CULTURAL ELEMENTS WHICH CONTROL COMMUNICATION IN A NEW

MISSION SITUATION

by

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To Ken

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CULTURAL ELEMENTS WHICH CONTROL COMMUNICATION IN A NEW MISSION SITUATION

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the cultural elements which control and direct communication in the culture of a new mission situation and to determine how these relate to the missionary and may be utilized by him in his role as communicator of the Christian gospel. To do this the field of cultural anthropology will be investigated to discover those disciplines which speak to the problems of the missionary in learning to understand a foreign culture and to communicate effectively to the individuals in it as well as to be the agent in its future transformation.

B. Significance of the Problem

The proclamation of any message which has as great implications for both individuals and for society as does the Christian gospel merits the best possible training and insight in preparation for the cultural conflicts which it is bound both to confront and to create. The application of the principles of anthropological studies, principally from the areas of ethnology and ethnography, aims to eliminate as much as possible those factors in

the human element which would distort or hinder the message in order that its full power may be concentrated to promote those things which are central. Thus the problem is significant: How can cultural anthropology illuminate the field of contact of the missionary in order that a relevant witness may be established?

C. Delimitation of the Problem

Other studies, notably Eugene Nida's Customs and Cultures and the recent best-seller The Ugly American by William Lederer and Eugene Burdick have served to underscore the need for anthropological orientation. With these and other sources in mind the present paper assumes its necessity. In the field of cultural anthropology the discussion will be limited to the areas of ethnology and ethnography. These will be studied to determine the various concepts of culture, the techniques used in the study of culture, and the standards for the classification and the interpretation of data gathered on the field as they relate to the missionary in his attempt to communicate in a totally new cultural setting.

Terms frequently used are defined as follows:

1. Webster defines communication as the "interchange of thoughts or opinions ; a process by which meanings are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols . . . an art that deals with expressing or ex-

changing ideas effectively in speech or writing or through the graphic or dramatic arts."[1] In this study the term will refer to both process and art. Communication as an art will refer to the principles which must be applied before effective transfer of ideas can take place. As process it will be concerned with the methods by which the exchange of thoughts or opinions is accomplished.

2. Cultural anthropology as defined by Winick is "the study of the behaviors of man which are learned, including among others the social, linguistic, technical, and familial . . . the study of man and his works."[2]

3. In the study of anthropology two terms frequently used are those of ethnology and ethnography. These are defined as "primarily sciences which deal with man as a racial unit."[3] The purpose of ethnology is "to isolate the factors involved in culture growth and function, to determine whether there are as many ethnologists believe, definite laws comparable to physical laws, or only vague trends toward regularity."[4] It thus deals with subtle and intricate processes.[5]

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1 Webster's Third New International Dictionary

2 Charles Winick, Dictionary of Anthropology, New York, Philosophical Library, 1956, p. 29.

3 "Ethnology and Ethnography," Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 8, 1957, p. 781

4 Philip Drucker, "Ethnology," Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 10, 1957, p. 549.

5 Ibid., p. 550.

Ethnography on the other hand is defined as "the scientific, organized, and detailed description of a particular culture and includes as well the procedure through which such information is collected . . . In other words, the term refers to the research procedures and the descriptive results of the raw materials of ethnology."[1]

While it is difficult to discern the point of departure between ethnology and ethnography, ethnology will refer in this study to the concepts of culture and the principles of interpretation which guide the field study. The actual on-the-field study and the gathering of data will refer to ethnography.

4. Culture, according to Murdock "consists of habits that are shared by members of a society, whether this be a primitive tribe or a civilized nation."[2] Hoebel says that it is "more than isolated bits of behavior. It is the integrated sum total of learned behavior traits which are manifest and shared by the members of a society."[3] Within the context of this thesis it will refer to both the visible shared traits in the realm of such areas as technology and religion and to the invisible but powerful forces of sanction and custom which govern the

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1 Philip Drucker, "Ethnography," Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 10, 1957, p. 548.

2 George Peter Murdock, "How Cultures Change," Man, Culture, and Society, ed. by Harry L. Shapiro, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 248.

3 E. Adamson Hoebel, "The Nature of Culture," Man, Culture, and Society, ed. by Harry L. Shapiro, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 162.

the thought patterns and the behavior of the individuals
in that society.

5. Cultural elements refer to the accumulated learned
behavior of a particular society reflected in the broad
range of factors which compose the economic, political,
linguistic, and religious life of the group. These may
be further divided into such categories as authority
structure, land tenure rights, marriage, pubertal cere-
monies, sacrifice, worship, and folklore to name only
a few. It is to this complex of factors to which refer-
ence is made in the use of the term cultural elements.

6. New mission situation as used here refers to a
situation which is new to the missionary and uncharted
so far as previous anthropological studies are concerned.
In general it will refer here to a face-to-face rural
society in contrast to a complex urban community.

7. Culturally relevant witness describes a missionary
enterprise which is rooted in the forms and concepts of
the native culture in such a way that it utilizes the
natural social and political structures where possible
and follows the natural channels of communication. It is
not to be confused with the concept of the native church
which has purely native leadership. Such a situation may
or may not produce a culturally relevant witness. In
chapter three reference will be made to indigenous move-

ments. This term also refers to those enterprises which
are rooted in the cultural forms of the society. It
does not not refer to native led churches which may rely
almost completely on Euroamerican forms.

D. Method of Procedure

The thesis will consist of three chapters. Chapter
one will survey the field of cultural anthropology. Cul-
ture change, that process which is of vital concern to
the missionary will be considered in some detail. Since
the missionary becomes an important factor in the process
of culture change an examination of the problems and
responsibilities of the one who initiates change points
up the need for adequate training and preparation in two
related fields of cultural anthropology, namely ethnology
and ethnography.

Chapter two will indicate the place of ethnology and
ethnography in providing basic orientation to the study
of culture. Contemporary concepts of culture, along with
current methodology in the field and means used for classi-
fication and interpretation of data will be studied in
some detail.

Chapter three will relate the general findings in
the fields of ethnology and ethnography to particular as-
pects of culture to show their implications for the mis-
sionary. Part two of the chapter will deal specifically

with the application of the insights of ethnology to
the role of the individual missionary as communicator
of the Christian gospel. The final section will examine
the means by which the missionary may apply the principles
of ethnology to foster the development of a Christian
witness rooted in the culture.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN MISSIONARY STRATEGY

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THE ROLE OF CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN MISSIONARY STRATEGY

A. Introduction

When a missionary enters a new mission situation more than a number of isolated individuals meet him as he moves about. He is confronted by a new culture. Those who have grown up and lived in the group are all partakers of it. In the earlier definition by Hoebel, culture was described as "the integrated sum total of learned behavior traits which are manifest and shared by members of a society."[1] The extent to which the culture has cast the mold for the past life of each individual and will to a large extent determine much of his future conduct is well illustrated by the following quotation in which the writer seeks to make clear the impact of the group life and the culture:

> He must share in its family life as defined by his society. He must share the reciprocal ob-
> ligations of that group. As a member of that
> group, he takes part in its economic activities.
> He shares its knowledge and experience; he shares
> its sentiments, its drives, its fears; he shares
> in its language and art and dance. He drinks out
> of its cup, the cup of the group's culture. [2]

One of the great needs in missionary strategy has been the need to recognize the individual as a member of

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1. Hoebel, op. cit., p. 168.

2. K.A. Busia, "Ancestor Worship," Practical Anthro-
pology, vol. VI, no. 1., 1959, p.28.

a group. At the same time there is the need to discover
ways in which the culture as a whole may be reached redemp-
tively and changed by transformed individuals. Hoebel
says, "Since every person is at one and the same time
an individual and a group member, he wrestles constantly
with the conflict of individual self-interest as against
his obligations to the group interests."[1] The conflict
is intensified when he embraces loyalties which run coun-
ter to those of his closest family group.

It is precisely this two-way stres with which the
missionary must come to terms. It is not sufficient to
preach the gospel to the individual as an island in soci-
ety. Rather, he must be regarded as one cell of a much
larger body, unique, yet bound to the whole by ties which
influence all aspects of his life. The missionary seeks
to understand the larger body, its strengths and weak-
nesses, its past history of accepting or rejecting new
ideas, its natural channels of communication. He does
this in order that he might better understand the indi-
viduals and families which he contacts. Eugene Nida
states, "Any effective cultural contact must be made
within the framework of the culture if it is to have
relevance to the people."[2] It is essential to know the

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1 Hoebel, op. cit., p. 174.

2 Eugene Nida, "Cross-Cultural Communication of the
Christian Message," Practical Anthropology, vol. II, no.
2, 1955, p. 42.

culture in order to understand the people who are a product of that culture.

However well trained the missionary may be in the scriptures, and however full of enthusiasm he may be to master the language to begin the work of evangelizing, without the knowledge and ability to cross the gulf between his own culture and the new, his task is made immeasurably more difficult and the chances for an effective ministry are greatly diminished. Robert Taylor says, "A missionary can maintain a superb devotional life and possess an unusual mastery of Bible and theology and yet fail because of lack of understanding of the people he works with." [1]It comes down to a problem of communication. Nida says, "Basically the study of anthropology provides the means of effective communication." [2]

It is to the field of anthropology, and more specifically to the area of cultural anthropology that the study now turns. Whatever will help to bridge the gulf is of vital concern to the missionary.

