LEADERSHIP AND FUNDING IN FAITH MISSION WORK. THE CASE OF ANNIE SKAU

Abstract

The theme of this article is tension between different ideals of leadership and funding in faith mission work. This theme is studied by analyzing the case of Annie Skau (1911–1992), a Norwegian independent missionary. This case illustrates the tension between Skau, who wanted to follow what she perceived to be her “calling,” and a missionary organization, which wanted to plan further ahead and have the final say regarding funding and mission fields. In the analysis, references are made to Victor Turner’s idea that tensions between structure and community exist in all societies, and to Max Weber’s notion that priests and prophets have different understandings of leadership. The analysis is based on primary sources, such as letters, reports and protocols, and secondary ones, such as biographies and autobiographies. This article argues that although Annie Skau’s “faith mission” principles created some tensions between her and her missionary organization, they also illustrate how a charismatic entrepreneur, in some cases, may have greater success than an organization.

Keywords: faith mission, leadership, funding, Annie Skau, Haven of Hope, Victor Turner, Max Weber

Introduction

During the 19th century, several Christian missionary societies were formed in Norway. The first missionary organization, the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS), was founded in 1842. Most missionary organizations were democratic institutions, organized with board of directors and leaders, who made decisions regarding acceptance of missionaries, their destinations, and the spending of their monetary funds. Local missionary associations collected money for the organizations through charity bazaars and donations during meetings. In doing this work, women funded as much as two thirds of the work of NMS (Predelli 2000; Tjelle 1990). The Lutheran missionary organizations claimed that the calling of a missionary consisted of an outer as well as an inner calling, and therefore viewed missionary work as an assignment through a church or a missionary society (Claesson 2001:108). These missionary organizations worked in a
traditional way – and mirrored most contemporary missionary societies in Germany and England.

The founder of the first “faith mission” organization was the English missionary Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), who founded the China Inland Mission (CIM) in 1865. The principles of CIM were unusual compared with those of other missionary societies at the time. It was stated that all missionaries should “depend upon God” for wages and other expenses to do missionary work in China, and they should live as simply and inexpensively as possible (Skeie 2014: 67). CIM did not guarantee any income, and was not willing to go into debt to fund the work. The mission was funded entirely by donations. There were no collections of money at meetings, as all needs (financial as well as other needs) had to be presented to God in prayer, and not be requested from any person. The aim of Taylor’s mission was to convert Chinese people to Christianity without the use of fund-raising and committees (Austin 2007: xiii).

Hudson Taylor came to influence Norwegian missionary work. After his visit in Norway in 1889, a Norwegian branch of CIM was founded, and the first missionaries were sent to China the same year (Skeie 2014: 67). The “faith mission” principle was never used within the Lutheran missionary organizations. However, several members of the smaller Free Churches (churches outside the Lutheran majority church) and interdenominational organizations were attracted by the way Taylor organized his mission. More (lay) people wanted to be missionaries than could be funded by denominational structures. The charismatic leadership style of founders of independent mission enterprises often attracted evangelicals who disliked more bureaucratic structures, or who were not a part of traditional missionary organizations (Robert 1990: 29–31).

The founder of the Missionary Covenant Church of Norway (MCCN), Fredrik Franson (1852–1908) encouraged faith mission. It was through Franson that the first Norwegian missionaries went to China (Skeie 2014: 67). According to this faith mission organization, mission implied an understanding that it was God who sent individuals to the field. Every Christian person had a responsibility to do missionary work, and anyone with an inner calling could become a missionary independently of a missionary organization (Claesson 2001: 107–108).

The Norwegian missionary Annie Skau (1911–1992) was influenced by Hudson Taylor and his faith mission principles (Breistein 2013:182). Skau had first been sent to China as a missionary nurse by Missionary Covenant Church of Norway (MCCN) in 1938. She worked in the province of Shaanxi until 1951, when she and other Western missionaries were forced to leave China. After 1951, she wanted to continue with the mission work among the Chinese, but MCCN wanted to send her to a different mission field. Upon an invitation by the Scottish missionary nurse Helen Wilson, Skau decided to go to Hong Kong to work in a refugee camp instead. What was meant to be a short stay, ended up as a lifelong engagement. Skau played an important part in building and running the Haven of Hope hospital, and worked in Hong Kong from 1953 to 1988. Without any regular income, she and her co-workers built and ran a hospital where they treated thousands of patients.

Annie Skau received several awards for her work. In 1961, she was awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal for Nursing Service, and two years later, the King of
Ingunn Folkestad Breistein: Leadership and funding in faith mission work

Norway awarded her as member of the Order of St. Olav. She was also awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1969 (Bergmann 1975: 22). In 1975, *Time* magazine named Skau as one of the world’s living saints (*Time* 1975: 447). And finally, in 2013, she was voted one of the 100 most important people in Norwegian history during the last 200 years by the newspaper daily *Verdens Gang* (*VG* 2013). She was the only missionary on the list.

