at Subashi on The Road from Tashkurghan to Kashgar North of the Ulugh Rabat Pass', September 13th 1931, Xinjiang, China, Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 8, Neg.56265, Maynard Owen Williams, 'On Route from Tashkurghan to Karasu Karaul', September 12th 1931, Xinjiang, China, Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 9, Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, Xinjiang, China, Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams' yak photographs suggest an even closer relationship between man and yak than his photographs of camel and man. Like the camel the yak was an everyday feature in the lives of the people pictured and Williams' photographs show this familiarity. The photographs he took of yaks often depicted them in the close proximity of families. For example in figure 7 the yak is being ridden by multiple small children whilst being led by an older woman. Figure 8 shows a man sitting close to his yak, seemingly showing it off to the camera. Figure 9 once again shows the relationship between owner and yak that is beyond mere beast of burden. The woman in the photograph is evidently well trusted by her yaks. The baby yak has its faced pressed into her hand whilst the older yaks calmly go about their business close by her. It seems possibly that the yaks are kept by this woman from their childhood through to adulthood and that human and yaks all know each other well. Such imagery once again shows man and nature coexisting peacefully. For Williams such scenes may well have been an example of the "unspoilt" pastoralists and nomadic life that existed in Asia. The static photographs of yaks were not published in the NGM. It seems that photographs of yaks were regarded as boring, or perhaps inconsistent with the Western viewer's idea of the Silk Road.

Each of these photographs was taken in the Ulugh-Rabat Pass which leads to the ancient ruined city of Subashi in Xinjiang, through which Sven Hedin travelled in June 1894.⁴¹⁸ Subashi is a part of what UNESCO refer to as the Network of the Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, which UNESCO believes took shape between the 2nd century BC and 1st century

⁴¹⁸ 'Dr Sven Hedin's Travels in Central Asia', *The Geographical Journal*, Feb, 1895, Vol.5, No. 2 (Feb., 1895), The Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers), 154.

AD.⁴¹⁹ This region of China borders Kyrgyzstan and the people pictured in these images are identified by Williams as Kyrgyz.



Figure 10, Maynard Owen Williams, “Bous-Kasshia”, or Mountain Polo, As Played by Sarikoli Tribesmen of Sinkiang’, 1931, Exact location unknown, ‘First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas’, 1932, Xinjiang, China, The National Geographic Magazine, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1932, 135, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

In sharp contrast with the static photographs of yaks in the photographs above, which were not published, NGM did chose to publish a photograph of a highly dynamic ‘polo’ game (figure 10). The photograph caption describes the game as ‘mountain polo’ or Bous-Kasshia.

⁴¹⁹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442/>

It shows a great ball of movement of horses and yaks being ridden by men engaged in a spirited game. The sharpness of the yaks' horns and the dust being stirred up from the quickness of the players' movements is dramatic. The game is evidently dangerous. It is difficult to tell what is happening in the game. There is no ball visible or other objects within the scene that might make the game familiar to western audiences. Williams identifies the people as 'Sarikoli Tribesmen of Xinjiang'. Sarikoli were known as shepherds and numbered some seven thousand during the 1930s, when this photograph was taken.⁴²⁰ The Sarikoli people are closely associated with the town of Tashkurgan, which appears in the caption for figure 7 and 8. Tashkurgan was a trading city along the Silk Road, at the meeting-point of major caravan routes in eastern Xinjiang.

Williams took many photographs of donkeys, which have been used throughout history to carry heavy or awkward loads. These animals were less exotic than camels or yaks, but their role in Christianity means that they hold a special place in the Western imagination. In fact, it was Williams' own faith that had drawn him to Asia as a missionary during his early 20's and his written work about Asia makes numerous references to Christianity.⁴²¹ For Williams and his fellow-countrymen donkeys had significance beyond their physicality. Not only did these animals hold the sign of the cross on their back but in both the Old and New Testament there are many descriptions of journeys by donkey through lands which the expedition passed. A large fraction of the NGM's American readers in the 1930s would have

⁴²⁰ Ingvar Svanberg, 'Ethnic Categorizations and Cultural Diversity in Xinjiang: The Dolans along Yarkand River', *Central Asiatic Journal*, 1996, Vol.40, No. 2 (Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, Germany, 1996), 265.

⁴²¹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

been Christians and would have been able to relate to the Biblical significance of these images.⁴²²



Figure 11, Neg.55570, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Types', May 22nd 1931, Herat, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

⁴²² In the 1950s more than 90% of the Americans identified themselves as Christian (Frank Newport, 'Percentage of Christians is declining, but still high', 24 December 2015, *Gallup*).



Figure 12, 'Christ Entering Jerusalem', 1337, Cappella degli Scrovegni All'Arena, Padua, Italy.

Williams' photographs of donkeys trekking through desert landscapes are reminiscent of Christian imagery which illustrated Biblical stories. Figure 11 depicts a boy on a donkey dressed in the kind of clothing that is often found in Biblical illustrations, with flowing fabrics folded and tucked so as to drape in beautiful patterns. The similarities are evident when compared with figure 12 which depicts Christ entering Jerusalem. The title of figure 11 gives no information about the image apart from the fact that it was taken in Herat. Figure 11 is also sparse in terms of content and the background has no identifying features. The main focus is the donkey and its young rider. The donkey has no bridle and its saddle seems to be made from layered fabric similar to that used on the camels and yaks for transportation of goods. The young boy is possibly riding this donkey after having transported or on his way to pick up some kind of goods, or maybe he was using the donkey to simply transport himself about.



Figure 13, Maynard Owen Williams, 1932, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 13 shows the movement of a long line of donkeys walking away from the viewer, no destination is visible in the never-ending desert. This is a large caravan moving through the crisp outline of sand dunes. Their snaking positioning draws the eye deep into the distance. The caravan has evidently chosen this route through the difficult landscape as it poses the easiest line of movement, cutting through the lowest parts of the dunes on their journey forward. This image presents the 1930's NGM viewer with an image that corresponds closely to the stories of Christianity, many of which involve arduous treks through desert in search of God or sanctuary. Travel through deserts was dangerous. The traveller could easily get lost or run out of rations, and encounter bandits or even sudden sand storms. Indeed, Williams and other Early Silk Road photographers and explorers mention in their

writing how they would regularly come across the bleached bones of animals and people during the desert sections of expeditions. Western viewers of photographs such as figure 13 might feel that they were observing scenes from the Bible. NGM did not publish this group of photographs of donkeys. Williams may well have been drawn to take them due to their Biblical resonance rather than from any expectation that they would be published in the NGM.

Besides beasts of burden the expedition also used humans as means of transport. Williams' presentation of humans as beasts of burden to some degree reflects a Darwinist view of human beings divided into races that are at different stages of "progress" and "development". Williams' views are sometimes not far removed from the Darwinist racial stereotypes that underpinned Western colonialism, which were examined in chapter 1. This attitude is evidenced by his description of the men the expedition hired during the crossing of the Pamirs:

I suppose there is no more ignorant, worthless and destructive coolie on earth than the Kashmiri. They are a poor race...Their habit is to pack up their loads, go their own pace, stop for food or forage where it occurs, and ultimately deliver their loads at the next stage of the journey, ten to twenty miles further on.⁴²³

and that:

...I found that these dirty, ignorant, spiritless, half-famished coolies have more guts

⁴²³ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Dashki on the Gilgit Road, July 27, 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, 1

than I gave them credit for. And when we chosen of the earth make our progress among lesser folk it is just as well for us to know and recognise that were it not for these ill-clad beasts of burden who live in earth topped packing cases and must at times give themselves to the embrace of filthy, ugly hags, we would never get along from one spot to another.⁴²⁴

Although there are some parts of this paragraph which provide a positive outlook on these men - even crediting them for the success of the expedition - it is on the whole disrespectful, not least to the women, who are described as “filthy, ugly hags”, with whom these hired men engage. The photographs Williams took of these men show them either lounging around, or used as background ‘extras’ in photographs that demonstrate the “plight” of the expedition cars.

⁴²⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Doyan on the Gilgit Road, Gilgit 53 miles Bandipur 140 miles, July 28 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, 3.



Figure 14, Maynard Owen Williams, Neg.56038, 'Coolies at Khaibar on the Gilgit-Kashgar Road', 1931, Gilgit-Kashgar Road, India, T Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 14 presents an image taken in the Himalayan portion of the expedition. It was taken on the route from Gilgit to Kashgar. Gilgit was an important stop on the Silk Road and was on the route through which Buddhism spread from South Asia to the rest of Asia. The two famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, Faxian and Xuanzang, almost certainly used this route.⁴²⁵ During this segment of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition manpower was relied on greatly and in figure 14 these men are the focus of the photograph. The men seem to be resting due to the physically taxing work they have just completed. The environment around the resting men is dry, jagged, huge and sun bleached. The men stand or lie around, some squinting giving a sense of the brightness of the light. There is no apparatus around them that might ease the intensity of their physical labour. Their footwear is meagre. It is clear it is purely their own strength that will carry out the task they have been paid to complete. Many of them are not young men making the task even more onerous. It is striking that Williams witnessed and photographed these men's physical exertion yet still chose to write about them in such a derogatory manner. Williams could not speak their language, which may have reduced his empathy for them and increased the likelihood of misunderstandings. Without an understanding of what people were saying it may have been easier for him to fall back upon Western stereotypes of people from this region rather than seeing his subjects as distinct individuals. Without a common form of communication, be that sign, written or verbal language, one can only go a limited way towards Williams' stated goal of mutual understanding.

When it came to the Citroën cars and hired manpower, the expedition was highly selective about how it communicated to its public, as was examined in Chapter 3. For example, the

⁴²⁵ Frederick Drew, *The Jummo and Kashmir Territories: A Geographical Account* (London: British Library Historical Prints Edition, 2011)(originally published London: E. Stanford, 1875).

expedition claimed to have crossed the Himalayas by motor, but this was untrue. The narrative presented to the public—especially by Citroën—was that of the power of ‘superior’ Western minds and engineering forging its way through the tough, inhospitable lands of the East. However, on numerous occasions the expedition was entirely reliant upon local hired help in the form of man and beast. Without local manpower and animals, the expedition would have made little progress, yet this is often underplayed. The derogatory and unsympathetic views of the expedition in general, and Williams in particular, towards local hired labour is consistent with widespread racism in the West towards the people of Asia in the 1930’s.



Figure 15, Neg.56894, Maynard Owen Williams, 'View Taken Almost Same Time as Neg.56892, but Sand Storm has Blotted Out Background', 10th January 1932, Yellow River, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Boats were also modes of Silk Road transport photographed by Williams. Figure 15 shows the freezing cold scene where one of the Citroën cars is being loaded onto a boat on the Yellow river (*Huang He*). The photograph captures a frozen inhospitable landscape with wind racing through the air. The sky is a blur of grey and white icy tones and the ground is free of any trace of animal or plant. There was a sandstorm so heavy that it blotted out the sun while this photograph was taken. Once again the viewer is offered a glimpse of the harsh natural elements that a traveller would encounter on the Silk Road. One questions how anyone survived day to day in this environment. The only movement visible is that caused by the strong winds that are whipping one man's thick coat about and are causing the waves to thrash in the river. This image provides an insight into the toughness of life in this area of China during the winter.



Figure 16, Neg.55925, Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, Srinagar, India, Washington D.C.:

The National Geographic Society Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 17, Neg.57611, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Canal Scene Below the Town', 1932, Hue, Annam, French Indo-China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 16 and 17 present a completely different water-faring experience. They show a relaxing lethargic scene of people living in harmony with nature. Both of these images look as though they could have been lifted out of Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Looking -Glass River':

Smooth it glides upon its travel,

Here a wimple, there a gleam-

O the clean gravel!

O the smooth stream!

Sailing blossoms, silver fishes,

Pave pools as clear as air-

How a child wishes

To live down there!

We can see our coloured faces

Floating on the shaken pool

Down in cool places,

Dim and very cool;

The water is still, despite the movement of the boats. Plants are growing, the weather looks warm and there are house-like constructions on the water. Both of these images seem unreal and have a distinctly dreamlike tranquillity. No danger is seen here, just the languid flow of life under the gentle heat of the high or setting sun, with shade provided by trees or the onset of night. These are idyllic scenes of romance. There is no danger, just open water accompanied by plants and living situations unfamiliar to most western audiences.

Figure 16 was photographed in Srinagar in the Himalaya region. Srinagar makes up one of the four ancient corridors of the Silk Road linking South Asia with the rest of Asia.⁴²⁶

According to UNESCO it was corridors such as this that contributed to South Asia becoming a prominent part of the Silk Road.⁴²⁷ Williams described Srinagar as a fairyland⁴²⁸ and consistently paints in photographs and writing a dreamlike world fit for poetry with:

Shady canals, bowered in beauty, lead between flowering floating gardens, and the full moon looks down on Dal Lake, such scenes as only dreamers known in less-favoured climes.⁴²⁹

And that

⁴²⁶ <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/countries-alongside-silk-road-routes/india>

⁴²⁷ <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/countries-alongside-silk-road-routes/india>

⁴²⁸ National Geographic, Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to La Gorce, Nedous Hotel Srinagar, June 27 1931, Washington DC: National Geographic Society.

⁴²⁹ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine* Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 439.

Night after night we dine in one of his (Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir) houseboats. We are rowed through the reflected beauty of lake and mountain by silent Kashmiris wielding paddles shaped like hearts.⁴³⁰

Such statements are evidence of the prosperity that Silk Road trade brought to the location. Stop-off points like these where people could “refuel” were important in ensuring successful Silk Road commerce.⁴³¹ The boats used in this image were likely only used for manoeuvring around this stretch of water, the Dal Lake. The boats featured in figure 17, taken in Vietnam, were possibly used in short distance trade along the many waterways that existed. Unlike animals and humans boats did not require feeding or paying and boats could carry more weight over greater distances with more ease. In essence boats were more efficient than other forms of pre-industrial transport, hence the great success of the maritime Silk Road even after industrialisation.

Epic Landscapes

The epic nature of the Asian landscape was regularly invoked in the writing of Williams and Haardt. Haardt described the expedition’s route as being:

Across desert wastes and windswept plateaus, over snow-clad mountain passes,

⁴³⁰ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir’, *The National Geographic Magazine Index* July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 439.

⁴³¹ Subhakanta Behera, ‘India’s Encounter with the Silk Road’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 51, (Economic and Political Weekly, Dec. 21-27, 2002), 5077.

through strange lands where ancient civilizations flourished, and into vast, mysterious, teeming China – such will be the route of the Citroën Trans–Asiatic Expedition, which left (Beirut) in April...⁴³²

⁴³² Bill Jones, '1931: The Silk Road Meets the Auto Age', <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/features/far-and-away/1931-the-silk-road-meets-the-auto-age/>



Figure 18, Neg.56402, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Geological Structure in The Valley of Bazaklik Not Far From The Caves. Cart Track in Valley Crosses Stream Several Times.

Small Grain (corn) Fields Above Water Level', 1932, Valley of Bazeklik, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE

NGM.



Figure 19, Neg.55843, Maynard Owen Williams, Burzil Pass, India, 1931, Washington D.C.:
The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams' landscape photographs encapsulate this description. They present the viewer with the majesty of the Silk Road landscape: endless rolling hills, terrifying heights, dry sweltering heat as seen in figure 18 and freezing temperatures as seen in figures 19. Such images showed to audiences the breadth of the environments to be encountered and endured along the Silk Road. Williams painted an Eden-like image of the Silk Road, regularly writing on such themes as, for example, the bountifulness of the orchards he visited, bowing heavy

with fruit.⁴³³ Williams seems to view Asia as a place of danger but also a Utopia. The following passage demonstrates this juxtaposition:

Photographs alone can suggest those massive walls of everlasting ice; those precarious paths now hung in mid-air, now lost in the turbid torrent; those peaceful Hunza villages with orange splashes of drying apricots on flat mud roofs amid the green; those friendly folk offering fruits at every turn; those Gothic Karakoram parks bathed in tints which change with every shifting of clouds and sun.⁴³⁴

His written descriptions of the Asian landscape were published in the NGM. However, his landscape photographs were not often featured, possibly due to the NGM's belief that their readership was more interested in "human geography". Williams seems to have had a similar view, as he took far more portraits than he did landscapes.

The fact that both Williams and the NGM wished to concentrate on human geography caused problems in the relationship between the NGM and Citroën. As was seen in Chapter 3, Citroën were irritated with the lack of representation of their cars in the NGM's reportage on the expedition. Citroën had hoped that many of the photographs produced and published would feature their vehicles, and demonstrate to the NGM's American audience the

⁴³³ Kalamazoo College Archives, MOW Diary Asia 1931 Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, May 20th, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

⁴³⁴ Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 343.

dynamism and robustness of the Citroën vehicles. However, the NGM had a policy against product placement.

Images of landscapes tended to be those which showed off the Citroën cars to best advantage. Citroën wished for many such photographs and written mention of their company to be made in the NGM. However, the NGM's non-commercial policy meant that such images could not be placed in the magazine as frequently as Citroën wished. The NGM audience bought the magazine for its beautiful and exotic images from around the world, not cars which they saw every day in the streets of America and the audience's satisfaction was one of the NGM's main concerns. Williams was equally uninterested in cars. In a letter to J.R.Hildebrand, he stated that images of cars and their contents were "...deadly dull".⁴³⁵ For both Williams and the NGM, the primary purpose of this series of articles and photographs was to connect with the long history of Asia and the Silk Road and "retrace the steps of Marco Polo". Modern, state-of-the-art vehicles did not fit easily with such a purpose, even though the vehicles were essential for the expedition to take place.

The landscapes that Williams did photograph seem to have two principle influences: The Hudson River School and Frontier Photography. Although Williams does not directly mention these two art schools, it is not unlikely that there was a connection between these schools and his work. Williams' parents grew up during the construction of the United States of America in the nineteenth century, as the frontier pushed steadily westwards towards the Pacific Ocean. His family were academic, patriotic and religious. Therefore, Williams would

⁴³⁵ The National Geographic Society, Letter from MOW to Hilde, Feb 3 1931, 11-27.6 Folder 6 Box 1, Personal Papers, Williams Maynard Owen 1931 Hildebrand J.R, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

probably have had access to ideas that were promoted during the creation of the United States of America and the artworks that reflected these ideas.

The Hudson River School was America's 'first true artistic fraternity' (from 1850 until the Centennial in 1876). It included painters and writers who produced epic and evocative depictions of the wilds of the Western landscapes of America.⁴³⁶ These artists painted landscapes of America that were influenced by the work of British artists, such as J.M.W Turner and Constable, who drew upon notions of idealised naturalism and sublime or fearsome aspects of nature. Frontier Photography began in the early 1840's and also focused upon the Western Frontier landscape, depicting this region with grandeur. Princeton University described the purpose of Frontier Photography as:

Early photos of the American West document the history of a region, but they also demonstrate how America characterized their place and their future...Their photographs offered a glimpse into the future of a nation.⁴³⁷

Many of these photographs were taken during scientific expeditions to the 'Western Frontier'. Some of them were associated with the NGS and NGM. NGS archives contain many examples of these photographs that Williams could easily have had access to, be it in

⁴³⁶ Kevin J. Avery, 'The Hudson River School', Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 2004, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd_hurs.htm).

⁴³⁷ <https://rbsc.princeton.edu/exhibitions/framing-frontier>

the form of magazines he consumed as a child, or work he saw whilst employed by the institution.



Figure 20, Thomas Moran (1837-1926), 'Mosquito Trail, Rocky Mountains of Colorado', 1875, Watercolour on paper, Private Collection.



Figure 21, Neg. 56367, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Rock Fromation Between Murtuk and the Bazaklik Caves', 1931, Between Mutrtul and Bazaklik, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 22, Neg.56078, Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Trail from Baltit to Gulmit', 1931, Baltit to Gulmit, India, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

It seems likely that Williams was influenced by the Hudson River and Frontier Photographers, transposing their perspective and techniques from the American to the Asian context. Williams' landscapes can be construed as presenting Asia as an "untamed wilderness", still largely unexplored, except for intrepid explorers and photographers such as himself. There is a close affinity between the compositional tools used by Williams and those of the Hudson River and Frontier Photographers. The inclusion of people or animals within the landscape provide a measure against which the viewer can comprehend the vastness of the landscape, as can be seen in figure 20. Figures 21 and 22 all use tiny humans as a measure for the scale of the environment. Such compositional devices intensify the idea of the struggle involved in traveling through the Silk Road landscapes. The viewer is reminded of how small and weak humans are in comparison with nature.

In figure 22 the people in the photograph are so small that the viewer does not even notice they are in the photograph unless they look very closely. The vastness of the landscape around them takes almost all of one's attention. It seems to continue at infinitum into the distance, with cliffs that only become bigger as the viewer looks further into the distance. This photograph is made of layer upon layer of grandeur, which draws the viewer's eye ever further beyond the foreground. The viewer is ineluctably led to consider the difficulty and length of time it would be required to traverse it. In the foreground of Figure 22 the expedition is shown traversing a clear path. Despite the numerable scattered boulders that surround it, evidently this is a well-trod and maintained path. This is understandable considering that the area in which the photograph was taken lies between Baltit and Gulmit. This route had been involved in long distance trade for centuries with South and Central

Asia via the Trans-Karakoram trade route. In fact the 700 year old fort at Baltit, which the expedition visited and photographed, was home to the Mir of Hunza until 1945.⁴³⁸



Figure 23, Albert Bierstadt, 'Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, California', 1868,
Washington D.C.: Smithsonian American Art Museum,

⁴³⁸ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/gilgit-baltistan-hunza-valley-altit-baltit-fort>



Figure 24, Neg.56206, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Subashi to Gez (Gaz). Reflection in Bulunkul (lake) Near Tarbashi', 1931, Bulunkul, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The Hudson River and Frontier Photographic schools made use of great pools of water in their work. These glass-like pools mirror the surrounding landscape, creating a sense of vastness that continues into the background of the photograph and vertically downwards into the water. This similarity between these presentational styles and Williams' work can be seen when one compares Albert Bierstadt's painting in figure 23 and Williams' photograph in figure 24. In both the photograph and the painting, endless swathes of still water emphasise the magnitude of the landscape depicted: the stillness of the water captures the atmosphere of Eden, its serenity and purity, untouched by modernity. In fact, America was often described as an Eden and a place given to settlers by God. The view of Americans as the

inheritors of a “Manifest Destiny” to whom had been given the “Promised Land” was deeply-rooted in the outlook of the Hudson River School. During the early 20th century a large proportion of Americans were Christian and God-fearing.⁴³⁹ Christian audiences viewing Williams landscapes photographs might therefore have seen them as demonstrating God’s majesty.

⁴³⁹ Frank Newport, ‘Percentage of Christians is declining, but still high’, 2015.



Figure 25, Neg.56891, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Yellow River, South of Chung Wei', 1932, Yellow River, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 26, Neg.57884, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Water carrier leaving the moat in front of the Great Khmer temple, made famous in Paris because of its reproduction in the Colonial Exposition of 1931', 1932, Angkor Wat, Cambodia, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Other examples of the calmer side of Silk Road life include these two photographs in figure 25 & 26. They also provide images of a Silk Road landscape in which one could escape from the stresses of life. During the 1930s many Americans were living through difficult times. As discussed in Chapter 2, such images provided escapism and hope. Williams' depictions of languid and beautiful landscapes suggested that the idyllic representations of Asia in the Romantic movement did in fact exist.

Footsteps in the sand are a common trope in images showing travel through deserts. They show the presence of humans in a location that for the most part one would not expect humans to be. Figure 25 shows a landscape devoid of human presence, apart from a curving path of footsteps in the sand. The footsteps lead right up to the bottom edge of the photograph, making the viewer feel as though those footsteps belong to them. Although the photograph is of a desert, it is a safe desert, the mountains rise high in the background but there is a full flowing river nearby. If we were there we would not die of thirst, and where there is water, plants will grow: one could survive in this landscape. Whoever created the footsteps is human judging by their gait and most likely belong to Williams. The path he has trodden is an odd shape. It may be because that is the best way to traverse dunes or, perhaps because he moved in that way so as to create a better photograph. His footsteps add interest to the image encouraging the viewer to create a story as to why the footsteps exist or who they belong to. They also are a useful compositional tool drawing the eye of the viewer to both the foreground and background. As the footsteps stop immediately below the front of the photograph one has the feeling that whoever is taking the photograph is resting and surveying the beauty of the landscape around them. Or the viewer could pretend that the footsteps are their own.

Figure 26 also incorporates water but in the form of a lake filled with plants that create dappled patterns across its surface, in the evening or morning light. In the background stands Angkor Wat and in the foreground a man moves about without disruption to the water's surface. This photograph has a stillness that mirrors the atmosphere of its religious location. Angkor Wat has long been famous in the West for its sacred character and mystery, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.



Figure 27, Neg.55722, Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, Ak Robot Pass, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The precarious nature of travel is a recurring theme in Williams work.⁴⁴⁰ For example, Figure 27, taken in the Ak Robot Pass in Afghanistan which leads to Bamiyan,⁴⁴¹ a place the expedition visited and which is analysed in greater depth in Chapter 5. The image contains a snaking, well-trodden path through an “alien” landscape that might be unsettling to most Westerners. Seeing a pathway, person or people traveling through a seemingly desolate and unforgiving landscape provides one with a sense of the potential for loneliness of those travelling the Silk Roads. The landscape in this image looks parched, endless and with little to tell one section of it from the other - no trees, water, or particularly prominent rock features. This, together with the fact that the man walking side by side with his donkeys in the foreground is alone, creates the sense that the figure in the foreground is making a lonely and monotonous journey. The fact that this man is alone apart from his livestock is suggestive of danger as the risk of attack from bandits is increased when someone is travelling alone. In addition to merchants in large caravans, innumerable people must have travelled along the Silk Road in this solitary and lonely fashion, with only their animals to keep them company.

Williams was excited about the Himalayan portion of the journey⁴⁴² and wrote to Gilbert Grosvenor about the prospect of traveling along the Gilgit trail:

⁴⁴⁰ The National Geographic Society, Letter from *MOW to Grosvenor*, April 13th 1932, Phnon Penh, Cambodia, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

⁴⁴¹ Joseph Hackin, 'In Persia and Afghanistan with the Citroen Trans-Asiatic Expedition', *The Geographical Journal*, May 1934, Vol. 83, No.5 (The Royal Geographical Society, with the Institute of British Geographers), May 1934), 359.

⁴⁴² The National Geographic Society, Letter from *MOW to Gilbert H. Grosvenor*, no date but was sent from France), Folder 4 Box, 1 11-27.4 Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owens, 1931.

I can't tell you what a kick I am getting out of the idea of avalanches and dust storms and thirst and hunger and the pioneer spirit and the good old fight to win through. C'est la vie pour un homme and I know how you love it yourself.⁴⁴³

Such enthusiasm might explain why he captured so many landscapes in his journey along this segment of the route. He was so impressed with the Himalayan landscape he saw during this portion of the journey that he wrote:

Photographs alone can suggest those massive walls of everlasting ice; those precarious paths now hung in mid-air, now lost in the turbid torrent; those peaceful Hunza villages with orange splashes of drying apricots on flat mud roofs amid the green; those friendly folk offering fruits at every turn; those Gothic Karakoram peaks bathed in tints which change with every shifting of cloud and sun...we saw a mile-long avalanche burst into clouds of snow dust and settle to rest on the amazing flank of Rakaposhi, king of the Kailas Range, its summit more than three vertical miles above our heads. At Gulmit, beyond the green and gold of field beans and ripened grain, the Karakoram peaks in the Little Guhjal wore a Joseph's coat of ever-changing hues.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴³ The National Geographic Society, Letter from *MOW to Gilbert H. Grosvenor* no date but was sent from France), Folder 4 Box, 1 11-27.4 Personal Papers Williams, Maynard Owens, 1931.

⁴⁴⁴ Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 343.



Figure 28, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Only a Few Loose Stones Between Life and Destruction', 1931 NGSM title: The "Golden Scarab" clings to the Gilgit Road. When a portion of the footing dropped away beneath it, the tractor was left on a precarious perch 40 feet above a mountain torrent 'Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', The National Geographic Magazine, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 333, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

This was a very dangerous part of the expedition, and the photographs from it demonstrate this clearly. For example, cars balanced on cliff edges that, with one wrong move, would see the vehicle and its occupants plummet to their deaths. In Figure 28 we look up at just such a scene. What we see is a situation in which it seems impossible for the car not to topple over. However, the image also begs the question, how on earth it got up there in the first place. It is a surreal image and situation. The road upon which the car is balanced, even before it crumbled, is extremely thin and unstable, made up not of solid rock but piled up mismatched rocks. This image was published in the NGM but one cannot imagine that Citroën would have been too pleased about it. It shows the excitement and drama of the expedition and thus tell its story in a compelling way. But it is not a photograph that shows the triumph of Citroën engineering. Rather it shows how unsuited these vehicles were to the environment. The car looks ungainly and in need of great help both to have got into the situation it is in and to prevent it plummeting down the rock face. In fact, Williams' writing in the article would have compounded Citroën's irritations as his description of the situation does not present Citroën's vehicle in a positive light. Rather it makes it look rather ineffectual.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 333.



Figure 29, Neg.55843, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Cars on Way to Summit of Burzil Pass, India, 13,775 Feet, Worlds Altiude Record for Motor Cars', 1931, Burzil Pass, Kashmir, India, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 30, Maynard Owen Williams, 'The First Car Nears the Summit of Burzil Pass', 1931, Burzil, between Kashmir and Gilgit, Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', The National Geographic Magazine, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1932, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

What is shown in these landscape photographs, but is somewhat side-lined in Williams' writing, is the great efforts that the hired help made to ensure the success of the expedition across the Himalayas. They carried heavy loads - including the cars, dismantled and whole - through freezing temperatures, dressed only in summer clothes and sandals.⁴⁴⁶ Figures 29 and 30 view the same scene from different angles. They show men pulling the Citroën car up the sheer face of a Himalayan mountainside. They are straining against the swerving weight of the Citroën car as it slides in the opposite direction. Meanwhile the expedition members sit in the car or stand by the side watching, or as is the case with Williams, photographing the scene. The photos emphasise the ineffectual nature of cars in the Himalayas despite the fact that the accompanying writing states the opposite. The elevation of the Burzil pass, where this photo was taken, is at 4,100m and the route is a historic caravan route lying between Srinagar and Gilgit, commonly navigated by horse and man power.⁴⁴⁷ The expedition was advised not to travel this route during the beginning of the summer by locals and these photos demonstrate the wisdom of this advice. The car looks out of place in this snowy vista, and does not seem to be battling successfully against the elements. Despite this negative depiction of the "strength" of Citroën engineering it was included in the NGM reportage. The NGM gave the following title to this image of a weak-looking car:

⁴⁴⁶ Eric Deschamps, *Croisiere Jaune, Chroniques 1929-1933* (E-T-A-I, Boulogne-Billancourt, Cedex, France, 2003).

⁴⁴⁷ John E.Hill (translator), 'The Western Regions according to the Hou Hanshu', The Kingdom of Wuyishanli (Kandahar, including Arachosia and Drangiana) (Seattle: Silk Road Seattle Project, 2003).

The First Car Nearing The Summit of Burzil pass, Despite the 13,775-foot altitude, the machines forged forward under their own power. An army of coolies tugging ropes provided insurance against disastrous side slips.⁴⁴⁸

The NGM was misleading its audience by claiming that the local men were not ensuring the success of the car but were rather an insurance against a worst-case scenario.

Trade: The Bazaars of the Silk Road

The term “Silk Road” reflects the fact that the route across Eurasia was based on trade. The photographs analysed in this section depict the manner in which trade over long distance found its way into everyday life in towns and cities along the Silk Road. These images combine the familiar with the unfamiliar. They include exotic goods alongside everyday objects familiar to the Western viewer, but often rendered ‘exotic’ by the context. In fact, some of the objects Williams saw on sale were far more familiar to Western audiences than one might have expected. For example, Williams wrote in his biography of how in “...the shadowy bazaars” in Aleppo he saw fabrics from Manchester and Japan on sale.⁴⁴⁹ In the markets along the Silk Road one could observe just how far afield trade stretched and with whom it was conducted.

⁴⁴⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas’, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 277.

⁴⁴⁹ Williams, Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, Kalamazoo Archive, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

As was seen in chapter 1, the term 'Silk Road', devised by Richthoven in 1877, was closely connected with Europe's commercial and colonial interests in Asia. The NGM was fully aware of the intimate relationship of the Silk Road with commerce, not only historically, but also in the context of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition.⁴⁵⁰ It believed that the expedition would enlarge Western knowledge of the commercial opportunities along the Silk Road. This is reflected in a document from the NGM archives (June 1931):

From the point of view of economics, the location of present commercial centers and the chief articles of trade, exchange, currencies, and the nature of credits will be observed.⁴⁵¹

Marco Polo's *Travels* is full of descriptions of vibrant trading towns along the Silk Road. The sections on the 'Middle East' and the 'Road to Cathay' provide detailed accounts of trade and industry in a succession of towns that he passed through on his journey from the Mediterranean to Western China, including cities such as Tabriz (Iraq), Kerman (Eastern Persia), and Kashgar (Xinjiang)⁴⁵²:

The people of Tabriz live by trade and industry; for cloth of gold and silk is woven here in great quantity and of great value. The city is so favourably situated that it is a

⁴⁵⁰ The National Geographic Society, File: 11-3.46, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

⁴⁵¹ The National Geographic Society, 'Trans Asian Expedition Starts', June 1931 File: 20-1844, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

⁴⁵² Marco Polo, *The Travels*, (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 57, 62 and 80.

market for merchandise from India and Baghdad, from Mosul and Hormuz, and from many other places...It is also a market for precious stones, which are found here in great abundance. It is a city where good profits are made by travelling merchants...

In [Kerman] originate the stones called turquoises; they are found in great abundance in the mountains, where they are dug out of the rocks. There are also veins producing steel and ondanique [a form of steel] in great plenty. The inhabitants excel in the manufacture of all the equipment of a mounted warrior – bridles, saddles, spurs, swords, bows, quivers, and every sort of armour according to local usage...The gentlewomen and their daughters are adepts with the needle, embroidering silk of all colours with beasts and birds and many other figures...

[Kashgar] was once a kingdom, but now it is subject to the Great Khan. It has villages and towns aplenty. Its inhabitants live by trade and industry. They have very fine orchards and vineyards and flourishing estates. Cotton grows here in plenty, besides flax and hemp. The soil is fruitful and productive of all the means of life. This country is the starting-point from which many merchants set out to market their wares all over the world...