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1. Robert B. Taylor, "Obstacles and Opportunities for Christian Apologetics," Practical Anthropology, vol. II, no. 2., 1955, p. 31.

2. Eugene A. Nida, "The Role of Cultural Anthropology in Christian Missions," Practical Anthropology, vol. VI, no. 3, 1959, p. 113.

B. What is Cultural Anthropology?

Beals and Hoijer define the subject in the following

way:

> Cultural anthropology studies the origins and his-
> tory of man's cultures, their evolution and devel-
> opment, and the structure and functioning of human
> cultures in every place and time.
> Since cultural anthropology covers so wide a range
> of human activities, it is traditionally divided
> into three main branches: archeology, ethnology,
> and linguistics.
> Archeology or prehistory deals primarily with an-
> cient cultures and with past phases of modern civi-
> lizations. 1

For purposes of this paper ethnology and linguistics

rather than archeology, appear to have more relevance.

Beals and Hoijer continue with a description of ethnol-

ogy:

> Ethnology, in its theoretical (as opposed to its
> merely descriptive) aspects, is devoted very
> largely to the problem of explaining the similarities
> and differences to be found in human cultures. . .
> In recent years ethnologists have also turned their
> attention to the role of the individual in society
> and to personality development as related to the
> cultural tradition. . . . They attempt to find an-
> swers to problems such as these: What part does
> the individual play in the processes, such as in-
> vention, discovery, and the spread or diffusion
> of cultural traits, whereby a culture grows and
> develops? By what means do individual societies
> seek to shape individual personality? What kind of
> behavior is rewarded and encouraged, and what kind
> is discouraged? How far may an individual depart
> from cultural standards of acceptable behavior,
> and what is done to the person who breaks the rules?
> Studies of this sort have given us more precise
> information on the processes whereby cultures ex-
> pand and develop, and have provided new insights
> on problems of the nature and growth of personality
> and character, the education of the young, and so-

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1 Ralph L. Beals and Harry Hoijer, An Introduction
to Anthropology, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1959,
pp. 9-10.

cial control.[1]

It is not difficult to see why the recent developments in ethnology have been filled with meaning for the missionary. In these field studies, the student asks, How do cultures change? In what way are new ideas disseminated and accepted? These are the questions which the missionary must also ask.

While the study of linguistics is a highly specialized field, it can offer as does ethnology, many insights for the missionary:

> But the linguist who is also an anthropologist is not exclusively concerned with linguistic problems as such. He is interested also in the many interrelations between the language of a people and the other aspects of the culture. Thus, for example, he may study the ways in which the language spoken by a group of people is related to that group's status or social position, the linguistic symbols employed in religious rites and ceremonies and how these differ from the ordinary, everyday speech, the ways in which the changing vocabulary of a language reflects the changing culture of the people who speak it, and the processes whereby language is transmitted from one generation to another and how these processes aid in transferring beliefs, ideals, and traditions to successive generations. [2]

In the case of both ethnology and linguistics it will be seen that both penetrate to the central factors involved in the study of culture, past the visible and audible to those things which represent beliefs and ideals and thought patterns. These are the powerful intangibles. Beals and Hoijer summarize the need for anthropological

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1 Ibid., pp. 12-13.

2 Ibid., p. 13.

orientation: "It appears that the administration has been more effective from both the native and the administrative viewpoint where anthropological techniques and knowledge have been most widely used."[1]

For purposes of this study, the field of ethnology will be investigated in detail, with limited attention being given to the area of linguistics.

Ethnology has much to say about the process of culture change. Since this process has definite bearing upon missionary planning and strategy it is to an investigation of the phenomena of culture change that the study now turns.

C. The Process of Culture Change

If an individual in a new mission situation is contacted and does receive the transforming message of the gospel, he must still work out the implications of his decision and commitment in terms of the social and political, economic, and religious aspects of the culture of which he is both a product and a part. He himself has undergone a radical change. Though some of the traditions and rites may present no challenge to his new loyalties, others undoubtedly will. As an individual he has a choice. Either he can become progressively more of an island, separating himself from his own people and their

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1 Ibid., p. 20.

customs, cutting off any influence which he himself might have, or he can become a vital factor in the process of change whereby his own native culture is reached and transformed by the power of the gospel. William Reyburn says, ". . . a Christian lives and witnesses to his conversion in terms of a society and cultural form."[1] He says further, "The transformation of society can follow only in the wake of a truly transformed individual."[2] If the church is to take roots in the native soil, and hopes for any continuity of existence this must take place. . . . the church . . . cannot begin to set down its Christian roots until it plants them in its own human soil."[3] Changes must take place in the culture for those roots to go down.

Regarding the process of culture change Hoebel says:

> . . . cultures are never consciously planned or directed in their general growth. In the second place, most cultural traits are acquired through borrowing. . . . The sources of borrowing for any culture are diverse and unlike. While there is always a certain amount of selection (people do not borrow blindly), new elements may be taken up even though inconsistent with elements or principles already within the culture, because they appear to

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1 William D. Reyburn, "Conflicts and Contradictions in African Christianity," Practical Anthropology, vol. IV, no. 5, 1957, p.165.

2 Ibid., p.167.

3 Ibid., p. 168.

be more desirable in themselves.[1]

Culture change hinges on the entrance of a new element. About this Hoebel says: ". . . it may find its way into the cultural whole because it serves a need or interest satisfactorily. If it produces a conflict within the culture, that is a matter to be suffered."[2]

The development of cultural change follows definite steps. In tracing out the method, Murdock says that it begins with the process of innovation, the formation of a new habit by a single individual, and that this habit is subsequently learned or accepted by other members of the society. He says moreover that of all forms of innovation cultural borrowing is by far the most common and important.[3]

> In this case the innovator is not the originator
> of a new habit, but is its introducer. The habit
> has previously been part of the culture of another
> society; the innovator is merely the first member
> of his social group to adopt it. . . . The innovator,
> faced with a new situation in which the shared habits
> of his own society are not fully satisfactory, copies
> behaviourwhich he has observed in members of another
> society. . . . 4

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1 E. Adamson Hoebel, "The Nature of Culture," Man, Culture and Society, ed. by Harry L. Shapiro, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 180.

2 Ibid., p. 180.

3 George Peter Murdock, "How Cultures Change," Man, Culture, and Society, ed. by Harry L. Shapiro, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 253.

4 Ibid., p.253.

A number of factors are at work to produce change. First of all there must be an incentive, a need or drive to prompt the desire for change. Secondly, if in the receiving society there are some elements of the trait or habit to be transplanted, this will greatly facilitate the ease of transfer of the new element and increase the chances for its survival. The new idea must also receive social acceptance. Practiced by the innovator alone this will never happen. Imitation is begun by a small basic group, usually a family or clan, and from there spreads to the community as a whole. The model whose behavior is copied is a member of the local community, rahter than the member of an outside community. Social acceptance depends upon the prestige of the innovator and of the group who are first to imitate him.[1] Regarding the prestige of the first individual to introduce a new element Murdock observes, "Changes advocated by an admired political or religious leader are readily adopted, whereas few will follow an unpopular or despised innovator."[2] One final factor is at work, namely the principle of selection. "Every innovation that has been socially accepted enters, as it were, into a competition for survival. So long as it proves more rewarding than its alternative a cultural

1 Ibid. p. 255.

2 Ibid. P. 258

habit will endure, but when it ceases to bring comparable satisfactions it dwindles and eventually disappears.[1]

D. Implications of the Process of Culture Change for Missionary Strategy

The knowledge that cultures can and do change is of great encouragement to the missionary. Further, it comes as a challenge to know that the borrowing from one culture by another is never blindly done. What is worthwhile and appears more rewarding than the old cultural habits will be considered. The implications of this for the missionary are clear. The power of the message to be communicated must first be demonstrated in the life of the missionary.

Various degrees of conflict and chaos follow in the wake of cultural change. The far-reaching effects of rapid urbanization and vast technological changes are solemn reminders of the fact in Western societies. The knowledge of the upheavals which may follow change ought to make the missionary consider carefully and move slowly so that central areas and not side issues become the focal point of his concern. William Wonderly makes a case for a cautious missionary approach in the matter of culture change when he speaks of the need to guide the change in the culture to eliminate its harmful features without

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1 Ibid.

at the same time upsetting the cultural equilibrium that

must be maintained if disaster is to be avoided.[1]

An incentive or drive prompts change. The message

of the gospel must be aimed at the basic needs or drives

of the culture. While it is true that the message is the

same for all cultures, it may make its appeal in quite

different ways for different cultural groups. Individ-

uals do not receive the message in a vacuum. For this

reason the missionary must take time to learn about the

ideals and beliefs of the native culture. About this

John Beekman observes:

> One of the important duties of the missionary is to
> learn the culture of the people among whom he serves
> so as to be able to select those Scriptural truths
> which will have the greatest relevance to their par-
> ticular needs and concerns. . . . While the basic
> need of man and the basic message is the same every-
> where, the most effective presentation of the gospel
> is that which takes into account the cultural beliefs
> and fears of the people. [2]

Social acceptance is the only way in which a long

term ministry may be assured. The prestige of the innova-

tor is a vital factor in gaining acceptance for new beliefs

and practices. The implication for the missionary is that

he must search out the core groups which would provide

the most stable type of witness. This knowledge would

not be widely used if it led to the neglect of those less

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1 William A. Wonderly, "Indian Work and Church Mission
Integration," Practical Anthropology, vol. VIII, no.5, 1961,
p. 196.