Annie Skau practiced what she understood to be “a principle of faith,” namely that she never asked people for money, only God. The faith mission principle implied that all things (among them time and money) should be used “according to the will of God,” in the big decisions of life as well as the small. The funding principle of “faith” missions sometimes conflicted with the funding practices of her missionary society, Mission Covenant Church of Norway (MCCN), as well as of some of her co-workers. This article uses the case of Annie Skau to analyze two different understandings of leadership and funding: the entrepreneur with a “faith mission principle” and the missionary society with a traditional democratic organization. The aim is to examine differences and similarities between these two when it comes to leadership and funding.

Research questions, material and method

How did the faith mission principle influence the leadership and funding policy in the mission work of Annie Skau? This article will try to answer this research question as well as a second one: What kind of tensions did this principle create between Annie Skau and the missionary society to which she belonged?

The analysis is based on letters between Annie Skau and her family, friends, donors, and missionary society for the period 1953–1985. This material has not been used in research before, as it was unavailable for researchers until the opening of the MCCN archives in Kristiansand, Norway in 2010. I have also interviewed three of Annie Skau’s Chinese co-workers in Hong Kong in 2012. These data are supplemented by economic reports and yearbooks from MCCN and Haven of Hope.

The data also include articles about Annie Skau in newspapers and magazines, as well as biographies and autobiographies of and by her. The biographies and autobiographies are written as edifying stories, and come close to being hagiographies. In this regard, the stories told by and about Annie Skau equal many other stories from the mission field: “The stories of the mission are sorted, intentionally or unintentionally, by the missionary, in order to further the interests of the mission work. Only rarely is there information about doubt, strife or failure” (Claesson 2001: 30). The stories are told in order to make the reader see the success of the missionary work, and the details are presented as part of a greater storyline: how the missionary understands her work to be part of God’s work.

The letters provide a good source to answer the research questions, since they are close in time and space to the missionary work. Also, they are not part of a storyline in the same way as the autobiographies, where information about leadership and funding seems to be used to construct a “big narrative.” Annie Skau’s letters to her family and
friends seem to be more openhearted than those to the donors, and they reveal more of her hardships. This is not surprising, given that letters to donors were supposed to make the contributors continue their support. This article will mainly elaborate on information from the qualitative material, supplemented with some quantitative material I have found (financial reports, information about the size of gifts, etc.). Altogether, the data material is suitable for answering questions about tensions between the faith principles of Annie Skau regarding leadership and funding, and the principles of her missionary organization.

Previous research on faith mission, leadership and funding
Internationally, several researchers have written on the history and ideology of faith missions. In 2007, Canadian historian Alvyn Austin published the first scholarly work on the China Inland Mission (CIM). Austin argues that Hudson Taylor did not run CIM according to democratic principles, but more as a family business with himself as the leader, and either family members or close friends as members of the board of directors. The economic principles of the faith mission made CIM vulnerable, but they also gave flexibility to the organization in times of economic crises in the West (Austin 2007). American historian of mission Dana L. Robert has written about the origins of independent evangelical missions (faith missions), and how missionaries coming from these missions outnumbered those from denominational missions. Although she mentions the funding principles of the faith missions, her main focus is the premillennial mission theory (Robert 1990).

American historian Mark A. Noll claims that little research has been conducted on Protestant religion and funding. For example, the annual budgets for some of the voluntary societies (like the American Board for Foreign Missions), equaled the annual income of relatively large American corporate firms. Protestant voluntary societies were able to raise such large sums of money because they went outside the denominational boundaries rather than stay inside one single church (Noll 2002: 10–12).

In Scandinavia, some research has been conducted on faith mission, in general, and on Annie Skau, in particular. Norwegian professor of religious studies, Lisbeth Mikaelsson, used Annie Skau as one case of “autobiographical profiles”. Even if Mikaelsson mentions the faith economy of Annie Skau, her focus is autobiographical texts, and not the funding principles of mission work (Mikaelsson 2000: 295–302).

Former General Secretary of MCCN, Ingulf Diesen, has written the history of MCCN (Diesen 1984), and the Norwegian missiologist, Ingrid Eskilt, has provided an analysis of the understanding of the missionary call in MCCN (Eskilt 2006: 90–100). Neither scholar analyzes financial matters in faith mission work.

