

*NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY*

*A Worldview Study of the Chinese Family in Nairobi  
with Specific Reference to Dyad Relationships*

*BY  
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*Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of  
Arts in Missions Studies*

*JULY 2006*


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July 2006

Student's Declaration

A WORLDVIEW STUDY OF THE CHINESE FAMILY IN NAIROBI WITH  
SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO DYAD RELATIONSHIPS

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other College  
or University for academic credit.

The views presented here in are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical  
Graduate School of Theology or of the Examiners.

(Signed)  \_\_\_\_\_

Margaret Wangui Gitau

July 2006

## **Abstract**

A worldview approach in studying culture is one of the most effective ways of understanding a people whose culture is different from one's own. This study describes the contemporary Chinese family living in Nairobi. From that dimension, this thesis attempts to understand and describe the worldview of Chinese people. A qualitative research design employing ethnographic interview and participant observation was used to carry out the research.

The findings indicated that the Chinese family living in Nairobi has significantly departed from the ideal traditional Chinese family values. Whereas such a traditional family would be held together by communal identity, today's family in Nairobi is deprived of such an identity by changes that have occurred in China and by the demands of modern life. This family is unique in that the individual still finds his or her identity by belonging within the unit of three family members comprised of father, mother and child. But the members of this family are all busy trying to be successful, such that other subsections of culture, namely economics and educational, have assumed a higher significance than the family substratum of the culture. As a result, Chinese people are becoming more individual than kin oriented.

## Dedication

To the Kenya Chinese Gospel Fellowship, with gratitude for the rich cross-cultural experience I have had among you for the last four years.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

China, the third largest nation in the world, is also emerging as a world superpower to reckon with in the not too distant future. China's phenomenal economic growth is part of this matrix, but its greatest advantage as a world power is its human resource, currently estimated at 1.4 billion people. Anyone who is interested in having a meaningful dialogue with this powerful nation must make attempts to penetrate the depths of the Chinese mind, in order to understand the Chinese people.

### **Rationale for Chinese Studies by Christians**

Christian Missiologist Tony Lambert, in *China's Christian Millions*, and sinologist David Aikman, in *Jesus in Beijing* wage a higher bet on the wealth of China's huge population. Recording the momentous impact that Christianity is having in China through a marginal section of the population, the two predict a great potential of the gospel to influence the world where more of the Chinese people embrace and spread it. Groundwork studies by these two authors show that Christianity is spreading fast in China, with a correspondingly powerful impact on Chinese people. However, in spite of the fast growth, only about 80 million Chinese

people in China are Christians. Reviewed sources differ on the extent of China's Christianization, but all agree on the great need for missionaries in China. Some works read on this topic include Lambert's *China's Christian Millions*, Mooneyham's *China: A New Day*, Paterson's *Heartcry for China*, Hattaway, *Back to Jerusalem*, Gordon, *Standby for China* and Taylor, *Hudson Taylor*. SungHae Kim in Schreiter's book underscores the need for a contextualized approach to witnessing among the Chinese people, taking into account their cultural and religious heritage. As much as we rejoice in these numbers, the convictions drawn from the gospel make us contend that in such a populous nation, surely, the death of Christ was worth more than 80 million. And if 80 million Christians can make such an impact in China as Aikman and Lambert record, then what potential lies in the conversion of a higher percentage of Chinese people! The conclusion of the matter is that China needs missionaries to ensure that everybody has had an opportunity to hear the gospel, and in turn these will spread it to new frontiers that have not yet heard. This is the driving force of this research project. Considering the inconsistencies of previous missionary generations, it is of fundamental interest that future missionaries to China or among Chinese people understand the Chinese culture.

Another reality that inspires this work is what Jenkins (2002) and other Christian scholars observe: Africa is experiencing one of the most phenomenal growths in Christianity, while the West, which has been the traditional missionary sending center, is experiencing decline in Christian strength. If this is so, there is little question as to who should prepare to take the gospel to nations that are yet to be fully Christianized like China. Africans have to take their place in global missions. This research is an effort by an African to penetrate one of the very complex cultures in readiness to be a witness within that culture.

### **Problem Statement**

We must comprehend a people's worldview to appreciate them. To do this we have to learn the deep level assumptions and motivations behind their overt and covert behavior. The study of the Chinese kinship cultural domain will be a window into understanding the Chinese worldview. The description of the dyads in the Chinese kinship system will be the focal point of study.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships among members of a Chinese family unit, and from this perspective arrive at a worldview understanding of Chinese people's thoughts, behavior and feelings.

### **Significance of Study**

By the time the research is completed, I will be empowered to carry out a more relevant ministry among the Chinese people in Nairobi. I will be able to communicate the gospel in such a way that it will address the relational needs of the Chinese people with God, with one another and with non-Chinese people.

This research will provide my church with documented material about Chinese people. Pastors who are unable to spend extensive time studying the Chinese people will use this material to understand and minister to the Chinese people in our church.

Finally, in view of the growing Chinese global influence, this study will be an effort to pioneer African Christian scholarship in the field of Asian (Chinese) studies. I anticipate that in the future, the NEGST Missions Department will have an Asian

Studies Emphasis to prepare missionaries to work in Asia. This research is greatly motivated by this aspiration.

### **Assumptions**

1. I assume that most Chinese people's halfhearted commitment or total resistance to the gospel is because it seems to conflict with their cultural values, not because they are not touched by its message. Allegiance to Christianity appears to be transference of cultural loyalty from the next of kin to a stranger, Jesus Christ. Being a Christian is believed to be following a foreign set of values that are different from the ones Chinese people have inherited from their ancestors. Jesus is seen to usurp traditional authority. Lausanne Papers (1980, 6) observe that western missionaries were often insensitive to Chinese cultural and social barriers. Most of these barriers have not been overcome today.
2. I assume that the Chinese people are as much in need of relationship with God as any other human being. In connection with this, I assume that Chinese family values and the gospel can find point of congruence so that they do not have to conflict.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the significant dyads in contemporary Chinese families?
2. How do the members of a dyad interact with members of other dyads?
3. What is the worldview consequence of interactions among members of various dyads?

### **Limitations**

The key limitation of this research is the fact that I do not speak Chinese and I am not Chinese. I had to rely directly on English speaking Chinese people for primary data. When I interviewed and observed Chinese people who did not speak English, I asked the English speaking ones to translate for me into English. Some of the Chinese people I had access to did not have some of their family members in Kenya. So I had to depend on the interview method and make inferences from what those who were available said concerning their families.

The other limitation is that I was researching into unfamiliar subject and using a complex method. I have only interacted with the Chinese people for four years and have stayed in China for a month, but that has not helped me to understand them enough. As far as the method is concerned, the conceptual framework of culture and worldview is also a new field of study at this level of my studies. I am in the process of understanding it as I research and may therefore portray some inconsistencies in analysis to seasoned experts in this field.

The research has attempted to understand the Chinese family according to a worldview theory as a tool of analysis of the kinship cultural domain. This is inspired by Kim's approach in his study of Swahili Supernaturalism (2001), and by Kraft's (1996) ideas of worldview.

### **Delimitation**

Kinship is a wide subject. This research does not deal with every aspect of kinship in the Chinese family. It concentrates on the contemporary nuclear Chinese family living in Kenya. Furthermore, it does not deal with every substratum of a

culture; it focuses mainly on social, economic and educational systems, which were found to interact with each other closely.

