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Ng, Gan-Theow, Ph.D.

Andrews University, 1991

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Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

RELIGION, CULTURE, AND MODERNITY: SOME  
MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE  
PROCESS OF SECULARIZATION  
IN EAST ASIA

A Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Gan-Theow Ng  
October 1991

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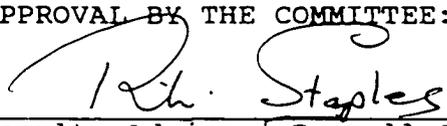
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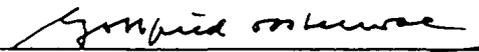
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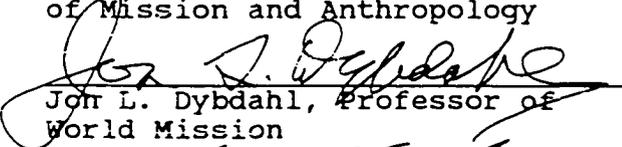
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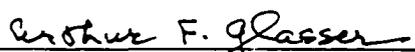
APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

  
Faculty Advisor: Russell Staples  
Professor of Mission

  
Gottfried Oosterwal, Professor  
of Mission and Anthropology

  
Jon L. Dybdahl, Professor of  
World Mission

  
Norman K. Miles, Professor of  
Urban Ministry

  
Arthur Glasser, Professor of  
World Mission, Emeritus  
Fuller Theological Seminary

  
Werner Vyhmeister, Dean  
SDA Theological Seminary

November 25, 1991  
Date Approved

ABSTRACT

RELIGION, CULTURE, AND MODERNITY: SOME  
MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE  
PROCESS OF SECULARIZATION  
IN EAST ASIA

by

Gan-Theow Ng

Chair: Russell L. Staples

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: RELIGION, CULTURE, AND MODERNITY: SOME  
MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROCESS  
OF SECULARIZATION IN EAST ASIA

Name of researcher: Gan-Theow Ng

Name and degree of faculty chair: Russell L. Staples, Ph.D.

Date completed: October 1991

This study investigates the outcome of the process of secularization in three modernized urban Chinese societies in East Asia and seeks to describe the resultant patterns of change and continuity. Some missiological implications are drawn from the findings of the investigations.

Chapter 1 is an account of the historical development of secularization in Western societies and the effects of secularization on religion, society, and the individual. The focus in chapter 2 is on worldview and worldview change and the functions of these in the process of secularization. A five-part theoretical paradigm of the traditional Chinese worldview analyzed vis-à-vis the themes,

hierarchy, antiquity, particularity, harmony, and practicality is presented in chapter 3. In chapter 4 the impact of modernization and secularization on these Chinese societies and the emergence of a new hybrid worldview in which elements of both the traditional and modern are synthesized, are examined. Some aspects of the traditional Chinese worldview, such as affinity for hierarchy and antiquity, have gone through radical and perhaps irreversible change, whereas the Chinese esteem for particularity, harmony, and practicality has largely remained intact. Chapter 5 focuses on the implications of continuity and change, and seeks to show how these dynamic patterns of change have created new conditions conducive to mission.

The missiological conclusions of the study are spelled out in categories: mission, conversion, and church.

1. The process of secularization has opened up a degree of freedom from family and historical tutelage. This signals new opportunities for mission.

2. The Chinese group consciousness calls for a rethinking of the evangelistic process to include a more family and group oriented approach.

3. The sense of unease induced by change has created an atmosphere in which the church as the Body of Christ needs to function as a socially supportive and meaning reifying community.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background to the Problem

The Chinese are perhaps one of the world's most widely scattered ethnic groups. Chinese who reside outside mainland China are found in over eighty countries. They live under various political, ethnic, and economic conditions. The Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, however, share a commonality in that their countries are highly urbanized and industrialized cosmopolitan societies with Chinese descendants as most of their citizens. Chinese in these countries share a great cultural and commercial heritage. Most of them were born and have spent most or all of their lives outside China. Their pro-Western governmental, judicial, educational and medical systems are similar. Being Chinese, though, does not necessarily mean they are Chinese-speaking Chinese. Millions do not know or care much about the Chinese language and live, dress, eat, and think in a manner that bears little resemblance to their Chinese counterparts in mainland China.

The contemporary Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore have grown up during decades of rapid industrialization and economic growth. During the years of

national development, Western ideas and technology have been imported and vigorously adopted. The espousal of Western ideals and models has brought the pervasive influence of Western civilization in general and secularization in particular.

Many social scientists argue that industrialization invariably produces secularization, and that as technology, industry, and bureaucracy spread throughout the world, the importance and influence of religion decrease. To some degree this appears to be true in these Chinese societies. Powerful social and economic forces have triggered a crisis in values. Traditions that have been entrenched for millennia are being challenged and reshaped by a new worldview. Young Chinese are leaving traditional Buddhist and Confucian religions in search of a "good life." In general terms one might argue that preoccupation with the pursuit of material prosperity is put in the place of the traditional priority of worship. In certain areas temples are being replaced by technology, and joss sticks by microchips. Long-cherished traditional rituals and symbols are being replaced or forsaken. Cohesive family ties are breaking down. On the other hand, Taiwan is currently in a temple-building boom. Hence, the overall picture is quite complex. Fundamental social changes in the contemporary societies present the Christian church with unprecedented problems and opportunities, but the resurgence of

traditional religious belief and reaffirmation of some social mores in certain areas is a reminder of the durability of the traditional ethical code of the Chinese.

#### Purpose of the Study

The ultimate purpose of this study is missiological. We are concerned with the exploration of possibilities and opportunities for the communication of the gospel and the enlargement of Christian communities in the three contemporary, modernized, urbanized, Chinese societies of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Before this can be done, it is necessary to seek to understand as thoroughly as possible who the Chinese in these societies are. To what extent have they remained traditional Chinese, and to what extent and in what ways have their thinking and the patterns of their lives been influenced by the symbiotic processes of modernization and secularization. At the outset, therefore, there is a sustained attempt to investigate and analyze the processes of modernization and secularization in these societies. This investigation is conducted in stages, as follows: (1) studying secularization in its Western historical context; (2) examining the concept of worldview and worldview change and the way these relate to the process of secularization; (3) identifying the traditional Chinese worldview in terms of its cultural continuity; and (4) describing the worldview in these three societies as shaped and fashioned by the forces of modernization and

secularization. What is learned from these investigations is then used to inform a missiological investigation of the new possibilities, challenges, and difficulties in the communication of the gospel and the establishment and expansion of Christian communities in these societies.

#### Delimitations

This dissertation is subject to several limitations. First, the study is conducted in the setting of three predominantly overseas Chinese communities in East Asia, namely, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Although not exactly parallel in every respect, they have enough commonality in their cultural heritage and economic prowess to make them objects of our study. In the survey of the traditional Chinese worldview, mainland China is understandably the main focus.

Second, this dissertation is concerned with the traditional and the contemporary Chinese mind. It is not intended to be a study of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, or Chinese folk religion, although these are often alluded to and referred to. These religions are only referred to within the context of their respective influence on the traditional Chinese worldview.

Third, this dissertation is not intended or designed to be a comparative study of the processes of secularization in the West and the East. It is accepted that secularization is a universal phenomenon. Some of the

characteristics it assumes in the West and the East are similar, although many dimensions of the process are very different. The study of secularization in the West is employed as a background against which to evaluate a similar process in the selected Chinese societies.

#### Methodology and Sources

This dissertation is in the main a descriptive study of the process of secularization. To achieve its objectives an interdisciplinary approach is followed. Chapter 1 is an historical study in broad sweep of the process of secularization in Western societies. Inasmuch as secularization is a social phenomenon, sociological interpretations of the processes and results of modernization and secularization are employed in chapters 1 and 4. Insights from anthropology are used in the study of worldview and worldview change in chapter 2 and of the traditional Chinese culture in chapter 3. In chapter 5 the findings of the sociological and anthropological analyses of the worldview and the varied social and political situations of the selected Chinese societies are utilized in missiological deliberations on strategies to reach the contemporary Chinese.

Both published and unpublished sources are used in the study of secularization and the traditional Chinese worldview. The sociological and anthropological data on the contemporary Chinese worldview are based principally on

published sources in both English and Chinese.

The following is an overview of the dissertation. Chapter 1 is a survey of the historical development of the complex process of secularization in Western societies and of the impact of secularization on religion, society, and the individual. Chapter 2 is a study of worldview and worldview change and the relationship of these to the process of secularization. In chapter 3 a theoretical framework of the traditional Chinese worldview is outlined and discussed in five broad categories. The influence of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and folk religion on the Chinese worldview is also considered. In chapter 4 the focus is on the emergence of the contemporary Chinese worldview after decades of modernization in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. In chapter 5 the attention is shifted from the descriptive to the prescriptive. Suggestions regarding the task of mission among the Chinese are made primarily from the standpoint of the new Chinese worldview. Special emphasis is given to the presentation of the gospel to the Chinese mind. The different political and religious contexts of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan will also shape suggested mission strategies.

#### Significance of the Study

This dissertation seeks to break new ground in three ways: (1) in the understanding of the contemporary Chinese worldview in three industrialized societies, (2) in the

comprehension of the process of secularization within a cultural matrix stabilized by the Chinese worldview, and (3) in suggestions regarding the communication of the gospel to the contemporary Chinese in the light of their worldview assumptions and social situation.

Literature on Western secularization abounds; but relatively few books, journals, and dissertations deal with the process of secularization and its effects on the Chinese urban communities studied in this dissertation. On the other hand, literature on Chinese philosophy and tradition can be readily found, but little of this explores the relationship between secularization and the Chinese mind. Besides, thought pertaining to ways of reaching the Chinese with the gospel tend to focus primarily on the historical and philosophical perspectives instead of on deep-seated Chinese worldview assumptions. Admittedly, the intellectual approach to mission has its place, but the scope of its application is somewhat limited to the intelligentsia, not the commoners, who are the majority of the populace.

The varied patterns of relatively slow growth of Christianity in East Asia has been a matter of missiological concern. Despite the rapid socioeconomic growth in East Asia, two things remain unchanged.<sup>1</sup> For one thing, Asia is still one of the most "religious" of the continents. Asia

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<sup>1</sup>Walbert Buhlmann, The Coming of the Third Church (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1978), 160-62.

has been known as the birthplace of the great religions, inasmuch as the major religious faiths originated there. The three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, arose in Western Asia; the four other world religions, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Shintoism, had their cradle in East and South Asia. Each of these world religions is still practiced in parts of the continent where it began.

On the other hand, Asia is one of the least Christian of the continents. According to David Barrett, the most comprehensive chronicler of world Christianity to date, the 89 million Christians in East Asia represent only about 4.9 percent of all Christians (almost 1.8 billion) in 1991, while the 147 million Christians in South Asia represent about 8.2 percent of all Christians. By comparison, Christians in Africa represent 13.4 percent; Latin America, 25 percent; and Europe, 22.8 percent of all Christians.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, the Christian church has always had a keen interest in East Asia, especially in China, which for many years was the world's largest single foreign mission field. The history of Christianity in China spans thirteen hundred years, from the arrival of the Nestorians in 635

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<sup>1</sup>David B. Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1991," International Bulletin of Missionary Research 15 (January 1991): 25.

A.D.,<sup>1</sup> to the Franciscan missionaries in the thirteenth century,<sup>2</sup> to the Protestant missionary movement in the nineteenth century. In spite of their attempts to penetrate Chinese life and culture with the gospel, they had little success. In fact, missionaries were banished from the country time and again, the last occasion being in 1949 after the Communist takeover.<sup>3</sup>

Even after 1949, progress of the gospel work among the overseas Chinese in East Asia has been somewhat sluggish. Recent statistics reveal that the Average Annual Growth Rates (AAGR) of the Christian churches from 1970 to 1980 were about 1.3 percent for both Hong Kong and Singapore, and about 3.1 percent for Taiwan.<sup>4</sup> The trend in decades of meager success in mission among the Chinese suggests potentially serious problems that need to be

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), vol. 1, 324.

<sup>2</sup>Leonard M. Outerbridge, The Lost Churches of China. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952), 59.

<sup>3</sup>For a review of the thirteen hundred years of history of the Christian faith in China, see Ralph R. Covell, Confucius, The Buddha, and Christ: A History of the Gospel in Chinese. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986.

<sup>4</sup>The method of calculating Average Annual Growth Rates and Decadal Growth Rates is taken from Bob Waymire's and C. Peter Wagner's book, The Church Growth Survey Handbook (Milpitas, CA: Global Church Growth, 1984), 15-17, 38-39. The AAGR of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the same period were -7.3 for Hong Kong, 1.2 percent for Taiwan, and 1.5 percent for Singapore. See 126th Annual Statistical Report 1988. Compiled by the Office of Archives and Statistics (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 12-13.

attended to. Finding ways to reach this large people group constitutes one of the most pressing needs of the church in the 1990s and beyond.

## CHAPTER I

### SECULARIZATION IN ITS WESTERN CONTEXT

#### Introduction

Secularization is primarily a process of change in religion and society. More specifically, it is an interpretive paradigm used to explain the emergence of the modern world that is radically different from what came before it.<sup>1</sup> In sociology of religion, secularization is a process said to have led to religion's becoming more marginal in contemporary societies. Secularization is often associated with such concepts as social change, decline of organized religion, desacralization of society, conformity with "this world," etc. For the purpose of this dissertation, secularization is defined as a process of fundamental social change in which traditional meaning systems or worldview are modified, lost, or replaced.

The word "secular" has its root in the Latin *saeculum* that means "period of time," "generation," or "age." It was a neutral term with no negative or positive

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Luckmann. "Theories of Religion and Social Change," in The Annual Review of the Social Sciences, ed. Joachim Matthews, Bryan R. Wilson, Leo Laeyendecker, and Jean Seguy (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1977), 17.

connotation. In the Vulgate translation of the New Testament, the meaning of the word was ambiguous. It could assume a neutral meaning, i.e., to signify "a great length of time" (as in 1 Timothy 1:17, *saecula saeculorum*--"forever and ever" or an "endless span of time"). Or, it could be used as a religiously negative term signifying "this world" under Satan's domination (as in Romans 12:2, *et nolite confirmari hui saeculo*), "yet not conform to this age," or "worldly desires" (as in Titus 2:12, *saecularia desideria*).<sup>1</sup> To be secular in this sense is to be bound to the present age and to be given to the concerns of the world.

In the Middle Ages the antithesis of the secular and the holy became more apparent. Being secular meant "belonging to the world and its affairs as distinguished from the church and religion."<sup>2</sup> It signified the nonecclesiastical, nonreligious, and nonsacred. Later, however, as the church became more at home in "this world," the term was accorded a more neutral meaning. Thus there was "the secular clergy," or "the secular arm," as contrasted with the "religious" or "regular" clergy, who

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<sup>1</sup>Shiner provides an excellent account of the evolution of the word "secular." See Larry Shiner "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 6 (Fall 1967): 207-209. See also Charles H. Malik, A Christian Critique of the University (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 83.

<sup>2</sup>James A. H. Murray, ed., A New English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), s.v. "Secular."

lived according to the *regula* or rule of their monastic orders.<sup>1</sup> Secular priests lived in the "world" and were not bound by vows and might possess property.

In the past twenty years, the concept of secularization has been used with a great divergence of meaning. It has been identified with slogans ranging from the "death of God" and "the decline of religion" to "man come of age."<sup>2</sup> The lack of consensus among sociologists has prompted much debate. In response to this, David Martin suggested that the word be erased from the sociological dictionary because its meaning had become subject to ideological distortion.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, however, he later helped to rehabilitate the concept.

British sociologist David Lyon gives a valuable account of the historical development of the concept of

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Hill, A Sociology of Religion (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973), 229.

<sup>2</sup>David Lyon, "Rethinking Secularization: Retrospect and Prospect," Review of Religious Research 26 (March 1985): 229. See also Karl Dobbelaere, "Secularization: A Multi-dimensional Concept," Current Sociology (Monograph) 29 (1981): 5-7; and David Lyon, "Secularization and Sociology: The History of An Idea," Fides et Historia 13 (1981): 38-52.

<sup>3</sup>David Martin, "Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularization," in Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences 1965, ed. Julius Gould (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), 182. See also Peter Glasner, The Sociology of Secularization: A Critique of A Concept (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977); Harry Ausmus, The Polite Escape: On the Myth of Secularization (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982); and Luckmann, 17.

secularization since the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> He outlines four phases of development it underwent as follows: enlightenment, change and loss, modernization's partner, and change and relocation.<sup>2</sup>

The Enlightenment, beginning in the eighteenth century, might be characterized as the triumph of reason over ignorance, prejudice, and superstition. Previously reality was understood and defined by theology. God was believed to be the Creator of all things. All mores and folkways, all social institutions, and all academic disciplines were of divine origin and subject to divine

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<sup>1</sup>Lyon, "Secularization and Sociology", 38-52.

<sup>2</sup>Different authors approach the historical development of Western civilization and secularization differently. Christian philosopher Cornelius van Peursen, for example, subscribes to the philosophical categories: the myth, the ontology, and the function. See "Man and Reality: The History of Human Thought," The Student World 56 (First Quarter 1963): 13ff. French thinker, Auguste Comte (1798-1857), one of the fathers of modern sociology, believed in the theory of unilinear evolutionary development of human society. He taught that Western society evolved from a theological stage, through a metaphysical stage, to the present positivistic form. See Auguste Comte, The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte, trans. Harriet Martineau, vol. 3 (London: Bell, 1896), 305-8. Although Comte's theory of unilinear evolution provides a useful framework for the interpretation of European history, there is danger of applying the theory too far. The logical conclusion to his theory would lead to the inevitable disappearance of religion, a position with which many sociologists disagree. They believe religion does not so much vanish as take new forms. Further, Comte's theory lacks empirical support. Without verification, the theory appears incongruous. Although Comte failed to prove the theory of unilinear evolution, he did give a fairly good description of European intellectual history under the metaphor of a three-stage development.

direction. Religious assumptions were a *priori* to human thought and action. Kings ruled by divine right. Rebellion against rulers was tantamount to rebellion against God. Rain was thought to be the direct activity of God. Famine and drought were regarded as divine judgments. Alchemy, numerology, and astrology were considered to be valid sciences. But with the establishment of modern science, supernatural phenomena were discounted; enlightened reason and scientific explanation replaced religious myths.

During the development of sociology as an academic discipline from 1860 to 1920, sociologists came to conceive of secularization as a social process of change and loss. This new perspective was developed in response to the social conditions in western Europe where urbanization, industrialization, and capitalism took on increasing social importance causing religion to decline or to take on new social forms.

During the later economic and technological development of the 1950s and 1960s, "secular" sociologists came to regard secularization as an inevitable partner of modernization. As society was modernized, they argued that it tended to become secularized. Religion was accorded a steadily reduced role in society. But as we shall see later, this proved to be more of an ideological than an actual perspective.

In the seventies, many less biased sociologists saw

secularization as involving change and relocation and not as an inevitable evolutionary process that would bring about the eventual demise of religion. They maintained that religion did not so much disappear as relocate, taking on different forms and assuming different meanings.

### Defining Secularization

#### A Definition of Religion

The outcome of any discussion of secularization largely depends on two basic premises: how secularization is defined and, as importantly, how religion is defined.

David Lyon affirms that a working definition of religion is essential to a working definition of secularization. He explicates his view this way:

The study of secularization must begin with the question: secularization of what? Sociologists are far from united on this question. The main dividing line falls between those who prefer to see religious behavior in organizational (and thus more empirically testable) terms of church membership and religious practice, and others who maintain that because religion for most believers is obviously more than mere observable practice, religion should be more broadly defined to include certain phenomena not normally thought of as "religious."<sup>1</sup>

Lyon obviously maintains that the meaning of secularization depends on how religion is defined, whether functionally or substantively. The functional approach to religion seeks to understand religion in terms of the social

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<sup>1</sup>David Lyon, "Rethinking Secularization," 234. See also W. Warren Wagar, ed., The Secular Mind (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 2, 3.

functions it fulfills, whereas the substantive looks at religion in terms of its content and belief system. Functional definitions emphasize what religion *does*, whereas substantive definitions seek to define what religion *is*.

Functional definitions of religion are usually broader than are substantive ones. This inclusive approach may comprise such phenomena as ideologies, ethos, value systems, and worldview, which substantivists may identify as non-religious.<sup>1</sup> A functional approach may encompass cross-cultural, trans-historical, and changing aspects of religion and encourages the observer to be sensitive to the religious undertone of many social settings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Meredith B. McGuire, Religion: The Social Context (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1987), 9-10. See also Ronald J. Johnstone, Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 270ff.

<sup>2</sup>The definitions of religion used by Robert Bellah, Clifford Geertz, and Thomas Luckmann reflect the functional approach. Bellah, for example, defines religion as "a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence." To Geertz, religion is "a system of symbols that acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." Luckmann describes religion as "the transcendence of biological nature by the human organism." See Robert Bellah, "Religious Evolution," American Sociological Review 29 (June 1964): 358; Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, ed. Michael Banton (New York: Praeger, 1966), 4; and Luckmann, The Invisible Religion, 49. See also Peter Berger, "Second Thoughts on Substantive Versus Functional Definitions of Religion," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 13 (June 1974): 125-33. In this article Berger defends a substantive definition of religion that does not

The need for functional definitions of religion stems from the fact that not all aspects of religion are, in Lyon's words, "empirically testable." Chinese "religious" systems, for instance, are much more implicit than explicit, and often "beliefs" are unconsciously held and rarely systematically expressed. Besides, these systems involve elaborate rounds of symbols and rituals, which transmit ideas, feelings, and values. All these make quantifying the religiosity of the Chinese in the exclusive sense of the word impossible.

Many who are schooled in the Christian tradition are accustomed to thinking of religion in narrow, institutionally specialized forms. This is true especially in societies with fairly complex and differentiated social institutions and structures, as in Europe and America. But institutional forms of religion constitute only a narrow category of the religious experience of humankind. There are also noninstitutional religions and nonchurch forms of religiosity whose presence and influence have been somewhat overlooked.

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lose sight of the phenomena of religion itself. See also Richard Machalek, "Definitional Strategies in the Study of Religion," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 16 (December 1977): 395-401; Roland Robertson, "Basic Problems of Definition," in Sociological Perspectives, ed. Kenneth Thompson and Jeremy Tunstall (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971), 365-78; Andrew J. Weigert, "Functional, Substantive, or Political? A Comment on Berger's 'Second Thoughts on Defining Religion,'" Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 13 (December 1974): 483-86.

Both the functional and substantive approaches to religion are recognized as valid methodologies for the study of religion, however. In this dissertation both approaches are utilized because the inquiry relates to secularization in the Chinese cultural milieu where religion is not narrowly institutionalized. Religion in this context may be defined as the ground of the meaning system that defines reality and legitimizes the patterns of social life.

In the West, religious and secular worldview are often held in diametrical opposition. This sacred/secular polarity, common in the West, is by no means consubstantial in every culture. As Niyazi Berkes points out, this polarity is largely based on the Western model of "church" and "state," and presupposes an institutionalized form of religion which functions independently of, and on a different level than, the political order.<sup>1</sup> This principle of differentiation, characteristic of some Western Christian societies, is not found in many non-Western societies or religions. Berkes alludes to typical Islamic societies as illustrative of states in which political authority is permeated with religious values. In such societies, religion for the most part is a way of life and a determining factor in every sphere of daily living. Every act or symbol has religious significance. There is no

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<sup>1</sup>Niyazi Berkes, "Religious and Secular Institutions in Comparative Perspective," Archives de Sociologie des Religions 16 (July-December 1963): 65.

dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. Life is one complete whole.<sup>1</sup>

An absence of duality also may be seen in Chinese "religious" systems. An often-asked question is whether the entire panorama of traditional Chinese practices, such as filial piety, ancestral cult, divination, etc., are religious practices. Most Chinese do not think so. The Chinese wholistic approach to life does not leave room for dualism. Worshipping one's ancestor is considered no more "religious" than eating rice at three meals daily. One is as much a cultural thing to do as the other. It is true that the former may have more "religious" attributes, as religion is understood in the West, nevertheless, it is considered neither "religious" nor "nonreligious" in Chinese thought. It is simply part and parcel of the Chinese cultural heritage. Therefore, to impose a non-Chinese sacred/secular dichotomy on certain aspects of Chinese culture is to make Chinese culture something it is not.

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<sup>1</sup>Those who have dichotomized traditional and modern societies and placed the sacred in one and the secular in the other have been taken to task by Bendix, Gusfield, and the Rudolfs, and others. See Reinhard Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered," Comparative Studies in Society and History 9 (April 1967): 292-346; Joseph R. Gusfield, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change," in Social Change: Sources, Patterns and Consequences, ed. Eva Etzioni-Halevy and Amitai Etzioni (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 333-41; and Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

### A Definition of Secularization

The essential notion of the concept of secularization is that the religious doctrines, institutions, and values that once dominated society appear to have lost much of their status and influence. The former authority of the church over the political, economic, scientific, and moral spheres of human life has waned. As a consequence, religion is increasingly confined to private life. Many choose to look upon the world and their lives without the benefit of religious interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

The definition of secularization used in this dissertation is based on a broad concept of religion in order to accommodate non-Western, non-institutionalized forms of religious expressions. Secularization in this context may be defined as a process of fundamental social change in which traditional meaning systems and the worldview that underlies them undergo loss, replacement, or modification. It should be noted that secularization is a process that not merely involves religious phenomena, but to a large extent also influences cultural and traditional norms and perceptions. The result is a change in basic, deep-seated, long-held belief systems. A person caught up in the process of secularization is less likely to feel bound by the absolutes of tradition, and more likely to be

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 108.

open to change in response to the emerging realities of history.<sup>1</sup>

### Secularization in Historical Perspective

The process of secularization has been influenced through the years by a series of historical developments. We shall briefly consider the rise of Protestantism, the Enlightenment, the development of science and technology, and the development of the modern state.

#### The Rise of Protestantism

Most sociologists agree that Protestantism contributed to the process of secularization. Peter Berger contends that Protestantism served as an historically decisive prelude to secularization,<sup>2</sup> in that it promoted the spirit of rationalism. The mystery and magic of the sacraments were demythologized in an effort to uplift the transcendent God and His grace. Relics, shrines, and special places of holiness that had survived in the Catholic Church were done away with. The reformers rejected the sacerdotalism of the Catholic clergy and demystified the

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard E. Meland, The Secularization of Modern Cultures (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 3-9; Howard Becker, "Current Secular-Sacred Theory and Its Development," in Modern Sociological Theory in Continuity and Change, ed. Howard Becker and Alvin Boskoff (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1957), 133-86.

<sup>2</sup>Berger, The Sacred Canopy, 113. See also Ernst Troeltsch, Protestantism and Progress: The Significance of Protestantism for the Rise of the Modern World (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

priesthood and its functions. They abrogated private confession as well. Man became the keeper of his soul, a phenomenon which Wilson described as the "privatization of responsibility."<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, Protestants encouraged the rise of modern science by their support and promotion of scientific research. Moore has provided evidence of the influence of specific Protestant contributions to the advancement of science in the seventeenth century. For example, a Lutheran prince, Duke Albrecht of Prussia, subsidized the publication of the astronomer Copernicus' De Revolutionibus (1543); Andreas Osiander, a Lutheran theologian, arranged for its printing and wrote the preface; Joachim Rhaeticus, a Lutheran mathematician and professor at the Wittenberg University, supervised the printing; and Erasmus Reinhold, another Wittenberg professor, supported Copernicus' teaching in his astronomic tables.

Evidence that Protestants helped stimulate the scientific revolution derives from data concerning the religious preferences of scientists. Percentagewise, there seems to have been a relatively larger number of Protestants who were scientists than there were scientists in the population at large. For example, 90 percent of the foreign members of the *Academie des Sciences* in Paris between 1666

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<sup>1</sup>Bryan Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 86.

and 1883 were Protestants, and this was in a period when Protestants constituted only 40 percent of the population of Western Europe outside France. Evidence from other sources points in the same direction.<sup>1</sup>

### The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment in the eighteenth century played a major role in unseating the church from its position of influence and dominance. The humanistic spirit espoused during the Renaissance, together with other elements such as religious wars and dogmatism, contributed to the rise of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment in turn contributed to the development of a new epistemology.<sup>2</sup> In medieval epistemology the church was regarded as the ultimate authority. In Protestantism from the sixteenth century, the authority of Scripture was elevated above the authority of the church. During the Enlightenment, however, authority underwent a shift from the church and Scripture to experience and reason.

Undeniably the change of authority posed a serious challenge to theology and the church. It caused a spirit of self-sufficiency, a naturalistic way of viewing things, and a breakdown of the supernatural understanding of reality,

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<sup>1</sup>James R. Moore, "The Rise of Modern Science," in The History of Christianity, ed. Tim. Dowley (Oxford: Lion Book, 1990), 48-50.

<sup>2</sup>Robert E. Webber, The Church in the World (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 147-49.

for reason promised to solve all problems without resort to supernaturalism.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Development of Science and Technology

The development of science and technology also contributed to the process of secularization. Science and technology demand rationality and functional utility, which in turn predispose to rational thinking and to a questioning of religious interpretations of the cosmos and life. Besides, people who adopt science and technology are more inclined to look for technical solutions to human problems than for religious or moral ones. The development of science and technology has contributed to the alienation of Western culture from its religious roots.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Development of the Modern State

The development of the modern state was yet another factor in the process of secularization. The idea of the modern state as a social system is closely linked with the concept of legitimation. Legitimation may be defined as "the process by which one aspect of a social system confers sanctions on the society as a whole and on particular

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<sup>1</sup>Vernon Pratt, Religion and Secularization (London: Macmillan, 1970), 11-20.

<sup>2</sup>Wilson, 43, 55. See also Bryan Wilson, ed. Rationality (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970); and S. S. Acquaviva, The Decline of the Sacred in Industrial Society, trans. Patricia Lipscomb (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 140.

institutions within it."<sup>1</sup> Historically, religion has been the most widespread and effective instrumentality of legitimation. Legitimation may also come in such forms as myths, legends, proverbs, folklores.

With the arrival of the modern state, the role of religion as a source of legitimation has been reduced. Increasingly the modern state has become self-justifying. Some claim legitimation on the basis of the will of the people. Others regard political and economic goals and functions as the ultimate source of legitimation.<sup>2</sup> Social institutions have replaced religious institutions in exercising the function of legitimation.

To sum up, we may say that the process of secularization is a multifaceted and bewilderingly complex phenomenon that took shape in response to a variety of developments. We have seen how Protestantism, the Enlightenment, science and technology, and the modern state have contributed to the process. Not all sociologists may agree about the extent to which each of these developments

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<sup>1</sup>Richard K. Fenn, "Religion and the Legitimation of Social Systems," in Changing Perspectives in the Scientific Study of Religion, ed. Allen W. Eister (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 144. See also Berger, The Sacred Canopy, 32ff; McGuire, 224; and Wilson, Perspective, 54.

<sup>2</sup>Talcott Parsons, "Belief, Unbelief and Disbelief," in The Culture of Unbelief, ed. R. Caporale and A. Grumelli (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 99; Guy E. Swanson, "Modern Secularity: Its Meaning, Sources and Interpretation," in The Religious Situation, ed. Donald Cutler (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 801-34.

was involved, but most concur that each of these historical developments has considerably influenced the Western world at almost every point of human existence.

### Impact of Secularization

The impact of the process of secularization on society has been profound and complex. In this study we are interested primarily in its effects on religion, which may be explored in at least four interrelated spheres, namely, liberation, differentiation, privatization, and individualism.

### Liberation

Many religious thinkers decry secularization as a negative force which has replaced religious faith with scientific rationality. This common perception can be seen in Jacques Ellul's view of the city. Ellul regards the city as irredeemable and secularization as pernicious.<sup>1</sup> Harvey Cox, on the other hand, appears to be more optimistic. Cox admits that secularization is a force relativizing religious worldviews and rendering them innocuous.<sup>2</sup> But he welcomes secularization and sees it as a fulfillment of biblical themes. Cox identifies secularization with liberation, "the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage,

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<sup>1</sup>Jacques Ellul, The Meaning of the City (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

<sup>2</sup>Harvey G. Cox, The Secular City (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 2.

the turning of his attention away from other worlds and toward this one."<sup>1</sup> Seen in this way, secularization is not necessarily the implacable enemy of Christian faith.

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, in his attempt to understand the process of secularization in the light of biblical faith, views the triumph of secularization as neither the triumph of the Kingdom of God nor the work of the devil.<sup>2</sup> To him, secularization means new possibilities of freedom for all.

In a biblical perspective this can be seen as man's entering into the freedom given to him in Christ, freedom from the control of all other powers, freedom for the mastery of the created world which was promised to man according to the Bible. At its best the secular spirit claims the freedom to deal with every man simply as man and not as the adherent of one religion or another, and to use all man's mastery over nature to serve the real needs of man.<sup>3</sup>

Both Cox and Newbigin in the sixties perceived the positive impact of secularization as delivering people from mysticism and tradition-bound orthodoxy. They saw this freeing effect as having significant missiological

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 15. Cox's book, The Secular City, was much criticized in the sixties and seventies. A discussion of the so-called Secular City Debate is beyond the scope of our study. Suffice it to say that Cox gives an over-glorified picture of the city without taking into account the social problems associated with it. But his point on secularization as liberation, while much too optimistic, does contain some elements of validity. Cox confesses that his later books are much less optimistic.

<sup>2</sup>Leslie Newbigin, Honest Religion for Secular Man (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 29.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 8-9.

implications not only in Western society, but also in the three Chinese societies focused upon in this study. In this they were quite perceptive and studies during this period began to indicate a gradual increase in the receptivity of people in East Asia to the gospel.

#### Differentiation

The secularization of society is reflected in a phenomenon sociologists call institutional differentiation. The term "differentiation" is utilized to describe the process by which the various institutional spheres in society become separated from each other, with each institution performing specialized functions.<sup>1</sup> During the Middle Ages, the church more or less dominated every aspect of life, religious and otherwise. All aspects of life were influenced by religious beliefs, values, and practices. The church, believed to be endowed with divine authority, defined and punished deviant behavior. Secularization has changed the central role the church played in society. In the process of differentiation each institutional sphere became separated from the other. In due course, political, economic, and educational institutions broke away from the control of religion and developed their own specialized forms. Institutionalized religion thus lost much of its overarching influence. Shiner describes this phenomenon as

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<sup>1</sup>McGuire, 221ff.

the "disengagement of society from religion."<sup>1</sup>

Because the role of religion in contemporary society is much reduced, certain social relationships, business transactions, and moral choices appear to operate on values other than those of the Judeo-Christian heritage. For instance, marriage is no longer considered by many as being made in heaven, but is regarded an earthly arrangement in response to biological and social needs. An answered prayer may not be thought of as divine providence, but as a matter of luck. Instead of attributing phenomena such as earthquakes, death, floods, etc., to God's will, explanations are sought in scientific and rational terms.

The process of differentiation also contributes to the difficulty of motivating behavior and commitment. In societies in which institutional differentiation has not yet taken place, family, community, religion, and tradition are the prime motivating factors. In contemporary society, however, it has become increasingly difficult to inspire commitment on those grounds.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Shiner, 212. Differentiation is part of the process of the so-called "desacralization of the world," which Weber refers to as the *Entzauberung* (disenchantment) of the world (Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills [New York: Oxford University Press, 1958], 139). See also Talcott Parsons, "Christianity and Modern Industrial Society," in Sociological Theory, Values and Socio-Cultural Change, ed. Edward A. Tiryakian (New York: Free Press, 1963), 33-70.

<sup>2</sup>McGuire, 223.

## Privatization

Another consequence of secularization is the so-called "privatization" of faith--a process in which the private sphere of life is compartmentalized and removed from effective roles in the public sphere. The public sphere represents the world of facts, whereas the private sphere includes the world of beliefs, opinions, and values. The public sphere is the macro world of giant institutions, government, business, politics, economics, and national life. It is large, impersonal, and anonymous. The private sphere is the micro world of the family and social relationships, the world of personal tastes, sports, hobbies, and other leisure pursuits.<sup>1</sup>

As the institutions of the public sphere become less and less concerned with providing meaning for people, the private sphere is expected to take over. The family and other institutions in the private sphere are counted upon to provide a haven from the public sphere.<sup>2</sup> Yet ironically, the influence of the family on the public sphere is shrinking. This is mainly because the extended family has been reduced to the nuclear family. The traditional

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<sup>1</sup>McGuire, 52; and George Gerharz, "Secularization as Loss of Social Control: Toward a New Theology," Sociological Analysis 31 (Spring 1970): 8. Newbiggin describes privatization as one of the hallmarks of the contemporary society. Lesslie Newbiggin, Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 18-19, 35-39.

<sup>2</sup>Luckmann, Invisible Religion, 107-14.

supporting web of the extended family, friends, and neighbors is difficult to count on for support and meaning.