In spite of the fact that economic funding has a central place in all kind of missionary work, there are no systematic studies on the leadership and funding methods in faith missions, especially not in the Scandinavian countries. In the history of NMS and other Norwegian mission societies, the issue of funding is mentioned, but seldom discussed nor analyzed. In an earlier article, I have used Max Weber’s theory of the Prot-
Funding strategies at Haven of Hope

Before I analyze the funding strategies Annie Skau used at the hospital Haven of Hope, I will give a brief presentation of her work in Hong Kong. As mentioned above, Skau started to work in the refugee camp Rennie’s Mill in 1953, upon the invitation by Helen Wilson. The leaders of the MCCN told Skau that they did not have any plans for Hong Kong, but they could offer her a small salary of 180 British Pounds (GBP) per year. They stressed that they would not offer any additional funds for the work she was going to do. Her reply demonstrated a sense of independence and an understanding of God as her true employer: «I was happy to hear this, because that would give Jesus and me a freer position» (Berntsen 2003: 10).

Skau worked in the refugee camp until 1955, and practiced the faith mission principles regarding funding by never asking people directly for money. From the beginning, she stood out as a good fund raiser. Neither Skau nor her co-workers had any fixed income, although they received fish oil, condensed milk, and vitamins from donors in Norway. Typhoons frequently hit Hong Kong, and the worst came in 1954 with the result that the primitive clinic buildings were ruined. After this event, Skau decided to look for a place to build a sanatorium. She describes her experiences during the typhoon as a spiritual crises and a new calling to trust that God would supply the money (Berntsen 1988: 101).

The opening day of the Haven of Hope hospital was January 26, 1956 with 102 patients. The plan to build a sanatorium for patients with tuberculosis had been made in 1954, when it was estimated that around 1,000 Rennie’s Mill residents were infected with tuberculosis. A committee from Junk Bay Medical Relief Council, which had been established to the work in Rennie’s Mill, decided to retain control over the work rather than turn it over to the government. The committee named Dr. Harveson as Medical Superintendent and Annie Skau as Sister in Charge/Matron (Bergmann 1975: 4–5). From the beginning, the work was interdenominational and supported by relief organizations and churches in the USA and Europe, as well as by individuals from different countries. Not all the people involved shared Skau’s idea of faith mission principles. Yet, when she became matron at the Haven of Hope hospital, she continued to use the same faith mission principles as she had done in the work in Rennie’s Mill.

What were the funding strategies of Annie Skau? Her first and foremost strategy, as presented in her letters, was to pray to God for money. This strategy was close to her faith mission ideals, and she sent numerous invitations to pray in her letters. She used
to go outside the hospital to pray next to a stone, and this “prayer stone” still exists in the garden at Haven of Hope.

The second strategy for fund raising seems to have been the stories she told in her letters and autobiographies. The stories were mostly from everyday life in the hospital. The stories had one common character: that the money needed would show up just at the right time. One story told both in her biographies and in letters is about bedside tables, which Annie thought that all the patients should have. The building committee disagreed, since there was no money. Annie describes how she and her co-workers started praying for money, and how she on the day before the next meeting of the building committee, received three checks from three different places in Norway. Annie Skau writes: “Before I went to the meeting, I cashed the checks in the bank, and came to the meeting with the money in my pocket”. When the building committee asked about the night tables, Annie put “the exact amount of money that was necessary” (GBP 163) on the table (Berntsen 2003: 44–45). Many stories have similar content and dramatic climax. Stories like this served as implicit invitations to donate money, since the message was that donations were interpreted to be gifts from God.

Yet another strategy was the annual Christmas letters, where she provided information about the needs as well as the tasks already accomplished. The letters were addressed to “my dear friends and prayer partners,” suggesting that the donors were friends of Annie and partners in prayer. Money was not directly mentioned in the letters, but in some letters, there were specific references to what was needed in the hospital. The readers were asked to pray, not (directly) to donate: “Pray with us, for daily bread and daily drugs… The price of every necessity is soaring in Hong Kong… We need a new autoclave, we need heated food-trolleys… we need a new ward, we need new staff-quarters… we need at least two doctors, and we need 5 registered nurses… Will you pray with us…” (Christmas Letter 1970). In an Easter Letter, Annie Skau asks the donors to pray that the Hong Kong government will give GBP 9 375 towards a new ward (Easter Letter 1966). Even though the readers of the letters were asked to pray, not to donate, the letters must have served as an indirect invitation to send money to the work. The people praying and the people giving were the same persons. And the codes used in the letters were clearly understood by the readers. Since the needs were revealed to them, they were also supposed to react to this information by giving what was needed.