2 John Beekman, "A Culturally Relevant Witness,"
Practical Anthropology, vol.IV, no. 3, 1957, p. 83.

fortunate or popular individuals who showed real interest
in the gospel. It does indicate, however, that the spear-
head of the witness ought to be made where there is some
solidarity and hope of the message being carried through
the natural channels to the group at large. Commenting
on findings made in a survey in Ecuador, Marie Fetzer
Reyburn says:

> The kin and socio-religious structure indicate that
> mission effort should be directed mainly toward
> adults: heads of families and men of prestige and
> respect in the community.
> . . . .
> Such a structure of kinship and social units sug-
> gests the advisability of adapting the gospel wit-
> ness to the direction of flow of life in the com-
> munity with the object in mind of incorporating in-
> to the church units which would have a solidarity in
> Christ as family and kin groups. 1

Finally, the principle of selection in the choice of
borrowed elements must not be overlooked. Cultures are
dynamic. Both old and new elements are in a real way
competing for survival. There is no reason to suppose
that what is good and acceptable and meeting the needs
in the present will fulfill the requirements in the fu-
ture unless it keeps abreast of needs and meets the chal-
lenge which they present. The church may take root and
have relevance for the needs of the people. The culture
may undergo gradual changes because of the influence of

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1 Marie Fetzer Reyburn, "Applied Anthropology Among
the Sierra Quecha of Ecuador," Practical Anthropology,
vol. I, no. 2, 1953, pp. 19-21.

of the church, yet this is no guarantee of the life of the
church in the future. The missionary must take account
of this. In the daily activities of his work, in the
training of new converts, and in the development of lay
leadership, the missionary must take account of the needs
and opportunities of the community and plan with these
in mind. If this is not done the church will run the risk
of becoming obsolete, an institution which does not speak
to the needs and problems of the culture. It will instead
be replaced by some other organization or group which does
recognize and seek to cope with the changing needs of the
society.

E. Summary

Chapter one has indicated the major problem faced by
the new convert in a culture in which there has been no
Christian witness previously. It results from the basic
conflict between allegiance to Christ in the new-found
faith, and loyalty to those in his native culture. He is
both a product and a part of the culture. In order to
be a witness to those in his culture he must live out
his faith in terms of that culture. At times he will
have to break with practices which run counter to his
Christian faith but to be an agent in the future trans-
formation of the culture so that others may be reached
he must not isolate himself. It is no easy matter for

an individual as a new convert to face this tension. For
this reason it becomes the responsibility of the missionary
to become familiar with the culture to which he goes with
the gospel. It is necessary that he learn something of
the social structure so that he may witness to the group
which would have a natural solidarity in the community
and thus make a more effective base for outreach.

Study of culture change was seen to be in the branch
of cultural anthropology known as ethnology. Ethnological
insights on the factors which influence culture change
have served to underscore the important role which the
study of ethnology should play in missionary preparation.
Chapter two thus deals in some detail with the field of
ethnology and the related area of ethnography.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PLACE OF ETHNOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY IN MISSIONARY

PREPARATION FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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THE PLACE OF ETHNOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY IN MISSIONARY

PREPARATION FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

A. Introduction

It is the purpose of this chapter to outline the
place which the study of ethnology and ethnography have
in missionary preparation. The purpose of study in these
two areas is to assist the student of the new culture to
understand the dynamics of culture. Something of this
has been discussed already in chapter one under the topic
of culture change. For effective communication to take
place, it is essential that the missionary learn as much
as possible about the various aspects of the culture to
which he is to communicate the gospel. For this reason
he needs to become acquainted with those disciplines
which deal with both the theoretical and practical approach
to the study of culture.

Chapter two serves to indicate certain areas of eth-
nology and ethnography of vital importance to the mission-
ary in his role as communicator. The chapter will be di-
vided into three sections. Section one will present three
concepts of culture. Section two will discuss methodology
in ethnographic surveys, first as it relates to the mis-
sionary as the collector of data, second as it makes avail-
able specific field methods for the gathering of data.
Section three will investigate the various methods of

classification of data, along with the problems and possibilities involved in its interpretation.

Reference has been made already to the two terms ethnology and ethnography.[1] Ethnology as used in chapter two will refer to the comparative study and analytical classification, ethnography to the more descriptive aspects, i.e. to the processes of obtaining and recording data.

B. Concepts of Culture

Systematic ethnology has passed through a number of stages since its origin as a science in its own right by Edward Burnett Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan in the latter half of the nineteenth century. From purely descriptive and historical studies it has progressed to the point where experts in the field are being asked to give practical help in many areas of present-day cultural change.[2]

New schools of thought have come into being in the past half century. All have implications for the missionary. Architects of the new concepts are many, however it is possible to see the emergence of three distinct schools. The first to be discussed will be the group which adheres to the functionalist concept of culture.

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1 Supra, pp. 3-4.

2 Mead, Margaret, ed., Cultural Patterns and Technical Change, Deventer, Holland, The Ijsel Press, Ltd., 1953.

The second to be investigated will be the configuration concept school, while the third will be the personality and culture school.

1. The Functionalist Concept

The functionalist school was championed chiefly by Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski. The following summarizes their approach:

> They stressed the fact that cultures are not simply assemblages of miscellaneous traits and complexes, but are like complex mechanismsiin which each part is linked directly or indirectly with every other part. For instance, in the culture of a primitive tribe, the "agricultural complex," expressed in the tools and techniques of planting, cultivating, and harvesting, may affect and be affected by food habits, system of land tenure and inheritance, trade practices, and wealth concepts . . . . Social customs, such as marriage may be connected: farmlands may be transferred as dowries or as part of the bride price, or a woman's desirability as a mate may be estimated in terms of her industry in the fields . . . every important pattern of a culture will be reflected in some degree in every other pattern. This interrelationship within a culture is termed integration. 1

To the functionalist, culture is composed of a number of factors in the realm of economics, religion, political and social structure, to name only a few. These, he believes are not independently functioning aspects but are intermeshed "as the gears of a machine, to constitute a smoothly running, effectively functioning whole."[2] The emphasis of

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1 Philip Drucker, "Ethnology," Encyclopedia Americana, vol. X, 1957, pp. 551-552.

2 Melville J. Herskovits, Man and His Works, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1956, p. 215.

this school has been upon the forms or institutions of culture.

For the Western missionary there is need for this type of orientation. It should help to overcome the common fallacy in the thinking of Western Christians who see a great gulf separating religion from the economic, political, and social aspects of life. To the functionalist, culture is an integrated whole.

2. The Configuration Concept

Ruth Benedict has been among the anthropologists who consider that in every culture there is a single polarizing configuration which may be understood in psychological terms, and will provide a label for that culture. The example is cited of the prevailing pattern in Western societies to put such emphasis upon the individual acquisition and retention of wealth.[1] This one concept provides a motive which directs much of Western thought and activities. One need only to leaf through several current popular magazines to be persuaded of this truth.

Melville Herskovits considers the problem of the configuration concept ethnologist to be "to discover the threads of aim, of objective, or satisfactions that give

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1 Philip Drucker, "Ethnology," Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 10, 1957, p. 552.

to the institutional unity the particular quality, the
special "feel" that everyone senses when he compares one
culture with another."[1]

Dangers involved in oversimplification through the
influence of this school are fairly plain. If, however,
on the part of the ethnologist there is willingness to
change when new insights are available, the configuration
concept is valuable. It advances the theory that there
is an organizing center about which every culture gravi-
tates. While the functionalist sees all the institutions
or forms of a culture working together, the configuration
concept ethnologist says that a certain aspect of the cul-
ture, or a certain belief has paramount importance in the
lives of the individuals of each particular group.

Much which will be of lasting help to the missionary
will be learned if the culture is studied for a long enough
time to get the "feel" to which Herskovits refers. Dis-
covery of the basic orientation of the society may unlock
many perplexing features of both custom and sanction. Com-
munication will be more effective when the one communicat-
ing knows the basic motivations of the receiving group.
This is what the configuration concept ethnologist hopes
to discover.

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1 Herskovits, op. cit., p. 215.

3. Personality and Culture Concept

Some of the more recent important developments in
ethnology have aimed at investigating the relation-
ships between the individual and his culture. In
the past, ethnologists tended to deal with culture
as an entity in itself, paying little attention to
the persons who were its bearers. However, it is
the individual and the individual only who perpet-
uates his culture, acts out its patterns, changes it
if changes are made. He also must be affected by
his culture, which conditions his reactions and
channels his thinking.[1]

Ethnologists in this school acknowledge that physi-

cal characteristics, environment, and individual experi-

ences make each individual unique. They assert, however,

that there is a certain standardization which each culture

produces. Patterns of reaction and thinking may be quite

similar in the group. These have been deeply ingrained

throughout a period of years so that to a measure it is

possible for the individual well-acquainted with the

general patterns to predict the behavior of other individ-

uals in the same culture because they have all been con-

ditioned by the same forces.[2]

For the missionary, appreciation for the unique ap-

proaches of the culture to bring about conformity will

help to explain how individuals in the society think, what

their world view is, what their values are. The maxim,

"Know thyself" has relevance, too. To understand those

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1 Philip Drucker, "Ethnology," Encyclopedia Americana,
vol. 10, 1957, p. 552.