Increasingly religion is practiced in the private domain. Religion retreats into the inner person and finds definition and meaning in personal religious acts. Berger explains the outcome of this private religiosity and its irrelevance to the public sphere as follows:

This religiosity is limited to specific enclaves of social life that may be effectively segregated from the secularized sectors of modern society. The values pertaining to private religiosity are, typically, irrelevant to institutional contexts other than the private sphere. For example, a businessman or politician may faithfully adhere to the religiously legitimated norms of family life, while at the same time conducting his activities in the public sphere without any reference to religious values of any kind. It is not difficult to see that such segregation of religion within the private sphere is quite "functional" for the maintenance of the highly rationalized order of modern economic and political institutions.<sup>1</sup>

As religion is privatized, the traditional potency of religion is weakened, in that it is effective largely in the private domain. Further, religion has tended to become more tenuous, because the modern family as representing the private domain is also of tenuous construction.

#### Individualism

Secularization has also contributed to the development of individualism. The new emphasis on self appears to be rooted in the Enlightenment. Kant defined the Enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-imposed

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<sup>1</sup>Berger, The Sacred Canopy, 133.

tutelage," and he saw it as man's claim to be recognized as an adult, responsible being.<sup>1</sup> Man has come of age, so to speak. Individuals can now pursue freedom in every conceivable form--freedom from arbitrary power, freedom from ecclesiastical authority, freedom of speech, freedom of trade, freedom to realize one's talents, and freedom of aesthetic response. In short, one can discover one's potential in the fullest sense of the word.

This discovery of the individual self has turned into individualism. Bockmuehl observes that individualism has had a noble birth. Respect for the individual started out as a prominent and precious heritage of Christianity. But the Enlightenment severed it from its organic link and turned it into individualism.<sup>2</sup> In essence, extreme forms of individualism teach that before any person can discover his destiny, he must first declare himself free from institutional control. External authorities are to be rejected, be they political, parental, or ecclesiastical. This is an emphasis upon values of self-determination, personal gratification, and individual rights.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Gay, The Rise of Modern Paganism, vol. 1, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 3, 8.

<sup>2</sup>Klaus Bockmuehl, "Secularization and Secularism: Some Christian Considerations," Evangelical Review of Theology 10 (January 1986): 61.

<sup>3</sup>Edgar Mills, "The Sacred in Ministry Studies," in The Sacred in a Secular Age, ed. Philip E. Hammond (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 170.

One of the outcomes of individualism is the segregation of individual roles in society. In societies in which communalism is regarded as important, group interests matter more than individual rights. But in a highly differentiated society, the reverse seems to be true. Individual roles are well defined and designated. The person is regarded as a role-performer rather than a member of the community. The segregation of roles may have contributed to increasing personal isolation, loneliness, anonymity, and a host of social problems, such as suicide, disruption of marriage, and substance abuse.

#### Secular Spirit

The process of secularization has also facilitated the emergence of a modern worldview Gilkey calls "the secular spirit" which is characterized by contingency, autonomy, relativity, and temporality.<sup>1</sup> The secular spirit or mood sums up in a general way the contemporary person's understanding of self and reality.

Contingency is an accidental occurrence, something whose happening depends on chance. A person who accepts the premise of contingency believes the basic elements of the universe simply exist, and that everything that exists has a natural cause that can be scientifically explained.

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<sup>1</sup>Langdon Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 39-71. See also Anthony Campolo, A Reasonable Faith: Responding to Secularism (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983).

Creation of the universe by a supernatural God is ruled out. One implication of contingency is the concept that planet earth and its inhabitants came about through a series of accidents.

Autonomy means that human beings are creators of their own environment. Since God is not a factor in the creation of the universe, human beings are free to choose their destiny as they see fit. Autonomy is seen as essential for the development of a new and enlightened humanity. Human beings are no longer willing to let the transcendent dictate their lives and the meaning of their existence. Even social authority is not welcome, for it is believed that all external social authority--whether of church, of state, of local community, or of family--will in the end undercut personal authority. Most scholars recognize that the spirit of autonomy is due in part to Protestantism. In their zeal to deliver Christianity from the ecclesiastical tutelage of the Roman Church, the reformers championed the cause of individual autonomy, autonomy over against ecclesiastical authority, but not as over against divine authority. The prevailing concept of autonomy, however, has taken a new twist. Autonomy in contemporary society may simply mean freedom from any kind of authority, political, ecclesiastical, parental, or otherwise. In particular, it means being free from the need of God. It means human beings can control the present and

the future. They can cope with change and eventuality. There is no need for resignation to a divine will.

Relativity denotes the absence of absolutes in a world believed to be in a constant state of flux. If humans are creators of society, then the values and destiny created by one group of people may not be acceptable to another group in a different cultural and historical context. On this view there is no single system that can be adopted as binding all people at all times. To a secular person, the days of moral absolutes are over.

Temporality means that everything is bound by time and space, and is subject to change and decay. There is no after life, no future world, and no sense of accountability for deeds and misdeeds. Death ends all. God and eternity, therefore, have been consigned to the realm of fantasy. Gilkey concludes that the spirit of temporality has rendered eschatology equivocal and meaningless. An historical interpretation of eschatology has become more meaningful to a contemporary person than an eschatological interpretation of history.<sup>1</sup>

Gilkey's description of the secular spirit of contingency, autonomy, relativity, and temporality is by no means confined to contemporary Western society. Secularization being an universal phenomenon affects other cultures as well. As we shall see in chapter 4, some

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<sup>1</sup>Gilkey, 57.

present-day Chinese come rather close to sharing the same spirit.

#### Secularization in Western and Eastern Milieus

Secularization appears to manifest itself differently in Western and Eastern societies. In the West, secularization is a process of *religious* change, a process in which religious thinking, practice, and institutions lose social significance. It is a moving away from the influence of religion in all spheres of life toward a separation between religious faith and the structures of society.

In East Asia, as is shown later in this study, the process of secularization has taken on different characteristics. The contrast stems mainly from the way religion is perceived. In the West, religion tends to be expressed in terms of a belief system; in the East religion is experience. Western religion is more dualistic and organizational, while religion in the East is more wholistic and ritualistic. Secularization in the West is generally characterized by the decline of organized religion. In the East, where religion is not institutionalized and where religion and culture are enmeshed as one, secularization appears to be more broadly expressed in *social* and *cultural* change. It is a process in which there is a decline in the social influence of the traditional meaning system. It is a reorientation of values. It is a moving away from traditional guidelines and sensitivities.

Social and cultural change in the Eastern milieu has been accelerated by rapid modernization. In fact, secularization has often been identified with modernization, and modernization is associated with market economies, bureaucracy, and industrialization. Modernization has fostered changes in structures, processes, and attitudes.

1. It has brought about the replacement of outmoded commercial and economic establishments with modern ones, usually adopted or emulated from the West.

2. It has also had consequences for social processes as well as social institutions.<sup>1</sup> For example, mate selection as a social process has tended to go from marriage by arrangement to love marriage. The family as a social institution has also gone "modern" from a largely extended family structure to the conjugal type.

3. Modernization as a commercial-industrial process has precipitated changes in values, attitudes, and beliefs. Basic deep-seated traditional values have given way to those consonant with such modern ones as individualism, youth-orientation, and achievement-orientation.

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<sup>1</sup>W. E. Moore, The Impact of Industry (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 11-12. See also Alex Inkeles, "Industrial Man: The Relation of Status to Experience, Perception and Value," American Journal of Sociology 66 (July 1960): 1-31; David J. Smith and Alex Inkeles, "The OM Scale: A Comparative Socio-Psychological Measure of Individual Modernity," Sociometry 29 (December 1966): 353-77; and Alex Inkeles, "Making Men Modern: On the Causes and Consequences of Individual Change in Six Developing Countries," American Journal of Sociology 75 (July 1969-May 1970): 208-25.

The change in structures, processes, and attitudes are undoubtedly interdependent. But the change should by no means be equated with westernization. Values and attitudes may be modern (i.e. associated with the imperatives of the industrial way of life), they are not necessarily westernized. Considerable evidence from Japan and other East Asian countries has shown the emergence of social structural features that are modern, but are definitely not western.<sup>1</sup>

The social and culture change engendered by the process of modernization has been chosen as the focus of this dissertation. Of special interest is the change in values and attitudes, or more broadly speaking, a reorientation of worldview. The definition and functions of worldview and worldview change are the core of study in chapter 2.

### Conclusion

The concept of secularization may be understood as a process that has contributed to the displacement of a

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, T. O. Wilkinson, "Family Structure and Industrialization in Japan," American Sociological Review 27 (1962): 678-82; E. F. Vogel, Japan's New Middle Class (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965); K. Odaka, "Traditionalism, Democracy in Japanese Industry," Industrial Relations 10 (1963): 95-103; and B. Karsh and R. E. Cole, "Industrialization and the Convergence Hypothesis: Some Aspects of Contemporary Japan," Journal of Social Issues 24 (1968): 45-64. For similar evidence on the Chinese communities in East Asia, see chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

religious interpretation of reality and a religious orientation toward life by scientific and rational explanations. This process has precipitated the decline of the social influence and significance of religion in Western societies.

Secularization is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon. By and large, it is a result of a long process of social and religious change that most sociologists believe began at the Renaissance. The Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution have all contributed to the trend toward empiricism and rationalism. Other aspects of modernity-related developments, such as the contemporary communications media, the education system, science and technology, and a market economic system have also contributed to the decline of religion from its formerly dominant role in society.

Secularization has had considerable effect on society, primarily through the process of institutional differentiation. It has resulted in the relativization and privatization of the spiritual sphere. It also has affected individual members of society largely through extreme individualism and the segregation of roles. In addition, the process of secularization has facilitated the emergence of a rational reductionism or secular spirit in which human

life is seen in terms of contingency, autonomy, relativity, and temporality.

Although the process of secularization is a global phenomenon, it has taken different forms in different societies. Secularization in the West is marked by a decline of the social significance of religion. In the East where religion and culture are inextricably linked, it is characterized by social and cultural change in which the traditional meaning system that has held people together for millennia has been weakened.

The study of the process of secularization in its Western milieu is intrinsically related to one of the purposes of this dissertation, and that is to provide a foil against which to analyze the impact of the process of secularization in three contemporary urban Chinese societies.

## CHAPTER II

### WORLDVIEW AND WORLDVIEW CHANGE

#### Introduction

The slow growth of the Christian church in China has been a source of concern to missiologists for decades. Scores of books have been written and many explanations suggested for the tenacious resistance encountered and sluggish development of the church. Two main underlying reasons may be identified: one pertaining to external factors, and the other internal. External factors have to do with problems associated with presenting the gospel in Western dress and by Western missionaries protected by Western imperialist power. Christianity was frequently considered by the Chinese as a foreign religion with little relevance to Chinese culture.

The internal factors are more subtle, and less easily perceptible. They have to do with the intrinsic resistance of Chinese to the gospel. The Chinese mind does not appear to be receptive to the gospel message. Such apathy, and even antipathy as has been encountered, may have been culturally conditioned. An examination of the external factors pertaining to missionary endeavors in mainland China

in the nineteenth century lies beyond the purposes of this dissertation, but the study of the internal factors, and particularly those relating to the Chinese worldview, constitutes the main thrust of chapters 2 to 4.

The study of the concept of "worldview" by anthropologists was given renewed impetus during World War II in efforts to analyze the national character of Germans, Japanese, and other peoples with whom the United States was engaged as enemies and allies. Refinement of the concept took place in a subsequent dialogue between anthropologists, notably Clyde Kluckhohn, and philosophers such as F. S. C. Northrop, Ethel Albert, and David Bidney. Together they studied the worldview of non-Western peoples in contrast to those of the West.<sup>1</sup>

#### Defining Worldview

The word "worldview" derives from the German *weltanschauung* or *world-and-life view*. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines it as "a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world, especially from a specific standpoint."

"Worldview" is commonly used to describe that which is most general and characteristic about a people. It is the set of presuppositions or assumptions underlying each

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<sup>1</sup>Roger M. Keesing, Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981), 365.

culture. Kraft suggests that worldview is the "central control box" of culture. It lies at the very core of culture.<sup>1</sup> Worldview assumptions are the deepest assumptions about life and reality. The concept of worldview has been expressed in such terms as "unconscious system of meanings,"<sup>2</sup> "unconscious canons of choice,"<sup>3</sup> "configurations,"<sup>4</sup> "culture themes,"<sup>5</sup> "value orientations,"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles H. Kraft, Christianity in Culture (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 53. Lloyd Kwast and others with similar understanding regard culture as having several successive "layers," the outermost of which is behavior; the next, values and beliefs, and the innermost is worldview. See Lloyd E. Kwast, "Understanding Culture," in Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, ed. Ralph D. Winter and S. C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 361-64. See also David J. Hesselgrave, Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 125; idem, Planting Churches Cross-Culturally (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 177; Michael Kearney, World View (Novato, CA: Chandler & Sharp, 1984), 41; Paul G. Hiebert, Cultural Anthropology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 371. See also Robert Redfield, "The Primitive World View," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 96 (1952): 30-36; Anthony F. C. Wallace, Culture and Personality (New York: Random, 1961), 100.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Sapir, "Conceptual Categories in Primitive Languages," in Language in Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology, ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 128.

<sup>3</sup>Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), 48.

<sup>4</sup>Clyde Kluckhohn, Mirror for Man: The Relation of Anthropology to Modern Life (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949).

<sup>5</sup>Morris E. Opler, "Themes as Dynamic Forces in Culture," American Journal of Sociology 51 (1945): 198-206, and "The Thematic Approach to Cultural Anthropology and Its Application to North Indian Data," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 24 (Autumn 1968): 215-27. See also Luzbetak's use of "societal personalities" in Louis J. Luzbetak, The

"covert core,"<sup>1</sup> or "philosophical presuppositions."<sup>2</sup>

Geisler describes worldview as an overall framework of meaning through which human beings view the totality of their environs.<sup>3</sup> He likens worldview to a pair of glasses through which every face is seen. Worldview serves as a grid through which everything in life is screened in a particular fashion. He further elaborates:

A worldview is a conceptual framework or "system" of thought through which everything is given meaning and context. It is a structure by which all the "stuff" of experience is given meaning and coherence. Without an overall worldview the facts of life are like unconnected dots on a page.<sup>4</sup>

Geisler concludes that people do not usually see

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Church and Cultures: An Applied Anthropology for the Religious Worker (Techny, IL: Divine Word Publications, 1970), 161ff.

<sup>6</sup>See Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck, Variations in Value Orientations (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 4-10.

<sup>1</sup>Laura Thompson, Culture in Crisis: A Study of the Hopi Indians (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 183.

<sup>2</sup>Donald R. Jacobs, "Conversion and Culture: An Anthropological Perspective with Reference to East Africa," in Gospel and Culture, ed. John Stott and Robert T. Coote (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979), 175-94.

<sup>3</sup>Norman L. Geisler, "Some Philosophical Perspectives on Missionary Dialogue," in Theology and Mission, ed. David J. Hesselgrave, 241-57 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 242. See also Robert Redfield, The Primitive World and Its Transformations (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1953), 85-86; and Clyde Kluckhohn, "Values and Value Orientations in the Theory of Action: An Exploration in Definition and Classification," in Toward a General Theory of Action, ed. Talcott Parsons, Edward A. Shils (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 388-433.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

things as they are, but as they appear through glasses tinted by their worldview. Conditioned by their cultural systems, people interpret reality according to what they are taught to perceive. If their culture informs that disease is caused by evil spirits, they perceive most diseases in their lives to be so caused.

Most worldview assumptions are implicit rather than explicit. They are assumed to be true without prior proof or reason. They are caught rather than taught. Some assumptions appear so obvious that people do not know what they are assuming because no other way of putting things has ever occurred to them.<sup>1</sup>

Worldview is taught to the next generation early in life so persuasively and imperceptibly that it seems absolute and is seldom questioned.<sup>2</sup> The learning process is so thorough and subtle that some anthropologists, such as Luzbetak, are convinced that it actually conditions some of the glands, involuntary muscles, and nervous system.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, worldview is seldom verbalized. If it is, it

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<sup>1</sup>A. N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: Mentor Books, 1948), 49.

<sup>2</sup>This attitude has been labeled by anthropologists as "ethnocentrism" which simply means that the culture of the group is of central importance irrespective of actual achievement. Arsenberg and Hiehoff note that ethnocentrism is not necessarily "bad," for it is vital to the preservation and continuity of a cultural system. See Conrad M. Arsenberg and Arthur H. Hiehoff, Introducing Social Change (Chicago: Aldine & Atherton, 1971), 66ff.

<sup>3</sup>Luzbetak, 77.

is not done in intellectually oriented propositions but in moral admonitions, statements of religious faith, and training formulas for child conduct.<sup>1</sup>

Since worldview is a matter of assumptions, it seldom occurs to people that there may be others who do not share the same assumptions. Most people do not carefully evaluate their own worldview; neither do they meticulously examine and interpret messages arising within the context of other worldview. Although worldview assumptions are largely implicit, they are reinforced by the deepest feelings, and anyone who challenges them may become the object of vehement attack. This is why most of the time worldview is sacredly guarded and is rarely changed. Since most people are used to one pair of glasses from the time of their earliest recollections, they are not predisposed to lay those glasses aside in order to look at the world through another pair of glasses.<sup>2</sup>

#### Dimensions of Worldview Assumptions

The study of worldview may be enhanced by examining its various dimensions. In his worldview model, Hiebert

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<sup>1</sup>Felix M. Keesing, Cultural Anthropology: The Science of Custom (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), 323.

<sup>2</sup>Hesselgrave, Communicating, 98, 125; and Paul G. Hiebert, Anthropological Insights for Missionaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 45.

spells out three basic worldview assumptions: cognitive, affective, and evaluative.<sup>1</sup>

Cognitive or existential assumptions provide a framework that people use to explain reality. These assumptions include concepts of atoms, viruses, and gravity in the West, and *feng-shui* (Chinese geomancy), spirits, and *yin-yang* forces in the East. Cognitive assumptions provide the grammar by which the concepts of time, space, and other worlds may be understood. They help to give shape to the mental categories and logic people use, and to the concepts of authority they accept.

Affective assumptions are related to a people's notions of life, in general, and their tastes in art, food, and music, in particular. For example, the principle of

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<sup>1</sup>Hiebert, Anthropological Insights, 45-48. The terms "cognitive," "affective," and "evaluative" have been used earlier by Parson and Shils in the development of a system classifying the mechanism of learning. They call the system the cognitive-cathective- (or affective-) evaluative matrix. The classification is based upon the phenomenological place of problems, the type of problems, and the kind of learning processes chiefly responsible for solution of the problem. See Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils, eds., Toward a General Theory of Action (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 125ff. Edward Hall's three levels of culture are adapted by Hiebert in his worldview model. Hall notes that there are at least three levels of culture: formal, informal, and technical. Formal culture includes implicit assumptions and beliefs that are taken for granted but are generally emotion-laden. Violation of formal culture is considered as sin. Informal culture involves assumptions which have strong emotions attached, although they are less explicit. Violation is bad taste. Technical culture is explicit cognitive knowledge acquired largely in school. Its assumptions are rational, and violation is considered as error.

health for the Chinese is harmony between the two forces in the body. Where the two are in equilibrium, health is maintained. This underlying assumption leads the Chinese to eat the kinds of food that will achieve that balance.

Evaluative assumptions have to do with the ethics and morality of a culture. They serve as criteria to determine truth and error, right and wrong. They are standards people use to make judgments. One aspect of the Chinese worldview, for instance, upholds *li* as the highest propriety and social sensitivity. It means telling people what they want to hear, not necessarily the truth, because it is deemed more important to encourage than to hurt.

#### Worldview and Its Functions

The importance of worldview to the present study of the Chinese becomes apparent when one considers its functions. Charles Kraft outlines five major functions of worldview: explanatory, validating, reinforcing, integrating, and adaptational.<sup>1</sup>

First, worldview explains how and why things are as they are and how and why they continue that way. Geertz maintains that worldview not only provides us with a model of reality but also structures our perceptions of reality.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles H. Kraft, "Ideological Factors in Intercultural Communication," Missiology 2 (July 1974): 295-312. See also Charles Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 54-57.

<sup>2</sup>Geertz, 7.

If one accepts the assumptions of one's worldview that the universe is mechanistic and impersonal, one's beliefs and values would lead one to explain all phenomena in terms of those assumptions. If one's assumptions say that the world is capricious and spirit-controlled, the way one interprets the cosmos would be very different. In other words, worldview provides a person with the foundations on which to build a system of explanation.

Second, a worldview sanctions or legitimizes the values and institutions of a society, giving people the impression that their cultural norms are right, and other approaches are inferior, perhaps even wrong. In most cultures, the ultimate ground of legitimation is "supernatural" (using the word in its Western sense).

Third, worldview provides psychological reinforcement at points of anxiety or during crises such as illness and death. It gives emotional support and security. That is the reason worldview assumptions are most evident at births, initiations, marriages, and funerals. They are also conspicuous during accidents or failure. Frequently this reinforcement takes the form of a ritual or ceremony. The ritual may involve the group or the individual.

Fourth, worldview integrates and systematizes perceptions of reality into a design which makes sense for the people involved. This integrated design helps people to understand and interpret events in a meaningful manner.

Finally, worldview has an adaptational function. Worldview assumptions do not always remain unchanged. They may be challenged by new ideas, behavior, and products. Under such pressure, one can select those assumptions that fit one's culture and reject those that do not, or one may attempt to retain two contradictory sets of assumptions and try to minimize internal dissonance. Alternatively, the differences between the old and the new may be reconciled by devising a new understanding of the old assumptions. The result is likely to be a gradual transformation of the worldview.

#### A Thematic Approach to Worldview

The concept of worldview theme is important to our study of the Chinese worldview in that it provides a theoretical framework from which worldview assumptions may be analyzed and evaluated. Most worldview assumptions tend to be nebulous and imperceptible, but a thematic approach to the study of worldview has the advantage of systematizing assumptions into several organized categories. Opler suggests that in most cultures several closely related themes unite the various elements of culture into an integrated whole. He explains:

It is the thesis of this paper that a limited number of dynamic affirmations, which I shall call themes, can be identified in every culture and that the key to the character, structure, and direction of the specific culture is to be sought in the nature, expression, and interrelationship of these themes.

The term "theme" is used here in a technical sense

to denote a postulate or position, declared or implied, and usually controlling behavior or stimulating activity, which is tacitly approved or openly promoted in a society.<sup>1</sup>

Worldview themes are sometimes called "societal personalities" or "national character." These themes make up the worldview of the people in a culture. The themes of an American worldview would include such core values as individualism, democracy, equality, competitiveness, youth orientation, frontier spirit, and the like.

Although Opler's theory is helpful in analyzing worldview, not all worldview themes are readily detectable. Even after considerable "digging," not every theme would emerge with lucidity or being rational. For this reason, the outcome of a study of a given worldview is not likely to be without a certain degree of vagueness and ambiguity.

#### Worldview Change and Cultural Change

Most anthropologists agree that all cultures change in one way or another. Most of them, though, change slowly over an extended period of time.<sup>2</sup> Luzbetak explicates the phenomenon this way:

Cultures are constantly changing because the individuals of a society, the "architects of culture,"

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<sup>1</sup>Opler, "Themes as Dynamic Forces in Culture," 198.

<sup>2</sup>For the Wape people in Papua, New Guinea, culture change took generations. See Donald E. McGregor, "Communicating the Christian Message to the Wape People of Papua New Guinea," International Review of Mission 63 (July 1974): 530-38. See also Donald R. Jacobs, "Conversion and Culture," 181.

are constantly modifying their cultural plans, "improving" and adjusting their ways to the whims and demands of their physical, social, and ideational environment. One change in the blueprint may necessitate other changes so as to restore the balance and harmony that through change has been disrupted. Sometimes change gets out of control and disorganization sets in. Some cultures may change more rapidly and more thoroughly than others, but all cultures change, even the most primitive and isolated.<sup>1</sup>

Although all cultures change, they also tend to resist change. Luzbetak spells out the twin tendency of most cultures--to persist as well as to change.<sup>2</sup> People in most societies tend to retain certain socially shared ideas in their original form and thus perpetuate orthodoxy. If most people are inclined to be conservative, why is change taking place? Arensberg and Niehoff believe that most cultures are not immune to change because they are not isolated from other cultures. If they were absolutely isolated from others, there would be relatively little force for change.<sup>3</sup> Change would appear to be inevitable in a world that is rapidly becoming a global village. For the most part, though, persistence and change are held in constant tension. It is impossible to speak of the one without speaking of the other, for together they constitute the positive and negative aspects of cultural dynamics.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Luzbetak, 195.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Arensberg and Niehoff, 67.

<sup>4</sup>Luzbetak, 197.

Cultural change may occur in different areas of culture. It may take place in the structure of a society; or it may affect the form, meaning, function of its culture and institutions. The fundamental meaning of an element of the culture may remain the same, even though the form may change.

Inasmuch as worldview is at the heart of culture, worldview change is indissolubly associated with cultural change. Just as everything that touches the roots of a tree affects the fruit, so anything that changes the worldview assumptions is likely to change the whole culture.<sup>1</sup> The reverse appears to be true as well. Change in peripheral customs often leads to change in worldview relative to the specific area of life.<sup>2</sup> For example, the introduction of a steel axe as a replacement for a stone axe tends to alter a people's perception of values. Having a stone axe may be perceived as a sign of poverty, whereas a steel axe represents a rise in status and financial standing. Hence, change in either worldview or culture is likely to have a corresponding effect on the other.

Anthropological studies of change are more likely to relate to culture than to worldview, and tend to focus on

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<sup>1</sup>Charles H. Kraft, "Worldview, a Society's Map of Reality," in Worldview and Worldview Change: Source Book, ed. Ian L. Grant (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1985), 49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 50.

observable phenomena such as behavior and practice. Research that examines change in understandings of the self and reality moves toward the area of worldview.

#### Types of Cultural Change

Since cultural change is part and parcel of human societal existence, people of various cultures use different approaches to work out conflict stemming from two or more incompatible sets of assumptions, each claiming equal validity. Luzbetak spells out four methods of resolving the problem of cultural change: substitution, loss, incrementation, and fusion.<sup>1</sup> Substitution entails the dislodging of traditional elements by new ones. Substitution may be complete, or it may be partial. Loss involves the elimination of traditional patterns without simultaneously providing substitutes. Incrementation occurs when additional elements are introduced without corresponding displacement. Finally, fusion is the amalgamation of new and traditional patterns.

Luzbetak's description of incrementation as a means of coping with cultural change is akin to the so-called "pragmatic adaptation" discussed by Gusfield. Gusfield explains that in some Asian and African societies old and new cultures have the capacity to exist alongside one another without conflict. The acceptance of the new does

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<sup>1</sup>Luzbetak, 199-202.

not necessarily do away with the traditional forms:

The syncretism of inconsistent elements has long been noted in the acceptance of religious usages and beliefs. Paganism and Catholicism have often achieved a mutual tolerance into a new form of ritualism drawn from each in Spanish-speaking countries. The "great tradition" of the urban world in India has by no means pushed aside the "little tradition" of the village as they make contact. Interaction has led to a fusion and mutual penetration. We have become increasingly aware that the outcome of modernizing processes and traditional forms is often an admixture in which each derives a degree of support from the other, rather than a clash of opposites.<sup>1</sup>

Pragmatic adaptation as a method of resolving conflicting worldview presuppositions is significant to this study in that it helps to explain why and how in some cultures people seem able to live with two sets of assumptions without overt dissonance.

#### Internal and External Factors

Cultural change may be attributed to the outcome of interplay of external or internal developments. Anthropologists use the terms "origination" and "diffusion" to describe factors of cultural change. Origination is the process of change from within the society, while diffusion is change due to outside borrowing. Luzebetak maintains that diffusion is more common than origination.<sup>2</sup> His view is supported by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck:

It is logical to assume that the better integrated a

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph R. Gusfield, "Tradition and Modernity," 335-36.

<sup>2</sup>Luzbetak, 213.

value-orientation system is, the greater will be its power of resistance to the effects of impinging forces. This is most especially true in cases of culture contact (the outside culture being considered as the impinging external force) where the power factor of actual conquest is not a critical issue. . . . Anthropological studies have amply documented the fact that it is a common tendency of people to borrow actively, or accept passively, the ideas, the techniques, the art forms, and many other aspects of other cultures and then remold them in accordance with their basic value system. Our theory would argue that while this is generally true, it is the more likely, as a tendency, the greater is the degree of goodness of fit of the ordering of the several orientations in the total value-orientation system.<sup>1</sup>

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck further submit that the seeds of change almost always are located outside the system. "The external force which is potentially creative of providing the seeds of a basic change is the impact of another culture--another value system."<sup>2</sup>

The importation of another value system may be deliberate. Arensberg reaffirms the view expressed by Luzebetak and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck. He speaks of the phenomenon of intentional borrowing:

A cultural system can change in respect to borrowing when the members come to believe that the adoption of new ideas is more advantageous than maintaining old customs exclusively. Several Asian countries at first attempted to defend themselves against the industrial European powers by keeping the new ideas out; later they reversed their decision. Japan was one of the earliest to decide to close itself off from the encroaching West, but it changed policy in the nineteenth century and embarked on a deliberate program of getting Western ideas, particularly those of a technical nature.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>3</sup>Arensberg and Niehoff, 75-76.

Arensberg goes on to say that while it is common to borrow, people are much more apt to borrow ideas of a technological nature. In fact, the kinds of things that have been universally borrowed are usually of a technical nature. Arensberg's point has particular relevance to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Increasingly, much of the technical borrowing in these countries is initiated by state or state-sponsored corporations. The adoption of Western technical knowhow invariably encourages the adoption of Western culture and value systems.

#### Significance of Understanding Worldview

An understanding of worldview is critical to the study of the process of secularization and its impact on the Chinese mind. Several reasons are advanced in support of this thesis:

First, worldview provides a point of reference from which the essence of a culture is grasped. When the point of reference is incorrectly placed, the conclusion cannot be expected to be valid any more than one can type accurately when one's fingers are not properly stationed at the home keys of a typewriter or computer. For too long attempts have been made to try to analyze and understand the Chinese mind from the non-Chinese perspective, and the result in reaching the Chinese with the gospel has been disappointing. A case in point is the popular practice of the traditional Chinese bridal party taking seemingly aimless detours on

their way to the marriage ceremony. Well-meaning Christian workers in China used to label such practices as "strange," "ridiculous," or even "superstitious." If the workers had understood Chinese worldview within a Chinese frame of reference, they would have known that the Chinese believed that evil spirits could not turn corners. Therefore, the bridal party taking a circuitous route could not be followed by evil spirits.

Second, worldview provides the key to comprehend the process of worldview change in Christian conversion. It is a fundamental Christian belief that the power of the gospel changes people at the deepest level of human consciousness, or the worldview level, as Kraft puts it.<sup>1</sup> Thus Christian conversion represents a radical shift in one's value orientation. This shift frequently appears to be rather threatening, for it causes disequilibrium at the center of the culture, and it subsequently affects the rest of the culture. An understanding of worldview should provide enlightenment on the process and implications of such change as it relates to Christian conversion.

Third, an understanding of worldview is basic to any serious consideration of missionary communication. Grant believes that worldview is probably the single most critical

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<sup>1</sup>Kraft, "Worldview, A Society's Map of Reality," 38-39.

topic in the cross-cultural communication of the gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Hesselgrave regards worldview as a starting point for missionary communication.<sup>2</sup>

Communication involves both the communicator and the receptor. Christian communicators must first understand their worldview assumptions. They need to be acquainted with their presuppositions to know what causes them to act and react as they do. They cannot adequately understand another worldview until they understand their own.

Second, a Christian communicator must be conversant with the receptor's worldview. Failure in this respect is likely to result in noncommunication. Kraft relates the experience of an Asian student who was having a trying time in the United States:

Not only was he struggling with culture stress in general, but he was nearly starving to death as well. He was living with an American family and eating every meal with them. In his culture it was considered polite when somebody offered additional food at a meal to turn it down. One must turn it down three times and then, with a show of reluctance, only accept it when it was offered the fourth time. When the hostess offered him food, he said, "No, thank you." He responded that way when she offered it the second time. Then she didn't offer it again. Here he was getting thin and didn't know what to do. First of all, he concluded that this American family was not very polite and even greedy and didn't want to give him enough food to eat. Meanwhile, they were quite concerned because he wasn't eating and was losing weight. They thought he didn't like their food. Neither he nor they realized that their

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<sup>1</sup>Ian L. Grant, ed., Worldview and Worldview Change: Source Book (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1985), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Hesselgrave, 121-29.

assumptions were different, and until they found out, they had no idea what was happening. He didn't know that it was not normal for an American hostess to offer food more than twice, and she didn't know that he expected her to offer it at least four times. She was assuming that he was really not interested in more food when he refused it. He, of course, assumed that she knew she must continue to press it upon him before he would do what he really wanted to do--accept more food.<sup>1</sup>

Fourth, a proper understanding of worldview provides the foundation for research on how the gospel can be contextualized. Luzbetak maintains that the investigation of "culture dynamics is perhaps the most urgent and most basic missionary research called for."<sup>2</sup> The Willowbank Report of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization highlights two "cultural blunders" that may be inadvertently committed by missionaries.<sup>3</sup> One is the perception on the part of the receptors that missionaries undermine the local culture when presenting the gospel. "Sometimes people resist the gospel not because they think it false but because they perceive it as a threat to their culture, especially the fabric of their society, and their national or tribal solidarity."<sup>4</sup> Second, the missionaries may be misunderstood as seeking to impose a foreign culture on the

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<sup>1</sup>Kraft, "Worldview, A Society's Map of Reality," 38-39.

<sup>2</sup>Luzbetak, 204.

<sup>3</sup>The Willowbank Report: Report of a Consultation on Gospel and Culture, Lausanne Occasional Papers No. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1978), 13-14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 13.

locals. When the gospel is presented in alien cultural forms, it may be resisted on terms extrinsic to itself. Missionaries may be regarded as foreign agents imposing their own way of life. In order for the gospel to engage in terms that are intelligible, meaningful, and nonthreatening, it must be communicated in terms that engage within the cultural milieu of the receptor. Effective contextualization must be undertaken in the conceptual frame of reference and terms of the worldview of the people concerned.

#### Conclusion

Worldview may be defined as the philosophical assumptions upon which reality is constructed and interpreted by a social group. It is an all-pervasive force that informs everything a group thinks and does. Worldview lies at the center of culture. It is deep down in one's consciousness and is seldom brought out for examination. Although worldview assumptions are mostly implicit, they wield immense power over beliefs, values, and behavior. Worldview are seldom static and are subject to change.

The study of worldview is valuable in that it provides a point of reference from which one may understand a culture. It is also pertinent to our understanding of the ways culture may change in the processes of modernization and secularization. Moreover, an understanding of worldview

is essential to a consideration of the communication of the gospel.

So far in this study the process of secularization in its Western context, its historical development, and its impact on religion and the individual have been examined. The meaning, function, and significance of worldview have also been explored. The focus of the next chapter is the intricate network of themes in the traditional Chinese worldview.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE WORLDVIEW

#### Introduction

In chapter 2 we examined worldview and its missiological significance. We also noted the multi-faceted relationship between worldview and culture change. The focus of this chapter is on the application of Chapter 2 in one particular area, namely, Chinese culture. Chapter 3 serves as a base line by which to measure the kind and extent of change engendered by the process of secularization in East Asia. As we study the traditional Chinese worldview, perhaps Luzbetak's appeal needs to be reiterated: "Research into culture dynamics is perhaps the most urgent and most basic missiological research called for."<sup>1</sup>

At first glance, the Chinese culture may appear unclear and subtle, sometimes even enigmatic and paradoxical. Admittedly, Chinese culture is complex. Any attempt to simplify it runs the risk of oversimplification and, therefore, of misrepresentation. In more ways than one, it is impossible to speak of a single Chinese worldview. National and ethnic diversity as well as

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<sup>1</sup>Luzbetak, 204.

political, historical, and ideological dissimilarity make it foolhardy to assume that there is only one traditional Chinese culture. Even if there were only one culture, subcultures would exist within each of its clans and groups.

Its complexity notwithstanding, Chinese culture has maintained an amazing degree of continuity over two thousand years. A characteristic identity has been retained despite long episodes of political and social upheaval and change. In this identity, one may discern regularly repeated and identifiable worldview assumptions that transcend time and space.

Suffice it to say that no single person, not even a Chinese scholar, can completely and exhaustively grasp the Chinese worldview in its totality. However, studying this worldview is exceedingly helpful because it is the all-pervasive force that, to a large extent, controls the thinking and behavior of millions of Chinese. It is an invaluable theoretical construct in probing the Chinese mind. Confucius once told his disciples that one thread ran through his teachings. He was later taken to have meant that human beings share a single mind, which penetrates all things, much as blood does the body. The Chinese worldview may be considered to be analogous to the thread of understanding continuously woven through millennia of Chinese history and philosophy.

At the risk of doing some injustice to the intricacy

of Chinese culture, the study of Chinese worldview through a theoretical framework necessitates some generalization. The worldview described in this chapter is that generally held by a wide spectrum of Chinese in China prior to the Communist era. The description that follows is more typical of the worldview of the middle and lower classes, rather than that of the upper class Chinese.

Before focusing the worldview proper, however, the manifold factors that have contributed to the Chinese worldview through the ages are examined.