### **Definition of Terms**

1. *Worldview* is the ‘culturally structured assumptions, values and commitments and allegiances underlying a people’s perception of reality and their response to those perceptions’ (Kraft 1996, 52).
2. *Kinship* refers to groupings based on birth or marriage (Kraft 1996, 332). We also choose to assume that kinship is about relationships.
3. *Dyads*: a dyad consists of two linked and related persons, e.g. husband-wife, father-son (Hsu 1971, 8).
4. *Structure* in family organization describes the size of the group, the variety of related individuals who live together, and the expected and actually practiced relationship pattern in terms of obligation, privileges and actions taken and actions not taken. For example in an individual family, the father may be the breadwinner, the mother does housework, and the children assist in various duties (Hsu 1971, 8).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter, I will interact with the literature that gave a theoretical framework to the actual research. In the interests of space, this review will be relieved of details that may have been in the proposal but do not have a significant bearing on the actual research and its outcome. The two broad themes covered are kinship and worldview theory.

#### **Exploring Scholars' View of Kinship**

Kraft classifies five categories of identity: biological, marriage, common interests, ranking and territory (1996, 331). Probably the most vital of all these are the biological and marriage groups; these are lumped together and referred to as kinship groups. The Encyclopedia of Sociology describes kinship systems as mechanisms that link conjugal families in ways that enhance the ability of the society to reproduce itself in an orderly fashion. This happens through relationships of blood and marriage ties, and through identifiable family connections over the years.

Although human beings have always identified themselves as members of a kinship group, the term 'kinship' came into wide scholarly use in the 1860s, the same decade that Darwin's theory of evolution emerged and developed. So Darwinism



had an effect on kinship studies (Trautmann 1987, 3-4). Henry Morgan was an anthropologist credited as one of the founders of the Kinship studies in 1860s. His work, *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* published in that decade, 'is the most important single source of kinship studies. To this day, his work structures that of other scholars who engage in kinship studies.' (Trautman 1987:4). Other studies on kinship include Freinberg and Ottenheimer (editors), White and Schweizer (editors) and Velsen. Levi-Strauss carried out a detailed analysis and description of elementary structures of kinship. Levi-strauss is identified by many anthropologists as one of the pioneers in the study of kinship structures. His work has also been expounded and critiqued by Leach (1974). Levi-Strauss work had an influence on later anthropologists, including Kraft, who quotes him in his work. These he defines as structures that permit the determination of the circle of kin and prescribe marriage to a certain type of person and not another (1969, xxiii). A modern-day scholar in the filed of kinship studies is Robert Parkin. His more recent work *Kinship and Family: an Anthropological Reader*, co-edited by Linda Stone, attempts to contextualize kinship studies in contemporary societies using the framework of older scholarship on kinship, but drawing from recent fieldwork by various anthropologists.

### Grouping on the Basis of Kinship

Queen and Habenstein (1974, 11) refer to kinship as grouping based on the extended family beyond the parent-children relationship through three or more generations, including grandparents and grandchildren. For Kraft, kinship terms are labels for social statuses. What one calls another carries a prescription for how one behaves towards that person. If biological father is used for both father and the

brothers of the biological father, chances will be that those extra fathers will be expected to behave like the biological father (1996, 332).

No kinship system provides separate and distinct terms for every possible position in the kinship chart. Kraft differentiates between classificatory and particular kinship terms (1996, 332). Classificatory categories are when a system lumps together people related differently to each other under one kinship term. When a term is particular only to one relationship, it is a descriptive term, for example, father, or oldest brother. Chinese kinship particularizes even the nuclear family. There is a term for younger, *didi*, and older *gege*, brothers and younger *meimei*, and older *jiejie*, sisters. It also has terms for small children and older children, all used accordingly by various people depending on their relationship with the child or his/ her parents. A full classification as done by Huang ([http://acjournal.org/holdings/vol13/Iss3/spec1/huang\\_jia.html](http://acjournal.org/holdings/vol13/Iss3/spec1/huang_jia.html), accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2006) is provided in appendix A. The degree of particularizing or classifying is a pointer towards the amount of focus given to a particular kin relationship. This research will focus on the various family connections, identified as dyads.

### Dyads

Kinship ties are identified in terms of the basic dyads apparent in the family. Hsu advances a hypothesis on kinship and grouping that is pivotal to this research's dyadic analysis. His hypothesis is that

The dominant attributes of the dominant dyad in a given kinship system tend to determine the attitudes and action patterns that the individual in such a system develops towards other dyads in this system as well as towards his relationships outside of the system (1971, 10).

In a nutshell, Hsu's hypothesis proposes that in any kinship system there is a distinguishably dominant dyad that affects the qualities and patterns of other relationships both in and outside of the family; thus all the dyads have their unique attributes.

Presuming that a nuclear family has at least two siblings of both sexes, Hsu proposes eight dyads to such a family. These are husband-wife, father-son, mother-son, father-daughter, mother-daughter, brother-brother, brother-sister and sister-sister. A nuclear family would be expected to give equal status to all its dyads. But quite often, one of the dyads takes priority over the others, becoming the dominant dyad that tends to modify, magnify, reduce or eliminate other dyads in the family. For example, if the father-son dyad is dominant, it obscures the husband-wife dyad. It may also dictate the son's future that is his family and career choices; his father will have a lot of say in these choices.

A more probable picture is Rohlen's, who considers Hsu's hypothesis to be somewhat deterministic. He prefers to discuss the relationships in a family as jural and affective ties (Hsu 1971, 144ff). He describes jural ties as those rights and duties expected to exist by custom and tradition within specific kinship dyads. Jural ties are neither questioned nor changed. For example, with a dominant father-son dyad, the eldest son succeeds the status of his father, whereas younger sons with slightly less status form families removed from the main line of descent. The eldest son assumes the position of family representative to its ancestors; as he matures, his mother and siblings come to defer to him but he remains subordinate to his father till the latter dies, after which he inherits the father's authority, roles and rights (Hsu 1971, 146).

The affective ties are those attitudes and feelings towards kin that are socially rather than culturally prescribed. For instance, the father may like and treat his female

children or younger sons better than the eldest son. Rohlen's contention is that the dominant dyad does not necessarily mean that the rest of the dyads are obscured. Where the jural and affective ties conflict, the jural ties culturally and naturally carry greater weight. Rohlen proposes that the analysis of any kinship system along the lines of Hsu's hypothesis requires that a distinction be made between culturally jural and socially given affective ties, rather than dominant and non-dominant dyads.



### The Chinese Kinship System

The following description portrays the ideal traditional Chinese family. Historical references indicate that the political upheavals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have greatly destabilized this traditional family. Reference may be made to Montgomery's *Giant in Chains* and Patterson's *The China Paradox* for a detailed analysis of how Marxist/ socialist philosophy has affected China. Nevertheless, in the near absence of studies of the modern Chinese family, we refer to the traditional family for a conceptual framework to lead us to study the modern family. With this in mind, we proceed in our examination of the Chinese kinship system.

A traditional Chinese family is a complex organization of family members, property, domestic animals, reputations, traditions, and the list goes on (Yang 1965, 45). A single kinship unit is built around a large extended family of three or four generations living under the same roof (Queen and Habenstein 1974, 100). The family is located within a broader social organization of clan and integrated within a system of ethico-religious beliefs centering around ancestor worship.