2 Ibid.

forces in his own background which have molded a partic-
ular outlook or way of doing things will be a great aid
in understanding the complexities of another culture.
Ethnocentricity which hinders real communication may be
eliminated in some ways by the missionary's realizing
that his own orientations and habits are from a great
variety of possible ones, and not necessarily the only
and the best.[1]

C. Methods in Ethnographic Surveys for
Missionary Preparation

Were the study of culture confined to a laboratory
where cultural elements could be processed by modern
computers the problems of ethnography would be simplified
greatly. Such is not the case, however. In fact, part of
the challenge to the ethnographer is in the baffling and
bewildering array of intangibles and unknowns which con-
front him in his first few weeks and months in a new cul-
tural situation.

1. The Role of the Individual in Ethnographic
Surveys

Because the role of the individual may determine the
success or failure of on-the-field surveys, it is the pur-
pose of this section to examine this role to determine the
most appropriate and effective manner of approach.

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1 Herskovits, op. cit., p. 81

The field is the laboratory of the cultural anthropologist. To carry on his field-work, he goes to the people he has elected to study, listening to their conversation, visiting their homes, attending their rites, observing their customary behavior, questioning them about their traditions as he probes their way of life to attain a rounded view of their culture or to analyze some special aspect of it. In this, he is the ethnographer, the collector of data, which, in its wider ethnological significance, he will later, on his return from the field, analyze, and relate to other materials. 1

The way in which he is able to relate to the community and to establish friendly relations will largely determine how successful his field study will be. Herskovits says that the favorable circumstances necessary for effective study will depend on "his sensitivity to the situations he encounters, on the interplay between his personality and the personalities of the natives with whom he must deal, rather than his skill in manipulating test-tubes or balances or incubators." 2

Human relations lie at the heart of the ethnographer's problem. It is impossible to be too careful at this point because it is essential that he have as cordial reception as possible as an outsider, otherwise much of the inner workings of the society will be cut off from his observation.

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1 Ibid., p. 79.

2 Ibid., p. 81.

The group under study must always be taken into account, since it is their preconceptions, their prejudices, their fears that dominate the scene. This factor of the native's attitude is one toward which the ethnographer cannot direct too sensitive a concern. It is the essence of the human element in his study, and is to be handled with the greatest delicacy possible. He achieves this by exhibiting an honesty of purpose that is manifest in his every act. He plays fair, and shows restraint. He does not go where he is not welcome. He asks permission before intruding into a house or attending a rite of any kind. He realizes that, though the rituals of death and the beliefs concerning the dead they reveal are important for his research, the death of a member of a family causes deep grief among the surviving relatives, and he remains away from the funeral unless he is wanted there. If he is wise, he knows that, by exercising these restraints, he will, in the long run, gain in the respect and confidence of the people, and his materials will ultimately be richer for this sensitivity. Above all, in living in a community, he will respect the place assigned to him by that community. 1

Arrived at his destination and settled in his village, the problem that faces the student of the culture is how to make contact so that study may be begun. Because situations vary there is no single rule which governs as to how initial contact is to be made. Herskovits says that a useful rule to follow is: "See as much as you can, participate whenever you are permitted to do so, and compound your experiences by discussing them formally and informally with natives as widely as you are able."[2]

In order to learn about the culture and to become acquainted with the people, the student must go out to see

1 Ibid., p. 85.

2 Ibid., p. 84.

and to be seen. A walk through the village or country-
side will begin the contact. Residents will no doubt be
curious enough to come to visit and in this way there will
be established a basis for casual conversation. While
such contacts are helpful, if there is to be any rounded
understanding of the culture, the services of an inform-
ant will be essential. As an outsider and an observer
the student may not be allowed to witness such important
rites as weddings or funerals, but he may learn from a
good informant much of the customs and sanctions surround-
ing these events. Because each individual has a slightly
different way of interpreting the familiar, several in-
formants may be needed to achieve balance and perspective.[1]

The strangeness of the new society also presents for-
midable barriers to understanding and to the establish-
ment of workable human relations.

> We have all had the experience of finding ourselves
> in a strange new community; of walking the streets
> alone, in a setting that differs only little from
> our accustomed one, but with a feeling of wanting to
> know what is happening here, who these people we
> brush by may be--of being an outsider. If we pro-
> ject ourselves into a situation where the physical
> environment differs from ours, where the language is
> incomprehensible, the food, the clothing, the houses,
> the very physical type of the people is strange, we
> can gain some insight into the initial problems the
> ethnographer must meet. Such a simple experience
> as walking through a public market in a tropical cap-
> ital can be disturbing. The experience has not sorted
> itself out.[2]

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1 Ibid., pp. 87-88.

2 Ibid., p. 86.

It is the blur of personalities, the meaningless-
ness of customary habits and behavior, and doubt about
what one's own behavior ought to be which makes the sort-
ing out process so difficult.

> Field experience soon teaches that no matter how dif-
> ferent in physical type or cultural tradition a peo-
> ple may be, there will always be some individuals
> among them for whom he will have a warm personal re-
> gard, and with whom his relationships will be close
> and meaningful. But there will also be those who
> will baffle him, and whom he will come perhaps to
> dislike. And these reactions in any situation will
> be mutual. They are, above all, not to be feared or
> avoided, for they have much to teach the ethnographer
> of the personality of these individuals, and the ten-
> sions in the group. Often, too, the man or woman
> whose confidence is the most difficult to gain has
> valuable insights to give the student.[1]

The foregoing has presented some of the problems and
perplexities which face the missionary ethnographer in a
new cultural situation, along with guides for his own per-
sonal approach and behavior in field study.

Also of great importance are the practical methods
which the student uses for gathering information regarding
the culture.

2. Methods for Obtaining and Recording Data in
Ethnographic Surveys

No one method is best for ethnographic surveys. The
usefulness of the method varies with the type of situation,
the type of culture, and the particular aspect of culture
under study. Four methods for obtaining data will be pre-

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1 Ibid., pp. 86-87.

sented. These in no way exhaust the possibilities, but are among the most widely used, and also are fairly simple for the beginning student.

a. Notes and Queries

The attempt to amass a quantity of data on the non-material aspects of culture by means of notes and questions gained recognition in a publication by a British anthropological group in 1875.[1] It has been revised and modified since that time.

In the hands of an untrained observer this means of study may result in the acquisition of a mass of material, yet it will be relatively useless unless it has some order. With well-directed questions the missionary ethnographer may learn much. Data thus obtained, if organized systematically, will help in the breakdown of material into manageable units. The following is a list of sample questions of a type used by missionaries engaged in ethnological studies:

> 1. Describe thoroughly the person-to-person links by which news and gossip get around the community. These are the channels the gospel also follows.
>
> 2. How are the decisions regarding various matters reached by the community as a whole: by groups in the community? by households? How do these decision-making patterns influence people's decision about Jesus Christ?
>
> 3. What do people of different statuses want most out of life? How does their action show what they think to be most important? What do they think you feel is important?

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1 Ibid., p. 89. Outline for methods of obtaining data follows Herskovits division, pp. 89ff.

4. In the community, which persons control the actions of which other persons? in what ways? on what grounds? What is your place in this system?

5. How does each kind of object produced or imported by the community (goods or services) get to its ultimate user?

6. Who lives where? Give all names, ages, titles, and kinship ties to other people. Use maps.

7. How is each individual trained from birth to become a fully participating member of the community? each recognized group within the community? What do they do about people like you who have not gone through these processes?

8. Give a resume and evaluation of everything that has ever been written about the language, culture, and general area.

9. How is sexual behavior channeled in marriage? outside of marriage? What is the rationale for each practice?

10. Who controls each piece of land, and how is that control expressed? In what ways is the land utilized?

11. How are differences between persons or groups settled, either in or out of court? Do all differences stay settled?

12. Who are considered deviant or marginal by most people? Why? What is done about them? How do you know your work is not limited to deviants?

13. Describe all practices and idea systems of the religion you are trying to see superseded.

14. What groups of people does marriage bring into relationship? What is the nature of that relationship? Who may and who may not get married? Why? Who actually does marry whom, regardless of the rules?