It seems that Annie Skau changed her funding policy from around 1959. That year she applied for money from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and broke with her principle of never asking people for money. Why did Skau change her policy? The hospital was constantly expanding. The number of patients more than doubled during the first six years, new buildings were being built, and Annie Skau and her co-workers seemed to plan for continuous growth. The number of patients rose from 102 in 1956 to 250 in 1962, so the number had more than doubled within six years. The costs of running the hospital increased. The prices per bed or patient had gone up from GBP 3 in 1956 to GBP 19 in 1962. The main explanation was the wage increase of the staff, even if the staff was paid less than in other hospitals (Letter to Dr. Steinert 15.11.1962).
As the work became more reputable, Haven of Hope began to receive money from donors who were not familiar with the “codes” of giving that had been used in the letters to her regular supporters and prayer partners. As a result, Skau had to use alternative strategies for funding and another language for people who were unfamiliar with her specific Christian terminology. One source of funding was the Hong Kong government. In 1957, it funded 20 patients, which rose to 60 in 1962. Some patients, who could afford it, also paid part of the costs. In addition, organizations and churches covered costs for a certain number of beds. The funding from the Hong Kong government was a result of negotiations. The government agreed to pay the hospital because Haven of Hope treated as much as one third of the TB-patients in Hong Kong.

In 1959, the Norwegian Refugee Council wanted to fund work among refugees, and several Norwegian missionaries in Hong Kong submitted a joint application. Skau asked her brother Bjørn Skau (1929–2007) for advice about the application. He was political secretary for the Minister of Social Affairs at the time. In a letter written on the stationery of the ministry, he explains to her how to apply, and writes that the Minister of Social Affairs, Gudmund Harlem, thought Haven of Hope was a good project (letter from Bjørn Skau to Annie, dated 5.12.1959). In 1959–60, Haven of Hope received GBP 26 850 from The Norwegian Refugee Council, the biggest donation to the hospital so far (Berntsen 1984: 217). This might be understood as yet another funding strategy, namely networking.

Annie Skau now combined the practice of faith mission simultaneously with asking organizations like NRC for support. She continued to tell stories and send letters to the donors who were familiar with her Christian terminology, while she also wrote applications and negotiated for money from secular organizations and the Hong Kong government. Money from the Hong Kong government and NCR were mainly used for existing projects, or bigger building projects. In contrast, donations from Christian friends were used for new projects (“extras”) and for patients who were unable to pay or were not covered by other organizations (Letter to Dr. Steinert, 1962). One reason why she continued to use the faith mission principles in addition to more traditional forms of funding was that she favored the faith mission principle method. Nevertheless, the introduction of new funding methods seems to indicate that Annie Skau was a pragmatic leader who sought sources of funding from different sources.

To sum up, her strategies for funding included indirect requests through stories and letters, and more direct requests through applications and negotiations. The funding of the hospital had started with money coming from donors familiar with the Christian faith and terminology. In her later period as matron, the faith mission principles were combined with funding from secular organizations and the Hong Kong Government.

Perspectives on leadership and funding

Victor Turner (1969) uses the term “structure” to describe the kind of society that is structured, differentiated and hierarchical, whereas the term “communitas” describes that which is unstructured, undifferentiated, and offers comradeship and homogeneity.
“Structure” tends to be pragmatic and this-worldly, whereas “communitas” is often speculative and generates imagery and philosophical ideas. Structures and communitas differ when it comes to kinship, funding, and structure (Turner 1969: 96, 133). In the following I will use MCCN as an example of an enterprise that represents “structure”, whereas the way Annie Skau organized the Haven of Hope hospital can be seen as “communitas.”

In addition, I will use Max Weber’s notion of the “prophet” as opposed to the “priest”, and “charisma” as opposed to “traditional” authority to understand the difference between Annie Skau as a missionary entrepreneur and the leaders of MCCN as representatives of an “office.” Weber sees the prophet as a personal carrier of charisma, whose power is revealed by a divine command. The prophet has a special calling, and understands his calling to come directly from God (Adair-Toteff 2014: 7–9; Weber 2001: 177–178). The charisma of the leader is in Weber’s typology constructed by his “followers” or “disciples” (Weber 1947: 359). Several researchers, among them Inger Furseth (1999), have used this typology to describe how followers as well as biographers and historians have created charismatic traditions around leaders in political and religious movements (Furseth 1999: 235–245). Since my material seems to reveal more about how Annie Skau helped to construct a charismatic tradition around her own person in and through her writings, I will examine whether Weber’s notions of charisma are useful to understand Skau’s descriptions of herself. In addition, I will use my interviews to see if Skau’s co-workers in Hong Kong contributed to constructing this charismatic tradition. I will also analyze the material like biographies and articles to examine if biographers and journalists helped to construct such a charismatic tradition. But first we shall see how the missionary society can be understood as an enterprise, representing “office” and “structure”.