Marriage is regarded as a social arrangement between two families. It emphasizes family rather than individual needs. Importance is placed on perpetuation

of a lineage and worship of ancestors, not on affection or gratification. In this family, attributes of *familism*, “a form of social organization in which all values are determined by reference to maintenance, continuity, and functions of family group” include emphasis on father-son relationship, family pride, encouragement of the large family, the ancestor cult and common ownership of property by the family (Queen and Habenstein 1974, 96ff). Of these, *hsiao* or filial piety is the most basic. Through *hsiao*, a man is charged to devote everything to parents, even at the expense of the marital relationship. If there is a conflict between his wife and mother, he takes the side of his mother, earning the respect of both family and society, (Hsu 1971, 447). Chang’s *Wild Swans*, a celebrated autobiographical memoir lends credence to the claims of reviewed researchers like Hsu, Queen and Habenstein and Yang, who are quoted above. This narrative runs through three generations of women and spans well over 100 years. The four volume fiction series of *A Dream of Red Mansions* presents a multifaceted world of ideas of Chinese life; it also proved helpful in beginning to understand Chinese people.

Approval by other persons is of utmost significance to the Chinese, so much so that the concept of gaining or losing face is about the most important form of social motivation. A child is taught to save face as soon as he becomes self-conscious. Family disgrace is abhorred. To be thrown out of the family is perhaps the most terrible thing that can happen to the Chinese. Mutual dependence means that each human being is not his own master; whether he is seven or seventy his actions and destiny are tied to his parents, ancestors, clan members and descendants (Hsu 1971, 7). Identity is found in belonging within the wider kinship group, not in individual claim and achievement.

Hsu outlines also five cardinal relations, *wu lun*, identifiable with the Chinese society. These are lord and subject, father and son, husband and wife, brother and brother, and friend and friend. Four of the relationships have a specific, non-transferable variety of virtue assigned to it. To father-son relation is assigned filial obligation (*hsiao*), to brother-brother fraternalness (*ti*), to lord-subject loyalty (*chung*), and to friends faithfulness (*hsin*). Other virtues are propriety (*li*), righteousness, (*yi*), integrity (*lien*), and self-consciousness or sense of shame (*chi'ih*) (Hsu 1971, 450-451). Notably, these virtues primarily cement interpersonal relations and promote the collective conscience in place of individual moral integrity, achievements, bravery or creativity. In the past, an enormous amount of literary and moral energy was spent in discussing, analyzing, amplifying and exemplifying the virtues (Hsu 1971, 451).

According to Hsu, the virtue associated with marriage, harmony (*chen* or *chieh*) it is not emphasized (Hsu 1971, 451). This is because of what Queen and Habenstein observe, that romantic love is seen to be dangerous to the development of modesty and deportment expected of married family members in their primary roles of respectful son and subservient daughter-in-law (1974, 106). Social decorum dictates that overt expressions of romantic love are frowned upon as a threat to family order. Even Eros is merely a reality to be dealt with, like man's need for food but without an intrinsic relationship with other areas in marriage. At best it is pressed into the service of filial piety, to provide an heir (Hsu 1971, 449). It is not that romantic stories do not feature in Chinese stories; on the contrary great operas and novels, like *The Dream of Red Mansions*, are built around themes of love. But in practical life Eros does not assume the prominence it does in western societies. Good husbands are encouraged to keep their minds on weightier matters of business and career to provide for the family. A Chinese husband who works hard and long cannot be accused of

neglecting his wife; she is happy to receive his checkbook or its equivalent at the end of the day.

### Dominant Dyad in Chinese Family

The dominant dyad in the Chinese kinship is that of father-son. Some of its key attributes include continuity. This means that every father is a son and every son is a (potential) father. Thus father-son is a link in an everlasting chain of father-son dyads. This dyad is also inclusive: every son has only one father, but potentially every father has many sons. Authority and compliance, the major attributes of this dyad, are carried out openly without qualms on either side (Hsu 1971, 24). Since the parents have more say on the son and are likely to choose the spouse, married partners in this system may be expected to be aloof to each other in public, for they often place their duties and obligations towards parents, not towards each other.

Divorce is possible but rare. The attribute of continuity and of authority strongly militates against the dissolution of the marital bond. Regardless of problems between spouses, marriage must be made to succeed so that filial piety can persevere and bloom. This form of kinship is likely to be associated with a strong cult of ancestors and maximum tendency for the development of the clan (Hsu 1971, 23).

As Queen and Habenstein note, it is difficult to find anywhere else an institutionalized form of family life serving procreative and educative functions so adequately and also include new members or contract without strain. This creates a highly functional society out of the Chinese people (1974, 125).

## **Worldview**

It is difficult for anyone to fully get in a culture that is not his or her own, acknowledges Brown (1963, 14). The study of other cultures is further complicated by the tendency to compare the ideal in one's culture with what is thought to be the worst of another culture. A worldview approach in studying culture is one effective way to understand a people whose culture is different from one's own. This research has adopted a worldview approach. Other studies on culture have been carried out from a worldview approach. Maranz (1993) studied the Senegambian Wolof Muslim people's Worldview. He discovers Islam has been localized to suit the Wolof's pursuit of peace, not the expected requirements of universal Islam. Another reviewed work is that of Lewis (1989) who also took a similar approach to in his study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession in a particular tribe.

## **Worldview and Culture**

For the purposes of this research, we prescribe to Kraft's description of culture as the integrated system of learned, not biological, explicit and implicit behavior patterns among members of a society. This perspective sees the relationship between culture and human beings as similar to that between fish and water, whereby humans are totally immersed in culture (Kraft 1979, 46). According to Kraft, we are conceived without culture but immediately embark on the process of enculturation within the family. In this process we learn particular set of habits, habitual patterns of perceiving reality, behaving, thinking, and so on. Our cultural behavior is learned as though it had a universal value for all mankind (Lingenfelter and Mayer 1986, 150), but what is



considered right and proper in one society may be considered wrong in another society (Brown 1963, 159).

This project involves anthropological research, which is the study of human behavior. Christian anthropologists try to discover and describe people as they are, so that they can communicate the gospel in such people's terms (Kraft 1996, 4). In the process of studying people, anthropology has developed the concept of worldview (Kraft 1996, 11). Kraft assumes that at the core of culture and at the heart of all human life lies the structuring of the basic assumptions, values and allegiances in terms of which people interpret their world, experiences and in turn governs their behavior. These assumptions, values and allegiances are what we call worldview (Kraft 1996, 11).

Quoting Kraft, Kim writes that worldview is not explicitly observable because it is generally hidden under human behaviors. Worldview is logically seated in the deep level of the human culture (2001, 252). The link between worldview and behavior is that worldview is cognitive, while behavior is overt action, and both are parts of culture. By studying the kinship behavior and analyzing it for underlying worldview assumptions, we are studying the Chinese culture. Therefore, continues Kim, understanding a people's worldview means to grasp the rationales for social activities and institutions, and it leads to comprehending the cultural meaning of individual behaviors (2001, 253). In this research, we are studying a social institution kinship and its activities, family relations, to comprehend the meaning behind behavior of the members of that institution, the family, and by implication of the entire Chinese society.

## The Function of Worldview

The concept of worldview is important to our understanding of culture. We will briefly review some factors that Kraft (1996, 52ff) assigns to worldview.