Marco Polo's account of Central and Eastern China is fulsome in its wonder at the country's vibrant commercial life, including a lyrical account of the commerce along the Yangtse (*Chang Jiang*):

I assure you that this river runs for such a distance and through so many regions and there are so many cities on its banks that truth to tell, in the amount of shipping it

carries and the total volume and value of the traffic, it exceeds all the rivers of the Christians put together and their seas into the bargain'.⁴⁵³

Trade was also a favourite subject for Williams in relation to the Silk Road. For him, Asia was brimming with an abundance of commercial life and exotic consumption. In his autobiography Williams wrote: "Europe is mesmerized by Oriental luxury".⁴⁵⁴

No matter where the expedition halted, Williams would seek out the local marketplaces.⁴⁵⁵ It is easy to understand why he was drawn to photographing this subject. They were often lively locations that provided his camera with an array of different sights: all manner of objects carefully displayed in an enticing fashion so as to capture the eyes of passing customers and a hubbub of people bustling around buying and selling. Marketplaces provided Williams with "exotic" objects and "exotic" people to photograph. For Williams, a lover of portraiture, this must have proved invigorating artistically and anthropologically, especially after being cooped-up for days, traveling in a car over desolate plains and deserts. Marketplaces provided NGM's readers with examples of what a region had to offer in terms of trade, including beautiful metal work, intricate embroidery or spices, and gave a glimpse of the everyday consumption and dress of the people from the region or place photographed. Williams' market photographs not only contain produce but also the people

⁴⁵³ Marco Polo, *Travels*, 1974, 209.

⁴⁵⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope, Box 7/6. Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

⁴⁵⁵ Kalamazoo College Archives, MOW Diary Asia 1931 Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

through whom he brings Silk Road commerce alive.



Figure 31, Neg.57841, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Maret', 1932, Near Hue, Annam, French Indo-China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams did not write much about the South East Asian portion of the expedition, probably due to the fact that following Haardt's death there was great uncertainty about whether the expedition would be completed, following the path of Marco Polo's return to Europe via South East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. Consequently, there are difficulties with analysing his work from this period. However, he did take many photographs in Southeast Asia. Figure 31 depicts a market with little produce in sight, just a sea of people. It is evidently a popular place. It was taken in Vietnam and is alive with frenetic activity. One can

almost hear the sounds of the market. The photograph is busy and bustling, engulfed by a sea of identical white hats bobbing about at different angles, producing an effect reminiscent of a flock of birds. Such hats were already a symbol of Asia to Westerners and became fashionable attire amongst early 20th century Western women. The photograph presents a very different world from the one that would have been familiar to the NGM's readers. Figure 31 seems to depict a food market. If the viewer looks closely in between the people, they can catch sight of baskets that seem to contain ginger, mushrooms or possibly chicken feet. A number of people have turned up with empty baskets maybe to carry home their purchases in or because everything has been sold from that basket. This image is less focussed on produce, as the viewers can't see much of what is on sale, nor can they see the majority of the peoples' faces, as their hats hide their faces. This is a photograph that seems to aim to capture how it feels to be in a market like this. The sea of moving hats, lack of space and people winding around each other capture the busy atmosphere of the market in a surreal and dreamlike manner.

Food appeared regularly in Williams market scenes. Some of the first photographs he took during the expedition were of lemonade sellers in Beirut. The shapes and texture of food provided visual interest and food was a preoccupation during the hours of boredom travelling in cars. Food would have been a popular topic with the NGM audience, to which they could easily relate. To see what people thousands of miles away ate day-to-day would have been intriguing. Williams' articles contain numerous mouth-watering descriptions of the food the expedition enjoyed and saw. Not only was food on show in bazaars but, as is the case in most societies, food was a big part of hospitality in the places the expedition visited. Williams description often were lyrical in their enthusiasm for exotic food eaten in exotic locations He describes a picnic at Sahne between Kermanshah and Hamadan in Iran as follows: "Rugs

spread besides a stream, and honey-sweetened milk curds, with flat sheets of bread on which to scoop them up, were set out".⁴⁵⁶ And that whilst in Kashmir the expedition visited

This unusual restaurant besides a willow-shaded pool, had come to be a friendly place, and this delicious Persian meal, eaten on a moon-lit balcony, was a relief after a day in which beauty had escaped my lens.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX*, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 410.

⁴⁵⁷ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX*, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 405-406.



Figure 32, Neg.55241, Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, Iran, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams' photographs included examples (Figure 32-34) depicting the food that the majority of people would have eaten. In Figure 32 loaves of breads stand to attention in two rows in an open-air market. The loaves are almost the size of the young men next to them. These breads are very different from the rounded cubed loaves most Westerners experienced. Almost all countries around the world consume some kind of bread, and often during the course of a country's history, it was bread that helped to keep populations alive. The topic of bread, however "oddly" shaped, would therefore have been one to which any audience could relate. The gathered group in figure 32 all stand in the right-hand side of the photo. All the men are young and look at the camera, making this image seem rather posed: people do not usually gather in this configuration at a market stall. Williams may have wished to have a clear view of the bread and as result would have had to ask everyone to stand aside. The

juxtaposition of the old and the new is strongly in evidence in this photograph. Boys are dressed in the “modern” Western fashion, wearing suits and hats. They constitute the majority of the group gathered in the photograph, whilst one woman dressed in a “traditional” burka stands amongst them. The bread that this group stand next to is not Western. The woman’s dress and the man-sized bread represent the Iranian aspects whilst the men’s clothing show the “modern”. The tug of war between “modern and traditional” in Iranian dress reflects the wider debate over tradition and modernity in inter-war Iran, which is discussed further in Chapter 5.



Figure 33, Neg. 56944, Maynard Owen Williams, ‘Crullers’, 1932, Ning Xia, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 33 also depicts 'exotic' versions of food well known to the Western viewer - doughnuts. However, these doughnuts are not all the same shapes as those common to Western markets. The breads, not the shop vendor, are the subject of this image as they are the only thing in focus. These Chinese doughnuts were savoury and a staple of everyday cuisine. Williams mis-titles the back of this photograph as "cullers", a deep-fried American sugary pastry, which looks similar to the *youtiao* (油条) on offer in the photograph which is odd considering Williams had lived and worked in China for many years. This image is an example of how photographs can produce misunderstandings, especially if someone is interpreting them through their own cultural experiences.



Figure 34, Neg.56776, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Doughnut merchant inside south gate of Kanchow', December 26th 1932, Zhang Ye, Gan Zhou, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

This photograph (figure 34), entitled “Doughnut Merchant Inside South Gate of Kanchow”, captures the food on offer and the clientele. The crowd gathered at the doughnut stall are all smiling, munching away on their “doughnuts” or waiting to be served - a popular stall! To the right of the homemade deep fryer is a table, with various bowls upon it. This is probably where the doughnut man prepares the “doughnuts”. This photograph shows the whole process of this man’s profession in one photograph, the creation, the frying, the selling and the enjoyment of his “doughnuts”.

Each of these photographs shows rudimentary street stalls, places where ordinary people would gather each day rather than the sumptuous dining hall feasts that the expedition were regularly invited to. Williams seems to have been more interested in photographing street food as he took many photographs on this subject and only two photographs of formal presentations of food. As mentioned in Chapter 3 and 4 one of Williams’ goals was mutual understanding, which may explain his focus on the everyday lives of ordinary people. The majority of the world’s population did and do not live in a lavish manner. Images of the everyday lives of the majority of people were therefore much more useful in the creation of mutual understanding, as this was the commonplace mode of existence across all cultures.

Prior to entering Afghanistan the expedition had travelled through Iran. Williams did not find this experience easy as he was strongly encouraged by his Iranian guide to focus his lens upon the modernised aspects of the country. Williams did not like this as he did not find these aspects interesting nor representative of what he believed was the “true Middle East” (examined further in Chapter 3 and 5).⁴⁵⁸ He considered that when the expedition entered

⁴⁵⁸ Marco Polo includes Iran in his section on the ‘Middle East’.

Herat "...we crossed the threshold into the unspoiled East".⁴⁵⁹ The photographs Williams' took in Afghanistan are those of which he was proudest, and make up some of his most cinematic and painterly work on the expedition. His comment that Afghanistan was the gateway to the unspoiled East is representative of his belief that he was now about to see and photograph the "real East". Whilst in Afghanistan Williams took photographs of many market scenes located in major Afghan trading cities, including Herat, Kandahar, Ghazni and Kabul. These cities had been trading centres along the Silk Road for thousands of years. Williams was excited about his work in Afghanistan and wished for a large amount to appear in the NGM. In a letter to the NGM Williams wrote that he had never enjoyed work so much as that he conducted in Afghanistan's bazars.⁴⁶⁰ He felt that this series of work was his most valuable to date because he believed not only was this work aesthetically pleasing but that in his view this was the first professional camera to do work in this location.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index* July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 418.

⁴⁶⁰ Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to La Gorce, Afghanistan May 23rd 1931, (Washington DC: National Geographic Archive).

⁴⁶¹ 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4, A charming room in the Former Italian Legation Kabul, Afghanistan, June 11, 1931, Letter from Maynard Owen Williams to La Gorce, 2 & 1, Kalamazoo Archive, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.



Figure 35, Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), 'The Moorish Bath', 1876, Oil on Canvas, Saint Petersburg: The Hermitage.



Figure 36, William James Muller, 'The Carpet Bazaar, Cairo', 1843, Bristol: Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery.

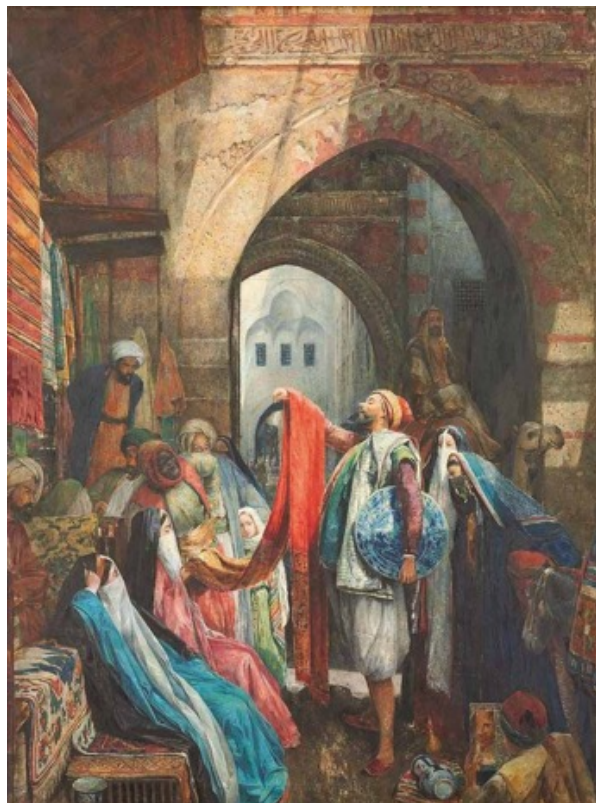


Figure 37, John Fredrick Lewis (1805-1876), 'A Cairo Bazaar; The Dellal', 1875, Watercolour, Christies Auction.



Figure 38, Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 39, Neg.55523, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Covered Section of Bazaar in Herat (two second exposure)', 1931, Herat, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 40, Neg.55506, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Bazaar', 1931, Herat, Afghanistan,
Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE
NGM.



Figure 41, Neg.54962, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Street Scene', 1931, Baghdad, Iraq, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams' use of light and arch framing in these photographs correspond closely to the work of Orientalist painters such as Jean-Léon Gérôme (figure 35). Indeed, one has only to look at figures 38, 39 and 40 in comparison to Jean-Léon Gérôme's work in figure 35 to see the remarkable similarities. Arch framing is also a common feature of Williams photographs in Afghanistan. The compositional device creates a feeling of looking through a secret door into a "magical" and hidden world which was an atmosphere very much in vogue during the early 20th century when it came to depictions of Asia. The device is most visible in figure 39, taken in Afghanistan and figure 41, taken in Iraq. The photograph taken in Iraq, in a shaded alleyway, is also interesting as it shows an establishment that sells saddles for donkeys, horses and camels. This shop is not only a beneficiary of Silk Road Trade, due to its need for various types of leather and metal accrements. But it is also shop that aids in ensuring successful travel through its merchandise, which is hung on display outside the shop or workshop.⁴⁶²

Each of the photographs Williams took in the bazaars in Herat have a similar atmosphere. They do not look like Western markets, they are covered markets whose architecture is made up of foreign pointed arches and winding corridors filled with men. None of the bazaars photographed is in their prime. They all seem to be old and look as though they have been in use for a long time. Once more the viewer is presented with a popular romantic presentation of the crumbling East that has fallen from its peak of prosperity.

⁴⁶² Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index* July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 404.

For Williams Afghanistan was where Asia began. Its bazaars fascinated him bringing to life the fantasies he had seen in painting and read about in literature:

From twenty miles away we saw four of the great minarets which rise like chimneys outside the mud-walled city. Passing between them and entering the long bazaar which runs from one gate to the other...Men squatted in their tiny cubicles or stood so close beside us that our cars almost brushed their breasts...For two days I worked in the bazaar and along the walls under conditions which, had it not been for genuine good will and innate politeness, would have been impossible. And these were the men whom our friends on both sides of them describe as savages!⁴⁶³

Williams wrote of the work he produced there that "All my hopes are tied up in the hundreds of films I have been able to make".⁴⁶⁴

And that

I am superstitious about dying that I have made good photographs until the results are in paper. It is quite possible that some of the shots made here in the bazars upon

⁴⁶³ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index* July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society, October 1931), 418.

⁴⁶⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to LaGorce, May 23rd 1931, Heart, Afghanistan, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

which I pin high hopes will prove worthless...⁴⁶⁵

Williams commentary on his work in Afghan marketplaces is interesting not only because it provides an understanding of his excitement at being in Afghanistan, but also gives insights into his photographic methods. The fact that Williams used glass plates for many of his Afghan shots also demonstrates his love of this location. Williams had access to fewer glass plates than film. Moreover, glass plates were more expensive than film. Part of his decision to use plates may also have been due to the dim light conditions in the covered bazaars. Plates were riskier to use but evidently Williams was willing to take the risk.

Williams may have enjoyed his time in Afghanistan but his work was not easy. The Afghan bazaars he photographed were often dimly lit and full of people going about their daily activities, which was part of why he enjoyed it so much but it also produced complications. Williams did not always find it easy to photograph market places. For example, on occasions his minders caused problems when they raised issues about his choice of subject. This was especially the case in Iran.⁴⁶⁶ Whilst in Afghanistan the main problem was the fact that it was difficult for Williams to prevent local people from interrupting his shots by coming too close to the camera, or sticking their head into the lens to get a look at what was going on within. In a

⁴⁶⁵The National Geographic Society, Letter from MOW to LeGorce, Afghanistan May 23rd 1931, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Archive).

⁴⁶⁶ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to G, May 15th 1931, Pension Leman, Meshed, Persia, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroen Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾,(Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

letter from Williams to the NGS he expresses the excitement and frustrations he experienced whilst working in a bazaar in Herat:

...for I tried things that no one man would try. Can you imagine attracting a following of hundreds of devilish little kids and grown men, and then taking a five second exposure in a dimly lighted bazaar? I have fallen quite in love with the Afghans...But I have never known people who respond so loyally to a feeling of liking. I come to a crowded bazaar, with two-way traffic. To get a shot of a shop, I must shoot across the line of traffic and work with a tripod whose three legs are almost sure to touch some foot. Yet time and again I drew a line in the earth, indicated that I HOPED the crowd would not cross that line, let horses, donkeys and camels cross the open space I had selected and then had the crowd withdraw behind the spot where the line had been and let me get my shot. They are perfect, and rows of curious heads will reveal the fact that curiosity often got the better of them, but I have never so enjoyed such work.⁴⁶⁷

Whether or not Williams positioned his subject beyond the line he drew in the sand one cannot know for sure, but his subjects were evidently aware of being photographed. Indeed,

⁴⁶⁷ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to La Gorce, Herat, Afghanistan, May 23 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

the work he conducted in the Herat Bazaar was taken with five second exposures,⁴⁶⁸ which means that Williams must have told his subjects to remain still during the shot.

Williams' famous bazaar photograph, figure 38, was not published in the NGM's Citroën articles, although it did appear in the NGM in December.⁴⁶⁹ It is hard to understand why it did not appear in the Citroën articles. Perhaps the NGM had greater plans for it. This photograph as well as figures 39 and 40 in particular correspond closely to the work of 19th century Romantic painters (figures 35-37). In all three of these photographs the light in conjunction with the gathered men in their stark white headwear makes these photographs interesting to look at. They combine together in a single image all of the Western tropes of the Near and Middle East. They are fantasy captured in reality.

The images Williams took in this bazaar are not filled with objects but with men upon whose faces it is necessary to concentrate closely in order to make them out. These photographs require the viewer to explore them closely due to the fact they are darkly lit and slightly out of focus. The shards of light streaming through the ceiling into the darkened space of the bazaar and the many turbaned men are reminiscent of an Orientalist painting. The feeling of mystery and adventure evoked by these photographs is enhanced by its background, which

⁴⁶⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX*, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 419.

⁴⁶⁹ Although this famous Afghan bazaar image was not published alongside Williams' reports from the expedition, it was published in the NGSM numerous times later on as well in their other publications. This often happened with other works created by Williams. Indeed, Williams photographs are some of the most prolific in the NGS archive.

snakes off into the seemingly endless distance. The viewer is invited to explore further, but as they cannot step into the photograph they are left wanting more.

A question that arises is: Why did Williams take so many photographs in Afghan bazaars with such close similarity in subject, lighting and composition? Could Williams be deliberately trying to capture a scene he had read about or seen in a painting? Or might he have been so excited about stumbling across such beautiful sights that he could not help but take many photographs of them? Judging by his writing both explanations seem valid.

Williams' descriptions of the bazaars in Afghanistan not only show his wonder but also his outlook on the Afghan people. He seems to have regarded the Afghan people as almost childlike and viewed the expedition as their saviour:

Wonder was written large in every countenance. No forwardness, no facile welcome from these tall men in huge white turbans. Only one continuous double row of faces which broke into smiles, and hands which swept to head and heart in answer to our first show of friendliness.⁴⁷⁰

It is possible that Williams artificially constructed these bazaar images. He makes numerous references to the co-operativeness of the people he photographed in the bazaar. He even

⁴⁷⁰ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine* Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society, October 1931), 418.

goes so far as to say that without their co-operation his work would have been impossible.⁴⁷¹

Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index* July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 418.



Figure 42, Neg.55274, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Silversmith Beside The Char Minar', 1931, Kandahar, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 43, Neg.4565-F, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Brass and Copperwear Merchant', June 11th 1931, Kabul, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive,

NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 44, Maynard Owen Williams, 'A Kabul Dealer in Embroidery', Kabul, Afghanistan, The National Geographic Magazine, Index, Volume LX, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society, July-December, 1931, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 45, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Business Men of Ghazni are Never Too Busy to Enjoy a Cup of Tea', Ghazni, Afghanistan, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume LX, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society, July-December, 1931, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 46, Neg.55575, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Tea House in Herat Bazar', 1931, Herat, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED

IN THE NGM.

In Afghanistan Williams also took a series of photographs of artisans he encountered in market places and streets (figures 42-48). All of these artisanal shops are manned by men and there are no women in these photographs. The small shops are filled with beautiful objects, many of which were familiar to the West. Not only did they influence various fashion trends and designs, but people would also spend considerable amounts of money to buy the “real thing”. For example, Liberty’s, in London, was created with the purpose of selling such “authentic” objects, and crowds flocked to the store to purchase a part of Asia.⁴⁷² These photographs demonstrated the origins of the objects that Western consumers owned or aspired to own.

In fact, Early Silk Road Photography in general helped fetishized clothing from Asia. Western persons saw Asia as mysterious, exciting and interesting, and wished to be viewed in that light themselves. Therefore, people, particularly from the upper classes, adopted modes of dress inspired by Asian fashions. People during the early 20th Century may have seen the Silk Road as something that no longer existed but here it was involved, but in a different way, in cultural trade with the West once more.

⁴⁷² <https://www.libertylondon.com/uk/infromation/the-store/store-heritage.html>



Figure 47, Neg.55273, Mayard Owen Williams, 'Embroidered Jacket Merchants near the Char Minar', 1931, Kandahar, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 47 shows embroidery on sale. The men sitting in front of the stalls are all different ages and the intricate work on sale hangs above them. Judging by the ornate outfits on sale this shop is not selling everyday clothing. The men are all different ages suggesting that these shops, and possibly the skill of making such clothing, is passed down from generation to generation. One man sitting next to a child, has a bound-up cloth in one hand and a long bit of card that has writing, patterns or maybe measurements on it. He might be the artisan who makes the clothes that are on sale in this marketplace. Clothing and textiles in general are extremely important not only in Early Silk Road Photography but also in the very concept of the Silk Road. This aspect of Early Silk Road Photography is examined in more detail in Chapter 5.

Williams seems to have greatly liked Afghan tea as he makes regular descriptions of it and often specifically talks of the flavours that are added to Afghan tea that are not common in the West:

...green tea and cardamon-flavoured hot milk to refresh us. Drink as many cups as you like. If it runs low, a half cup will warm you. If hospitality outruns your appetite, turn your cup over on its saucer and the matter is settled, without argument or false politeness.⁴⁷³

And that

⁴⁷³ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 417.

...In the Governors garden where they camped they were given cigarettes to smoke from Russia. Local pistachios, tea served in tiny glasses with much sugar. Mulberry trees dropping with fruits.⁴⁷⁴



Figure 48, Neg.55430, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Bazaar Types, Tea House Which Supplied Our Tea (Afghan green tea is "A-No.1")', 1931, Ghazni, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 48 depicts an Afghan tea shop, something superficially familiar to Western audiences. However, this teashop is not quite like those the audience would have been

⁴⁷⁴ Dairy of Maynard Owen Williams, Asia 1931 Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan: May 20th, 1931, Kalamazoo Archive, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

familiar with. This is a photograph (figure 45) of a new and exciting version of something that was normal to the viewer. It is an open-air tea-shop manned by men in turbans. If one looks closely one can see that the wooden shelves are decorated with cut paper whilst a large samovar sits at the front of the shop and a great number of tea pots line the walls. The fact that there is a samovar in this establishment is in itself an example of cross cultural exchange along the Silk Road. The samovar is thought to have been spread across Russia, Asia, North Africa and the Middle and Near East by Asiatic nomads before the 18th century.⁴⁷⁵ It is surprising Williams took no photographs of tea consumption in China, one of the “homes” of tea production and consumption, yet he did photograph the subject in the Near East (figures 42-48).

Summary

The photographs analysed in this chapter contain the staples of Silk Road iconography. Williams’ photographs of iconic images along the Silk Road corresponded closely with the outlook of the NGM and its readers. As will be seen in chapter 5 and even more so in chapter 6, Williams’ photographs did not always correspond with the perspective of NGM and the expectations of its readers. Throughout the expedition there was a complex relationship between the perspective of Williams and the NGM on the one hand, and the perspective of Citroën on the other.

Trade was the central function of the Silk Road and transport was fundamental to this purpose. Traditional means of transport included camels, yaks, horses, and donkeys, as well as people. The expedition journeyed through epic landscapes of deserts and snow-clad

⁴⁷⁵Mary J. Barry, ‘The Samovar History and Use’, Fort Ross Conservancy Library, 1986, 9-15.

mountains. For thousands of years, human beings and their animals had trudged across these spectacular and forbidding landscapes. The nature of the goods produced and traded along the Silk Road had changed little across the ages. They included spices, textiles, jewels, precious metals, and tea. The bazaar was the iconic location in which commodities were both bought and sold. This chapter has examined these evocative and iconic Silk Road images in relation to a sequence of questions.

What are the origins of and influences behind this iconic subject matter and its style of presentation in Williams' photographs?

The style and content of Silk Road depiction stretches back long before the advent of photography and the term "Silk Road" was invented in the late nineteenth century. Marco Polo's *Travels* exercised a deep influence on western conceptions of the Silk Road. Indeed, the expedition was framed around the objective of "retracing the footsteps of Marco Polo". Perceptions of the Silk Road were shaped also by the art and literature of the Orientalist movement that included the Pre-Raphaelites and Romantics. One only needs to look at Williams' photographs and compare them with the work of the great masters' artistic depictions of Asia or read epic Orientalist poetry to find striking similarities in their content and form.



Figure 49, James Tissot (1836-1902), 'The Magi Journeying', 1886-1894, Opaque watercolour over graphite on grey wove paper, New York: Brooklyn Museum.



Figure 50, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Basik Kul En-Route from Subashu to Bulunkul. Passing of Camels', 1932, Basik Kul En-Route from Subashu to Bulunkul, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.:

The National Geographic Society Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

In the case of the themes of transport and travel, their depiction existed well before the invention of photography. The regions of the Silk Road, particularly the Near East, have long been depicted with an emphasis on landscape and transportation (via camels and donkeys) in the text of the Bible and associated Christian art. Many of Williams' photographs and those by other Early Silk Road Photographers bear striking similarities to such religious

works as can be seen in figures 49 & 50. The very notion of the 'Silk Road' across Eurasia is inseparable from instruments of transport. Marco Polo's *Travels* was based on transport across the vast territory and much of the visual imagery associated with the Travels included iconic means of transport.

Other artistic movements which may have helped shape Williams' photographic style, particularly in his landscapes, are the Hudson River School and Frontier Photography. Not only does it appear that these schools influenced Williams' interest in and his manner of presenting the Silk Road landscape. They might also have inspired Williams to have similar motivations behind his work: the exploration of new frontiers possibly in the name of American expansionism and the search for a new, international frontier for America's "Manifest Destiny".

The concept of "salvage" was a further influence upon Williams photographs, which helps to explain the lack of modern industrial technology in his Silk Road photographs. The decision to ignore the seeds of industrial progress in Asia was a conscious one. Williams was explicit about his dislike of photographing images of modernisation. He was rather scathing of the benefits of modernity for Asia. In this he was at one with the objectives of the NGM.

The objectives of the NGM had a fundamental impact upon the nature of Williams' photographs. Williams was not merely creating photographs that interested him or recording the expedition's experiences. His work was destined for commercial publication. His photographs needed to capture NGM readers' attention and keep them coming back for more. This need to please the NGM readership required Williams to produce work that was escapist and fed into popular visions of the Silk Road and Asia. In other words, his work

needed to keep the fantasy alive and thereby excluded the presentation of Asia as a region in which modernisation was making progress, however, slow that might be.

Why were these topics of interest to Williams and his readership?

A wide array of factors stimulated readers' interest in the iconic images of the Silk Road portrayed in Williams' photographs. Pre-existing artistic and literary movements helped to shape the style of Williams' depiction of the Silk Road. They also helped to shape the NGM audience's expectations of photographs of the Silk Road. The long tradition of artistic and literary works nurtured viewers' expectations about "Asia". The invention of photography provided an exciting new way of viewing and understanding this continent. Photographs tended to be viewed as an objective, scientific record. Early Silk Road Photography provided viewers with "proof" that what was found in painting and literature corresponded with reality. In fact, as we have seen, photographs are far from being a neutral and objective reflection of reality.

NGM's photographic images and accompanying articles within were intended to educate. As we have seen in chapter 2, NGM regarded itself as "tutor to the nation". In fact, Williams' NGM representations of the Silk Road seem to be more escapist than educational, with a romantic and adventurous writing style, and a highly selective choice of visual images. The photographs provided the NGM audience with entertainment through fantasy, oddity and adventure. Williams and his readers seem to have been particularly interested in subjects that were different from their everyday experiences, as was examined in Chapter 2 and will be further explored in chapter 5.

Westerners tended to have a degree of familiarity with lands of the Silk Road that lay in the Near-East, as it had great importance for Christians. The vast majority of the NGM's American readership were self-declared Christians for whom the words in the Bible were regarded as historical facts. Biblical illustrations were an important part of Western iconography, adorning books used in homes and churches. Photographs taken there had a significance beyond Orientalist fantasy. Most people did not have the means to travel to such locations and photographs depicting these places were the closest that they could get to being there. Such photographs brought to life stories and art works which could stir particular emotions related to religious belief.

Photographs of landscape, transport and trade provided images of familiar activities that were rendered new and "exotic" due to the unfamiliar modes of transport, the contrast in the wares sold and the unfamiliar appearance of the people selling and buying those wares. Such photographs depicted a world that the West understood and lived day to day, but presented in a new and exciting way.

Economic and geo-political considerations played a role in the way in which the photographs were taken and selected for publication in the NGM. The regions through which the expedition travelled were of great interest to the West, both economically and politically. "Eurasia" remains today at the heart of global geopolitics.⁴⁷⁶ The expedition may have been involved with intelligence work, though it is, self-evidently, difficult to conduct research into this topic. Advanced Western technology was symbolised by Citroën's vehicles, which were

⁴⁷⁶ The central role of Eurasia in geopolitics is explored in numerous sources. The classic investigation of this issue is in Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Objectives*, New York: Basic Books, 1997.

the only images of modernity consistently photographed by Williams on the expedition. The photographs of Citroën's state-of-the-art vehicles advancing through forbidding landscapes constituted a vivid demonstration of the benefits that Western technologies could bring to the "underdeveloped" regions through which the vehicles travelled.

The numerous images of vibrant markets helped to nurture expectations among readers about the possibilities for expansion of trade with the "undeveloped" economies of the lands along the Silk Road. NGM's readers were mostly drawn from the educated American middle-class, with an awareness of the potentialities for international trade to contribute to the country's economic progress. The economic opportunities opened up by the Silk Road included labour-intensive exports to the West, including embroidery, tea, hats, carpets, metalware and textiles, as well as oil, gas, minerals and metals.⁴⁷⁷ Moreover, the vast extent of Eurasia offered enticing opportunities for American manufacturers to export industrial goods, that would contribute to economic development while generating profits for American companies and dividends for their investors.

What ideas about the Silk Road did these images capture and promote?

These iconic images promoted the idea of Asia suspended in a pre-industrial time-warp, hermetically closed off from the outside world. The "iconic", pre-industrial world was one in which people were viewed as possessing a closeness to nature that the West had lost through industrialization. These ideas reinforced a vision of the "real or authentic" Asia/Silk Road existing in a pre-industrial period of development, bolstering late 19th and early 20th century notions that modernity belonged to the West. Photographers had a duty to "salvage"

⁴⁷⁷ The oilfields of Azerbaijan, Iraq and Persia had begun operation before the 1930s.

the pre-industrial world and preserve it for posterity. The rest of the world in comparison were but children who the West needed to raise up or shield from mechanised innovation. Asia was presented as presenting no 'threat' to Western global dominance but "ripe" for Western influence.

The NGM intended that the photographs illustrated in this chapter would provide education about the non-western world, which they did to a certain extent. However, sometimes the information provided was inaccurate, such as that given about the doughnut stall (figure 34) or images of the Citroën cars in the Himalayas (figures 29 & 30). However, the atmosphere of loneliness, the reliance on beasts of burden as well as the self-sufficiency required for travel along some of the routes of the Silk Road is palpable. The themes of survival and the magnitude of Asia's landscapes are recurring and powerful. Images of wide open natural vistas also would have had an escapist appeal to them. These photographs were in a sense a kind of stage, upon which the viewer could imagine themselves traveling through the 'natural' pre-industrial landscapes of the Silk Road. However, few photographs depicting this were published in the NGM articles.

The expedition's successful navigation through challenging landscapes using Western technologies reinforced ideas about the West's strength to the public, creating a sense of security and pride amongst Western people regarding their countrymen's ability to 'conquer' all and any trial put in their way.

Images of travel and trade further helped industrialised Westerners visualize and understand the Silk Road as a conduit of long distance trade across Asia. For example, Williams' market photographs present the 'exotic' objects that have been brought to that locale using beasts of burden. The marketplace in itself is an example of the cross-pollination of ideas and

people, integral to the notion of the Silk Road. For example, one can see tea being sold and drunk in Afghanistan, which would have come from plants imported from China and Pakistan.

These images do not challenge the NGM's audience's preconceived ideas about Asia or the Silk Road but rather encourage and reinforce them through imagery that is evocative of late 19th and early 20th century poetry. Such photographs capture the beauty and danger of travel along the trading routes of Asia thereby helping the viewer to have empathy and respect for those involved in such activities.

Chapter 5: The Difference Between Them and Us.

This chapter explores the fascination that Williams and his Western audience had for the differences that exist between themselves and Asia. In fact, as was discussed in Chapter 2, the main focus of the NGM quickly became the presentation of that which was uncommon to the American people. Almost all of Williams' Citroën work focuses on difference to some extent. This was in evidence in some of the photographs analysed in the previous chapter. The photographs discussed in this chapter place the topic at the centre of the analysis. In Williams' pre-NGM work he expressed his excitement and interest in the differences that existed in the world:

The wharf of Beirut in the season of the pilgrimage is filled with wanderers from many lands, and the varied costumes and facial characteristics of the travellers remind one of a vast museum of anthropology.⁴⁷⁸

Williams felt a responsibility to bring this 'ancient' and different world to people in the West through the medium of the photograph. He felt that he was enabling Western viewers to share the experience of this different world through his work, which would thereby enlarge his audiences' perspective and enhance their understanding of the world. He regarded this exercise as no less than an 'exercise in human fellowship', achieved through the medium of photography:

To study this interesting old continent to follow pilgrim and trade routes older than idols or money; to record the sights and sounds of the changing East by methods

⁴⁷⁸ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams, Publications, Item XII, Box 1/3, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 751.

unavailable to former expeditions; to share our results with millions – this is no mere mechanical treadmill. Were this a motor dash, archaeologist and photographer and cinema director would be left behind. But this experiment in human fellowship, this adventure in human geography, gains greatest significance when most widely shared. Only through the help of Kublai Khan could Marco Polo “see wonders.” Only through Marco Polo did the shadow of “the lord of lords” reach to the Western World. The changing East has messages we cannot with impunity ignore.⁴⁷⁹

The NGM was a pioneer in the use of photography to bring the experience of distant lands and cultures into the homes and minds of Americans. The high quality of its photographs created through the technical and artistic skill of its photographer-journalist-explorers meant that its readers could experience a vivid sense of proximity to the subject matter of the photographs. It is no wonder that the NGM were so fond of Williams as their photojournalistic interests ran in parallel. Many of the photographs in this chapter are portraits, as discussed in chapter 4 Williams had little interest in taking photographs without human interest. This is yet another aspect of Williams’ distinctive photo-journalistic style and interest that seems to have not only contributed to his appointment at the NGM but also helped to shape the house style of the NGM’s photojournalism.

The first half of this chapter, “Religion & Festivity”, discusses Williams’ depiction of religious places, art, people, ceremonies and celebrations. These images concentrate on the differences in philosophical outlook and public decorum along the Silk Road. The second

⁴⁷⁹ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir’, *The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 392.*

half of this chapter, “Ethnic Types, Hats and Preservation”, discusses one of the most popular Early Silk Road Photographic subjects, “ethnic types”. These images focus on the diversity of dress in the Silk Road regions, in terms of pure aesthetics and as a way of expressing identity.

In both sections of this chapter the following questions will be examined:

- Why was Williams and his audience fascinated by difference?
- How were these differences depicted and what influences were behind the subject and compositional choices?
- To what extent did these photographs reinforce a sense of difference between nations and if so, how and why?