The missionary society as enterprise: organization and funding

The Missionary Covenant Church of Norway had been established in 1884. Women and men had the right to vote on an equal footing from the beginning, and women were introduced as preachers both in Norway and abroad. The organization was congregational, meaning that the local churches were independent and the members elected both board and pastor. Mission work abroad was the most important issue upon which all congregations worked together, and the annual conference with representatives from all congregations decided both the budgets for the mission work as well as who should be sent as missionaries. The leader of MCCN was called General Secretary, and a lay person was elected chair of the board of directors.

A “traditional” missionary organization like MCCN planned their work carefully, and had to get the support of the annual conference when deciding to employ new missionaries or start working in new mission fields. It was run by budgets, and needed to collect enough money before plans could be put into practice. Money for the mission work was collected through the congregations, missionary associations, and from individuals. Some people would send gifts and money directly to the missionaries, but MCCN encouraged members to send gifts through the missionary organization.
The total income of MCCN in the years 1910–1939 varied year by year: from GBP 1,500 in 1910, up to GBP 10,000 in 1925 and down to GBP 6,000 in 1939. Half was used for mission work in South Africa and Congo, and the rest for mission work in Norway, including administration (Nilsen 1984: 190–191). It was difficult to raise enough money to the mission work MCCN already had begun, not to speak of accepting new missionaries.

As Table 1 shows, the support from MCCN to Hong Kong was relatively low during the years Annie Skau worked in Hong Kong (no more than 6% of the budgets), compared to the money given to Congo (between 20–30% of the budgets). MCCN paid Annie’s salary, but not for the medical work she was doing. The reason was that Hong Kong did not have the same status as Congo. MCCN had chosen Congo as a mission field, whereas Skau had chosen to work in Hong Kong against the advice of the leaders. However, after 1975 MCCN regarded Hong Kong as a mission field and started to pay for administration costs.

Table 1: Accounts of Missionary Covenant Church of Norway 1959, 1969 and 1978

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1958</th>
<th>1968</th>
<th>1977</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong(^5)</td>
<td>1,510</td>
<td>3,742</td>
<td>37,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total budget</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>10,362</td>
<td>30,272</td>
<td>132,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total budget</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for mission work abroad</td>
<td>14,728</td>
<td>34,025</td>
<td>190,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% used for Mission work abroad</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total budget MCCN</td>
<td>32,516</td>
<td>94,421</td>
<td>635,143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The work of MCCN was funded by donations from its members; including the mission work in Norway. The money was used for church buildings, salaries for pastors, and administration. The members frequently heard sermons that encouraged them to give as much as ten percent of their income to the church. Donations were an essential part of the ideology of MCCN, not least because the Free Churches did not receive any support from the state for its work.\(^6\) The Free Churches and the lay Lutheran missionary organizations were totally dependent on donations from their members, and therefore fostered a “habit of giving” in addition to the “habit of volunteering” (Nemeth and Luidens 2003: 108).

To conclude, MCCN was an organization which wanted to make decision about where and how mission work should be done, and how money should be spent. However, when it came to funding, it was dependent on donations, and this created tension between the organization and the charismatic leader, as we shall see later on.
The missionary as charismatic prophet and leader

I will now examine whether or not the leadership of Annie Skau had common traits with the features Max Weber used to describe the prophet and charismatic leader, and with Victor Turners description of “communitas”.

According to Weber, charisma is based on an emotional form of communal relationship, and there is no room for hierarchy. There is no such thing as salary, since the followers tend to live primarily in a communist relationship with their leader on means that have been provided by voluntary gifts (Weber 1947: 359–361). The way Haven of Hope was run, seem to resemble such a communal relationship. As shown earlier, not only Annie Skau, but her co-workers received lower salaries than they could have received at other hospitals in Hong Kong. Also, the work was mainly funded by donations, thus creating an unpredictable economy both when wages and money for patients and medicine was concerned.

It seems as if the leadership of Annie Skau was unstructured and undifferentiated, and that she filled many different roles. In this sense, one may see a “communitas” pattern. To the leader of MCCN, she writes about the different roles she has to fill, since the main doctor is away: “I’m a doctor, superintendent, matron, business manager and I don’t know what else for 116 patients, 25 colleagues, and teacher for 19 students, in addition to everything, plan teaching and exams, committee meetings, new buildings that we have received gifts for, and pray and work hard to keep it all together…” (Letter to Thorleif Holm Glad, 27.5.1957).

Annie Skau seemed to have adopted “communitas” as an ideology rather than “structure”. The staff and patients at Haven of Hope were part of a big family, with Annie not just as matron, but as “mother”. In several letters, she called Margit Lindgård, who administered the donations from Norway, “my dear child”, although they were the same age. At other times, she called her “my dear” Margit or “sister” Margit, indicating that they were part of a spiritual family. Her co-workers were mentioned as “sisters”, “brothers”, some of her patients as her “children” and “friends” (Mikaelsson 2000: 199).