First, a worldview is culturally structured. How a Chinese thinks and relates towards his kin is determined by what is already within the culture. If a Chinese man treats his wife indifferently in public, it is because this has already been unconsciously inculcated in him, and there is an underlying explanation which no one in that culture will question or seek for proof. This underlying explanation is the worldview assumption. Assumptions lie beneath a people's interpretation, evaluation or adaptation to experience, among other things. For example, the assumption that romantic love is not integral to a traditional Chinese marriage means that its existence or absence in a marriage is not a necessary factor to the survival of the marriage. In fact, the silent assumption may be that a marriage has to work anyhow, so an unhappy couple will put up with its marriage at any cost. Without these assumptions, people do not know how to perceive reality or make things work. Therefore, foreign suggestions of alternatives or intervention are considered intrusive in the least and at the worst destructive because they are interpreted within the grid of old assumptions. The disturbance is further aggravated by the fact that such old assumptions are well tested by time and proven by experience.

### The Individual, the Society and Conformity to Worldview

Worldview puts together deep, underlying personal characteristics. This means it shapes the way an individual uses his will to make choices and decisions. In the case of the Chinese man, he is taught to bend his will to conform to group expectation

rather than to satisfy personal desires. Likewise, the use of emotions is bent towards the culturally prescribed norms.

According to Hiebert (1995, 220), all people live in societies or communities of humans who relate to one another in orderly ways. Each community creates its own interaction patterns, which over time lead to socially acceptable ways of doing things, and from which the individual is not expected to deviate. In most non-western societies, relationships are often meaningful ends in themselves, not a means to another end. As it were, “a person with many relatives, friends and descendants will long be remembered and honored. Consequently, people give priority to cultivating relationships over completing tasks”(Hiebert 1994, 142). Notions of beauty and wisdom are attached to values of relating like hospitality, generosity or geniality. In addition, to live at peace with others is the greatest good. Maintaining social harmony is a chief value. The previous analysis of the Chinese kinship system seems to confirm these observations that Hiebert makes about relationships.

But there is more to a person than the relationships around him, be they kindred or other. There are broader influences from the wider society. There are also individual personality traits to take into consideration. Western psychology, influenced by Freudian theories, advances that at the center of human personality are basic drives for self-gratification (Crabb (1975:27ff). If this were so, it would contradict the ideas around which the identity of Chinese person is built, that of belonging to a family and of satisfying others other than oneself. Hsu (1961) observes that all human behavior is mediated through the minds of individuals, and all individuals live in social groups—the two disciplines, anthropology and psychology cannot be totally separated. Generally in families, personality seems to be created as a response to the interactions between genetic inheritance, cultural patterning and

enculturation or education (Kraft 1996, 155). Included here is an interactive process in which there is pressure towards conformity to the cultural patterns exerted by the society. According to Durkheim who studied theories of man and culture, cooperation and cohesion in society happen because people are controlled by a system of beliefs and sentiments that make up a collective conscience (Hatch 1973, 169).

Kraft points out that even in the best regulated and most orderly of societies as in families, there will be less than perfect conformity by some individuals (1996, 155). Sometimes individuals comply through reproduction of patterned roles as one does a construction blueprint without personal allegiance to what they are made to do. While studying the kinship system, the research will remain alert for factors that shape the individual's worldview, factors that may be other than kinship induced. At the end of the day, Christian faith requires that the individual makes a commitment to Christ, then by inclusion, the family becomes a part of the family of faith. Asking people to commit themselves to Christ means prescribing anything but the accepted behavior, in which case it is necessary to know what one is up against.

#### Importance of Worldview Study to Christian Witness

Commenting on Kearney's study of worldview, Naugle (2002, 244) raises key questions for this research. "What relationship exists between the content of worldview categories and socio-cultural behavior? What kind of influence does a worldview have on life?" To respond to this, we look at Kraft's classification of worldview universals, which he in turn draws from Kearney. Worldview universals are the areas of life with which every known worldview deals. Of the eight categories Kraft lists, we cite two for our purposes, namely classification and group universals

(1996, 63-64). Classification relates to placing experience into known categories, “to show the logic lying behind the classification” (Kraft as quoted in Kim 2001, 253). Kim also believes that the way of classification demonstrates the value system of a people (2001, 253). As for group universals, we are taught to see people either as individuals or as groups. Chinese society sees people as groups rather than as individuals.

Queen and Habenstein (1974, 96) have referred to the Chinese kinship system as “a classic instance of a multifunctional family of great stability”. It is one of the best family systems because of all the benefits acquired thereof, including identity, provision, stability and continuity. The big question concerns what exactly are the assumptions behind this stability are. We also wonder how that family can be protected from destabilization and how the values can be passed on to coming generations. There is also the issue of how interference, especially by foreign values, which are good but may happen to conflict with Chinese values, affects the members of this family.

Following Kraft, I am especially concerned about knowing their worldview, “since it is a person’s or a group’s worldview that is at stake whenever an appeal for conversion is made. When people become Christians, they make certain changes in their deep level worldview assumptions, values and allegiances” (Kraft 1996, 11). To carry out effective witness, Nida (1954) encourages missionaries to make a determined attempt to understand the cultures and customs of others to avoid prejudice and unsuitable methods of Christian witness. His work and that of Kraft (1979) encouraged me to carry out this research.

When one considers that the Chinese culture is entrenched in a long history, governed by multiple philosophies and locked out from the rest of the world by an

intimidating language, it becomes very important to penetrate it through a worldview study approach. This is a key step towards a contextualized approach to evangelism among the Chinese. It is essential for me as a cross-cultural witness to undertake this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

Linton in the introduction to *A Chinese Village* commends community studies as a major development of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. These studies reveal the interrelations of the many factors that influence both the life of the individual and the community. They also provide an understanding of individual needs and desires. If these are not understood, no attempt at planned change can be successful (Yang 1965, v). A study and description of any community is not an easy task. This is because there underlies a covert zone of concepts and attitudes which gives the visible behavior its social significance. These underlying concepts are what Kraft terms as worldview (2000, 1-2). How to penetrate the covert level of an alien culture is still one of the most difficult problems for a researcher. The assumptions that operate at the unconscious level can rarely be ascertained by direct questioning, even when the informants from a community are very friendly. Beyond interviewing and observations, a researcher has to discover things through a process of careful analysis and interpretation.

The study of culture is cultural anthropology (Law 1968, 10). The traditional divisions of cultural anthropology are ethnology and ethnography. Ethnography is the descriptive study of a culture in a non-interpretive way. It is the collection of data that gives the raw material for analysis, interpretation and comparison. Ethnology carries the process to completion by analyzing the meaning of data through classification and the use of principles that aid the interpretation of the ethnographic facts in terms of broad anthropological theory (Law 1968, 14). In this research, I followed Spradley's

Developmental Research Sequence method of doing an ethnographic study. The method assumes that *some tasks are best accomplished before other tasks when undertaking ethnographic fieldwork* (1980, 175).

### Entry Procedure

For the last four years I have worked among members of the Kenya Chinese Gospel Fellowship as an administrative and pastoral assistant. Therefore, during this research, I have had regular access to my informants. No letter of introduction to my field of study was required. I was able to gather data in a developmental sequence, combining both ethnographic interview and participant observation.