Religion & Festivity

Williams’ interest in religion and festivity came from a fascination with the “exotic” as well as his own deep Christian faith, an aspect of Williams relationship with Asia that is also discussed in chapter 4. Williams writing provides a great deal of interesting insight into his personal views of religion in Asia. In a pre-NGM article entitled ‘*The Romance of the Eternal*’ he wrote:

Compared with the Oriental, we are children in religion. Religion to us, whether we live according to its principles or not, is a mode of life rather than a philosophy. It is more closely allied to ethics than to metaphysics, to conduct than to intellectual exercise. We live in no atmosphere of thought which considers the individual as one step in the evolution of a soul that reappears from generation to generation, nor do we hope for such an ideal of Oriental bliss as Nirvana. This is why the theological graduate, loaded down with the theory of something which he practiced just as all before his period of

theological training, too often fails to convince the Eastern peoples among whom he works. Perceiving him to be a child in philosophy, they pay little attention to the fact that he has the secret of religion which they lack, - the living of an abundant life attuned to God.⁴⁸⁰

Evidently Williams was aware of some of the philosophical practices and non-Christian religions in Asia. He respected their history and longevity. However, he rates his own faith above those different from his, believing that Christianity holds “secrets” that others do not. This may explain why he took particular interest in photographing the Christian community in China. These photographs depict a religion experienced day-to-day by most 20th century Americans, but presented with an “Oriental” face. There is a long history of Christian missions’ depiction of their work in Asia through visual mediums and it is possible Williams grew up seeing such work and that these images shaped how he photographed Christianity in Asia. At some points, the expedition took rest in Chinese Christian missions, providing Williams with easy access to Christian subject matter. In fact, from 1922-1953, the German-Dutch Catholic Congregation *Societas Verbi Divini* sent approximately 90 missionaries to Northwest China. These missionaries often had a special interest in Ethnological study, similar to Williams and the expedition. The Catholic Congregation *Societas Verbi Divini* established around 30 missionary stations (plus about 100 out-stations in Gansu), Qinghai and Xinjiang.⁴⁸¹ Although Williams does not specifically name the missionary order he stayed with whilst in Gansu he does identify the mission as being German. Indeed, the

⁴⁸⁰ Kalamazoo College Archives, Box 5/8, Item XXVI, Williams Early Articles in Manuscript, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 774.

⁴⁸¹ Bianca Horlemann, ‘The Divine Word Missionaries in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Third Series, Vol. 19, No. 1.*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Jan, 2009), 59.

expedition spent some time with these missionaries celebrating Christmas and the New Year with them.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸² Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society Archive, 1932), 560-61.



Figure 51, Neg.57967, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Chinese Looking at Religious Picture in Catholic Church Near Liangchow', January 3rd 1932, Near Liang Zhou, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 52, Maynard Owen Williams, 'A Chinese Christian Calendar on The Door of a Mission Church', Liangchow, 1932, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroën-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', Gansu (?), China, The National Geographic Magazine Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1932, 529, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 51 is an example of such work, it shows a mother and child standing in the interior of a Catholic church in Gansu Province, one of the poorest provinces in China. For many of the poorer members of Chinese society, during the early 20th century, the Christian churches could offer food and care that they could not find elsewhere. This photograph may depict this role, as judging by the clothing of the subjects they are not from a wealthy background. Williams was familiar with the history of Christianity in China and fully aware of the social welfare role that the Christian Churches played. This is evident from the legend he wrote for figure 52:

To this mission church, shaped and decorated like a Chinese temple, the poor and half naked are ever welcome. It is situated near Liangchow, opium centre, but the entire Christian community refrains from planting or using the drug. Nestorian Christianity reached China more than twelve centuries ago.⁴⁸³

Within the church featured in figure 51 there would have been many altars dedicated to different saints. Williams chose to photograph this couple in front of the image of Jesus Christ standing strong and holy in heaven, overlooking two centurions in battle. Christians believe Jesus to be the son of God and the saviour of mankind. Maybe this photograph is an allegorical expression: like Christ, Christianity was present in China to rescue its people from the hardship of their existence in a country gripped by civil war. Those who had grown up within the Christian faith, would have been well aware of allegories and their significance in communicating concepts and beliefs. A photograph presenting Christianity within Asia,

⁴⁸³ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, (Washington D.C., National Geographic Society Archive, 1932), 534.

regardless of the allegories present within it, would have encouraged Western Christian audiences to think that the word of God was taking roots within a “pagan” country.



Figure 53, Neg.56725, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Entrance to Mid-City Temple in Suchow, Looking Toward Main East-West Street. Morning Light View Toward South. Soup Kitchens Beside Entrance. Suchow, China, December 20th 1932. We Left Suchow, December 22. Ma Dju Nying Entered the City December 23rd, 1932, Su Zhou, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 53 depicts a soup kitchen in Suchow in Gansu Province. Suchow had been an important centre on the Silk Road, specifically in the trade of Rhubarb, since at least the Yuan Dynasty. Rhubarb was a lucrative venture as is evident in Frances Wood's (2002)

quote from Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo's embassy report (1403-05) to Samarkand that states; "The best of all merchandise coming to Samarkand was from China: especially silks, satins, musk, rubies, diamonds, pearls and rhubarb..."⁴⁸⁴

In fact, Marco Polo searched for the plant whilst in the province. He was probably stimulated to do so due to its high trade value and its medicinal use.⁴⁸⁵ Despite the region's role in trade along the Silk Road, Gansu was in a dire situation by the time Williams and the expedition arrived. The soup kitchen captured in figure 53 may have been an important life-line for many of the inhabitants of Suchow during the 1930s.

Williams makes repeated reference to the poverty and destruction he saw during his time in China. For example, he states that whilst in Gansu:

A circle of miserable folk silently watched us breakfast, while a woman with bound feet hobbled over with hot water for tea. The generous Petro immediately gave a butt of bologna to one man, who divided it with studied fairness. The dispenser of jam solved his problem of justice by sticking his finger into the tin, withdrawing as much

⁴⁸⁴ Frances Wood, *The Silk Road : Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 13.

⁴⁸⁵ John Uri Lloyd, *Origin and history of All the Pharmacopeial Vegetable Drugs, Chemicals and Origin and History of All the Pharmacopeial Vegetable Drugs, Chemicals and Preparations with Bibliography*, Cincinnati: Caxton Press, 1921 (Kessinger Publishing, 2008).

preserve as would stick to it, and letting one half-naked youngster after another lick it clean.⁴⁸⁶

It is interesting that Williams not only photographed but wrote about the poverty he witnessed in China but did not do so during the Himalayan portion of the expedition, a point that is explored in greater depth in Chapter 6.

It is not clear who set up the soup kitchen depicted, although as the photo was taken in a temple it suggests that a religious organization is behind it. It was common for Christian and Buddhist organisations to provide sustenance to the poor through soup kitchens. It is the early morning and everyone is busy eating and getting ready to go off to work. There is movement in every part of the photograph. It is a cold morning, demonstrated by the dragon-like bellowing steam and smoke rising through the air which filters the light creating movement and drama, reminiscent of Film Noir. All of these elements make the photograph feel spontaneous and as though one has accidentally turned a corner and stumbled across an unfiltered scene of the daily morning rituals of the citizens of Suchow: a sneak peek inside a world to which they would normally not have access. This feeling of exploration of the “authentic” is what the NGM strived for.

Besides Christian subjects in Asia Williams also photographed non-Christian and non-religious practices and festive subjects. Since at least the Victorian period there had been

⁴⁸⁶Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII*, (Washington D.C., United States of America: National Geographic Society, 1932), 560).

fascination with all things “pagan” and “unsettling” amongst Western audiences. In fact, as was discussed in chapter 1, in the early 20th century in the West there occurred a rise in the practice and study of the occult, which fused its teachings with elements from Buddhism, Hinduism and Shamanistic faiths and philosophies. Yoga and meditation also surged in popularity amongst Westerners. Therefore, photographs depicting foreign faiths would have appealed to Williams and his audience as they were very much in vogue.



Figure 54, Neg.56982, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Drum Top and Dragon in Ningsia's Mid-City Temple', January 15th 1932, Ning Xia, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 55, Maynard Owen Williams, 'The "Hell" of a Taoist Temple in Suchow, Kansu Province', "For more than 2,000 years Taoism, now a "conglomeration of animism, polytheism and magic", has been the popular religion of the Chinese. Its philosophy is responsible for Chinese passivity in the face of suffering and emphasis on culture rather than possession. In the "hells" connected with their temples many forms of torture are represented, tortures in the face of which the virtuous, overlooking the hell from a bridge of safety, take only detached interest", 1932, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroën-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', 1932, Gansu, China, The National Geographic Magazine Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1932, 529, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Examples of these images include figure 54 and 55 both of which depict Chinese temples. The expedition often sheltered in such temples and therefore Williams had plenty of opportunities to photograph them. Out of the many photographs Williams took on this subject figure 54 and 55 best capture the contradictory outlook that the West tended to hold towards “foreign” religions. On the one hand, figure 54 captures the romantic outlook through its calming soft light and inclusion of the famous Chinese symbols of two phoenixes on the drum and a dragon sculpture lifting itself out of the darkness in the background. This is a non-threatening scene that could be looked at by the viewer with pure curiosity. Figure 55 on the other hand feeds into the West’s fears about “foreign” religion being dangerous. In this photograph the audience is shown a frightening scene. As is common in Chinese temples, they were often brightly coloured and the sculptures faces exhibited highly expressive fusions of local religious practices and Buddhism. Figure 55 shows just this through an expressive sculpture presenting the tortures that awaited those that were sent to what Christians would call “hell”. The photo was published in the NGM with the caption ‘The “Hell” of a Taoist Temple in Suchow, Kansu Province’. The accompanying commentary read:

For more than 2,000 years Taoism, now a “conglomeration of animism, polytheism and magic”, has been the popular religion of the Chinese. Its philosophy is responsible for Chinese passivity in the face of suffering and emphasis on culture rather than possession. In the “hells” connected with their temples many forms of torture are represented, tortures in the face of which the virtuous, overlooking the hell from a bridge of safety, take only detached interest.

In the photo there are demons, fire, torture instruments and people in visible pain. Such ideas were not foreign to Christians as they make up a significant part of their theological understanding of the universe in the form of Hell, daemons and the Devil. However, what is different is that by the turn of the century Christians did not tend to make such vivid and large sculptures of Hell. Some Western viewers might well have misread such a sculpture as being a form of worship of daemons and the devil, an accusation that was generally taken

far more seriously during the early 20th century than it is now. NGM chose to publish this dramatic photo (figure 55), but not the calm and philosophical photo (figure 54). One could say that in this instance the “entertainment” function of the NGM superseded the “educational” or “tutorial” function. The dramatic photo that the NGM chose to publish was more congruent with the Western viewers’ wish for drama and fantasy in their conception of the East.



Figure 56, Neg.56547, Maynard Owen Williams, ‘Chinese Gods Disembowelled Either as an Act of Iconoclasm or in Search for Treasure Hidden in the Gods. Destroyed by Moslem Rebels in 1931-1932. Similar to color plate 137’, 1932, Chang Liu Shuei, Gansu (?), China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archives, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 57, Neg. 56802, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Graves Outside Liangchow City Wall. Earthquake Region', 1932, Liang Zhou, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archives, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 58, Neg. 56810, Maynard Owen Williams, ' Earthquake Ruins', 1932, Liang Zhou, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 59, Neg.56804, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Liangchow Raga Muffins on a Freezing Day', January 1st 1932, Ruins of a temple outside west gate, earthquake shattered, Liang Zhou, Gansu. China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archives, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Many Chinese temples had been destroyed by soldiers or earthquakes. Williams' photographs capture this.⁴⁸⁷ For example photographs of temple icons mostly show them in a state of destruction (figure 56-59). Such devastation of places by soldiers and other persons may have arisen through boredom, target practice or in order to break the morale of local people who did not support their goals. These sculptures, ravaged by war and natural disaster, are symbolic of the ordeals suffered by China during this period in history. Perhaps Williams could not bring himself to photograph the more violent aspects of real people living through such awful situations, or perhaps he had only heard about such things and never seen it in real life but wished to make Westerners aware of the situation as best he could. Williams knew that photographs of injured people would never be allowed into NGM, and these sculptures were probably the only way he could document the situation. Religious Western viewers, in particular, would have empathized with the upset resulting from places of worship being destroyed.

Williams also photographed religion in the Near-East. This region is at the heart of the Christian religion. Before working for the NGM Williams wrote in 1912:

...a Bible is an absolute necessity for travel in Palestine. Cities have disappeared but dress and customs are what they were in Bible days. In a single day one may see a score of customs which the bible describes as accurately and more concisely than any modern book I have seen. It is this one book and the events which it relates that have made this barren land interesting. It is this book that one must constantly consult to

⁴⁸⁷ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine Index*, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society Archive, 1932), 535.

make a Palestine tour more than a hurried trip through a moderately beautiful country.⁴⁸⁸

Evidently Williams placed great importance on the Bible not only as a religious text, but also a truthful document of history and tool for understanding Near-Eastern regions. For many Westerners the Bible was their first and sometimes only source of information about this region, influencing understanding, expectations and depictions of the Near-East. However, Williams did not photograph Christian worshippers in the Near-East. Rather, his photographs mostly depicted Islam to which the majority of Near-Eastern populations subscribed.

Williams had many opportunities to photograph non-Christian religious buildings. However, he preferred to photograph the people practicing their religion rather than buildings:

... after we left Sari, we came to a small old mosque with such an octagonal dome as one finds in Mazandaran and the Colonel asked if I did not care to photograph it. "It is interesting", said I "but dead". There isn't a person in sight. I believe in a living Persian.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams, Kalamzoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a: The Kalamazoo Gazette, Sunday, November 17th 1912 'Kalamazoo Boy Writes Letter for Holy Land', (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan),

⁴⁸⁹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Pension Leman, Meshed, Persia, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, May 15th 1931, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 3.

Williams' interest in the living/human aspect of religious practice is shown in figure 60 & 61 which capture the subjects' dedication to and mediation upon God.



Figure 60, Maynard Owen Williams, 'A Prayer to Allah in a Twice-Hallowed Shrine', Though the French have built a new Palmyra, with a glaring white mosque in its centre, at the time of the Expedition's visit prayers were still being said in a quiet, tumble-down mosque which for many years has occupied a site in the centre of the Great Temple, pagan relic of a former day. The author photographed an old worshipper at the end of what was one of the last services to be held there' (Written by NGSM editors), Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 60 was taken in Palmyra which is an ancient caravan city. Its location in Syria in the Tadmor (Tadmur) Desert made it an important trade centre. It was quicker for merchants to cut through the Tadmor Desert then travel around it and as Palmyra was in the desert's centre it became a very useful stop-off point in an otherwise desolate landscape. As a result this city became a melting pot of culture and languages from the East and the West.⁴⁹⁰

Williams knew the significance of Syria and Palmyra well. He had travelled to the region before and had even written an article for NGM titled 'Syria: The Land Link of History's Chain' (November 1919).⁴⁹¹ In one of his articles for The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition he wrote that:

Temples and columns and portals, carved stonework, arches and other majestic ruins, with inscriptions in Latin, Greek and Palmyrene, attest to the glory that once was Palmyra's, when the city dominated two great trade routes of the ancient world, and when its beautiful queen ruled an empire which included Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt.⁴⁹²

To visit a place with a knowledge of its history is quite a different experience from visiting a place without such knowledge. Such information means your understanding of the

⁴⁹⁰ <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/palmyra>

⁴⁹¹ *The National Geographic Magazine*, Volume XXXVI, Number Five, November, Washington DC National Geographic, 1919.

⁴⁹² Maynard Owen Williams, The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 398.

monuments and cultural practices you encounter draws not only from your own experience in that moment but also from the past. In the case of Williams, this seems to have been the manner in which he understood many of the regions the expedition passed through and that he photographed.

However, as was discussed in preceding chapters, Williams' understanding of Asia was not only drawn from history books. Poetry, fictional literature and art seem to have also been a big element. For example, Figure 60 contains almost all of the tropes common to Orientalist poetry and painting: crumbling architecture, desert sand, shafts of light pouring into the cool interior space from the hot exterior, repeated arches, lamps decorated with crescent moons, and an elderly bearded man, turbaned and draped in flowing fabrics, his head bowed in prayer. Not only does this photograph capture tranquillity and reflection on the word of God but it also provides everything the 20th century viewer might want from an image of the Near-East. Judging from the uncanny resemblance of this photograph to Orientalist works it is possible that the scene was set. Williams would have been very lucky to stumble across such a "perfect" composition.



Figure 61, Neg.55277, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Afghans in Prayer', 1931, Arghandab River near Kandahar, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 61 shows men in communal prayer, practiced multiple times a day by Muslims. These men are praying in the middle of a sparse landscape. The photograph would bring home to the viewer the fact that Islam was a living religion that was not confined to worship in mosques. It was a faith that travellers took with them on their long and difficult journeys along the Silk Road. Two often-recited lines in the Koran are verses 94.5-6: "For indeed, with every hardship will be ease, Indeed, with every hardship will be ease".

One can easily imagine the support that the Koran provided for Muslim merchants along the Silk Road. This photograph provided the Western public with an example of the importance

that faith, and the obligations that came with it, had for people in this region. Images of Muslims at prayer were well known in the West due to their appearance in paintings, literature, illustration and film. However, to observe at close quarters through a photograph Muslims at prayer in a remote and desolate landscape would have conveyed powerfully the sense of an “exotic” and remote civilisation and driven home the importance of Islam to the people of this region of the world.

During Williams’ journey along the Silk Road, he encountered various religions uncommon in the West. For example, over a large part of his journey through central Asia he came across the remnants of the Buddhist culture that had dominated the region for over 1000 years:

It is hard to imagine that Central Asia was for nearly a millennium as deeply Buddhist as it is Muslim today. But from the first or second century BC to the Arab conquest, this was the case.⁴⁹³

Moreover, for half a millennium after the fall of the Han Dynasty (220 AD) Buddhism became firmly implanted in China. The whole of the era from the fourth to the eighth century can be considered as the ‘Buddhist Age’, not only in China but across the whole of Asia:

[Buddhism] blanketed the whole of the Asian continent, except for Siberia and the Middle East, giving to this vast area a degree of cultural unity that has never been matched since then.⁴⁹⁴

A vast quantity of Buddhist buildings, art and sculpture were produced in Central Asia in the

⁴⁹³ F.Starr, *Lost Enlightenment*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 81.

⁴⁹⁴ E.O.Reischauer and J.K.Fairbank, *East Asia: The Great Tradition*, (Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1958)147-8.

pre-Muslim era. Before the Islamic conquest of Central Asia in the eighth century “Buddhist institutions provided infrastructure all along the eastern Eurasian section of the Silk Road”.⁴⁹⁵ Like their later European counterparts, the monasteries produced religious objects of great beauty, often encrusted with jewels and precious stones. Their products included murals, statues, temples and silk paintings, as well as giant Buddhas carved out of cliff faces; “From Bamiyan [in Afghanistan] to Yun Gang [in Shanxi province] Buddhist monuments lined the entire length of the Central Asian Silk Road”.⁴⁹⁶ Williams’ encounter with Buddhism at Bamiyan made a powerful impression upon him. Despite his preference for human focused photographs he also took photographs of murals in Chinese temples and of the Bamiyan Buddha (figure 62 & 63) in Afghanistan. However, although people are not the focus of these most still contain people in some manner. For example, none of his photographs of Bamiyan show the sculptures without the presence of human beings milling about in the background or foreground.

At Bamiyan Williams found a subject that fulfilled many of his criteria for a good photograph of the East. At Bamiyan was not only a stone cut sculpture to be marvelled at but also people going about their lives at its feet. Williams wanted to photograph places in Asia that were “untouched” by Western modernity, an aim which is also evident in the work discussed in Chapter 4. It seems that at Bamiyan, Williams felt he could witness life somewhat as close to as it had been in centuries past. Williams writing attests to this:

We were fortunate also in the human elements that added to the interest of this historic valley. On this ancient pilgrim and caravan route modern migrations were taking place

⁴⁹⁵ Liu Xinru, *The Silk Road in History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 72.

⁴⁹⁶ Liu Xinru, *The Silk Road in History*, 2010: 64.

in the ancient manner. If four buses seemed out of place at the very feet of the Great Buddha, the migration of Baluchi merchants going across the Ak Robot Pass to Mazar-i-Sherif and of Tarachi-Ghilzais headed for the hills helped us to picture this verdant valley as it was when a thousand monks, living in countless grottoes, levied tribute on the credulous, who bought small models of the Bamiyan statues, as did the worshipers at Ephesus, and carried them throughout the Buddhist world.⁴⁹⁷

An important aspect of these Buddhist sculptures is that they stand within a region that had become predominantly Muslim. Williams' Bamiyan photographs, therefore, also capture the diverse history and ever changing nature of the Silk Road regions. In his photographs one is presented with the past and the present in a single image. The towering Bamiyan sculpture demonstrates the region's Buddhist legacy whilst the people going about their day present predominantly Islamic Bamiyan and Afghanistan of the 20th century.

⁴⁹⁷ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX*, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 432.

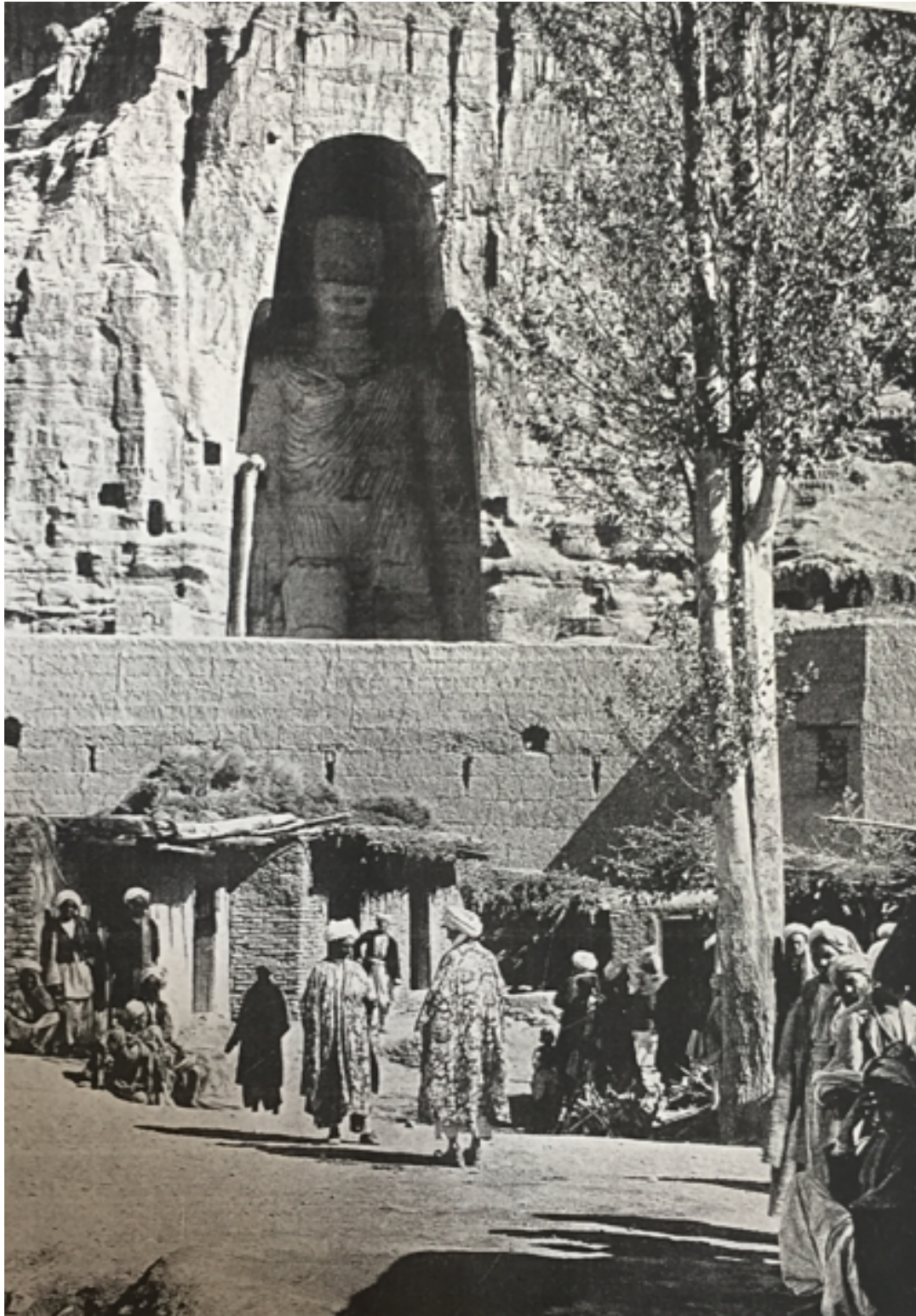


Figure 62, Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Great Buddha is The Largest of the Colossi of Bamian', Bamyán, Afghanistan, The National Geographic Magazine, Index, Volume LX, Washington D.C: The National Geographic Society, July-December, 1931, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

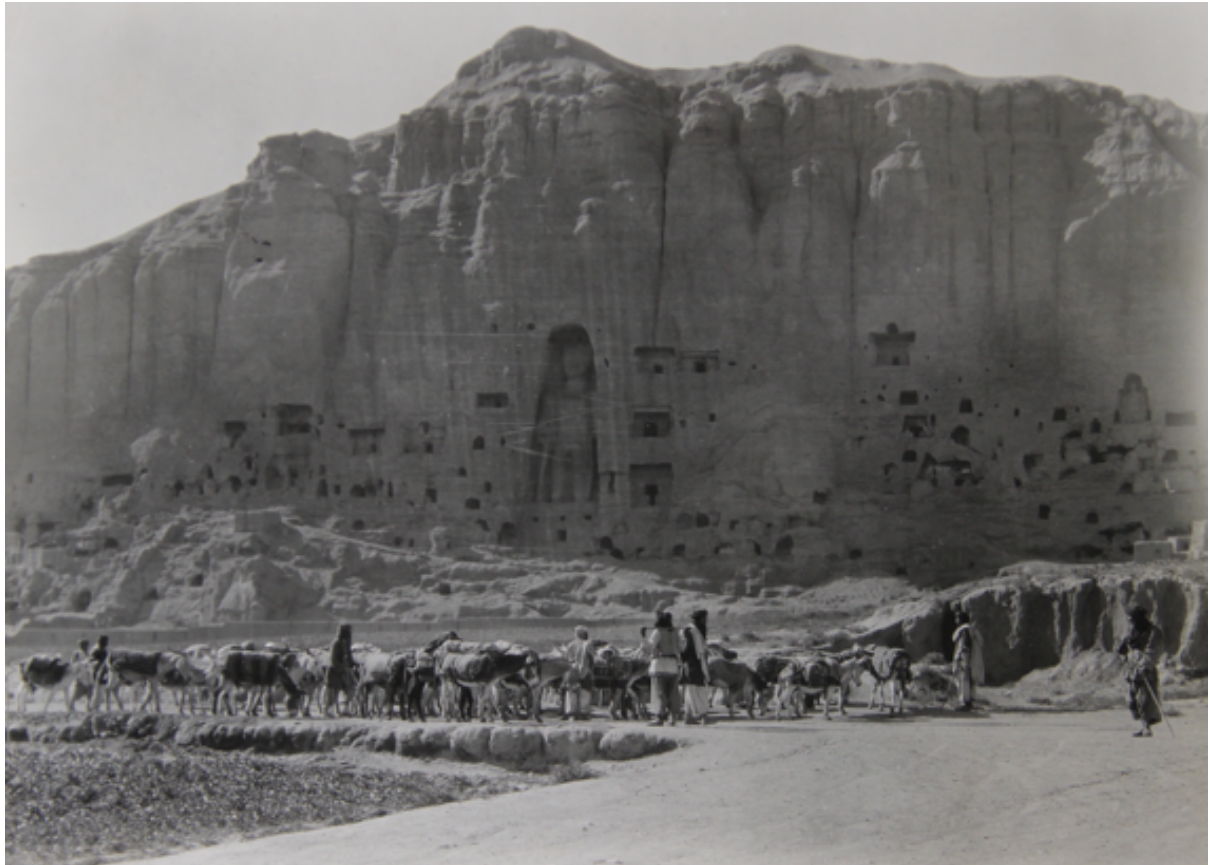


Figure 63, Neg.55723, Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, Bamiyan, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

In Figure 62 men in ornately patterned clothing stand in the midground whilst numerous other men in less ornate outfits and turbans stand at the edges of the photograph all overlooked by the giant edifice of a rock cut sculpture of the Buddha. The men seem to have been interrupted by Williams and his camera from carrying on with their day as they all stand looking into his lens seemingly interested whilst also waiting for him to finish. Figure 63 seems to concentrate on the colossal nature of the site since it is taken at a distance that allows for the whole structure to be seen. Williams wrote that; "Bamiyan Valley is indescribably beautiful. Situated at an altitude of 9,000 feet and backed by the summits of

Koh-i-Baba, nearly twice as high, it is worthy of world-wide fame".⁴⁹⁸ He was very impressed by these giant edifices and its history and hoped to; "... make the Bamiyan Valley known in America, which is what a whole century of scientists have not done as yet".⁴⁹⁹ Williams recognised the historical significance of Bamiyan and how it was once an axis for traffic toward the Roman empire, China and India, and played a key role in the transmission of Buddhism into East Asia. Williams wrote that; "...Bamian (Bamiyan), first century centre of artistic and commercial influences from Iran, India and Central Asia. As key to the development of Central Asian art. Bamiyan is without rival".⁵⁰⁰

Williams' images of Buddhism in South-East Asia and Mongolia further demonstrate the role that the Silk Road played in the spread of faiths across the continent whilst also demonstrating how foreign religions fused with local regional practices across Asia. For example, whilst in Mongolia Williams photographed the Tibetan Buddhist community during their New Year or Monlam Chenmo prayer Festival celebrations. The expedition wished to record the ceremonies involved in this festival but were not allowed to do so, probably because these were holy and because the participants were tired of Westerners visiting and recording them. For example, Beatrix Bulstrode (1869-?), Stefan Passe (1875-?), Roy

⁴⁹⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX*, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 430.

⁴⁹⁹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Dr. Hoben, Nedou's Hotel, Srinagar June 24 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

⁵⁰⁰ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX*, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 428.

Chapman (1884-1960) and his wife Yvette Borup Andrews (1891-1959) had all photographed this region.



Figure 64, Maynard Owen Williams, 1932, Sharamuren, Mongolia, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The bright light conditions in Mongolia were perfect for Williams' camera as he could use a high shutter speed, resulting in his photographs being amongst his sharpest and most technically proficient. The skin of Williams' Mongolian subjects resembled bronze, caused not only by the tone of the subject's skin but also the bright light conditions. This is most obvious in figure 64, the subjects look as though they are made of the same material as the giant trumpets they lean on. Thickly layered cotton/silk robes denote their priestly vocation and their coarse non-reflective texture accentuates the subjects shining skin, making them look appropriately other-worldly. Such tones are reminiscent of the work of John Thomson who would have been known to Williams as the field of photography in Asia was very close-knit, as was discussed in chapter 1. The odd angles in figure 64, created by the leaning men, upright trumpets and slanting doorframe give this image a surreal atmosphere, accentuating notions of differences between the viewer and subject.



Figure 65, Neg.57154, Maynard Owen Williams, 'A Couple of Lama Novices Take an Interest in My Camera During a Pre-New Years' Outdoor Ceremony at Sharamuren, Mongolia', February 5th 1932, Sharamuren, Mongolia, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams also photographed children during these festivities. Figure 65 shows two children, wearing robes suggesting they might be novices, standing in a sea of taller, but similarly-dressed people all wearing high plumed hats, seemingly waiting for a ceremony to begin. Apprenticing within religious orders at such a young age might not have been viewed as odd as it is to today by audiences, particularly amongst early 20th century Catholics, as the practice had been common in seminaries prior to the turn of the century. In fact, parallels between the boys in figure 65 can even be drawn between Catholic altar boys' involvement in religious ceremonies. Both were put in charge of the incense burner and dress in special clothes appropriate to their roles.

Williams' journey through southeast Asia provided an opportunity to convey through photography a sense of another non-European world that contrasted with the expedition's journey across Eurasia. Unlike the other photographs Williams took during the expedition, his work in South East Asia showed a place that was warm, lush and home to rainforests. The environment seems almost Eden like when compared to the harshness of the deserts and mountains the expedition had been travelling through prior. However, despite the fact that Indo-China was a French colony with railways, cars, cinemas and radio, Williams still chose to present the region as a "primitive" idyl.



Figure 66, Neg.57557, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Buddhist Priests Outside the Temple Entrance', 1932, Angkor Wat, Cambodia, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Like many Westerners, Williams was fascinated by Angkor-Wat. The religious complex of Angkor Wat had been a significant Hindu and later Buddhist pilgrimage site long before the West's developed a fascination with it. It was built in the early 12th century, in the capital Yasodharapura (Angkor), by Suryavarman II and covers the largest amount of land of any religious structure in the world. This huge temple complex was in the public imagination during the 1930's. "Discovered" in the mid-19th century, by the French explorer and naturalist Henri Mouhot (1826-1861), numerous images were created and circulated in Europe of the complex. Angkor-Wat was so popular that giant copies of it were exhibited at World Fairs

and it became a well-known symbol of South-East Asia in Europe.⁵⁰¹ Angkor-Wat was presented to Europeans as a “lost city” and “lost civilization”. Williams’ photographs seem to play upon this notion. For example, in figure 66, which shows the interior of Angkor, the stone architecture is in a dishevelled state whilst seemingly ghostly “apparitions” of Buddhist priests stand in lines in their robes, staring at the viewer. The photograph is silent, everyone is still and their mouths are closed: it is almost unworldly.

⁵⁰¹ Micheal Falser, ‘The first plaster cats of Angkor for The French Metropole: From The Mekong Mission 1866-1868, and the Universal Exhibition of 1867, to the Musee Khmer of 1874, *Bulletin de l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient*, 2012.



Figure 67, Neg.57697, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Buddhist Acolyte', 1932, Hue, Annam, French Indo China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 68, Neg.57890, Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Cambodian Dancer Who Plays the Part of the Prince', 1932, Phnom-Penh, Cambodia, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams was also very interested in the clothing worn by religious persons or persons engaged in religious ritual, as seen in figure 67 and 68. These two images give centre stage to the shapes and textures of its subjects' clothing. Figure 68 shows a Cambodian ballet dancer dressed in densely decorated dress in shapes unusual to the West. Cambodian Ballet performances, within a ritual context, were considered an offering to the spirit realm of deceased ancestors, capable of influencing monsoon rains and the land's fertility.⁵⁰² Such dancers were popular in 1930's Europe in part as a result of the visit made by dancers from Phnom Penh Royal Palace to France in 1906 to perform in Marseille which inspired artists like Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). The costumes worn by these dancers influenced various European styles of costume and erotic dance, in and outside of the theatre.

⁵⁰² Paul Cravath, 'The Ritual Origins of the Classical Dance Drama of Cambodia', *Asian Theatre Journal*, Autumn, 1986.