Yet another characteristic of charisma is that it is opposed to rational and bureaucratic authority (Weber 1947: 361). Weber meant that real charisma was in opposition to systematic budgetary activity, and rejects the methodical and rational acquisition of money. In the stories told by Annie Skau, the gifts are said to come just in time to solve a critical situation. The economic situations are presented as dramatic; the money has a tendency to show up at the last moment (Mikaelsson 2000: 296–297). One of the stories ends with this comment: “Jesus’s timetable is never too late, neither is it too early” (Berntsen 2003: 88).

On several occasions, Annie Skau underlined that she understood her calling from God to be more important than obeying her leaders. While most other missionaries in MCCN were willing to switch mission fields when the leaders suggested so (Eskilt 2006: 199), Annie Skau was the only missionary who made the organization begin work in a place it had not chosen. She was not willing to submit to authority or hierarchy, only to what she understood to be the leadership of God.
It is not possible from the letters to say how Annie’s leadership was experienced by her fellow workers, because they first and foremost give her own account of the work. However, in the yearbooks of MCCN and the history writings of Haven of Hope, she is clearly pointed out as the founder of Haven of Hope. Both organizations she worked for, seem to have helped to construct her charisma. I interviewed some of her co-workers, and the way they spoke about her certainly seemed to add to her position as charismatic leader. One of them was a former principal of the Holm Glad College that MCCN ran in Hong Kong. He called her “a visionary,” “a humble person,” “strong and firm” (Interview with Patrick Lai 2012). One female pastor who had worked with Annie, Ms. Wang, said that Annie’s leadership was respected because she had faith in God and people, not because she was a good administrator (Interview with Ms. Wang 2012).

Also, the biographers and journalists seem to have contributed to the charismatic tradition that was built around her, highlighted by Time Magazine calling her a “saint of our time” (Familien 1987; Gleason 1966; Time 1975). As the work of Annie Skau became known far outside churches and religious organizations, this seems to have added to construction of her charisma. The Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Alexander Grantham, visited Haven of Hope in 1957. Crown Prince Harald and Crown Princess Sonja of Norway visited the Haven of Hope hospital in 1970.

Annie Skau can be characterized as a religious matriarch running Haven of Hope as her extended family. Although she had been raised in a family strongly involved in the Labor Party, and was a member of a denomination with democratic principles, it seems that her ideal of leadership was closer to Hudson Taylor than to the leaders of her own organization. Taylor was the General Director of CIM, and held the highest authority and responsibility in the Mission. CIM was never a democratic organization, even from the start. Taylor was convinced that it was far better to have authority vested in one man than in a committee. He had a patriarchal ideal of leadership and saw himself as a father figure with an extended family of helpers who would give him loyal obedience as they would to God (Austin 2007: 103). In the faith mission of Hudson Taylor, as well as in MCCN, there was an acceptance of women’s individual divine calling for missionary service. Provided that women had charisma or a type of religious experience acknowledged as valid also by men, there was a sphere open for women (Mikaelsson 2003: 123).

Annie Skau managed to convert her charismatic power into gaining positions within the organization, both as the leader of Haven of Hope and as field secretary for MCCN. She reinterpreted patriarchal leadership into a matriarchal leadership, and she seems to have taken for granted that there was no difference between the calling of a woman and the calling of a man (Vårt Land 1988). After she married, she also made it clear that her marriage could never disturb her calling as a missionary (Berntsen 1988: 239; Familien 1987).
Interpretations

We will now take a look at the tensions between Annie Skau and MCCN, first when it comes to leadership, and then when it comes to funding policy.

Tensions between Annie Skau and MCCN about leadership

The first and foremost tension when it came to leadership was that Annie did not consider any leader in MCCN as her supervisor, because she saw God as her true leader. This was expressed through her choice of mission field, and was also demonstrated when she made decisions about the work in Hong Kong without confiding in any of the leaders of MCCN. Unlike the first female pastor in MCCN and in Norway, Gerda Karjord, she did not openly oppose the General Secretary or any of the other leaders, but she did not ask them for advice either (Breistein 2010: 74).

Another tension arose from the transition of leadership after Annie Skau stepped down from her position as matron after 16 years of service at the hospital (1955–1959, and 1961–1972). It looks as if the board of MCCN did not have the correct information as to how Haven of Hope was organized when it came to ownership and administration, since it suggested that MCCN should send a person to Hong Kong to take over the duties of matron. The statutes of Haven of Hope (§ 29) gave MCCN the right to appoint a member of the board of the hospital, but not to appoint a successor to Annie Skau as matron of the hospital. It seems that the board of MCCN thought it could make decisions about the laws and statutes of Haven of Hope, which was not possible, because Haven of Hope was fully independent of MCCN (Protocols of MCCN 4.12.1971/item 6A, 15.4.1972/item 17 and 4.5.1972/item 12). The next matron at Haven of Hope was one of the nurses Annie had trained; Mary Wong Fung. Further research needs to be done in order to say whether or not the development can be described as “institutionalization of leadership”, but the historians and biographers do not create a charismatic tradition around her the way they did with Annie Skau.