15. What things and ideas from alien sources are fully accepted? partially accepted? By what process did they get accepted? What makes people accept some things and reject others? What has been accepted from you, and what rejected? Why? [1]

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1 Joseph E. Grimes, "Ethnographic Questions for Christian Missionaries," Practical Anthropology, vol. 6, no. 6, p. 275.

b. Genealogical Method

The genealogical method makes available a broad
range of information concerning the kinship groupings and
social structure of the community. Through the services
of an informant important facts regarding his biological
kin may be arranged in relationship. The process may be
repeated using other individuals until the full kinship
terminology is built up. On the system of relationship
rest many customs regarding marriage, inheritance, proper-
ty, magic, religion, and ritual. It is a simple method,
yet extremely useful. While limitations are faced when
taboos are attached to the disclosure of names, where it
is possible to make use of it this procedure is very use-
ful. In addition to building up the composition of the
community in terms of relationship there is also the prac-
tical advantage that the discovery and use of proper kin-
ship terminology will help to increase rapport with the
group. The ability to use the appropriate title with each
individual will make communication more effective and the
reception of the newcomer more cordial.

c. Village Mapping

For small areas, the use of the village map is a
great aid. On a scale map may be located the different
homes with indications of the relationship between them.
It should be noted whether homes are related by intimate

family-clan ties or whether the relationship is of a political or economic nature. Each communal dwelling should be included, each public place where people meet, each field and altar, as well as the location of conveniences such as wells or storage pits.

In a detailed study of three villages in one of her Samoan expeditions Margaret Mead made a careful examination of each household. The following statement indicates the specific information for which she sought. This might also be included on the map.

> Each household was analyzed from the standpoint of rank, wealth, location, contiguity to other household, and the age, sex, relationship, marital status, number of children, former residence, etc., of each individual in the household.[1]

For a larger area the mapping becomes more complex. Where the size of the area warrants its use, the map becomes a great asset in the analysis of the locale as well as a useful guide for home visiting.

d. Biographies and Autobiographies

The life story of any individual whether he is well-known or obscure, rich or poor, gifted or average, reveals much about the culture of the group. Autobiographies and biographies are useful for the broadening and deepening of the cultural study. Herskovits says:

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1 Margaret Mead, From the South Seas, New York, William Morrow and Company, 1939, p. 263.

They reveal many things about a culture. Most of
all, they afford a corrective to exclusive preoc-
cupation with institutions. Cultural behavior is
institutionalized, but the range of accepted vari-
ation in individual conduct must be analyzed if the
institution and the culture are to be seen in per-
spective. Intangibles such as values, goals, and
other-motivating drives come out in such documents,
as does the play of differing personalities within
a society. 1

While there has been no mention made of the impor-
tance of using the native language in on-the-field studies,
it cannot be overlooked. How well and how quickly the
missionary becomes familiar with the language will to a
large extent determine how well he has caught the partic-
ular "feel" of each situation and how well he has inter-
preted the information.

In each of the procedures indicated, each new entry
should be indicated with date, place, and informant. One
possibility for filing necessitates the making of three
copies of each piece of information, one for a chronolog-
ical file, one topical, and a third to be delivered to
some outside place for safekeeping.

Not mentioned in the four methods given are such de-
vices as the tape recorder, slide camera, or motion pic-
ture machine. Use of these along with the four methods
cited would no doubt be a great asset. Equipment which
is more elaborate also presents problems. It may be a
distraction to those whom the student is studying. Care

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1 Herskovits, op. cit., p. 92.

needs to be taken. In any case, the use of such equipment in no way replaces the methods indicated.

D. Classification and Interpretation in Ethnographic Surveys

Once again the focus of study needs to be sharpened. Method is not an end in itself but a means by which valuable insights may be gained so that communication may be more effective. The use of specific questions directed toward various aspects of the culture in the obtaining of data, and the suggestion of a topical file point to the need for classification to further refine field notes so that relationships may be seen and interpretation begun.

1. Classification in Ethnographic Surveys

Since the first anthropological studies were launched efforts have been made to classify cultural elements. Ideally cultures should be studied as wholes but the mass of data which a study produces makes it impossible to do.

Grouping of data will depend somewhat upon the scope of the research, the time available for the study, and the nature of the culture in which the work is done. Categories may include language, religious practices, family and social systems, education, and modes of creative expression. Herskovits divides the culture in this way:

Material Culture and its Sanctions
Technology

Economics

Social Institutions
      Social organization
      Education
      Political structures

Man and the Universe
      Belief systems
      The control of power

Aesthetics
      Graphic and plastic arts
      Folklore
      Music, drama, and the dance

Language 1

Aware of possible groupings it becomes the responsibility of the student to choose some division which will make possible systematic treatment yet be flexible enough to allow for change.

The great danger in any type of classification is that the system will become more important than the data. Exceptions which are extremely important may not be recorded simply because they do not fit. In the unusual for which there seems to be no neat category may be the key to some overlapping in various aspects which the other data may not have revealed. The system adopted must be flexible.

2. Interpretation in Ethnographic Surveys

Interpretation deals with the subtle intangibles of the culture. While the obtaining of data and its classification will take long hours of work, the attempt to

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1 Ibid., p. 239.

interpret it will require serious study of a slightly
different nature.

If the student accepts the theory of the function-
alist school that all institutions work together and are
interrelated he must learn to look for relationships.
Further, to borrow from the configuration concept school,
a knowledge of the aspects of the culture and their inter-
relationships should reveal that one aspect of the culture
dominates the others so much so that it gives to the cul-
ture a particular orientation.

Again, there is no rigid rule to follow in the mat-
ter of the interpretation of data. Continuous review of
old insights, pertinent questions asked regarding those
things not fully understood with the careful noting of
relationships will pave the way for theories to be drawn
up and put to the test. If it is believed that one key
idea, motivation, belief, or fear has primacy over others
keen observation to see whether or not it does impinge on
every other part of the culture will either corroborate
the theory or prove it to be only partly correct, or to-
tally wrong.

To cite an example of how one ethnographer discovered
the central focus of one aspect of the culture Malinowski's
research on ancestor worship may be noted. Dismissed as
pagan and a hindrance to progress by some, research yield-

ed these insights:

> On the contrary, we have come to perceive that uni-
> versally human, moral, dogmatic, and social atti-
> tudes are to be found in African ancestor worship
> or in their belief in one Godhead, in their reli-
> gious appeals to natural forces, and in their fears,
> hopes, and misgivings connected with magical prac-
> tices. 1

Interpretation aims thus to find the reasons behind

ritual and custom and sanction.

> Whether we analyze the objective manifestations of
> a culture, or approach it along the broader avenues
> of its fundamental sanctions and intent; whatever
> the terminology we may apply to clarify our data and
> set them in significant conceptual context; the fact
> of cultural unity, of cultural integration is estab-
> lished. Its outer forms frame inner meanings; sanc-
> tions mold conduct; and life as a whole goes on, per-
> mitting human beings to seek and find fulfillment. 2

While life is worked out in the realm of the materi-

al it is from the non-material, ideas, motivations, and

beliefs which it derives its meaning. If the study of

culture has forced the missionary to stop , to listen,

and to hear the pulse of an unfamiliar type of life and

if in addition to a knowledge of the material culture he

has learned something of the basic motivations, beliefs,

and fears of the new culture, he will be in a much better

position to take up the work to which he has been called

to communicate the gospel in a truly relevant way.

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1 Bronislaw Malinowski, The Dynamics of Culture
Change, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1945, pp. 151-
152.

2 Herskovits, op. cit., p. 226.

E. Summary

Chapter two has indicated the place of ethnology
and ethnography in missionary preparation. From the field
of ethnology three concepts of culture have been presented.
In the field of ethnography methodology has been investi-
gated as it relates to the missionary as the collector
of data, and as it relates particular methods to be em-
ployed in the obtaining of data for on-the-field surveys.
Classification has been dealt with as a necessary device
to break down into manageable units data from field studies.
The difficulties of interpretation have been noted, along
with possible standards to guide in determining relation-
ships.

It will be the purpose of chapter three to apply
the insights of ethnology and ethnography to the problems
of communication in the total cultural complex.

CHAPTER THREE

THE COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THE TOTAL CULTURAL COMPLEX

CHAPTER THREE

THE COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THE TOTAL CULTURAL COMPLEX

A. Introduction

It is the purpose of this chapter to make use of the insights of ethnology and ethnography in the task of communicating the gospel in the total cultural complex. Part one will take the form of an examination of the aspects of culture with the application of anthropological insights and their implications for the missionary. Part two will indicate the role of the missionary in communication. Part three will culminate the chapter and the thesis by investigating the means by which, with an adequate background in ethnology and ethnography, the missionary may develop a relevant witness in the total cultural complex.

B. Aspects of Culture and Communication

All of the aspects of culture have implications for the missionary, however it is not possible for him to investigate them all.

> It is impossible for any study of culture, no matter how comprehensive it may be, to describe more than a portion of the aspects of the life of a single people. Even those whose aim it is to give the most rounded portrayal possible find certain limits which, for technical reasons of time, space and competence they cannot exceed. 1

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1 Melville J. Herskovits, Man and His Works, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1956, p. 238.

The following discussion of the aspects of culture will of necessity have to exclude certain important areas, which, though important in communication are rightly the field of the specialist. The material culture will be discussed under the aspects of technology and economics. Social institutions will be dealt with under social organization, education, and political structure. Religion will be a separate topic as will language and folklore. Only passing reference will be made to the areas of drama, music and art, not because the author sees no value in their study but because they require more technical treatment and skill than comes within the bounds of this paper.

1. Material Culture [1]

a. Technology

The technology of a society concerns those ways in which natural resources are utilized, crops are raised, and farming is done. It also relates to the way in which various processes are used in simple or complex manufacturing, along with the techniques used for the preparation of food.