Figure 69, Neg.57886, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Women Having Her Head Shaved at Cambodian New Years time (April) as Result of a Vow', 1932, Phnom-Penh, Cambodia, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 69 shows a religious practice not well known to the West at that time: a layperson voluntarily having their head shaved during the Cambodian New Year. This was common amongst priests and monks in the West but was not normal amongst laypeople. In that era, if a Western layperson's head were shaved it is unlikely that it would be voluntarily. It was more commonly associated with illness, prison, insane-asylums or the military. Such an act was, in general, considered aggressive and negative in the western world. However, this photograph (figure 69) presents head shaving for religious and celebratory reasons.

Finally, a group of Williams' photographs capture a world that was even stranger and might have been disconcerting for the Western viewer. Williams' photographs of non-religious festivity (see figure 70 and 71) would have been seen as far stranger than those of religious subjects. Neither of these photographs was published in the NGM. Perhaps the taste of its customers meant that there were boundaries of the "other" that could not be crossed by the NGM, at least with a religious subject. Williams' photographs of festivity include images of men dressed as women. Although this practice was not foreign to Westerners, it was mainly only permissible on stage prior to the 20th century. Even in the early 20th century cross dressing was not accepted in the West as it was associated with sexual "deviancy". Many associated cross dressing with homosexuality which was illegal and considered to be sinful. Openly dressing like this in the West would have resulted in verbal or physical assault.



Figure 70, Neg.57217, Maynard Owen Williams, 'New Years Stilt Dance Between Kalgan and Peiping', 1932, Between Kalagan (Zhangjiakou) and Beijing, Zhili, China, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archives, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 70 depicts men dressed as women on stilts taking part in a New Year celebration in China. NGM readers might have been unfamiliar with Chinese dress codes and not realized that these men were wearing women's clothes. Rather, Western viewers might have seen this photograph as depicting men wearing strange but pretty outfits, as trousers were more closely associated with men's clothing than women's clothing in the West. Nonetheless the clothing, fans and stilts would have made rather an unusual scene for a Westerner. Stilt walking in Northern China was a communal entertainment that took place during special festivals and had been practiced for centuries. The stilt walkers dressed up and performed operas or other shows and some even performed acrobatic feats. This photograph depicts

not only skilled individuals dressing up, but also the continued presence of a long history of performance.



Figure 71, Neg. F.2217, Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, Baltit (Hunza), Kashmir, India, Originally a Colour Finlay Plate, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 71 taken in Kashmir, also shows males dressed up as females. Williams took a few photographs of these boys, and on the back of one he wrote; "...four shadowy dancing 'girls' clad in polychrome Khotan silks and long braids of hair from Kashgar, performed several graceful dances which, since the artists were really young boys, seemed highly

effeminate”.⁵⁰³ It is likely that these boys are Bacha Bazi (Boy Play) and Williams alluded to this in his article.⁵⁰⁴ Within some Muslim communities these boys would dance for men as female substitutes at parties or gatherings. This practice was not common in the West and would have been viewed as scandalous. This photograph (figure 71) was not necessarily Williams’ idea, as his diary mentions how Hackin told the Governor of Ghazni that “native dancers” would make a good feature in his pictures.⁵⁰⁵ It may seem rather idyllic: gentle dappled light, beautifully embroidered clothes, “traditional” music and dancing under a canopy of trees. However, there is possibly a darker side to this image. The practice of Bacha Bazi (Boy Play) is still undertaken by some in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and numerous articles have been written that highlight the dangers of such work. It is common for these boys to be recruited from poorer parts of society who had no other options of employment, and in some cases such work included prostitution.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰³ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas’, *The National Geographic Magazine, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1*, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society Archive, 1932), 343.

⁵⁰⁴ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas’, *The National Geographic Magazine, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1*, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society Archive, 1932), 343.

⁵⁰⁵ Kalamazoo College Archives, Diary MOW Asia 1931 Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan: June 6th Leaving Kabul and on road to Kandahar (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

⁵⁰⁶ Najibullah Quraishi, ‘The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan’, *Clover Films*, (2010) and Anthony Shay, ‘The Male Dancer in the Middle East and Central Asia’, *Congress on Research in Dance, Dance Research Journal, Vol. 38, No. 1//2* (Summer-Winter 2006), 140.

Ethnic Types, Hats & Preservation

The influence of ethnography and anthropology upon photography of the non-Western world was discussed in chapter 1. Behind many of these photographs lay the influence of Darwinism and the conception of a hierarchy of human levels of “development”, in which different segments of the earth’s population were classified as more or less “advanced”, with the white races of Europe and North America at the apex of world civilisation. The photographs in this section and the writing which accompanied them are reminiscent of ethnographic and anthropological studies of the time. For example, the use of the term “types” together with photographic concentration on capturing subjects’ foreign dress and facial features generalizes and de-humanizes subjects.⁵⁰⁷ Such work was referred to as “Human Geography” by the NGM.⁵⁰⁸



Figure 72, Edward S. Curtis, ‘No Wings-Nez Perce’, 1911, *The North American Indian*, v. VIII, Norwood, MA: The Plimpton Press, University of Southern California.

⁵⁰⁷ Kalamazoo College Archives, Dairy MOW Asia 1931 Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

⁵⁰⁸ Kalamazoo College Archives, Dairy MOW Asia 1931 Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Williams, Kalamazoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

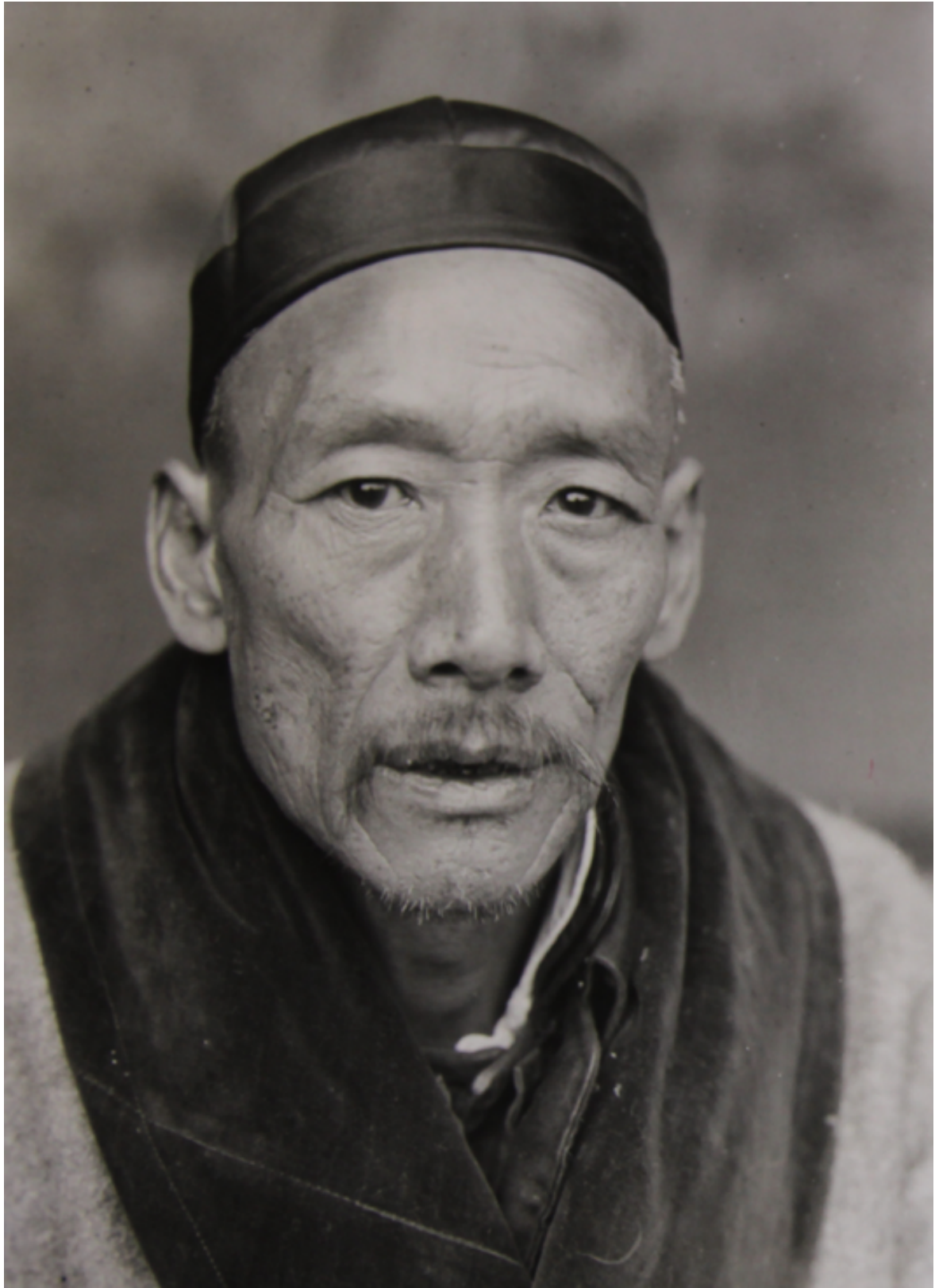


Figure 73, Neg.56273, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Chinese Military Officer at Tashkurghan, Sinkiang', September 12th 1931, Tashkurghan, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The recording of “Human Geography” in all its diversity, through the photographic and cinematic lens was proclaimed as a main motivation for the Citroën expedition. “Human Geography” was akin to anthropology but presented in a romantic and exciting fashion that was reminiscent of fictional literature.⁵⁰⁹ Williams’ photographs involved a synthesis of painterly and scientific styles in his photography and written work, in a fashion close to that of Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952), whose work was featured in the July 1907 issue of the NGM. Williams would almost certainly have been familiar with Curtis’s photographs, which were highly popular in the U.S.A. Like Curtis, Williams tended not to photograph his subjects in a strictly ‘scientific’ manner, front and side prison-like shots. Instead, he preferred his subjects to appear dignified and romantic. Indeed, in 2015 Curtis was described by Alexandre Harris, an editor at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C., as a photographer who; “...assigned beauty and romance to the Native American image...”.⁵¹⁰ Like Curtis, Williams often created portraiture with compositions in which the viewer looks up towards the subject rather than down upon them, whilst the subject stares directly down the lens. These similarities are clear when viewing their photographs side by side as can be seen in figures 72 and 73 Williams’ subjects rarely seem uncomfortable, which suggests that they were at ease with him. Williams probably came across as harmless due to his boy scout sense of style, kindly face and general outward similarities with caricatures of a bumbling Westerner.

⁵⁰⁹ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-3.44, ‘The Geographic News Bulletin on Motor Caravan to Cross Least Known Asia’, (written in pencil 1934), (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive).

⁵¹⁰ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/151019-edward-curtis-photo-picture-native-american-indian-costume>

Few of Williams' portraits have a feeling of spontaneity. It seems possible that he had lists of what he wished to photograph and that this sometimes resulted in the construction of images.⁵¹¹ For example, guides were asked to bring particular subjects to him⁵¹² or he might have paid subjects to pose for him. This was a common practice amongst photographers of the time but it is unclear if Williams partook in such methods. Either way the focused and close up composition of Williams' portraits suggests that he had his subjects' cooperation.

Regardless of whether or not a photograph was constructed, he still made the decision as to how and what to photograph. Williams and the NGM also had control over the processing of a photograph. For example, Williams wrote:

The Asiatic hates the idea that he is not white. Every (word unclear) photographer has his bottle of stain for staining the face inches' [sic] negatives so that the face will come out white. Most Asiatic have a horror of nudity. ... Lacovleff, working in warm-toned red-chalk, a tone of which a La Gorce or (word unclear) can be proud, gives the impression to Asiatic that he is painting them in deeper dye than nature gave them.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Baghdad, Rutz Hotel, April 18th 1931; 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box 3/4, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

⁵¹² Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Baghdad, Rutz Hotel, April 18th 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

⁵¹³ The National Geographic Society, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Uremtchi Sinking, November 7th 1931, File Number: 11-3.52, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive), .3,

It is unclear if Williams was implying a preference for white skin upon his non-Western subjects, or that his subjects request the lightening of their skin in their portraits. It is well known that in Asia many favoured pale skin over darker tones. In general paler skin was associated with wealth and a life spent in leisure or scholarly pursuits, whilst darker skin was associated with days spent toiling in agricultural work under a baking hot sun. Moreover, in the early 20th century skin colour was a highly-charged subject in the USA. If it was Williams who chose to lighten his subjects' skin tone, why did he do so? Was it due to personal aesthetic preference or did the NGM feel that its predominately white readership would prefer a paler Asia? Whatever the reason it is an interesting aspect of the relationship between Asia and the West, potentially providing insight into the aesthetic and ethical code of both Williams and the NGM.

Judging by the proliferation of portraits of subjects in elaborate and beautiful head decoration, headwear was judged as interesting and representative of Asia by both Williams and the NGM. Hats have long been markers of belonging to a class, age group, profession or ethnic group, and would have been of interest to anyone studying or wishing to record the differences that existed between different peoples within Asia.

Williams' China photographs make up his most varied images of dress taken during the expedition. Some of his first comments upon arriving in Xinjiang express this:

Mongol women wore long braids in brocade cases like edged umbrella slips, but the women in bright jackets and trousers and the men in padded garments, broad at shoulder and narrow at ankles, were plainly Chinese.⁵¹⁴

During a market day in Kucha he saw hundreds of people, including “Young Turkic women, less free to follow, seemed irked because of their sex, but their perky skullcaps, with bright pompons like imitation flowers touching jet black hair, made us more tolerant”.⁵¹⁵ Williams evidently was impressed by and interested in the ethnic diversity of China and his photographs reflect this.

⁵¹⁴Maynard Owen Williams, ‘From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey’, *The National Geographic Magazine* Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, 521-527.

⁵¹⁵ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey’, *The National Geographic Magazine* Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, 520.



Figure 74, Dr. Fu Manchu from the popular film 'Dr. Fu Manchu', 1939, television programmes, novels and comics also were created about Dr. Fu Manchu for over 90 years.

Figure 73 is a beautiful photograph of a military officer who looks calmly and confidently at the photographer with no apparently “negative” racial elements. However, it may have been viewed negatively at the time of its creation. Fear-mongering about China was rife in the early 20th century Western media. Fears of the “Yellow Peril” was promoted. Stereotyped images of China and its people as opium addicted, dim-witted, suspicious or villainous abounded in books, films, cartoons, magazines and advertising. Figure 73 captures the “quintessential” Chinese man. His appearance which includes thin face, prominent and high cheekbones, a wispy moustache and dressed in layered robes and a small silk hat, corresponded closely to Western stereotypes of Chinese men (figure 74). Consequently, Westerners might have transferred their negative associations onto the subject of figure 73.



Figure 75, Neg.56278, Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, 'Type at Karasu Karsul, Sinkiang',

Karasu Karul, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT

PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams took a large number of photographs of Kyrgyz people in China. Such subjects would have been uncommon for Williams' audience in the USA and would have likely intrigued them. The hats these subjects wear are distinctive and are called "Kalpak" (figure 75). The Kalpak's shape and colour reflects the snow-capped mountains and the four panels the cardinal directions, the four natural elements and harmony and balance, which are highly valued in ancient Tengrist beliefs. However, Williams did not mention this. It seems that Williams believed his audience was more interested in the difference of this subject's manner of dress rather than anything deeper. Although Williams was a photo-journalist and not an academic, he states in his private papers that he always read extensively on the places he visited. However, the expedition covered a huge tract of land, containing a wide arrays of cultures, histories and languages. Moreover, information about these countries and their cultures was much more limited than today. At the time that Williams was working such studies were still in their infancy. Indeed, the expedition's itself was intended to add to the knowledge of Eurasia. It is therefore, unlikely that he was aware of the deeper meanings behind many of his subjects' clothing. His decisions to take many of the photographs seem to have been driven by a combination of aesthetics and concerns for salvaging vanishing civilisations.



Figure 76, Neg.56220, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Khirghiz Type at Karasu Karaul on the Road from Tashkurghan to Kashgar North of the Ulugh Rabat Pass', 13th September 1931, Karasu Karaul, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The expression of the subject in Figure 75 is stern and silent. He stares directly down the camera, suggesting a seriousness and toughness, qualities needed when traveling long distances through inhospitable territory. His face is in shadow but is the only element in focus drawing one's attention deep into it. In contrast, Figure 76, who was also Kyrgyz, shows a friendlier and gentle looking Kyrgyz man. He is in a relaxed position, casually leaning whilst smiling towards the camera. In Figure 75 and 76 the photographs display very different moods and contrasting stereotypes of the 'wandering nomad'. For whatever reason, neither of these portraits (75 & 76) were published in the NGM. Each of the subjects in these portraits appears confident and at ease, neither aggressive nor in awe of the photographer. Could it be that their calmness and confidence was inconsistent with the racially-tinged expectations that the NGM's audience had about 'Orientals'?



Figure 77, Neg.2441, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Mongol Princess. Nirgidma of Torhut Whom We Knew as Princess Palta Outside a Yurt at Urumtsi. Speaks English and French Colloquially. Excellent Thinker. Highly Objective. Charming Dancer, Sinkiang', Urumchi (Tihuafu), Xinjiang, Finlay colour plate, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archives, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The pages featuring Williams' colour photographs of Inner Mongolia from his July-December 1932 article are entitled "Land of Genghis Khan in its True Colors". Such a title demonstrates the particular relationship that Williams and the NGM had with Mongolia.⁵¹⁶ Genghis Khan was a figure of fascination and romance to many Westerners and a symbol of the 'golden age' of Asian history. Mongolia was very much "in vogue" during the 1930's, and images like these (figure 77) served as inspiration for various Western artistic motifs and literatures. Moreover, Mongolia, and in particular Outer Mongolia, was of great strategic interest to Westerners as it sat between Communist Russia and China, which was in a state of political turmoil. As a result, during the 1930's American diplomats were sent to Mongolia to establish trading relations and American expeditions of geologists, biologists and palaeontologists conducted fieldwork in the region.⁵¹⁷ As was discussed in chapter 3, there was a close relationship between Western geo-political interests and the route followed by the Citroën expedition.

⁵¹⁶Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, 569-570.

⁵¹⁷ Davaagyn Tsolmon, 'An Historical Outline of Mongol-American Relations and American Studies in Mongolia', *American Studies International*, Vol. 33, No. 2, (Mid-American American Studies Association, October, 1995), 71-72.



Figure 78, Neg.57031, Maynard Owen Williams, 'One of The Servants at the Catholic Mission of San Cheng Kung (San Tao Ho)', January 23rd 1932, San Tao He, Mongolia, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

This photograph (figure 78) taken in Mongolia of a man relaxing and having a cigarette depicts trade. The tobacco the subject is smoking would not have been grown in Mongolia but probably brought from Southern China, South East Asia, India or America. The subject's hat, well known in the West as a symbol of Russia and the Soviet Union, could be atop his head as a result of the well documented intermediary role Mongolians played in trade between China and Russia. This photograph could also have been seen by NGM readers as evidence of Russia's presence in this region. However, this hat is worn in many northern regions of Asia during colder months. Where the hat originated one cannot know for certain but the prevalence of it in these regions demonstrates cross-pollination of culture whilst also demonstrating the external differences that existed between East and West.

The NGM published two of Williams' photographs of Mongolian princesses. Figure 77 depicts the Mongolian Princess Nirgidma of Torhut (Princess Palta), with whom Williams was rather taken, if one can judge by his description of her, which paid particular attention to her dress, language skills and their conversations.⁵¹⁸ The clothing the princess is wearing in this photograph is intricately decorated with materials sourced from across Asia and possibly beyond. Her clothing in itself is a manifestation of long distance Silk Road trade. The fact that this photograph depicts a Mongolian princess in Urumchi in Xinjiang gives further evidence of long distance movement of people during this time. This photograph contains all the "hallmarks" of the Western stereotypical idea of an Asian nomadic princess: hawk, embroidered clothing, elaborate headdress and an averted gaze. Such aspects together with the fact that this image is a "Finlay" print, which would have required Williams to set up the shot due to the long exposure times, suggests that this image is an expression of Williams'

⁵¹⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, 535-534.

personal vision of a Mongolian princess. On the other hand, one should not discount the possibility that due to the subject's royal status she may have had control of her own depiction. Indeed, the elements of this photograph do clearly reflect her high status.



Figure 79, Neg. 57169, Maynard Owen Williams, 'This and the similar pictures of the Mongol Princess His Ssu Nying I owe entirely to her. She and her party would not pose. But in going to her ordinary business she deliberately stopped long enough for me to take her photograph from a stand. Had I thought this possible, this would be in colour. When the soldier at the left stepped in front of my camera she side stepped so as to be uncovered but gave no sign that she was cooperating with me. Only the fact that we were guests of the Prince made any photograph possible. But this is a unique picture of a Mongol Princess amid her people. The fact that she was the Princess made any open collusion impossible', 1932, Mongolia, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams' Mongolian portraits taken during New Year or Monlam Chenmo prayer festival celebrations lack the intimacy of his other work. This may have been because attendees did not wish to be bothered by a foreign expedition during such an event. However, Williams was particularly interested in the royal attendees at the festival and managed to photograph the Mongolian Princess His Ssu Nying. Unlike figure 77, figure 79 was not set up. The Princess is not surrounded by objects or positioned in a manner that conforms to Western expectations. Rather, this is a candid shot. The Princess looks directly at the camera and is in control of the situation and its legend corroborates this. Like figure 77, Princess His Ssu Nying's wealth and importance are demonstrated through her dress. She wears a beaded headdress and thick fur-lined and embroidered clothing. The elements that make up her clothing probably came from distant locations, demonstrating to all who saw her that she occupied a high social position. An image of a princess would have been a great coup for the NGM. A foreign royal would have been fascinating to its audiences. Such people were more often than not outfitted in the most lavish and beautiful clothing from their region and also were not often caught on film by foreigners. Such an image would have certainly delighted the NGM and their audiences, further cementing the NGM as a magazine that could report on and photograph things that others could not. The fact, that the article that accompanies this photograph describes how the expedition were guests of Princess Ssu Nying, and describes the accompanying festival activities, would have added distinction to this issue of the magazine and enhanced the credibility of the expedition as a whole.

NGM chose to publish the pictures of both Mongolian princesses - Princess Nirgidma of Torhut and Princess His Ssu Nying. Difference fascinated audiences and the more removed the subject was from their daily reality the more interest that subject would create. Few topics for photographs of the exotic and "other" could compare with those of a "Mongolian princess". NGM's caption to the photograph of Princess His Ssu Nying emphasises the rarity of the photograph:

She and her party would not pose. But in going to her ordinary business she deliberately stopped long enough for me to take her photograph from a stand. Had I thought this possible, this would be in colour. When the soldier at the left stepped in front of my camera she side stepped so as to be uncovered but gave no sign that she was cooperating with me. Only the fact that we were guests of the Prince made any photograph possible.

In other words, through the photograph, Williams and the NGM were providing its readers with unique access to the exotic and secret world of a “Mongolian princess”.

During the Mongolian New Year’s festivities Williams took many photographs of attendees, with particular focus on their dress. Williams was excited by the clothing worn by the attendees at the festival; “Visitors came from far and wide and the variety of colors and costumes was remarkable. In Mongolia, the peacock-feather hat-plume and the “Mandarin button,” former features of official dress in China, are still worn”.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁹ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey’, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, XIII.



Figure 80, Neg.57192, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Such Caps Went Out in China With Fall of Manchus. Still Worn by Mongols', 1932, Mongolia, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 81, Neg.47189, Maynard Owen Williams, 'How a Mongol Bow and Arrows are Carried as Seen at Camp of Prince His Ssu Nying. On Mongolian Plateau east of Peilingmiao', February 6th 1932, Plateau east of Peilingmiao, Mongolia, Washington D.C.:

The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figures 80 & 81 demonstrate this interest, by showing the same distinctive hat at different angles and in different situations, showing off their subjects in profile, which is the best perspective from which to appreciate the physical nature of their headwear. Williams could have taken one photograph but he chose to use up scarce photographic resources to take more. Such photographs were not uncommon in the Early Silk Road genre. For example, Figure 80 is similar to photographs taken of Mongolian and Chinese archers by Europeans and Russians during the late 19th and early 20th century, including the French photographer Auguste Francois (1857-1935) and the Norwegian adventurer and salesman Oscar Mamen

(1885-1951).⁵²⁰ Evidently the archer was seen as a trope of the Western vision of Mongolians. However, in Williams' photographs he combines this trope with a concentration on headwear. In the West, archery was a skill practiced by people as a hobby. In the U.S.A it was strongly associated with Native Americans, but had not been a regular part of their military or security forces for some time, if ever. To see such skills being used by people in Asia must have been like looking back in time. Once again, the viewer is shown an image that not only had a romantic aspect but also a "salvage" element behind its creation. There is no mention of why these men were accompanied by their bows and arrows. It may have been for tradition, for protection or recreation. Guns were in wide use in China during the 1930s and therefore would have been well known by and available to Mongolians as much as they were to Russians and Chinese. Therefore, it is most likely that these men were carrying their bows for a reason other than for protection of Princess His Ssu Nying, to whose camp they belonged.

Many of Williams' Afghan photographs both reflect and feed into a Western canon of "Central Asia" as depicted in film, painting and poetry, of which Williams was an avid consumer. There is a striking similarity in terms of content, composition and atmosphere.

⁵²⁰ <https://www.oscarmamen.com/alle-1872>



Figure 82, Neg.55180, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Tribesman (chief) in Grounds of Former Italian Legation, our Guest House', June 11th 1931, Kabul, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.:

The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 83, Stills of Rudolph Valentino playing Ahmed in 'The Sheik', 1921.

In Afghanistan Williams had relative freedom to photograph what and how he wished, resulting in a series of work of which he was proud.⁵²¹ He viewed Afghanistan as a “raw untouched field”.⁵²² Williams’ Afghan portraiture (figure 82, 84, 85 and 87) provides a diverse and beautiful vision of the country’s population. The most striking of these is figure 82, which mirrors a 19th century Romantic painting. The sweeping, intertwining fabrics and contrasting shadow and light draws one’s eye deep into the subject’s lined face and open eyes. This portrait is the epitome of the Western conceptions of the Central Asian man. Not only are there parallels between this photograph and painting, but also with films like the 1921 box-office sensation ‘The Sheik’. Although ‘The Sheik’ (figure 83) was set in the Sahara one can see visual crossovers from the film in Williams’ work in Afghanistan, in terms both of clothing and an atmosphere of “exotic” allure. One of the opening frames of the film ‘The Sheik’ describes the Sahara as being; “Where the children of Araby dwell in happy ignorance that Civilization has passed them by”.⁵²³

Such statements used within a hugely successful film give insight into the popular vision presented to - and consumed by - the Western public. “The Sheik”, and similar films, also helped popularize a sexualized idea of the Arab world. Such depictions were a catalyst for popular portrayals of sexual fantasy played out in a desert landscape. In fact, Williams wrote

⁵²¹ The National Geographic Society, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, A charming room in the Former Italian Legation Kabul, Afghanistan, June 11, 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive,), 2.

⁵²² The National Geographic Society, June 1 1931, Afghanistan, File Number: 11-3.45 & File Number: 11-3.46, (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society Archive).

⁵²³ The Sheik (Paramount Pictures, October 21st, 1931).

his own sexual desert fantasies in his unpublished fictional work (*see Appendix 1*).⁵²⁴ However, as his fictional work attests, Williams certainly did have similar fantasies and outlooks on the East as his fellow countrymen. This may explain why so much of his work carries common tropes of the East found in Western representations of the continent. Although Williams photographs are not sexual, they could well have been used as an inspiration for film costume and locations. In fact, Williams was contacted by Paramount pictures for information about possible filming locations in the Near East for their film *Samson and Delilah* (1949).⁵²⁵

⁵²⁴ Maynard Owen Williams, Item XXVIII, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 13-14.

⁵²⁵ Williams - Worksheets, Autobiography , XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, Kalamazoo College Archives, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.



Figure 84, Neg.55473, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Seller of Embroidered Caps, Worn Under Turbans', May 21st 1931, Herat, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Like figure 82, figure 84 and 85 present men who fulfil the Western stereotypical notion of how a Near Eastern person “should” look. None of the men in these photographs is intimidating, rather they are captured in languid scenes and with calm expressions. For example, the man dressed in spotless white clothing in figure 84 is a seller of highly embroidered hats which are displayed behind him. There is no danger or upset detectable in this image. It simply depicts men going about their day-to-day work, in the same fashion as people across the world do.



Figure 85, Neg.55568, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Bird Charmer', 1931, Herat, Afghanistan, Washington D.C: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

There is a long history of bird keeping in Afghanistan and all across Asia, whether for fighting, song bird contests or simply for company. Figure 85 captures just such a scene this. The man in figure 85 holds what seems to be his pet bird, a beautiful jackdaw which are well known for their intelligence and ability to mimic, that perches on his hand seemingly without any wish to rush away from him. The man's clothing almost matches his bird which, combined with the ease with which the bird and the man have in one another's company, gives one a sense of some kind of bond between the two. For many years in the West there has been a fascination and association between Near-Eastern persons or people of Arab descent and the idea of charming animals, be they snakes or in this case birds, indeed figure 85 is actually titled bird charmer.



Figure 86, Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), 'The Sacrament of Ordination (Christ presenting the Keys to Saint Peter)', 1636-1640, Oil on Canvas, Fort Worth, Texas: Kimbell Art Museum.

The influence of Williams' deep Christian beliefs is a theme that runs through many of his photographs on the expedition. The clothing worn by the subjects in many of Williams' Near-Eastern photographs would have been familiar to him and his audience from the Christian imagery they had grown up with. Indeed, if one looks at figures 82, 84 and 87 and compares

them with figure 86 the closeness in dress style is striking. Similarities of dress between early 20th century Near-Eastern populations and ancient figures from the Bible helped cement the popular perception of the Near-East as frozen in time. On the whole, Williams' body of work tends to reinforce this perception.



Figure 87, Neg.11/1932547 III, Maynard Owen Williams, 1931, Ghazni, Afghanistan, Finlay
Colour Plate Negative, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, PUBLISHED IN
THE NGM.

Figure 87 was one of the few colour photographs taken by Williams in Afghanistan, it was also one of the few featured in the NGM alongside the Citroën articles. The novelty and the cost of the colour prints may have been a factor in the NGM's decision to include this photograph in the publication over the more arresting images such as figure 82, 84 and 85. That is not to say that this image is dull. Ghazni has been an important location for trade and cultural exchange for thousands of years. This photograph captured simultaneously the people and city of Ghazni in a highly atmospheric manner.

Williams wrote more positively about his interactions with Afghan people than he did about any other country's population. His attitude towards them reflected a romanticised and stylised view of the apparently contradictory character of the people of Central Asia – “friendly and loyal as friends, but dangerous as enemies”. Williams referred to the Afghan men as “gentlemen”, commenting upon the...’extraordinary friendliness shown to me by the Afghans...’⁵²⁶ At the same time he warned; “...some photographs which must reveal the Afghan as a friendly soul, - albeit I would not pick an Afghan as a comfortable enemy”.⁵²⁷

In fact, Williams had little basis for delivering such a judgement, as the expedition's stay in Afghanistan was relatively short and there is no evidence that Williams was able to communicate in depth with Afghan people. Despite the limitations in his restricted

⁵²⁶ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to La Gorce, Herat Afghanistan, May 23 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

⁵²⁷ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Dr Hoben Nedou's Hotel, Srinagar June 24 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

understanding of the people, in Afghanistan Williams found the Asia he had been searching for. He found a world that mirrored the literary descriptions of the Silk Road and Asia that he had avidly consumed. Williams' Afghan portraits reflect the contradictory nature of Western fantasies about the Silk Road: calm and peaceable yet warlike. Williams wrote:

These men feel quite lost without a gun and a forty-pound corset of cartridges. But they caress tame birds and fondle flowers. Where else on earth do wild looking men play hide and seek with partridges?⁵²⁸

⁵²⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine Index* July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, October 1931), 419.

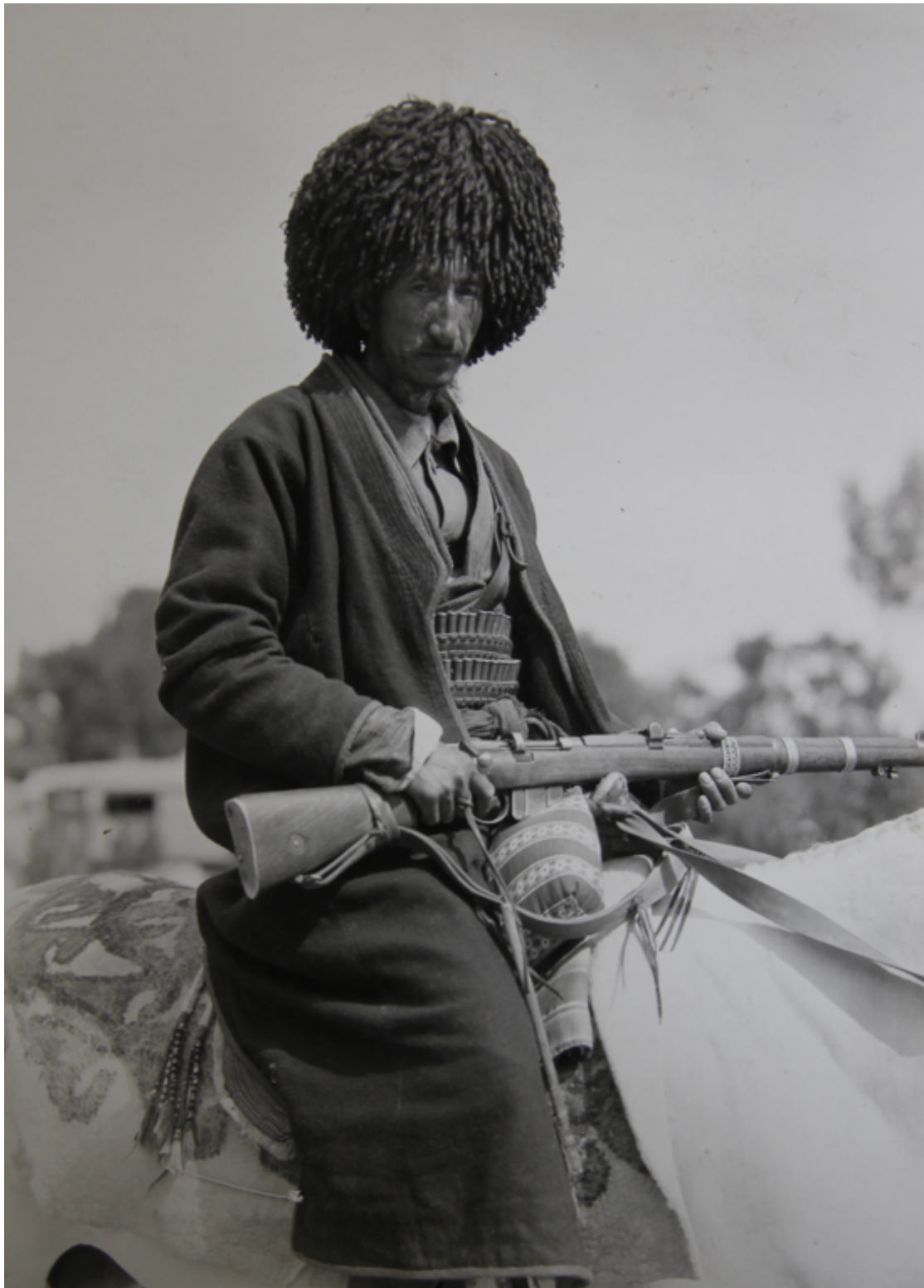


Figure 88, Neg.55624, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Visit of Turkomans to Our Camp in The Governors Garden. One Sees a Few Turkomans in The Bazaars but This Assembly was Remarkable for Heart', 1931, Herat, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 89, Neg.55636, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Visit of Turkomans to our Camp in the Governors Garden. One Sees Few Turkomans in the Bazaar but This Assemble was Remarkable for Herat', 1931, Afghanistan, Herat, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 90, , Charles Deas (1818-1867), 'Long Jakes, The Rocky Mountain Man', 1884, Oil on Canvas, Denver, Colorado: Art Museum and the American Museum of Western Art.