After Annie Skau had ended her position as matron at Haven of Hope in 1972, she became field superintendent of the MCCN in Hong Kong. Skau had been the official representative of the MCCN in Hong Kong from 1953, and she held that responsibility until 1988. This shows that MCCN accepted her as a leader. The missionary organization also bowed to her vision when it came to accepting Hong Kong as a missionary field. Although MCCN accepted her leadership, Annie continued to challenge the leadership and organization of MCCN, since she always would heed what she meant to be the leadership of God more than the leadership of men. Although MCCN had room for both the role of the priest and the role of the prophet, these two types continued to challenge another, since one required structure, and the other communitas.

Tensions between Annie Skau and MCCN about funding policy

The main tension between Annie Skau and MCCN when it came to funding had to do with “earmarked gifts”, and from the wish of MCCN that money should be channeled
Ingunn Folkestad Breistein: Leadership and funding in faith mission work

through the organization. They also partly appealed to the same donors. A letter from the field secretary in Hong Kong, Egil Torp (1944–) underlines this tension:

“Some donors give their gifts on condition that the gift is used for certain purposes. We ask them to send them to MCCN, so that MCCN can register the gifts… The question MCCN needs to clarify (again) is whether or not it can accept gifts earmarked for purposes specifically wanted by donors and channeled through MCCN, without using these gifts to cover the budgets. I am afraid that a more restrictive line will mean that more money than formerly will be sent directly to the mission fields.” (Letter from Torp to MCCN, undated).

The field secretary seems to encourage MCCN to allow gifts to be given outside MCCN, and thus to continue the practice of Annie Skau. The tension about donations was therefore not necessarily merely one between a charismatic leader and a missionary organization that preferred that things were done by the rules. Many members in MCCN had the same view as Annie Skau about donations of money. Therefore, one might say that the tension existed within MCCN, not just between MCCN and Skau.

MCCN alone would not have been able to fund the work at Haven of Hope. While MCCN had a total budget of GBP 32 516 in 1958 (see Table 1), Haven of Hope had a total budget of GBP 38 228 in 1960 (Budget Haven of Hope 1960). The budget of Haven of Hope thus amounted to 72 percent of the budgets of MCCN in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Therefore, Skau was bound to get funding outside of MCCN and the donors who belonged to the organization.

Some tension existed because Skau started work in a mission field MCCN had not selected. Although MCCN paid Skau’s salary, and she is listed as a missionary in the yearbooks of MCCN, the organization MCCN did not take over the administrative costs in Hong Kong until 1975. Until then, Skau had covered the administrative expenses of MCCN’s work in Hong Kong through donations given to Haven of Hope. After 1975, Skau argued that Hong Kong should be seen as a mission field, and therefore should be funded in the same way as the mission field of Congo. In 1975 Congo received GBP 5 652 for administrative expenses (Protocols of MCCN 25.8.1975/item253). MCCN thus seems to have had profited from Skau’s way of organizing the finances, since MCCN had not paid administrative expenses for the work Annie Skau had done for the missionary organization until 1975.

The funding strategies that Annie Skau used, like prayer, stories from the mission work, letters and network building, were also used by MCCN. In addition, MCCN used more traditional funding methods like collection of money in meetings. The organization and the entrepreneur were both dependent on voluntary funding. Thus, the tensions between Annie Skau and MCCN about funding were smaller than when it came to leadership.
Conclusion

In the beginning of this article, I asked how the faith mission principle influenced the leadership and funding policy of Annie Skau. I have examined her strategies of fundraising, and found that although she never admitted to having asked people for money, there were hidden codes that made the donors understand what was required from them. I have also found that Annie changed her policy of never asking people for money after 1959.

The work of Annie Skau has several of the hallmarks of faith missions: it was not tied to one nation or one denomination. It was led by a charismatic person, not by a democratically elected board. Funding depended upon prayers to God, but the money was collected through stories that the givers understood as invitations to donate to the hospital. These hallmarks made Haven of Hope a far bigger enterprise than other mission work carried out by the MCCN in other places and in the rest of its work in Hong Kong.