### Sampling

‘[S]killed ethnographers often gather most of their data through participant observation and many casual, friendly conversations’ (Spradley 1979, 58). I directly interviewed a core group of 12 people. These included three teenage girls, four men, and five women. All of these are ethnically Chinese, have lived in Kenya for anything between two and five years and are thoroughly immersed in their culture. They responded to open ended questions and interactive discussions over a period of several months. In addition to those directly interviewed, I also did participant observation of different family contexts and interactions involving a total of over thirty people. This latter action was aimed at observing both explicit and implicit behavior within the Chinese family. Observation of behavior in natural contexts helped to lend credence to the responses given to interview questions and reinforce conclusions deriving from the analysis.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Analysis and Interpretation of Research Findings**

This research intends to discover the relational patterns of members of a Chinese family, with specific reference to the prominent set of two family members, referred to as the dominant dyad. Following Hsu (1971) and Queen and Habenstein (1974), the idea of a dominant dyad has been conceived with the ideal traditional Chinese family in mind. But the research group comprises of Chinese people currently living in Kenya, which means they are modern Chinese living away from the ideal location where a traditional Chinese family would function.

From the onset, it is important to state that this research finds many variations between the traditional and the contemporary Chinese families. But the differences are not because the research group lives away from China, the setting that would offer the ideal circumstances for the traditional-like family to function. In fact, the general trend is that Chinese in Kenya have not interacted much with Kenyans to form what Hiebert calls a bicultural community (1995, 228). By and large they remain an unadventurous lot, socializing mostly within their Chinese. Therefore, except for some factors caused by geographical displacement, they are not very different from the Chinese in China. So, whatever cultural changes that might have occurred within the Chinese family are not primarily because they are in foreign country with a different culture. They have been caused by the revolutions that happened in China during the last century. We will briefly take a look at these later. For now, suffice to suggest that the lifestyle of a Chinese family in Kenya is comparatively similar to that

of a family in China. Having said this, let us embark on an analysis of the outcome of the research on the Chinese family.

### **The Dyads**

Research findings indicate that the contemporary nuclear Chinese family has three dyads: wife-husband, mother-child and father-child. To this, we add the grandparents-child dyad that also featured in the findings. But our main focus will be on the nuclear unit. The families in the research group have one child each, except for two cases where each couple has two children. In one case the couple has a set of twins who have been living in China with their grandparents for the last four years, hence could not be included in the research. The other couple got a second baby (three months old at the moment of writing) whom they claimed was unplanned for and might have been aborted; they opted to keep him after considering their Christian convictions. It could not be established what impact he has on the family, as everybody is still excited about the new born. These instances of two children in a family have not provided us with sufficient data to depart from the observations made in the one child family.

### **The Dominant Dyad**

In the basic nuclear unit, the one child is the center of attention by both parents. But each parent gives and receives a different kind of attention from the child. This relationship has important implications for the set of two in that dyad, whether it is the father-child or mother-child relationship. So, the parent-child set may be cautiously referred to as the dominant dyad. It is dominant because following

Hsu's hypothesis, this dyad determines the attitudes and action patterns that the individuals in it develop to others who are apart from that dyad. It also affects the qualities and patterns of other related relationships. This will become clear as we analyze each of the three main dyads. The note of caution here is that there are no comparative dyads, such as those of other siblings, to point out in a conclusive way how the relationship dominates over the rest of the family members. Then, it is not a father-child but a parent-child dyad, meaning that really, it is the child who is so important as to be considered dominant. The dominance is not to be understood in terms of superiority or equality/ inequality but in terms of importance to the entire family structure.

#### Father-child Dyad

Five fathers and their children, three of whom are boys and two are girls were interviewed and/ or observed here. One informant's son and his mother are in China. This man missed his son more than anyone else in his family. Though the boy is only six years old, the father has great plans for his future. Another father would not bring his wife in Kenya and was content to stay away from her as long as she did not have a baby. When a baby was conceived, he went back to China to be with his child. In response to research questions, he said he would spend any spare time he has away from his office with his eleven-month-old (at the moment) daughter, who has brought back meaning into his (sad) life, because he was forced into the marriage.

For all fathers, characteristics of this relationship oscillate between the urge to indulge his only child and the desire to role-play as a tough Chinese man. This tension is resolved when the father is able to provide for the best education and the best living conditions for the family in which that child lives. The three girls interviewed are in

up market kind of schools, while one father has sent his twin children to China to ensure they master the Chinese language while they are young. In future, he plans for them to study for excellent English in a British-type school. When able to fulfill this role, the ego of a father as a tough, responsible man is boosted. Simultaneously, the child gets the best of the world, as well a sense of obligation to the father. All the privileges given to the child serve a deterrent against disobedience for fear of offence, and are a motivation to reward the parents in the future for bringing him or her up.

Whatever the privileges the child gets, the concept filial piety (*hsiao*) is still operative between the child and the father. In fact, the general ideals of male behavior seem to be transferred to this one child even if it is a girl. For example, he or she is expected to behave as a grown up, obey, be self-disciplined and respect the parents. In addition, the child should develop independence, courage and a degree of aggression in order to survive in a competitive world. The most effective way to show these qualities is through the outcome of their schoolwork and extra curricular activities in school. One of the girls regretted that she was unable to participate in sports events that would make her father really proud. She makes up to him by excelling in his favorite subjects, the sciences, and by learning how to repair the machines of his factory. Actually for most of the children, including the ones I met in China, academic excellence is usually done to honor the father.

There are also some immediate characteristics to this dyad. The three girls interviewed describe the relationship with their fathers in warm terms, with words such as “my dad adores me”, “we are very close”, and “he loves me very much”. But they also say the father does not openly show love or affection. They know they are loved in the way the father provides the best for them, responds to requests, or comes to the rescue when they need help. At times the father is strict with the child. For

instance, in public, the fathers are observed to be almost always indifferent towards the child. They may practice mock hostility through “straight talk” to the child on how to excel in school and life like so and so. That would usually be in the presence of a guest whom the father wants to impress.

For the father, playing the above roles is related to fatherliness as much as to cultural expectations. The fatherly role is obvious. As for cultural expectations, it appears that a father bets all his worth on this one child, who is the sole heir to the family lineage that is still central to a Chinese person’s existence. Sometimes, it seems that the father pushes the child too hard in an effort to see a replication of themselves, or the realization of a dream they did not achieve.

Does the father-child dyad affect the husband-wife dyad? In this research, it seemed to do so for the better. Almost all the women indicate that when they were expecting their one child, the husband would take special care of them, of course in different ways but with a marked difference before or after the child was conceived and born. This may point to the value the father placed on the anticipated family lineage heir. Rarely does a child appear to rival the husband-wife dyad, simply because both parents want the best for the child. The father maintains more of the jural ties with the child: he decides on the school, works to meet the needs and determines the future of the child more than does the mother. But the mother spends more time with the child than the father does with the child

### Mother-child Dyad

Reinforced by nature and nurture, the mother-child relationship seems to be very strong and very important to both. It is significant for the affective roles that both mother and child have for each other. The mother tends to be the confidante and

refuge of the child, whether the child is a boy or a girl. One sixteen-year-old says that she tells anything and everything to her mother, and her mother does likewise, including details of the marriage; the two are soul mates. A mother confided that contrary to expectation, her six-year-old son prefers to be with her than with the father. Two of the teenage girls say that their mother does everything for them, including cooking and washing while they study. Likewise, the child seems to secure the woman's marriage and her husband's respect for her as the mother of his child.