### The Genesis of the Chinese Worldview

#### Introduction

Most historians agree that Confucius and Lao-tzu, the founders of Confucianism and Taoism respectively, were two of the most influential figures in Chinese history. The concepts at the heart of these cultural systems constitute the foundations of Chinese culture. In addition Mahayana Buddhism took root in Chinese life and thought in the second century A.D. These three systems were distinct and separate in origin and in the contribution each made to Chinese culture. Confucianism gave new codes for social life, Taoism provided a mystical and aesthetic interpretation of the world and nature, and Buddhism brought in meditation and enlightenment. Yet in the later stages of their development, these systems interacted and to some extent

coalesced inextricably with one another and with the traditional folk religion as well. The traditional Chinese worldview, as we know it today, emerged from the interplay of this foursome and other socio-political forces.

#### Confucianism and the Chinese Worldview

Confucianism was the official state ideology for nearly two thousand years of Chinese history and represents one of the major strands of Chinese thought and piety. Confucius (557-479 B.C.) has been acclaimed as the first major philosopher and educator in Chinese history. Despite his unpretentious self-evaluation of himself as a transmitter rather than an originator of ideas,<sup>1</sup> Confucius imperceptibly molded the basic pattern of the Chinese mind in almost every aspect of life. He contributed much toward the remarkable stability of Chinese civilization for the ensuing twenty-five centuries.<sup>2</sup> Even today, the Chinese

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<sup>1</sup>Confucius repeatedly depreciated his innovations in Chinese culture. He preferred to regard himself simply as "a lover of the ancients. . . . For none but a sage can originate, but to transmit is within the range of a worthy" (Analects VII, 1, 20). See Confucius quoted in William E. Soothill, The Analects of Confucius (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1968), 324, 325. Huston Smith aptly remarks that although Confucius was not the author of Chinese culture, he remains its supreme editor. Huston Smith, The Religions of Man (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 216ff. See also Hans Steninger, "The Religions of China," in Historica Religionum, ed. C. J. Bleeker and G. Widengren, vol. 2, Religions of the Present (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 465-515.

<sup>2</sup>Huston Smith gives an historical account of the profound influence of Confucianism in China. "During the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-200 A.D.) Confucianism became in

reverently and affectionately speak of Confucius as the First Teacher, or Teacher of the First Degree, because he stands above all other teachers in rank.<sup>1</sup>

The pre-Confucian period was marked by political and social disintegration and widespread breakdown of morality. In the context of this severe crisis, Confucius set out to reform society. His reflections centered on human beings rather than on nature. His contention was that if people could not know themselves, how could they hope to know and control nature? Confucius believed that the source of human

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effect China's state religion. In 130 B.C. it was made the basic discipline for the training of government officials, a pattern which continued in the main until the establishment of the Republic in 1912. In 59 A.D. sacrifices were ordered for Confucius in all urban schools, and in the seventh and eighth centuries temples were erected in every prefecture of the empire as shrines to him and his principal disciples. To the second half of the twelfth century his Analects remained one of the classics. But in the Sung Dynasty it became not merely a school book but the school book, the basis of all education." Smith, Religions of Man, 260.

<sup>1</sup>The fortunes of Confucianism changed in the early twentieth century, however, when Western science and political thoughts were introduced. The internal decay and corruptions of the imperial government precipitated the founding of the Republic. Confucianism and other ancient traditions came under attack. Since the "cultural renaissance" of 1917, China has tried to cast off its Confucian shackles. Even some of the policies of the present Communist government represent attempts to "deconfucianize" the country. In Taiwan today, however, there is a resurgence of interest in Confucianism. See Laurence Thompson, The Chinese Way in Religion, Encino, CA: Dickenson, 1973), 231-41; Donald E. MacInnis, Religious Policy and Practice in Communist China (New York: Macmillan, 1972). See also C. K. Yang, Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 341-404.

happiness is to be found within oneself. It is this concept that gives Confucius' teaching an inevitable humanistic bent.

Confucius' desire to reform society led to his teachings on family and social life. Among them, filial piety (*Hsiao*) was accentuated. The rationale was that if relations at home were correct, other social relationships would also be proper. Confucius stressed the value of the home. He believed the family circle was the training ground for a person's lifelong dedication to humanity (*jen*) and ritual propriety (*li*), and that faithful filial relationship to one's parents and those in the kinship system would root one firmly in both *jen* and *li*.

Another of his major contributions to the Chinese worldview lies in his wholistic approach to nature. Confucius regarded human affairs as part and parcel of a bigger cosmic whole.<sup>1</sup> The present was linked with the past, and the traditions of the ancients were valuable because they represented wisdom on how to live harmoniously with nature. If humans were to prosper, they would have to walk the virtuous path trod by the heroes of China's golden age.

The third area of Confucius influence on the Chinese worldview stems from his emphasis on the importance of the Golden Mean. Confucius preferred a middle-of-the-road

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<sup>1</sup>Denise L. Carmody and John T. Carmody, The Story of World Religions (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1988), 373.

approach to life and rejected extremist doctrines. He counseled moderation in all things. Confucius' philosophy of the Golden Mean had a profound influence on the Chinese propensity to inclusiveness and pragmatism in religious matters.

Confucius' esteem for hierarchial relationships also made an imprint on the Chinese mind. He placed high value on a cosmic hierarchy of beings that at the lower end included humans. Of particular importance in this system was an hierarchy of patriarchal kinship that Confucius repeatedly affirmed was crucial to the well-being of the entire social fabric. The emperor was thought to be part of this cosmic hierarchy, and the Chinese were scrupulously taught to respect their ruler's connection with heaven.

#### Taoism and the Chinese Worldview

Lao-Tzu, the founder of Taoism, is said to have been a contemporary of Confucius. His name, which can be translated as "the Old Boy," "the Old Fellow," or "the Grand Old Master," is obviously a title of endearment and respect. Like Confucianism, Taoism had its beginnings as a response to the social upheaval of the Warring States period (402-222 B.C.). Lao-Tzu's Tao Te Ching, Taoism's basic text, was written as a philosophy designed to find solutions to the conditions of the times.

Examination of the content of Tao Te Ching reveals that everything Lao-Tzu taught revolves around the pivotal

concept of *Tao*,<sup>1</sup> the cosmic and moral "way" or "path." But Taoism is more than *Tao* itself. It is a complex and baffling blend of theories and practice.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Taoism has left its mark on the Chinese worldview in two general areas--philosophical and popular Taoism.

### Philosophical Taoism

Philosophical Taoism is characterized as a "nondualistic naturalism."<sup>3</sup> While Confucianism stressed the moral goodness of humans as the key to happiness, Taoists accented the harmony and perfection of nature. Lao-Tzu considered the ideal life to be simple and harmonious, unlike the kind of well-regulated life suggested by Confucius. The development of a well-regulated life through rites and ceremonies seemed not only artificial to him, but

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<sup>1</sup>In the opening passages of Tao Te Ching, Lao-Tzu maintains that "the *Tao* that can be expressed in words is not the eternal *Tao*; the name that can be named is not the eternal name." Hence, *Tao* as a metaphysical reality is nameless, invisible, inaudible, infinite, formless, and transcendent. See Charles W. H. Fu, "Confucianism and Taoism," in Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World, ed. Ismail Ragi al Faruqi (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 118.

<sup>2</sup>Taoism is reputed to be a mixed bag of philosophy of Lao-Tzu and other philosophies such as the *yin-yang* doctrine of Tsou Yen. It includes famous legends of the Isles of the Blessed such as Mt. Peng Lai and the Taoist Immortals (*hsien*). It also incorporates alchemy, magical talismen, Chinese yoga, collective sexual orgies, revolutionary secret societies, folk religion, a growing pantheon of gods including Buddhist bodhisattvas and national heroes, as well as Confucian moral doctrine and the Buddhist belief in karmic retribution and hell. See Fu, 121.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 118.

also to interfere with nature. Thus, following Tao means supporting all things in their natural state, allowing them to transform spontaneously.

The basis of Lao-Tzu's philosophy is found in the concept of the unity of humans and nature. The two were regarded as being inseparable.

In Confucianism human beings and nature are differentiated, and goodness and well-being are considered to proceed from what belongs to humanity rather than nature. Taoism sees humanity and nature as a unity and does not differentiate between the two. According to this philosophy, the basis of humanity is not of our own making, but is contained in the being and the function of the totality of the universe. Consequently, in its critical and negative aspects, Taoism analyzes the deficiencies and evils confronting human society and concludes that they stem primarily from a wrong view of humanity and the universe.

Constructively, Taoism offers a view of the universe and man as a unity. Human knowledge transcends the limits of precepts and concepts. It is direct and immediate, not being dependent upon a false duality between the knowing subject and the known object. The principles that should guide life and regulate the actions of human beings are the principles that regulate nature. Life is lived well only when people are completely in tune with the whole universe and their actions are the action of the universe flowing through them. The institutions of society are regulated by allowing them to be what they are naturally; society, too, must be in tune with the universe.

The task of philosophy is to lead humans to a unity with the universe by illuminating its Tao, or Way. The word Tao refers to a path or a way, and in Taoism it means the source and principle of the functioning of whatever exists. When the Tao of humanity and the Tao of the universe are one, human beings will realize their infinite nature. Then peace and harmony will reign.<sup>1</sup>

Since the practice of Tao has ecological

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<sup>1</sup>John M. Koller, Oriental Philosophies (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 284-85.

implications, the Taoists were great environmentalists. A Taoist would never describe the scaling of Mount Everest as "the conquest of Everest," but rather as the "befriending of Everest." Taoist temples did not stand out from the landscape, but were nestled against the hills, back under the trees, blending in with the environment. Taoism also left its mark on Chinese art. Smith believes that it is no accident that the seventeenth-century "great period" of Chinese art coincided with a great surge of Taoist influence on the Chinese mind.<sup>1</sup>

#### Popular Taoism

Taoism did not always remain as it was from the beginning. Later Taoists incorporated mystical aspects into the Taoist philosophy which some call the perversion of Taoism. The doctrine of *Tao* might have been too subtle to be grasped by the average mind. When Taoism made contact with the general populace, its tenets were adulterated. Thus the lofty heights of *Tao* practiced by the philosophers progressively became the priestcraft of popular Taoism. Mysticism became mystification. Religion was perverted into necromancy and sorcery.<sup>2</sup> The art of meditation became exorcism. Later, Taoism was known for its pursuit of immortality through trance meditation, embryonic

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, Religions of Man, 284.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 272.

respiration, elixirs, alchemy, and sexual yoga.<sup>1</sup> It even developed its own set of priesthood, rituals, and monastic institutions.

Perhaps most significantly, Taoism was known to be associated with the worship of gods and spirits. Welty explains the phenomenon this way:

Many important Chinese gods, such as the gods of rain, fire, medicine, and agriculture and the kitchen gods, arose from the Taoist school. The impersonal and infinite force beneath nature became transformed into individual, finite human souls that, after death, became powerful spirits. The popular Taoism of later times increasingly filled the need for the magic that people often turn to when other resources fail them. The Chinese peasant sought the help of unseen powers because he lived on a narrow economic margin, and hard work and skill were not always enough for survival. As a consequence, the average man began to associate the Taoists with the world of spirits who must be placated and appeased. The Taoists were called upon more and more to select lucky days for weddings, and funerals, to choose sites for housing, and in general to regulate those human activities peculiarly related to the world of spirits.<sup>2</sup>

It is no wonder that some scholars lament that Taoism is but a systematization or dressed-up version of magic and animism. Suffice it to say this popular version of Taoism left an indelible effect on the Chinese worldview in terms of an affinity for geomancy, magic, and spirit worship. It may be for this reason that Taoist priests have

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<sup>1</sup>For a more detail treatment of Tao and longevity, see Wen-Shan Huang, "On Longevity," Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology Academia Sinica 46 (Autumn 1978): 141-5.

<sup>2</sup>Paul T. Welty, The Asians: Their Heritage and Their Destiny (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1966), 164.

been described by leaders of Communist China as "agents for the perpetuation of gross superstition."<sup>1</sup>

#### Buddhism and the Chinese Worldview

Buddhism made its entry into China in the first century A.D. or earlier.<sup>2</sup> Being an Indian import, Buddhism created a significant cultural gulf between itself and the Chinese traditions. Wright notes that both Buddhism and the Chinese traditions appreciably differed in terms of language, literary mode, attitude, and in their concepts of time and space.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese language was uninflected, logographic, monosyllabic, with no systematized grammar. Indian languages were highly inflected, alphabetic, polysyllabic, and with a highly elaborated grammatical system. In terms of literary modes, the Chinese preferred concrete thinking and familiar objects, whereas the Indian literature was full of metaphors and abstractions.

As to their attitudes, the Chinese showed little enthusiasm for personality analysis, while the Indians had a highly developed science of psychological analysis. Both were also radically different as regards concepts of time and space. The Chinese tended to think of both as finite

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<sup>1</sup>Steininger, 511.

<sup>2</sup>Hans Kung and Julia Ching, Christianity and Chinese Religions (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 200.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur F. Wright, Buddhism in Chinese History (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 33-34.

and to reckon time in life-spans, generations, or political eras; the Indians, however, perceived time and space as infinite and tended to think of cosmic aeons rather than of units of terrestrial life. Moreover, Buddhism seemed relatively "agnostic" compared with traditional Chinese animism with its worship of countless gods, spirits, and ancestors. Despite these striking dissimilarities, Mahayana Buddhism found a wide following in China after centuries of conflict, change, and adaptation.<sup>1</sup> Some of its doctrines

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<sup>1</sup>See Wright, Buddhism in Chinese History, 34-59. The illustrious "domestication" or "contextualization" of Buddhism in China has been noted by many scholars. Welty, for example, gives a brief account of how Buddhism managed to become grafted into the Chinese religion: "Buddhism in China played down its foreign elements and made itself as Chinese as possible. The abstract concept of Nirvana--the state or condition of desirelessness--was minimized, and a concrete place of happiness, like the Western Heaven of Amitabha Buddha, was given prominence. It built on the foundations of the other ideologies popular during the early part of the Christian era. Since Taoism was popular among the commoners and intellectuals alike, Buddhists used Taoism as an instrument of conversion by taking over Taoist terms, writing commentaries on Taoist books, and identifying Buddhism with Taoist teaching and practice. The common elements in Taoist and Buddhist doctrines were deliberately stressed over and over again. At times, the truth was stretched in order to make Taoism and Buddhism agree. They honored Confucianism by speaking of a Bodhisattva as being an incarnation of Confucius, by naming a temple after Confucius, and by stressing the virtue of filial piety as an aspect of Buddhist teaching. Buddhist monks pointed out the similarities between Confucian and Buddhist morality, even going so far as to set up ancestral tablets in a special hall to honor the memory of their dead monks. . . . By showing itself not as an exclusive religion but as a complement to other Chinese beliefs, Buddhism penetrated and permeated Chinese life and became as Chinese as the native philosophies of Confucianism and Taoism. The Chinese were never hereafter at any particular period either Confucianists, Taoist, or Buddhist--they were all three simultaneously." Welty, 176-77.

had to be sinicized before they were accepted.<sup>1</sup>

Chinese religion was never the same after the inception of Buddhism into China. Significantly, Buddhism brought a new consciousness to the Chinese mind. This consciousness was in stark contrast to the this-worldly orientation of Confucianism which accentuated the human, historical dimension. Cutting through the familism and particularistic ethics of the Chinese, Buddhism taught a universal ethic and a doctrine of salvation outside the family.

Buddhism was also partly responsible for the reconceptualization of the Chinese understanding of happiness. The Chinese tended to be preoccupied with the establishment and fulfillment of human life on earth. Buddhism, however, was deeply pessimistic about human

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<sup>1</sup>A popular goddess worshipped by the Chinese in East Asia has been Kuan Yin who, unknown to many, had a Buddhist origin. "Liu Chang-Po, former director of National Central Library [in Taiwan] points out that the original Kuan Yin was a follower of Amitabha in the Western Lands, and thus of course a male. But in the Yuan dynasty, monks attempting to spread Buddhism depicted Kuan Yin as--after getting agreement from two Taoist deities--returning to the reincarnation cycles to give merciful assistance to people entranced by fame, fortune, and pleasure. This story became widespread among the people, but it is truly dumbfounding: not only has Kuan Yin changed sex, she is interacting with Taoist deities, and has turned into a merciful spirit who saves people pain and difficulty! Yet in the eyes of Chinese, Kuan Yin's popularity far exceeds that of Buddhist founder Sakyamuni. Kuan Yin is so popular, in fact, that Chinese often slaughter animals as offerings at Kuan Yin festivals--never mind that Buddhism forbids killing any sentient being!" Laura Li, "The Chinese Otherworld View," Sinorama 15 (January 1990): 15.

prospects for earthly happiness. Buddhism did not deny the existence of a great variety of temporary experiences of joy. But it insisted that there was no such thing as absolute happiness in mortal life. As such humans should mistrust the possibility of realizing bliss on this earth. Only Nirvana offered deliverance from the curse of all existence.<sup>1</sup>

Buddhism gained a respectful hearing in China among the intelligentsia and plebeians alike.<sup>2</sup> The educated perceived Buddhism as a more profound consideration of death, immortality, psychic liberation, and meditation than the native traditions. For the commoners, Buddhist rituals for the dead were especially consoling, and the Buddhist Bodhisattvas came to be regarded as helpful, comforting saints to whom one might pray in adversity. Buddhism won the loyalty of Chinese commoners because it had accommodated itself to the folk beliefs and practices to which they were accustomed and in addition it was believed to accord access to magical or superhuman power.

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<sup>1</sup>Wolfgang Bauer, China and the Search for Happiness: Recurring Themes in Four Thousand Years of Chinese Cultural History, trans. Michael Shaw (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 153-59.

<sup>2</sup>Success notwithstanding, Buddhism did encounter obstacles in China. For example, there were the Chinese suspicion of works and ideas not sanctioned by the Confucian 'canon,' the aversion to asceticism, the misgiving if not outright rejection of celibacy, and the Chinese prejudice that foreign things could not be better than things originated from the center of the earth--the Middle Kingdom. See Carmody and Carmody, World Religions, 353.

## Folk Religion and the Chinese Worldview

Folk religion may be defined as the beliefs and practices of the masses, in contrast to the views of the intelligentsia and religious officials. It is a mix of local religious traditions and animistic beliefs. It deals with the problems of everyday life, not with ultimate realities.<sup>1</sup> Folk religion tends toward pragmatism. It answers the question "Does it work?" rather than "What does it mean?" Folk religion by nature is somewhat inarticulate, incoherent, and unreflective, but it may be no less rich or meaningful to its believers.

The bifurcation between "folk" and "elite" religions or "great" and "little" traditions has long been a subject of debate. In the study of Chinese religion in recent years, the trend has been to talk of "popular" religion,<sup>2</sup> "local" religion, or "popular religious cultures"<sup>3</sup> rather

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<sup>1</sup>Hicbert, Anthropological Insights, 222.

<sup>2</sup>Studies in European religions have generally made a distinction between 'popular' religion and 'institutional' religion. Studies in Asian religions, however, have been influenced by Robert Redfield's differentiation of 'great' and 'little' tradition. See Robert Redfield, Peasant Society and Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 42ff.

<sup>3</sup>See Catherine Bell, "Religion and Chinese Culture: Toward an Assessment of 'Popular Religion,'" History of Religions 29 (August 1989): 35-57. See also Mary R. O'Neil, "From 'Popular' to 'Local' Religion: Issues in Early Modern European Religious History," Religious Studies Review 12 (July/October 1986): 222-26; Hendrik Vriehof and Jacques Waardenburg, eds., Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 1.

than elite and folk religions. The trend toward the terminological alternatives appears to be in line with Maurice Freedman's assessment that in the context of the Chinese religion, elite culture and peasant culture were not two different matters, but were versions of the same thing.<sup>1</sup> Freedman's evaluation is similar to Creel's suggestion that the body of popular knowledge was by no means confined to the unlettered masses alone.<sup>2</sup> Popular religion was also deeply ingrained in the philosophers, the rulers, and the statesmen who were humans and, therefore, experienced the same desires and met the same crises in life.<sup>3</sup>

Creel further suggests that while folk religion is not identical with elite religion, it does not conflict with elite religion either. Where the two impinge on each other, they are similar on the essentials. In the study of Chinese

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Freedman, The Study of Chinese Society. Essays by Maurice Freedman, selected and introduced by G. W. Skinner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 355. Freedman's thinking is akin to that of C. K. Yang who objects the two-tier elite/folk bifurcation in a society known for its wholistic perspective to culture and religion. Yang proposes Chinese religion as having two aspects, "diffused" and "institutional." Yang, 20-21, 294-95.

<sup>2</sup>H. G. Creel, Sinism: A Study of the Revolution of the Chinese Worldview (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1929), 113.

<sup>3</sup>In a comprehensive study of folk religion in Southwest China, Graham discovers that while it is true the ideas of the scholars influenced the ordinary Chinese people, it is also true that the beliefs and practices of the common people strongly influenced the scholars and rulers of China. David C. Graham, Folk Religion in Southwest China (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1967), 110.

religions, Creel concludes that:

It is this fundamental agreement between the ideas of the common people, on the one hand, and those of the high philosophers, on the other, which provides the most certain evidence that sinism was not the chance creation of a handful of Chinese intellectuals led by Confucius, but that it was rather the expression, in philosophical term, of the historically-evolved worldview of the Chinese people.<sup>1</sup>

It is recognized that Confucianism generally made its greatest impact on the ruling class. As in most other traditional civilizations, the Chinese ruling class was a minority sitting atop a vast peasant majority. Undoubtedly, Confucius' teaching came to shape the thought and practice of this majority in such matters as family life and respect for civil rulers. Yet, at the bottom of the Chinese pyramid, it was believed, were unseen forces of folk religion. More ancient but less rational than Confucianism and Taoism, these folk beliefs had at least equal influence on the populace.

Chinese folk religion became part and parcel of the Chinese worldview in terms of widely-held beliefs in matters relating to challenges in everyday life. These beliefs included protection on journeys, the interpretation of dreams and diseases, general guarantees of livelihood, quest for longevity, and acquisition of good luck. Chinese folk religion had tended to accentuate the utilitarian aspects of Chinese religion. It was more experiential than analytical.

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<sup>1</sup>Creel, 120.

It was also more ritualistic. Most Chinese, whether intelligentsia or peasantry, experienced religious reality directly through purposeful behavior such as rites and rituals on a regular basis.<sup>1</sup> Though the modes in which these rituals were practiced were many, their impact on the Chinese worldview was both deep rooted and far-reaching. In fact, the perceived importance of such popular beliefs as *feng-shui* has shaded the Chinese worldview perhaps as remarkably as has Confucianism.

Having studied the contributing factors that influenced the ancient Chinese worldview throughout the long history of Chinese civilization, we must now identify the major worldview assumptions that constituted the traditional Chinese mind.

#### Traditional Chinese Worldview Themes

The Chinese worldview as described in this chapter is based on two primary assumptions. First, it is based on the traditional worldview of the masses, and not necessarily on the value system subscribed to by the minority literati and elite who tended to be more philosophical than pragmatic. Second, the traditional Chinese worldview is based on the commonality of Chinese culture.

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<sup>1</sup>Steven Harrell, "The Concept of Soul in Chinese Folk Religion," Journal of Asian Studies 38 (May 1979): 520. See also Lewis R. Lancaster, "Elite and Folk: Comments on the Two-Tiered Theory," in Religion and the Family in East Asia, ed. George A. DeVos and Takao Sofue (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 88.

Understandably, the Chinese of the diaspora are not totally homogenous in their perceptions of the Chinese culture and worldview.<sup>1</sup> However, it has been found that the Chinese culture, though complex, has retained remarkable constancy around the world, so much so that one may speak of the universals of Chinese culture.<sup>2</sup>

Nakamura's analysis of the characteristic Chinese way of thinking provides a helpful paradigm to study the Chinese worldview. His description of eleven Chinese

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<sup>1</sup>For the complexity of the Chineseness of the Chinese, see Vivienne Wee, What Does "Chinese" Mean? An Exploratory Essay (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 1988). See also Vincent Y. C. Shih, "On Being Chinese: A Philosophical Reflection," in Understanding Modern China, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 202-213.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps the most outstanding research to substantiate this assumption is Hendrick Serrie's dissertation "Constancy and Variation in Chinese Culture: An Analysis of Fourteen Mainland, Offshore, and Overseas Communities in Terms of the Hsu Attributes," Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1976. Serrie field-tested Francis L. K. Hsu's four attributes of the Chinese culture: continuity, inclusiveness, authority, and asexuality. Its strategy was to analyze the social organizations of a substantial number of the most highly variant Chinese communities around the globe. These includes five provinces in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, California, Mississippi, and England. Results of the study shows a universal presence of all four of Hsu's attributes in all the communities selected.

The present study on Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore seems to bear out Serrie's conclusion. Granted there are differences and diversities in each locale where Chinese culture is found, however, the innermost worldview assumptions of the Chinese appear to bear distinctive semblance.

attributes<sup>1</sup> have been consolidated in this study into a five-theme theoretical construct that forms the basis for the description of the Chinese worldview that follows. The selected traits are: hierarchy, antiquity, particularity, harmony, and practicality. The order of progression is not intended to indicate a ranking in the order of importance.

#### Esteem for Hierarchy

One of the outstanding features of Chinese civilization has been its emphasis upon social relations. Proper social relations were indispensable to achieving and maintaining an orderly society. Each social relation must be viewed in its proper place, and each person has his or her proper responsibilities and duties. This is what Confucius called *ming fen*, or the "rectification of names," *ming* meaning "name" and *fen*, "duty." Every title in the social order implied status and responsibility, and if each person knew his or her place and duty and acted accordingly, there would be social order and peace. Confucius reiterated this in his statement: "Let the prince be prince, the minister minister, the father father, and the son son."<sup>2</sup>

This proclivity to hierarchy is reflected in the famous Chinese belief in cosmic hierarchy. Human existence

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<sup>1</sup>Hajime Nakamura, Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India-China-Tibet-Japan, ed. Philip P. Wiener (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1971), 175-294.

<sup>2</sup>Soothill, 581.

was regarded as the highest and most important order of being. A clear demarkation was established between human beings and other living creatures.<sup>1</sup> The rationale behind the high value placed on a proper hierarchy of being may be attributed to Confucius' teaching regarding *li*, or rules governing life. *Li* was ideal moral conduct. It was considered to be the fundamental morality of Chinese society. *Li* gave a high value to order of rank and social position.

Chinese society was traditionally divided into four main classes which, in descending order, were the scholar-administrator, the farmer, the artisan, and the merchant. The scholar-administrator enjoyed the highest rank because an educated person was thought to be morally superior. Further, scholarship led to bureaucratic positions which in turn brought wealth and prestige. To be a scholar-administrator was the most cherished dream of most Chinese.

The same hierarchical order prevailed in terms of relationships. Thus men were ranked above women, parents over children, masters over peasants, teachers over students, etc. A teacher generally would not visit just anyone, and for a pupil to come into town and not quickly pay a visit to his teacher was a serious slight.

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<sup>1</sup>Nakamura, 259-60.

### Kinship System

The kinship system in China was basically patrilineal and the most important groups have been the extended family and the lineage, sometimes called the clan. The extended family seems to have been an economic unit, whereas the clan was the legal, ritual, and property holding unit.<sup>1</sup>

### The Extended Family

The basic and most characteristic Chinese institution was the family. The family played a leading role in economic life, social organization, moral education, and in government. Confucius himself upheld family ethics and stressed familial continuity. The five well-defined relationships that made up the web of social life were those between father and son, elder brother and junior brother, husband and wife, elder friend and junior friend, and ruler and subject. That three of the five relationships were determined by kinship is indicative of the importance Confucius attached to the family institution.

The traditional ideal Chinese family was the extended family which usually included two or more nuclear families united by consanguineal kinship bonds. A typical case would include the parents and families of their two oldest adult sons. In China, a married son seldom

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Freedman, "The Family in China: Past and Present," Pacific Affairs 34 (1961): 323-36.

established a new home of his own but continued to live with his bride in his parents' house. When his sons married, they and their wives, in turn, lived in the same household with their parents and grandparents. Consequently families with several generations residing together were not uncommon.<sup>1</sup>

The two general types of extended family in China were the stem family and the joint family. A typical stem family consisted of parents, all their unmarried children, and one married son with his wife and children. This type of family could be broken up in cases when only one of the parents was alive or when the son had no children. The joint family differed from the stem family in that more than one married son or daughter remained with the parents and their unmarried children. Sometimes other close relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and nephews might also live under the same roof. Usually the father was the head of the joint family, but sometimes the eldest brother supervised the common property and presided over the lives of the members.<sup>2</sup> The large joint family was

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<sup>1</sup>Morton H. Fried, Fabric of Chinese Society: A Study of the Social Life of a Chinese County Seat (New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 69ff; G. P. Murdock, Social Structure (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 24. See also two books written by Marion J. Levy, The Family Revolution in Modern China (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 50ff; and Modernization and the Structure of Societies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 414-17.

<sup>2</sup>Olga Lang, Chinese Family and Society (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), 14ff.

considered the ideal by all classes of Chinese.

The extended family system, though encouraged, was often held in check by poverty. The destitute had to be contented with having conjugal families. The stem and joint families might include two or more generations, but the conjugal family was limited to two: parents and unmarried children.

In any case, the Chinese family system was usually both hierarchical and authoritarian. The status of each person depended on position by birth or marriage in the family. The gradations of relationships among members of the household were carefully spelled out. This was expressed in a complex system of kinship terminology which differentiated between the paternal and maternal uncles, aunts, cousins, and in-laws. Special attention was given to seniority and rank.

#### The Clan

The clan, *tsu*, or the lineage constituted a prominent unit in the Chinese kinship structure. A clan was a collective descent group sharing a common patrilineal ancestry in a given locality. Only patrilineal descendants were considered clan members. Because marriage within a clan was not allowed, a woman always married outside her father's clan, and her children belonged to her husband's

clan.<sup>1</sup> Clan members bore the same surname, but families with the same surnames did not necessarily belong to the same clan. There are about 470 surnames in use today, but there were many more clans.<sup>2</sup>

One of the crucial roles of the clan was to support ancestor worship and the institution of ancestral halls. Ancestor worship perpetuated the kinship system, and its integrating function fostered unity and continuity among its members. It was a constant reinforcement of one's common social origin. It kept group-orientedness alive in the clan member's consciousness. Clan members were also reminded of their consanguinity by the use of kinship terminology.<sup>3</sup>

Concomitant with this integrating function, the clans also served other functions in respect of the economic, educational, judicial, and political well being of the group. The social and financial status of clan members varied greatly. Part of the responsibility of the clan was the redistribution of money and goods donated by wealthier clan members. They also supplied means for the education of children from poorer families, cared for orphans and the indigent elderly. Clan aid was sometimes rendered to members in the form of loans. Sometimes assistance was also

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<sup>1</sup>Chang-Tu Hu, China: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture (New Haven: Hraf Press, 1960), 166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>The discussion of ancestor worship is expanded later in this chapter.

provided to help out in funerals and weddings of the members.

Most clan leaders enjoy considerable prestige and respect. They wield considerable power in mediating disputes and punishing erring clan members according to tradition and the rules set down by the clan. They often ignore government authorities, especially in rural areas. In the event of some crimes, the clan might usurp the power of the government and local officers would be relegated to making face-saving investigation.<sup>1</sup>

Though they appear to have remarkable solidarity, clans have been known to have frequent internal and external conflicts. Intra-clan tension usually revolve around complaints regarding the inequitable sharing of wealth and matters of prestige or power among the sub-branches. Inter-clan hostility and feuds also plague many clan organizations. Most squabbles are related to rivalry and competition between clans in the same geographical area. Some have even broken out in open confrontation.

#### Filial Piety

Inasmuch as their social organization centered in family and kinship, the Chinese believed *hsiao* or filial

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 168.

piety was their cardinal virtue.<sup>1</sup> The duty of children to their parents was regarded as the foundation whence all virtues spring.

The concept of *hsiao* is summed up in the famous Confucius dictum, "When the parents live, serve them with decorum; when they are dead, bury them with decorum, and sacrifice to them with decorum."<sup>2</sup> Filial deeds are extolled throughout the various Chinese Classics such as *Lun Yu* (Analects) and *Li Chi* (Book of Rites).

The concept of *hsiao* is deeply ingrained in the Chinese language. For example, the word *lao* (old) is often incorporated into such terms as *lao shih* (teacher) and *lao yu* (old friend) to teach respect and deference.

*Hsiao* was rooted in the father-son relationship, which according to Hsu was the most important relationship in Chinese culture.<sup>3</sup> The son had been called to life because of his parents, his ancestors, and the deceased. It was his duty to render them services which included veneration and obedience. Veneration implied veneration of

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<sup>1</sup>Steninger, 487. See also Francis L. K. Hsu, "Filial Piety in Japan and China: Borrowing, Variation and Significance," Journal of Comparative Family Studies 2 (Spring 1971): 67, and Marcel Granet, The Religion of the Chinese People, trans. Maurice Freedman (London: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 82-88.

<sup>2</sup>Soothill, 153.

<sup>3</sup>Francis L. K. Hsu, "A Hypothesis on Kinship and Culture," in Kinship and Culture, ed. Francis L. K. Hsu (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1971), 55.

the living parents as well as ancestor veneration, since the family tree extended backward far beyond the present generation.<sup>1</sup>

Obedience implied the central role parents played in one's life, both before and after one was married. As such, the twenty-first year as the age of independence was alien to the Chinese mind. As long as one's parents were alive, it was one's obligatory duty to follow their wishes even if they did not agree with one's own. In the Confucian code, to disobey one's parents was a heinous offense. Crime, laziness, nonachievement, even inability to procreate brought great dishonor and mortification to the family. In ancient China, parental power was believed to be almost absolute. According to the law, a son or grandson who reviled or assaulted a parent or grandparent could be killed with impunity, since such unfilial acts were considered capital crimes.<sup>2</sup>

Customarily, children at an early age were vigorously trained to be completely obedient and responsive to commands and concerns for the well-being of parents, grandparents, teachers, and other authority figures. The essence of their home training was the children's

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<sup>1</sup>Ancestor veneration or worship is discussed in the next section entitled "Esteem for Antiquity."

<sup>2</sup>Richard J. Smith, China's Cultural Heritage: The Ching Dynasty 1644-1912 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), 217.

obligations to parents and never vice versa.<sup>1</sup> For centuries Chinese children were carefully instructed by tales known as *Er Shih Ssu Hsiao* (twenty-four examples of filial piety). They were taught to follow Confucius' dictum that "parents are always right." Support of parents, therefore, must precede all other obligations and must be fulfilled even at great expense.

One of the most poignant displays of *hsiao* was at the funeral. Lavish expenditure on a funeral was common. No expense was considered too great to ensure the comfort of the dead. Hsu gives a vivid description of what a funeral involved:

Among the wealthy the coffin is kept in the house for long periods while hired monks and priests recite sutras. The home is filled with life-sized paper mache images of commodities, livestock, and servants, all of which are eventually burned to provide for the comfort of the dead. An overflowing crowd of guests is served expensive feasts and entertained by story tellers. The less well-to-do and even the relatively poor often make similar stupendous efforts. Since filial piety requires a man, rich or poor, to consider the welfare of his parents before all else, it follows that the living should spare no effort to assure the comfort of the dead. But it is equally imperative that an auspicious funeral meet the definitive expectations of the living. A man who fails to make his best efforts on such an occasion soon finds himself handicapped and slighted on all sides. Here there can be no excuses, for in this social environment, a person's worth is known to practically everyone. . . . In the Chinese context, if individuals break the economic backbone of their families because of lavish funerals for their parents, no one would say they were wrong. Instead, they would become known as outstanding examples of filial piety.

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<sup>1</sup>Francis L. K. Hsu, Americans and Chinese: Passage to Differences, 3d ed. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981), 80-81.

These same expectations also apply to birthday celebrations for aged parents, family weddings.<sup>1</sup>

Hsu maintains that the ethic of *hsiao* is by no means a one-sided relationship. As in all relationships, the parent-child relationship was based on the principle of reciprocity:

In the Chinese context, the son owes to his father absolute obedience, support during his life time, mourning when he passes away, burial according to social station and financial ability, provision for the soul's needs in the other world, and glory for the father by doing well or even better than he. But the father must provide for his sons when they are young, educate them in the ancestral tradition, find mates for them, and leave them good names and ample inheritances. Fathers and sons have to do these things not merely because they owe them to each other, but because they are both obligated to the generations that went before and those yet to come.<sup>2</sup>

But Levy contends that in practice the principle of reciprocity was seldom applied. More often than not filial piety had to be imposed by stern discipline. The relationship between the son and the father was characterized more by fear and resentment than by love and admiration.<sup>3</sup> Hu Shih, one of the main figures in the Chinese renaissance movement, maintains that filial piety in actuality scarcely existed and that "in those rare cases where it was consciously cultivated the price paid for it was nothing short of intense suppression resulting in mental

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<sup>1</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 315-16.

<sup>2</sup>Hsu, "Filial Piety in Japan and China," 68.

<sup>3</sup>Levy, 75-84, 166-75.

and physical agony."<sup>1</sup> If Hu Shih is right, filial piety might not have been a natural and accepted attitude in China but rather a notion largely idealized by tradition.

#### Concept of "Love"

Hsu maintains that the Chinese terms *lien ai* or romantic love is strictly a modern linguistic creation to fill the need of an expression for its Western equivalent.<sup>2</sup> In classical Chinese literature, the words *lien* and *ai* were used separately. Both words meant love or devotion, not between a man and a woman, but as corollaries to the concept of loyalty (emperor-subject) or of filial piety. The word "love" as used and understood in contemporary Western society has never been respectable in conservative China. It comes close to having the connotation of the term "licentiousness."