Figure 91, Michael Miley (1841-1918), 'General Robert E. Lee mounted on Traveller, His famous War Horse', September 1866, U.S.A, Location Unknown.

Figures 88, 89 and 92 each display the “warrior” aspect of men in Central Asia. The subject of these three photographs are Turkmen. The Turkmen were renowned for their nomadic lifestyle and superb horsemanship. The subject of figure 88 is mounted on his highly-decorated horse holding a rifle, with his torso wrapped in bullets. His face looks sternly down at the camera from underneath his imposing sheepskin hat, a “telpek”. This hat is an outward signifier of the ethnic group to which he belongs. Most people from Central Asia, China and probably Russia who saw a man wearing this hat would have recognised to which ethnic group its wearer belonged. Despite the foreignness of this subject, similarities can be found in the composition, which parallels those found in Western grand paintings and photography of gallant war heroes. For example, comparing figures 90 and 91 to figures 88 and 89 one can see the tradition of the posed shot of a man on his steed. None of these images is spontaneous. In all of these photographs the men are in charge and calm. They are seemingly ready for action: why else would they be perched atop a horse if they were not headed somewhere to do something?



Figure 92, Neg.55630, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Visit of Turkomans to Our Camp in The Governor's Garden. One Sees Few Turkomans in The Bazaar but This Assemble Was Remarkable for Herat', 1931, Afghanistan, Herat, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 93, Frederic S. Remington (1861-1909), 'A Dash for the Timber' 1889, Oil on Canvas, Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Amon G. Carter Collection.



Figure 94, Edouard Detaille (1848-1912), 'Vive L'Empereur', 1891, Oil on Canvas, Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales.

These are people with purpose, people who appear to be fearless and brave. It is often the case that images of men on horseback are associated with battle. Williams may consciously or un-consciously be transposing compositional styles he had seen in Western depictions of horsemen onto his Afghan “horseman and warriors”. He also photographed other Turkmen galloping upon their horses in a large group (figure 92), reminiscent of paintings of military charge. The Turkmen are not presented as calm, passive or submissive. Rather they project power and dynamism. Similar compositions and subjects abound in Western paintings that depict famous battles or cowboy shootouts (figures 93 & 94). One might read Williams’ concentration on these Turkmen horsemen as not only being an interest drawn from the fascination for the unfamiliar, but also the familiar encountered in an unlikely setting. These are the only photographs that show any sense of fast-moving and lively energy in his Afghan portraits. His other photographs present the Afghan people as languid.

Curiously, none of this group of images was published in the NGM alongside Williams’ written articles. Why did NGM choose not to publish this set of dynamic and visually interesting photographs? Is it because the images’ resonance was too close to that of the USA’s own Wild West, including guns, horses and gestures, and therefore less “exotic” and “Eastern”? The photographs of Turkmen show them as strong dynamic, heroic and dressed in an thoroughly distinctive way. Perhaps this aspect of Asia would have been a bit too intimidating for NGM audiences at the time. Or maybe the NGM decided that they simply did not illustrate the narrative that Williams’ article presented. Whatever the explanation, it is evident that these men fascinated members of the expedition. Not only did Williams photograph them, but Alexandre Jacovleff painted them and Andre Sauvage filmed them.

Throughout his career Williams claimed that he wished to photograph what he considered to be truly representative of the countries and people he encountered. It seems that what he viewed as representative was an Asian person who was “unadulterated” by Western culture.

He therefore tended to photograph “street types”, who were often the poor or “outsiders” to the social mainstream, and visually corresponded to the Western stereotypical conception of the Silk Road. This often brought him into conflict with his guides as they believed such photographs created an impression that their people were ‘backward’.⁵²⁹ One example of change in Asia that drove Williams to distraction was the “Pahlavi”, an extremely popular hat worn in Iran during the early 20th century. Williams hated this hat because he thought it ugly and a symbol of what he termed the “progress bug”.⁵³⁰ He wrote:

The Turk, in his Western hat, and the Persian in his “pahlavi”, has the feeling of a man at a swell party in a rented suit. I can’t feel that either the hat or the pahavi had become a natural dress for more than a small minority. Because he is out of character, the Persian, like the Turk, suffers a humiliation which must tinge his life.⁵³¹

Williams linked this hat to a loss of ‘tradition’ and its prevalence in Iran incensed him, as demonstrated by the great number of words and pages he devoted to complaining about it in his letters and diaries:

Pictures in Persia are going to prove difficult. First because the male Persian wears

⁵²⁹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX, Envelope V, Box 7/6, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

⁵³⁰ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Sari, North Persia Iran, May 6th, 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia ¾, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

⁵³¹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Herat, Afghanistan, May 23rd, 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia ¾, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

the pahlavi, the worlds ugliest head-gear...Second, because with the progress bug everywhere - And Riza Shah Pahlavi is a pusher and is making real progress - pictures of native tribes, head dresses, etc. are hard to get except by contraband methods such as we do not use.⁵³²



Figure 95, Neg.56176, 'Maynard Owen Williams, The Ugly Pahlevi as Worn at a Camel Sacrifice', 1931, Tehran, Iran, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The sea of men wearing the pahlavi at a camel-sacrificing ceremony in figure 95 demonstrates the prevalence of the headwear in Iran. This photograph also captures Williams' frustration at encountering this headwear everywhere he went in the country.

⁵³² Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Grande Hotel, Teheran, April 28 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Nos 3-4, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 2.

However, this hat was more than just a fashion or frustration of Williams'. The Pahlavi was a political statement and represented the Shah's drive to modernize the country. The Pahlavi was introduced as the official hat for Iranian men in 1927 as part of a drive to promote nation-building, which included the secularisation of the judiciary. People were invited by the Reza Shah to don this hat, fashioned after the French Kepi, in exchange for their "traditional" headwear. Later, people were banned from wearing any type of "traditional" dress. Some Iranians did not like the hat for various reasons, including a wish to outwardly express their belonging to a particular ethnic group.⁵³³ Williams did not like the hat, but regardless of this, his photographs are records of an important part of Iranian history. Unsurprisingly, NGM did not publish Williams' photographs of the Pahlavi, as this was inconsistent with the romanticised view of Asia that they wished to convey to their readers.

⁵³³ Houchang E. Chehabi, 'Staging the Emperor's New Clothes: Dress Codes and Nation-Building under Reza Shah', *Iranian Studies*, Vol.26, Nos 3-4, (Summer-Autum 1993), Published by Taylor & Francis, Ltd on behalf of International Society of Iranian Studies), 212.



Figure 96, Neg.55204, 'Persian Village Girl', 1931, Shane, Iran, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 97, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Friendly Eyes Framed by a Black Chuddar', 1931, Iran, The National Geographic Magazine, Index, Volume LX, July-December, 1931, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 417, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams approach to photographing women during the Citroën expedition varied greatly depending on the region. In the Near-East he took few female-focused photographs. He attributed this to the position of women in this predominantly Muslim region. He had experience photographing “the land of Islam” for forty years and wrote that;

“...photographers learn to keep a wise blindness to anything that looks like a woman”.⁵³⁴

Williams therefore kept to the principle that he would not photograph a Muslim woman without her husband’s consent⁵³⁵ or he would ask his escorts if they could bring him female subjects.⁵³⁶ Without such consent and help from his escorts he might not have been able to photograph any women. The majority of the few photographs that Williams took of women in the Near-East were taken in Iran. Williams seems have found it slightly easier to photograph Persian women (figure 96-98) due to the political changes taking place in the country.

However, he longed for visions of the romantic “veiled peasant”, writing in his unpublished autobiography that the Arab custom of; “Veiling its daughters added mystery and imagining romance to the Orient”.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

⁵³⁵ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

⁵³⁶ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘The Citroen Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir: Scientific Party Led by Georges-Marie Haardt Successfully Crosses Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Afghanistan to Arrive at the Pamir’, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, July-December, Volume LX, 406.

⁵³⁷ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

However, Williams' Iranian escorts wished for modernity to be presented in his photographs and not 'peasants'.⁵³⁸ This tug of war between Williams and his escorts was a microcosm of the ideological battles taking place in 1930's Iran. In 1928 the Iranian government ordered police to allow women to frequent public places unveiled,⁵³⁹ which some groups opposed.⁵⁴⁰ As a result Iranian women's dress became highly politicized, in the same way that 'traditional' hats had become a symbol of an 'un-modern past' which the Iranian government wished to move away from so too did elements of women's dress.

In his unpublished autobiography, Williams spoke in favour of the romance of veils. He also talks of how he thought headscarves were ugly, hid a women's beauty and that he was pleased that women in parts of the Arab world had stopped wearing them.⁵⁴¹ Although not overtly rude about women wearing the veil, he did make fun of their dress. For example, in Iran during a camel sacrifice in Tehran he wrote that:

⁵³⁸Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Pension Leman, Meshed, Persia, May 15th 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 4.

⁵³⁹ Houchang E. Chehabi, 'Staging the Emperor's New Clothes: Dress Codes and Nation-Building under Reza Shah', *Iranian Studies*, Vol.26, No. ¾ (Summer-Autumn 1993), Published by Taylor & Francis, Ltd on behalf of International Society of Iranian Studies)p. 214.

⁵⁴⁰ Houchang E. Chehabi, 'Staging the Emperor's New Clothes: Dress Codes and Nation-Building under Reza Shah', *Iranian Studies*, Vol.26, No. ¾ (Summer-Autumn 1993), Published by Taylor & Francis, Ltd on behalf of International Society of Iranian Studies)p. 214.

⁵⁴¹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Williams-Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).

My conception of them is as crows in some huge production of “Chantecler”, for the horse-hair visor gives a very beak-like aspect and the silk or cotton billows out almost to the smoothness of feathers. But sometimes the front opens, showing white in the front (in the villages, this white may even be a bare bosom (not white indeed) and Morizet thinks these women look like Alfred the Penguin, as familiar on this side as Micky Mouse and Krazt Kat with you.⁵⁴²

It is common for Williams’ writings to include contradictory views. They suggest he was a person who was often contemplating, pondering and evidently flip flopping between ideas. Regardless of this, judging from the overall tone of his writing and conduct as well as from his family background, he was an advocate of equality between the sexes.

⁵⁴² Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from MOW to Grosvenor, Grande Hotel, Teheran, Iran, April 28 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan).



Figure 99, Neg.56227, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Khirghiz Type at Subashi on the Road from Tashkurghan to Kashgar North of the Ulgh Robot Pass', September 13th 1931, Subashi, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 100, Neg.56222, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Khirghiz Types at Subashi on The Road from Tashkurghan to Kashgar North of The Ulugh Robot Pass', September 13th 1931, Subashi, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams took a large number of portraits of the women who were members of the Kyrgyz families with whom the expedition stayed. Amongst the Kyrgyz people there seems to have been no public social divide between men and women, nor unease about Williams photographing them. He took a particular interest in the Kyrgyz women's headwear, taking many photographs from different angles. These headdresses were not an everyday attire, normally being reserved for special occasions. Therefore, Williams probably asked for the women to wear them (figure 99 & 100).⁵⁴³ It would have been unusual for Westerners to come across images of Kyrgyz people and therefore Williams' accounts would have been fascinating to NGM readers. His depictions of the Kyrgyz people as a whole have an "idyllic charm". He described how this Kyrgyz community "feasted on yak cream"⁵⁴⁴ together with the expedition and how:

Although their rough, outdoor life makes them hard-featured and weather-beaten by middle life, they are often rosey-cheeked and attractive in youth. They tend the flocks and herds, milk the yaks, make the family's clothes, weave carpets, make felts, and rear families⁵⁴⁵.

⁵⁴³Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 355.

⁵⁴⁴ The National Geographic Society, File Number: 11-10015.467, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive,).

⁵⁴⁵ Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 360.

Le Fevere's written accounts have an equal rustic idealism to them:

These people have not surrendered to civilization...one feels that they live beyond the reach of the artificial world. Free with their herds, their horses, and their vast smokeless horizons, they love the virgin earth. Formidable horsemen, they win our admiration⁵⁴⁶.

For Williams and Le Fevere, Kyrgyz women are admirable, as they represent a group of people who have "not surrendered to civilization" and 'live beyond the reach of the artificial world'. In the same fashion as social anthropologists, they considered that the expedition, most notably through Williams' photographs, was engaged in "salvaging" a civilisation that was under threat from modernisation. Such sentiments were a major stimulus behind the development of the academic discipline of social anthropology. A large part of that academic discipline is involved in recording and romanticising "indigenous" people, who wander "free with their herds, their horses, and their vast smokeless horizons [and] love the virgin earth".⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁶ Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 355.

⁵⁴⁷ Maynard Owen Williams, 'First Over the Roof of the World by Motor, The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Sets New Records for Wheeled Transport in Scaling Passes of the Himalayas', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, January-June, 1932, Volume LX1, 355.



Figure 101, Maynard Owen Williams, Maynard Owen Williams, 'A Laotian Women', Between Pakse and Bassac (Basak), Laos, 1932, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 102, Neg.58664, Maynard Owen Williams, 'A Laotian Women', Between Pakse and Bassac (Basak), Laos, 1932, Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams' photographs of women in Southeast Asia present a contrasting view of Western perceptions of gender across the Silk Road. Western male audiences may have considered the photographs he took of Laotian women to be titillating. These portraits are the only ones that show any kind of nudity. Often such images feel rather voyeuristic, but one does not get that feeling from this photograph (figures 101 & 102) as her face, rather than the bareness of the subject's breasts, is what draws the viewers' attention. Her expression is strong and seemingly irritated as she stares directly at the viewer down the camera lens whilst leaning in a relaxed manner on a ladder. The NGM could claim that this photograph was of scientific merit, and not sexual voyeurism. Yet, however much one looks at this image in a non-sexual manner one can't pretend that during the 1930's it would not have been viewed in a somewhat pornographic way by some readers. It is possible that it would have also aroused a kind of "native fantasy": a beautiful Asian girl with no top on, living in a hut-like structure, pictured behind her. It is the stuff of Western Orientalist fiction and painting. As has been mentioned Williams was a very cultured man and one could suggest that his wish to capture such images could have been influenced in part by such artists as Gauguin, who painted scenes very similar to figures 101 & 102. Williams was a romantic and a man who seemingly had always wished to explore the world. The work of artists such as Gauguin who is known for his wanderlust and the art he created during his journeys may well have had an impact on him.

Summary

In part, the photographs in this chapter reflect a common human fascination with places and people different from one's own. Compared with the written word and pictorial representations, the photograph greatly increased the sense of immediacy of the representation of the "other". However, as we have seen in this chapter, there is an array of other considerations that help to explain this fascination, including the motivations of the photographer; the objectives of the publication for which the photographer works; the

expectations of the audience for whom they were intended; as well as the use made of the photographs of “difference’ by academic research, especially in the fields of ethnography, human geography and social anthropology. At a deeper level, the fascination with “difference” is connected with Darwinian perceptions of the “hierarchy of human development”; with the search for spirituality; with the wish to salvage “different” civilisations before they disappear; and, even, with geo-political relationships between “developed” and “less developed” parts of the world.

Why was Williams and his audience fascinated by difference?

For the NGM, Williams and Citroën this Asiatic Expedition was motivated by a science-based goal to record ‘Human Geography’, a concept inspired by the popular “scientific” practices of anthropology and ethnography. According to Williams the Citroën expedition intended to; “...be of real value to mankind in making the contemplative life of the Orient and the fast moving life of the Western World better known to each other”.⁵⁴⁸

Williams’ felt that he was contributing to a deeper understanding of the ‘Orient’ in the West. He does this by presenting the differences between East and West within practices common to all humanity: religion, festivity and dress. Such images captured the viewers’ attention as they could understand the photographic content, having typically participated in such practices themselves. However, the image was made interesting as the practices depicted had an “exotic face”. For example, headwear was worn by most people across the world

⁵⁴⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘Trans Asian Expedition Starts’, *National Geographic Magazine*, 11-3.46 & 20-1844, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, June 1931).

during this period, signifying status and nationality. Western audiences would not only have been intrigued by the “strange” shapes and designs of foreign hats but also understood their significance and would have been interested in what they were intended to communicate as a signalling device.

Interest in the differences that existed between the peoples of the world was stimulated by a long history of European exploration and the large volume of associated literary and pre-photographic depiction of the world beyond the West. By the 1930’s this had developed into a preoccupation with all things Oriental within the creative industries. Fashion, theatre, film and fiction all drew inspiration from Asia and the general public consumed such things with relish. Williams’ photographs of Asia were rich in visual detail and made for a brilliant source of inspiration for viewers and creators alike, expanding their imaginings of Asia and the Silk Road by showing practices of which most Westerners were unaware.

Religiously focused photographs proved to be a catalyst for various new artistic creations. Images of foreign religions also inspired some to explore new pagan faiths that drew on Asian religious practices. The 1930’s saw an increase in the number of people practicing in what was classed as “pagan” religions. However, images of “strange” religious practices were not only of interest to Western pagans. The 1930’s the Western world was far more religiously devout than is the case today.⁵⁴⁹ Images of non-Christian faiths from distant lands had a greater significance and resonance with most Western people than would be the case today. Western populations were not only interested in the difference of faith in Asia but could also understand religious dedication in a way that most cannot today. Western photographers and viewers may have regarded photographic representations of the religious

⁵⁴⁹ Frank Newport, ‘Percentage of Christians is declining, but still high’, 24 December 2015, *Gallup*.

practices of the “other” as validation of their own “superior” religious practices. This was self-evidently the case for Williams.

Due to the fact that the Western world during the 1930’s was mostly Christian, Williams’ images of the Near-East would have held particular significance. The Near-East is where the Bible stories are set and Williams’ photographs mirror Christian imagery from these stories. His images would thus have made “real” that which Westerners had seen in religious works throughout their lives. However, most of the subjects of Williams’ photographs would have been Muslim during the 1930’s. Therefore, his images of Islam in the region would also have captured difference in the eyes of the West. Such photographs showed at once something that a Christian audience could connect with yet also was alien to them.

How were these differences depicted and what influences were behind subject and compositional choices?

People and their practices fascinated Williams. He had a strong preference for photographing people rather than things. For example, when it comes to depicting “difference” in faith and festivity Williams’ photographs for the most part show people practicing their faith rather than religious buildings. When he photographs dress, he often leaves the background blurred, favouring a crisp focus on the subject and their clothing, in particular their hats. His choice of composition was often based upon what showed the sitter’s hat to best advantage.

Williams’ photographs were representative of his, the NGM’s and the NGM’s audience’s understanding of what Asia and the Silk Road constituted. This vision of Asia was shaped by the romantic idylls found in pre-photographic depictions of Asia, an Asia that had absorbed little influence from the West and where “animistic pagan” religions reigned supreme. Like

much of the Orientalist Master paintings, Williams' photographs capture an Asia whose grandeur and power had faded but its beauty and rich cultural diversities remained: an Asia that has a wealth of natural and creative resources but is "underdeveloped" and does not constitute a geo-political threat to the West.⁵⁵⁰

The era in which Williams grew up and the representations of Asia which he experienced during this time influenced his view of modernity as inconsistent with the "real Asia". Consequently, for him it was not worth photographing. Such choices taken by Williams demonstrate a strong "salvage" aspect to his work, much like that of the Romantic artists and writers, and photographers such as Edward S. Curtis. Indeed, like Curtis, Williams seems to have strived to photograph those elements of the region and people that he travelled through, that he felt were being encroached upon and harmed by modernity. He did this through a portraiture style that made use of evocative lighting and classically posed subjects with dignified expressions and stances that gave prime position to their styles of dress.

Williams' wish to photograph a particular type of Asia brought him into conflict with locals and his guides as they did not wish their country to be shown as backward or ignorant. Williams tended to ignore the protestations and took the photographs he regarded as representative of particular regions. The conflicts could be interpreted as examples of the West's wish to understand Asia as frozen in a past time, whilst Asia wished to develop and modernize, and have this wish understood by the West.

⁵⁵⁰ This view changed radically with Japan's conquest of most of Asia in the late 1930s, including absorption of the West's colonial territories that spread across East and Southeast Asia.

It was against NGM policy to construct images yet some of Williams' work could well be described as doing just that. Some photographs seem to deliberately construct the romantic scenes he had read about and seen in films and books. Such construction was seemingly created to fulfil what the expedition and its readers felt was needed in images of Asia.

It was not only romance that may have influenced Williams' photographic choices. Christian imagery, particularly in his work in the Near-East and Chinese missions, seems to have had an impact upon him. For example, his choice of Near-Eastern subject-matter and style of representation tends to follow closely the Christian imagery one finds in stained glass windows or illustrated versions of the Bible. Similarities can also be seen in Williams' Chinese Christian photography and the long tradition of missionary photography. Williams grew up in a highly religious family with much missionary zeal. He would have been exposed to such work. Williams' photographs are in a sense a continuation of the missionary canon of depiction.

Williams' photographs of festive and religious practices uncommon to the West are often presented in an almost otherworldly manner, deliberately conjuring a dream-like look through the use of almost unreal textures, strange angles and novel framing techniques. This is appropriate for photographs depicting people or practices devoted to a world beyond the corporeal. For many readers, images of Muslim men kneeling in prayer or men on stilts dressed as women and "scary" local Buddhist sculptures were strange and Williams' photographic style emphasized this.

His photographs of the destroyed Chinese temples in particular have an otherworldly element to them. However, they also have another striking aspect. It seems that Williams' images of the decapitated and disembowelled temple gods were used by him as emblematic of the lives of many people in Gansu. Williams had worked on and off in China for much of

his life and had worked in the country as a missionary. He was not immune to human suffering and the suffering in China during the 1930's was plain to see, especially in the politically chaotic areas of Western and Northern China that the expedition passed through. He would have known that the disturbing images of human suffering would not have been published in the NGM, so it is possible that these destroyed temple photographs were the closest he could get to publishable material on the subject.

It was not only Chinese people that were living through a period of great hardship during the 1930's. In 1931-32 Americans were living through the depths of the Great Depression. Williams never drew parallels between the two situations. It is possible that he did not do so as he and the NGM were both very patriotic and it might have been deemed a step too far to suggest similarities between a "Great Western" nation and a country that was widely regarded as crumbling and backward. During this era Asia had become critically important for the USA's international relations. Emphasising similarities between the USA and China in the 1930s might be construed as unhelpful for projections of American power in Asia. More prosaically, the sales of the NGM also needed boosting during the Great Depression and editors knew that romance and exotica, sold better than turmoil and distress.

Did these photographs reinforce a sense of difference between nations and if so why?

Whatever their purpose, Williams' photographs do capture significant differences between Asia and the West. Judging by his choice of subject matter and compositional style, he was searching for a very specific representation of Asia. This was an "Asia" commonly found in painting, books, films and poetry. It was an Asia that was outwardly very different from the West in the way it dressed and how it celebrated important events and the manner in which it expressed religious faiths. These photographs highlighted real differences between the East and West's history, culture and aesthetics, whilst also simultaneously displaying the diversity of people living and moving along the Silk Road. These images were exciting and

escapist, presenting a Western viewer with the “exotic”, diverse and captivating differences between the peoples of Asia and themselves. Williams’s photographs were the work of someone at the leading edge of photo-journalism at that time. Their high technical level and deep human sensitivity enabled them to have a deep impact upon NGM’s readership. NGM self-evidently felt that he was a prized asset for the magazine, which is why they selected him to be the head of their Foreign Correspondents division.

Escapist photographs showing difference would have been appealing for much of the NGM’s audience. The Great Depression was devastating for many in the U.S.A and those who could afford to buy the NGM are likely to have enjoyed the distraction of a publication filled with beautiful images of foreign people doing foreign things.

Concentration on the differences between Asia and the West suggests preservationist and “salvage” motivation. Photographing these “traditional” forms of dress and varied festive and religious practices may well have been a part of the collective Western wish to preserve that which many Westerners feared were soon to be lost. Williams was often very damning of change in Asia, one only need look at his commentary on the Pahlavi in Iran. Such negative commentary on, and avoidance of, photographing change is a telling reflection of Williams’ Orientalist outlook towards the East - an outlook common to most Westerners during this era. Sadly, such conscious avoidance of modernity presented the West with an Asian continent that seemed lost in time and ignorant of the modern world, reinforcing the West’s sense of superiority. Promotion of such notions amongst Western public were useful for Western governments in pursuit of their colonial and commercial ambitions in Asia.

Chapter 6: Dangerous Worlds.

Whether in literature, painting, theatre or photography the Silk Road was frequently depicted as poverty stricken, lawless and dangerous, as was seen in chapters 1-3, and which will be analysed in greater depth in this chapter. This disturbing vision of the Silk Road was typically presented to the Western public as exciting and romantic. Williams follows in the footsteps of this tradition, especially through his photographs depicting opium production and its use, and the poverty experienced by children living along the Silk Road. Since his early twenties Williams had lived and worked in both Asia and Europe, as a missionary teacher and photojournalist. He spent much time in poorer regions of the countries he visited and as a result had witnessed much privation, including his work in famine relief in Armenia in 1917-18, which was discussed in the Introduction. Consequently, he was not uncomfortable in such situations. Williams was moved deeply by what he saw, though he sometimes had a rather naive outlook on such situations. Both these aspects of his response to the disturbing aspects of life along the Silk Road are evident in the series of photographs examined in this chapter. Williams evidently thought these subjects were of great importance as they make up a sizable portion of his photographs from the expedition. However, few of the more challenging examples were published in the NGM alongside his Citroën articles. This chapter will explore Williams' work on the subject of danger on the Silk Road by exploring the following questions:

- What were the influences behind the creation of these images and what significance did they have for Westerners?
- Why were many of these photographs side-lined by the NGM?

Opium, Romance and Vice

As noted in Chapter 2, alongside the romantic and Orientalist view of Asia, there existed a consistently contradictory aspect to American attitudes towards Asia. In relation to the American attitude towards China, the great American historian, J.K. Fairbank (1971) noted that

Our folklore and public attitudes concerning China have included several discordant images – exotic, idealized, or disillusioned – which have coexisted but remain unreconciled in our inherited thinking...In the United States the picture of Chinese drug addiction, prostitution, foot binding, concubinage, and unspeakable vices excited the morbid, while heathen idolatry and sin appalled the devout.⁵⁵¹

In the mid-19th century the opium trade reached its height, with China as the focal point. Opium addiction was a huge social problem in nineteenth century China. Moreover, during the Victorian era (1837-1901) opium dens began appearing in increasing numbers in Western port cities such as London, Marseilles and San Francisco. The subject of opium dens appeared in popular novels, poems, newspapers and other art forms, which stimulated public imagination concerning the drug and popular interest in the countries in which it was heavily used. In fact, people still hold romantic notions about the danger associated with the Chinese opium dens in Victorian London. These have been stimulated over the years by the large amount of reportage, fiction and arts produced on the subject of opium. Such accounts tended to be romantic and voyeuristic, depicting the descent of people into addiction,

⁵⁵¹ Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 1971, 292-4.

frequently describing this descent as being “at the hands of Orientals”.⁵⁵² For example, the French Journal “Figaro” reported on an opium den in Whitechapel in 1868: “It is a wretched hole so low that we are unable to stand upright. Lying pell-mell on a mattress placed on the ground are Chinamen, lascars, and a few English blackguards who have imbibed a taste for opium”.⁵⁵³

Works of fiction had a powerful impact on Western notions of opium and Asia. It was such a popular subject matter during the late 19th and early 20th century that it appeared in the works of a diverse array of authors, including Agatha Christie, Rudyard Kipling, Thomas de Quincey, Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Dickens and Charlotte Bronte. For example, in Oscar Wilde’s novel ‘The Picture of Dorian Gray’ (1891) he wrote; “There were opium dens where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new”.⁵⁵⁴ It was common for these novels to tell stories that presented crimes fuelled by opium abuse⁵⁵⁵ and by immigrant Chinese communities. Far-Eastern opium users were shown in a dark and dangerous manner, and by the 1830⁵⁵⁶ were; “Routinely depicted (opium smokers) as physically and mentally decrepit with a

⁵⁵² Ellen Castelow, ‘Opium in Victorian Britain’, <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Opium-in-Victorian-Britain/>

⁵⁵³ Ellen Castelow, “Opium in Victorian Britain”, <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Opium-in-Victorian-Britain/>

⁵⁵⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2010).

⁵⁵⁵ Louise Crane, <https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/W87wthIAACQizfap>, (London: Wellcome Collection, 28 April 2011).

⁵⁵⁶ Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca.1600-1950*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), chp. 31.

skeletal frame, a grey complexion, weak stamina, stained teeth, diminishing willpower and a lack of incentive to work".⁵⁵⁷ Such presentations effected not only the Western outlook upon Asia, and in particular China, but it is also likely that they affected the way in which Western photographers captured Asia. Popular images included Chinese people engaging in opium use or the opium industry.

The Western world was reluctant to draw attention to the fact that opium trade constituted a shared history between the West and East or to acknowledge that the West had played a central role in the use of opium in Asia. By the end of the 20th century, China had the largest number of opium consumers in the world, primarily as a result of British trading activity.⁵⁵⁸ The substance links Asia and the West together politically, economically and emotionally. Trocki (1999) wrote that; "The years between 1780 and 1842 were formative years for the opium trade. They were also the formative years of the British Empire... Though difficult to prove beyond question, it seems likely that without opium, there would have been no empire".⁵⁵⁹ In Derks' view, the "formative years" of the British opium trade in Asia were more than 100 years earlier.⁵⁶⁰ The 1800's saw a surge in the use and depiction of opium in the West and China. Part of this may have been due to the significance that opium had for Britain, which was the dominant colonial power during this time, and benefitted greatly from

⁵⁵⁷ Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca.1600-1950*, Chp. 31.

⁵⁵⁸ Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca.1600-1950*, Chp. 31.

⁵⁵⁹ C. Trocki (1999a), 58-59 quoted in, Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca.1600-1950*, 50.

⁵⁶⁰ Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca.1600-1950*, Chp. 6 & p.49.

the wealth it amassed from the opium trade.⁵⁶¹ Opium was so important that by the mid 19th century Britain had fought two 'Opium Wars' - in support of free trade and against Chinese restrictions on its trade.⁵⁶² Opium remained China's largest import until the 1880s. Thereafter, domestic production gradually replaced imports.

Despite the ambiguity of Western views about the role of the West in the spread of opium in the East, the fact that there had been so much public discussion of the issue of opium and so much voyeuristic interest in the topic, it would seem unproblematic for Williams to photograph opium production and use along the Silk Road, and for NGM to publish photographs on the subject. Indeed, it would add an element of drama and excitement to the NGM photographs from the expedition. It would also be consistent with NGM's proclaimed purpose of 'educating the nation' through truthful representations of the world outside the USA. In fact, remarkably, Williams' powerful sequence of photographs of opium sale and use in China did not feature at all in his articles for the NGM.

Opium addiction formed an important part of the anti-East Asian sentiment that developed in the USA in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁶³ In the popular perception, the parlous state of the Chinese political and economic system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was associated with the spread of opium. There were widely expressed fears that the drug

⁵⁶¹ Opium was one of the largest sources of revenue for both the East India Company as well as the British government in India after 1858, when the Crown took formal control of British India.

⁵⁶² Ellen Castelow, 'Opium in Victorian Britain', <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Opium-in-Victorian-Britain/>

⁵⁶³ The fears of Chinese people in America are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.

would spread out from the Chinese communities in the West into the population at large. This was a sensitive subject politically and socially. Moreover, publication of bleak images of Chinese opium trade and use was inconsistent with the NGM's objective of publishing photographs that were beautiful and uplifting. This sentiment was even stronger during the depth of the Great Depression, which coincided with the timing of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition. NGM had invested heavily in the expedition and it was anxious to stimulate sales during this difficult time.

There is a sharp contrast between traditional Western depictions of opium production and use in the Far-East and the Near-East. The popular representations of the Far East tended to emphasise its dangerous and dirty nature. Near-Eastern depictions tended to be romantic, tranquil and decadent. Images such as a man languishing in silks whilst nursing a pipe, or a beauty from a harem reclining with bare breasts on a chaise longue, were popular Western images of opium use in the Near-East. Those representations that provided a glimpse into the shadowy aspects of opium use in the Near East often did so with beauty. For example, the British Iran-ologist E.G Browne, wrote in his famous book titled 'A Year Among Persians' (1893):

Judge me not harshly, O thou who hast never known sickness – ay, and for a while partial blindness – in a strange land, if in my pain and my wakefulness I at length yielded to the voice of the tempter, and fled for refuge to that most potent, most sovereign, most seductive, and most enthralling of masters, opium.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶⁴ E.G Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893), 476.

Here one is presented with a shadowy alluring depiction of opium. It may be dark but that darkness is imbued with romance through Browne's use of language.

Beautiful and romantic depictions of opium conformed to the NGM photographic guidelines, which were examined in Chapter 2. It is therefore unsurprising that the only photos of opium from the Citroën-Haardt expedition that appeared in the pages of the NGM, were those taken of poppy fields in Iran and Afghanistan. There is a clear difference in representation from one region to the other.

Williams' work on the subject of opium in the Near East follows the common canons of depiction of this subject. However, the precedents set by other visual depictions of the Near East were not the only influences upon his photographs of opium along the Silk Road. Williams' views were formed not only during his religious schooling but also during his years working as a missionary teacher in the Near East (see Appendix). Williams was a Baptist Christian and most Christians regard the Near-East as a Holy Land and abhor the use of drugs. As a result, Williams may not have wished to draw attention to the perceived negative or ugly aspects of the Near-East's involvement in opium production and use. Moreover, the expedition was far more closely monitored in the Near East, especially in Iran, than it was in the Far East.⁵⁶⁵ In China the expedition met with bureaucratic difficulties regarding its movement in and out of cities. However, the Chinese government entities that the Citroën-Haardt Expedition encountered were far more concerned with the civil war and political disorder in their country than with monitoring the movements and photography of the expedition.

⁵⁶⁵ Chapter 3 examines this issue in greater detail.