Two odd cases highlight the significance of the mother-child dyad to the development of the child and fulfillment of the mother. In one case, the parents sent the daughter to study in a foreign country during her teenage years. This was a forced decision to allow the parents to pursue business interests without her in the way while still providing her with an excellent education. About six years later, the mother brought this daughter to Kenya in an attempt at reunion. After a short troubled stay, the daughter as good as denounced her mother and went back to China to what her mother described as a bad life. Rejected and alone in Kenya, the mother Kenya picked up a self-destructive habit, to the detriment of her hitherto thriving business. In another case, the mother of a teenage girl has to stay in China, while daughter and father live in Kenya. Her father, a more jural than affective type, projects onto her the male expectations described earlier. In the absence of her mother, she neither trusts nor confides in anyone. Instead she exhibits signs of forced adulthood, clearly missing out on her teenage.

Where the threesome is living together, the mother-child dyad is very important to the wife and the child, but is no threat to the husband-wife relationship. The mother plays the mediator between the father and the child when the father's expectations for the child are too high.

## Husband-wife Dyad

The husband-wife dyad is an ambivalent one. It is caught in the tension between traditional role expectations and fragments of modern or western ways. For starters, the choice of a spouse is mostly a personal affair, but one of the men involved in this research, in his twenties did not have a choice on the woman he married. The marriage was arranged between the parents back in China when he was here in Kenya working for his company. He was made to get married when he went on a one month break in China. His has been an “unhappy ever after” marriage, the only relief being a child born into the troubled marriage.

For any couple to be happy, the parents have to approve the choice. One respondent narrates the sad tale of her sister who married a man whom the parents didn't approve. They were such an unhappy couple that she died out of depression-related illness ascribed to her unhappy marriage. Besides approval, parents are further involved in the wedding details, as in the cases of three of the men and five of the women who recalled their wedding details. Parents of both bride and groom usually compete to outdo each other with lavish feasts and gifts for the couples.

Once the marriage has been consummated, spouses have grown accustomed to each other, and a baby is born to the couple, this dyad seems to receive the least attention. This proves Hsu's proposition that Eros is pressed into the service of filial piety, to provide an heir. One of the successful men says that as long as he provides everything for his wife, he does not need to tell her that he loves her. She on the other hand complains of his lack of affection; their marriage has been troubled on occasion. Another of the men has this to say of a wife: “a good wife should not complain. There is a saying that says, ‘if you are married to a chicken, you must obey the chicken, if

you are married to a dog then obey the dog'. My wife knows I love her by what I do for her." His wife appears to be one of the happiest wives in the research group.

Just as proposed in the reviewed section, the marital bond is meant to last for life. It appears that it is not even endangered by long periods of separation. All of the interviewees have at some point been separated from their spouses, an issue concerning which they made little fuss. Every year, one of the spouses might be absent for several months at a time to attend at business or family affairs in China. Sometimes husbands and wives can be away from each other as long as economic pursuits demand. The woman described earlier, whose daughter denounced her, is a case in point. She does business in Kenya with goods sent from China by her husband. She in turn sends the money and supports him back in China. She has been doing this business for the last seven years, in which period she and her husband have only been reunited thrice for short periods. Another woman receives regular money for upkeep from her husband who is in China, but neither of them will give up their independence in China or in Kenya to live together.

Where the family has access to the mother-in-law, she is a more prominent person in the household than is the wife. She is the threat to the husband-wife dyad. According to the man who didn't have a choice on his wife, his mother is more important to him than his wife. In turn, the man's mother, who was the chief architect of the marriage, looks to the interests of the wife. Another man is also torn between his mother and wife, but because of filial piety he shows more attention to the mother to the chagrin of the wife.



### The Child-grandparent Dyad

This fourth dyad seems important to this analysis because it features in most of the interview responses. Since the grandparents can no longer pride themselves in having large households, they are very happy to receive and make a fuss of the one child begotten by their children. Each of the children in this research talks highly of their grandparents, particularly the grand father. The children love to visit with the grand parents when they go back to China, because they get everything they ask, and the grand parents do not push them to work as hard as do the parents. For one of the girls, it was her grandfather who gave her pet name *jiao jiao* which means ‘the delicate one’. This girl loves to visit with him.

Grand parents may serve as foster parents. For one family, they are helping to bring up the children in China while they attend school there. At the urging of their mothers, two of the teenage girls interviewed would like to get married as soon as they are through with university education. The reason is that they can get children and bring them to the mothers, who will tend them while the daughters pursue their careers. These mothers want grandchildren. The man who had a marriage forced onto him said his mother wanted a grandchild, but he was not getting married fast enough so they had to decide to help him.

### **Worldview Implications**

Over the last fifty years, profound changes precipitated by political events have taken place in China. When Chairman Mao Zedong and his communist party won a civil war in 1949, China became a communist country. Efforts to reconstruct China from the destruction of long years of war using Marxist principles led the country through a series of crises, the worst of which was the Cultural Revolution

from 1966-1976. After the death of Chairman Mao in 1976 the country began a fresh wave of economic reforms. Missionary Sinologist Tony Lambert in *China's Christian Millions* movingly records that the Cultural Revolution destroyed the illusions of a whole generation, overwhelmed the Chinese society and culture and created a deep wound in the collective Chinese psyche. Families were torn apart. Almost thirty years later, Chinese people still carry this wound. In 1980, following the inauguration of economic reforms, the central Chinese government decreed that every Chinese family is to have only one child. The one-child-policy dealt a heavy blow on the entire Chinese psyche. The one child is a big factor in any considerations of the worldview of Chinese culture today.

With only one child per couple, one would have assumed, and indeed has been suggested that China is raising a generation of “little princes and princesses”. It would be expected that the parents indulge the one child and that the child would be demanding. Research findings point to the contrary. Each of the children interviewed carries a sense of obligation towards the parents. Indebtedness to parents is in fact inculcated in the child early on. They learn to take provisions of the parents as favors to be reciprocated through hard work now and security in later years. Some of the students I met in a Chinese university in China last year wish to support their parents once they complete school. With this in mind, let us focus on the worldview of Chinese people.

### Worldview Universals of Person and Relationship

The results of the research indicate that the dominant institution within the Chinese society is kinship based on the nuclear family, not kinship based on the extended family. Within this smaller unit the values thereof are “family” as opposed

to “self” oriented. The family claims primary allegiance or at least that is the intention. However, having lost their former source of pride and preoccupation—many children—this research indicates that most Chinese people have turned their attention to economic pursuits. This seems to happen for two reasons. First, it is a necessary occupation to meet needs, especially with the rising standards of living. Secondly, there appear to be increasing expectations for each of the family members to be highly successful. So business for the husband and wife and education for the child end up receiving equal or competing attention over and above the family subsystem of culture.

Therefore, to a large extent, the social substratum of the Chinese culture is no longer shaped by inherited kinship norms that have been delineated in the review section. Social relations are mostly dictated upon by the environmental/ geographical settings where the Chinese person finds him or herself. In our case, the context is a foreign country, where one is alienated from extended kin members, though one gets to meet and relate with other Chinese people. In these circumstances most of life is lived at the nuclear unit level. Here, the Chinese person sees him or herself as part of a small unit, which is not the same as belonging within the wider society, neither is it being a self-declared individual. He or she is closely linked with others within that small unit, but is sufficiently detached from the wider society, which one does not depend on and has little obligation to.

Belonging to the small unit means that decisions are made within the family context; the parents are responsible especially for the child till the child grows up and the roles get reversed. Relationships are therefore defined in terms of “me and my wife and child”, and maybe our parents, as opposed to “we” the general Chinese society, or “me” the individual. There is apparently a difference between this kind of

identity and that of western nuclear family identity. The western kind teaches the individual to be independent and responsible for themselves, encourages the development and exercise of a strong individual conscience, decisions and consequences (Kraft 1996, 295-297). The Chinese cannot disengage themselves of the events, processes and responsibilities of the unit he or she belongs to.