Observation in any of these areas will provide an excellent opportunity to see the community as it really operates, and may reveal, in addition to techniques for various processes many helpful insights into the social, political, and economic structure of the group. Some of

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1 Herskovits, op. cit., p. 239. Breakdown of aspects of culture follows his division.

the tensions and problems in the group will also come to light in this way.

The missionary will need to make specific note of details, if in a short time he hopes to become thoroughly familiar with the material environment. In studying food, for example, observations will be made on the type of food used, its source, and preparation. It will include study of hunting techniques. It will mean investigating the kinds of domestic animals and plants.

Study of shelter will indicate the relationship between the locale and the type of shelter used. Observation of clothing will indicate the materials used, the processes involved in production as well as the more subtle aspects of clothing which indicate canons of taste, conduct, and occupation. Closer study should reveal the association which various types of clothing have with sex, class, status, power, and rank.

Crafts such as weaving, pottery, metal-working and woodcarving will give insight into the occupations of the people as well as opportunity for the discovery of the refined technology which even relatively simple processes entail.

The technological aspects of culture have several implications for the missionary. First, a careful observation of the technology will help to explain many of

the things which at first appeared strange or unusual.
Every society, however simple, has worked out a basis for
exploiting its natural resources, and for living within
the limitations of its environment. Close study of the
technology will also guide the missionary as to how he
himself must also adapt to the environment. Much wisdom
has been stored up by those who over the years have ex-
perimented to find the best possible ways of coping with
the problems of survival. The missionary can learn a
great deal if he is willing. He can also gain in sympa-
thy and appreciation for the problems and accomplishments
of his new neighbors.

Technology is a natural point of contact for becom-
ing acquainted with the members of the group. People
usually feel more free when they are employed at familiar
tasks. Such conversations around the daily routine jobs
are valuable avenues for language learning. They may pro-
vide essential and relevant concepts for the communication
of Christian truths. Witness Christ's knowledge of the
tools of the culture in the Sermon on the Mount. Only
as the material culture is fully known can there be a
knowledge of the needs and opportunities which it presents.

b. Economics

Study of economics will take into account the proc-
esses of production, consumption, distribution, and ex-

change.

Questions such as: Who makes what? for whom? Why?
are appropriate here. In the study of economics division
of labor should be noted as well as the motivations for
work. The basis for trade or barter will give insight
into the workings of the community. The rites of prop-
erty will be important to learn.

Through the study of the material culture the mis-
sionary will learn what individuals and the people as a
whole consider important in the material realm. Through
the knowledge of these facts important concepts in the
gospel may be communicated. The parables of the lost
things in Luke 15 will have significance if, in the trans-
lation those things which are the object of such inten-
sive search are considered of real worth to the people in
the culture.

Here as in other aspects of the culture many intan-
gibles affect the total picture. Concepts from other
areas may be of prime significance in certain rites. Eco-
nomics, for instance, may have a powerful link with reli-
gion through the influence of ancestor worship. It is at
the point of the overlapping of various aspects of the
culture that the student must exercise the greatest care.
There is the danger of reading too much into the relation-
ship, and the equal danger of disregarding it altogether.

2. Social Institutions

a. Social Organization

> Social organization includes the institutions that
> determine the position of men and women in society,
> and thus channel their personal relationships. . . ..
> In a still broader sense, social structures must
> also be thought of as including those relationships
> of a political character based on locale and status.
> The educational function of various institutions,
> especially the family, is also of signal importance.[1]

The importance of social institutions may be seen in
the variety of functions which they perform. They set
the relationships between the sexes, insure the continu-
ation of the group, assign the individual a place among
his fellows, are the means of achieving prestige, bring
order into life, and integrate the individual into society,
as well as provide for the inculcation in succeeding gen-
erations of the sanctions and behavior patterns of the
group.[2]

The family may be studied in its immediate biologi-
cal unity with parents or children or it may be regarded
as an extended group enfolding a great number of individ-
uals as it does in many cultures.

Kinship terminology will help to define the relation-
ships between individuals, and will help to make possible
the speedier mapping out of the basic lines of communica-

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1 Ibid., p. 289.

2 Ibid., pp. 298-290.

tion in the community.

In the family may be determined the legal, economic, and religious bonds which unite the members as well as the feelings of love, affection, and respect which are displayed among them. Rights and obligations will also be noted. Study should reveal the relationship between the sexes, general sex restrictions, pregnancy taboos, rites at childbirth, pubertal ceremonies, adolescent activities, the rights and duties of adulthood, and the status and treatment of the aged.[1] The missionary needs to be aware of the wide variations in family life so that there will be freedom to understand and to appreciate forms differing from his own.

Family associations move out to larger spheres. Everyone belongs to a family or to a community. The larger community is a powerful force for molding personality.

> As the children of the tribe grow up, they learn
> the formal patterns of organization-how to take
> part in a tribal council-and the informal ways of
> cooperating with fellow tribesmen-how to recognize
> them, what to expect of and from them, when to give
> them hospitality and support. 2

We behave toward these neighbors according to the

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1 Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Family," Man, Culture, and Society, ed. by Harry L. Shapiro, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 267.

2 David G. Mandelbaum, "Social Groupings," Man, Culture, and Society, ed, by Harry L. Shapiro, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 296.

rules and notions of proper neighborly behavior of our respective societies. And our neighbors have similar, reciprocal behavior toward us. These rules and notions, patterns of behavior they may be called, are almost never consciously recognized or written out. It is only the anthropologist and other students of society who analyze and catalogue the patterns of local group behavior. 1

It is through these processes that ideas are passed on in the society, and are as it were the framework for the network of communication in the community.

In addition to indicating for the individual his place in society, and his rights and obligations the larger community embraces relationships of individuals of a more formal nature, namely institutions. It is important for the student of the culture to know not only how people are organized but why they are organized, and what institutions do in ordering the lives of those who are governed by them. Malinowski says,"Culture is a vast apparatus for the satisfaction of needs. Each institution, integrated on a certain principle, has a certain system of needs to satisfy."[2] It is the need which is satisfied by the institution for which the student must look.

The institution known as lobola or bride-price has often been looked upon with scorn by Westerners. This

1 Ibid., p. 287.

2 Bronislaw Malinowski, The Dynamics of Culture Change, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1945, p. 62.

has been a mistake in judgment in many cases, says Mali-
nowski, since its real purpose is not the purchase of a
girl by a man but the means for establishing legitimacy,
a guarantee for the stability of the marriage, and an
equitable equivalent to her parental family for the loss
of her productive power.[1]

Among the other facets of the social structure which
may be studied those should be dealt with which deal with
the means for the transmission of messages, and the dis-
semination of news and other information. These are the
identical channels through which the truths of the gospel
will be transmitted. Study of the social structure will
also reveal the core group in which plans and changes
originate.

Donald Mc Gavran makes a plea for a better under-
standing of social structure in his book The Bridges of
God. Missionaries, he believes, need to be well acquaint-
ed with social structure in order to understand how people
normally act in groups.

Nida says, "People are such an integral part of the
social structure in which they live that only in and
through this structure can they be reached and live out
their faith." [2] In advancing principles of communication

1 Ibid., p. 53.

2 Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission, New York,
Harper and Brothers, 1960, p. 95.

which relate directly to social structure Nida suggests
that communication follow that pattern of social structure
found in the community, that the Christian witness also
incorporate valid indigenous social structures.[1]

b. Education

One purpose of education is to equip the individual
for an adult role in society. Commenting on the differ-
ing emphases in cultures Herskovits says:

> No two cultures have similar orientations, and the
> transmission of cultural identity requires the con-
> tinuation of the orientations, and the expression of
> the differing interests people have in different as-
> pects of their cultures. A complete catalog of what
> is taught a child would thus in the fullest sense
> constitute an ethnographic description of his culture.
> The order in which he is taught what he must learn
> reveals the maturation patterns of his group and in-
> dicates what they hold important in their culture. [2]

Education thus has a second important function, that of
passing on the cultural heritage from one generation to
another. This is knowledge not only in the technological
sense, but also in the store of traditions, sanctions,
and beliefs which make up the total cultural complex.

Techniques of training consist of overt training by
elders, emulation of older children, close observation
of parents or elders at work, attendance at ceremonies
where only the mature participate. Moral values may be

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1 Ibid., p. 136.

2 Herskovits, op. cit., p. 319.

inculcated and training may be given in proper conduct through direct instruction, correction of an error, ridicule, corporal punishment, or praise for right conduct. Techniques are universals, however it is wise for the missionary to note those techniques which are used more frequently than others.

Content of instruction will require study to formulate. It will probably be along the lines of family and kinship rites and duties, sexual prohibitions, and initiatory practices. Instruction in arts and crafts and technology in general will be given to prepare the individuals for adult roles. More indirect training but equally important will center around preparation for political and religious leadership and the inculcation of the beliefs and practices and traditions of the community as a whole.

Knowledge of the educational system has untold opportunities for the missionary. To acquire a knowledge of the methods and content of instruction is to learn much about the values and basic orientations of the society. That which the society considers of ultimate importance is transmitted from one generation to another. Here is a point of contact for the missionary. While it is true that the gospel is the same message to every group, it nonetheless is received in terms of a particu-

lar cultural framework.