In fact, if a man said that he loved a girl, the statement usually carried the implication that something irregular was afoot. If a woman told anyone that she loved some man, it would be tantamount to her downfall. This is probably why the word *ai* was used to describe the feelings of lovers in a few novels; in the vernacular it usually implied an illicit relationship.<sup>3</sup>

It is no wonder that public display of affection between the sexes was frowned on. Even for husband and wife, showing of affection must never be exhibited beyond

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<sup>1</sup>Hu Shih, The Chinese Renaissance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 110.

<sup>2</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 49-50.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 50.

the bedroom door. The relationship between husband and wife appeared to be one of aloofness.

The Chinese esteem for hierarchy is believed to be one of the reasons for such aloofness. The requirements of the social situation tended to overshadow individual enjoyment. Individual conduct must not overflow its social boundaries. Instead, it must be kept contained by the two parties concerned.<sup>1</sup>

#### Status of Women

In the Chinese male-oriented society, a woman's status was one of subordination and subservience to men. The misogynistic tradition of Confucianism dictated that women obey their fathers in youth, their husbands in middle life, and their sons in old age. Once married, a woman was expected to serve her husband, and her husband's parents. She was considered useless until she bore a male heir, in which case her status rose substantially for she would have done her part in carrying on the family lineage. Hence, the highest aspiration for a woman was to be a wife and mother. It was unthinkable for any woman not to marry. Singleness was a social stigma that branded a single unmarried woman as queer or even abnormal.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>2</sup>The traditional status of women in China can be seen from many sociological studies on the Chinese family. See, for example, Sidney D. Gamble, Ting Hsien: A North China Rural Community (New York: Institute of Pacific

Since a woman's lot was early marriage,<sup>1</sup> child bearing, and household duties, her education was minimal, except in cases where the family was wealthy or where the daughter happened to be the father's favorite child. Because the male line took precedence over the female line, only sons could carry on the family name and lineage. Girls were considered a poor social investment, since after years of nurture most of them would simply marry to become members of other households. It was not uncommon that baby girls in impoverished families were sometimes sold, deserted, or victims of infanticide. Many believed it was better to destroy the child than to doom her to a life of poverty and shame.

Except for the dowry given by the groom's family at their wedding, a woman had no property rights, since the patriarchal father controlled the family property. Women had no say in family affairs. Even their physical movements

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Relations, 1954); C. K. Yang, The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959); Daniel H. Hulp II, Country Life in South China (New York: Columbia University, 1925); Florence Ayscough, Chinese Women: Yesterday and Today (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937); Yueh-Hwa Lin, The Golden Wing (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1947); and Carolyn Matthiasson, ed., Many Sisters: Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective (New York: Free Press, 1974). For a more recent book that gives a laconic historical review of Chinese women's lives and status, see Esther S. Lee Yao, Chinese Women: Past and Present (Mesquite, TX: Idle House, 1983).

<sup>1</sup>It is believed that the marriage age for brides averaged seventeen and eighteen years.

were curtailed by the customary footbinding.<sup>1</sup> A woman's destiny improved only with age when she became a mother-in-law herself, perhaps typically as dominating and autocratic as her predecessors.

### Marriage and Divorce

Most marriages in China were arranged by the families of the betrothed. Sometimes the services of professional match makers (*mei-jen*) were used. The match makers first investigated the social, financial and personal status of the two families involved. They then examined the *ba zi* (horoscopes) of the proposed couple. A Chinese marriage was literally "made in heaven," for the ancestors were often consulted as to the compatibility of the match and the choice of auspicious days for the various rituals connected with the marriage.

Marriage was generally preceded by a contract to marry. The contract was either oral or written. If it was an oral contract, the go-between served a very important

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<sup>1</sup>Dworkin describes how women were grotesquely crippled from a very early age through the ritual of footbinding. The resulting three-inch "lotus" hooks were in reality useless stumps. The patriarchs were said to use such means to make sure their girls and women would never "run around." Andrea Dworkin, Women Hating (New York: Dutton, 1974), 103ff. Others disagree and argue that a bound foot was admired for its unsurpassed erotic beauty. See Richard Smith, China's Cultural Heritage, 226; Howard Levy, Chinese Footbinding: The History of a Curious Erotic Custom (New York: W. Rawls, 1966); and Paul Ropp, Dissent in Early Modern China (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1981), 122-26.

function as witness to the negotiations and the final contractual agreement. Later if disputes arose about the contract, the go-between was a logical witness to the details of the agreement. In cases where contracts were in written form, they were written by literate members of the community who also served as witnesses to the contract.<sup>1</sup>

The system of arranged marriage symbolized the person's subordination to the family. Individual interest was to be subjected to group interest. As such, marriage was more a union of families than of individuals. It was not a partnership but a relationship of servitude to a husband and his family. The Chinese woman was primarily her husband's source of sons who were the reason for her marriage. The purpose of marriage was to benefit the family from ancestors on down. Personal relationships between husband and wife were of secondary importance. Thus the Confucian view of marriage gave little place for romance.

After marriage, women were expected to be faithful to their husbands and not to remarry if widowed. Men on the contrary were allowed to take secondary wives and concubines into the household.

The traditional Chinese marriage took on the character of a purchase and sale. Marriage was regarded as

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<sup>1</sup>David C. Buxbaum, "A Case Study of the Dynamics of Family Law and Social Change in Rural China," in Chinese Family Law and Social Change in Historical and Comparative Perspective, ed. David C. Buxbaum (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 223.

a reciprocal exchange between two groups of clansmen and the wife was given no freedom of choice in either marriage or divorce. The husband received the wife into his family, and in exchange the wife's family received a substantial marriage gift or dowry.<sup>1</sup> The dowry was returned with the bride in the form of furniture, bedding, and clothing, which contributed to the establishment of a new household.<sup>2</sup> Some argue that dowry was not purchasing property per se but compensating her relatives for her loss and loss of her children. The compensation should be considered as evidence of respect for the bride. Be it as it may, C. K. Yang points out that the practice of "buying and selling" of marriage precipitated the low status of women. It was a reprehensive way of treating women. The dowry gave husbands the right and excuse to abuse their wives. Moreover, women

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<sup>1</sup>The Chinese understanding of dowry is the opposite of its usual anthropological usage that refers to a substantial transfer of property from the bridal group to that of the groom. In classical China, the custom of the groom and his relatives paying a bride and her relatives is closer to what anthropologists call bride price or bride wealth. See Robert B. Taylor, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1973), 65-66, 251-52; and Conrad P. Kottak, Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity (New York: Random House, 1974), 311ff.

<sup>2</sup>William L. Parish and M. K. Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 180-2. The dowry was considered the woman's property and was not under normal circumstances absorbed into the household economy. S. Shiga, "Family Property and the Law of Inheritance in Traditional China," in Chinese Family Law and Social Change in Historical and Comparative Perspective, ed. D. C. Buxbaum (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 118.

were economically dependent on men and the threat of hunger often forced them to submit.

Under the Imperial Penal Code, a husband could divorce his wife unilaterally on seven grounds: failure to produce a son, adultery, unfilial behavior towards parents-in-law, loquacity, stealing, jealousy, and a malignant disease.<sup>1</sup>

Since the continuation of the family and the ancestral lineage was the primary purpose of marriage, failure to produce a male heir was considered a legitimate reason for divorcing a wife. Divorce on the ground of adultery was allowed in order to protect the purity of the clan. This ground applied only to the wife. For the husband, only adultery with the wife's mother was considered a ground for divorce.

Another purpose of marriage was service of the parents-in-law. Failure of a wife to serve them with care was deemed unfilial and flagrantly immoral. The definition of being unfilial was subject to ambiguous interpretations. In many cases, simple personal displeasure on the part of the parents-in-law was sufficient cause for the daughter-in-

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<sup>1</sup>Yen-Hui Tai, "Divorce in Traditional Chinese Law," in Chinese Family Law and Social Change in Historical and Comparative Perspective, ed. David C. Buxbaum (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 86ff. See also Jack L. Dull, "Marriage and Divorce in Han China: A Glimpse at 'Pre-Confucian' Society," in Chinese Family Law and Social Change in Historical and Comparative Perspective, ed. David C. Buxbaum (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 23-74.

law to be regarded as "unfilial."<sup>1</sup> The term "parents-in-law" included not only the husband's parents, but also grand-parents, foster parents, the father's principal wife, and the step mother. If a wife was disobedient to any of these people she could be divorced.

A garrulous wife could likewise be divorced. Talking too much could cause discord among the relatives. Being loquacious included not only talking nonsense but also saying anything that could disrupt the harmony of the family. In the Han period, for example, a wife was actually divorced for complaining that her husband's younger brother did not help with the family work.

Theft committed by a wife constituted grounds for divorce, not only because it was immoral but because it tarnished the reputation of the husband's family, causing them to lose "face" in the community. No younger members of the family, including the daughters-in-law, could have any private goods or savings from family property as long as the parents were still alive. To do so was regarded as stealing from the family.

Jealousy was a ground for divorce because it was said to destroy order and propriety in family life, especially between wives and concubines. In the Han period,

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<sup>1</sup>In the late Han period, one wife was divorced for being late in fetching water for her mother-in-law, and another was divorced for scolding a dog in front of her mother-in-law. Ibid., 87.

for example, a wife was divorced because her jealousy prohibited her husband from taking a concubine who would have helped with the housework. As it turned out, the children had to do the housekeeping themselves.

Malignant disease prohibited a wife from worshipping the ancestors with her husband, and therefore constituted grounds for divorce. The term "malignant disease" was generally interpreted to mean leprosy or similar diseases.<sup>1</sup>

At least in theory, three types of divorce were allowed: by mutual consent; by order of an authority such as the family head, the clan head, or government authority; or by either husband or wife. But after the feudal period

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<sup>1</sup>Tai indicates that provisions were set in place to restrict some divorces from going through. The following are three limitations for divorce. First, divorce was prohibited during the period of mourning for the parents-in-law. It was thought that the husband owed a debt of gratitude to his wife who had done so. Second, a husband who had been poor when he married was restricted in divorcing his wife if he had become rich and noble later. It was considered a violation of *li* (rules of propriety) for a rich man to abandon a wife who had shared a time of poverty with him. Third, divorce was also restricted if a wife had no family to return to. "Family" was interpreted to mean the persons who could have presided over the marriage. The persons who would have been qualified to preside over the marriage were: paternal and maternal grandparents, parents, paternal and maternal uncles, brothers, and maternal aunts and cousins. However, the wife could not be sent back to her maternal uncle, aunts, or cousins who did not live together nor own property together, even if they had presided over the marriage. See Tai, 90.

of China's history, divorce became almost exclusively a male prerogative.<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, divorce was suffered with utmost disgrace, and remarriage after divorce was unthinkable for women. It was resorted to only by the very poor. Divorce was rare,<sup>2</sup> however, and most marriages were terminated by the death of the husband or the wife. But whereas widows generally went to live with their sons following the death of a husband and rarely remarried, widowers had the option of remarriage, perhaps to a concubine.<sup>3</sup>

The rare occurrence of divorce may be attributed to the stability of traditional marriage. Francis Hsu believes that the traditional marriage relationship was regarded as immutable. It was considered to be a part of the "unchangeable order of nature."<sup>4</sup> Second, unlike Western

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<sup>1</sup>G. R. Leslie, The Family in Social Context (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), and S. A. Queen and S. A. Habenstein, The Family in Various Cultures (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1974).

<sup>2</sup>G. W. Barclay, A. J. Coale, M. A. Stoto, and J. J. Trussell, "A Reassessment of the Demography of Traditional Rural China," Population Index 42 (1976): 610; Hsiao-Tung Fei, Earthbound China: A Study of Rural Economy in Yunan (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 59-60.

<sup>3</sup>G. B. Spanier and F. F. Furstenberg, Jr., "Remarriage and Reconstituted Families," in Handbook of Marriage and the Family, ed. M. B. Sussman and S. K. Steinmetz (New York: Plenum Press, 1988), 419-34.

<sup>4</sup>Western marriage emphasizes individual independence. When a problem arises, each partner tends to think of his or her interest first. Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 153-55.

patterns of marriage in which marital bonds are a matter of individualized adjustment and choice and in which separation and divorce are viewed as solutions to problems of adjustment, the Chinese lived in a cultural atmosphere where the permanence of family ties was taken for granted. Hence, the possibility of separation and divorce hardly arose to their consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Third, the marital relationship was only one of the many relationships that functioned in the context of the extended family. The parent-child relationship was especially important.<sup>2</sup> "Being situation

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Hsu feels that of all parent-child relationships, the father-son tie was predominant. This tie was inherently characterized by continuity, inclusiveness, authority, and asexuality. Continuity inheres because every father-son relationship is potentially a link in an eternal chain of father-son dyads. It is inclusive because while every son has only one father, every father actually or potentially has many sons. Therefore the father-son relationship is inherently tolerant toward sharing with others. Authority means that a father's most important responsibility towards his son is to raise him, and this requires his ability to give commands and assistance. Finally, the attribute of asexuality simply means a quality which has nothing to do with sex. Hsu concludes that the Chinese lineage was an ultimate expression of the attributes of continuity, inclusiveness, authority, and asexuality. The traditional lineage maintained relationships between ancestors and descendants. It was a continuum between the present life and the next life. Lineage was inclusive in that it provided material and psychological security. Its authority was maintained through the gradations of organizations and relationships. Strong values against any expression of sexuality, via the husband-wife relationships, ensured the dominance of parent-child relationship, in general, and father-son relationship in particular. Francis L. K. Hsu, "Chinese Kinship and Chinese Behavior," in China in Crisis, vol. 1, book 2, China's Heritage and the Communist Political System, ed. Ping-Ti Ho and Tang Tsou (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 583-87. See also Francis Hsu, "A

oriented, the Chinese finds enough security in his basic human ties to allow him to relax and even to stop competing altogether, for he is embedded in a net of human ties. The removal or breakdown of any one of them does not lead to the collapse of his entire world."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Chinese man was secure in his primary relationships. There was little need to seek satisfaction in wider alliance and association.

### Group Orientation<sup>2</sup>

The security of primary relationships precipitated the Chinese proclivity to group orientation. One was always tied to one's own web of social relationships. A Chinese was never a lone Chinese. He or she always belonged to the primary groups in which mutual support was found.

The Chinese affinity to the group may be seen from studying the Chinese names. The Chinese put the family name first and the individual name last, whereas Westerners put the individual name first and the family name last. The former implies that the individual exists for the family,

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Hypothesis on Kinship and Culture," 13.

<sup>1</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 156.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Hsu's writing in this area is informative. The major portion of this section is indebted to his book, Americans and Chinese, pp. 78-91. See also his earlier book Clan, Caste and Club (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1963), and K. S. Yang, 'Psychological Studies in Chinese National Character: A Review of the Literature,' Thought and Word (Chinese) 2 (1965): 390-406.

but the latter stresses that the family exists for the individual. The Chinese individual was considered significant only as the family or group to which he belonged was significant.

Emotionally, the Chinese had an unusual sense of security. They were safely anchored in close ties. A Chinese did not have to defend his or her success or failure by continuous acts of conquest. The success of the individual was the success of the group, because success could never be attributed to personal acts alone but to the accumulated efforts of fellow kinsmen and remote ancestors. For this reason, a person of fame often made it a point to return to the home village where glory could be shared with those who had a part in his or her upbringing and success.

Although the family name gave the Chinese a sense of belonging, it carried with it a certain degree of protracted and at times untenable expectation of success and excellence, a concept which is related to this matter of "face" which is discussed below. This build-in expectation of the high esteem of the family name did not allow much room for failure and forgiveness.

The Chinese pattern of socialization reflected the importance of group orientation. In a typical home, there was no privacy to speak of. Parents often shared the same room with their children until the children reached adolescence. There was little individual ownership of

things. Whatever was in the house belonged to the family.

Chinese children were introduced to the world early in life. Small children were taken to such social activities as wedding feasts, funerals, religious gatherings, and even business meetings. Inasmuch as they took part in adult activities, children were given a head start in the adult world. Thus sharing the same world with their parents, children had few surprises when they entered the real world.

Equally important was the way Chinese children perceived the world. In China, parents had fewer exclusive rights over their children than they would have liked to have. Due to frequent and continuous contact with other members of the extended family, children mingled freely and learned to see the world in terms of a network of relationships. As a result, the generation gap was practically non-existent, for the children's world was fused with the adult world. In addition, instances of juvenile delinquency were rare, for most Chinese children found satisfaction and security in the kinship group and seldom felt any compulsion to leave.

Perhaps it was this group-oriented affinity that developed into group control characteristic of the Chinese culture. Since one belonged to a group, one was subject to the externalized controls of the group. A premium was placed on conformity rather than on individual initiative.

The approval of the group dictated the behavior of the individual. Any deviation from the group brought shame. There was little internal, self-reliant, individualized control such as the conscience. An individual's conscience, as it were, was the group's conscience.

In spite of the strong external control exercised by the group, conflict between individuals was inevitable. The services of an intermediary were used to resolve conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

Adjudication and even arbitration were regarded as last resorts. The unusual importance traditional Chinese regarded mediation in the resolution of disputes is reflected in the Chinese proverb: "It is better to die of starvation than to become a thief; it is better to be vexed to death than to bring a lawsuit."

Mediators were employed for at least three reasons:

1. The Chinese did not encourage a direct, strong, emotive, confrontational approach. They preferred to convert person-to person matters into broader group affairs.

2. The traditional Chinese' view of the formal law was one of relative insignificance. *Li* or propriety was preferred as a guideline to action and behavior.

3. It was believed that government interference was to be avoided. It was considered preferable to resolve

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Gallin, "Conflict Resolution in Changing Chinese Society: A Taiwanese Study," in Political Anthropology, ed. M. J. Swartz, V. W. Turner, and A. Tuden (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1966), 268.

local conflict on the local level by individuals whose words would be heard and respected. Since intermediaries were usually men familiar with both the conflict situation and the adversaries, they were in a good position to bring about a satisfactory solution. Success in settling disputes was largely dependent upon how well the "face" of each disputant was preserved, rather than on how well "justice" was finally served.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the more senior the intermediary, the greater were the chances of success.

#### The Concept of "Face"

The concept of *lien* or "face" is an intangible set of attitudes and values that are important to the Chinese but difficult to describe. Hu defines "face" in a communal context. She says face is "the respect of the group for a man with a good moral reputation: the man who will fulfill his obligations regardless of the hardships involved, who under all circumstances shows himself a decent human being."<sup>2</sup> Thus, "face" refers to personal integrity, good character, and the confidence of society in a person's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Hsien-Chin Hu, "The Chinese Concepts of 'Face,'" American Anthropologist 46 (January-March 1944): 45. See also Dennis Bloodworth, The Chinese Looking Glass, revised and expanded edition (New York: Farrar, 1980), 299-306; and Leon E. Stover, "'Face' and Verbal Analogues of Interaction in Chinese Culture: A Theory of Formalized Social Behavior Based upon Participant-Observation of an Upper-Class Chinese Household, Together with a Biographical Study of the Primary Informant." Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1962.

ability to perform expected social roles. On a personal level, "face" is somewhat equated with "ego." Thus the fear of losing face is analogous to the fear of having one's ego deflated. This can be caused by a wide range of factors including the failure of a child to pass an examination, the marriage of a daughter to a poor man, or receiving a gift that is inexpensive.

In traditional China, the communal sense of "face" represented the confidence of the community in the trustworthiness of a person, and since a person with a feeling for "face" could be relied on implicitly, "face" was worth more than what money could buy. A business person noted for honest business deals would be less likely to cheat. In this sense, "face" served as an internalized social sanction for enforcing good moral standards in a society that operated largely on the basis of trust. Thus the loss of face, or the betrayal of one's integrity, meant that the confidence of society in one's character was impaired, and the offender was in danger of being despised and isolated.

The "loss of face" implied not only the loss of confidence of the community in one's integrity but also signified shame on the group to which one belonged. A person's family, friends, and superiors had an interest in his or her advancement or set-backs. Hence, a public disgrace resulting in "loss of face" negatively affected the

reputation of the family. If a woman violated the rules of propriety, she brought shame upon herself, and her family upbringing was inevitably called into question. Members of the extended family reckoned that her family should have taught her manners consistent with proper behavior. Her mistakes also shamed her husband's family because, even if she had been insufficiently educated by her family, her husband's family should have assumed the responsibility of improving her manners.

To the group-oriented Chinese, "face" was often used as a means to stimulate the young to greater effort and correct behavior. In fact socialization in China was performed mainly by instilling a feeling of shame in the family. Shame was felt when social obligations were violated. The parents or the elders would often say to the children, "Don't lose 'lien' for us!" or "Don't shame us in what you do!" Moral education not only implanted the concept of *lien* in the minds of the young, but brought to their realization the collective responsibility the family bore in regard to their behavior. They were impressed with the fact that their character should benefit the standing of the family.<sup>1</sup>

In a society like China where shame was used to keep everyone in line, there was an built-in resistance to change. A Chinese aphorism states, "One should never

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<sup>1</sup>Hu, 50.

display family shame to an outsider." Conflict in the family was a closely guarded secret. No member of the family, especially in the ruling class, would bring to light a shameful situation in his family because it would mean loss of status for himself and the entire group. This prevalent attitude may explain why most Chinese were inflexibly reluctant to use mental health facilities even if they badly needed them. Besides, this belief tended to shelter wrong-doers and perpetuate corruption in high places.

To the Chinese, the loss of "face" was a weighty matter. In some cases, group condemnation leading to the "loss of face" drove individuals to suicide. Suicide was a means of "saving face" that liberated the person and the family from shame. Thus suicide might be invoked to escape the loss of self-respect and to recompense for falling seriously short of the expectations of one's peers and to enable one's relatives to again face society without humiliation.<sup>1</sup>

Western observers have often remarked that the Chinese are excessively modest about their attainments and status, so much so that they appear to be hypocritical. This exaggerated sense of humility may be explained by the Chinese belief that over-estimation of one's ability was frowned upon by society. So, rather than inflating one's

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, Religions of Man, 261-62.

capacity and face the possibility of "losing face" later, the Chinese found it a better strategy to depreciate one's intelligence on every occasion, always confident that that would prompt others to have an even higher opinion of one.<sup>1</sup> Thus if a Chinese man said he did not feel that he was good enough for a particular responsibility, he did not really mean it. What he meant was that he was humble. It was up to the listener to perceive the virtue in his humility and convince him that indeed he was the most capable person for the job. In so doing, the person was accorded "a lot of face."

#### Esteem for Antiquity

Perhaps one of the most outstanding characteristics of the Chinese civilization has been its seeming changelessness. Many political, economic, biological, and religious explanations have been given for its static nature.<sup>2</sup> One probable answer may be found in the Chinese over-riding concern for antiquity.

#### Attachment to Past Events

The traditional Chinese worldview was strongly oriented to the past. The past was regarded as the model for the present and the primary source of information on

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<sup>1</sup>Hu, 49.

<sup>2</sup>See Raymond Dawson, The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 65-89.

human society. Utopia was not something yet in the future, it had already occurred in the past. The experience of people in olden times aroused in the Chinese mind a sense of validity.<sup>1</sup> This past-orientation may be seen in a wide spectrum of Chinese culture. It appears in such areas as ancestor worship, filial piety, a strong sense of family traditions, and an almost compulsive concern with record keeping.<sup>2</sup>

Chinese reverence for antiquity is also reflected in their mode of learning. The essence of learning was to acquire knowledge of the precedents of the past. History was highly regarded. An old axiom said:

"No gentleman of high standing will be found among those who repudiate the past in discussing the present, and no gentleman of wisdom will be found among those who are ignorant of the past and are easy-going in their achievements. Even though one may be completely virtuous in his own conduct, if he repudiates the past, he will be a mediocre man."<sup>3</sup>

China's former pre-eminence was accounted for by the legacy of the wise rulers and sages of remote antiquity who had formulated and developed moral principles which were valid for all times and all people. Literate and responsible persons of each generation were selected as guardians of the wisdom of the past. Their duty was to see

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<sup>1</sup>Nakamura, 204.

<sup>2</sup>Kearney, 97.

<sup>3</sup>W. A. Rickett, Kuan-tzu (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1965), 103.

that the present reality was measured against immutable ancient norms.

The Chinese preoccupation with the past may also be seen in their literary expressions. Metaphors, for example, are based on historical particularity. To understand an idiom is to understand the history from which the idiom evolved. This explains why Chinese idioms, though concise, are pregnant with historical facts and meanings. Consequently, Chinese literature became very extensive and profound.<sup>1</sup>

The backward-look of the Chinese may be attributed to another significant factor--respect for the classics. Nakamura maintains that the life and thought of the Chinese were strongly conditioned by the classics,<sup>2</sup> especially *Wu Ching* (the Five Classics) which is comprised of: *I Ching* (Classic of Changes), *Shu Ching* (Classic of Documents), *Shih Ching* (Classic of Songs), *Li Chi* (Book of Rites), and *Chun Chiu* (Spring and Autumn Annals). Nakamura believes that the five Classics were esteemed as having unquestionable authority over the Chinese way of life:

The Five Classics were established as a pattern for the life of the Chinese people. It offered the precedents *par excellence*, ruling over all other precedents, so that in time the work came to be considered truth itself and perfection. It was thought that no matter how much human life might change, all the truth vital to human life was to be sought in these Five

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<sup>1</sup>Nakamura, 205.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Classics. . . . Though dynasties in China have often changed, each dynasty has accepted the Five Classics as the supreme authority and treated them as the pattern for human life.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the Five Classics, the Four Books, *Lun Yu* (The Analects), *Ta Hsueh* (The Great Learning), *Chung Yung* (The Doctrine of the Mean), and *Meng Tzu Shu* (The Book of Mencius), were also greatly extolled. Both the Five Classics and the Four Books taught the cardinal virtues of *hsiao* (filial piety), *li* (propriety), *I* (righteousness), *chung* (loyalty), etc. Ancient historical works showed the working of these principles in past events. Thus the cultural legacy of the past was the repository of wisdom and the guide to perfection and right action. Since the past was a repository of morally meaningful experience, the study of monuments and historical texts to rediscover and reconstruct China's cultural past was a highly regarded profession.

Perhaps the Chinese orientation to antiquity may be summed up in a statement in which Confucius referred himself as "a transmitter and not an originator, a believer in and lover of antiquity."<sup>2</sup> Thus knowledge of the classical way was passed from one generation to another largely without change or innovation. Chinese life was fixed. Chinese thought was a continuum of the past.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 206-07.

<sup>2</sup>Soothill, 325.

Exaltation of the Aged

It is no accident that ancient China, because of the esteemed position of the elderly in the family and the general veneration of the aged, is sometimes described as a gerontocracy.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the "youth culture" of the West, the "age culture" of classical China accorded every Chinese a gradual increment in his or her social standing with every passing year. Hence the aged were greatly prized, even more than children.<sup>2</sup> The rationale was that, unlike children, elders could never be duplicated. In contrast to the West where youth is eulogized as the best years of life, in China the sunset period of one's life was exalted. Age bestowed unsurpassed value and dignity on people. In the West when someone confesses to being fifty, the response is likely to be, "You don't look a year over forty." In China, if the same fact were disclosed, the response would very likely be, "Why you look every bit of sixty." In each culture the intent is courtesy. The difference is in its direction.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See A. P. Chandler, "The Traditional Chinese Attitudes towards the Old Age," Journal of Gerontology 4 (1949): 239-44.

<sup>2</sup>The stark contrast of the way the aged are treated in the East and West has prompted someone to remark that "China turned its old people into community elders; America turns them into dilapidated youth." Marc J. Swartz and David K. Jordan, Culture: The Anthropological Perspective (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), 181.

<sup>3</sup>Smith, Religions of Man, 261.

In ancient China, the services of the aged were often treasured and utilized. During the Han and Tang dynasties, for example, experienced senior citizens were often invited by the community to teach practical courses such as family relations and agriculture. Some over fifty years old were selected as *San Lao* or "political consultants" in courts.<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Rites records an example of the extent to which the aged were esteemed. Each year the local government hosted the *Hsiang Yin Chiu* ceremony in honor of the aged on the twelfth month of the lunar year. Leu believes that such annual ceremonies were held from the earliest history of China right up to the late Ching dynasty. He adds:

Both the young and the aged of the community were invited, with the former presenting a banquet for the aged in honor of their contribution to society...Rules for the ceremony included the following: "Those over 60 years old may sit in the ceremony; those under 50 should stand." Food also depended on age. The older people were served more and better quality dishes.<sup>2</sup>

Exemplified by the concept of filial piety, the aged were held in respect because they represented a wealth of accumulated wisdom and experience. Chinese men and women continually sought the counsel of their elders. Their words were listened to and implemented by virtue of the fact that

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<sup>1</sup>Chien-Ai Leu, "Filial Piety Modernized," Free China Review 39 (March 1989): 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

they had eaten more salt than the children had eaten rice, and had gone further on bridges than the latter could ever have travelled by road. Further, the aged were accorded great honor because they were only a step away from becoming ancestors. This forthcoming ancestral status could be of great future benefit to the family in terms of prosperity and happiness.

Chinese children were taught from very young years to do everything possible to ensure the comfort and bliss of the elders. One of the filial obligations was the support of parents in their old age. Another important duty was to faithfully carry out ceremonial rites for them after their death. Inasmuch as most aged were taken care of by their children, no social security system was needed. Only the destitute were taken care of by clans and local communities.

The most important birthdays of a Chinese person were at sixty, seventy, eighty, and up. To be a centenarian was a crowning achievement for both the person and the family. Annual birthday dinners were usually a family affair, attended by members of the family, relatives, and close friends. The sixtieth birthday celebration took on a grander scale, for it heralded the beginning of a new life cycle. According to the Chinese calendar, a life cycle was comprised of sixty years. Thus, birthday celebrations beginning at the sixtieth birthday were actually a celebration of longevity.

Traditionally, children's birthdays were not celebrated except by the wealthy. Children's birthdays, if celebrated at all, were occasions for adult celebration at which children might be present but certainly not as the center of attraction.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, old age took on a different meaning for the aged. Old age was not a symbol of defeat but a blessing and a sign of a new beginning. For this reason, most aged ones did not dolefully admit they were old. They were proud to be old. In fact, they lived in anticipation of old age, for growing old was congenial and pleasurable. It was a time of leisure and of little responsibility. Even the women achieved respect and superiority with increasing age. No longer afraid as they once were, they grew into mothers-in-laws. They were given authority as well as obedience and support from the family.

#### Ancestor Worship

The Chinese respect for elders and the premium virtue of filial piety made ancestor worship one of the most important institutions in traditional China. From the beginning of Chinese history, ancestor worship had been an integral part of the Chinese culture.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 90.

<sup>2</sup>H. G. Creel, The Birth of China: A Study of the Formative Period of Chinese Civilization (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Co., 1937), 80, 126, 174. See also James T. Addison, Chinese Ancestor Worship: A Study of Its Meaning

Hsu indicates that the Chinese had at least three basic assumptions about ancestor worship. First, all living persons owed their fortunes or misfortunes to their ancestors.

"A great official may attain prominence by excellence of scholarship and strength of character, and everyone who knows him may testify to these virtues. But his very achievement is de facto evidence of his ancestors' high moral worth. Therefore, since the remotest times, the Chinese have said that their individual successes derived from the shadow of their ancestors and that their individual successes, in turn, shone upon their ancestors."<sup>1</sup>

The second assumption was that departed ancestors needed to be cared for.<sup>2</sup> The Chinese maintained a close relationship with their departed ancestors as they did with their living kinsmen. They believed the ancestors continued to live in another world as spirits and that they depended upon their descendants for the necessities of life. Confucius himself taught, "Serve the dead as they were served when alive, and those who have passed away as if they

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and Relations with Christianity (Shanghai: Church Literature Committee of the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui, 1925), 3; and Francis Hsu, Under the Ancestor's Shadow: Chinese Culture and Personality (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 182-91.

<sup>1</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 248-49.

<sup>2</sup>See also J. J. M. DeGroot, The Religious System of China, vol. 1, Disposal of the Dead (Taipei, Taiwan: Ch'eng-Wen Publishing Co., 1969), 120; Anna Seidel, "Buying One's Way to Heaven: The Celestial Treasury in Chinese Religions," History of Religion 17 (February 1978): 419-31; and Stephen F. Teiser, "Ghosts and Ancestors in Medieval Chinese Religion," History of Religions 26 (August 1986): 47-67.

were still abiding amongst us, this is the summit of filial conduct." If not properly tended, revered, and fed, the ancestors could degenerate into vagabonds, capable of inflicting misfortune on the living. It was most important, therefore, that a man had male descendants who could carry on the proper rites for him after his death. Mencius, the most famous disciple of Confucius, said that the most unfilial act was to leave no posterity. The Chinese took his words so seriously that if a man had no children of his own, he would adopt a son to carry on his line and ensure his comfort in the afterlife.

The third assumption was based on the belief that the living and the dead were mutually interdependent. The ancestors were thought to have the power to protect and assist their earthbound relatives if the proper rites were rendered them. Thus a person's present lot might be improved by the endowment of the merits of the departed ancestors, and the spiritual welfare or misery of the ancestors might likewise be enhanced or mitigated by the actions of living descendants. Part of these actions included the hiring of priests, monks, and nuns to perform elaborate rituals. Many also patronized mediums and attended seances to determine the situation and needs of the departed loved ones.<sup>1</sup>

A prominent part of ancestor worship was the worship

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 250.

of the ancestral tablets in the homes and in the ancestral temples. The Chinese believed that each person had three main souls and seven lesser souls. After death the first soul remained in the casket, one stayed in the ancestral tablet, and the third went to heaven, hell, or was reborn in the transmigration of souls into some creatures. It was thought that the soul of the deceased actually dwelt in the ancestral tablets, and the tablet was thought of and treated as if it were the ancestor himself.<sup>1</sup> The seven lesser souls disappeared in seven weeks after death, one each week.

Liaw notes that ancestor worship was normally divided into three stages.<sup>2</sup> The first stage involved the paper tablet. After a person's death, a paper tablet was established as a symbol of the deceased. Mounted on a stick and placed on a table together with an incense pot, the rectangular piece of paper was believed to contain the spirit of the departed.

The second stage involved the wooden tablet. After the paper tablet had been destroyed, the deceased ancestor's name was written on the front of a piece of wood and the time and date of his birth and death on the back. The piece of wood was then placed in the box of the ancestor tablet,

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<sup>1</sup>Graham, Folk Religion, 121-22.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen Liaw, "Ancestor Worship in Taiwan and Evangelism of the Chinese," in Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices, ed. Bong Rin Ro (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1985), 186.

an act which signified that the spirit had left the paper tablet and now resided in the wooden tablet. The spirit would stay there to receive the worship of the descendants forever. The tablet was placed on the deity table in the center of the living room. A separate ancestor hall was built when there was no more room on the table to accommodate more tablets. Every large family generally had its own ancestral temple. Each temple had a caretaker who daily burned incense and worshiped the ancestors before their tablets for the family.<sup>1</sup> Only male descendants had a part in the ancestral ceremonies. This explains why it was so important that in each family sons be born to continue the family line and maintain the worship of the ancestors.

The third stage of ancestor worship centered on the ancestral tomb. The location of the tomb had to be in harmony with the *feng-sui* (wind and water) of the locality to ensure positive ancestral influence. When the wind and water which represented the breaths of heaven and earth were harmonious, blessings and prosperity would ensue.<sup>2</sup> The graveyard was the center of activities during the Ching Ming

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<sup>1</sup>Special worship services were held on special occasions such as the Lunar New Year, the fifth day of the first month, the fifteenth day of the first month, Ching Ming Festival, the fifth day of the fifth month (Dragon Boat Festival), the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Ghost Festival), the fifteenth day of the eighth month (Moon Festival), the ninth day of the ninth month (Tsunng Yun Festival), winter solstice, and the last day of the lunar year.

<sup>2</sup>The importance of *feng-shui* is discussed below.

(literally pure and bright) Festival, known also as the Feast of the Dead. The descendants cleaned the tomb and rendered the necessary rituals which included bowing to pay obeisance as if the dead were present.

The question as to whether ancestor worship was the worship of the deceased departed spirit or a memorial service has long been debated. Addison maintains that the Chinese did not worship the deceased ancestors as deities.<sup>1</sup> But others are not so sure. Western missionaries were known to have fought among themselves about its meaning. Some found ancestor rites idolatrous, while others found them to be praiseworthy expressions of familial love.<sup>2</sup> One thing is certain, however, ancestor worship had so powerfully and fundamentally shaped the traditional Chinese mind that the two had become inseparable. Moreover, ancestor worship epitomized filial piety of the highest degree. Marion Levy succinctly says, "Ancestor worship was in effect the canonization of the value of filial piety."<sup>3</sup>

#### Inertia and Resistance to Change

The Chinese esteem for antiquity has led some observers to comment on the static nature of Chinese

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<sup>1</sup>Addison, 52.

