

*NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY*

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

*BY
MARGARET WANGUI GITAU*

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

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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.