Figure 103, Maynard Owen Williams, 'M. Haardt (center) Inspects a Persian Poppy Field', 1931, Maynard Owen Williams, *The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir*, *The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX*, Washington D.C.:

The National Geographic Society, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The only photograph depicting opium in the Near-East (see figure 103) that appeared in Williams' NGM articles were in the first article, 'The Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir'. This photograph showed Haardt standing in an opium field in Iran and was accompanied by the following short passage:

One noon we went out between white poppy fields across a dusty plain to the little paradise which Persia's greatest bibliophile has made to grow among arid hills. A simple humble man, Hadji Malek owns a library of 46,000 precious volumes, some unique. He express regret that in America it is Omar Khayyam - not Safed, Firdausi,

or Hafiz - who represents Persian poetry. "is your priceless collection protected from fire?" I asked; for when rare treasures are massed together, one accident became a catastrophe, as was the case when fire destroyed the old libraries on Mount Athos. Alas! Like the illuminated manuscripts at Mount Sinai, there is no adequate protection for one of Persia's chief treasures.⁵⁶⁶

This quote once again reinforces the fact that Williams was well versed in and had a deep appreciation of literature and history. It further supports the proposition that his work and relationship with Asia was strongly coloured by his consumption of literature from many different disciplines, including poetry, history and possibly further afield. Remarkably, this passage makes no mention of what these poppies are, rather the focus is on the beautiful and poetic aspect of the scene. The role of the poppy in drug production is almost completely obscured by the discussion of the region's literary history. Without the photograph that accompanies this text one might never recognize the scale of opium production that surrounded Hadji Malek's library. In the photograph (figure 103) the field of opium poppies fill almost the entirety of the image, stretching out in all directions, yet despite this no mention is made of opium production.

Iran, where this photograph (figure 103) was taken, has a long history of opium production. Between 1850-1955 opium became one of the country's most important industries accounting for one-tenth of the annual revenues of the Iranian government through domestic use and export, including to East Asia, and provided employment for tens of thousands of

⁵⁶⁶ Maynard Owen Williams, The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir, *The National Geographic Magazine* Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society archive, October 1931) 416-417.

Iranians. According to Ram Baruch Regavim (2012), a large proportion of the Iranian population used opium during the 19th century, yet reference to this is omitted Williams' presentation, both photographically as well as in his writing.⁵⁶⁷ The fact that under the rule of Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-1941) the opium industry was brought under the control of the state may be a factor affecting the way in which Williams presents opium in Iran.⁵⁶⁸ The Iranian government kept a close watch on what the expedition photographed during their time in the country as they wished for Iran to be presented in a positive and modern light (as discussed further in chapter 5). The Iranian government was evidently very conscious of and concerned by the power that photography had over the outside world's understanding of Iran. The economic and social significance of an opium field in Iran is overlooked by Williams' articles in favour of romance. One might wonder if such information was left out because Williams and his NGM editors felt it would not have been of interest to the NGM reader, or perhaps because Williams was not very knowledgeable about Iran beyond the romance of the ancient history and beautiful literature he consumed.

Figure 103 was the only Near-Eastern opium photograph to appear in the NGM from this expedition. However, it was not the only photograph Williams took of this topic as is evidenced by these photographs (figure 106 & 107) taken in Afghanistan and Iran. Williams' archived diaries from his time in the Near-East make no mention of opium and these photographs present a highly romanticised image of poppy cultivation. No references are

⁵⁶⁷ Ram Baruch Regavim, 'The Most Sovereign of Masters: The History of Opium in Modern Iran, 1850-1955', <https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1845&context=edissertations> , (Philadelphia: Penn Libraries, University of Pennsylvania, 2012), 1-2

⁵⁶⁸ Ram Baruch Regavim, 'The Most Sovereign of Masters: The History of Opium in Modern Iran, 1850-1955', <https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1845&context=edissertations> , 2012, 6.

made to the poppy's role in drug production nor the disastrous impact opium had on the lives of its drug-addicted consumers. Nor is there even any comment on the positive impact of opium in the treatment of pain or its contribution to Iran's economy. This shows either a degree of shallowness and naivety in Williams' presentation of the subject, or Williams' lack of knowledge about the industry and the substance. It is hard to believe that the latter (i.e. lack of knowledge) was the case. In Iran the expedition was accompanied by government guides who controlled what they saw and photographed. It is unlikely that Williams would have been able to take photographs of Iran's opium fields without the guide's approval and consequently the guide's explanation of what he was photographing. In China Williams demonstrated that he had good knowledge of the substance's harmful impact, which will be analysed later in this chapter. This lens supports the notion that he perceived opium use and production in the Near East in a very different fashion from that in China, which in many ways it was. As a journalist it is very odd that Williams did not even ponder in his writing, whether personal or public, nor in his photographic field titles, why he considered the two situations to be so different. Such considerations points once again towards Williams willingly, but in good faith, being overtaken by his perceived romance of a given location.



Figure 104, Jan Both, 'Italian Landscape with a Draughtsman', c.1650, The Hague: Rijks Museum.



Figure 105, Robert S Duncanson, 'Landscape with Rainbow', 1859, Oil on Canvas, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Figure 106, Neg.55615, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Poppies Near Omar Khayyam's Tomb at Nishapur Persia.', May 13th 1931, Nishapur, Iran, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The landscape photographs of Iranian opium fields are so tranquil that they are reminiscent of 17th century Dutch Golden Age landscape paintings (figure 104) and 19th century American landscape painting (figure 105). For example, Figure 106 shows a wide sweeping landscape of an opium poppy field with flowers dancing in the wind whilst a man dressed in clean cotton or raw silk clothing cares for or is harvesting the crop. The background is equally calm. It is not dirty or muddy but has open skies, with a light dusting of trees and mountains. It is likely that Williams chose to photograph this idyllic scene as the field may

have belonged to the famous bibliophile Hadji Malek whom Williams had visited⁵⁶⁹ and because it was located near Omar Khayyam's Tomb. Omar Khayyam's Rubaiyat is a towering symbol of Near Eastern poetry. The intensely romanticised translations of this poem into English and other European languages were extremely popular during the early 20th century. It is likely that Williams had read the poem and that the experience of being in the lands within which it was written and where the author was buried would have stirred his emotions. By the 1930s FitzGerald's 1859 translation of the Rubaiyat was well known in the West and had woven its way into the Western world's perception of the East. This epic poem was appreciated by its Western readers for its dreamlike descriptions of the beauty of the Orient but also for its reflections on what it is to be a part of the cycle of life and the inevitability of death. Indeed, during WW1 many soldiers who died in the trenches were found to be carrying well-worn copies of the work in their pockets.⁵⁷⁰ 'The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam' connected with people on many levels during a time when, particularly during the post-war years and the Great Depression in the United States, Western populations were searching for escapism and reflecting upon the hardships humanity had to endure. Philosophy on difficult subject matter communicated through the beauty of art and literature helped people not only to escape but also to endure or come to terms with the difficulties they and their countries faced. A photograph such as Figure 106 that presents the beauty of the Near East, would have been popular with the NGM's readers. Indeed Williams who came from the same society as his readers was thrilled by his work and relished time spent "in the lands of Omar Khayyam".

⁵⁶⁹ Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition Reaches Kashmir', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1931, Volume LX, 416-417.

⁵⁷⁰ Sandra Bill, 'The Rubaiyat in Ruhleben camp – Omar Khayyam in the First World War', 2013.



Figure 107, Neg.55513, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Gathering Opium Near Guest House',
1931, Herat, Afghanistan, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT
PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 108, Adelaide Hanscom, 'Earth Could Not Answer', c.1910, Location Unknown.



Figure 109, Edward Fitzgerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Illustrated by Edmund Dulac, New York/London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1920.

Figures 103, 106 and 107 each provides a safe and idyllic image of opium production. In Figure 107 the viewer is once again in an opium field, but this time it is a portrait of two men tending to the plant. The men are involved in collecting the ‘tears’ from the opium plant. Afghanistan did not produce opium in the quantities that Iran did during the expedition’s time in the country. It was not until the latter part of the 20th century that Afghanistan became the world’s largest producer of opium. Nevertheless, it was evidently a substance that was in demand due to the fact that it was being grown during the 1930s. The man in the foreground of figure 107 holds a special knife called a *nushtar*, used for scoring the outside of the poppy-seed pod. The next day, after the plant has ceased its “crying” of the sticky brown resin, “poppy tears” or raw opium, were collected. Williams may have chosen the older man as the main subject of the photograph rather than the man standing by his side due to the fact that he is wearing a white turban and has a long beard. This look fits precisely the popular Western perception of a “man from the Near East”. Such figures appear regularly in illustrated versions of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Examples of these illustrations include, Adelaide Hanscom’s c.1910 painting entitled ‘*Earth Could Not Answer*’ (Figure 108) or Edmund Dulac’s 1920s illustrations (see figure 109). Once again no written reference is

made by Williams to the trade for which these fields were intended nor to the role these men played in it.

Williams' depictions of opium in the Near-East are clean and romantic, in stark contrast to his work in China. This needs to be considered in the context of the contrasting political, economic and, even, climate and weather conditions in China, Iran and Afghanistan at the time of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition. The opium problem was at epidemic proportions within China but this was not the case in Iran and Afghanistan. When the expedition visited Iran and Afghanistan it was spring, and the countries were both in a state of relative peace. The relative political calm in this region may have reinforced Williams' inclination to present the region in a positive light. However, West and northwest China were in the depths of winter and in the throes of violent civil war and political disorder. The part of China through which the expedition travelled, from Xinjiang through the north-western provinces, was especially turbulent at this time in contrast to the relative political stability in the central-southern provinces between 1927-35. It was one of the least developed parts of China, with negligible Western investment, in sharp contrast to the east coast cities, most notably Shanghai, which was the largest economic and financial centre in Asia.

Williams wrote in his diaries about the prevalence of opium use in China and took a number of photographs depicting the subject. Yet, none of his photographs showing opium in China featured in the magazine and only a small number of written references were made to it by Williams and published in the NGM.⁵⁷¹ This is remarkable, in view of the scale of the

⁵⁷¹Maynard Owen Williams, 'From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor', The National Geographic Magazine Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX, (Washington DC: National Geographic Society Archive, November 1932)

problem in China. The NGM may have decided to not include these photographs in the magazine as they were not pretty photographs. They revealed the dark side of drug use and production, which might have been considered as too challenging and depressing for their audience. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the NGM had rules regarding what was and what was not appropriate for publication.

Williams had worked for the NGM since 1919 and published many articles and photographs in its pages. He was also the first head of the NGM Foreign Correspondents department, which was established in 1930, just before the expedition took place.⁵⁷² He must have had a clear idea of the boundaries of acceptability for publication of photographs in the NGM, including what would and would not be allowed to be published in the magazine (see Chapter 2 and the Appendix for more analysis of these issues). Therefore, it is puzzling that he would have chosen to “waste” limited and expensive film on such unpublishable subjects. He may have flouted convention because, like many Westerners of the time, he possibly had a fascination for the topic of opium use or felt he had a journalistic responsibility to expose some of the realities of the situation.

⁵⁷² This department existed for a total of 48 years before being disbanded when new communications and transportation technologies became more available and reliable, including planes, radio, television and telephones (Bendavid-Val, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, .25.)



Figure 110, John Thomson (1837-1921), 'Opium Smoker', c.1867-72, Possibly taken in Southern China, Private Collection, London: The Bridgeman Art Library.

The photographic subject of Chinese opium use was not new. Western understanding and depiction of the subject was well established by the time Williams took his "opium" photographs. For example, one of the earliest Silk Road Photographers, John Thomson, also photographed the topic (figure 110). The majority of opium photographs taken by other photographers in China depicted the act of smoking, yet Williams only showed the accoutrements of its consumption and the act of its selling. This may have been because he

did not have access to the opium rooms themselves. Whatever the rationale behind this decision, the act of selling most certainly fits in with the subject of the Silk Road, for opium was, and still is, a product traded along the Silk Road. Indeed, a Sumerian clay tablet (c.2100BC) is believed by some scholars to contain one of the world's oldest references to the opium poppy. Arab physicians used opium extensively around 1000AD.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷³ Svend Norn, Poul Kruse, Edith Kruse, 'History of Opium and Morphine',
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17152761/>



Figure 111, Neg. 56700, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Opium for sale in the main east-west street of Liangchow. Liangchow opium is famous and cheap. Our "boys" ignoring Haardt orders bought a lot of it which I lifted down from its hiding place a top a trailer when we made camp beside the Yellow River later on.', December 31, 1931, Liang Zhou, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 111 shows a portrait composition of a market scene. This composition gives a sense of an intimidating and crowded space, as one is being stared down by an all-male group with rather unfriendly and solemn expressions. The fact that there are young boys present at a stall selling an opioid adds further to the unsettling nature of the scene. There is no sky visible, no space in this photograph, to potentially walk away from the scene. We are looking up at this group of individuals, who have a wide diversity of facial expressions that are not particularly welcoming. Unlike the poppy field, where the opium lay within the dancing flowers, opium is now presented in great oily hunks, sitting in dirty bowls and fabrics. The men and boys in the photographs are not dressed in the clean clothing of the Near Eastern photographs. Instead, they wear dark, well-worn and stained outfits. This is not an image of the wealthy, but of the poorer members of society. There is no calmness or warmth to this photograph as there is in Williams' Near-East works. It is most unlikely that NGM readers would have seen opium bricks before. One can imbue the sight of dancing smoke wafting from the end of long sinuous pipe with some kind of beauty, despite the surroundings in which it is being consumed. However, it is hard to find beauty or romance in this "matter of fact" presentation that Williams has provided for the viewer, with the substance simply sitting, inert on the ground. The title of figure 111 makes reference to the fact that the members of the expedition bought opium whilst in Liang-Zhou. The expedition members probably looked down on opium addiction yet they were happy to purchase what Williams described as "a lot" of the substance, though for what ends one cannot be sure.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷⁴ See Chapter 3 for an examination of Williams' fraught relationship with many of his fellow expedition members.



Figure 112, Neg.56740, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Old Chinese Smoker', December 20th
1931, Su Zhou, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT
PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

The photograph of the Chinese man smoking opium (figure 112) conforms to the canon of Chinese opium consumption in a more “traditional” manner. It was taken in Suchow’s⁵⁷⁵ Liang-Zhou district in a street that Williams described as being “lined with vices”.⁵⁷⁶ “Suchow” is in Gansu province in northwest China. It is still one of the poorest regions in China. He spoke about how he felt rather ashamed to take photographs of opium until he saw the subject of figure 112. He wrote; “I felt a bit ashamed at photographing this, and it was a relief to turn to a jolly cobbler, whose smiling face would show friendliness even in reproduction”.⁵⁷⁷

Williams’ decision to take this photograph caused some upset. He wrote:

As I finished an English-speaking Chinese said, “It is a shame for China that you take picture of such a man.” This snobbish viewpoint is one which no conscientious photographer can accept. “Why is it a shame? This man is a worker. He is clean. He seems reasonably happy and honest. He represents the real China. He is neither imposing exorbitant taxes nor gratifying personal ambition at the expense of the poor. Far from discrediting your country, his picture will help offset stories of maladministration and hatred of ‘foreign devils’. He and I cooperated in that picture

⁵⁷⁵ “Suchow” (Suzhou) is a district in the northwest of Gansu province. Liang-Zhou is a county (*xian*) within Suzhou District. It is located in the ‘Hexi Corridor’, which connects southern Gansu with Xinjiang through the Yumen Gate.

⁵⁷⁶ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor’, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX.

⁵⁷⁷ Maynard Owen Williams, ‘From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor’, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX, 560-561.

through a tacit understanding. In this limited sense we like each other. No such evidence of mutual friendliness can dishonour your land.⁵⁷⁸

Both of these quotes give an insight into Williams' relative naivety in regards to the widespread problem of opium abuse in China. Williams may have understood the practicalities of opium use and its effects, but he seems not to have recognised that this "jolly" man was most likely "high" on opium, nor that the English-speaking Chinese man may have been expressing concern about the representation of opium abuse within China, rather than expressing snobbery towards drug users or the poor. The Chinese population was well aware of the devastating effects that opium was having on their nation. They also knew full well who played a large part in the deliberate saturation of China with this drug - the British. As early as the 1830's there was a common idea in China that opium was the poison of the West and that whosoever supported these "criminal Western foreigners"⁵⁷⁹ were themselves criminals.⁵⁸⁰ This does not mean that the opium users were looked upon with pity. Hans Derks writes that as early as "Around 1830, these victims were hated because they exposed the weakness of the Qing state, and they permanently demonstrated the Chinese defeat, the serious humiliation by the 'Foreign devils'".⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX, 560-561.

⁵⁷⁹ Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca.1600-1950*, 627.

⁵⁸⁰ Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca.1600-1950*, 627.

⁵⁸¹ Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca.1600-1950*, Chp. 31 and 627.

The Chinese man who berated Williams for this photograph may well have been angry that Williams was perpetuating Western stereotypes of the “opium-addicted Chinaman”, and displaying the weakness of China to control the import of this ravaging substance across its borders through the image of this man to the world. Williams may well have been looked upon as just another Westerner attempting to profit from and weaken his country further. For Williams, life in China was only temporary. He could leave, but most Chinese people could not. This was their home and most did not have the money nor would possibly have had the wish to abandon their home land. It was deeply unsettling for them to see their country crumbling, when it had once been at the pinnacle of world culture and technological development.⁵⁸²

The only other mention of the use of this drug during Williams’ time in China was when, near Zhong-Wei (Ningxia Province), Williams and a few of the expedition members went to a house where:

...while the mother mixed the paste, two youngsters played on the bed platform, at the end of which a wrinkled granny, lying on one side in the yellow glow of the opium lamp, went through minute details connected with smoking the drug, her beady eyes

⁵⁸² Joseph Needham pioneered the study of science and civilisation in China. His survey article (Joseph Needham, ‘Science and China’s influence on the world’, in Raymond Dawson, ed., *The Legacy of China*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) synthesises the impact of pre-modern China on global technical progress.

watching the smoky gob on its long needle or peering down at the blunt pipe in which she forced the drug with fingers as bony and dark as those of a mummy.⁵⁸³

Understandably Williams did not photograph this scene, but his description of it provides an insight into his own views on this drug. His vivid and haunting depiction of opium use by the grandmother is upsetting, and he evidently did not view this substance positively. It is interesting to note that although this vivid description of opium addiction was included in the NGM articles, his photos depicting opium in China were not. Maybe a photograph was considered too real and shocking for the NGM public to view, whereas the written word provided distance from the situation presented. It might also be the case that they wished to keep on relatively good terms with the Chinese government, so their reporters could continue to work in the country. Written references might not be picked up on by a foreign government as easily as images.

⁵⁸³ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX, 564.



Figure 113, Neg. 56702, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Opium lamps, pipe stems, bowls, etc., on sale in main east-west street of Liangchow. Opium smoking is a patient, fussy, time-wasting practice. It demands a surety of technique in cooking, molding, piercing and smoking the pellet which requires considerable self-control until the relief and torpor come. In the chiaroscuro around an opium lamp, the act of smoking has a macabre fascination and drama about it. A nervous smoker of tobacco or a swift swallower of hard liquor is much less interesting – but better off', December 31 1931, Liang Zhou, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

One of the most interesting photographs that Williams took of opium is figure 113. This photograph is very different from the others, as it not only presents the viewer with an overview of the various apparatuses needed for the smoking of opium, but it does this in a very surreal manner. Around the main focus of the photograph, the pipe apparatus, is a swirling and blurring of a gathered crowd that is indicative of the experience of smoking

opium. This opium-dream-like quality is oddly unsettling, as the only clear figure is that of a young boy's calm face staring out from the unknown. Williams was a seasoned photographer and it is therefore highly likely he would have intentionally created such a photograph. It is intriguing that he decided to take these photographs that would provide his audience with "proof" that China conformed to popular negative stereotyping of the time considering that, in a letter he wrote to Grosvenor, he described one of the reasons for his embarking on this expedition as follows:

One reason why I went back to the Orient was to make the Chinese better understood and appreciated in America. I once counted C.T. Wang (Foreign Minister, b.1882-d.1961) as a personal friend. The high-handed methods of the West toward China have repeatedly roused my ire and I am in hearty accord with them in all that would prevent a continuation of such methods.⁵⁸⁴

It is possible that Williams captured these images in order to bring his readers' attention to the destructive impact that Western policies were having upon large segments of the Chinese population. However, his published articles do not make reference to Britain's involvement in the situation, which once again is somewhat confusing. As mentioned in Chapter 3 and in the appendix, it was not unusual for Williams to state one thing only to state the opposite later in the same work. Williams undoubtedly was well-intentioned but he would frequently say or write things that today seem at odds with such well-meaning intent.

⁵⁸⁴ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from Williams to Grosvenor, Bunji on the Gilgit road, August 2nd 1931, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, (Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan), 1.

Overall, Williams' opium-focused photographs also are representative of the contrasting perspective that Western people typically had with these regions. The Near East was viewed in an idyllic and dreamlike manner whereas China was viewed as dangerous, dirty and morally weak. This series of photographs demonstrates the complexity of the West's relationship with opium, and its cultivation and consumption, in these two regions.

Children of The Silk Road

The subject of children might seem to have little connection with a thesis about Early Silk Road photography. However, it was children as well as adults who survived on the income gained from and also used the products transported along the Silk Road. Many children also worked or travelled, from a young age, on the trade routes of the Silk Road. The topic of "Children of The Silk Road" includes many of the most extensive, moving and well-executed of Williams' work created during the expedition. These photographs made a regular appearance in the Citroën articles, focussing on those which featured children in pleasant circumstances, whereas Williams' more challenging photographs of children living in poverty were mostly side-lined.

There is a tradition of depicting children in Early Silk Road photographs produced by missionaries. For centuries, religious groups were involved in the care and education of children living in the Silk Road lands across Eurasia. This is evidenced by the schooling role that Buddhist monasteries and Muslim Madrassas have played in the lives and upbringing of children for centuries. European Christian organizations were yet another element working in this tradition. Williams had spent a large amount of his youth working as a missionary with

children in Asia. He had a love of children and had five of his own.^{585 586} He cared about children's safety and health and would get very upset when the guards who sometimes accompanied him, thinking that the children were getting in the way of their charge's work, would hit them.⁵⁸⁷ These points may, in part, account for the prevalence of child-focused photographs.

Another possible reason for the prevalence of children in Williams' work is practicality. Children would have been easy subjects as a child was more likely to be out on the streets and less likely to have reservations about a foreign man with a camera. For a child, a stranger riding around in a car, in odd clothing, speaking a 'strange' language and carrying bizarre photographic apparatus must have been a fascination. Williams reports in his diaries, letters and articles that groups of children would follow him around whilst he worked in villages and towns. For example, he was "...followed about in the Suchow [China] by hundreds of youngsters, whose many smiles were worthy of record".⁵⁸⁸ At some points the crowds of children would become so large and excited that they would cause problems by getting in the way of his work:

⁵⁸⁵ Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, United States of America, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

⁵⁸⁶ Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 8.

⁵⁸⁷ Kalamazoo College Archives, Letter from La'Groce to Williams, Pension Leman, May 15th 1931, Pension Leman, Meshed, Persia, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32 Citroën Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box, 3/4, (Kalamazoo, Michigan), 6.

⁵⁸⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX, 544.

Behind my camera curious children trailed along behind the piper of Hamelin. With a stand camera, you are at the mercy of the mob. Offend them and you might as well go home. Inspire their good will and they'll warm your heart.⁵⁸⁹

The photographs Williams took of children were predominantly of the poorer classes. Whether this was by choice or just because the wealthy children were less likely to be hanging out in the streets one cannot know for sure, Perhaps the image of smiling but poor children had a romantic appeal to him and his audience?

The greatest number of images of children Williams took were in North West China. In a description of that impoverished region Williams quoted Thomas Paine's 'Rights of Man' (1791), saying that China was in the midst of fighting for "...its integrity for the rights man".⁵⁹⁰ China at this time was living through a violent civil war and political disturbance. North West China, within which the expedition spent much of its time within China, was not only one of the poorest regions in the country, but was also recovering from a powerful earthquake.

During Williams' time in China as a young man, pre-NGM, he wrote a passage that provides some insight into his own views of Chinese politics: "...the people here are awakening to a

⁵⁸⁹ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX, 543-544.

⁵⁹⁰ Kalamazoo College Archives, Box 5/8 Item XXVI Williams Early Articles in Manuscript, (Kalamazoo, Michigan).

feeling, not of patriotism, but of individual rights and republican freedom".⁵⁹¹

and that

The solidarity and permanence of republican institutions rests upon the willingness of the individual to sacrifice himself for others. Democracy in its perfection is nothing but the application of the law of loving one's neighbour as oneself. For centuries, in [word unclear] and informal way, the Chinese have been obeying the law of the neighbour, but in politics they have not yet reached willingness to abide by the decision of the majority or to uphold the Constitution. China's political morals are far behind her personal morals and yet she is moving toward political consciousness. What will be the result? A vast increase in the number of deaths arising from the larger numbers involved and the greater popular sentiment for or against political changes or a soul-stirring turning toward the enactment into politics of the Chinese attitude of peace toward neighbour.⁵⁹²

Both passages demonstrate Williams' very American political outlook on the world, including a belief in Western democracy as the ideal type of political system, without consideration for its shortcomings. The first quotation (above) shows Williams had been watching China's political upheaval since the early Republican period. Indeed he had moved to China in 1914

⁵⁹¹ Kalamazoo College Archives, Box 5/8 Item XXVI Williams Early Articles in Manuscript, (Kalamazoo, Michigan), 727.

⁵⁹² Kalamazoo College Archives, Box 5/8 Item XXVI Williams Early Articles in Manuscript, (Kalamazoo, Michigan), 727-728.

shortly after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912. As a member of the Citroën-Haardt expedition he was once again witnessing and recording an important era in the country's history.

In the article 'From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor', which documents the expedition's time in North West China, Williams makes extensive references to the dangers of travel. He often talks of the ghost-like villages that had been abandoned due to war,⁵⁹³ of "floods of refugees" at the gates of Suchow fleeing war lords such as Ma Chung Ying,⁵⁹⁴ and makes frequent reference to the devastation that the earthquakes had upon the region.⁵⁹⁵ He wrote about how the land had been: "...shaken open in deep cracks by an earthquake year before..."⁵⁹⁶

The earthquake of which Williams is speaking is the 1920 Haiyuan (Gansu) Earthquake. It reached 7.8/8.5 on the Richter magnitude scale. Mountains were avalanched, ground cracked, black water overflowed. In some places ground was turned into high mounds or deep valleys and four whole cities were completely devastated. Over 250,000 people lost

⁵⁹³ Maynard Owen Williams, From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX, 543.

⁵⁹⁴ Maynard Owen Williams, From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX, 543-544.

⁵⁹⁵ Maynard Owen Williams, From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX, 553.

⁵⁹⁶ Maynard Owen Williams, From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index July-December, 1932, Volume LX.

their lives and the region experienced aftershocks for three years' after the first quake.⁵⁹⁷

The photographs Williams took in the region over ten years later, still show the devastation caused by this natural disaster. Indeed, it looks as though the earthquakes only happened recently, which might account for Williams' claim that the event only struck a year before their arrival. China was simply not in a position to be able to care for its people due to the political chaos and social instability, especially in the North West. Williams' photographs, and in particular those he took of children, capture this.

In the 'From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor' article, Williams devotes many pages to Lieutenant Commander Victor Point's account of his journey. Point was the leader of the China group. His account makes reference to the violence and danger that he saw during his journey across China. For example, near Hami (in Xinjiang) his party came across:

...wreckage of war: horses killed, carts overturned, corpses lining the road and in the ditches; soldiers, women, and children huddled together in utter disorder... Before night, reinforcements from Hami announced that the route was clear and we continued our way amid burning homes.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁷https://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/nndc/struts/results?eq_0=3165&t=101650&s=13&d=22,26,13,12&nd=display

⁵⁹⁸ Maynard Owen Williams, 'From The Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor, The Citroen-Haardt Expedition Successfully Completes its Dramatic Journey', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Index, Volume, July-December, 1932, LXII, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1932), 528.



Figure 114, Unknown Photographer on Point's Expedition, 'Close to Hami, the China Group falls right into the middle of a confrontation between two bands. The dead are strewn over the ground. Doctor Delastre and Father Teilhard care for the wounded', 1931, Hami, Xinjiang, China, Eric Deschamps, Croisiere Jaune, Chroniques 1929-1933, (ETAI, France, 2003), 125, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 115, Photographer Unknown, 1931-1932, Gobi Desert, Book 117, Citroën Archives, France, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Apart from Point's words or Williams' reports of empty villages, there is little in the NGM articles that provides insight into the lives of everyday people in North West China. The China group's photographs of what they encountered (figure 114 & 115) and almost all of the more challenging of Williams photographs depicting the devastation in the region were left out of the magazine. Instead, images that showed poverty were presented through Williams' photographs of smiling children living in hardship.

As NGM's most experienced photo-journalist and head of the Foreign Correspondents division, Williams would have been well aware of the boundaries for publication of photographs in the NGM, yet he still decided to take those difficult images. He may have

chosen to take them as he felt it important to make a record of China during this period regardless of the NGM rules. Such images, if allowed in the NGM, would have helped to make Western audiences aware of the effects that international and internal politics were having on the 'ordinary' people of a country.



Figure 116, Neg.56825, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Midwinter Near Liangchow', 1932, Near Liang Zhou, Gansu, China, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 116 is one of the most arresting photographs that Williams took on the subject of children living in poverty. The focus of this image is a small child, standing alone in a crowd of people in the dead of an ice-cold winter. His only protection is a raggedy coat whilst feet, legs hands and face are bared to the elements. Gansu province, where this photograph was taken, was and still is one of the poorest in China. It was common during this time for a family to share clothes amongst their children, or for a family to only be able to afford a single item of clothing that they shared amongst their children.⁵⁹⁹ A coat, for instance, would be chosen as it could keep its wearer's chest and heart warm. It is not only the clothing and cold that makes this photograph very moving. The child is dirty and his nose is incrustated with snot. He is very young and when you view this image thoughts concerning this boy's welfare come to one's mind. He is presented to the viewer as forgotten, mirroring the state of much of the Chinese population during this time. R.H.Tawney described the Chinese peasant in the early 1930s as 'like a man standing up to his neck in water, where a single ripple is sufficient to drown him'.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁹ Dr. Charles Curwen (Lecturer, Department of History, SOAS, 1968-1987) worked in this region between 1945-1955. He recalls that Central Gansu was so poor that the children in many families shared a single pair of trousers (personal communication).

⁶⁰⁰ R.H.Tawney, *Land and Labour in China*, London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1932, 77.



Figure 117, Dorothea Lange (1895-1965), 'Children in the United States of America during the Depression', Washington D.C.: Department Of Agriculture, and Bureau of Agricultural Economics Division of Economic Information (ca.1922-1953).

The topic of children on the Silk Road was of interest to Williams not only on a humanitarian level, but also because he was a father who had left his family in a Depression-stricken USA. The fact that during his absence his family ran out of money, and had to ask family friends for financial support surely must have entered his mind. As have seen, the parallels with the US Great Depression may be a reason why the NGM did not publish the more upsetting photographs from the expedition. The American government, with whom the NGM had a close relationship,⁶⁰¹ might not have wished for American citizens to be shown how similar its “Land of the Free” and home of the “American Dream” was to what many viewed as the “crumbling” and “sick” China. In fact, the NGM reported on the Depression in the USA, (figure 117) through work by photo-journalists such as Dorothea Lange. As can be seen in figure 117 her work documenting the Great Depression strongly parallels Williams photographs of children living in poverty in China, children without their parents in dirty surroundings, torn clothes and without shoes.

⁶⁰¹ This relationship was analysed in chapter 2.



Figure 118, Neg.55956, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Astor Child', 1931, Astor, Kashmir, India, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 119, Neg.55957, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Astor Children', 1931, Astor, Kashmir, India, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Williams also approached the topic of Children on the Silk Road briefly whilst in the Himalayas. As already noted, Williams did not take many photographs depicting the famine and poverty he saw during his crossing of this region. The only photographs that he took that show some inkling into what he saw were those he took of children. Although these images are not as arresting or shocking as those he took in China, they do have a haunting element to them. Examples of these include these two slightly out-of-focus photographs (figure 118 & 119) of thin children looking up at the camera. Both photographs show the subjects with a glum expression or seemingly forced smiling expression. These children are not shown in a lush fruitful environment. Instead they are sitting alone in a parched location, wearing clothes that are dusty and have holes in them. Once again such images are eerily similar to those photographs of children taken during the same period in Depression era America. Such an image would not “transport” audiences into the land of fantasy, but, rather, emphasis the failings of their own country’s governance.

Williams’ images of children in strife would inspire empathy in anyone who viewed them. Their subject matter is one that appeals to the viewer’s humanity whilst also engaging with the widely-held view in the West about the crumbling of the East, and the harsh realities of life for many of the world’s citizens.



Figure 120, Neg.56567, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Kids in Suchow', 1932, Su Zhou, Gansu, China, (The magazine entitles this 'Young China Often Smiles'. The traditional "poker face" of the oriental is used to hide feelings; but the Chinese are remarkably quick to show emotion by facial expression. A group of children in Suchow.), Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

In fact, many of Williams' photographs depicted children in poverty but smiling and laughing (figure 120). There was a widely-held romantic view in the West of the exotic foreigner who was happy while living in poverty and this image certainly nurtures such a view (figure 120). NGM readers might look at such positive depictions and forget the fact that these children had little to no way out of the situation into which they were born. Instead, the photograph might induce them to look upon the children's lives as simple but happy. They may be in ragged and dirty clothes, and live in landscapes of destruction, but nonetheless they seem to

be happy with what they have and wish for nothing more. This is not to say that even in the most difficult times one cannot find laughter, calm or happiness and many of Williams photographs did, indeed, capture this. No matter how such images were presented and consumed by the early 20th century NGM readers, their audience might well have seen them as evidence for the concept of the contented foreigner living in poverty. Such presentations of the East might have helped affluent Western audiences, which included most of NGM's readers, feel more comfortable about their own position in comparison to the subject of such photographs. Such positive images of children who are "happy amidst poverty" might also give support to the "salvage" and social anthropological view of the East, in which people are happier in a "less-developed" state, which would be deprived by modernisation.



Figure 121, Neg.57081, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Lamas have a habit of making seemingly insulting gestures. Personally I think these are the result of self-consciousness and theatrical sense on the part of those accustomed to perform in or watch Devil dances. Some of the gestures are identical especially to those with the feet. But the lamas are a degraded and insolent lot in comparison with the manly Mongols. Small chorten at edge of lamasery village of Peilingmiao', February 3rd 1932, Pelingingmiao, Mongolia, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Despite the dark undertones of some of Williams' images of children, most of his photographs of children express the universally positive aspects of childhood. Unsurprisingly these were the type of images that were included in the articles. For example, this photograph taken in Mongolia (figure 121), shows three boys and students of the Buddhist monastery playing about on a stupa. One would expect them to be very serious due to the significance of their location and their religious education. However, these three boys are just acting like all children do and are messing about pulling faces at the camera. Such a mischievous photograph is unusual for Williams' work. One gets the feeling that it may well have been spontaneous on the part of the subjects and not orchestrated by Williams. It's possible that Williams set up the shot of the boys on the stupa, yet the children seem to have taken control of the photograph. This image presents us with an unusual juxtaposition of religion and mischief. It is humanising and presents the viewer with commonalities that exist between people across the world, a particular fixation of much of Williams work. Despite the striking nature of figure 121 it was not included alongside Williams NGM articles possibly because the photograph did not conform to the popular Western vision of the stoicism embodied by Buddhist followers.