<sup>2</sup>For an Asian assessment of ancestor worship, see Bong Rin Ro, ed., Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>Marion Levy, Family Revolution, 250.

civilization. In fact, the Chinese have been described as a people of eternal standstill.<sup>1</sup> Historians used to say that China was the model of a static nation, so unchanging that it had, so to speak, gone out of history.<sup>2</sup>

The Chinese inertia and resistance to change may be attributed to Confucius who taught the value of the preservation of things as they were and the maintenance of the status quo of society and its institutions. His attitude was that nothing new ever happened in the present or would happen in the future. It had all happened before in the far distant past. Change of any kind was not encouraged. Even when there were changes in rulership, the system was to remain untouched. As noted by Hsu, "Revolt is regarded not as a weapon of destruction but as a tool of restoration; revolt is a lever to restore the balance of society, not to upset it."<sup>3</sup> The Chinese were taught to accept life as they found it and to follow the beaten paths. They had no compulsion to embark on crusades or reform movements.

#### Esteem for Particularity

The Chinese had a high regard for history, and this included attachment to many historical particularities. The

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson, 65-89.

<sup>2</sup>Ben-Ami Scharfstein, The Mind of China (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1975), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 378.

Chinese tended to think concretely, instead of in nebulous and abstract terms. Much of the entire spectrum of the Chinese tradition was concrete in character. The family was a visible entity; so were the clan, the ancestral tablets, clan temples, and ancestral graves. Several factors contributed to this proclivity; these include linguistics and the Five Classics.

#### Linguistic Factor

From the third century B.C. until today, the written Chinese language has provided remarkable cultural unity across space and time. Its script could be read by any literate person from any dialect group. Some scholars believe there is a link between the Chinese language and the Chinese pattern of thinking. They think the reality-centered orientation of the written Chinese language predisposed the Chinese to reality-centered thinking.<sup>1</sup>

#### Hieroglyphic Form

Chinese characters were originally hieroglyphics. They were simplified pictures of objects (pictographs) and ideas (ideographs). For example, the character which symbolizes the sun is derived from a drawing of a circle.

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred H. Bloom, The Linguistic Shaping of Thought: A Study in the Impact of Language on Thinking in China and the West (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981), 33-59; Nakamura, 177-80, 185-88; Scharfstein, 133; and A. C. Graham, "The Place of Reason in the Chinese Philosophical Tradition," in The Legacy of China, ed. Raymond Dawson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 54-55.

"Tree" is a picture of a tree, and "man" of a man. Examples of ideographs are: a short horizontal line means "one," two such parallel lines mean "two," the character with a line pointing down means "down," and a line pointing up means "up" and so on. More complex characters are created by doubling up simple characters. Two trees placed side by side represent a "forest." A sun and moon together convey the meaning "bright." A sun with a short horizontal line below means "dawn."

One of the most important Chinese characters *hsiao* (filial piety) has two parts. The upper part, meaning "old" or "old person," is a picture represents a hunch-backed person walking with a cane. The lower part of the character means "child." Taken together, the pictogram "hsiao" means "a child bearing an older person." This word-picture implies that as one grows up, one does not leave the older folks behind, but continue to support them affectionately and faithfully. Such is the ability of the Chinese hieroglyphics to represent reality in vivid and moving written forms and to predispose the Chinese to concrete thinking.

#### Grammatical Ambiguities

Nakamura believes the various grammatical ambiguities of the Chinese language make it an awkward

medium for expressing abstract thought.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese used uninflected monosyllabic words. No distinction was made between parts of speech. Words corresponding to the prepositions, conjunctions, and relative pronouns of Western languages were very rare in Chinese. There was also no difference between singular and plural. A single character *jen* could mean a man, men, some men, or mankind. Further, there were no cases. One word could be a noun, an adjective, or a verb. Because of this, the Chinese language tended to be ambiguous, and this explains why exegesis of the Chinese classics has produced a bewildering array of interpretations, many of which are contradictory. This ambiguity also reveals why the Chinese had great difficulty understanding the Buddhist sutras which were originally written in a radically different kind of language.<sup>2</sup>

Besides its grammatical ambiguities, the Chinese language can "see" reality much better than other languages can. Graham explains it this way:

In Indo-European languages word-inflection forces us to think in categories, such as thing, quality, and action, past, present, and future, singular and plural, the muddles and inconsistencies of which show us that the forms of thought present difficulties as well as its content; but in Chinese words are uninflected and their functions marked only by particles and by word-order, so that there is much more complete illusion of looking through language at reality as though through a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 188.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 187.

perfectly transparent medium.<sup>1</sup>

The Chinese language, seen hieroglyphically and grammatically, predisposed the Chinese to shun abstract patterns of thought and to orientate them to a reality-centered mode of thinking. The Five Classics also played a part in this proclivity.

#### The Five Classics and Particularity

As noted above, the Classics had an immense influence on the Chinese for they were regarded as providing the authoritative pattern for human life. For generations, the Five Classics taught the Chinese not merely the general principles of life, but about specific instances of human need, government, and morals. Imperceptibly they shaped the Chinese tendency toward particularity. Nakamura explains:

The Five Classics, which are the works of the highest authority regarded as providing the norms for human life, contain, for the most part, descriptions of particular incidents and statements of particular facts. They do not state general principles of human behavior. Even the Analects of Confucius records mostly the actions of individuals and the dicta of Confucius on separate incidents; these dicta for the most part have a personal significance. Through the classics and their commentaries the Chinese sought valid norms of moral conduct through individual instances.<sup>2</sup>

The third century B. C. Confucian philosopher Hsun-tzu made the following statement in reacting to the work of the Kung-sun Lung-tzu:

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<sup>1</sup>Graham, "The Place of Reason," 55.

<sup>2</sup>Nakamura, 196.

There is no reason why problems of "hardness and whiteness," "likeness and unlikeness," "thickness or thinness" should not be investigated, but the superior man does not discuss them; he stops at the limit of profitable discourse.<sup>1</sup>

Following the paths of the sages, the Chinese consequently viewed historical particularities with great interest. This preoccupation with particular instances is related to their inclination to concretize abstractions.

#### Affinity for Concretized Concepts

The Chinese loved the immediately perceptible, especially the visually perceptible. The Chinese scholar Lin Yu Tang saliently points out that Chinese thought always remained on the periphery of the visible world.<sup>2</sup>

In Chinese, abstract concepts were often expressed in two concrete terms, as "big-small" for "size," "long-short" for "length," "broad-narrow" for "breadth," etc. The term "epigraphy" in Chinese simply meant "writing on metal and stone," and "enthusiasm" became "the spirit of the dragon and the horse." Sometimes numbers were used to express quality. Thus, for a "fast horse," they used *tsien-li-ma*, meaning "a horse good for a thousand miles." For a person endowed with clairvoyance, they used the expression

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<sup>1</sup>Hsun-tzu in Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, vol. 2, History of Scientific Thought (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), 202.

<sup>2</sup>Yutang Lin, My Country and My People (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1938), 83.

*tsien-li-yen*, or "thousand-mile vision."<sup>1</sup> Perfection was often expressed as round, for it was believed the heart of a sage was round.<sup>2</sup>

In the Chinese language, descriptive statements were preferable to hypothetical ones. Rather than saying, "If Lee had been able to speak Chinese, he would have gone to China," the Chinese would say, "Lee couldn't speak Chinese and therefore he did not go to China."

Another unique linguistic feature is the shift from an extraction of the idea of the condition as a theoretical entity to a description of a condition.<sup>3</sup> So rather than talking about "Mary's sincerity," the Chinese would say "Mary is sincere." Instead of saying "bravery of the general," the Chinese prefer to say "the general is brave."

#### Non-Development of Universal Truth

One implication of the Chinese esteem for particularities is that the Chinese showed little interest

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<sup>1</sup>Nakamura, 179.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 180. Lin gives several examples showing how abstract literary styles are described in concrete expressions: "The method of watching a fire across the river" (detachment of style); "the method of dragon-flies skimming the water surface" (lightness of touch); "the method of painting a dragon and dotting its eyes" (bringing out the salient points); "the method of a sharp precipice overhanging a ten-thousand feet ravine" (abruptness of ending); the method of letting blood by one needle prick" (direct, epigrammatic gibe); "the method of going straight into the fray with one knife" (direct opening), etc. Yu-tang Lin, 84.

<sup>3</sup>Bloom, 40.

in universal propositions which transcended individual or particular instances. They seldom created a universal out of particulars. Even ethics was not understood as part of a universal law, but was taught on the basis of particular experiences, and was then utilized to realize human truth.<sup>1</sup> To the Chinese, truth was to be obtained through concrete experience, not through universal propositions. As such, truth was always relative for it was defined according to one's situation. As situation changed, so did truth. Hence there was no universal truth to speak of, for truth by nature had different shades of meaning.

#### Non-Development of Science

Nakamura believes the Chinese tendency toward the non-development of universal truth might have led to the non-development of deductive science in China.<sup>2</sup> Joseph Needham, in his major work on the history of science in China, presents an impressive array of evidence in support of the claim that traditional China had no lack of inventions.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese have always been practical and

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<sup>1</sup>Nakamura, 185, 198.

<sup>2</sup>Nakamura, 190.

<sup>3</sup>See Needham's chapters 13 and 14 for discussion of the lack of development of a theoretical orientation to science in early China; and chapter 18 for a discussion of the lack of development of a theoretical approach to law in China; See also A. L. Kroeber, Configurations of Culture Growth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1944), 183-199.

pragmatic people. They were making wheelbarrows and iron-chain suspension bridges a thousand years before they appeared in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Ancient China was also ahead of many countries in the field of natural sciences. The Chinese were well known for their mathematical prowess. As early as the fifth century, Chinese scholars calculated the value of  $\pi$  to lie between 3.1415926 and 3.1415927. The accuracy of  $\pi$  was rediscovered by the Europeans only in 1585. Some of the more notable Chinese inventions included the seismograph, printing, water clock, functions of hormones, anesthetics, gun powder, etc.

Kroeber notes that it is significant that the Chinese made many important inventions, but not one major scientific discovery; neither did they seek an understanding of nature beyond that which was useful or practical.<sup>2</sup> Nakamura describes earlier Chinese scientific research as being inductive, but this inductive methodology was replaced by deductive when precedents in the classics were quoted as authority.<sup>3</sup>

The Chinese disinclination toward a theoretical orientation was perhaps the reason why China did not develop a scientific tradition as we know it. With their inherent

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Griffiths, Changing Asia (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 35.

<sup>2</sup>Kroeber, 184.

<sup>3</sup>Nakamura, 190.

proclivity to particularity, the Chinese were not predisposed to leave the world of practical application behind in order to construct and test theoretical hypotheses. This may have been the reason why the Chinese preferred an applied instead of a theoretical approach to mathematics in general, and why geometry, which depended most on theory, was least developed in China.<sup>1</sup>

#### Esteem for Harmony

Another aspect of the Chinese worldview is a high esteem for harmony--harmony between humans and nature, and harmony between humans. The concern for harmony partly accounts for the Chinese propensity to tolerance of pluralism and a syncretistic approach to life and religion.

#### Harmony between Human Beings and Nature

A basic element of the classical Chinese tradition is that the natural world and human society were closely bonded. Human beings were the correlates of nature. Both were regarded as integral parts of the cosmos. There was no real separation of humans from nature. One was simply an extension of the other.<sup>2</sup> Because nature was not opposed to

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, vol. 3, Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), 152-68.

<sup>2</sup>Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck contrast this harmony-with-nature orientation with subjugation-to-nature and mastery-over-nature orientations. A subjugation-to-nature orientation is akin to fatalism. Those who believe it simply accept what they consider to be the inevitable.

humans, nature was not to be mastered, manipulated, or exploited. This may have been one of the reasons why for many years China lagged behind other countries in the development of the natural sciences.<sup>1</sup>

The harmony between humans and nature formed the basis for the Chinese wholistic approach to life. Practice and theory were parts of a whole. The sacred and the secular were never dichotomized. Death was the continuation of living.

Chinese cosmology was based on the theory of *yin* and *yang* and the Five Elements (water, fire, wood, metal, and earth).<sup>2</sup> The *yin* and *yang* represented negative and positive forces at work. Everything in China was divided into either *yin* or *yang*. The moon was *yin* and the sun was *yang*. Women were *yin* and men were *yang*. The weather was affected by interaction between *yin* and *yang* elements. When the weather was cloudy, the *yin* predominated. Thus a cloudy day was called *yin tien*, and a sunny day a *yang tien*. Too much *yin* caused rain and flood, while too much *yang* caused drought.

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Mastery-over-nature orientation, on the other hand, accentuates the belief that natural forces of all kinds are to be overcome and put to use. The motto is "God helps those who help themselves." Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Variations in Value Orientations, 13.

<sup>1</sup>Nakamura, 281.

<sup>2</sup>Laurence G. Thompson, The Chinese Religion: An Introduction, 3d ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1979), 3-15; Needham, Science and Civilization, 216-345; and Schuyler Cammann, "Some Early Chinese Symbols of Duality," History of Religion 24 (February 1985): 215-54.

Chinese medicine operated on the assumptions of *yin* and *yang*. When the two elements were properly balanced, a person was healthy. If the *yin* prevailed, a person had a *yin* sickness, and was likely to have chills. Superiority of the *yang* produced a *yang* sickness, usually associated with a fever. All medicines were classified as *yin* or *yang*. For a *yin* sickness, a person must take *yang* medicine until the *yin* and *yang* were balanced, and then he would recover. In short, sickness and misfortune were ascribed to imbalance between *yin* and *yang*; health and prosperity were the result of balance restored and harmonized.

#### Doctrine of the Golden Mean

Confucius' counsel of moderation in all things has profoundly contributed to the Chinese tendency in harmony. Confucius' Doctrine of the Golden Mean was considered so important that it had become part of the Confucian canon.

The word "mean" or *Chung yung* literally means "middle" and "constant." Thus, the Mean is the way that is "constantly in the middle" between life's excesses and extremes. The Mean was highly prized as one of the cardinal Confucian virtues. It was Confucius' vision of the good life. The aim of Chinese classical education had always been the cultivation of the reasonable person--a person who guarded against excess, over-indulgence, and fanaticism, and who exercised moderation with regard to human's seven

passions of pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth.

The effect of the Doctrine of the Golden Mean on the Chinese worldview can be seen from the traditional Chinese preference for negotiation and mediation rather than confrontation and settlement by lawsuits. Legal action was generally regarded as something of a disgrace, reflecting an incapacity to work things out by compromise and consensus.<sup>1</sup> The Doctrine of the Golden Mean is also reflected in the Chinese apathy to politics. The Chinese judiciously abstained from talking about political issues.<sup>2</sup>

#### Inclusive Approach to Religion

The Chinese propensity to harmony is best illustrated by the way they approach religion. Two characteristics of this approach are noted here. First, it is characteristic of the Chinese to acknowledge the individual significance of every religion as possessing some degree of truth. Naturally this attitude led to tolerance

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, Religions of Man, 261. Smith concludes with these words, "We must remember China's reputation for having the most pacific people in the world. She has exalted the life of reasonable enjoyment and despised the destructive. As a result she has been able to unite an immense area of fertility and preserve the longest continuous civilization man has ever achieved, one which at its height united one-third of the human race. The political structure of this civilization alone, the Chinese Empire, lasted under various dynasties for 2133 years (from 221 B.C. to A.D. 1912)--a stretch that makes the empires of Alexander the Great and Caesar look ephemeral." Ibid., 263-64.

<sup>2</sup>Yu-tang Lin, 172.

of the thought and actions of others and promoted sympathy and appreciation for what was different. It was not surprising, therefore, that when Buddhism was introduced into China, it was not rejected outright. Rather, it was discussed and admired by the Chinese.<sup>1</sup>

Second, it is characteristic of the Chinese to underscore complementariness rather than contrariness. Differences regarded from two opposing viewpoints were seen as completing each other, thereby constituting a whole.<sup>2</sup>

Instead of thinking, "A and B are opposed, therefore one must take either A or B," one thinks, "A and B are opposed, therefore both are needed for the whole." For example, one does not choose between practice and theory, but chooses *both* theory and practice.<sup>3</sup>

This emphasis on complementariness may be a partial explanation of the Chinese proverbial tolerance of religious differences. Rather than excluding various alternative views as false, the Chinese tended to believe truth consisted in a combination of partially true views. A case in point would be the Chinese syncretistic attitude toward their three principal traditions--Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Confucianism espoused the ethical philosophy of life created by the great moral sages; Taoism taught that eternal happiness centered in total identification of human

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<sup>1</sup>Nakamura, 286. The religious tolerance of the Chinese has often been noted. See, for example, Lang, 290-91.

<sup>2</sup>Koller, 247.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. (Emphasis original.)

beings with nature; and sinicized Buddhism, shed of its other-worldly transcendentalism, prescribed a pragmatic nirvana for this life. Despite the inconsistencies between these three systems of thought, the Chinese saw an underlying harmony and regarded them as different roads toward the same destination. This nondiscriminating attitude toward religious beliefs often led them to conclude that all religions were of equal virtue and validity.

This emphasis on inclusiveness blurred Chinese religious identity. The majority of the Chinese did not profess to have a particular religion of their own. They not only respected all religions, but adopted beliefs and practices from several religions at the same time. For centuries, elements of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and folk religion have been combined in belief systems and rituals. Most Chinese had no qualms in reverencing Confucius, participating in Buddhist burial services, and resorting to Taoist blessings of health and wealth at the same time. Even the charms that were used to ward off demons were collectively written and sold by Buddhist and Taoist priests, and *tuan kungs*, the priests of black magic.<sup>1</sup> A recent archaeological find in China confirms the eclectic nature of the Chinese religious experience. The China Daily

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<sup>1</sup>Graham, Folk Religion, 125-27. See also Chu Chai and Winberg Chai, The Changing Society of China (New York: Mentor Books, 1962), 145-49, and Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 255.

reported on June 19, 1987 that an ancient painted scroll, called *Heng Ting* which means the Spirit's Roadmap, was discovered in Southwestern China. Measuring about fifty-one feet long and one foot wide, the scroll contains features of Taoism, Buddhism, Lamaism, and the Tongba religion, a pantheistic worship of the gods of mountains, rivers, wind, and fire.<sup>1</sup>

#### Esteem for Practicality

The last aspect of the Chinese worldview considered in this study has to do with the Chinese proverbial practicality. The Chinese esteem for practicality is by no means the least of the five worldview assumptions in the theoretical paradigm. It is, in fact, as Chinese as the other aspects of the Chinese worldview. Three areas of this propensity are noted: an anthropocentric tendency, a this-worldly attitude to religion, and an utilitarian approach to religion.

#### Anthropocentric Tendency

The Chinese tended to consider all things from an anthropocentric perspective. Even abstract ideas were expressed in relation to human beings.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps more than anything else, the classics had a part in bringing about

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<sup>1</sup>Chin-Ning Chu, The Chinese Mind Game: The Best Kept Trade Secret of the East (Beaverton, OR: AMC Publishing, 1988), 45.

<sup>2</sup>Nakamura, 233.

this affinity. The classics were records about the human world--the world of people's morals and right way of living and governing. As a result, the Chinese perceived all events from the standpoint of their own group and often did not see themselves as others saw them.

This anthropocentric tendency contributed to their national pride as a race. To be a Chinese implied an identification with the noble heritage of the longest continuous civilization of the world. It implied that the Chinese not only were a civilization but that they were civilization. The Chinese with this ideology of superiority viewed their own land as *Chung Kuo*, the Middle Kingdom, or the Central State, from which every other country revolved. All foreigners were often referred as "barbarians" or "foreign devils."<sup>1</sup>

As a result, the Chinese did not develop the study of logic for it was considered to have no utilitarian purpose,<sup>2</sup> nor were they interested in principle apart from its practical utility. Similarly, metaphysical thought was not cultivated. Even Buddhism was transformed from a

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<sup>1</sup>The Chinese cultural superiority has been characterized by sinologist John Fairbank as "culturalism," and "sinocentrism" by C. K. Yang. John K. Fairbank, The United States and China (New York: Viking Press, 1962); Yang, Religion in Chinese Society. See also Robert S. Elegant, The Center of the World: Communism and the Mind of China (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968); and James McDonald, "China and the Barbarians," New Society 10 (August 31, 1967): 295-6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 234.

metaphysical to a humanistic religion, with the result that Buddhism was popularly perceived by the commoners as a religion of spells and charms. It was not uncommon for the Chinese to pray to various Buddhist bodhisattvas just as they did to other folk deities.

Because of their humanistic devotion to the present life, the Chinese loved practical subjects and everything that pertained to the earth. Proportionately little thought was given to the hereafter. When Confucius was asked about the question of death, his famous reply was, "We don't even know life, how would we know death?"<sup>1</sup> Confucius' contention was that one should seek the meaning of this life rather than engage in fruitless inquiry into life after death. In his view, one was unqualified to speak of serving the spirits without being first able to serve humans. The modern Chinese scholar Lin Yu-tang terms the question of immortality an "unnecessary metaphysical worry, a kind of preposterousness that an Oriental mind cannot understand."<sup>2</sup> To the Chinese, life was too full to be preoccupied with thoughts of immortality, too good to forsake the visible earth for an invisible heaven. Lin goes on to draw an analogy with the Chinese roof. Like the Chinese roof, and unlike Gothic spires, the Chinese spirit did not aspire to heaven but brooded over the earth. Its greatest achievement

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<sup>1</sup>Soothill, 521-23.

<sup>2</sup>Yu-tang Lin, 103.

was to attain a measure of harmony and happiness in this earthly life.<sup>1</sup> As the Chinese roof might also have suggested, happiness was first to be found in the home, the symbol of Chinese humanism. The close-knit Chinese primary group system seemed to offer such a superlative degree of contentment and fulfillment that the Chinese finally came to believe that perfect existence must be in this world.

#### This-worldly Attitude in Religion

The predominant this-worldliness of the Chinese worldview did not mean it was completely free of any conception of the supernatural. Evidences of the supernatural may be observed in ancestor worship, in the pantheon of gods, and in the spirits in Chinese worship.

The Chinese approach to the world of the supernatural was essentially the same as their approach to life on earth. They believed that gods and spirits were simply transformations of human beings. Therefore the supernatural world was more or less a replica of the earthly world in terms of hierarchy and fallibility.

#### Hierarchy

The Chinese' love of hierarchal order naturally led to the bureaucratization of the gods. Some of them were considered officers or "department heads" responsible to high-ups in a divine chain of command. The hierarchy in the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 108.

spirit world consisted of three interrelated domains: the Domain of Judgment, the Western Paradise, and the court of the Supreme Ruler of Heaven.<sup>1</sup> The Domain of Judgment was the judgment hall where the judges reviewed records of the merits and demerits of all humans. The wicked were banished to a eighteen-story hell where they were punished, and the meritorious were given eternal bliss in the Western Paradise.

The Supreme Ruler of Heaven presided over all gods and humans, including the emperor himself. Inasmuch as the Supreme Ruler was not omnipresent, he depended upon a large number of functionaries who held title and rank similar to the earthly pattern of hierarchy. These functionaries executed his order and meted out judgment on the living as well as on the souls of the dead.<sup>2</sup>

Wolf maintains that there was a pervasive parallelism between the Chinese view of the hierarchy of the gods and that of earthly bureaucrats.<sup>3</sup> For instance, Tu Ti Kung and the Stove God were not of the same rank. Tu Ti Kung was like a policeman who could only report to lower gods such as Cheng Huang. The Stove God was more like a plainclothesman who reported directly to Tien Kung or the

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<sup>1</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 240.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur P. Wolf, "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors," in Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society, ed. Arthur P. Wolf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 138.

Supernatural Emperor.<sup>1</sup> Communications among the gods must be by way of another god, who himself should be one of the higher-ranking deities. Lowly deities could not approach the Yu Huang Ta Ti anymore than a district magistrate could approach the emperor.<sup>2</sup>

The bureaucracies of the natural and supernatural worlds were regarded as two parallel systems. The bureaucrats of the other worlds were not necessarily thought of as possessing an authority superior to that of human bureaucrats. Rather, the higher-ranking members of one bureaucracy had authority over the lower-ranking members of the other. Thus, when the gods failed in their duties, they could be tried by magistrates and condemned to public beating!<sup>3</sup>

#### Fallibility

The resemblance between the Chinese gods and their human counterparts did not end in their bureaucratic compatibility. The gods were also subject to the same weaknesses as earthly mortals. The notion of an one and only infallible god was inconceivable to the Chinese.

Shryock relates the experience of a god named Chong Huang who allowed an innocent boy to be mistakenly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 144.

identified as a thief. Knowing he was innocent, the boy wrote a letter of complaint condemning the god. The letter was burnt and was subsequently picked up by one of the wandering inspector gods who brought it to the attention of the Jade Emperor. The Emperor immediately issued a decree banishing the city god 1,115 li from his city for three years.<sup>1</sup>

#### Utilitarian Approach to Religion

The Chinese attitude to religion tended to be utilitarian. As their social roots lay in human primary relationships, the Chinese felt that they did not stand or fall with the gods. The gods were invoked only when they were needed for specific and practical purposes.<sup>2</sup> There was no staunch or permanent commitment to speak of. In fact, the notion of having a close relationship with a god was alien to the Chinese view of religion. For this reason, Hsu asserts that to the Chinese, personal prayers were as incongruous as they were unnecessary.<sup>3</sup> He further elaborates:

In spite of their desire to obtain the god's favors, the Chinese do not seek too close an association with them. In the normal course of events, gods are located in the temples or in special shrines. The closest the

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<sup>1</sup>John Shryock, The Temples of Anking and Their Cults: A Study of Modern Chinese Religion (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste, 1931), 113-14.

<sup>2</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 257-58.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 255.

Chinese come to "living" with gods and spirits is in respect to the household altars. But this is no more than physical proximity, for the worshiper pays homage at appointed times before such an altar, and as soon as he leaves it, the gods are left behind. The same respectful distance that separated the people and the emperor, separates the people and their gods. The Chinese believe that those who have gods hovering about them are mediums or persons nearing death or in some way peculiar.<sup>1</sup>

The upshot of this utilitarian tendency was that the Chinese resorted little to prayers. Even when prayers were used, the "utterances were little more than an express request for godly favors."<sup>2</sup> This practical attitude may have precipitated the phenomenon of the so-called "rice Christians" in China.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, the Chinese approach to Christianity was consistent with their approach to other religious traditions. As they turned to Taoism and its magic to fulfill the present, Confucianism for wisdom and morals, and Buddhism for salvation, they turned to Christianity for its temporal materialistic benefits. The immense missionary enterprise in China and the wealth of its institutions such as hospitals, schools,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 243.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 255.

<sup>3</sup>See the two stories related by Hsu. A Mr. Liu published in the local newspaper his experience of overcoming poverty by joining the Catholic Church. He thought it was perfectly natural to advertise his ulterior motive so that others might benefit from the relief supplies given by the church if they were willing to be baptized. The second story was about a Chinese student who applied for financial aid from Northwestern University. On the application form where one's religion was to be indicated, she wrote, "Willing to be a Methodist." Ibid., 272-73.

orphanages, and other social organizations gave the poverty-stricken the impression that the church commanded enormous wealth and technical know-how. Hence, what appeared to be a mercenary approach to Christianity may actually have been a reflection of the customary Chinese utilitarian attitude to religion.

### *Feng-Shui*

The Chinese passion for this-worldly values such as wealth, health, and longevity resulted in the development of numerous kinds of divination, geomancy, astrology, dream interpretation, fortune-telling, and the like.<sup>1</sup> Because of the significance attached to *feng-shui* or geomancy, further explication is necessary.

*Feng-shui* is a complex system of beliefs about luck and prosperity associated with the direction of sites of graves, houses, and buildings. *Feng-shui*, literally "wind" and "water," involves the study of wind and water in relation to the outward signs of the working of *yin* and *yang* in nature. It assumes a worldview in which directions, astral influences, the winds, and the waters were considered to have power over humans. *Feng-shui* was regarded as exceedingly important to the Chinese. In fact, it was almost synonymous with being Chinese.

To harmonize the cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang*,

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph M. Kitagawa, Religions of the East (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 75.

houses must be built according to the *feng-shui* of the locality. Topographical features such as mountains, streams, valleys, and temples were held to affect the operation of the cosmic forces. Straight lines were believed to be evil influences, but trees or a fresh water pond could ward them off. It was not surprising, therefore, that the basic design of Chinese villages included trees and ponds for protection. It was believed that if the *feng-shui* of the house was good, its residents would prosper, become wealthy, and have many descendants.

*Feng-shui* was especially crucial in the location of ancestral graves. The coffin and the corpse must point in the right direction. If the *feng-shui* of the graves was bad, calamities would ensue among the descendants. That was the reason why before each burial, a *feng-shui* professor was hired to assess the locality for good *feng-shui*.

Freedman maintains that *feng-shui* is actually the reverse of ancestor worship. The deceased ancestor was only a corpse. As a set of bones, he was no longer in command of his descendants. On the contrary, he was at their disposal. They no longer worshiped him; he served their purposes.<sup>1</sup>

Freedman explains:

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Freedman, "Ancestor Worship: Two Facets of the Chinese Case," in Social Organization: Essays Presented to Raymond Firth, ed. Maurice Freedman (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967), 87. See also Maurice Freedman, Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung (London: Athlone Press, 1971).

Geomancy delivers a man's ancestors into his hands. He may determine his own fortune by siting one or more of his ancestral graves in such a way that the geomantic influences (the "winds and waters") of the landscape are channelled through the bones of the ancestors to their agnatic descendants. By geomancy a Chinese may seek riches and success for himself in order to outpace his agnates; he can do so by choosing ancestral graves that will give him the smallest number of fellow descendants with whom to share the benefit induced, and by procuring (through geomancer) that the siting and orienting of the graves favor him among the descendants. It is for this reason that brothers will often wrangle long among themselves over the siting of their father's and mother's grave, each one seeking to ensure his private success at the expense of the others. Where *feng-shui* is carried to its highest degree of development, bones may be exhumed and reburied in the pursuit of good fortune. In all this seeking after riches, progeny, and success by the manipulation of their remains, the dead are virtually passive. They transmit the virtues of a site to their descendants, but they cannot initiate the flow of benefits or block it off.<sup>1</sup>

Freedman observes that ancestor worship and *feng-shui* belong to opposite ends of a spectrum. In ancestor worship, the ancestors are revered; in *feng-shui*, they are subordinated. In the former, the ideal ties between the generations are reinforced; in the latter, they are denied. The first stands for group solidarity, the second represents group differentiation. Freedman concludes that by *feng-shui*, the ancestors are used as things for the attainment of worldly desires.<sup>2</sup>

The prevalence of belief and practice of *feng-shui* in China illustrates the Chinese pragmatic and utilitarian approach to life. As noted in the next chapter, this

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 87-88.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

proclivity to practicality is by no means diminished in the contemporary Chinese societies in East Asia.

### Conclusion

China's long and essentially unbroken cultural tradition has long been the pride of its people. Its cultural heritage, though bewilderingly complex, may be traced to its early origin in Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Chinese folk religion. The interplay of these four hereditary legacies through the centuries has produced certain repetitive, enduring, and identifiable worldview assumptions which form the basis of a theoretical paradigm for understanding the traditional Chinese mind. This paradigm includes five selected Chinese proclivities, namely, hierarchy, antiquity, particularity, harmony, and practicality.

The Chinese esteem for hierarchy can be seen in Chinese preoccupation with proper social order; the centrality of ethics; a strong emphasis on ritual, propriety, and morality; a highly developed patriarchal family system based on the principle of filial piety and the subordination of the individual to the social group. This hierarchical structure is also characterized by control, low status of women, and a strong group orientation. The Chinese proclivity to antiquity is expressed in an obsessive concern with historical particularities and an exaltation of past events as models for present and future. It also means

deference and honor to the aged, and the prominence of ancestor worship as an integral part of the culture. The affinity to particularity denotes the Chinese penchant for looking at reality in concrete rather than in abstract terms. It also indicates the non-development of rational logic and a lack of concern for universal truth in Chinese thinking. The esteem for harmony points to the famous Chinese propensity for harmony between human beings and nature as well as harmony between human beings. It highlights the Chinese perennial concern for moderation in all things, and it contributes to their inclusive approach to religion. Finally, the inclination toward practicality and an anthropocentric orientation lead to the well-known Chinese pragmatic, this-worldly, and utilitarian approach to life.

The five selected elements described above represent the major contours of the traditional worldview that lies at the core of the Chinese culture. They are deeply embedded in the Chinese consciousness and are scarcely noticeable. They form the heart of the Chinese understanding and interpretation of reality, and as such help to give meaning and shape to relationships and behavior.

Having identified the major dimensions of the traditional Chinese worldview presuppositions, we now shift our focus to an enquiry pertaining to the extent to which these presuppositions have changed during the last twenty

years or so. Our purpose is to assess the impact of the processes of modernization and secularization on the Chinese societies in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONTEMPORARY CHINESE WORLDVIEW: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

#### Introduction

If we wish to ascertain the contemporary Chinese worldview, we must know the de facto situation in regard to the contemporary Chinese. The focus of this chapter is on three of the four Newly Industrializing Economies (NIEs), namely, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Its purpose is to examine the effects of modernization and secularization on these societies and ascertain the extent to which the traditional Chinese worldview has deviated from its theoretical framework outlined in chapter 3.

Although the tradition-modernity dichotomy has been abused and overused, it remains useful in ascertaining how change has transpired in contemporary Chinese society.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The tradition-modernity dichotomy has been developed by social psychologists into various traditional-modern (T-M) attitude scales. For a discussion on the construct validity of these measures of traditional and modern attitudes and assessment of the interrelationships among these measures, see Pauline A. Jones, "The Validity of Traditional-Modern Attitude Measures," Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 8 (June 1977): 207-39. For studies relating traditional-modern attitude scales to the Chinese, see John L. M. Dawson, Richard E. Whitney, and Raymond T. S. Lau, "Attitude Conflict, GSR, and Traditional-Modern Attitude Change among Hong Kong Chinese," The Journal of

Admittedly, there is no unadulterated "tradition," just as there cannot be pure "modernity," since both are only ideal abstractions. Nevertheless, the tradition-modernity dichotomy is a valuable device for understanding reality, though its limitations must be acknowledged.

### Ethnological Background

Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are chosen as samples of this study mainly because they have large concentrations of Chinese whose forebears were migrants from China. Both Taiwan and Singapore are independent countries, whereas Hong Kong is a British colony bordering China on its Southeast coast.

Hong Kong was leased from the Chinese government in 1898 for ninety-nine years and will revert to China in 1997. About 99 percent of Hong Kong people are Chinese, most of them coming from the neighboring Chinese province of Guangdong. In 1901 the population of Hong Kong stood at 380,000. Over the ensuing forty years, the conditions in China led to a great influx of refugees to Hong Kong. Many

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Social Psychology 88 (December 1972): 163-76; John L. M. Dawson, H. Law, A. Leung, and R. E. Whitney, "Scaling Chinese Traditional-Modern Attitudes and GSR Measurement of 'Important' Versus 'Unimportant' Chinese Concepts," Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 2 (1971): 1-27; John L. M. Dawson and William Ng and Wing Cheung, "Effects of Parental Attitudes and Modern Exposure on Chinese Traditional-Modern Attitude Formation," Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 3 (June 1972): 201-07; and John L. M. Dawson, "The Effects of Economic Development and Modernization in Resolving Traditional-Modern Attitudinal Conflict," International Journal of Intercultural Relations 4 (1980): 43-75.

emigrated during the Republican Revolution of 1911. More crossed over following the eruption of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The conquest of China by the Communists caused a further exodus of refugees to the colony. By the end of 1950, the population had shot up to 2.3 million. At present (1991) about 91 percent of the 5.7 million Hong Kong residents live in urban areas.

As in Hong Kong, the Chinese in Taiwan comprise some 98.5 percent of a population of 20.5 million. Except for about 200,000 people indigenous to the island, all the inhabitants of Taiwan are descendents of Chinese settlers from the mainland, primarily from Fujian and Guangdong provinces. The Chinese began arriving from China in significant numbers only in the seventeenth century. The latest and most significant influx occurred after 1945. It peaked in the late forties and early fifties when the Communist regime won control of the Chinese mainland. Some two million newcomers came, increasing the population by more than 30 percent. Taiwan's population is relatively young, with more than 35 percent under fifteen years of age in 1970; only 3 percent are older than sixty-five. More than two-thirds of the population live in urban areas. Much like their counterparts in Hong Kong, most Taiwanese embrace, at least nominally, a combination of Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucianist beliefs.

Singapore is the smallest nation in Southeast Asia.

In 1832 Singapore became the headquarters of British rule in the region. In 1867 the Straits Settlements, which included Singapore, Malacca, and Penang, became the Crown Colony whose administration was directly responsible to London. After more than one hundred years of British rule, Singapore attained internal self-government in 1959 and became independent in 1965. The British withdrew militarily from Singapore in 1971. The Chinese in Singapore are largely the descendents of early migrants from the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong in Southeast China. The Singapore Chinese community is unique in that it represents the single largest concentration of Chinese in Southeast Asia (about two million strong). The Chinese are the majority ethnic groups of Singapore, comprising about 77.7 percent of a population of 2.7 million (1990). Over 70 percent of the Singapore Chinese are locally born; almost 30 percent are not. Obviously most of the latter are migrants from China in the early part of the nineteenth century.