I also asked whether or not there were tensions between Annie Skau and her missionary organization MCCN when it came to leadership and funding. I found that the tension when it came to leadership stemmed from the fact that Annie regarded God as her true leader, and would not heed to any human leader. Annie Skau took a leadership position; it was not given to her by her missionary society. However, MCCN accepted her as a leader. The explanation for this might be that MCCN was open to charismatic leaders that took a place of their own, and that the members of MCCN heeded the call for money not only from the missionary organization but also from entrepreneurs like Annie Skau. One might say that in MCCN, there was room for the role of priest as well as the role of prophet, but that these two types of offices continuously challenged one another.

The biggest tension when it came to funding was “earmarked gifts”. For the entrepreneur Annie Skau, it was easy to ask for gifts to specific purposes. For the democratic organization MCCN, the money given was used for purposes planned through budgets. Even though the faith mission principles and practices of Annie Skau created some tension between her and MCCN, her missionary organization also greatly benefited from her work, not least through gifts that were given as a result of her becoming the most famous Norwegian missionary of her time. This case illustrates the transition of ideals within missionary work: democracy versus family organization, front-line control of money versus transparency, bureaucracy versus direct contact between donors and missionaries.

This article has analyzed the case of Annie Skau to illustrate how missionary organizations can be seen as parallels to businesses and structured organizations and how some missionaries can be seen as prophets and religious entrepreneurs. These two forms of leadership still exist, both in missionary work and in relief work. While there might be tension and competition between missionary or relief organizations and the independent entrepreneurs in mission and relief work, this article has shown that sometimes the independent entrepreneur may have greater success than organizations due to
greater flexibility when it comes to leadership and ability to draw on different eco-

Notes

1 The archive consists of around 6000 letters between Annie Skau and her family, friends, do-
nors and missionary society, as well as hundreds of pictures. The material has been collected
by Annie Skau herself, and was part of the estate left after she died. In writing this article, I
have mainly used the correspondence between Annie Skau and her family, friends and do-
nors for the years 1953 to 1985.
2 All money will be given in GBP. For comparison, an average income in 1952 for women
working as nurses in Norwegian asylums was GBP 491 per year (SSB 1953).
3 The exchange rate for GBP to NOK is estimated to 20 for 1910–1939.
4 The exchange rate for NOK to GBP was 20 in 1958, 17 in 1968 and 9 in 1977 (Antweiler
2013).
5 For the year 1958, the money for Hong Kong also includes support for Indonesia.
6 By “Free Church” I mean protestant churches teaching that church and state should be sep-
arated. Free churches were allowed in Norway from 1845, and got a small funding per mem-
ber from 1969.
7 In 1960 the exchange rate for HKD to GBP was 16, and for NKr to GBP was 20 (Antweiler
2013).
8 The Exchange rate for NOK to GBP in 1975 was 11.5.

References

Austin, Alvyn 2007. China’s Millions. The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society,
Berntsen, Annie Skau 1984. Hos kineserne i Hong Kong (At the Chinese in Hong Kong). In Det
From the desert flatland to a place of springs). Oslo: Ansgar Forlag.
Berntsen, Annie Skau 2003. On the Barren Upland. Hong Kong: Haven of Hope Christian Ser-
vice.
Breistein, Ingunn 2010. Gerda Karijord – den første kvinnelige forstander i Norge (Gerda Kari-
jord – the first female pastor in Norway). In Biografin i väckelsesforskningen, Ingvar Dahl-
backa and Carola Nordbäck (eds.), 70–86. Åbo: Kyrkohistoriska arkivet vid Åbo Akademi.
Breistein, Ingunn 2013. Økonomisk praksis i Annie Skaus misjonsvirksomhet (The economic
practice in Annie Skau’s missionary work). In Gud og Mammon. Religion og næringsliv,
Claesson Anna Maria 2001. Kinesernas vänner: en analys av missionens berättelse som ideolo-
gi och utopi (The friends of the Chinese: An analysis of the story of mission as ideology and


Familien 1987. Interview with Annie Skau Berntsen.


Vårt Land 1988. To kvinner i tjeneste for Gud (Two women in the service of God). In Ansgarskolens insert 4.5.


Primary sources


MCCN Protocols for Hong Kong 1971–1975. HA.

MCCN Yearbooks 1950–1980. HA.

*The Mission Covenant Church of Norway: Rules, Articles of Association and Instructions*. Compiled and published 1949/1975. HA.

Lai, Patrick, Mr. 2012. Interview with former President of Holm Glad College, Hong Kong, October 10th.

Letters and correspondence regarding Hong Kong, between Annie Skau and her parents/friends/donors/MCCN. HA. Skau 1970. Printed Christmas letter from Annie Skau to “My dear friends and prayer partners”, Hong Kong. HA. Torp, Egil. Letter to MCCN, undated. HA.

Wang, Ms 2012. Interview with former pastor, Hong Kong, October 10th.