Figure 122, Neg.57695, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Indo-Chinese Expressions', Hue, Annam, Vietnam, 1932, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 122 is a candid photograph showing two children who belong to a wealthy family. It expresses some of the same kind of childlike happiness as figures 120 and 121. These children are eating sweets, which seem to be rather sour-sweet judging by their expressions. This photograph again captures the universal nature of children, but in this image it is shown through their love of sweets rather than through their sense of mischief as shown in figure 121. We may never know if this photograph would have been published alongside Williams' Citroën articles, as his South East Asia work was never published in conjunction with the Expedition.



Figure 123, Neg.55203, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Persian Villagers. Sahne Between Kermanshah and Hamadan', 1931, Sahne, Iran, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 124, Neg.55999, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Kanjuti Types or Hunza Men Whose Language is Burushaski. Youngster is a Relative of the Mir of Hunza', 1931, Baltit, India, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 125, Neg.56229, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Khirghiz Types at Subashi on the Road from Tashkurghan to Kashgar North of the Ulugh Rabat Pass', September 13th 1931, Subashi, Xinjiang, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.



Figure 126, Neg.57502, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Prince Buu Liem with Members of His Household', 1932, Hue, Annam, Vietnam, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

In portraiture the gentler side of the parent and child relationship tends to be shown through portraits of mother and child and not father and child. However, Williams turned this on its head as he was drawn to the topic of relationships between father and child (figures 123-128). These images make up his warmest and most intimate work taken on the expedition. As already noted, Williams was a father himself and his presence on this expedition meant that he was unable to see his children for over a year. His role as a father, as well as his emotions of missing his children, may not only have influenced his choice of subject matter but also his ability to capture the touching moments that exist between a father and a child.

His images of a father and child capture an intimacy that his mother and child photographs do not. Despite any financial or political difficulties experienced by the individuals featured in these photographs, the children are evidently well cared for. They are not shown alone but held in the arms of their fathers, grandfathers, uncles or other male relative or family friend. This series of photographs shows the closeness of relationships between man and child, regardless of who or where one is from. Each photograph presents to the viewer the care that male subjects had for the child in their charge. These are intimate moments captured by Williams that seemingly were far more spontaneous than his other work due to their relaxed and less statue-like compositions.



Figure 127, Neg.55457, Maynard Owen Williams, 'Turbot-Sheikh-Jam on the Herat Trail', ,
May 18th 1931, Turbot-Sheikh-Jam, Iran, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive,

NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

Figure 127 shows a father or grandfather and a small child who have been captured pulling the same expression and pose. This makes one feel as though they must surely be close for the child to have picked up the expressions of the man who is holding them. The small child is held gently on the lap of this much larger bearded man, providing a scene of caring and protection towards the child on the part of the man.



Figure 128, Neg.56739, Maynard Owen Williams, 'The Restaurant Man was More Proud of His Baby than of His Profession', Su Zhou, Gansu, China, 1932, , Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, NOT PUBLISHED IN THE NGM.

One of the most exuberant images is figure 128. Williams wrote: “The restaurant man was more proud of his baby than of his profession”.⁶⁰² This photograph depicts a proud father excited by his child. His face clearly shows his joy, which is something that any new father could connect with. One could surmise that many of the smiling people around him are regular customers, and possess similar emotions upon seeing this child. These positive photographs of children demonstrate the gentler side of life on the Silk Road, as well as commonalities that all humans have when it comes to children. The commonalities of the human experience across cultures is a persistent theme of Williams’ photographs taken on the C Citroën-Haardt expedition. The subject of children is highly emotive and this set of photographs are Williams’ most emotional work from the expedition. These photographs express the importance of childhood. They reflect the fact that many children are denied a carefree childhood due to situations beyond their control. Nevertheless, Williams also captures the optimism that children frequently possess, even in the midst of great difficulties.

Summary

The photographs discussed in this chapter depict the difficulties experienced by people on the Silk Road. They focus on the drug trade and the effects that poverty and political disorder have upon children. They analyse the contrasting fashion in which Williams photographed these subjects in the Near East and China. The contrast was due in part to the perspectives of the Silk Road in Western literature and visual representation. It was due also to the difference in political and social conditions in the two regions. Compared with the disturbed conditions in West and North West China, the Near-Eastern world appeared as an oasis of peace and calm. Important parts of the Near East were under Western control and

⁶⁰² Maynard Owen Williams, Ng.56739, Suchow, Gansu, China, 1932, Washington DC: National Geographic Archive.

there was considerable foreign investment, most notably in the region's oil industry. At the time that the Citroën-Haardt Expedition travelled across Western and North West China the country was engaged in civil war. These regions of China were extremely poor and conditions were especially disturbed compared with Central and Southern China. Moreover, the expedition travelled through these regions in the middle of winter and the region had suffered a devastating earthquake only a few years earlier.

What were the influences behind the creation of these images and what significance did these photographs have for Westerners?

The representations of opium in the era before the Citroën-Haardt Expedition had a deep impact, both positive and negative, upon the West's perception of the Near-East and China: dreamy and mystical in the case of the former, and threatening and dark in the case of the latter. In books, film and other media, in the decades before the Citroën-Haardt Expedition Chinese people were routinely represented as opium addicts who were bringing the vices of China to poison the West. In the Near-East on the other hand opium use was typically depicted as beautiful and dreamlike. These sharply contrasting perceptions helped to shape Williams' own representation of these subjects. His photographs represent opium use and production in the Near-East as harmless and romantic: open fields filled with pure white poppies. In China it is shown as dark, depressing and threatening: cold markets in poor societies selling great greasy hunks of opium displayed on dirty rags.

Williams' background as a teacher in missionary schools may have contributed to a high degree of sensitivity to the condition of children. Children in poverty are shown in a starkly realistic fashion in China whilst there are few of Williams' photographs that depict such scenes in his Near-Eastern or South-East Asian work. The contrast in the representation of children was influenced also by the fact that Williams' photographs in China were taken in

North China in the depths of winter. However, despite the fact that during the Himalayan section of the expedition the area was in the grip of famine, Williams did not take photographs that reflect this. Children in the Near-East and Himalayas on the whole were shown in an apparently secure environment with their parents, whilst only a few are shown this way in China. Instead children in China are depicted alone or in gangs, which contribute to the viewer's empathy due to the apparent absence of parental support.

Williams placed emphasis upon friendship and understanding amongst the whole of mankind. He had great faith in the connections between different parts of the human species and the commonalities that they shared. The Silk Road seems to have been used by him as a metaphor for a fundamental commonality of human experience. His photographs depicting the relationship of parents and their children cut across cultural differences, demonstrating a commonality between all people. This together with the fact that Williams was himself a father with several children, may have been an impetus behind the fact that he took so many images of children and affected the way in which they were taken.

Why were many of these photographs side-lined?

Williams was employed as a photo-journalist. However, most of Williams' photographs that demonstrate the darker side of life on the Silk Road in the early 1930s were vetoed by the NGM. This means that the image of the Silk Road presented to Western audiences was not the one experienced by the expedition. This was most obviously the case in relation to photographs taken in the poverty-stricken, politically chaotic conditions of West and North

West China.⁶⁰³ Williams' photographs of the hardships experienced by the people of China in these regions during this period provide a powerful and moving visual record of a chaotic era in Chinese history. However, Williams' most disturbing photographs of those regions were vetoed for publication in the NGM.

The fact that the USA was living through the Great Depression helps to explain why Williams' most challenging photographs were excluded from the publication. Such images of China, particularly of children, paralleled the lives lived by many American citizens during the 1930's. The NGM wished to provide an escapist, "magic carpet ride". It avoided drawing attention to the harsh realities of life for many people across the world. It is also likely that a publication so closely tied to the American government would not wish readers' attention to be drawn to the similarities between China, which was regarded as weak and crumbling, with the USA, which considered itself strong and the leading light of democracy and modernity.

The Great Depression was at its most severe at the time of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition of 1931-32 and the NGM struggled to keep itself afloat financially, as did Citroën. This may have influenced NGM's decision to leave out those more challenging images in favour of giving the people what they wanted, in the form of escapism, romance and beauty. Such depictions did of course include danger. However, the danger shown in Williams' photographs was carefully curated so as not to be sufficiently unsettling to shock the viewer out of their enjoyment and fantasies. They were intended to provide an escapist view of

⁶⁰³ In fact, the most dramatic transformation of the lands along the Silk Road were those taking place in revolutionary Russia, but these important segments of the ancient Silk Road, including cities such as Bokhara and Samarkand (in Uzbekistan), were barred to the Citroen-Haardt Expedition.

danger, captured through beautiful photographs, rather than ones that presented the harsh reality. Even the photographs which showing poverty, represent the subjects as the “happy and contented” poor, who inhabit an unchanging “salvage’ time-warp.

Ultimately, it is unfortunate that Williams’ more challenging photographs together with a more nuanced and exploratory text, were not featured in the NGM Citroën-Haardt articles. The photographic (and written) record was widely distributed and helped to shape perceptions of Eurasia. Instead of enriching Western understanding of the lands and lives along the Silk Road, the decision to avoid challenging images, served to reinforce existing romanticised perceptions of the Silk Road among NGM’s readers. In this the NGM failed to live up to its stated objective of acting as the ‘tutor to the nation’.

Conclusion.

This thesis explored the largely neglected field of Early Silk Road Photography and the role this has played in the West's relationship with and understanding of the Silk Road. The concept of the "Silk Road" is being used with increasing frequency. The relationship between East and West is at a crossroads. Analysis of Early Silk Road Photography and the West's depiction of the Silk Road can help to enhance mutual understanding in the face of common global challenges. Due to the great number and wide diversity of Early Silk Road Photographs this thesis approached the topic through a case study of the NGM photojournalist Maynard Owen Williams' (1888-1963), focussing on the work created during the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932). In conducting this analysis the central question to be answered was:

How and why did Williams decide to photograph the people and scenes encountered during his journey along the 'Silk Road' as the National Geographic Magazine's photographer on the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932).

This question was shaped with the aim not only of understanding Williams' work but also of recognising and deepening understanding of the whole genre of Early Silk Road Photography. Chapters 1-3 analysed the factors that shaped the way in which Williams decided which objects, people and scenes he would photograph and how he would photograph them. Chapter 1 examined influences that were common to the whole genre of Early Silk Road Photography, while Chapters 2-3 examined those that were specific to Williams and his photographs on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition. The concepts developed in chapters 1-3 informed the detailed analysis of Williams' photographs in chapters 4-6. Chapter 4 analysed iconic images of the Silk Road, including travel, landscapes and trade. Chapter 5 examined photographs that emphasised "difference" between socio-economic life in the

West and the East, including images of religion, festivities, “ethnic types” and headdress. Chapter 6 analysed the complex and difficult issues of opium, poverty and childhood along the Silk Road.

Ch. 1. Early Silk Road Photography.

Williams joined the NGM in 1919 and was appointed head of the Foreign Correspondents’ Division in 1930, just before the Citroën-Haardt Expedition. Williams’ photographs on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition form part of the genre of Early Silk Road Photography and they share many of the same influences. The analysis of Williams’ photographs taken on the expedition contributes to a deeper understanding of the genre of Early Silk Road Photography as a whole.

Despite doubts about the authenticity of Marco Polo’s *Travels*, the book exerted a profound influence on Western perceptions of the Silk Road. The Citroën-Haardt Expedition “re-traced the footsteps of Marco Polo” across Eurasia and Williams carried a copy of the *Travels* with him on the Expedition. The Silk Road existed physically for at least 2000 years before the writings of the archaeologist-explorers Aurel Stein and Sven Hedin helped to popularise the concept. In fact, the Silk Road consisted of many sub-branches and routes that shifted over time. Recent research on the Silk Road reveals the great extent of trade within different segments of the route, compared with the transport of goods from end-to-end. It also reveals that, despite the increasing importance of the sea route, the land route remained active through to the twentieth century and beyond.

Richthofen’s invention of the phrase ‘Silk Road’ in 1877 coincided with the development of technologies that made it progressively easier to take photographs while travelling away

from a studio setting. By the mid-1930s photographic technologies had moved into a revolutionary new era with the emergence of the movie film. In the early 1930s pre-industrial forms of transport, trade and social organisation remained important along most of the Silk Road. However, a relentless process of modernisation had been set in motion.

Paradoxically, during this era travel along the Silk Road became progressively more difficult due to the impact of the Russian Revolution and political disorder in China, which culminated in the Chinese Revolution of 1949. By the 1940s, technical progress in photography, the march of modernisation and restriction on freedom of movement brought the early era of Silk Road photography to a close.

Apart from Marco Polo's *Travels*, a wide array of Western literature, from Coleridge's poetry to translations of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, helped to construct romanticised Western perceptions of the Silk Road. Western painting, including both the Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite schools, helped construct exotic and sensual images of Eurasia. Governments reinforced these views through propaganda to support colonial expansion, which reached a peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A mass market for photographs of the Silk Road developed in the late Victorian era, including postcards, framed scenes, public photographic shows and devices such as the stereoscope. The new era of popular magazines in the early twentieth century produced a deluge of interest in photographs from "exotic" locations. Darwinism and colonialism coalesced into racist perceptions of the non-Western world. A new genre of photographs objectified people from these diverse regions as if they belonged to a less developed sub-species of the human race. Alongside this a form of cultural production emerged which attempted to 'salvage' pre-modern cultures through photography.

Photographs of the Silk Road were taken by professional photographers for commercial sale, for publication in newspapers and magazines, and as postcards; by explorers to illustrate their exploits and include in their books and articles, and accompany their lectures; by people who were themselves working along the Silk Road or were accompanying others employed along the Silk Road; by scientists, including archaeologists, botanists and anthropologists; and by government officials taking photographs for geo-strategic purposes. Some of the photographers, such as Maynard Owen Williams, became widely known. However, a great number of Early Silk Road Photographs are now labelled 'Photographer Unknown'.

Ch 2. The National Geographic, The Tutor of a Nation.

This chapter investigated the world view of Williams' employer, the National Geographic and the magazine that carried its name. The relationship between Williams and his employer played a key role in determining the way in which Williams selected and shot the photographs on the Citroën-Haardt Expedition.

In the late nineteenth and early 20th century, in Europe and America new academic sciences of anthropology, ethnography and geography, emerged. From the date of its establishment in 1888 until 1905 the NGSM was like any other academic scientific journal, catering to a small readership of professional scientists. That changed when Gilbert Grosvenor was appointed as the first full time editor of the NGSM, a post that he occupied from 1899-1954. Under Grosvenor, the NGSM bridged the gap between the academic and non-academic worlds through the presentation of science in a language that a non-scientist could understand. Membership of the NGS became associated with a certain level of social status and became a marker of an intellectual and worldly mind-set. Grosvenor's decision in 1905 to include photographs radically changed the direction of the magazine. Thereafter,

photographs were a constant and pervasive feature of the magazine. The NGSM became synonymous with providing the public with photo-journalism about the non-Western world. The manner in which the world was presented to the public by the NGSM was renowned for the beautiful photographs. These were usually taken during the same trip about which a given text in the NGM was written. Many photographers featured in the NGSM were so called 'triple-threats': writer, photographer and explorer. Reportage on their expeditions was presented in a fashion that emphasized their adventurous nature. The vivid, first-hand nature of NGSM content helped greatly to establish the magazine's authoritative and trusted position. The NGSM occupied a unique space - neither fully academic nor fully popular, thereby appealing to a broad public. The NGSM developed into the largest non-profit scientific and educational organization in the world. The wide extent of its readership in the USA meant that it played a significant role in shaping the American public's attitudes to the non-Western world.

The early decades of the NGM's existence coincided with a key era in the construction of American national identity and its relationship with the world. The process of forging a unified nation followed the traumas of the Mexican War, the Civil War, the long struggles against Native Americans and the bitter legacy of slavery. These were followed by large-scale immigration from Europe and class conflict during the 'Gilded Age' of capitalism. At the end of the nineteenth century the USA began to build an overseas presence in the Pacific Ocean. During this tumultuous era in American history photography became a vital mechanism in forging a unified national American identity out of a young, diverse and fragmented society. Frontier Photography was part of this process, making both a scientific and an artistic contribution. By recording the "unknown and untamed" parts of America it reinforced the concepts of the "pioneer spirit" and "manifest destiny" as fundamental components of American identity. It was around this time that photography also developed into an important recording tool in the sciences, including archaeology, geology, geography,

ethnography and anthropology. These disciplines and the associated fieldwork were supported by the US government in order to further the understanding, taming and exploitation of America's diverse natural resources. They also included extensive studies of Native Americans, who were often recorded in an Orientalist manner as foreign curiosities. The same photographic approach, which incorporated the "frontier spirit", scientific investigation and Orientalism, was employed by the NGSM in its representation of people beyond the USA.

From the outset, the NGM was patriotic. The NGS headquarters have always been located close to the White House. In its, formative years many of the NGM's senior officials were closely connected to the US government and the NGSM included information gathered by, and photographs produced by, the American government. For example, the magazine frequently included stories and photographs from areas of the world in which the USA had a strategic interest, which helped to nurture public support for US government activities in those regions. The NGSM, whether consciously or not, helped to influence its readers' political outlook, especially in regards to empire building and the notion of American national superiority, which was encouraged through the publication of photographs and articles that typically showed developing countries as living in a bygone time. The content of the NGSM helped to perpetuate ideas of the non-Euro-American world existing in the past, by focusing on the "strangeness" and "differences" between the Euro-American and the non-western world. The way in which the NGSM explored and recorded the "other" outside the USA grew out of the American tradition of study and recording those lands within the USA that were still "untamed". The NGSM's perspective on the world outside the USA evolved from the westward extension of the US frontier and the "manifest destiny" of the American people to explore new frontiers and exercise control over other people.

Ch. 3. In the Footsteps of Marco Polo.

The Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition was presented to the public as an expedition of scientific research. However, little evidence of the work of the expedition's scientists can be found in Citroën and NGSM archives. Neither Williams' photographs nor the writing that accompanied them can be considered seriously as a contribution to science. The principal motivation for the expedition was commercial. Publicity seems to have been a primary goal for both Citroën and the NGM. The fact that the expedition took place during the depth of the Great Depression acted as a spur to commercial considerations in undertaking the expedition. For Citroën, it provided a showcase for their vehicles. For the NGSM, the expedition meant that they could fill their pages with tales of adventure in the instalments produced during the course of the expedition. They provided "exotic windows" of escapism for its American readership during the Great Depression. NGSM benefitted from the Citroën's state-of-the-art vehicles that made the expedition possible, while Citroën benefitted from the NGM's sophisticated magazine production skills, wide readership and high reputation as a "serious" magazine journal. Not least Citroën benefitted from the skills of one of the NGM's top photographers, Maynard Owen Williams. Unfortunately for Citroën the NGM's non-commercial advertisement policy significantly diluted the presence of its vehicles in the magazine's reports of the expedition.

Global geo-politics played a part in the decision to undertake the expedition. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century both France and the USA established extensive overseas territories. The main part of the expedition traversed France's overseas colonial territories in the Middle East and the final part of the expedition was in France's colonial territories in Indo-China. Williams' exotic "salvage" photographs celebrated ancient and apparently unchanging civilizations along the Silk Road, while helping simultaneously to stimulate public interest in regions that were being transformed by Western investment and modernisation. Many of the regions through which the expedition travelled were volatile or of

great interest to both the American and French governments. The “Great Game” among western powers in Central Asia and China’s western regions was still under way at the time of the expedition. It is noteworthy that almost all of the expedition’s participants had served in the army or army intelligence. Important parts of the pre-modern Silk Road passed through Central Asia, including ancient trading cities such as Samarkand and Bokhara. The political situation in Soviet Russia and the disastrous impact of collectivisation in Central Asia meant that travel through the northern branches of the Silk Road in Central Asia was impossible.

The NGM’s reporting was selective in several respects. The difficult physical aspects of the expedition were reported in the NGM with a sense of romantic danger. However, its references to the ability (or inability) of Citroën’s vehicles to surmount the Himalayan peaks unaided was highly ambiguous. Other examples of the NGM’s selective manner of presenting the expedition included the fact that no mention was made about the famine that was taking place in the Himalayas during their time there. When reports were made about the more difficult aspects of the expedition, such as large scale poverty and violence in China, the articles and photography were highly selective and very cautious about their presentation of the situation. The NGM articles combined a poetic written style with elements of racism. The selective reporting, as well as the style of language used in the articles, gives evidence of the complex and often contradictory relationship that the expedition had with these regions and their inhabitants.

The research for this dissertation revealed that Williams and the Citroën-Haardt Expedition went to South East Asia, but this had been forgotten by archivists. Subsequently, the Southeast Asian segment fell completely out of view, which distorted the original purpose of the expedition, namely, to “retrace Marco Polo’s footsteps”. This helped to reinforce the idea

that China was the focal point of the Silk Road. In fact, as has been analysed in this dissertation, there was significant trade along the South East Asian mainland route of the Silk Road. This is but one example of how the NGM's curatorial decisions, as well as those of other institutions publishing Early Silk Road Photography, influenced the West's perception of the non-Western world and in particular the concept of the Silk Road. sidelining the South East Asian Mainland in favour of a China-centric focus in Silk Road research has been commonplace since the beginning of study of the Silk Road.

Instead of following Marco Polo's sea route back from Asia, the expedition planned to travel back overland. The expedition's land route roughly followed Marco Polos sea route by traveling through Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Near East to Beirut. Self-evidently, a sea journey would not provide an opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of Citroën's vehicles. Moreover, Citroën had already conducted two highly publicised expeditions across Africa prior to the Trans-Asiatic Expedition, which may well explain the decision not to include this segment of Marco Polo's *Travels* in their planned itinerary. In fact, the return leg of the journey was cut short by Haardt's untimely death.

The wide array of visual material connected with the expedition had a powerful impact on the general public's conception of the Silk Road. It ensured that the expedition lived on beyond its abrupt termination, by means of exhibitions, fashion, books, and magazines. The expedition's story was also later captured in cartoons and television series. However, Williams' photographs in the NGM were, arguably, the most important long-term legacy from the expedition.

Ch. 4. Iconic Images of the Silk Road.

The photographs analysed in this chapter contain the staples of Silk Road iconography, including transport, landscapes and trade. They correspond closely to the way in which the NGM and its readers visualised the Silk Road. For thousands of years, human beings and their animals had trudged across the Silk Road's spectacular and forbidding landscapes. Traditional means of transport along the Silk Road included camels, yaks, horses, and donkeys, as well as people. The bazaar was the iconic location in which commodities were traded, including spices, textiles, jewels, precious metals, and tea.

The style and content of Silk Road depiction stretches back before the advent of photography and before the term "Silk Road" was invented in 1877. There is a striking similarity of style and atmosphere between Williams' iconic photographs and the pre-existing stylised imagery of the Silk Road, both visual and textual, which include Marco Polo's *Travels*, imagery associated with the Bible, as well as the art and literature of the Orientalist and Romantic movements. Photography provided an exciting new way of understanding Asia. Photographs were viewed as an objective, scientific record. NGM's readers expected photographs of the Silk Road to provide "proof" that the representations in painting and literature corresponded with reality. Williams' iconic images reinforce the NGM audience's preconceived ideas about Asia and the Silk Road through imagery that is evocative of pre-photographic representations of Asia. Williams' photographs convey the atmosphere of loneliness and the reliance on beasts of burden, as well as the self-sufficiency required for travel along the Silk Road over the long course of its history. Images of travel, trade and bazaars helped industrialised Westerners to visualize and understand the Silk Road as a conduit of long distance trade across Asia. They capture the beauty and danger of travel along the trading routes of Asia thereby helping the viewer to have empathy and respect for those involved in such activities. His iconic photographs are more escapist than educational, alongside a romantic and adventurous writing style. The photographs provided the NGM audience with entertainment through fantasy, oddity and adventure.

In fact, Williams was highly selective in his choice of visual images to represent life along the Silk Road. Concern to “salvage” a vanishing world are strongly in evidence in Williams writings and photographs. Images of transport were foremost among the pre-photographic visual and textual depictions of the Silk Road. Williams’ photographs of the Silk Road are conspicuous for their focus on pre-modern modes of transport. The NGM’s readers wished for escapist photographs that coincided with popular conceptions of the Silk Road and Asia. This meant that the NGM excluded representations of modernisation, which was beginning to gain ground along parts of the Silk Road, including trains, automobiles and, even, aeroplanes, alongside traditional, unchanging technologies. Williams’ iconic images of the Silk Road conveyed the idea of Asia suspended in a pre-industrial time-warp, hermetically closed off from the outside world. In the pre-industrial world in Williams’ photographs, people were portrayed as possessing a closeness to nature that the West had sacrificed through industrialization. The photographs reinforced a vision of the “real or authentic” Silk Road in which people existed happily in a pre-industrial world. Williams’ photographs reflect his sense of duty to “salvage” the pre-industrial world and preserve it for posterity. By contrast, modernity is perceived to be the unique accomplishment of a superior Western civilisation, represented by the expedition itself, including its transport and photographic technologies.

NGM’s readers were mainly drawn from the American middle-class, with an awareness of the potentialities for international trade and investment to contribute to the country’s economic progress. Citroën’s state-of-the-art vehicles were the only images of modernity consistently photographed by Williams on the expedition. Photographs of the vehicles advancing through forbidding landscapes constituted a vivid demonstration of the benefits that Western technologies could bring to the “underdeveloped” regions through which the expedition travelled. Images of wide open natural vistas were a stage upon which viewers could imagine themselves traveling through the “natural” pre-industrial landscapes of the Silk

Road. Williams' landscape photographs show influence from the Hudson River painting school and the Frontier school of photography, not only in artistic style, but also in relation to the USA's new international frontier and its "Manifest Destiny. The numerous images of vibrant markets helped to nurture expectations about the expansion of trade with the "undeveloped" economies along the Silk Road. The economic opportunities opened up by the Silk Road included exports to the West of labour-intensive products as well as oil and gas, in addition to the vast potential market for American manufactured exports, that might contribute to economic development while generating profits for American companies and dividends for their investors.

Ch. 5. The Difference Between Them and Us.

The photographs analysed in the first part of this chapter depict "Religion & Festivity", including depiction of religious places, art, people, ceremonies and celebrations. These images concentrate on the differences in philosophical outlook and public decorum along the Silk Road. The second half of the chapter examined "Ethnic Types, Hats and Preservation". "Ethnic types" was one of the most popular Early Silk Road Photographic subjects. So also was the diversity of dress in terms of aesthetics as well as a mechanism for displaying identity. Compared with the written word and pictorial representations, the photograph greatly increased the sense of representation of the "reality" of the "other". Fascination with "difference" in the NGM's photographic representations of the Silk Road stems not only from Williams' personal world view, but also from the NGM's objectives and the expectations of its audience. The NGM's interest in "difference" was affected by use of the photographs in the fields of human geography, social anthropology and ethnology. At a deeper level, the fascination with "difference" may be connected in part with Darwinian perceptions of the "hierarchy of human development"; with the search for spirituality; with the wish to salvage "different" civilisations before they disappear; and, even, with geo-political relationships between "developed" and "less developed" parts of the world.

Religiously focused photographs were a source of great interest among NGM's overwhelmingly Christian audience. They may have found the representation of other religions as a validation of their own "superior" religious beliefs, which was self-evidently the case for Williams. This was especially the case for his photographs in the Near East. On the one hand, they served to authenticate the Biblical narrative, but, on the other hand, the preponderance of Muslims in the photographs provided the audience with stimulation from the sense of exotic difference. Williams' Christian background seems to have influenced his choice of subject matter and the way in which he photographed religious subjects, especially in the Near East, where he seems to follow closely the Christian imagery one finds in stained glass windows or illustrated versions of the Bible. Williams' photographs of festive and religious practices unfamiliar to a Western audience, are often presented in an otherworldly manner, deliberately conjuring a dream-like look through the use of unreal textures, strange angles and novel framing techniques, which serve to accentuate the sense of "difference".

There was great distress in North West China when the expedition passed through. Williams was aware that the NGM would be unlikely to publish disturbing images of people suffering. He may have used his otherworldly photographs of destroyed Chinese temples, with decapitated and disembowelled temple gods, as a metaphor for the lives of ordinary people in the region.

Williams felt that through his photographic representation of "difference" he was helping to deepen Western understanding of the Orient. He presented photographs of practices common to most people, including religion, festivity and dress, but showed them in an exotic setting. European exploration and conquest of the non-European world, which gathered pace in the era of colonial expansion after the 1870s, stimulated public interest in "difference". In this era there was a large volume of literary and visual depiction of the non-Western world. By the 1930's this had developed into a preoccupation with all things Oriental within the creative industries. Williams' richly detailed photographs of Asia were an

inspiration for viewers and creators alike, expanding their imaginings of Asia and the Silk Road by showing practices of which most Westerners were unaware. Williams had a strong preference for photographing people rather than things: when he photographs “difference” in faith and festivity Williams typically shows people practicing their faith rather than religious buildings and when he photographs dress, he often leaves the background blurred, favouring a sharp focus on the subject and their clothing, in particular their hats. Williams’ photographs reflect a vision of Asia that was shaped by the romantic idylls found in pre-photographic depictions, which was consistent with NGM and its audience’s understanding of Asia and the Silk Road. Williams’ photographs reflect his view that modernity was inconsistent with the “real Asia” and, consequently, it was not worth photographing. His efforts at “salvage” of disappearing cultures were reflected in a portraiture style that made use of evocative lighting and classically posed subjects with dignified expressions and stances that give prime position to their styles of dress. In contradiction with the NGM’s policy, Williams seems on occasion to have deliberately constructed the romantic scenes he had read about and seen in films and books. Such constructed images were seemingly created to fulfil what the expedition and its readers felt were consistent with images of the Silk Road.

Judging by Williams’ choice of subject matter and compositional style, he was searching for a specific representation of Asia, which was the one commonly found in painting, books, films and poetry. These images were exciting and escapist, presenting a Western viewer with “exotic”, diverse and captivating differences between the peoples of Asia and themselves. Williams’s photographs were at the leading edge of photo-journalism at that time. Their high technical level and deep human sensitivity enabled them to have a deep impact upon NGM’s readership. Escapist photographs showing difference would have been appealing for much of the NGM’s audience. The Citroën-Haardt Expedition coincided with the depths of the Great Depression. Those who could afford to buy the NGM are likely to have enjoyed the distraction of a publication filled with beautiful images of foreign people

doing foreign things. Close attention to the apparent differences between Asia and the West suggests a preservationist and “salvage” motivation, which was in conformity with a wide sense of regret at the passing of a pre-industrial world. Such conscious avoidance of modernity presented the West with a view of Asia that seemed lost in time and ignorant of the modern world. It served to reinforce the West’s sense of superiority and helped to nurture popular support for Western governments’ colonial and commercial ambitions in Asia.

Ch. 6. Dangerous Worlds.

The photographs in this chapter focussed on drug trade and use, and the effects of poverty and political disorder upon children. The chapter analysed the contrasting fashion in which Williams photographed these subjects in the Near East and China. The contrast was due in part to the contrasting perspectives of the two regions of the Silk Road in Western literature and visual representation. It was due also to the difference in socio-political conditions in the two regions, with politically disturbed conditions in West and North West China, compared with relative peace in the Near-East. For example, economic development was under way, albeit haltingly, in the Near East whilst the West and North of China were extremely poor. Moreover, the expedition travelled through these regions in the middle of winter and the region had suffered a devastating earthquake only a few years earlier.

In Western representations of Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese people were routinely represented as opium addicts who were bringing the vices of China to poison the West. In the Near-East on the other hand opium use was typically depicted as beautiful and dreamlike. These sharply contrasting perceptions helped to shape the way in which Williams photographed these subjects. In the Near East his photographs represent opium use and production as harmless and romantic: open fields filled with pure white poppies. In China opium is represented as dark, depressing and threatening: cold

markets in poor societies selling greasy lumps of opium displayed on dirty rags. Williams' photographs depict Chinese children in poverty in a starkly realistic fashion, while few of his Near Eastern or South-East Asian photographs depict such scenes. The contrast in the representation of children was influenced also by the fact that Williams' photographs in China were taken in North China in the depths of winter. However, despite the fact that during the Himalayan section of the expedition the area was in the grip of famine, Williams did not take photographs that reflect this. Children in the Near-East and Himalayas on the whole were shown in an apparently secure environment with their parents, whilst only a few are shown this way in China. Instead children in China are depicted alone or in gangs, which contributes to the viewer's empathy due to the apparent absence of parental support.

Williams' photographs that demonstrate the darker side of life on the Silk Road were mostly vetoed by the NGM. This means that the image of the Silk Road presented to Western audiences in the NGM was in certain respects not the one experienced by the expedition. This was most obviously the case in relation to photographs taken in the poverty-stricken, politically chaotic conditions of West and North West China. Williams' photographs of the hardships experienced by people in these regions provide a powerful and moving visual record of a chaotic era in Chinese history. The fact that the USA was living through the Great Depression helps to explain why Williams' most challenging photographs were excluded from the publication. Such images of China, particularly of children, paralleled the lives lived by many Americans during the 1930's. The expedition coincided with the depth of the Great Depression in 1931-32, which was extremely challenging for both NGM and Citroën. The NGM wished to provide an escapist, "magic carpet ride" and avoid drawing attention to the harsh realities of life for many people across the world. It is also likely that a publication so closely tied to the American government would not wish readers' attention to be drawn to the similarities between China, which was regarded as weak and crumbling, with the USA, which considered itself to be the beacon of democracy and modernity. These

considerations may well have led the NGM to exclude the challenging images in favour of images that their readers expected, in the form of escapism, romance and beauty. Such depictions did include danger. But the danger shown in Williams' published photographs was carefully curated so as not to be sufficiently unsettling to shock the viewer out of their enjoyment and fantasies. They were intended to provide an escapist view of danger, captured through beautiful photographs, rather than ones that presented the harsh reality. Even the photographs which show poverty, represent the subjects as the "happy and contented" poor, who inhabit an unchanging "salvage" time-warp. The NGM's decision not to include the most challenging photographs was highly significant. The photographic (and written) record of the expedition was widely distributed and helped to shape perceptions of Asia. Instead of enriching Western understanding of the lands and lives along the Silk Road, the decision to avoid challenging images recorded by Williams' camera, reinforced existing romanticised perceptions of the Silk Road among NGM's readers.

Concluding observations.