In spite of the changes, there are some older cultural expectations that still linger on in this diminished family. Personal security and meaning is tied to the family, rather than in individual freedom and achievement. Perpetuation of the family lineage is of paramount importance. Formerly, children were begotten as a form of old age insurance, as pointed out earlier. That insurance having been undermined by the one-child policy, Chinese people work hard to save for their future, but they want the child successful so that he can keep the family line going. The marriage of the child features prominently in the future plans the parents make for him or her, even when they encourage him or her to be successful at school. All the three girls interviewed talked of their parents desire for them to get a good job, a good husband and a child. Even so, the child grows up with the idea that he or she will be responsible for the parents when they are old. Certainly, filial piety remains.

### Worldview and Socio-cultural Specialization

Kraft says that in any given society, greater attention is given to certain things than to others. The surface level behavior that a people specialize in will have greater influence on the core assumptions, values and allegiances than the behavior they do not emphasize very much (Kraft 1996, 53). The group under investigation emphasizes two aspects of the culture, each of which is a corollary of the other. Both the Chinese man and woman highly value the family unit. Therefore, in principle, their primary

allegiance is to the family. However, for them to provide the best lifestyle especially for the one child, they have to make a lot of wealth. So commitment to the family drives them to do their best to be economically successful. But that shifts the patterns of behaving. Their surface level behavior suggests that their allegiance is first to the economic subsystem of worldview before it is to the family. This is seen at the attempts at many business ventures, hard work and longer periods of absence from the family unit consisting of the spouse and the child. This leads to another one of Kraft's worldview principles, and that is ramification.

### Worldview Ramification

In his model of culture as an organic unity, Kraft (1996, 436) envisions foundational assumptions, allegiances and values of worldview as the core of that organic unity. These assumptions spread all around the surface level behavior arranged in subsystems of social control, politics, religion, technology, economics, education and any other subsystems of culture. Change introduced at the worldview level will ramify through every surrounding subsystem, effecting integral change throughout (Kraft 1996, 372). Although the Chinese person means to offer the best to his or her family, the economic ventures in competitive business environment demand more time and attention than what he or she gives to the family. When a spouse gets home, especially the man, all he can do is slouch on the couch and switch on the TV because of fatigue, as one wife described her husband's habit.

Since the various aspects of a cultural system relate closely to one another, a change or a demand on one part will affect the other parts. This is worldview ramification (Kraft 1996, 372). We assert here that it is ramification rather than an intentional departure or rebellion against traditional values because findings indicate

that Chinese people do not easily change their values. The economic and educational pursuits are meant for the better, but they become a threat to the more important relational aspect of the Chinese culture. Spouses along with the children are willing to be separated for long periods, usually several years at a go. Virtually every Chinese family in Nairobi talks of a time when they were apart. Several of them are living singly in Kenya while the rest of the family is in China. Two women who participated in this research claim they still have a marriage with their husbands, but the spouses are back in China. Ironically, one of the women receives goods for her business from her husband, and she in turns sends money to him for his and their daughter's sustenance.

In the families that live together, there are further ramifications resulting from this emphasis on the economic part of the culture. The child sees parents working so hard because of him or her. So he or she puts a lot more effort on schoolwork, so as to reward the parents with pride at his or her good grades. To the child, the most important part of the culture shifts from the parents to school and the influences coming from there. The three teenage girls I interviewed have more to say about what they say and do at school than what they say and do with their families.

Further ramification seems to happen when the husband and wife become alienated as a result of their long absence from each other. Since the business world is competitive, rarely delivering the quick wealth it promises, some get disillusioned with life, less caring about others and more concerned about personal gratification. Several of them turn to various means of escape from the growing emptiness, which include casino gambling and drinking among other social ills, usually with devastating effects to the rest of the family. Eventually, most of the members of the Chinese family pay only lip service to the family unit but get more absorbed with

themselves. Therefore, with rippling effects, the whole economic substratum has hijacked the family for the worse.

### The Chinese Family in a Precarious Position

In conclusion to this analysis, we may assert that Chinese family does not seem to deliberately depart from a social/relational orientation. But it is the inevitable result of the one-child policy that leads to an economic and materialist cultural emphasis in an attempt to fill the vacuum left by the absence of many children. Our literature review section has intimated that the Chinese family is a strong unit, but this claim cannot be supported by this research. Instead, we suggest that the disequilibria (Kraft 1996, 374) occasioned by all these changes have created a greater sense of insecurity and imbalance than the Chinese people know how to, or, are prepared to handle. This family is therefore in a precarious position in relation to its future.

Non-confirmed data on China also suggests that though they do so by a lesser degree, most Chinese families are feeling the same impact of an increasingly economically driven, individual minded society at the expense of traditional family and communal values. The institutionalized family life is now more of an exception than the norm, although the traditional values are highly regarded. Hence we may claim that it is no longer a highly functional society. The new Chinese person is less the component of cultural patterning and more the result of school based education and personal achievements. But it is not all gloom and doom. The good news is that through the vacuum created by these developments, the gospel can and is bringing meaning into the lives of Chinese individuals and families. The gospel can help Chinese people to reconstruct their lives and society as members of the new family of God. We turn to this aspect in the next section.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusion**

Anthropology ought to be a helping science (Werner and Schoepfle 1987: 378). As Christians, Christ has commissioned us to make disciples of all nations. We use anthropological insights to understand the people of the world before we can transform these people into disciples. Having analyzed the research findings, we now attempt to draw helpful conclusions and recommendations for missionaries and cross-cultural workers among the Chinese people.

### **Missiological Implications and Recommendations**

Looking at the sequence of the family breakdown in the above analysis, it should be understood that the need of all humanity is not quite different. All men need to be restored to a rightful relationship with God. Moreover, each individual needs to respond to God as writes Koster (1956, 51), “It is the individual who sins, and therefore it is the individual who upon confession, repentance and divine forgiveness is saved.” Upon the basis of that salvation man can form true relationships with fellow men, both his blood kin and those of the family of faith that he joins upon conversion.

For the last thirty years, china has worked towards the reconstruction of a material civilization out of a troubled past. It has mostly succeeded, since China is now emerging as the global supplier and market of most everything. But it has not recovered its cultural heritage in equal measure; neither is it attempting to do so. Chinese people are no longer held together by concrete kinship values that ensured



the resilience of China for thousands of years up until the distressing 20<sup>th</sup> century. So no other cultural aspect is offering a strong, binding ideology for the Chinese people. The replacing values of the economics and education are no viable alternatives to the family-centered values that hold up and build the society. Someone has noted that the depravity of the human nature comes to the fore when the foundations of an earlier worldview have been shaken and a vacuum left without a feasible replacement. This has been confirmed from observations made on some members of the research group. The Chinese people are an at-risk society.

However, far from lamenting the breakdown of the Chinese family, this may be the opportunity for the Holy Spirit, working through the church to salvage the broken walls of Chinese culture. Christian faith should not just occupy a small part, a religious substratum within the larger framework of Chinese culture in competition with other parts of that culture. Christian principles should resound throughout all parts of the Chinese culture so as to cause a worldview transformation. This kind of change should be the foundation upon which China will construct a system of moral principles that will save China's soul in the long run. There is therefore no question of what the church should do; it has to get involved in the reconstruction of the Chinese culture and society by preaching the gospel to the Chinese people.