It is significant to note that though most people in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are Chinese, not all of them are Chinese by culture; neither are all of them racially pure in the sense of being descended exclusively from Chinese forebears. Many are third- or fourth-generation Chinese whose cultural heritage may be radically

different from their biological heritage.<sup>1</sup> The two are not synonymous and a clear differentiation between the two must be maintained with vigilance, for it has consequential implications in the way they respond to secularization.

### The Transformation of East Asia

Over the last thirty or more years, a radical transformation has taken place across the socioeconomical landscape in East Asia. Today Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are undoubtedly considered by many as modern industrialized societies. Others, however, regard them as "latecomers." According to Marion Levy, industrial societies can be categorized into two types, indigenous developers and latecomers.<sup>2</sup> The indigenous developers constructed their modern societies on their own over a relatively long period of time, whereas the late-comers imitate models of development from the indigenous developers.

The latecomers' borrowing began in the nineteenth century when East Asian countries stepped up contact with the technologically advanced Western world. There was large-scale borrowing of Western techniques, institutions,

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<sup>1</sup>See Wee, "What Does 'Chinese' Mean?" and Gungwu Wang, "The Study of Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia," in Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese Since World War II, ed. Jennifer W. Cushman and Wang Gungwu (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988), 1-21.

<sup>2</sup>Levy, Modernization and the Structure of Societies, 16.

and political and social systems such as modern democracy, nationalism, and the national state, as well as legal and educational systems. The effects of this intensive acquisition have been phenomenal, resulting in industrialization, rapid economic development, and profound social changes. The manner in which these Asian societies have been transformed may be more revolutionary than evolutionary.

Fairbank, Reischauer, and Craig observe that the process of adoption of Western technology is sometimes described as "Westernization." However, they reckon that when the drastic changes of the past century are examined, they are generally the more modern elements of Western civilization that have been borrowed. Many things that characterize the West before recent times have not become as significant in Asia as they have remained in the West. A case in point is Christianity. In this sense, Fairbank et al. suggest that the great transformation of East Asia can be better described as "modernization" than as "Westernization."<sup>1</sup>

The adoption of Western technology and the pursuit of Western standards of prosperity carry with them one major labyrinth, that is, the role of tradition in the process of

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<sup>1</sup>John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig, A History of East Asian Civilization, vol. 2, East Asia: The Modern Transformation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 7.

secularization. Fairbank et al. describe the predicament this way:

East Asians in their response to the West generally made a distinction between techniques and values, or broadly speaking, between means and ends. Western ways of doing things might seem necessary, even if distasteful, but the people of East Asia for the most part intended to maintain their own traditional values. Yet the distinction between foreign ways and native values inevitably became blurred. For example, the anti-Western patriot who was ostensibly reviving native tradition might turn out to be in fact the exponent of a new and very modern form of nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

Modernization and Westernization, therefore, are not the same thing, but the fact is they are so closely related at times that it is not always easy to dissociate them. The dilemma facing East Asian countries is how to achieve "industrialization with honor,"<sup>2</sup> that is, modernizing without being Westernized. Fairbank concedes that they are not always successful in their attempt. His conclusion is that cultural values are likely to be transformed by technological changes, even though East Asians are highly selective in their borrowing.<sup>3</sup> This is because techniques and values, means and ends are closely intertwined. Initially, values may determine whether new techniques are to be adopted. But sooner or later, new techniques will influence the attitudes and values of the people whose way

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>2</sup>John M. Steadman, The Myth of Asia (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 44.

<sup>3</sup>Fairbank et al., 8.

of life has been changed by them. If the assessment of Fairbank et al. is correct, we are likely to see deviations from the traditional Chinese worldview.

#### Catalysts of Social Change

Obviously, the new "modern" era in East Asia did not start with a *tabula rasa*. To all intents and purposes, significant traces of change had already taken place during the period of Western colonialism. After independence, the nations entered a new epoch characterized by increasing and ultimately decisive Western influence upon the societies. No single agent is responsible for the metamorphosis of East Asian societies emerging from a pre-industrial era to the high-tech decade of the nineties, but Western influences have been more pronounced in the following five areas: education, modern state, urbanization, media, and industrialization.

Education is obviously a significant factor of change. Many countries adopted a state education system modelled upon Western patterns. The new target was universal education for every child. The outcome has been a marked increase in the literacy of the general population over the years.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese take education very seriously. For centuries, education offered an escape from poverty. It

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<sup>1</sup>The literacy rates of the general population in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are 88.1 percent, 91.2 percent, and 82.9 percent, respectively. "Social Indicators," Asiaweek 17 (February 15, 1991): 13.

was a symbol of wealth, for only the rich could afford to study. Today, however, education is much more affordable and prevalent. The high level of educational effort spearheaded by the state reflects the traditional Chinese emphasis on scholarly prestige and the practical necessity of developing marketable skills in a competitive world. In Hong Kong, for example, 19,000 applicants competed for 1,999 places at top-ranked University of Hong Kong. More than 20,000 left for colleges abroad in 1989, a 40 percent increase compared with 1984.<sup>1</sup> Education, whether local or foreign, is the ladder leading to success and riches. The stress on education has led in one way or another to a more egalitarian attitude toward other members of the society. This may attribute in part to the rise of women's status and the loosening of paternalistic control in the family. Education also involves the introduction of novel ideas which are often accepted as better than traditional ones.

In an effort to develop internationally useful skills for commerce and industry, English has become the lingua franca of the Chinese. The ability to speak and use English proficiently is a *sine qua non* of many jobs. In Hong Kong there has been a decline in the number of secondary schools using Chinese as the principal language of instruction. The number of such schools dropped from 104 in

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<sup>1</sup>"Asia's Brain Wave," Asiaweek, 16 (June 29, 1990): 31.

1976 to 72 in 1982. During the same period the number of Anglo-Chinese secondary schools (using English as the major medium of instruction) rose from 283 to 346.<sup>1</sup> In Singapore English has been stressed since 1965,<sup>2</sup> and through the years English-medium schools have taken the place of Chinese, Malay, and Tamil schools.<sup>3</sup>

The creation of the modern state has also facilitated change. Government dictates a wide spectrum of policies designed for the "good of the nation." The state serves as a catalyst to promote trade as well as a strategist to help companies maintain their cutting edge in the world market. In addition, the state has taken over functions previously held by the family. These include health care, education, employment, and even moral education. The hand of the government can be seen in a bewildering number of enterprises, from airlines to shipyards, from banking to family planning.

Urbanization has also had an impact on Asian societies. The rapid growth of the urban population has

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh D. R. Baker, "Life in the Cities: The Emergence of Hong Kong Man," The China Quarterly 95 (September 1983): 474.

<sup>2</sup>Lim-Keak Cheng, Social Change and the Chinese in Singapore (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), 126-7.

<sup>3</sup>See Evangelos A. Afendras and Eddie C. Y. Kuo, eds. Language and Society in Singapore (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1980).

been a noticeable demographic trend.<sup>1</sup> Most countries in East Asia have seen a doubling of their urban population in the past two decades.<sup>2</sup> Urban areas have been the center of gravity in economic development. Cities function as administrative, judicial, and, above all, commercial centers. As cities are developed, rural to urban migration ensues as people flock to the cities looking for the "good life." Increasingly, women are drawn into the work force. The trend now is toward the dual-career family, in which both husband and wife work and children are left in day-care centers. This situation brings with it a host of fundamental socioeconomic changes.

The import of the media should also be considered. Marshall McLuhan looks at human history in terms of three periods. First, there is illiterate Tribal Man, where knowledge is shared by the community through verbal communication. Second, there is Gutenberg Man who, as a result of Gutenberg's invention of movable type, is able to gain information through reading books. Third, there is Electronic Man who sees the whole world as a global village

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<sup>1</sup>See Albert R. O'Hara, Research on Changes of Chinese Society (Taipei: Chinese Association for Folklore, 1974), 135-49.

<sup>2</sup>Hong Kong's urban population has grown from 2.7 million in 1960 to 5 million in 1985. So has Singapore's population risen from 1.6 to 2.6 million during the same period of time. See Prospects of World Urbanization, 1988 (New York: United Nations, 1989), and World Development Report, 1989 (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Vice President, Development Economics, World Bank, 1989).

through the television screen.<sup>1</sup> In East Asia, all three types of people exist simultaneously. People may be illiterate, yet they can understand the spoken word and pictures from television. They are electronic people without having to learn to read and write. The number of people per television set in Taiwan is 3.2; Hong Kong, 4.1; and Singapore, 5.1.<sup>2</sup> Already a leading barometer of affluence, television has rapidly eclipsed cinemas. But things have changed in the eighties with the ubiquitous video cassette recorder. Experts are now predicting a boom in cable television in the nineties.<sup>3</sup> Though local productions are in abundance, imported programs are not in short supply. Millions are daily bombarded by images from the developed West, shaping and reshaping people's values and thinking. Some call this intrusion of foreign values and technology "cultural imperialism."<sup>4</sup> This concern has been voiced by a number of authors, including Naisbitt and Aburdene who state:

Unlike cheeseburgers and jeans, the globalization of television is explosive and controversial because it conveys deeper values the way literature does. Entertainment through the medium of language and images,

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Griffiths, 52.

<sup>2</sup>"Tuning in to the World," Asiaweek 16 (February 23, 1990): 13.

<sup>3</sup>"Asia's Cable Revolution," Asiaweek 16 (March 16, 1990): 20-23.

<sup>4</sup>George Ann Geyer, "Seeking Cultural Revenge," Washington Times, February 27, 1989, sec. D, col. 2, p. 3.

crosses over the line of superficial exchange and enters the domain of values. It goes right to the ethos of a culture, addressing the fundamental spirit that informs its beliefs and practices. Language is the great link to the heart of a culture.<sup>1</sup>

The prevalent and dominant use of the English language appears to be one of the major reasons for such a high influx of media material. Where English is used, invariably the cultures of English-speaking countries dominate.<sup>2</sup> As it is, American and British rock music is part and parcel of the youth culture in East Asia.

Probably one of the most crucial factors inducing change in East Asia is industrialization. These nations developed a market economy that is largely based on manufacturing industries, international trade, and services. They started out with light industries, and then moved on to heavy industries. Most manufactured goods are exported. Most countries have shown spectacular economic growth as a result. In recent years, the prominence of the Asia Pacific region has gained increasing international attention. The rapid economic growth in the region is about five times the growth rate of Europe during the Industrial Revolution.<sup>3</sup> Between 1975 and 1988, the four NIEs, or "tigers" as they are commonly called, increased their share of the world's

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<sup>1</sup>John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, Megatrends 2000: Ten New Directions for the 1990's (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1990), 139.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 179.

total export of manufactured goods from 4 to 11 percent. In recent years, the emphasis has been on high-technology industries. Between 1985 and 1987 they increased their share of the world's export of consumer electronics goods from 15 to 30 percent. They are expected to continue growing at annual rates ranging from 7 to 10 percent, compared with about 3 percent growth in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Already, Hong Kong's vibrant economy has made it one of the great financial centers of the world. Nearly all major banks have offices there. Singapore is said to have the largest seaport in the world. It enjoys the highest living standard in Southeast Asia and has one of the highest savings rates in the world, 42 percent in 1988.<sup>2</sup> As for Taiwan, its trade surplus has grown from \$1.8 billion in 1981 to \$10.9 billion in 1988. It held about \$74 billion in foreign exchange reserves in 1988, the world's largest after Japan with \$87 billion.<sup>3</sup>

The spectacular economic success of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore has intrigued sociologists. A number of hypotheses have been offered. One of them points to their shared sinic cultural heritage as a possible explanation. It suggests the neo-Confucian or post-Confucian ethic is conducive to an industrious, personal

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 180, 185.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 189.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 189.

sense of responsibility that promotes economic development.<sup>1</sup> It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss whether cultural elements facilitate the adoption of industrial capitalism.<sup>2</sup> But this much seems to be true, the antithesis of a so-called "spiritual East" and "materialistic West" does not appear to be valid in contemporary East Asia and, therefore, should not be regarded as axiomatic.<sup>3</sup>

### Continuity and Change

Observers of the process of secularization in East Asia tend to polarize their views into two camps. There are

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<sup>1</sup>Herman Kahn, World Economic Development: 1979 and Beyond (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 121-23; and R. MacFarquhar, "The Post-Confucian Challenge," Economist (London), (February 9, 1980): 67-72. However, Max Weber disagreed with this hypothesis, arguing that the traditional Chinese cultural values do not engender the capitalistic spirit. In Weber's assessment, Confucianism, though rationalistic in form, lacked "an ethical prophecy of a supramundane God" and thus lacked "an inward core, of a unified way of life flowing from some central and autonomous value position." With the absence of the Protestant faith, the elements of capitalism were said to be missing in traditional Chinese enterprises. Max Weber, The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism, trans. and ed. Hans H. Gerth (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951), 229-32.

<sup>2</sup>One of the most recent discussions of the topic is Bill Moyers' conversation with noted sociologist Peter Berger. See Bill Moyers, A World of Ideas, ed. Betty S. Flowers (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 484-93. See also Peter Berger and Michael H. H. Hsiao, eds., In Search of an East Asian Development Model (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988).

<sup>3</sup>Peter Berger believes East Asian societies are much more materialistic than the West. "Compared to East Asians, Americans are mystical dreamers" (Moyers, 485).

those who believe that the Chinese tradition has maintained its status quo for centuries and is unlikely to change despite the onslaught of Western influence in modernization. Others think that change is inevitable, for no culture is ever immune to the impact of industrialization, urbanization, modern education, and communication. The latter regard Chinese culture as having been disfigured beyond recognition. The truth of the matter probably falls in between these two extreme views.

For the rest of this chapter, we will take a closer look at patterns of change and continuity in the traditional Chinese worldview using the fivefold paradigm outlined in chapter 3.

### Hierarchy

Hoselitz' claim that the process of economic development involves not merely a reshaping of the economic order but also a restructuring of social relations in general appears to be true in the three Chinese societies under study.<sup>1</sup> The traditional Chinese esteem for system of hierarchical relationship is showing signs of abating.

#### Changes in the Kinship System

##### Family Structure

Marion Levy remarks that "perhaps the most

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<sup>1</sup>Berthold F. Hoselitz, Sociological Aspects of Economic Growth (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 26.

significant feature of traditional China . . . is the fact that it was family-oriented to an overwhelming degree."<sup>1</sup> Certainly the value of family is the strongest value in Chinese culture. It was the single most important social institution of Chinese society. For centuries, the strength of the family's centripetalism provided exceptional continuity and inclusiveness. But there is evidence in recent years of a trend toward a weakening of the family system, particularly of the patrilineal extended family structure.<sup>2</sup> The traditional preference for joint residence of sons with their parents is followed less closely now, for the joint or stem family system is no longer considered ideal. Most have adopted a new ideal, namely, the conjugal family. The number of conjugal households appears to be on the rise, especially in urban areas. A survey in Kaohsiung, a thriving industrial city in Taiwan, shows that 79 percent of the population have adopted a conjugal form of marital residence compared with 18 percent in the village.<sup>3</sup> In a

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<sup>1</sup>Marion J. Levy, Economic Development and Cultural Change, vol. 2 (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1953), 165.

<sup>2</sup>See for example, W. Goode, World Revolution and Family Patterns (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963); J. Kahl, "Some Social Concomitants of Industrialization and Urbanization," Human Organization 18 (1959): 65-69; George M. Foster, Traditional Cultures and the Impact of Technological Change (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 31-34; and Joseph C. K. Wang, The Changing Chinese Family Pattern in Taiwan (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1981).

<sup>3</sup>William L. Parish, "Modernization and Household Composition in Taiwan," in Chinese Family Law and Social Change in Historical and Comparative Perspective, ed. David

1983 survey, 54.1 percent of the household in Taiwan were the conjugal type, 23.6 percent were extended, 5.7 percent were single-parent households, and 12.4 percent were single-person households.<sup>1</sup>

The trend toward conjugal family structure also has been observed by William Goode. Goode points out that the process of industrialization involves a breakdown in the economic control of the large patrilineal kin group over its members, and the emergence of the conjugal family as the accepted ideal. Goode refers to the latter as "conjugal ideology."<sup>2</sup>

A number of reasons account for this new ideology. One is the declining importance of the economic functions of large family units. Traditionally, the family was an economic unit. The larger the family, the more viable was the family's economic position. But now, with the rise in employment opportunities, many youth leave home to work in cities. The rapid growth in wages has meant that fewer and fewer young married couples are economically dependent upon their parents. They are now financially independent and set

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Buxbaum (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 284-87. For a look at the situation in Singapore, see Peter S. J. Chen, Asian Values in a Modernizing Society: A Sociological Perspective (Singapore: Chopmen Enterprises, 1976), 10-11.

<sup>1</sup>"Marriage Tensions," Free China Review 38 (December 1988): 16.

<sup>2</sup>Goode, 19.

up small nuclear family homes.

The lack of space due to urbanization may be another reason for the change. Increasing urbanization makes land in the city scarce and expensive. Many families are confined in small apartments. During the era of housing development in Singapore, the traditional housing areas were broken up and people were forced to resettle in high-rise apartments. Space limitation in crowded apartments made conjugal families a necessity. The government later sought to rectify the situation by introducing legislation to encourage young families to apply for an apartment next to that of their parents.<sup>1</sup> It was a return to the classical stem family structure comprising parents, their children, and the grandparents.

The decision to set up a separate household apart from the parents also may be promoted by the desirability of avoiding quarrels and unpleasantness which some consider inevitable in stem families. Further, it may be fostered by the young people's aspiration for freedom and independence. Moreover, the emulation of the Western lifestyle may play a part in the increasing preference for a conjugal style family.

A change in family structure also means a change in family composition. The traditional system was mostly patrilineal and patrilocal. Recent studies have shown an

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<sup>1</sup>Nanyang Siang Pau, December 14, 1977, 3.

increasing number of couples living with the wife's parents. This change in living arrangement may be partially due to the rising status of women. Thus, for some, the trend has been to move away from the traditional patrilineal, patrilocal family system to a bilateral and bilocal pattern in which both the wife's kin and the husband's kin are equally important and the married couple may choose to live with either or neither.

#### Family Size

Change in the structure of the traditional family brings with it the trend toward smaller families. The traditional large family is no longer considered ideal by most young people. The average household size in Hong Kong was 3.84 in 1981.<sup>1</sup> The birth rate is also on the decline, falling from 20 to 17 per thousand in the decade ending in 1983.<sup>2</sup> The same trend applies to Taiwan. Thirty years ago Taiwanese families had an average of five children, but now the average is less than two children per household.<sup>3</sup>

Willmott's research has also shown a relationship between education and family size. There is reason to believe that as the level of education increases, average

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<sup>1</sup>Baker, "Life in the Cities," 474.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Kao-Chiao Hsieh, "Attitudes in Flux," Free China Review 38 (December 1988): 25.

family size decreases. This is especially true of educated women.<sup>1</sup>

Among respondents' fathers who did not attend high school, the average number of children was 5.0; among those fathers who had at least some high school education, the average was 5.2. The difference, however, is not statistically significant. Among respondents' mothers who had no education at all, the average number of children was 6.9; among those mothers with primary school education, the average was 5.0; and among those with at least some high school education, the average was 4.8. The differences between the last two figures and the first are significant at the 0.001 level. Within each of the three socio-economic categories used for analytical purposes, differences in education were consistently related to differences in family size. Again the greatest differences were among the women.<sup>2</sup>

Willmott concludes that the most important correlate of family size is the education of the mother. He also suggests several factors that account for this relationship. First, education predisposes the educated woman to seek a less traditional role. Education also gives her aspirations incompatible with a large family. Moreover, education raises the status of woman and gives her more say in determining family size. Education may also delay marriage, shortening the child-bearing period. One of the most conspicuous changes in the age pattern of marriage in Singapore after World War II has been the postponement of

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<sup>1</sup>D. E. Willmott, The Chinese in Semarang: A Changing Minority Community in Indonesia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 267-68. Although Willmott's research is on the Indonesian Chinese, much of what he has written appears to be applicable to the three Chinese communities under study as well.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

marriage among women. More women are marrying late and a rising proportion choose to remain single.<sup>1</sup> These factors have caused a sharp decline in Chinese birthrates.

Willmott's conclusion is similar to the findings of the People of Kwun Tong Survey carried out by the Social Research Center of The Chinese University of Hong Kong,<sup>2</sup> as well as a separate study conducted among 293 women in Taiwan.<sup>3</sup>

The trend toward falling birthrates can be seen from the increasing number of one-child families. One implication of one-child families is that many of the children will grow up without brothers or sisters and, upon reaching adulthood, will have no uncles, aunts, nieces, or nephews. Chinese terms describing these consanguineous relationships will have become obsolete in time to come. Moreover, the overprotective me-generation syndrome of an only child is unnerving to many.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chen-Tung Chang, Fertility Transition in Singapore (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1974), 93-5.

<sup>2</sup>Pedro Pak-Tao Ng, "Social Factors Contributing to Fertility Decline," in Social Life and Development in Hong Kong, ed. Ambrose Y. C. King and Rance P. L. Lee (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1981), 242ff.

<sup>3</sup>Yu-Hsia Lu, "Women's Attitudes toward Career Role and Family Role Underthrough Taiwan's Social Change," Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology Academia Sinica 50 (Autumn 1980): 25-66.

<sup>4</sup>"Marriage Tensions," 18.

### Filial Piety: The New Ambivalence

Filial piety has long been held as the cardinal virtue of Chinese culture. It constituted an important element in the primordial and fundamental aspects of the Chinese worldview. It was one of the highest expressions of what it meant to be a Chinese. Although filial piety includes the devotion of younger brother to elder brother, wife to husband, subject to sovereign, and friend to friend, the focus has been on the devotion of a son to his parents. Confucianism has been influential in making the traditional Chinese son display unqualified submissive respect to the his parents irrespective of how he might feel. It was unthinkable for Chinese young people to strike back at their parents directly or symbolically.

Empirical studies of the traditional concept of filial piety suggest it is often associated with authoritarianism, particularly authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism.<sup>1</sup> More recently, however, filial piety as understood in terms of absolute obedience to parents has begun to show signs of erosion. Several important factors account for this.

First, the role of the family is diminishing. In today's society, the family no longer functions as the provider of education, health care, and vocational training

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<sup>1</sup>Yau-Fai Ho and Ling-Yu Lee, "Authoritarianism and Attitude toward Filial Piety in Chinese Teachers," Journal of Social Psychology 92 (April 1974): 305-6.

for its members. These functions have now largely been taken over by government and other agencies. Moreover, the family is no longer the only source of moral training. More and more schools, nurseries, clubs, and the state are molding the worldview of the Chinese. Consequently, the traditional centripetal loyalty is shifted from inside to outside the family system. Although still considered important, devotion to parents has lost much of its earlier status.

Second, modern education tends to produce a generation which values achievement and the making of decisions on rational grounds more highly than it does the authority of parents and elders. Advice from parents and elders is listened to, but its implementation is regarded as the prerogative of the individual. Further, economic independence has bolstered rational and independent thinking and behavior.

Third, the situation of the overseas Chinese is different from that of those in mainland China. Although many overseas Chinese retain regular contacts with relatives in China, the fact of overseas residence separates them from much of the traditional family and clan structure and kinship obligations. Their new sociological, psychological, and geographical situations make them amenable to another value system.

Fourth, solidarity between husband and wife has

become the dominant relationship in the family. This is mainly because of the collapse of arranged marriages. With more young people choosing their own marital partners, the tie between husband and wife takes precedence over that between children and parents, especially between sons and fathers. This seems to be a reversal of the traditional pattern, in which the father-son relationship was predominant. Potter rightly observes that in today's Chinese family "relations between husband and wife tend to approximate Western ideals."<sup>1</sup>

Fifth, perhaps most importantly, there has been a decline of parental authority, especially the father's.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, the father was not only the head of the family; he was also the head of the family business. The father in a patrilineal extended family enjoyed nearly complete authority in making decisions concerning every member of the family. But such authoritarian control has been subject to considerable challenge and change in

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<sup>1</sup>Jack M. Potter, "The Structure of Rural Chinese Society in New Territories," in Hong Kong: A Society in Transition, ed. I. C. Jarvie (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 24.

<sup>2</sup>A case study of five families shows that parental authority has faced a serious challenge. Yin-Chang Chuang, "The Chinese Family in a Changing Society: Case Analysis of Five Families in Nan-Tsun," Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology Academia Sinica 52 (Autumn 1981): 1-31. See also an earlier study by Robert Edward Mitchell and Irene Lo, "Implications of Changes in Family Authority Relations for the Development of Independence and Assertiveness in Hong Kong Children," Asian Survey 8 (1968): 309-22.

contemporary Chinese society. When a mutually interdependent family moves to the city, the children begin working for other employers, and the father stops being the employer. Soon the children know more about living in the city than their father does. He is no longer as highly esteemed as before. His position is further weakened when his sons begin to find high-status and high-salaried positions. When they finally move out to form their own families, parental authority is likely to be beyond reach. The economic independence and financial power of the sons frequently enables them to achieve a dominant position in the family, and a more egalitarian relationship with their parents. Thus parent-child relationships are being fundamentally altered.<sup>1</sup> Total obedience to parents is likely to be questioned by the younger generation.<sup>2</sup>

So, what does all this mean? Has filial piety vanished amidst social change? Research on the present Chinese attitude toward filial piety returns a mixed signal. On one hand, filial piety is strongly affirmed. One survey conducted among Taiwanese young people reveals that over 85 percent felt that filial piety is still necessary in modern

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<sup>1</sup>David Y. F. Ho, "Continuity and Variation in Chinese Patterns of Socialization," Journal of Marriage and Family 51 (February 1989): 154.

<sup>2</sup>See David Podmore and David Chaney, "Family Norms in a Rapidly Industrializing Society: Hong Kong," Journal of Marriage and the Family 36 (May 1974): 400-407.

societies.<sup>1</sup> Other surveys, however, show a different picture. For example, Yang's survey on land reform indicates discontinuity between the patterns of the father's authority and the son's submission.<sup>2</sup> Yang found that though 64 percent of the respondents still claimed that the father controlled all the affairs of his children, about 32 percent believed that the father's authority no longer extended to all areas of his children's lives. In other words, parents are perceived by young people to still hold substantial power over them, but the degree and areas of control have been tempered with reason and restraint and thus become more tolerable.

Moderation of parental authoritarianism seems to be substantiated by another survey conducted by the Taiwanese government among college students. The purpose of the survey was to find out the methods students chose to resolve conflicts between themselves and their parents. Nearly 40 percent of the respondents selected "discussion of the problem with the parents," and about 15 percent chose to "stick to my position."<sup>3</sup> It seems apparent that the trend

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<sup>1</sup>Chin-Hou Hwang, "Filial Piety from the Psychological Point of View," Bulletin of Educational Psychology 10 (June 1977): 11-20.

<sup>2</sup>Martin M. C. Yang, Socio-Economic Results of Land Reform in Taiwan (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1970), 446-55.

<sup>3</sup>Ta Hsueh Sheng Tui Tan Chien Sheng Ho Huang Ching Ti Kan Fa (The Opinion of College Students toward Their Living Environment) (Taichung: Bureau of Civic Affairs,

is moving away from complete domination and control to a more democratic process of discussion and persuasion.<sup>1</sup> While most parents prefer to have considerable control over the up-bringing of their children, they tend to exercise it rationally.

The liberalization of parental control and its subsequent adjustment have not been easy for the parents, to say the least. To many Chinese parents who are used to giving orders, carrying on a dialogue to settle differences with a child seems outlandish. It is so much easier to do it the "efficient" way, to impose their will on the child as their parents had done to them when they were children. That may be the reason why many parents complain that they were far more obedient to their parents than their children are to them today. Some say with resignation that after their sons are married, they will have gained a "daughter-in-law, but lost the son."<sup>2</sup>

To sum up, it may be said that filial piety as practiced by the ancient Chinese is undergoing a degree of

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Taiwan Provincial Government, 1970), 31-2.

<sup>1</sup>K. S. Yang, "The New Filial Piety in Modern Society," Chung Hua Wen Hua Fu Hsing Yueh Kan (Chinese Cultural Renaissance Monthly) 19 (1986): 51-67. See also Hsieh, "Attitudes in Flux," 25; and Leu, "Filial Piety Modernized," 21.

<sup>2</sup>Chin-Han Chang, "Gaining a Daughter-in-Law, But Losing the Son: On the Intergenerational Conflicts in Modern Families," in Che I Tai Ching Nien Tan Tai Wan, (Taiwan from the Eyes of the Young Generation) (Taipei: Huan-Yu Tsu Pan She, 1970), 156-62.

modification. In precept, the principle of filial piety is still widely accepted by the contemporary Chinese. In practice, however, it is often redefined with greater emphasis on respect and mutuality and less on obedience and submissiveness. In addition, the parent-child relationship tends to take on characteristics of companionship.

#### The Rising Status of Women

In traditional society, the role of women was wholly defined by their relationship to men. They were to obey their father before marriage, their husband after it, and their eldest son on widowhood. Women were expected to be subservient to men. Unless a woman produced a male heir, she had no status in the family. All of this seems to be drastically changing in the last thirty years, for the metamorphosis of the new womanhood is emerging.

Increasingly women are coming out of their former domains of homemaking and motherhood and are given a chance in education. Since the seventies, primary and secondary education have been made compulsory for all students in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Nine years of free education is provided for all, irrespective of gender. It must be noted that beyond the compulsory limit, some prejudice still remains against girls pursuing university education. For instance, in 1985 4,046 male students were registered at Hong Kong University in comparison with 2,218 females. At the Chinese University (also in Hong Kong) in the same year,

3,392 males compared with 2,259 females were attending.<sup>1</sup>

With better education and an expanding economy, more women are being drawn into the labor market. Employment means women are no longer economically dependent on men and, sometimes, they themselves become the major breadwinners of a family. Much of their wages is given to the parents as a token of repayment toward the cost of their upbringing.<sup>2</sup> With increased income, women are able to afford services in childcare centers, maid services, and other personal services. Some even purchase properties on their own, and this constitutes a reversal of the traditional right of the male only to own land. For instance, between the years 1956 to 1963, over half of the sales of new apartments in Hong Kong were transactions which involved women. Very few of the above purchases were made in partnership with men. In fact, 34 percent of all purchases were made by married women acting by themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Though present-day women are better educated and economically more independent than their traditional

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<sup>1</sup>Veronica Pearson, "Women in Hong Kong," in Social Issues in Hong Kong, ed. Benjamin K. P. Leung (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1990), 121.

<sup>2</sup>R. M. Marsh, "The Taiwanese of Taipei," Journal of Asian Studies 27 (May 1968): 57-84.

<sup>3</sup>L. F. Goodstadt, "Urban Housing in Hong Kong," in Hong Kong: A Society in Transition, ed. I. C. Jarvie (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 292-3.

counterparts in China,<sup>1</sup> they still suffer from sex-role stereotyping in a patriarchal society.<sup>2</sup> Males are still considered to be better than females. Women who have just given birth are often asked if the baby is a boy or a girl. If it is a boy, congratulations are quick and hearty, but if it is a girl, comforting words are in order.<sup>3</sup>

Though men and women have equal access to education, more women than men are illiterates. In Taiwan, for example, out of the 1.4 million people classified as illiterates, about 70 percent are women over fifteen years of age. The rest are men over the age of sixty.<sup>4</sup>

The disparity between men and women can also be seen in the employment pattern of Hong Kong's Civil Service in which only 24.6 percent of the positions were occupied by women. Of these only 9 percent were in directorate posts.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sheldon Appleton, "Sex, Values, and Change on Taiwan," in Value Change in Chinese Society, ed. Richard W. Wilson, Amy A. Wilson, and Sidney L. Greenblatt (New York: Praeger, 1979), 185-203.

<sup>2</sup>For a study on sex role stereotypes of Chinese and American students, see Lucy Jen Huang, "Sex Role Stereotypes and Self-concepts among American and Chinese Students," Journal of Comparative Family Studies 2 (Autumn 1971): 215-34.

<sup>3</sup>Winnie Chang, "Coming to Terms," Free China Review 41 (February 1991): 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Wong May Ling Lai, "Civil Service Attitudes towards Women in Hong Kong" (M.Soc.Sci thesis, Hong Kong University, 1980). In Taiwan, less than one-third of the 540,000 civil servants are women, who, on the average, have higher education attainment than men. Thirty-four percent of the

Until 1981 women civil servants were not entitled to the housing allowances and dental or medical treatment for their families accorded to their male counterparts in equivalent positions.<sup>1</sup> Parallel research reveals similar stereotyping: male officers on the average took 13.5 years to reach their present rank whereas females took eighteen years.<sup>2</sup> The irony is that women share the same negative attitudes toward women as do men. Perhaps for this reason, women themselves express ambivalence about claiming equal respect and pay for their work. One woman author admits that the discriminatory attitude toward women is "deeply entrenched in the family, the school, the society, the work place and minds of both men and women."<sup>3</sup>

Sex-role stereotyping, however, is showing signs of dissipating. A survey on men's expectations of women was conducted in 1990 by *Ming Sheng Pao*, one of the largest dailies in Taiwan. The result of the survey revealed that almost two-thirds of the 300 men interviewed would not mind women taking the initiative in courtship. This was in stark

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women have bachelor's degrees, and men only 28 percent. But only 1 percent of the women have graduate degrees, while 28 percent of men have master's or doctorate degrees. Chang, "Coming to Terms," 7.

<sup>1</sup>Pearson, 124.

<sup>2</sup>David C. C. Tang, An Evaluation of the Career Patterns and Attitudes of Upper Middle Civil Servants in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: n.p., 1982).

<sup>3</sup>Lai, 59.

contrast to women's attitude only a few years ago when they were told that taking the role of an initiator was downright degrading and that decent women would never do so.<sup>1</sup>

#### New Patterns in Marriage and Divorce

Traditional marriages were mostly arranged marriages. The parents' selection of a bride for their son emphasized their authority over the young woman who came into the family, for clearly she was chosen by her parents-in-law rather than her husband. Thus marriage was regarded as a family rather than a personal affair. Nowadays, however, Chinese society is more likely to permit a greater number of marriages of free choice. The trend among the "enlightened" younger generation has switched from parentally arranged marriage to "love" marriage.<sup>2</sup> Ninety-two percent of respondents in one survey among university students in Taiwan indicated they wanted love as a basis for their marriage--a considerable shift in attitude from only one generation earlier.<sup>3</sup> Clearly the new emphasis is upon the desirability of selecting one's own mate without interference from parents.

Most young people have gained a degree of economic and social independence. With increased social mobility,

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<sup>1</sup>Chang, "Coming to Terms," 5.

<sup>2</sup>O'Hara, Research on Changes of Chinese Society, 21-26.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 46.

the youth have more opportunities of coming into contact with potential spouses. Most meet their partners through peer-group activities or company-sponsored outings.<sup>1</sup>

Theoretically young people can refuse the choice of a potential spouse chosen by their parents. But in practice, "love" marriages take various forms. In some rural areas, it is still a common practice to negotiate marriage contracts between families, with frequent consultations with the prospective bride and bridegroom. The concerns or even objections of the bride or groom may be taken into consideration, but the final decision is a family decision. In other cases, the final decision is given to the bride and groom, but their decision has been heavily influenced by the parents' prior counsel and consent. The fact that most of the announcements of marriage in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are made in the names of the parents avouches at least a nominal recognition of parental authority in marriage. Still others do not wish to take full advantage of the new-found freedom. As a demonstration of filial devotion, they elect to seek approval of the match and comply to their parents' wishes such as marrying within their own ethnolinguistic group or choosing the year or even month of the marriage. Indeed, some do postpone marriages

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<sup>1</sup>Janet W. Salaff, Working Daughters of Hong Kong: Filial Piety or Power in the Family? (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 41.

in deference to their parents.<sup>1</sup> And, of course, there are those who believe romance supersedes parental consent and go ahead with their wedding plan anyway. As a general trend, however, there seems to be a loosening of tight family control in marriage choices.

The loosening of family control is accompanied by a generally more permissive sexual attitude among young people. Admittedly, quantifiable data in this respect is difficult to gather and verify. Some of Salaaf's respondents became pregnant before their marriages. The mothers of most of these cases were actually pleased at their daughters' pregnancy because of their longing for grandchildren.<sup>2</sup>

Sexual permissiveness is also evident in new unconventional lifestyles that are gaining acceptance by the populace. Many couples choose to live together without marrying. Others opt for multiple partners without permanent commitment to one.

One popular lifestyle today is commonly called "married but separate lives." Couples decide to live together for a period of time, then apart for a while. They alternate the arrangement so as to enjoy the best of both worlds--the freedom of single life and the coziness of marriage. Such an arrangement has been popular among couples in Hong Kong for a long time, and is now gaining adherents in Taiwan. The "DINKS" concept, that is "double income and no kids," works in well with the married-separate trend ...But these tendencies attack the very foundation upon which

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<sup>1</sup>Salaaf, 268.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 267.

marriage rests. Without children, sexual fidelity, or family ties, the idea of marriage looks artificial and irrational.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the above changes in the patterns of marriage, there is evidence of an upward spiraling trend of legal dissolution of marital union. Divorce was once regarded as a taboo that brought great shame to the family; increasingly it is being tolerated. Divorce rates in Hong Kong in the 1970s rose very rapidly. From 1981 to 1984 alone, there was a 70 percent increase--from 2,811 to 4,764 cases.<sup>2</sup> In 1987, there was one divorce for every six marriages in Taiwan. Some predict the rate will continue to increase. Many view the trend with alarm although the divorce rate in Taiwan may still lag behind that of Europe and America.<sup>3</sup> Recent figures from Singapore also show a rapid rise in the non-Muslim divorce cases.<sup>4</sup> Only twenty cases were reported in 1960, but 105 in 1965. The number continued to rise since the 1970s, from an estimated 593 in 1977 to 1,211 cases in 1981.<sup>5</sup> When computed against the

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<sup>1</sup>"Marriage Tensions," 20-21.