Those methods of instruction most commonly used
which are appropriate for the presentation of the gospel
will be the most effective which the missionary can employ.
In many face-to-face societies instruction is given in
the form of tales or legends which contain some moral pre-
cept or truth. Used wisely by the missionary they could
become powerful vehicles for education in the gospel.
H.R. Weber appreciates the use of indigenous media in his
booklet The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates.

Appreciation for what is good and worthwhile in the
traditional educational system will prevent the mission-
ary from initiating needless conflict which so easily re-
sults when one from another culture does not fully under-
stand the traditional and thinks instead that for the
sake of the gospel all institutions must be Westernized.

c. Political Structure

The complexity of Euroamerican bureaucracy is the
background against which many missionaries observe native
political institutions. Without the ballot box, the leg-
islative machinery, and government agencies, native poli-
tical structure certainly appears different, but it is
not fair to conclude that it is non-existent. Even a
short residence in a new culture will make evident that
there is class stratification with very often concentration

of wealth, privilege, status, and power. Societies may operate along democratic, federal, socialistic, or quite informal lines. Commenting on political institutions, Herskovits says, "The institutions by which the affairs of any society are directed and the conduct of its members is regulated, must be regarded as governmental institutions, however informal they may seem."[1]

Observations and questions should reveal where authority resides, how the administrative machinery operates, and what the judicial institutions are. The constitution may be in the realm of oral tradition instead of a written code. However difficult it may be to untangle the constitution and its related sanctions from the mass of irrelevant material it will be of untold value for the missionary to discover. These will provide the rules by which the missionary must himself abide if he is to be a participating member of the community.

In the political as well as the social structure are to be found the channels for the flow of information, important for the communication of the gospel. The place where real power resides will identify for the missionary the diplomatic channels through which contact must be made.

At the same time, the missionary must take into ac-

Ibid., p. 330.

count the fact that he is not entering a vacuum in adopting the role of religious leader. Here, in the political realm there may reside certain religious functions and powers along with the status which they afford. There will almost certainly be conflict and a clash of interests, however the clearer the recognition of the relationships involved, the more likelihood will there be of wise dealings to avert needless difficulties.

3. Religion

Religion and the arts complete the adjustment of man to his universe by providing security against forces more powerful than himself and creating channels for the positive expression of his aesthetic drive. 1

Probably the greatest problem for the missionary in a face-to-face society is to see how religion permeates all of life, in contrast to the way in which at least outwardly in Western cultures it is divorced from many aspects of the culture.

One of the reasons it is so dificult for those in the stream of Euroamerican culture, especially for intellectuals, to grasp the essential homely, everyday nature of religion is that we think of religion as supernaturalism, while our religious emotions are lavished on aspects of our experience we label as secular. 2

Religious practices may be observed by noting whether rites are carried out publicly or in private, through e-motionalism, recitation, silence, or through the use of

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1 Ibid., p. 347.

2 Ibid., p. 377.

special objects. Observation of the magical techniques and the particular ceremonials engaged in will give an understanding of the outer workings of the religion.

While these are important, the vital task for the missionary is to discover why certain rites are performed, what needs they satisfy, what fears they objectify. The true nature of the religious experience may be far below the surface. Discreet questioning and careful noting of details may bring many important concepts to light.

A spectacular display of witchcraft may represent deeply-rooted beliefs and fears. Commenting on the failure of administrators and missionaries alike to understand the practice of black magic, Malinowski says:

> A state of mind which is deeply rooted in universal human psychology cannot be abolished by legislation. . . . From this point of view, once we understand the psychological, social, or moral roots, we see that witchcraft, far from being an unmitigated evil, is in many ways a source of comfort and hope; a handle to manage the unmanageable.[1]

There is for the missionary no shortcut to find these deeper meanings in religious practices, but they are undoubtedly there and must be searched out if relevant communication is to take place.

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1 Malinowski, op. cit., p. 95.

Understanding of the religion of the receiving culture is important for the knowledge of terms which may later find their way into translations, stories, or personal conversation. Equally important, the knowledge of religion gives insight into the cultural strengths and weaknesses, needs, and fears.

Knowledge of indigenous rituals and rites may be an asset to the missionary in his future work. Observances at such occasions as births, deaths, weddings, and the like may be useful. With certain changes they may be used quite as well in the Christian witness, and will provide a functional substitute for former practices, thus helping to maintain a degree of permanence and solidarity necessary for a healthy and well-functioning community.

4. Language and Folklore

a. Language

It is not within the province of this study to outline methods for language study, rather the purpose is to indicate the importance of language in communication in the total cultural complex.

Language is the expression of the soul of a people and the key to their thoughts. Long periods of study and sensitive appreciation should eventually equip one with sufficient skill to penetrate the thought patterns of a strange linguistic and cultural group. The subtleties of

inflection and intonation bewilder the student who knows the vocabulary and grammar fairly well but only faintly grasps the real meaning where abstract concepts are used. Those who have gone before, however assure the new adventurer along the road that careful language study does eventually lead to the understanding of the thought patterns of the people, so necessary for any real and effective communication to take place.

In either written or oral translation of Christian concepts, problems arise as to equivalent meanings which will have relevance for the receiving group. The essential truths may have universal application but its cultural trappings may render it obscure and useless in communicating the gospel message. The message need not be altered but it must be made relevant to the culture. Nida suggests that the missionary in communicating, "must find certain cultural parallels which will make the message significant within the immediate context of people's lives."[1]

b. Folklore

The folklore of nonliterate peoples consists of their myths, tales, proverbs, riddles, and verse, together with their music; and comprises the least tangible expression of the aesthetic aspects of culture. [2]

Folklore has a number of functions. It may explain the universe and provide a basis for ritual and belief.

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1 Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1960, p. 59.

2 Herskovits, op. cit., p. 414.

Other tales contain a record of tribal history. These are valuable educational devices and also help to maintain a sense of group solidarity and worth. Proverbs contain pointed allusions and moral precepts. Riddles provide a test of wits and give prestige to the one who can produce one at the appropriate moment.[1]

It has been indicated already how important the knowledge of the content of education is in determining what the group considers important in the culture. Similarly, folklore, Herskovits says, ". . . reflects both its natural and cultural setting. A substantial body of folktales is more than the literary expression of a people. It is, in a very real sense, their ethnography which, if systematized by the student, gives a penetrating picture of their way of life."[2]

Different types of tales have different functions. Some are philosophical, while others are dramatic. The fact that these tales are recited and not read gives them certain values which written tales could never have. Pauses, interjections, exclamations, intonation, stress, and gestures add qualities which are of tremendous importance in their transmission.[3]

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., p. 418.

3 Ibid., pp. 425-426.

Knowledge of folklore may give valuable hints for translation: idioms, various constructions, and parallels which will help to make the message of the gospel more clear. As the missionary learns to adapt the proclamation of the message to the most appropriate type of folklore, it will have more relevance for the people and will increase the chances for its being passed from one to another.

Details which relate to the circumstances of the telling, the role of the story-teller, the location of the gathering, the type of listener, the time of day or night, and the duration, will all add to the missionary's knowledge of how best to communicate the Good News to the same hearers.

5. Drama, Music, and Art

It would be impossible to cover adequately in a short space the three areas of drama, music, and art. What Herskovits says about drama may well describe music and art:

> The drama in nonliterate societies affirms some of the deepest sanctions of living. The myths declaimed and acted, the choreography of the dances, the rhythms of the drums, the verses sung and spoken, call forth responses from participants and onlookers that bear profoundly on the value system of the individuals who compose the group, and their adjustment within this system. 1

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1 Ibid., p. 427.

Whenever possible the missionary ought to add to his knowledge of the arts of the people with whom he works. In each of the three, drama, music, and art reside some of the deepest sanctions of living which will be of value to learn not only for more effective communication to take place but also for the enrichment of the missionary's own life.

C. Communication and the Role of the Missionary

While the message of the gospel is of ultimate importance, the sender of that message may aid greatly in its transmission or may blur it by repeated error, lack of sympathy, or failure to exercise good judgment.

It is the purpose of this section to indicate how the missionary's role as communicator may be most effective.

Nida says:

> Our task . . . is not to propagandize people into the kingdom of heaven, but so to identify ourselves with them that we may effectively communicate "the Way." This identification can be achieved only by realistic participation with people in their lives, not by working for people but with them. 1

To overcome the barriers which make it difficult for meaningful relationships to be established, Nida suggests that the missionary make a point of having guests in and make an effort to go visiting in homes. It is in this

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1 Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1960, pp. 162-163.

way that he will learn the social structure and the communication network.

The missionary must know the religious beliefs and take these seriously. He must deal with the beliefs and fears which they objectify as real issues. He must learn the goals of the society.