Williams' work was highly representative of the Early Silk Road Photographic genre as a whole and leans very much towards aesthetics as a priority, evidenced by the deliberate omission of aspects of reality he and his employers deemed unsuitable for their audience. Instead, he preferred to present beautiful work reminiscent of Orientalist paintings accompanied by a writing style similar to that of a romantic novel. His work highlights the romantic adventure of travel across Asia, providing exotic, dangerous and exciting escapism from his viewers' humdrum lives. These images are without a doubt beautiful, and one cannot pretend that what they captured did not exist, nor that the images are not a useful tool in the study of Asian history. However, one should keep in mind that Williams seems to have had pre-conceived ideas about what to photograph, seeking out the beauty of Asia which he had read about in novels and poetry and seen in the theatre, rather than simply photographing that which crossed his path. The work that Williams was creating during the

expedition brought to the attention of the NGM audience the new frontiers that the U.S.A had yet to hold sway over. One should not discount the influence that Western relations with particular countries had over their representation by Williams and the NGM. Therefore, not only is this series of photographs politically influenced but they also exerted influence over their viewers' relationship with the peoples or region presented. The work of Early Silk Road Photographers, alongside other Silk Road-focused material has contributed substantially to western understanding of The Silk Road and Asian history. The choices Early Silk Road Photographers made regarding what was and what was not worth recording in the Silk Road regions has shaped what audiences believed were authentic and relevant aspects of the Silk Road, helping to form western visualization and understanding of the Silk Road for decades thereafter.

Appendix 1: Biographical Study of Maynard Owen Williams (1888-1963)



Maynard Owen Williams, 'Self-Portrait in a Cut-out Window Silhouette', Paris, 1936, Sold at Auction, Current Owner Unknown.

Maynard Owen Williams was born in 1888 in Montour Falls, New York into a highly religious,⁶⁰⁴ academic⁶⁰⁵ and socially progressive family. Sometime after 1888 the family

604 MOW's family were Baptist Christians and played an active role in the church.

605 MOW's father was a Professor of Ancient Greek at Kalamazoo College.

moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan, U.S.A where Williams father took up a position as a Professor of Greek at Kalamazoo College. Williams had two sisters Albertine and Roberta, one of whom went on to become a missionary in the Near and Far East, and a younger brother named Russell.⁶⁰⁶ The Williams household was not wealthy,⁶⁰⁷ but regardless the family always emphasized the importance of kindness and generosity to others.

During his youth Williams had many experiences that prepared and guided him towards the path he was to take in later life. One such occurrence to which Williams often referred was his visit, at the age of thirteen, to the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in *Buffalo*. Williams found the experience fascinating, in particular the “Hoochy Coochy” performance that he described as provocative and thrilling.⁶⁰⁸ After visiting the exposition Williams won a \$20 prize for an article he wrote about his experiences, marking his first publication and step into the world of journalism.⁶⁰⁹

Williams had various jobs during his youth in part due to his family’s difficult financial situation. One of his first employments was at the age of 10 working a paper route in order to save up for a bicycle.⁶¹⁰ During his college years he worked at what he described as “various rough neck” jobs.⁶¹¹ This included being sent out by his parents to work on his relatives’

606 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, & www.findagrave.com

607 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

608 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6,

609 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, LIX 77/1, Miscellaneous Correspondences, Box 14 F.6.

610 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, 6.

611 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

farms in Wyoming, New York and Elkhorn in Wisconsin. During his time at the New York farm Williams became involved in what his highly religious upbringing deemed rebellious behaviour, when he helped to brew and consume moonshine. Williams classed himself as teetotal and claimed that this was one of only two occasions in his life that he deliberately got drunk.⁶¹² These labour-intensive jobs helped prepare Williams for the physical requirements of life traveling the world with a camera and typewriter “on his back” and encouraged a strong work ethic and independent nature.

Williams attended Kalamazoo College, founded by American Baptist ministers in 1833. Since the college’s creation it had followed a progressive but highly religious dogma. All students were required to attend chapel each morning⁶¹³ and were a source of recruitment for Baptist missions in Asia. Indeed, the college had strong connections with Asia and many of the Kalamazoo school publications reflect this with their numerous references to Asia. Kalamazoo College was unusual as during the 19th and early 20th century it facilitated and advocated for the co-education of men and women and its student body was relatively mixed in terms of ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, although the numbers were small it is significant that during a time of segregation and deep conservatism in the U.S.A, a college in a small city accepted black and international students. During Williams’ time at the college his fellow students included two Japanese students, the famous authors Kat Su Ji Kato (1885-1961)

612 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, 5.

613 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Kalamazoo College Bulletin, 1905-1910, Volume 1, Number 1, Published quarterly by Kalamazoo College, Ihling Bros. & Everard Printers, Kalamazoo, Michigan; Williams Publications, Item XII, Box 1/3, 52.

and Nagai Kafu (1879-1959), as well as Jamaican brothers Soloman and John Williamson.⁶¹⁴

It is unclear, but likely that Williams learned his photographic trade whilst at Kalamazoo College⁶¹⁵ as during his time at College there was a boom in photography's popularity and many photographic studios opened in the city. The students of the college not only paid for photographs to be made but some also took up this skill and created college photographic societies.

During these college years Williams began his love affair with the theatre.⁶¹⁶ Kalamazoo sits halfway between Chicago and Detroit which meant theatre acts on their way to perform in these major cities would pass through Kalamazoo and often took the opportunity to perform in the local theatre, where there might be as many as six performances each week. Williams attended as many performances as he could and claimed that at one point he fell in love with the actresses Maude Adams (1872-1953) and Ethel Barrymore (1879-1959) and would go to the theatre four times in one week to watch them perform during the summer holidays. Williams' father did not approve of his son's time spent at the theatre and threw him out of the family home. Williams ended up living in a YMCA and managing George Hanselman's "Ice Cream Factory", located in the basement of a saloon/brothel. The telephone that the

614 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

615 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Kalamazoo, Michigan; Williams Publications, Item XII, Box 1/3, Kalamazoo College Index Vol.31, 40.

616 Indeed, through his life he saw various theatrical and cinematic performances for example; Shakespeare, Hitchcock, The Ballet Russe and the 26-year-old Anna Pavlova's legendary performance of The Dying Swan in London to name but a few (Kalamazoo College archives, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6).

clients of the saloon/brothel used to contact the girls' was in the basement and Williams described his role at the "Ice Cream Factory" as a "clandestine communication center".⁶¹⁷

Williams was a rather intriguing character. Throughout his life he conducted himself in both a manner that exemplifies a dedication to the doctrine of the Christian faith but allied this with a rebellious and somewhat reckless nature.

Williams was well-liked during his college days as evidenced by the humorous description of him by his fellow students in the Kalamazoo index:

The Chronic fool - several other things - but the Chronic Fool. His foolishness lies in making his little wisdom sound foolish. With a long face, a high collar and his hand thrust into his coat some things he says would be thought wise - but he'd be a failure. So why go to all that trouble when he's a failure already. Athletics, story-writing and sociology are his hobbies and school work his pastime, with little time left. His favourite author is Hugo with J.W. Foley a poor second. The study of human nature is his favourite study and his hardest. To make one smile instead of frown, think, instead of grind is his ambition and its long way off. To do a good act when no one knows or cares, with no reward but the greatest reward. The happiness of a kindly act – this is his desire. He's tried to preach, teach and make love and failed-hence his tale, like a Nick Carter novel, *Curly, the Chronic Fool*.⁶¹⁸

617 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, 7-8.

618 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Publications, Item XXII, Box 1.3, Kalamazoo College Index Vol.31, 59.

Williams did not gain brilliant academic grades at college but he did well athletically. He was part of the track and field teams and captain of the football team in October 1906.⁶¹⁹ Such athleticism served him well in his professional career, during which he became known for his eagerness to organise sporting games with his colleagues. He would involve himself in daring physical escapades such as diving from the tallest part of a ship into the freezing waters during the Donald MacMillan and Admiral Byrd Arctic Expedition in 1925.⁶²⁰ After this Commander MacMillan described Williams as; “...*the daredevil in bathing trunks (aka Williams)*” *climbed up the mainmast of the Bowdoin, a schooner that accompanied a 200-ton steamship named Peary,*⁶²¹ *and from near to the top made a graceful high dive down into the icy water of the Arctic Ocean*”.⁶²²

After graduating from Kalamazoo College with a Bachelor of Philosophy and a teaching qualification on the 15th June 1910, Professor Herbert Le Statton suggested Williams teach Math at the public school in Battle Creek, Michigan, Williams took up this role and loved it.⁶²³ Williams credits Professor Herbert le Statton with having changed his life, for he suggested

619 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Publications, Item XXII, Box 1.3, Kalamazoo College Bulletin 1905-1910, Volume 1, Number 1, Published quarterly by Kalamazoo College, Ihling Bros. & Everard Printers, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

620 Conrad, Lawrence H., Sr., 'Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963', Kalamazoo, Michigan, Upjhon Library Kalamazoo College, 1964, 5.

621 D.H. Dinwoodie, Artic Controversy; the 1925 Byrd-MacMillan Expedition Example, *The Canadian Historical Review*, Volume 53, Number 1, (University of Toronto Press, March 1972), 51.

622 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 5.

623 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, 11.

Williams for a position as a missionary teacher in athletics and English⁶²⁴ at the Syrian Protestant College (now American University at Beirut) for three years. Williams' response to this suggestion was; "I don't know where Beirut is, but if you think I should, I'll go".⁶²⁵

In Williams' unpublished memoir he also credits his mother as having significantly influenced the path which his life took. He stated that his mother believed that all that existed upon earth was a gift from God⁶²⁶ and as such should be treasured, encouraging him to have a; "...love affair with Mother Earth"⁶²⁷ and to; "...broaden my mind through travel".⁶²⁸

Such early inspirations and opportunities stimulated Williams to spend his life traveling the world and to pursue a career as a photojournalist. Williams' early photographs and articles appeared in the pages of the Kalamazoo Gazette and later in *The Christian Herald* (an illustrated news weekly that he worked for from 1915-1918), *The Journal of the American Asiatic Association*, *World Outlook* and *Travel*.⁶²⁹

Before travelling to Beirut Williams visited Paris and his account of his experience was published in the Kalamazoo Gazette September 10th 1911, 'Kalamazoo Boy Writes of

624 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

625 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, 11.

626 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

627 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

628 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

629 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item XXVII, Maynard Owen Williams' Fictional Writing, 5-6.

Things He Saw in Paris' demonstrates his sense of humour and fascination with the world beyond the U.S.A. It also shows his love and romanticism for the female sex, a theme that appears in his writing throughout his life; "Mona Lisa is a naughty girl. That roughish little smile of hers has proven, to an extent, my downfall".⁶³⁰ He also takes a rather romantic view towards the Venus Dr. Milo as he thinks about how many centuries have passed and eyes have gazed in aw at the statue. He went to the Tannhauser Opera:

Will the glories of such music ever die? Not so long as man's heart responds to joy, ambition, hate and despair set to glorious music. I cannot describe it. but the triumph of the solemn and religious over the beautiful and barbaric amid scenes and peoples which combine the two is a noteworthy event.⁶³¹

Such travels marked the beginning of an event filled life played out beyond the U.S.A and his prolific production and collecting of photographs as well as writing fiction and non-fiction works. Judging by his fictional work Williams fostered great fantasies about the East,⁶³² as evidenced by his work 'Desert Love':

She started nearer, but at this she stopped and dropping her cloak on the sand she

630 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Kalamazoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a, *Kalamazoo Gazette the September 10th 1911, 'Kalamazoo Boy Writes of Things He Saw in Paris'*

631 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Kalamazoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a, *Kalamazoo Gazette the September 10th 1911, 'Kalamazoo Boy Writes of Things He Saw in Paris'*

632 Leah Bendavid-Val, Gilbert M. Grosvenor, Mark Collins Jenkins, Viola Kiesinger Wentzel, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2008, 20.

began to dance. There was no suggestion of a crowded room, with men crowded along the walls. She seems a true daughter of the desert, a fanlike thing of the open spaces. Not a jewel, not a string of icons could be seen. But her eyes were bright as gems without their hardness and her olive arms were rich dowry for any man. She chanted a vivid song under her breath and for time to time the toss of the sand and soft stamp of her high arched feet accented the syncopated measure of the music. Adams had leaned forward a little, but sat like a lifeless thing watching every smile that weather her well-shaped mouth every gesture of her supple arms every movement of her rounded form. She stopped and with a naive sense of comradeship she stilled slowly down upon the sand beside him. The rug had slipped from his right shoulder and reaching behind him she replaced it. Her firm brown arm brushed his neck ever so lightly and rested there. An ecstatic shiver ran through her body and as though to quiet her, Adams drew her close to him, inside the cover of the rug. The moon was now high in the heavens. A camel snarled far away. Then silence. How warm her arms were, and how smooth and soft! and her hair pleasing to his touch. Her warm breath was on his cheek and her warm body was close. Her rapid breathing was like that of a startled fawn, hesitating before flight, yet he knew that her hold on him was becoming strong and stronger. She was his body and soul. But she wanted him, too. Her small white teeth nipped roguishly at the lobe of his ear, and she drew him down beside her on the sand. It was all a dream. He had no sense of actuality....It was with wonderful tenderness that he pushed her away, but as he rose to pick up her forgotten cloak the magic of the house was dispelled. As he draped the rug against her pretty shoulders, which he could still feel within his grasp, he wanted to take her into his arms again and kiss her red lips once more. But he knew that this would be kindness alone. He could

not hurt her more than need be, but he wanted her out of his sight.⁶³³

Williams' time in the Near-East, though interesting, was not without risks. In Beirut from the 11th-17th October 1911 Williams contracted what seems to be malaria. He described his illness as feeling: hot and cold fever, aching, nausea, headache and keeps collapsing and having to be carried back to bed, feeling weak and just generally awful. Such attacks returned at various points during his life.⁶³⁴ Another illness he contracted was "father of the knee" or "aburikab" in Syrian. Williams wrote that the illness; "...is an Oriental disease akin to 'American la grippe'. The person will have fever, chills etc. and a falling off of flesh".⁶³⁵

The disease attacked his joints, making him very weak and causing him to lose a lot of weight. Seeking help Williams went to the mountains of Lebanon where two Kalamazoo persons, Professor and Mrs. J Stewart Crawford, resided.⁶³⁶

It was not only illness that made up Williams' experiences in the Near-East. He spent much time relaxing: playing basketball, football, tennis, swimming, attending Bible classes, socializing and eating chocolate biscuits with other Westerners.⁶³⁷ He also became good

633 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item XXVII, Maynard Owen Williams' Fictional Writing, 13-14.

634 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Maynard Owen Williams Diary, 1911.

635 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams, Kalamazoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a.

636 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams, Kalamazoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a.

637 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Maynard Owen Williams' Diary, 1911.

friends with Lawrence of Arabia⁶³⁸ and visited various nearby sights of religious interest.

The religious significance of the Near East was important to Williams and he regularly described the region in his diaries and articles for the Kalamazoo Gazette as a Holy Land where one could stand in the same places that events in the Bible took place^{639 640} For example, in an article entitled “Kalamazoo Boy Writes Letter from Holy Land” in The Kalamazoo Gazette, Sunday, November 17th 1912 he wrote:

...a Bible is an absolute necessity for travel in Palestine. Cities have disappeared but dress and customs are what they were in Bible days. In a single day one may see a score of customs which the Bible describes as accurately and more concisely than any modern book I have seen. It is this one book and the events which it relates that have made this barren land interesting. It is this book that one must constantly consult to make a Palestine tour more than a hurried trip through a moderately beautiful country.⁶⁴¹

Other articles included reports for *The Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph* on the Italian-Turkish

638 v Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

639 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

640 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams, Kalamazoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a.

641 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams, Kalamazoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a: The Kalamazoo Gazette, Sunday, November 17th 1912, Maynard Owen Williams, ‘Kalamazoo Boy Writes Letter from Holy Land’.

War⁶⁴² and human interest stories. Such articles don't include any of his photographs, despite the fact he was taking them,⁶⁴³ but instead detailed rich descriptions of clothing and traditions present in the Near East.⁶⁴⁴

In 1914, Williams moved to the Wayland Academy at Hangzhou, China and taught English, football, baseball and basketball to the boys.⁶⁴⁵ The Wayland Academy was one of many missionary schools set up in China at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. These schools promoted the development of Western education and the dissemination of the Christian faith.

Whilst in China Williams travelled from Canton to Nanking and from Shanghai to the Tibetan mountains and contributed articles about his experiences to the Christian Herald.⁶⁴⁶ In his articles he describes China as: "...over-run, bankrupt, and infested with soldiery",⁶⁴⁷ "Today China is in a state of chaos... Never since the time of the boxers has a foreigner been less

⁶⁴² Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams, Kalamazoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a: The Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph Tuesday April 23, 1912.

⁶⁴³ Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams, Kalamazoo Gazette Clippings, Box 1/2a.

⁶⁴⁴ Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams, Publications, Item XII, Box 1/3, 751.

⁶⁴⁵ Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 4.

⁶⁴⁶ Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 4.

⁶⁴⁷ Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Early Articles in Manuscript Box 5/8, Item XXVI, 721.

sure of protection than now”.⁶⁴⁸ and “China is fighting and for its integrity and the rights for man.”⁶⁴⁹ (Williams quoting Thomas Paine’s (1737-1809) 1791 publication). Despite his reservations about the processes involved in creating the People’s Republic of China Williams did have a great respect for the history of the country.⁶⁵⁰

Whilst working at the Wayland Academy Williams met his wife Martha Daisy Woods, originally from Natick, Massachusetts and a fellow missionary teacher. Williams and Martha had five children and due to their almost constant travelling, only two were born in the U.S.A. Owen was born in France, Mary in Beirut and Charles in Istanbul.^{651 652}

Williams returned to the USA in 1915. Whilst there he attended the San Francisco Panama Pacific Exposition.⁶⁵³ In 1916 he returned to his home country to enrol in Columbia University and obtained a Ph.B. degree in Literature at their school of Journalism.⁶⁵⁴ During

648 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Early Articles in Manuscript Box 5/8, Item XXVI, 723.

649 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Early Articles in Manuscript Box 5/8, Item XXVI.

650 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Early Articles in Manuscript Box 5/8, Item XXVI, 774, Maynard Owen Williams, ‘The Romance of the Eternal’

651 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6.

652 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 8.

653 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Maynard Owen Williams Scrapbook, Clippings and Photos from 1913 through his Artic Trip with McMillian 1925 plus Subsequent Interviews, Lectures, etc. in Numerous Places around the world, Collected by his mother and by his wife, Item XXXVII.

654 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Diplomas Certificates, Item XXXII. Item XXXII.

his studies Williams was offered and accepted the role of acting head editor of two editions of The South American publication for all Latin-American affairs whilst the editor of the publication took a vacation. In the same year at his graduation he gained his first paid photojournalistic projects for the Christian Herald Newspaper, which sent him to Near East, Japan, China, Philippines, Turkey, Turkistan, Siberia, Russia and Armenia. During this time he also published with World Outlook magazine.

Williams, a pacifist,⁶⁵⁵ joined the Army of the United States of America on May 18th 1917 as a First Lieutenant in the United States intelligence service.⁶⁵⁶ His service was spent as an assistant military attaché in Beijing,⁶⁵⁷ and travelling around Asia as a photojournalist and publishing his work in the *Christian Herald*,⁶⁵⁸ Travel and other magazines. In 1917 Williams took up a mission traveling to Russia where he bore witness to the 1917 Russian revolution. Williams was not only an observer of the Revolution in Moscow, Petrograd and the Caucasus, but took part in it when from 1917-18 he was placed in sole charge of relief work in Van, historic capital of Armenia. He also spent time in Siberia as the only American correspondent with the Czechoslovak Legionnaires, a group of Czech prisoners-of-war who escaped and travelled up and down the Trans-Siberian railway attacking the Bolsheviks.⁶⁵⁹

655 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, LIX 77/1 Miscellaneous Correspondence, Box 14 F.6 Pre National Geographic.

656 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Diplomas Certificates, Item XXXII. ITEM XXXII.

657 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Maynard Owen Williams Scrapbook, Clippings and Photos form 1913 through his Artic Trip with McMillian 1925 plus Subsequent Interviews, Lectures, etc. in Numerous Places around the world, Collected by his Mother and by his wife, Item XXXVII.

658 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item LXI, 994-0/2, The Christian Herald, May 30th 1917.

659 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963,5.

France, Britain and America all provided money and supplies to anti-Bolshevik troops, which may have been why the Legionnaires allowed Williams to travel with them. In Williams' Kalamazoo archive there is a collection of medals some of which he gained during his service in the WW1 & WW2. Williams wrote about his experience during the Russian revolution in an article titled 'Justice Amidst Anarchy':

The greatest sin of the Old Regime was the wilful neglect of education among the sodden mass of widely varied peoples, and those peoples, staggering under the unwonted burden of responsibility after patriarchal mastery, should not be blamed too much for discrepancies which they have long had, but which were formerly hidden under the cloak of Romanoff authority. Un-specialized Russia has not only failed to build in a day a satisfactory republic from the wreckage of autocracy but has also failed in the grim game of war, which requires organization and discipline to an unusual degree. In drinking too deeply of unaccustomed liberty, the untaught Russian has poisoned himself with the dregs of anarchy and his aimless struggles for self-mastery have received perhaps too hasty judgment on the part of his older brothers in self-government. But it must not to be thought that in the things which he understands the Russian has lost all reason. Quite the reverse is true.⁶⁶⁰

This article once again demonstrates Williams' somewhat contradictory politics. Judging from Williams' writing it seems that his political views straddle American Free Capitalism and

660 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Box 5/10, Item XXVI, Williams Early Articles in Manuscript, 'Justice Amidst Anarchy', p.1.

democracy whilst still sympathizing with the Socialist/ Communist ideology that inspired the Russian Revolution.

On the 19th May 1919 at the age of 31 Williams was released from military service. On the back of his military release papers a note is written that recommends the USA military keep in touch with him for intelligence work in the future.⁶⁶¹

After Williams' discharge, he took up a post at the National Geographic Magazine as a field correspondent.⁶⁶² He was among the first photographers to be hired by the magazine. It is possible that Williams continued to have a role in intelligence gathering throughout his life. This is not an absurd suggestion as it is suspected that many NGM correspondents were in this line of work during their time at the magazine.⁶⁶³ How Williams first came to be known by NGM is unclear but he must have been thrilled upon his appointment, as in an NGM sound recording Williams talks of how since childhood he had loved the organization.⁶⁶⁴ Williams would have been an extremely viable candidate as he had travelled extensively around the globe, was a photojournalist with a degree in the subject from Columbia University⁶⁶⁵ and was well versed in a number of languages including Arabic and Mandarin.⁶⁶⁶ According to

661 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Diplomas Certificates, Item XXXII. ITEM XXXII.

662 Bendavid-Val, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, 2008, 20.

663 Mark Collins, *National Geographic 125 Years: Legendary Photographs, Adventures and Discoveries That Changed the World*, Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2012.

664 Sound recording of Maynard Owen Williams, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive.

665 Robert M. Poole, *Explorers' House, National Geographic and the world it made*, 131.

666 Kalamazoo College archives, 77/1 Field Notes and Letters, 1931-32, Citroen Haardt Expedition Across Asia, Box ¾, 4.

the NGS publication, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, Williams was hired because he was; "...young, educated, linguistically adept, and muscular enough haul around the burdensome equipment needed in the field".⁶⁶⁷

Williams was well liked by those who worked with him and was described along the same lines by NGM and non-NGM sources:

Williams, a shambling six footer with steel rimmed glasses, an eternal smile and a knack for languages.... A writer-photographer who dressed like a scoutmaster in knee length boots and khaki shirts, always with a tie.... Williams was happiest on the road, living out of dusty steamer trunks, wrestling with camera equipment, and losing himself in foreign cultures.⁶⁶⁸

Odysseys and Photographs also describes Williams as the NGSM's first great photographer-storyteller:

... (one of) those multi-talented contributors who could write, take pictures, make movies and be at home in faraway lands. He was also among the ranks of the most

667 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, *A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963*, 15.

668 Robert M. Poole, *Explorers' House, National Geographic and the world it made*, 2006, 131.

prolific and influential contributors in our history. There is hardly an issue of the NGSM in the 1920s and 30s that does not bear the stamp of his pictures or words.⁶⁶⁹

One of his most famous contributions to the NGM was his work on *Tutankhamun's Tomb*. He was present when the legendary tomb was opened and was one of the first Americans to take photographs of the treasures within it.⁶⁷⁰

The high quality and engaging work Williams produced during his time at the NGM is evidences of the energy and enthusiasm he had for his profession. His dedication was recognised by the NGM in 1930⁶⁷¹ when Williams created and was appointed first head and employee of The NGM Foreign Correspondent department,⁶⁷² which specialized in producing and sending those NGS correspondents with photographic and writing skills around the globe^{673 674 675} The Foreign Correspondent department produced some of the most iconic NGM images. As one of the longest running employees of the NGS and

669 Bendavid-Val, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, 2008, 15.

670 For Maynard Owen Williams article about the Tomb of Tutankhamen published in the May 1923 National Geographic see: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/1923/05/tut-discovery/williams-text/1>

671 Bendavid-Val, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, 2008, 21.

672 This was an element of the magazine existed for a total of forty-eight years only being disbanded when new communications and transportation technologies became more readily available and reliable, for example planes, radio, television and telephones (Bendavid-Val, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, 2008, 25.)

673 Bendavid-Val, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, 2008, 20.

674 *High Adventure, The Story of the National Geographic Society*, National Geographic, 2003, 41.

675 Bendavid-Val, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, 2008, 20.

head/creator of this department Williams had a lot of influence over the creation of these photographs, as it was he would have had a say in which photographers were employed by the magazine and the stories to be covered. Williams could therefore be credited with having helped shaped the magazine's well-known photographic and writing focus and style.

Williams was one of the most prolific NGM employees, by the end of his time at the NGM in 1953⁶⁷⁶ he had amassed 2250 pages of text and pictures for the magazine.⁶⁷⁷ However, this number does not give credence to the vast quantity of NGS shelves containing his unpublished photographs. Williams wrote that the motivation for this legacy of work was; "To see the best show on earth – the earth, itself – with the best cast - the people we live with"⁶⁷⁸ and that his method of traveling and photographing the world was; "I get around the world by being a nice little lady." and that; "I never carry a gun. I tell everyone I am helpless, and that I cannot speak their language".⁶⁷⁹

Kalamazoo Collage documented that prior to setting off on an exploration, Williams said of the people he photographed and worked with that; "...they can think as they please.

Ideologies are the window-dressing. If there's a stock of goodwill on hand, business will be

676 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, 6.

677 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 6.

678 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, 9.

679 C.D.B Bryan, *The National Geographic Society* (New York: Abrams, 1987), 183, in Robert M. Poole, *Explorers' House, National Geographic and the world it made*, 2006, 131-132.

good. And if good-will exists, even a far-ranging world-lover can cross boundaries without even a bump”.⁶⁸⁰

Kalamazoo College’s biography of Williams states that he took an academic approach to his work. Apparently Williams would be offered assignments or suggested assignments himself. Once accepted he would review all previous literature on the subject which would include information on local customs, government regulations and reports on the “temper” of the inhabitants of the area. Upon arrival in the area of study he would acquaint himself with the scenes: people of influence and passers-by until he had formed what he believed was a good understanding of the location, and of the topic he was to report on. Williams would then form a plan of action and commence taking large numbers of photographs and writing as much as half a manuscript to accompany them. Editing of the material would then commence.⁶⁸¹ Kalamazoo also claims that Williams was fluent in French and an able reader and conversationalist in German, Russian and Arabic.⁶⁸² Such statements regarding his language skills might be true due to the large number of literary and historical works and persons from different countries that Williams reference in his diaries and because he had spent large amounts of his life in the countries that spoke these languages.

680 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 9.

681 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 6.

682 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 9.

In 1922 it was decided the NGM would begin including colour photographs. Williams was constantly evolving in regards to his photographic equipment and was appointed as one of the first of its staff to be trained in the new photographic technique of Lumiere autochromes.⁶⁸³ To master these skills Williams lived in France from 1923-1925 with his family. During this period the French people developed a fascination with Asia, which intensified with the arrival of the White Russian community.⁶⁸⁴ Whilst in Paris Williams went to see one of the most famous and influential ballet companies to have emerged from Russia, The Ballet Russe,⁶⁸⁵ known for its artistry and Orientalist influences.⁶⁸⁶ Such performances possibly contributed to Williams' romantic fascination with the East.

In 1925 Williams utilized his newly learnt colour photography as an NGM representative with the Arctic aviation expedition, The Byrd-Macmillan Expedition, which searched for new land in the Arctic Ocean using biplanes.⁶⁸⁷ This expedition was headed by Commander Donald Macmillan and Admiral Byrd and the photographs Williams took were the first colour photographs from inside the Arctic Circle.

683 Washington D.C.: National Geographic Archive, File Number 11-3.47, Letter from Haardt to LaGorce November 13th 1930.

684 Pritchard, Jane, *Diaghilev and The Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909-1929*, London: V&A Publishing, 2010.

685 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX Envelope V, Box 7/6, 9.

686 Pritchard, Jane, *Diaghilev and The Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909-1929*, 2010.

687 Dinwoodie, D.H., 'Arctic Controversy; the 1925 Byrd-MacMillan Expedition Example', *The Canadian Historical Review*,

Volume 53, Number 1, University of Toronto Press, March 1972, 51.

In 1926 Williams and his family moved to Beirut where he carried out various travels. Two years' later he took up residence in Istanbul for the NGM.⁶⁸⁸ During the 1930's Williams was awarded an honorary Litt.D. degree by his old college Kalamazoo and elected a member of the Board of Trustees, a role in which he was very active. To this day Williams is probably one of the most famous and well respected graduate of Kalamazoo college and there is even a student fund named after him. From 1931-1932 Williams took up a position as a representative of the NGM on the Citroën-Haardt Trans-Asiatic Expedition (1931-1932). The resulting work bought him world renown.

In 1935 Williams was a NGM representative on the Solon River Survey⁶⁸⁹ and in 1937 he joined Dr. William M. Mann of the Washington, D.C., Zoo on the Smithsonian East Indies Expedition to gather animals for the zoo.⁶⁹⁰ The expedition collected 649 birds of 93 different species, 121 mammals of 46 different species and 112 reptiles of 30 species. The animals counted among them included two Himalayan bears, three White-handed Gibbons, four Nubian Giraffes, two Sumatran tigers, one barking deer, one weird bird of Paradise, a serpent eagle, seventy five strawberry finches, eight pink-headed fruit pigeons, three

688 Conrad, Lawrence H., Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 6.

689 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 6.

690 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 6.

Moluoosa megapods, two king cobras, one cat-eyed tree snake, fourteen blood pythons and one spiny-hill tortoise.⁶⁹¹

Beyond the NGM Williams saw much recognition. For example, during the course of his career he was elected to membership of: The Royal Geographic Society Kensington Gore London in January 27th 1930,⁶⁹² The American Geographic Society, The Explorers Club from 11th March 1940,⁶⁹³ The American Museum of Natural History,⁶⁹⁴ The Authors Club, The National Press Club, The Overseas Writers Club, The Cosmos Club of Washington, D.C., The Neptune Rex certificate⁶⁹⁵ and made a Chevalier of the Legion D'Honneur (France).⁶⁹⁶ He was given lifetime membership to The Essex Institute organized for the promotion of History, Science, Literature and the Arts in April 12th 1949⁶⁹⁷ and The NGS on May 27th 1953⁶⁹⁸ and the council of the American Geographic Society appointed him as a sustaining fellow of the society in April 15th 1952.⁶⁹⁹

691 William M Mann, *c/o* U.S. Council Diary, Zoology, Zoos, Wild animal collecting, National Geographic Society-Smithsonian Institution Expedition to the Dutch East Indies, Topics National Zoological Park, National Geographic Society (U.S.), (1937), 1-5.

692 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item XXXII, Diplomas, Certificates.

693 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item XXXII, Diplomas, Certificates.

694 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item XXXII, Diplomas, Certificates.

695 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item XXXII, Diplomas, Certificates.

696 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 7.

697 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item XXXII, Diplomas, Certificates.

698 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item XXXII, Diplomas, Certificates.

699 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Item XXXII, Diplomas, Certificates.

During his life Williams became close friends with many eminent, creative and famous people such as: George Cram Cook (1873-1924)& his daughter Nilla Cook (1908-1982) well,⁷⁰⁰ Lowell Thomas (1892-1981),⁷⁰¹ Harrison Howell Walker (?-?),⁷⁰² T.E. Lawrence (aka Lawrence of Arabia) (1888-1935), Howard Carter (1874-1939), W. Robert Moore (1899-1968), President Taft (1857-1930), Captain Luke W Bickel (1866-1917), Catherine Breshkovsky (1844-1934),⁷⁰³ Dr Mary Mills Patrick (1850-1940), Mr (1900-1989) and Mrs Lattimore (1895-1970) and therefore likely Hedda Morrison (1908-1991),⁷⁰⁴ Jan Masaryk of Czechoslovakia (1886-1948) and Lord Carnavon (1866-1923) who financed Mr. Howard Carter's search for and discovery of the tomb of the Egyptian King Tutankhamen (1336BC-1327BC) in 1922.⁷⁰⁵

Thirty four years after Williams began work for the NGM he retired on the 1st June 1953 and settled in Turkey. Williams' career was long, fruitful and highly regarded. He even helped Hollywood find locations for the shooting of Samson & Delilah (may have been for the 1949).⁷⁰⁶ During his time at the magazine he contributed ninety-seven articles and a total of

700 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX, Envelope V, Box 7/6, 9.

701 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX, Envelope V, Box 7/6, 21.

702 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX, Envelope V, Box 7/6,

703 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Christian Herald, Item LXI, 994-0/2.

704 National Geographic Archive, Washington DC, File Number, 11-10015.467.

705 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 6.

706 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams, Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX, Envelope V, Box 7/6

more than 2,250 pages of photographs.⁷⁰⁷ Reflecting upon his career Williams wrote the following; "...my whole life in Asia was an adventure since I had not planned it so".⁷⁰⁸ and; "...travel has been my life and I like the world in which we live".⁷⁰⁹

Williams' retirement was not a sedentary one. He spent some years lecturing, illustrating his talks with his own photographs, on a great steamship liner which made a "Mediterranean cruise".⁷¹⁰ Williams' retirement seems not to have had an effect on his interest in the lives humans live. The Mediterranean this time was an area of the world within which there were many religious and political tensions growing. Williams never stopped photographing and writing and making studies of the region. For example, before the first of his cruise voyages Williams decided to travel and study the Western part of Europe for a few months.⁷¹¹

The last trip Williams took was in Turkey in June 1963. He went on a solitary day-trip to explore the archaeological ruins in Antalya and to according Bendavid-Val (2008) at the end of the day sat down on a bench by the nearby Antalya River with his camera in his hands and died at the age of 75.⁷¹²

707 Bendavid-Val, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, 2008, 25.

708 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX, Envelope V, Box 7/6

709 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams Worksheets, Autobiography, XXIX, Envelope V, Box 7/6

710 Kalamazoo College archives, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Williams, Publications, Item XII, Box 1/3.

711 Conrad, Sr., Maynard Owen Williams Class of 1910 Kalamazoo College, A Distinguished Career in Journalism and Brotherhood 1888-1963, 7.

712 Bendavid-Val, *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*, 2008, 25.



Maynard Owen Williams and his wife in 1963, National Geographic Archives, File No: 38-1.56, Hard Copy Box: Z News Serve Biog, Williams, Maynard Owen, Inclusive Dates: 1967

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