<sup>2</sup>Pearson, 130.

<sup>3</sup>"Marriage Tensions," 21.

<sup>4</sup>Divorce in Singapore is controlled by two sets of laws, one for the Muslims in accordance with the Muslim Ordinance (1957), and the other for the non-Muslims under the Women's Charter (1961) and the Women's Charter (Amendment) Act (1967).

<sup>5</sup>Aline K. Wong and Eddie C. Y. Kuo, Divorce in Singapore (Singapore: Graham Brash, 1983), 11-20. See also C. I. Tai, "Divorce in Singapore," in The Contemporary

total number of marriages, the average non-Muslim divorce rate was 14.1 per 1000 marriages for 1960-69, 12.4 for 1970-74, and 36.6 for 1975-81.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that during the last seven years of this study a threefold increase in the divorce rate was registered, and there is no sign that the trend of divorce in Singapore is likely to be reversed in the future. According to Wong and Kuo, one of the major reasons for the sharp increase of divorces is the changing function of the family noted above. Previous functions such as economic, protective, educational, religious, and recreational have been taken over by schools, associations, and religious organizations. The implications of this change are significant. Wong and Kuo explain:

Since the family has been steadily losing many of its earlier functions, the reasons for keeping marriages intact are not so compelling as they once were. With the decline of the traditional extended kinship system and also the decline of moral and religious sanctions against marital breakup, individuals are no longer subject to the same level of social pressure to maintain a marital union which they find personally unsatisfactory. Although the number of divorces in Singapore is still very small by Western standards (in 1980 only 0.7% of the census population were divorced), there are signs that the social stigma which used to be attached to the divorced person is declining, especially among certain social groups.<sup>2</sup>

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Family in Singapore, ed. Eddie C. Y. Kuo and Aline K. Wong (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979), 142-67; and S. B. K. Ho, "Divorce and Social Change in Singapore: Trends and Relationships in Divorce" (Singapore: University of Singapore, Department of Sociology, 1979), photocopied.

<sup>1</sup>Wong and Kuo, 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 19.

It must be noted that even the context of divorce in contemporary Chinese communities has undergone change. In China, divorce was a family and clan affair; the wishes of the individual were secondary. Further, divorce was a privilege enjoyed almost exclusively by men. A wife was virtually helpless if her husband decided to put her away. Today, however, divorce is a matter to be decided by the husband or the wife, and their families have no veto power. Besides, the rising status of women in society makes a woman less defenseless and vulnerable to men's abuses.

One has reasons to believe the rising rate of divorce shows no signs of abating. The tendency to think of divorce as an easily available solution to domestic problems may persist. Though stigmatized, divorce is likely to become more socially acceptable.

#### Changes in the Lineage System

The weakening of the accepted hierarchical relationship system affects also the lineage. Next to the family itself, the traditional Chinese lineage (or clan) was the epitome of embodiment of the Chinese culture. The traditional lineage organizations wielded tremendous power. Among other things, they owned properties, directed inheritance, organized joint ancestral rites, and controlled local economy. But among most overseas Chinese there is an absence of a strong lineage network. Several reasons account for this. First, the migration from China to Hong

Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore was mostly on an individual basis. The immigrants were far from homogeneous. In fact, they were highly heterogeneous linguistically, which is evident from the wide array of surnames and dialects used. Second, there is virtually no lineage because the immigrants were reluctant to put down their roots. Although some went overseas for political reasons, like those who moved to Taiwan in the late 1940s, most Chinese migrated for economic reasons, hoping to return to China after accumulating sufficient savings. Third, lineages were absent because the migrants already had them back home in China where the ancestral cult was being perpetuated. As many did not desire to stay on in a foreign land for the rest of their lives, they hoped to return to China to spend their sunset years and eventually to die and be buried in their ancestral homes.

Consequently, the Chinese migrants went through a process of adaptation to a new cultural and political environment. Being highly pragmatic, they formed themselves into surrogate kinship organizations, principally mock kinship, shared district of origin, and shared surname associations. Mock kinship bonds were created by the swearing of blood brotherhood. Many of the secret societies in Hong Kong and Singapore in the 1950s and 1960s were formed in this way. The shared district of origin associations were established for those who came from the

same geographical areas. These also constituted linguistic subcultures that served to forge cohesive ties among their members. Often members of associations lived in the same neighborhood. Thus, part of the North Point district of Hong Kong island is often called "Little Shanghai."<sup>1</sup>

Of the three types of surrogate kinship associations, perhaps the surname associations are most prominent. Members of these associations are not necessarily blood-related but regard themselves as being remotely related by virtue of shared surnames. Thus, these groups were formed not on the basis of agnation, but on the basis of surnames.<sup>2</sup> These associations provide some kind of identity for the people, but they are not compatible with the lineage groups of traditional China. Nevertheless, they help promote a sense of cultural and ethnic identity in a pluralistic society. They also maintain ancestor worship for their members. There is, however, one important difference. The surname associations change the structure of kinship grouping, and this has led to corresponding changes in the grouping of ancestors. Instead of grouping the ancestors according to lineage, they are grouped unsystematically in relation to their living descendents.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Baker, "Life in the Cities," 471.

<sup>2</sup>Maurice Freedman, The Study of Chinese Society: Essays by Maurice Freedman, selected and introduced by G. W. Skinner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 164.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 165.

Members of an association can also arrange to have their commemorative tablets set up in the event of death and have themselves worshiped not by their immediate family, but by members of the association as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the adaptive ability of the Chinese associations in a modern society, indications are that they are on the wane. In the past they played an important role in the formation of marriages, adoptions, and the settlement of disputes. But now these corporate functions are performed by government and other agencies. One Singapore clan leader candidly admits:

One of the clan's functions was to act as mediator in family, social and even business disputes. Though still influential today the power of clan leadership is waning. People are more legal minded these days. So, they do not depend so much on the clans. They do not respect the clan leaders as much as they used to in the past.<sup>2</sup>

In most cases, clan leaders find that their authority has been substantially weakened by the economic and social independence of their members. The socio-economic perimeter of many has been extended from the rural to the city. Members can move about at will and behave unilaterally. The clan finds itself impotent to exert sanctions against its members or opponents. Moreover, the

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<sup>1</sup>John Clammer, Singapore, Ideology, Society, Culture (Singapore: Chopmen Publishers, 1985), 16.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Lee-Ching Chew, "Clan Power on the Wane, Despite Wealth and Fame," The Straits Times October 8, 1972, 10. See also Bernard Gallin, "Conflict Resolution," 270-2.

weakening of the social hierarchy has been accompanied by a general inability to use the traditional respect for clan leaders as a force for settling disputes.

There is also a growing sense of national consciousness. The compulsory national (military) service in Singapore, for instance, is one of the key elements in this development.<sup>1</sup> Chinese in Singapore, for example, prefer to be called "Singaporean" rather than "Chinese" or "overseas Chinese."<sup>2</sup> Chinese in Hong Kong, having fumbled with their identity for years, are now proud to call themselves "Hongkongers" as the 1997 deadline looms closer.<sup>3</sup> Besides having new national identity, the contemporary Chinese are not inclined to trace their ancestry. Many do not speak the dialects of their parents. As such, clannish loyalty appears to be diminishing.

In addition, the clan, as an organization in which social status is acquired and confirmed, has declined in importance. In an industrialized society, social status is largely determined by education, occupation, and personal

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<sup>1</sup>Seong-Chee Tham, "The Status and Role of Youth," in Singapore: Society in Transition, ed. Riaz Hassan (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1976), 319.

<sup>2</sup>In a "Singapore National Identity Survey" in which 1,000 samples were collected from all races, it was found that nine out of ten citizens preferred to call themselves "Singaporean" rather than Chinese, Malay, Indian, or any other ethnic group. The Straits Times, 11 May, 1970, 1, 5. See also Cheng, Social Change, 190.

<sup>3</sup>"Younger Ones Proclaim HK Roots as Deadline Nears," The Straits Times, 7 January, 1991, 2.

wealth, and hence the traditional means of validating status are no longer as meaningful as they once were. Now people look for new status symbols that are more significant in the modern social context.

Other socio-cultural changes also have accelerated the erosion of these associations. The termination of immigration from China since the end of the Second World War and the increase in the number of locally born Chinese mean that contacts with home villages in China have been drastically reduced, and are likely to terminate with the passing of the China-born generation.<sup>1</sup>

There are indications that lineage organization are likely to play a much smaller role in society than previously. It would be premature, however, to conclude that lineage organizations will vanish in the process of rapid social change.<sup>2</sup> In some Chinese societies, lineage organizations have modified their roles so as to meet changing social conditions. They have been asked by the state to widen their contribution to social, cultural and educational activities to include not only members of their

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<sup>1</sup>Cheng, Social Change, 190-3, 196. See also Jack M. Potter, Capitalism and the Chinese Peasant: Social and Economic Change in a Hong Kong Village (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 164-70.

<sup>2</sup>Morton H. Fried, "Some Political Aspects of Clanship in a Modern Chinese City," in Political Anthropology, ed. M. J. Swartz, V. M. Turner, and A. Tuden (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1966), 299.

own clans but citizens at large.<sup>1</sup> In addition, lineage organization can continue to provide warmth and a sense of belonging. Gallin maintains that kin and village-based relationships continue to be significant for the urban dwellers, even though in the city these relationships function only on an individual rather than a group level. In fast-paced societies that are getting more impersonal, these relationships still contribute to the socio-economic and psychic security of the people.<sup>2</sup>

#### Kin and Non-kin Relations

When the lineage loses its influence, people seek new relationships elsewhere. Potter's research reveals that as the scope and intensity of traditional relations within the family slacken, relations with fellow workers, friends, and business associates become increasingly important--in many cases more important than relations with kinsmen and relatives.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes kinship terms are extended to non-kin contexts. Unrelated persons known to the individual may be

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<sup>1</sup>Cheng, Social Change, 191; and Jack M. Potter, Capitalism and the Chinese Peasant, 170.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Gallin, "Rural to Urban Migration in Taiwan: Its Impact on Chinese Family and Kinship," in Chinese Family Law and Social Change in Historical and Comparative Perspective, ed. David C. Buxbaum (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 281.

<sup>3</sup>Potter, Capitalism, 172.

addressed by such kinship terms<sup>1</sup> as "uncle," "grandfather," and "brother," depending on their age and social status. Thus a supervisor may be called "uncle" or a colleague's mother "aunt." Some young men call each other "brother."<sup>2</sup>

The use of kinship terms for non-kin relations indicates an extension of the kinship network to include non-kin relations, although the non-kin relations tend to be based on kinship models. While kin relations seem to be on the decline, non-kin relations appear to be strengthening, both in scope and intensity.

#### Group Solidarity Versus Individualism

As noted in chapter 3, one of the most deeply ingrained aspects of the Chinese worldview is the preeminence of the group over the individual. A person's feelings must be subordinated to the requirements of the group. Chinese ethics demand discipline and achievement to guarantee the success not of the individual but of the group. The individual was first a member of the family or community, and the primary goal was the welfare of the

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<sup>1</sup>The Chinese kin terminology in its present form was established in the first century A. D. as part of the official Confucian canon. See T. S. Chen and J. K. Shryock, "Chinese Relationship Terms," American Anthropologist 34 (October-December 1932): 623.

<sup>2</sup>Although Potter's research was done in Hong Kong, subjective observations reveal the phenomenon is equally prevalent in Taiwan and Singapore. See also Robert Moore's dissertation, 177-79.

group. Individual goals were considered upsetting to the harmony of the group.

Emphasis now appears to be moving away from the group to the state and the individual. People are told that the interest of the state must precede any other interests, personal or otherwise. If necessary, individual welfare must be sacrificed so that the collective interest of the state may prevail. This is reflected in the first of the five values recently debated by the Singapore parliament: "Nation before community and society before self."<sup>1</sup> Some believe the centrality of the family has been deeply ingrained for so long that sometimes it may be difficult for a Chinese to transfer his loyalty from a family to the state.<sup>2</sup> But with the dawning of the new national consciousness, even that may be changing.

Concomitant to the stress on loyalty to the state is the accent on the individual. Goode observes that the "ideology of the conjugal family" is the inevitable result of industrialization, and this ideology tends to breed individualism:

The ideology of the conjugal family proclaims the right of the individual to choose his or her own spouse, place to live, and even which kin obligations to accept, as against the acceptance of others' decisions. It

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<sup>1</sup>"Words to Live by in Singapore," Asiaweek 17 (1 February, 1991): 41.

<sup>2</sup>Teh-Yao Wu, The Cultural Heritage of Singapore: The Essence of the Chinese Tradition (Singapore: University of Singapore, Occasional Paper Series, 25, 1975), 17.

asserts the worth of the individual as against the inherited elements of wealth or ethnic group. The individual is to be evaluated, not his lineage.<sup>1</sup>

Although group solidarity is still very much a part of the Chinese culture, it is imperceptibly giving way to a more individualistic orientation. Many research studies have been done on this. One of them has to do with a phenomenon which sociologists call social loafing. Research conducted in the United States indicates that people exert more effort when they perform individually than when they do so in a group, and this tendency is social loafing.<sup>2</sup> It is hypothesized that members of cultures whose value and institution have been identified as group-oriented tend to place group benefit over individual benefit. Given the Chinese traditional de-emphasis of internal wishes and stress on collectivist achievement orientation, one would expect them to show little social loafing. Contrary to this expectation, the result of an experiment conducted in Taiwan reveals that Taiwanese students indulged in social loafing.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Goode, 19.

<sup>2</sup>Hofstede's study of individualistic trait among employees of a multinational corporation in forty countries revealed that respondents from the United States were highest in individualism, followed closely by Australia and New Zealand. Nations whose workers exhibited lowest individualistic tendency included Venezuela, Colombia, Pakistan, and the Chinese in Taiwan. See G. Hofstede, Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980).

<sup>3</sup>William K. Gabrenya, Jr., Bibb Latane, and Yue-Eng Wang, "Social Loafing in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Chinese in Taiwan," Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 14

The conclusion of this study seems to fit in a general but cross-cultural trend of social loafing in Asia.<sup>1</sup>

Another survey appears to substantiate the new Chinese proclivity to individualism. In a survey conducted in 1986 comparing perceptions of family cohesiveness and autonomy among Australians and Singaporeans, Singapore adolescents were found to exhibit a higher level of family cohesiveness. At the same time, they also displayed a high perception of autonomy. The exercise of autonomy was perceived by them to be an inevitable part of the transition to adulthood.<sup>2</sup>

The trend toward individualism has been noted by a number of sociologists including Jack Potter. Though Potter admits this shift in orientation is not always easy to explain, he offers his own assessment of the phenomenon:

One part of the explanation might be that the lineage groups, based as they are on traditional sentiments and values, have simply ceased to be meaningful in the new social, cultural, and economic conditions. Such sentiments and loyalties are considered to be old-fashioned and out-of-date, as well as unimportant. Another part of the explanation might be that the increased occupational specialization and individual social mobility required by the new economy

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(September 1983): 368-84.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 379.

<sup>2</sup>Although Singapore adolescents showed high perception of autonomy, they saw themselves as making fewer decisions than their Australian counterparts. Millicent E. Poole, George H. Cooney, and Agnes C. S. Cheong, "Adolescent Perceptions of Family Cohesiveness, Autonomy and Independence in Australia and Singapore, Journal of Comparative Family Studies 17 (Autumn 1986): 311-32.

and the new society are simply undermining the older system which rested upon a collectivist orientation and upon ascribed status and particularistic relationships.<sup>1</sup>

The growing individualism also may be attributed to meritocracy in our modern education system and the work place. The accent is on personal achievement. Education has inspired the individual with a new sense of confidence, confidence in his or her ability to conquer at all odds, and to improve his or her life through self-reliance and self-effort.<sup>2</sup>

The rise of individualism has its bearing on the society. Ferdinand Tonnies suggests that individualism may contribute to the shift of society from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*.<sup>3</sup> Back in 1887, Tonnies insightfully observed, human relations in the *Gemeinschaft* (community) are highly affective, involving the nonrational, emotional dimensions of experience in the intimate relationship of kinship groups, comradeship, and neighborliness. Relations in the *Gesellschaft* (society), on the other hand, are generally impersonal, affectively neutral, and rational. Tonnies underscored the distinction between the affective,

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<sup>1</sup>Potter, Capitalism, 168.

<sup>2</sup>Yung Wei, "Taiwan: A Modernizing Chinese Society," in Taiwan in Modern Times, ed. Paul K. T. Sih (New York: St. John University Press, 1973), 487; Martin Yang, Socio-Economic Results of Land Reform in Taiwan, 521-33.

<sup>3</sup>Ferdinand Tonnies, Fundamental Concepts of Sociology (*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*), trans. Charles P. Loomis (New York: American Book Co., 1940), 42-116.

emotion-based communal society in which everyone has a sense of belonging and the affectively neutral relationships of the modern society in which each one builds his or her relations with others on an "end-means" utilitarian basis. Tonnies' description of the modern society seems to bear some resemblance to the Chinese societies under study. Indications are that human relations are increasingly distant, indifferent, and isolated. A case in point is the Chinese attitude to time. Traditionally, Chinese viewed time as cyclical in a pastoral and agrarian setting. Time was communal fellowship. It was never in short supply. The modern overseas Chinese have a penchant for understanding time in terms of personal and business achievement. Once upon a time, time was shared as a communal commodity; now it becomes private property.

In spite of the new emphasis on the state and the individual, the Chinese group consciousness has by no means vanished in contemporary society. It is, in fact, well and alive, according to a number of empirical data. Perhaps the most revealing experiment on group conformist behavior was conducted by Wilson among children from Hong Kong, Taiwan, New York Chinatown, and New Jersey. Two pictures were shown to the children, one showing a group of people similarly dressed and the other showing the same group in diverse clothing. In response to the question which group they would like to be a member of, the children from Taiwan and

Hong Kong responded overwhelmingly in favor of those who were similarly dressed (92.5 percent), whereas only 70 percent of children from New York Chinatown and 41 percent of children from New Jersey preferred the group that dressed alike. As to why they selected the similarly dressed group, Chinese children tended to respond in the following manner: "Because their clothes are the clothes of the group," or "If clothes are orderly then people will have an orderly feeling." American children, when asked why they favored the group in varied clothing, tended to answer this way: "I would have more freedom," "Because they show individuality and freedom," or "You don't have to be the same to join in a group. You should do what you feel like doing and not be the same."<sup>1</sup>

Wilson also discovered that one of the factors favoring Chinese conformity to group norms is the common notion that opposition to the group and its leaders is undesirable and should be avoidable as much as possible. The only valid criticism is the kind that will strengthen the group. For this reason, criticism of leaders is often muted. Besides, criticism of group leaders is tantamount to criticism of the group of which one is a member. Wilson derived his conclusion from interviewing children from the four groups mentioned earlier. In response to the question

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<sup>1</sup>Richard W. Wilson, The Moral State: A Study of the Political Socialization of Chinese and American Children (New York and London: Free Press, 1974), 193-95.

whether one could go against the group, 17 percent of children from Taiwan, 33 percent from Hong Kong, 50 percent from New York Chinatown, and 72 percent from New Jersey answered in the negative.<sup>1</sup> Wilson's work on group conformity seems consistent with Balazs' assessment that the Chinese focus less on the quality of individual human relationships and more on relations between people as integral parts of social groups.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Gold, Head of the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of California--Berkeley, believes the contemporary Chinese still strongly believe in group social network. He says, "When you look at the Chinese, you don't look at the individual Chinese; you look at the network in which the Chinese live and work. The family structure may be changing, but the individual as part of the network is still very very strong."<sup>3</sup> Gold's research in China shows that forty years of government effort to break apart the family and its network has not been successful. Group cohesiveness remains strong, as it does in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore.

In view of the above findings, it is erroneous to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>2</sup>Etienne Balazs, Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy: Variation on a Theme, trans. H. M. Wright, ed. A. F. Wright (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 195.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Gold, interview by author, 5 November, 1990, Berkeley, tape recording, University of California, Berkeley.

conclude that the group orientation has dissipated from the contemporary Chinese society. The individualistic orientation of present-day Chinese may be a radical departure from the traditional worldview, but it is a far cry from the extreme individualism evidenced in the West. Suffice it to say that although individualism is on the ascendancy, the Chinese group orientation has not been eradicated by any means. In fact, affinity for both group unity and individualism is at once present in the contemporary Chinese mind. This phenomenon is not to be considered unusual in view of the Chinese propensity for harmony.

#### Face-saving and Losing

The weakening of group orientation has a corresponding effect on the concept of "face." In a vestigial way face is still very much a part of Chinese society. Dicta such as "A man needs face like a tree needs its bark" enjoy widespread popularity. Unquestionably there is still an obsessive concern with not losing face even at the cost of persisting with errors. It has been observed that some government officials and civil servants loath to admit mistakes. An experimental study in Hong Kong in 1981 among college students has shown that people in contemporary society are reluctant to criticize for fear it may cause

another to lose face.<sup>1</sup> Ho observed that causing another person to lose face is typically construed as an aggressive act by the person whose face has been discredited.<sup>2</sup> Hence, people still prefer conflict-avoidance tactics rather than meeting problems head on. Further, protecting one another from losing face has become a mutual consideration. Bond and Lee call the phenomenon the "reciprocal conspiracy of face-saving."<sup>3</sup> This form of mutuality is considered to be essential for social survival in today's highly competitive society.

The traditional practice of depreciating one's ability and accomplishment so as to avoid any situation that may be face-losing is still institutionalized in Chinese society. Many consider it unChinese to be "flashy" about one's credentials, and the accentuation of one's weaknesses in public is a perfectly "normal" Chinese behavior. Some call it false humility, but the Chinese regard it as a sure way of safeguarding one's cherished face. Thus it is not uncommon to hear one say modestly, "I know a little about

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<sup>1</sup>Michael H. Bond and Peter W. H. Lee, "Face Saving in Chinese Culture: A Discussion and Experimental Study of Hong Kong Students," in Social Life and Development in Hong Kong, ed. Ambrose Y. C. King and Rance P. L. Lee (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1981), 289-304.

<sup>2</sup>David Y. F. Ho. "Face, Social Expectations, and Conflict Avoidance," paper presented at the First International Conference of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology, Hong Kong, 1972.

<sup>3</sup>Bond and Lee, 291.

computers," while in actuality he may hold a doctorate degree in computer science. To the Chinese, this is not hypocrisy, but practical common sense.

It should be noted, however, that the traditional face-value appeared to be more group-oriented than is the case today. It was the upholding of the image, integrity, and good name of the family and clan, and involved a sense of community. The more recent type of face-value is more individually oriented. It is much more personal and relates more to personal ego than to communal pride.

Summing up, one can say that the data collected thus far about the three societies under study indicate a trend toward a weakening of the Chinese hierarchical relationship system. The traditional extended family structure seems to be on the wane and is being replaced by the smaller conjugal family. The status of women appears to be on the rise. Women are given more say in family decisions, including their choice of marriage partner. To a large extent, love marriages have displaced arranged marriages. The lineage system is waning, having lost much of its authority and influence in the Chinese community at large. Similarly, the spirit of group solidarity is being eroded by demands for individual rights and orientation. However, the importance of saving face is by no means lessened. It is still very much an endearing concern of the Chinese.

### Antiquity

Historical Chinese society was oriented to the past and gave preferential status to past events. Ancestor worship and strong family and lineage structure were expressions of this preference. Perhaps for this reason ancient China has been known as a symbol of changelessness.

The Chinese esteem for antiquity is showing signs of disruption amidst the rapid socio-economic developments in East Asia. People have become more orientated to the present and future than the past.<sup>1</sup> There has been a strong commitment to innovation and new technology. Change itself is valued and is not resisted but is actively sought. The populace is dedicated to change in many areas of life. The essence is on the new look, the new model, and the new trend.

### Modern and Chinese Medicine

One of the casualties of the trend toward the new and improved is Chinese medicine. The profession of Chinese medicine was highly regarded in traditional China, but its prestige has been declining. Modern medicine, on the other hand, enjoys immense popular support and respect. One of the studies comparing the efficacy of Chinese and modern medicine is Kleinman's empirical findings in Taiwan.

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<sup>1</sup>Wei, "Taiwan," 487. See also Norman Diamond, Kun Shen: A Taiwanese Village (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), 108.

Kleinman observes that part of the Chinese "health care ideology" includes the widely shared belief of the Chinese that Western medicine is quicker than Chinese medicine in treating ailments.<sup>1</sup> Another study conducted by Rance Lee on Kwun Tong in Hong Kong in 1981 seems to validate Kleinman's findings. Among other things, researchers discovered that, in terms of preference, the Chinese appear to be switching from Chinese to modern medicine.<sup>2</sup> Most people (67 percent) perceived Western-trained doctors as more technically competent than the Chinese practitioners. A greater number of people expressed confidence in modern medicine (65 percent) than in Chinese medicine (10 percent) for the treatment of illnesses.<sup>3</sup> A marked difference also was noted in the extent to which modern and Chinese medicine were utilized. Among those respondents who sought treatment for sickness during the past three years, 83 percent reported they visited Western-trained doctors, while only 11 percent consulted Chinese physicians. Among those whose children used medical services during the past three years, 92

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur M. Kleinman, "Medical and Psychiatric Anthropology and the Study of Traditional Forms of Medicine in Modern Chinese Culture," Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology Academia Sinica 39 (Spring 1975): 116.

<sup>2</sup>Rance P. L. Lee, "Chinese and Western Health Care Systems: Professional Stratification in a Modernizing Society," in Social Life and Development in Hong Kong, ed. Ambrose Y. C. King and Rance P. L. Lee (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1981), 255-73.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 265.

percent reported their children were seen by doctors, only 5 percent by Chinese physicians.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Lee observes that the younger the generation, the more likely they would use modern medical services.

Why do contemporary Chinese opt for modern instead of traditional medicine? Lee suggests that the common Chinese perception that modern medicine is superior to Chinese medicine may be due to the proven efficacy of modern science in solving many problems. He further elaborates:

The "good result" of modern medicine may be an important source of its dominance over Chinese medicine in Hong Kong. That dominance may also result from modern medicine's association with science. It has been widely perceived by the local population that the knowledge and skills of modern medicine were developed through the use of scientific procedures, while Chinese medicine is unscientific and is, therefore, less reliable. Being supported and justified by the dominant value of science, the profession of modern medicine enjoys a higher degree of legitimacy than the profession of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong.<sup>2</sup>

It would be a mistake to conclude that Chinese medicine has met its doom and that its demise is a matter of time. The same study reports that despite the confidence the populace has in Western medicine, most people still believed in Chinese herbs (70 percent) rather than in modern drugs (12 percent), because they thought that herbs were less likely to produce side effects.<sup>3</sup> This explains why the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 267.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 269.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 265.

sale of Chinese herbs and medicine has continued as a multi-million-dollar business each year. In Lee's study, the new orientation of the Chinese is evident. In addition, it also shows the famous Chinese pragmatism in action. It is a situation where the best from the East and the West are carefully examined, selected, and amalgamated. Nobody knows how long this blending of Eastern and Western medicine will last. But for the moment, modern medicine seems to be more favorably evaluated and extensively utilized.

#### Dilution of Ancestor Worship

Intimately connected with the practice of filial piety is the cult of ancestor worship. Undoubtedly ancestor worship is dependent on the practice of filial piety and is vitally important to the tradition of family solidarity and continuity.

In the contemporary Chinese society, context-specific studies on the extent to which ancestor worship is practiced are difficult to come by. But evidence indicates that the traditional function and purpose of the ancient cult has been challenged. Fewer Chinese these days consider ancestor worship to be obligatory because of changing values in marriage and family. A survey of 1,048 Taiwanese in 1977 reported that 49 percent of respondents considered the purpose of marriage to be personal happiness; 28 percent the establishment of a family; and 18 percent the continuity of

the family lineage.<sup>1</sup> The high percentage of the respondents' aspiration for personal happiness appears to have made the tradition of maintaining an ancestor altar less desirable.

Although many Chinese in Singapore consider ancestor worship a principal part of Chinese culture, very few choose to identify themselves as ancestor worshippers. In a 1975 survey, only 3.1 percent of the respondents perceived themselves as such.<sup>2</sup> In a separate study in Hong Kong conducted in 1989, Smith used a quota sampling technique to interview 163 residents to ascertain the vitality of ancestor worship. 53.8 percent of the respondents mentioned the presence of an ancestral shrine in their homes.<sup>3</sup> As to their personal involvement in ancestor-related rituals, 28.2 percent claimed never to participate. An additional 34.4 percent participated in rituals no more than three times a year, while 23.9 percent did so four to twelve times a year.<sup>4</sup> Socio-economical change also affected the degree of personal involvement in ancestral rites. Only 8.5 percent of the interviewees considered themselves more regular in

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<sup>1</sup>Hsieh, "Attitudes in Flux," 27.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph B. Tamney and Riaz Hassan, Religious Switching in Singapore (Singapore: Select Books, 1987), 4-5.

<sup>3</sup>Henry N. Smith, "Ancestor Practices in Contemporary Hong Kong: Religious Ritual or Social Custom?" Asia Journal of Theology 3 (April 1989): 31-2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 33.

the performance of ancestor practices at the time of questioning than they were five years earlier; while 26.3 percent participated less regularly. A majority, 65 percent, indicated no change in their level of participation.<sup>1</sup>

Although ancestor worship is still being practiced, its vitality appears to be waning, especially among the third- and fourth-generation immigrants. Some set it aside as anachronistic. Others participate out of deference to their elders, and they intend to do so only as long as there are older members of the family who insist upon it. Most indications point to continuous trends toward a change in family and lineage structures, toward a lesser degree of group orientation, toward a narrowing of loyalties down to the immediate family, and toward more egalitarian attitudes and practices. These indications are not likely to be conducive to reverential respect and responsibility to elders which are basic to ancestor worship.

#### Current Perceptions of the Elderly

Historically, the Chinese have encouraged a positive attitude toward and responsibility for the care of the elderly in the family. Confucius explicitly outlined the duties of a son which included honor and veneration for the aged and provision for their needs and comfort.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 35.

China has long been recognized as a gerontological society. Chinese societies in East Asia, however, are relatively young. Chinese aged sixty-five and above numbered about 7 percent of Hong Kong's population in 1986<sup>1</sup> and 5.3 percent of Taiwan's population in 1987.<sup>2</sup> The population of elderly in Singapore has increased from 3.8 percent of the population in 1957 to 7.2 percent in 1980.<sup>3</sup> The projected figure for the year 2030 is about 600,000 or about 20 percent of the total population. The demographic shift toward an older population, however, does not pose as much of a problem as does changing attitudes toward the elderly. In a recent study comparing the attitudes toward aging in the United States and Taiwan, a sample of 200 Taiwanese nursing students showed a more favorable perception of older people than the sample of students in the United States.<sup>4</sup> But indications are that this favorable

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<sup>1</sup>Commissioner for Census and Statistics, Hong Kong 1986 By-Census, Main Report, vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Government Printer, 1988).

<sup>2</sup>Cecilia Chang, "Serving Those Who Served," Free China Review 39 (March 1989), 10.

<sup>3</sup>P. Arumainathan, Report on the Census of Population 1970, Singapore, Vol. 1 (Singapore: Department of Statistics, 1973), 52; and Chian-Kim Khoo, Census of Population 1980, Singapore, Release No. 1 (Singapore: Department of Statistics, 1981).

<sup>4</sup>Betty L. Chang, Alice F. Chang, and Yung Shen, "Attitudes toward Aging in the United States and Taiwan," Journal of Comparative Family Studies 15 (Spring 1984): 119.

perception is languishing, a trend that some believe to be worrisome.

A study of the problem of aging in Hong Kong by Chow shows that the support of the elderly remains largely a family matter. About 80 percent of the older people are still living with their families, usually their married children.<sup>1</sup> Research from Taiwan reveals 73 percent of the elderly live with their children.<sup>2</sup> Although generally well taken care of physically, the aged suffer a marked decline in status. Chow reckons that the most significant factor in this decline is the gradual loss by the elderly of a sense of importance in the family. He explains:

The traditional Chinese saying that "an elderly person is like unto a treasure at home" is no longer taken seriously and, as they are deprived of the role they have been playing for thousands of years, the elderly are finding themselves to be unwanted by the family.<sup>3</sup>

Besides rejection from one's own family, Chow elaborates other factors leading to the eclipse of the once formidable prestige of the elderly:

For the elderly in Hong Kong, the veneration of the young is as important as financial security. Unfortunately, there is no little evidence to show that

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<sup>1</sup>Nelson Chow, "Aging in Hong Kong," in Social Issues in Hong Kong, ed. Benjamin K. P. Leung (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1990), 166.

<sup>2</sup>Mei-Jen Lin, "Shifting Attitudes," Free China Review 39 (March 1989), 14.

<sup>3</sup>Nelson Chow, "The Chinese Family and Support of the Elderly in Hong Kong," The Gerontologist 23 (December 1983): 586.

the elderly are still held in high esteem. In the study mentioned above on the changing life-styles of the elderly in low income households in Hong Kong, it was found that despite the fact that the elderly usually considered themselves to have better personal qualities than the younger generations, they often had a very low image of themselves in terms of their contribution towards the society. They also expressed a strong feeling of isolation and loneliness.<sup>1</sup>

The change in the perception of the elderly leads to a change in attitude toward the way they should be treated. For example, Law's research in 1982 found fewer older folks were consulted on important family matters.<sup>2</sup> Some old people resort to suicide. The plight of feeling neglected and emotionally abandoned by their families may be part of the problem.<sup>3</sup> Another study reveals that the older folks have been found to be victims of abuse.<sup>4</sup>

The change in family structure and the shift in attitude toward the elderly prompts some contemporary Chinese to desire a greater governmental role in the care of the aged.<sup>5</sup> In Hong Kong, Chow found that though 90 percent of the respondents in a survey agreed that it was the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 167.

<sup>2</sup>Chi-Kwong Law, "Attitudes toward the Elderly," Resource Paper Series (Hong Kong: Department of Social Work, University of Hong Kong, 1982).

<sup>3</sup>Alex Kwan, A Study of the Suicidal Phenomenon of the Aged in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Association for the Rights of the Elderly, 1987).

<sup>4</sup>Peter Chan, "Report of Elderly Abuse at Home in Hong Kong" (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1986).

<sup>5</sup>Lin, "Shifting Attitudes," 14-17.

responsibility of the family to care for its elderly members, the same high percentage thought that the government also had an obligation to maintain the elderly at a reasonably good living condition.<sup>1</sup> Singapore and Hong Kong governments have so far expressed reservation regarding the involvement of the state with the problem of the aged. Both governments express concern as well as caution. As early as 1965, the Hong Kong government stated unequivocally that in tackling the problem of the aged, the traditional values must be preserved:

It is of the greatest importance that social welfare services should not be organized in such a way as to make it easier for socially disruptive influences to gain a hold over the community, or to accelerate the breakdown of the natural or traditional sense of responsibility--for example by encouraging the natural family unit to shed on to social welfare agencies, public or private, its moral responsibility to care for the aged or infirm.<sup>2</sup>

Most Chinese profess horror at the way Westerners put their aged parents into nursing homes rather than tending to them at home personally. To them it seems intolerably unfilial at best and downright inhuman at worst. In recent years, however, such astonishment has been replaced by an attitude of resignation. Many contemporary Chinese find themselves inadvertently following the

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<sup>1</sup>Nelson Chow, "The Chinese Family and Support of the Elderly in Hong Kong," 586.

<sup>2</sup>Hong Kong Government, Aims and Policy for Social Welfare in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Government Printer, 1965), 5.

footsteps of their Western counterparts. Some begin to place their parents in nursing homes, out of necessity, so they claim, for hectic work schedules prevent them from having much time for their children, let alone their parents.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, when both husband and wife work, caring for aged parents is now felt to be too demanding and out of the question. Since modern jobs preclude round-the-clock care for parents, many find nursing homes an attractive alternative. But it is an alternative many opt for reluctantly with mixed feelings of sorrow, guilt, and relief.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the concern pertaining to the abandonment of the aged, the importance of funerals is also being scaled down. As mentioned in chapter 3, traditional Chinese funerals were weighty matters. They involved complex rituals and great expense. In contemporary societies like Singapore, however, clan organizations have suggested that funeral rites be simplified to reduce "unnecessary wastage." Clan leaders suggest that "it is more important to show love

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<sup>1</sup>The demand of time on Chinese families has prompted the setting up of new but highly profitable "errand-running" companies in Taiwan. For a monthly fee of NT\$2000 or US\$56, the firm will run up to forty household errands per month, including sending children to school, paying utility bills, buying bus tickets, and shopping for groceries. "Marriage Tension," 18.