Christian witness offers a powerful reconciliation tool for the small family units as well as the wider disillusioned community. When trouble strips them of the illusions of wealth and personal achievement, or when these are put in the right perspective, Chinese people still desire to have and maintain strong ties with one another. Therefore, the church must help them foster a new community. It should also offer a buffer or a comfort zone, helping make sense of all the pressure and changes within the Chinese family and stepping in to mediate in times of trouble.

Indeed this is not just wishful thinking, it is happening. More and more Chinese people are successfully reconstructing their broken lives within the ministry of the Kenya Chinese Gospel Fellowship Church. Many give up their wrong escapist habits for the claims of the Christian faith and the warmth of the fellowship. They now channel their energy towards family welfare. They become responsible fathers and mothers and obedient children. Some go back to China to reconcile with their families and start all over again. These are an example and an encouragement that all the good of the Chinese tradition can be salvaged within the context of the church. Therefore the gospel of Christ does not have to come as a threat to the Chinese society as has been feared it would. The gospel is the fulfillment of what Chinese consider good and admirable. Jesus is the answer for the China in this century.

#### Ministry Recommendations

This research achieved its goal in that it has described the Chinese kinship system, more precisely the nuclear Chinese family living in Nairobi. We have found that there is a dominant dyad within this family. But we have expanded this dyad so that instead of being the father-child dyad, it is the parent-child dyad, so that it can either be the mother-child or father-child. Earlier the Chinese family was referred to as a “classic instance of a multifunctional family of great stability”. This claim cannot be supported by the outcome of this research. Instead, we can make the claim that this family is getting increasingly fragmented because the Chinese culture has not withstood the modernizing spirit of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or been able to make cultural sense of the changes that have occurred within the Chinese nation. The Chinese family in Nairobi is not culturally stable. For this reason, we recommend the following:

First, the church should be more intentional in doing evangelism among Chinese people in Nairobi. Since they tend to keep to themselves, they may never go out to look for help until the situations at home deteriorate and they are on the verge of getting in trouble with local authorities. Being aware of the causative factors of destabilization as outlined in this research, the church should go where they are. Once they have become Christians the believers need to go through thorough discipleship. This should help them make sense of the changes and to know how to cope with these changes, maintain the positive aspects of their culture while learning Christian principles to replace the negative aspects.

Secondly, Chinese people need to be helped to leave their isolated cocoons of the small family unit, learn from local cultures and become a bicultural community. This will help the cope with change in more creative ways. Simultaneously, the church should encourage and support the family unit to remain together since the family is the central pillar for the individual. As has been said, Chinese people's priority is on the family, and what departure from family values is not premeditated.

Finally, the need to have as many Christian workers, advocates of the Christian gospel among Chinese people cannot be overemphasized. With the erosion of traditional family values, Chinese people are sinking into unmediated individualism (compared to the West where individual freedom is a well understood and mediated value). In the long run, only reconciliation with God and man through faith in Christ will save this at-risk society from thorough disintegration. All churches must raise and send missionaries to work among Chinese people in China and wherever else they may be found. Churches must also make concerted prayers on behalf of the Chinese people so that the Lord will raise laborers for them.

As noted in the review section, western psychology teaches that at the center of the human personality is a basic drive for individual self-gratification. Christian theology teaches that the individual, through the exercise of his will is primarily responsible for his actions, their outcomes and his destiny. And in passing, it has been mentioned that it is the individual who first needs to be reconciled to God. Clearly, there is something on the individual that has lingered in the shadows of this research. In addition, the person and his actions and their effects on others have featured quite a bit in this research. Culture on the other hand puts the individual in dependence on other individuals and somewhat ascribes his actions, their outcomes and his destiny to those of other individuals. This relationship between cultural programming and the individual personality has not been resolved in this research. Therefore, the interplay between the Chinese individual, his personality traits and Chinese culture is an area of study that forms the basis for further study in a build up to this research.

Secondly, this research has referred to changes that took place in China during the last century. Many traditional societies, including most of Africa underwent major changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But there are few that were as radical and as disruptive as those that happened in China, because China has a longer history and was more institutionalized than were some of these other societies. Any scholar interested in the processes of culture and worldview change would find an interesting and stimulating case study of China and Chinese people. Thus this is an area of further and in-depth research that would go beyond a Masters Degree level.

Finally it is not enough to suggest that the gospel is the answer to the needs of the Chinese family. That gospel needs to be contextualized to address the felt needs. How to contextualize the gospel to meet the needs of the Chinese family, vis-à-vis the cultural changes taking place in this society is another area of further research.

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## APPENDIX A

### Diagram of Kinship Terms

RELATION TO EGO	CHINESE TERM	ENGLISH TERM
Paternal grandfather	Zu fu	Grandfather
Maternal grandfather	Wai zu fu	
Paternal grandmother	Zu mu	Grandmother
Maternal grandmother	Wai zu mu	
Father	Fu qin	Father
Mother	Mu qin	Mother
Son	Er zi	Son
Daughter	Nu er	Daughter
Son's son	Sun zi	Grandson
Daughter's son	Wai sun	
Son's daughter	Sun nu	Granddaughter

Elder brother	Ge ge	Brother
Younger brother	Di di	
Elder sister's husband	Jie fu	Brother-in-law
Younger sister's husband	Mei fu	
Elder sister	Jie jie	Sister
Younger sister	Mei mei	
Elder brother's wife	Sao zi	Sister-in-law
Younger brother's wife	Di mei	



## **APPENDIX B**

### **General Questions Used in the Interview Process**

#### **Descriptive questions**

1. Who is the most important person in your life?
2. Why is the person you have named the most important?
3. Imagine that you were able to have all the time to spend with this person; could you describe a typical day with him or her?
4. Describe your relationship with the most important person in your life
5. Which person do you respect most in your family?
6. Why do you respect/ honor that person?
7. Explain or demonstrate how do you show that respect?

#### **Structural questions**

1. What are the different kinds of relationships between you and members of your family?
2. What are the different kinds of relationships between you and say, your father (the most important person in your life)? Do it include friendship, instructor, discipliner, provider?
3. How and why do you address people who are, younger than you? Older than you?
4. Why do you address the members of your family with the titles that you use?

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### Educational Background

2004-2006 Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology:  
Master of Arts, Missions Studies  
2003 Intern (informal training in leadership), Nairobi Chapel:  
children's department and Missions department  
2001-2002 Alliance Francaise: advanced level certificate in French  
language  
1998-2002 University of Nairobi: Bachelor of Education Arts in  
Linguistics and Literature (Hons)  
1993-1996 Mary Hill Girls School, Thika: Kenya Certificate of  
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Education)

### Professional/ Ministry Experience

2003 to date Director of Chinese ministry at Nairobi Chapel: pastoral  
and administrative responsibilities  
2004 Pastoral assistant in the Missions department at Nairobi  
Chapel  
March-Sept 2002 Teaching English and French to Korean Children  
Jan-May 2002 Library and resource center management at Word of  
Truth Ministries  
2001 April-August Nairobi School: English and literature Teacher  
1997-1998 Bawan Roses Farm: recording clerk and assistant  
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### Travel Experience

Oct-Nov 2003 Mozambique / South Africa. Leading the Nairobi  
Chapel interns team on an missions trip among  
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**Mission and Vision:** With all my God-given capacities, my mission is  
"seeking his kingdom and helping the world seek and  
find the same".