Missionaries who live like the people but have never really learned what makes the societies tick cannot think as the people do hence cannot communicate.[1]

> Inner identification does not mean it is necessary to adopt the value system of those one seeks to communicate with; rather, that it must be taken seriously. The one who achieves inner identification must be aware of people's ideas, understand their viewpoints, and be genuinely sympathetic with their struggle for self-expression, even though he may not agree with its forms. [2]

The basis for identification rests on the understanding that one identifies with persons, not with generalities. Before another can be truly known and communicated with the communicator must know himself. The missionary thus as communicator must be willing not only to discover others but to be discovered and to have his real self seen. Real knowledge of others comes about only through participation in their lives, not as a superior being but as a co-worker.[3]

Communication takes place when there has been established a basis for friendly exchange. To achieve this

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1 Ibid., p. 164.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., pp. 168-170.

type of inner identification the missionary must go through the bewildering problems of language study and careful study of the culture to learn as much as he can about its forms and orientations. He must be willing to endure loneliness and perplexity until finally the first real communication is made concerning the the truths of the gospel. When the exchange results in new converts receiving the truths thus communicated some of the fruits of years of labor begin to appear.

The price to be paid is the price of genuine love for people. The missionary without love is not only ineffective but a lie to the truth which he communicates. His message must ever be, "For God so loved." That love must indwell the missionary, make him willing to pay the price, guide him to adequate preparation, sustain him in times of difficulty and perplexity, and finally work through him as a channel to communicate with other hearts that the same love may ultimately transform them and their society.

D. Missionary Principles for the Development of a Christian Witness in the Total Cultural Complex

> The essential importance of the real cultural context in which communication takes place is that only in terms of this setting does any message have significance.[1]

In the chapters which have preceded, emphasis has

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1 Ibid., p. 57.

been upon the importance of the missionary's becoming thoroughly familiar with the culture so that he may communicate as effectively as possible. The process of culture change indicated the urgent need for the missionary to know the receiving culture. Ethnological and ethnographical insights provided for the missionary knowledge and techniques for cultural studies. Chapter three consists of the application of these insights first, in the study of aspects of culture with their implications for the missionary, second, to the role of the missionary as communicator. Finally, part three gathers up the information thus gathered to outline some basic principles for the missionary . These will apply particularly after his initial cultural survey has been completed and he is down to the work of evangelizing with the hope eventually of planting the church in its own native soil under the guidance of adequate native leadership.

Principles which will guide the development of a Christian witness in the total cultural complex relate to the content of the message, decisions, institutions and forms, and church planting. The section will be concluded with four basic principles for communication.

1. Content of the Message

The configuration concept school of ethnology recognizes the existence of basic orientations within a cul-

ture. Nida suggests that the missionary select "significant features of the people's world view (especially as regards religious practices) and provide meaningful interpretations of the Christian content through the use of these indigenous symbolic forms."[1]

2. Decisions

Once the message has been presented, the missionary must guard against any undue pressuring for the sake of statistics. Particularly in a close community, people know when the decision is genuine, when forced. A man in whom the Holy Spirit has worked to bring about real transformation is bound to have a telling witness among his friends and neighbors. An individual who has taken a step as a result of only outward promptings will be no help in the advancement of the Christian witness.[2]

3. Institutions and Forms

Valid indigenous institutions need to be perpetuated in the Christain witness to provide solidarity and to avoid the destruction of those forms which hold the society together, otherwise cultural disintegration will result.

Three alternatives are faced with respect to any institution. Either it may remain as a rightful part of the society, or its form and content may be altered, or if it

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1 Ibid., p. 180.

2 Ibid., p. 114.

is totally unworthy as a possible institution for the
purpose of the Christian witness in the community, a suit-
able substitute needs to be found for it so that the needs
which it met previously may now be met by a new institu-
tion with a constructive purpose. "Indigenization," says
Nida, "consists essentially in the full employment of lo-
cal indigenous forms of communication, methods of trans-
mission, and communicators, as these means can be prepared
and trained."[1]

4. Church Planting

Communication was considered earlier as both art and
process.[2] Church planting is both since it rests on the
communicative process. It is at once a process by which
meanings are exchanged about the gospel, and an art con-
cerned with principles which must be applied before effec-
tive transfer of ideas can take place.

The first principle in church planting is that commu-
nication must be in the people's own language. Second,
it must be through the indigenous media in a culturally
relevant context. New content must be found for old
forms and institutions, new orientations toward the to-
tality of life, and finally, but most essential of all,
there needs to be the continuous working of the Spirit of

1 Ibid., p. 185.

2 Supra, p.3.

God.[1]

Hindrances to the growth of the indigenous church need to be recognized as well. The tendency to think that everything must be done at once or in a certain prescribed order is sure to smother a truly indigenous movement. Where local leadership is undeveloped and remains concentrated in the hands of missionaries, progress is also blocked. Anything which attempts to divert the original movement toward unworthy or peripheral goals saps its life. The original imperative to bring Christ as Savior to each individual must remain central for real life to result.[2]

Christian movements tend to lose their power when the communicative process breaks down. Christian movements "cool off" according to Eugene Nida when there is overorganization which becomes a barrier to growth and limits the working of the Spirit of God. Lack of organization may have equally disastrous consequences. Somewhere between the two a happy medium is found, enough organization to keep things moving, but with enough flexibility to allow for change and redirection. The life dies out when the message becomes old and commonplace.

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1 Ibid., p. 143.

2 Ibid., p. 147.

Syncretism will also dilute the power of the message.
Too limited goals for the Christian witness cause stagna-
tion. Failure to anticipate far-reaching cultural changes
may destroy the work as chaotic circumstances hinder an
effective ministry. [1]

The power of the "cooling off" may be reduced by a
constant supply of new information being given, relevant
Bible teaching for needs as they arise, training of lay
leaders, and preparation for contact with other groups
with whom contact may be made.

The continuing ministry of the missionary necessi-
tates that he be as much aware of cultural developments
in the ongoing work as when his ministry was first begun.
The dynamics of culture have not changed though the cul-
ture may have been transformed in many ways by the gospel.
The continuing needs of the group must still be the concern
of the missionary. The communication of the gospel must
continually be adapted to meet those needs. [2]

5. Four Basic Principles for Communication

The first principle for effective communication is
very simply that communication of the Good News must
rest on the basis of personal friendship. Without love

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1 Ibid., pp. 151-154.

2 Ibid., pp. 155-157.

for the people and real interest in their lives, the missionary can do nothing. Friendship provides an open channel through which the gospel may be transmitted.[1]

Second, after careful study of the culture and the social structure in particular, the first avenue of approach should be to those who can most effectively pass on the message so that from the beginning the Christian witness will have the solidarity of the natural family groupings which form the backbone of society.[2]

Third, a time principle must be kept in mind. Time must be allowed for the circulation of the new ideas.[3] Transformation of individuals and society does not take place overnight. The missionary has need of patience. Above all, he must not expect changes to follow his own preconceived pattern. He must allow the Christian movement in a culture different from his own to manifest itself in ways appropriate to the particular composition of the culture.

Finally, the continuing work of the missionary must take into account the principle of culture change. New and relevant application of the gospel must be found for each new cultural development.

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1 Ibid., p. 110.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

E. Summary

Chapter three has applied the insights of ethnology and ethnography to the problems of communication in the total cultural complex. Part one related these insights to five different aspects of culture: the material, the social, the religious, the area of language and folklore, with brief reference to the arts.

Part two related the insights of cultural studies to the individual missionary as communicator of the gospel.

Part three provided a summary of principles to guide the missionary in the establishment of a relevant witness. Principles were advanced relating to the content of the message, decisions, institutions and forms, and church planting. Four general principles for effective communication concluded the chapter.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this thesis to examine
the cultural elements which control and direct communica-
tion in the culture of a new mission situation.

To do this the field of cultural anthropology was
investigated. Chapter one surveyed the subject with par-
ticular reference to the way in which cultural anthropol-
ogy illuminated that phenomenon of such importance to the
missionary, namely culture change. From the discussion
of cultural anthropology it was seen that a knowledge of
ethnology and ethnography would be of signal importance
to the missionary in preparation for contact with a to-
tally new culture.

Chapter two indicated the place of ethnology and
ethnography in missionary training by providing basic in-
sights in the study of culture. Concepts of culture,
methodology in on-the-field surveys, classification and
interpretation of field data were all discussed in some
detail.

The purpose of the final chapter was to relate the
insights of ethnology and ethnography to the problems of
communication in the total cultural complex. Chapter
three thus related the general findings in these two are-
as to five aspects of culture: the material culture,
the social and religious aspects of culture, the area

of language and folklore, with brief reference to drama, music, and art. In each case the implications for the missionary in the task of communication were pointed out. Ethnological insights were related to the role of the missionary as communicator of the gospel in part two of the chapter. The third section concluded the chapter by advancing missionary principles for communication in the total cultural complex, with the purpose being to establish a relevant Christian witness. Principles to guide the missionary in the task of adapting the message to the culture related to the content of the message, the matter of decisions, forms and institutions of the culture, church planting, with finally four basic principles summarizing steps for effective communication in the new mission situation.

In conclusion it was found that knowledge of the cultural elements which control and direct communication may be gained by the missionary through the study of cultural anthropology in the areas of ethnology and ethnography. It was further discovered that knowledge of the cultural elements controlling communication assists the missionary in establishing a witness rooted and grounded in the culture, manifest in indigenous cultural forms and institutions, and able to relate the Christian message to the ongoing needs of the culture as a whole and the individuals who compose it.

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