<sup>2</sup>Jennifer Lee, "Nursing Home Alternatives," Free China Review 39 (March 1989): 28.

and respect for one's parents when they are alive."<sup>1</sup>

Despite the diminishing authority and prestige of the elderly, Gold reckons that there is still a general respect for the aged in contemporary Chinese society. Among possible explanations for this phenomenon, according to Gold, is the gerontocratic political system (as in Taiwan) in which elderly politicians are still in charge, even though the percentage of the population under twenty five is very high in East Asian societies.<sup>2</sup>

To sum up, it can be said that the modern, individual-centered way of life has reduced the traditional status and authority of the elderly. Many, in fact, are suffering from an eclipse in esteem, honor, and power. Others have become disillusioned by the lack of familial and social support in their old age. Traditional attitudes of respect and filial piety appear to have been replaced by varying degrees of casualness. The practice of putting the aged parents into nursing homes seems to indicate a new and ominous trend.

#### The "Emancipation" of Youth

The power and influence of the aged has been replaced in part by the rising status of young people in

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<sup>1</sup>Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore (Singapore: Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, 1989), 137.

<sup>2</sup>Gold, interview.

contemporary society. Yesteryear elders were revered for their wisdom, today members of the younger generation are hailed as the forerunners of society. Assuming a new identity, young adults are often regarded as representing the intrinsic value of change and newness. They have often been singled out as brave souls blazing new worlds, a vital force in nation building. No longer playing the role of appendages, they are lauded, showered with attention, and placed in positions of responsibility and authority. The Chinese dictum "Those without mustache are unreliable in handling matters" is obviously a thing of the past.

The "emancipation" of the youth seems to have come a long way. The loosening of parental control, as discussed earlier, not only means greater freedom socially, but also connotes milder and less frequent disciplinary action. Casual observers of contemporary society detect a certain degree of leniency in child rearing by Chinese parents who have been influenced by the more "modern" and permissive approach advocated by foreign media. Parents often comment that they treat their children much more laxly than they themselves were treated as children.

Liberated young people cherish the new perception they have of themselves. In a comparative study in Taiwan in 1986, the youth saw themselves as more influential in the

family than did respondents a decade ago.<sup>1</sup> They also demonstrated less eagerness to defer to the elderly or the voice of experience. This is probably due in part to their educational achievements. Today's young people have gone considerably farther in their schooling than did most of their parents. Moreover, they are convinced that their new knowledge is superior to that of their elders.

The emancipation of young people is reflected in their preference of teaching methodology in school. In a comparative study of Taiwanese students between 1975 and 1985, 83 percent (compared to 57 percent in 1975) preferred "soft-line" teachers, and 15 percent liked the "hard-liners" (compared to 39 percent in 1975) who had rigid attitudes toward the truth of what they taught. In 1975, 42 percent of the students preferred lectures to discussions. The preference was reversed ten years later with 7 percent favoring lectures.<sup>2</sup> The trend seems to point in the direction of more freedom of expression both at home and in school.

A trend toward a substantive shift of traditional values among modern young people has been reported by a number of studies. A survey conducted among students at the National Taiwan Normal University indicated, among other

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald A. McBeath, "Youth Change in Taiwan, 1975-1985," Asian Survey 26 (September 1986): 1028.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1029.

things, that when they become too old to walk, they would rather rely on their own savings than on the support of their sons; that bringing forth new ideas was more important than maintaining the achievement of predecessors; that human will surpassed the will of Heaven; and that they were certain that what was modern was superior to what was traditional.<sup>1</sup>

Age-old values such as frugality are also changing. Chinese tradition taught the high value of thriftiness and of putting aside personal savings. But the age of consumerism has arrived in the contemporary Chinese society. Rapid economic growth has given rise to a greater amount of disposable income and a higher standard of living. Increased affluence means increased consumption, usually spearheaded by the younger generation, as is indicated in this report from Taiwan:

According to July 1988 research findings published in Management magazine and Breath Through magazine, the consumption power of local youth between 13 and 19 years of age accounts for over US\$7.5 billion in annual sales. The marketing survey reported that the most popular priorities for pocket money spending include music cassettes, fast foods, clothing, stationary and cards, and admission to movies.<sup>2</sup>

Suffice it to say that the elevation of the status of young people represents a partial abandonment of a

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<sup>1</sup>Betty Wang, "Sweeping Revisions of Values and Goals," Free China Review 39 (August 1989): 35.

<sup>2</sup>Irene Yeung, "Consumerism Comes of Age," Free China Review 39 (August 1989): 38.

traditional worldview in which the role and power of the elderly were highly esteemed. The youth have emerged from their formerly passive role in family and society to become an active and treasured asset in nation-building. The emancipation of the youth has not been without its problems, however. Since young people accept and defend a way of life which is incompatible with tradition and parental authority, conflict between the new and old generations is as common as inevitable.<sup>1</sup> Such conflict may have precipitated a growing trend in youth-related social problems in Chinese communities.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Resurgence of Tradition

It has been said that once everything changed except China. It is now said that there is nothing in China that does not change. Whether that statement is true is debatable. However, there is little doubt that in the

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<sup>1</sup>For a study on the generation gap between 2,557 high school students and their parents in Taiwan, see Kuo-Hsiung Tsao, "Generation Gap among Taipei High School Students," Acta Psychologica Taiwanica 23 (1981): 9-16.

<sup>2</sup>In Taiwan, the juvenile offender rate in 1978 was 31.1 per 10,000 population. By 1987, the rate had increased to 67.4 per 10,000. In contrast, the adult offender rate rose from 41 per 10,000 population in 1978 to 52.6 per 10,000 in 1987. See Chuen-Jim Sheu, "Minimizing the Misfits," Free China Review 39 (August 1989): 54. For problems related to the young people in Hong Kong and Singapore, see Bong-Ho Mok, Problem Behavior of Adolescents in Hong Kong: A Socio-cultural Perspective, Occasional Papers No. 7 (Hong Kong: Institute of Social Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1985), and H. B. M. Murphy, "Juvenile Delinquency in Singapore," The Journal of Social Psychology 61 (December 1963): 201-31.

Chinese societies in East Asia radical transformation is taking place. An examination of social change in these communities during the last two or three decades shows that the traditional Chinese worldview is undergoing attrition. Naturally many are apprehensive about the implications of this process. On the one hand, there is general acceptance of progress and prosperity; on the other, there is an inevitable note of nostalgia regarding the passing of time-honored traditions, and anxiety regarding the prospect of a chillingly impersonal and ruthlessly calculating modern society.

It is perhaps for this reason that there is a revival of some of the old traditions in Chinese societies. The Taiwanese government has launched the Chung Kuo Wen Hwa Fu Hsing Yun Tung (Movement for the Renaissance of Chinese Civilization)--the purpose of which is to integrate Confucian virtues such as filial piety and harmony with science and technology.<sup>1</sup> The organization publishes a monthly journal and sponsors research promoting Confucianism. In 1989, Taiwan's oldest Confucian temple

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<sup>1</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 379. By and large, traditional Chinese customs flourish well in Taiwan. But in the past, attempts had been made by Japanese and Nationalist officials to limit or eliminate certain folk religious customs. See Robert P. Weller, "Beggars, Bandits, and Ghosts: The Failure of State Control over Religious Interpretation in Taiwan," American Ethnologist 12 (1985): 46-61; idem, "The Politics of Ritual Disguise: Repression and Response in Taiwanese Popular Religion," Modern China 13 (1987): 17-39.

built in 1665, was restored to its former grandeur at a cost of \$5 million. The restored temple is a symbol of the movement for the preservation of the Chinese tradition.<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, the Cultural Renaissance movement is organized in part as an ideological defense against Communism in mainland China, but it is also regarded as a bulwark against the erosion of tradition by the process of secularization.<sup>2</sup>

In a recent study conducted by Roberta Martin, it is significant to note the stark contrast between the social and political norms propagated by the governments of China and Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> Martin based her findings upon an analysis of two sets of elementary-school textbooks on such topics as personal attributes, social relationships, and attitudes toward manual labor, agriculture, and the like. The result of the study indicates important differences between the two political systems. In Taiwan, it is the aim to make the individual's focus the family unit. Filial piety, patriotism, academic achievement, an aesthetic appreciation of nature, and a sense of propriety in interpersonal relations are the desired attributes of the citizens in

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<sup>1</sup>Jeffrey H. Mindich, "Restored Grandeur," Free China Review 40 (November 1990): 4-21.

<sup>2</sup>For a recent study of traditional beliefs in Taiwan, see P. Steven Sangren, History and Magical Power in a Chinese Community (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup>Roberta Martin, "The Socialization of Children in China and on Taiwan: An Analysis of Elementary School Textbooks," The China Quarterly 62 (June 1975): 242.

Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> This conclusion appears to be consistent with the efforts of the Taiwanese government to revitalize the traditional Confucian system of social behavior and personal mores.

In the Republic of Singapore, the government has had misgivings about the purveyance of Western lifestyles and values through the mass media. With rising affluence and an English education, the traditional Chinese worldview is being replaced by a more individualistic lifestyle for the youth. The danger of deculturization was warned against in a remark given by the then Singapore Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, in his National Day Rally speech in 1978:

A person who gets deculturized--and I nearly was, so I know the danger--loses his self-confidence. He suffers from a sense of deprivation. For optimum performance a man must know himself and the world. He must know where he stands. I may speak the English language better than the Chinese language because I learnt English early in life. But I will never be an Englishman in a thousand generations and I have not got the Western value system inside; mine is an eastern value system. Nevertheless I use Western concepts, Western words because I understand them. But I also have a different system in my mind.<sup>2</sup>

More recently, in a dinner organized by 200

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 260. In contrast to the Taiwanese government, the Chinese government is found to be promoting a break with the Confucian system, stressing a new socialist system of attitudes and behaviors. The primary focus of the individual is to be the larger community in which he works--the team, the commune, the nation. Each citizen is to be actively involved in political programs in nation building, and party officials are to be model citizens.

<sup>2</sup>"A Rethink on Education System and Talent Deployment." The Mirror 14 (4 September, 1978): 1.

Singapore Chinese clans and business associations, the new Prime Minister Mr. Goh Chok Tong reiterated that Singapore needed a value-system that would ensure its long-term survival as a nation.<sup>1</sup> A set of five common values to help develop a Singapore identity and resist the spread of Western mores were later debated in Parliament.<sup>2</sup>

The measures taken by the Singapore government as part of the moral education program to remind its citizens of their roots include the teaching of the Chinese language as a second language, the "speak Mandarin" campaign, and teaching Confucianism in schools in the 1980s.<sup>3</sup> The efforts seem to be paying off, for there is some evidence of a resurgence of interest in things Chinese, from the resurrection of Chinatown to visiting China, not only among

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<sup>1</sup>Singapore Bulletin 19 (January 1991): 3.

<sup>2</sup>The five values are: nation before community and society before self; family as the basic unity of society; community support and respect for the individual; consensus, not conflict; and racial and religious harmony. See "Government Proposes Five Shared Values," Singapore Bulletin 19 (February 1991): 13-14. For a public reaction of the proposed values, see "Most People in General Support of Core Values," The Straits Times, 9 January, 1991, 2; "'Consensus' Emerges as the Most Controversial Value," The Straits Times, 9 January, 1991, 19.

<sup>3</sup>Renowned Confucian scholars from outside Singapore were invited to lecture and conduct seminars in an effort to further stimulate interest in Confucian ethics. Some of their publications include Lian-Chang Tai, Confucian Studies and Singapore (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1987); Wei-Ming Tu, The Way, Learning, and Politics in Classical Confucian Humanism (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1985), and Conference on Confucian Ethics (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1987).

the older generation but also among young Singaporeans.<sup>1</sup>

In Taiwan, fashion is no longer mere imitation from the West. The new "Chinese fashion" is gaining popularity. At first glance, the term "Chinese fashion" is a contradiction in terms, for "Chinese" represents changelessness, and "fashion" change. This is no longer the case, for Chinese folk styles and culture have been actively incorporated into contemporary designs from textile<sup>2</sup> to dolls<sup>3</sup> to layout of department stores.<sup>4</sup> The aim is to achieve a uniquely Chinese favor which at the same time is comparable to the contemporary world fashion scene.

Research conducted at the National Taiwan University also lends credence to the trend toward a resurgence of tradition. In the 1960s, young people listening to Western music were regarded by their peers as modern and superior, while those who preferred Chinese songs were thought to be less intelligent. But in the 1970s, things began to change.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas T. W. Tan, Your Chinese Roots: The Overseas Chinese Story (Singapore: Times Books International, 1986), 246.

<sup>2</sup>Theresa Sung, "New Ideas for Chinese Fashion," Sinorama 15 (April 1990): 6-13.

<sup>3</sup>Chung-Fang Chang, "Debut of Uniquely Chinese Dolls," Sinorama 15 (April 1990): 20-5. Chinese children are encouraged to drop their blond, blue-eyed Barbie dolls in favor of "Mei-Lan," complete with five changes of costumes: bridal dress, Ching dynasty court dress, two dresses from the early Republican period, and a contemporary cheongsam.

<sup>4</sup>Theresa Sung, "China Fever Hits the Departmental Stores," Sinorama 15 (April 1990): 14-9.

Wang describes what happened on campus:

Students began reading novels or essays about the land they grew up in, and professional performing groups, such as Taiwan's Cloud Gate Dance Ensemble and the Peking opera troupe led by Kuo Hsiao-Chuang, attracted floods of young admirers with their choreography that emphasized Chinese themes and tradition. Moreover, songs written and sung by students themselves became increasingly popular, leading to a genre called "campus singers" (hsiao yuan ko shou).<sup>1</sup>

Probably among the most encouraging signs of the revitalization of the Chinese culture in East Asia is the immense popularity of Chinese annual festivals and holidays. These festivals are calculated on the basis of the Chinese lunar calendar and are enthusiastically celebrated each year. Most, if not all, Chinese participate in these annual festivities no matter how sophisticated they think they have become. Many reckon that revelling during the Lunar New Year or ritualizing during the Hungry Ghost Festival is the very Chinese thing to do as Chinese. The continued celebration of the Chinese festivities and the preservation of folk arts are indicative of the survival power of Chinese culture.<sup>2</sup>

On the basis of the studies reviewed so far, several statements about the traditional Chinese proclivity for antiquity may be made. One is that deference to the elders

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<sup>1</sup>Betty Wang, "Sweeping Revisions," 35.

<sup>2</sup>Kun-Liang Chiu, "Traditions Trying to Survive," Free China Review 40 (April 1990): 4-11. See other articles in the same issue which is devoted to preservation of Chinese folk arts and customs.

is on the wane. The power and status of the elderly of yesteryear appear to have been supplanted by increasing independence of young people who are better educated and lauded as emerging builders of a new society. Orientation to past events and wisdom is being replaced by orientation to the present and the future. Changelessness is no longer regarded as a virtue. Change is not only deemed to be desirable but is actively sought after. Yet amidst tumultuous changes in the traditional worldview, Chinese age-old customs and festivities are still popularly practiced and show no sign of falling into abeyance.

#### Particularity

One of the well-known characteristics of the Chinese people is their natural bent for concrete rather than abstract thinking. For the traditional Chinese, one need not to reason so much as to perceive. Validity depends less on the coherence of ideas than on what may be conceived of as the coherence of what is perceived.<sup>1</sup> Noted Chinese scholar Lin Yutang explains it this way:

With the Chinese as with women, concrete imagery always takes the place of abstract terminology. The highly academic sentence: "There is no difference but difference of degree between different degrees of difference and no difference," cannot be exactly reproduced in Chinese, and a Chinese translator would probably substitute for it in the Mencian question: "What is the difference between running away fifty steps

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<sup>1</sup>Cornelius Osgood, The Chinese: A Study of a Hong Kong Community (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1975), 1151.

and running away a hundred steps [in battle]?" Such a substitute expression loses in definition and exactness, but gains in intelligibility. To say, "How could I perceive his inner mental processes?" is not so intelligible as "How could I know what is going on in his mind?" and this in turn is decidedly less effective than the Chinese "Am I a tapeworm in his belly?"<sup>1</sup>

Lin concludes that Chinese thought always remains on the periphery of the visible world. He thinks this helps one to have a sense of fact which is the foundation of experience and wisdom.

As alluded to in chapter 3, research in Chinese linguistics suggests that the reality-centered Chinese language predisposes the Chinese to reality-centered thinking. The hieroglyphic form of Chinese writing "concretizes" reality in visibly perceivable written form. The various grammatical ambiguities of the Chinese language also makes it an awkward medium for the expression of abstract thought.

The Chinese penchant for concrete thinking remains largely unchanged in contemporary Chinese society. Bloom, for instance, has done extensive research in Hong Kong and Taiwan on the Chinese response to counterfactual statements. In English, a counterfactual statement is in essence a hypothetical statement in which the reader is invited to temporarily switch from the realm of reality to "a state of affairs known to be false, not for the purpose of simply pretending, but for the express purpose of drawing

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<sup>1</sup>Yu-tang Lin, 83.

implications as to what might be or might have been the case if that state of affairs were in fact true."<sup>1</sup> "If he had come, I would have gone with him" is a simple example. In an experiment conducted in Hong Kong in 1972-1973, Bloom asked the subjects questions of the form, "If the Hong Kong government were to pass a law requiring that all citizens make a weekly report of their activities to the police, how would you react?" The subjects responded, "They won't," "They didn't," or "The Government hasn't." Bloom tried to explain, "I know the government hasn't and won't, but let us imagine that it does or did...." But the explanation only frustrated the subjects into explaining statements such as, "We don't speak/think that way," "It's unnatural," "It's unChinese." Some even suggested statements such as these were prime examples of Western thinking.<sup>2</sup>

To illustrate the Chinese aversion to counterfactual thinking, Bloom relates the experience of a friend in court:

A good friend of mine who was teaching Chinese in the Albany area was called to a New York State court to serve as a translator for a Taiwanese citizen who had overstayed his visa, but who had made plans to leave the country the next day. The judge asked my friend to translate the sentence, "If you weren't leaving tomorrow, you would be deportable." After struggling for a few minutes to formulate an adequate translation, she attempted to make sense out of the sentence in Chinese in a form roughly equivalent to "I know you are

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<sup>1</sup>Bloom, 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 14. This is only one of the experiments conducted by Bloom. For details of these fascinating studies, see the rest of the chapter "The Distinctive Cognitive Legacies of English and Chinese," 13-60.

leaving tomorrow, but if you do not leave, you will be deported." The Taiwanese replied in Chinese, "But what do you mean? I'm leaving tomorrow. Don't worry, I'm leaving." My friend persisted in her attempts to convey the counterfactual/theoretical intent of the judge's statement, but the Taiwanese continued to interpret the statement, no matter what form the translation took, as a threat, roughly equivalent to "If you don't go, you will be deported" and so, continued to declare defensively that he was indeed leaving. Then the judge asked, "If you have to be deported, where would you wish to be deported to?", making a further cognitive leap into the realm of the pure hypothetical. Again several attempts at translation, this time with even less success. Perceiving that the Taiwanese was totally unable to comprehend what was going on and that he was, as a consequence, becoming more and more frustrated, my friend counseled him to respond "Taiwan." He did. The proceedings terminated and were recorded in the court record. The Taiwanese left the country the next day apparently never understanding that it was not that the judge questioned the sincerity of his intent to leave and was therefore threatening him, but rather that the judge wanted him to understand the implications of what would happen if he did not act as he had already planned to."<sup>1</sup>

The reluctance among the Chinese to make a cognitive shift into the realm of the theoretically possible counterfactual seems to indicate the Chinese propensity to concrete thinking is very much alive today. In fact a content analysis of a leading Chinese newspaper in Taiwan over a period of three weeks uncovered only one use of counterfactual argument, and that turned out to be in a translation of a speech by Henry Kissinger.<sup>2</sup>

Some Chinese bilinguals are comfortable using counterfactual statements, but would prefer to use them in a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

descriptive form in order to express the same idea naturally in Chinese. Take, for instance, the statement "If the lecture had ended earlier, Bill would have had a chance to prepare for the exam" may be more concretely converted into factual alternatives such as "The lecture ended too late, so Bill did not have a chance to prepare for the exam."<sup>1</sup>

By and large counterfactual thinking is alien to most Chinese, especially the Chinese-educated. But those who are English-educated generally have no problem understanding counterfactual statements.

#### Linguistic Deviation

Several recent developments in Chinese linguistics suggest that significant attempts have been made to transform the Chinese language. Most of the efforts originate from the Peoples Republic of China. Since the 1950s, China has been promoting simplified Chinese characters to replace the often cumbersome old characters.<sup>2</sup> The new trend appears to have caught on. Even Singapore has been adopting simplified Chinese for the past twenty years, mainly because it is easier to learn and use. As to whether

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>2</sup>See Peter J. Seybolt and Gregory K. K. Chiang, eds. Language Reform in China: Documents and Commentary (White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1979; and Wen-Djang Chu, "Chinese Language," in A Symposium on Chinese Culture, ed. Chi-Pao Cheng (New York: China Institute in America and American Association of Teachers and Chinese Language and Culture, 1964), 21-7.

the simplified Chinese has any bearing on Chinese pattern of thinking has not yet been determined.

Another major development is the introduction of the *pinyin* romanization system. The eventual goal is to replace written characters with alphabets. Romanization facilitates the encoding of computers, of which the Chinese now have more than 300,000 words. Despite the alleged benefits of espousing the *pinyin* system, it is difficult to imagine the total abandonment of traditional Chinese characters without the sacrifice of a significant measure of Chinese culture.

Many believe the written characters will continue to provide a strong sense of cultural unity and continuity with the past. But even the Chinese language in its spoken and written forms has shown signs of change in response to the pressure of Western influence. The Chinese did not traditionally permit suffixes to be attached to the verbal form and turn it into a noun as is done in English (e.g., confirm and confirmation). In Chinese, the verb and noun forms are separate lexical entities. They do not necessarily resemble one another in sound or form. But the anglicized Chinese that one sometimes sees today is anything but Chinese. Chao points out that in spoken Chinese, more and more speakers are using noun forms constructed out of verbal forms by the affixation of suffixes.<sup>1</sup> Thus "capital"

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<sup>1</sup>Yuen-Ren Chao, A Grammar of Spoken Chinese (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 225-8.

and "communist" are converted into "capitalism" and "communism", and "modern" and "normal" into "modernize" and "normalize."

Another transmutation of the Chinese language has to do with the "de" construction to express equivalents of English possessive and English descriptive subordinate clauses.<sup>1</sup> For example, the English phrase "John's book" is translated as "John 'de' book." In a compound sentence, the multiple use of the "de" construction only tends to confound the listeners. Bloom lists a few of the strange constructions seen in Hong Kong and Taiwan today. "That matter 'de' important" is actually equivalent to "The importance of the matter." "That measure 'de' effectiveness" is equivalent to "The effectiveness of the measure." "His 'de' sincere" is equivalent to "His sincerity," etc. Commenting on this modern usage of the Chinese language, Bloom says:

These constructions, although in use, are still considered by many Chinese as corruptive influences that should be eliminated from the language altogether; by a majority of the subjects interviewed as aesthetically less attractive alternatives to the traditional non-entified forms; and by just about everyone, whether they oppose them, favor them, or remain indifferent to them, as prime examples of what is called in Chinese "Westernized Chinese speech."<sup>2</sup>

Bloom warns that Chinese linguistic change may mean change in the Chinese worldview. He believes that as the

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<sup>1</sup>Bloom, 42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 43.

Western counterfactual thought and language continue to influence the Chinese world, "there may be observed a process of value change in China leading for better or worse toward the theoretical system approach so characteristic of the West."<sup>1</sup> If Bloom's assessment is right, the departure of the contemporary Chinese from the traditional reality-centered thinking to a more theoretical mode of conceptualization would have far-reaching implications. The modern Chinese bent to a theoretical pattern of thinking may have something to do with the contemporary interest in science and technology in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. It may also have some bearing on the large scale on-going research and development projects sponsored by the various governments and their agencies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred H. Bloom, "The Role of the Chinese Language in Counterfactual/Theoretical Thinking and Evaluation," in Value Change in Chinese Society, ed. Richard W. Wilson, Amy A. Wilson, and Sidney L. Greenblatt (New York: Praeger, 1979), 63.

<sup>2</sup>In Taiwan, for instance, technicians accounted only 2.4 percent of the total working force in 1951. By 1986, the percentage reached 6.3 percent, more than double in thirty years. San Gee, "Occupations Redefined," Free China Review 38 (June 1988): 6. In 1979 the Institute for Information Industry was established with a staff of only twenty. By 1987, the number had grown to 511, 78 percent of whom were computer professionals. Li-Ling Tseng, "The Abacus Yields to the Computer," Free China Review 38 (April 1988): 6. Taiwan's technological transformation is also evident from the creation of Hsinchu Science-Based Industrial Park, its own equivalent of Silicon Valley in San Jose. Jhitang Chen, "Lessons for Hsinchu from Silicon Valley," Free China Review 38 (April 1988): 18-23.

## Harmony

Traditionally, the Chinese are well known for their inclusive approach to life. They view human experience as a continuum and are not inclined to choose between extremes, for taking an extreme position distorts reality. A harmonizing and reconciling tendency is part of the traditional Chinese worldview that has made the Chinese Chinese.

Literature on empirical studies in this area is extremely limited. This is probably an indication that the Chinese propensity toward harmony has remained rather stable over the years and not many mutations have been detected. A review of literature shows only slight indication of change.

It is perhaps not surprising that in contemporary Chinese society, the resilient aspect of the Chinese esteem for harmony is still thriving. The Chinese continue to vouch for the validity of equilibrium on three levels: natural, personal, and communal.

Harmony with nature includes recognizing the cosmic forces in time and space. When one is born, the eight characters of one's horoscope are believed to be related to the zodiac. One may be fated to be down and out because one is born at the wrong time, but through clever manipulation of the cosmic forces such as choosing auspicious dates for important events in life, one can reverse one's fortune. Even the positioning of one's desk, the direction of the

door, and the location of the ancestor's grave must be coordinated with the principles of *yin* and *yang* and the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. An architect or interior designer who is not well versed in *feng-shui* (geomancy) will be out of a job even if he or she has an advanced degree from Europe and America.

The second level of harmony is believed to be harmony with oneself. A person must have few desires. Outbursts of anger should be avoided. One must by all means practice the Doctrine of the Golden Mean as advocated by Confucius. In addition, the two forces of *yin* and *yang* should be kept in balance through proper diet.

The contemporary Chinese also believes in communal harmony. Ancestor worship is a means to achieve harmony with the deceased in the family. It is widely believed that sickness and misfortune are often results of negligence or failure to perform ancestral rites. In addition, communal harmony means getting along amicably with one's neighbors. When the corner of one's house runs up against the neighbor's house, one should hang up a hexagonal mirror to ward off the inauspicious effect. In the event of a death in the family, one must paste strips of red paper on the neighbor's doors to drive away evil spirits and bad luck. Extended further, communal harmony also means harmonious relations between people and the supernatural. The gods and ghosts must be appeased and respected, although many can be

manipulated and negotiated with a view to keeping them from activities inimical to their own best interests.

### A New Awakening

Traditionally, most Chinese are known to be apathetic to politics, and most choose to stay out of it as much as possible. Recent development, however, points to an awakening of political consciousness in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The mass rallies in Hong Kong after the Tiananmen Square incident in June 1989 surprised political observers. Some think the demonstrations were organized against the backdrop of concern over the prospect of democracy in Hong Kong in the post-1997 era. Nevertheless, the scale of the protest marches was unprecedented in the recent history of Hong Kong. In fact, the incident dramatically transformed Hong Kong's political landscape, producing a rare sense of communal spirit and purpose. It served as a catalyst that resulted in Hong Kong finding its "political soul."<sup>1</sup> Commenting on the rallies, one organizer said, "People have shown that they are politically conscious and motivated."<sup>2</sup>

A similar trend in political awakening has also been noted in Taiwan. For one thing, the number of public protests and demonstrations is on the rise. A study at the

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<sup>1</sup>"Waking up to the Future," Asiaweek 15 (23 June, 1989): 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

National Chungchi University shows a total of 1462 cases of public protest between July 1986 and June 1987.<sup>1</sup> Tsai remarks that one of the most significant social developments in Taiwan in recent years, particularly during the past three years, has been the emergence of numerous large scale collective movements characterized by public protests, demonstrations, mass petition, and violent confrontation with the authorities.<sup>2</sup> Many factors account for this trend. An important one has to do with the increasing differentiation of Taiwanese society. Rapid economic development has transformed Taiwan from a homogeneous to a heterogenous society in which various social units compete for control and power. The formerly integrated institutions such as the family and lineage are no longer able to forge unity and exercise social control. The traditional modes of conflict resolution through the elders are no longer feasible. People prefer to take their grievances to the streets.

#### The Concepts of Food

The ubiquitous presence of food in Chinese society attests its importance to the Chinese. The most common form of greeting is "Have you eaten?" instead of "Good morning"

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<sup>1</sup>Wen-Hui Tsai, "Protest Movements in Taiwan in the 1980s," The American Asian Review 8 (Winter 1990): 117.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

or "How are you?" Besides food, almost everything else is considered inconsequential.

The traditional concept of food is still very much alive today. Chinese cosmology based on the theory of *yin* and *yang* extends to food and medicine as well. Certain foods are categorized as *yin* which are "cold" and others as *yang* which are "hot." Examples of "cold" foods include squash, lotus roots, sugar cane, and mung beans, whereas the "hot" foods consist of mutton, beef, chicken, and the like.<sup>1</sup> Being cold or hot has nothing to do with the temperature or the spiciness of the food. Rather it is a metaphorical association with the *yin-yang* cosmology in relation to human organisms. For the body to be healthy, it is believed there must be a balance between the intake of "cold" and "hot" food. When this harmony is disrupted, sickness is bound to occur. According to a study done by David Wu, this common perception of food is popularly held in Singapore. It is found that almost everyone knows something about the classification of Chinese food and its relationship to health.<sup>2</sup> Even English-educated Chinese university students who themselves are the products of rapid social change have not completely abandoned their traditional concepts of hot-

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<sup>1</sup>David Y. H. Wu, Traditional Chinese Concepts of Food and Medicine in Singapore (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1979), 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5.

cold harmony in foods.<sup>1</sup> Informal interviews with students from Taiwan and Hong Kong reveal the same prevailing knowledge, a fact which goes to show the persisting power of traditional beliefs.

In the same study, Wu refers to the "pluralistic medical situation" in Singapore which illustrates the famed Chinese reconciling ability. He says, "Traditional medical practitioners and spirit mediums intermingle with physicians trained in modern Western medicine, while traditional stalls of Chinese medicine stand side by side with Western-style drug stores."<sup>2</sup> One of the oldest hospitals in Singapore, Kwang Wai Siu, has both modern physicians and Chinese medical practitioners available for consultation under one roof.

#### Religious Tolerance and Eclecticism

The Chinese proclivity to pluralism in medicine may also be seen in their approach to religion. The Chinese believe a religion should never be rejected because each religious system represents partial truth. No religion can claim a monopoly over other religions. As such, the Chinese see different religions as complementing one another. Religion, therefore, must be respected and tolerated. This toleration is evident in the way Chinese parents select

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1.

schools for their children. Chinese of all religions are found among parents of students at Christian as well as non-Christian schools. Although it is recognized that their children may be converted to Christianity, the parents seem to have no qualms about sending their children there.

A corollary of religious tolerance is syncretism. Being "open-minded," the Chinese adopt beliefs and practices from several religions at the same time, most commonly Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and folk religion. Since Confucius is highly esteemed in Chinese communities, his statue can be found not only in Confucius temples, but in such syncretistic folk /Buddhist temples as the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple in Malacca and the Lung Shan Temple in Taipei. There, Confucius is worshipped as Bodhisattva and the protector of ancestor worship.<sup>1</sup> The same phenomenon can be witnessed in most places in Chinese society. In cases of illness, prayers are offered to the various bodhisattvas as well as to deities of the local folk religion. During funerals, it is not uncommon to see both Taoist and Buddhist monks performing rites for the deceased and, occasionally, a Christian pastor may be asked to pray for the dead man's soul--just in case!<sup>2</sup>

Summing up, one can say that the Chinese tendency

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<sup>1</sup>Steninger, 493.

<sup>2</sup>John Blofeld, Beyond the Gods: Taoist and Buddhist Mysticism (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), 33.

toward harmony seems to have withstood social change. This does not mean, however, that the contemporary Chinese are as reconciling and inclusive as was traditionally the case. The traditional concepts of foods remain mostly unchanged. Despite the high level of technology and education and the official secular policy of the governments, the Chinese religion still perpetuates traditional forms of tolerance and syncretism.

#### Practicality

If the Chinese esteem for harmony has survived socio-economic changes largely intact, the propensity to practicality appears to be faring even better yet. In fact, it may be the most tenacious of all aspects of the Chinese worldview. As ever, contemporary Chinese are supremely realists with a vivid sense of the here and now. Their humanistic devotion to the present precludes anything metaphysical. There is little thought regarding the hereafter. In fact, it seems incongruous that one should forsake the visible world for the invisible heaven. The ultimate concerns of the this-worldly Chinese are success, wealth, and longevity. To achieve these, one must first know how to elude evil forces, and second, know what one might do to secure supernatural succor.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Vivienne Wee, "Religion and Ritual among the Chinese in Singapore: An Ethnographic Study," M.A. thesis, University of Singapore, 1977; Howard D. Smith, Chinese Religions (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), 171-

Eluding Evil Forces

From the dawn of history, China has been a land alive with spirits. The contemporary situation in overseas Chinese communities is no exception. Even today it is customary for the Chinese to offer little sacrifices to the gods and wear amulets for protection. They also consult shamans, healers, priests, and diviners to placate troublesome spirits and win them over. Consequently the belief in and fear of demons and the search for methods to prevent them from doing harm are significant factors in the Chinese worldview. Naturally, this adds to the importance of filial piety and ancestor worship, for practicing these virtues prevents the deceased ancestors from turning into malicious demons. A corollary of this is that any person, object, or ceremony that can protect people from demons is considered to be very important. Hence, the shamans and mediums enjoy high social esteem and are very much sought after.<sup>1</sup> Most shamans operate from folk temples. The rising level of education and the economy has not seriously undermined the popularity of folk religion.<sup>2</sup> In Taiwan,

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<sup>1</sup>Ruth-Inge Heinze, Trance and Healing in Southeast Asia Today (Bangkok: White Lotus Co., 1988), 60. See also Mitsuo Suzuki, "The Shamanistic Elements," in The Realm of the Extra-Human: Agents and Audiences, ed. Agehananda Bharati (The Hague: Mouton, 1986), 253-60.

<sup>2</sup>Kuang-Hong Yu, "Development of Taiwanese Folk Religion: Analysis of Government Compiled Data," Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology Academia Sinica 53 (Spring

there has been a great revival of folk religion. In 1983, there were 12,000 folk temples. According to Yih-Yuan Li's report, there is one temple per 1,800 people in Taiwan, which means that there are proportionately more temples than there are in Thailand where there is one temple per 2,370 people. It is estimated that about 35 percent of the population of Taiwan are adherents of folk religion.<sup>1</sup>

Like their traditional counterparts in China, the modern Chinese will do anything to avoid anything thought to be malevolent. Homes are protected with charms inside and out. The use of a mirror above the front entrance is a frequent practice for it is believed that demons are ugly, and when they see themselves in the mirror they are frightened at their own image and scurry in retreat. The Hungry Ghosts Festival on the fifteen day of the seventh month is a principal occasion to appease malevolent spirits. On that day the gates of hell are said to open releasing famished evil spirits that have been neglected by their living relatives. As these straying spirits are believed to be abominably malignant and mischievous, they must be painstakingly appeased. Hence, the community feeds them. Families offer food and burn ghost money for their use in

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1982): 67-103.

<sup>1</sup>Yih-Yuan Li, "Shamanism in Taiwan: An Anthropological Inquiry," in Culture-Bound Syndrome, Ethnopsychiatry, and Alternate Therapies, ed. William P. Lebra (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 179-88.

the nether world. Other paraphernalia such as incense sticks and incense papers are also set ablaze. The Hungry Ghosts Festival underscores the persistence of the traditional view of Chinese society as being under constant threat from the dead, even the dead from one's own family. It also highlights the Chinese esteem for practicality. In an interview with Bill Moyers, renowned sociologist Peter Berger, relates an experience he had in Singapore during a Hungry Ghosts Festival.

I was at dinner with some friends. When I went back to my hotel, there was a little tent next to the hotel. The employees' association of the hotel had a shrine for the hungry ghosts--that in itself was not surprising. Inside was a Chinese man selling paper money, which you burn and which then is transferred to the other world for the use of the hungry ghosts. But back of where he sat he had a big piece of paper on which were entered the exact amounts that each person had given for the hungry ghosts. It was a bookkeeping arrangement. That is East Asian folk religion--a pragmatic, indeed capitalistic, attitude in dealing with the next world. The ghosts can actually go and look at the balance statement. There's hard-headed practicality in dealing even with ghosts.<sup>1</sup>

Beside appeasing the ghosts, there is the selection of propitious days for important events such as weddings, the beginning of a journey, the opening of a new store, and the signing of business contracts. Even in today's love marriages, many weddings have been postponed because the dates chosen are considered unlucky. In setting up a home, the kitchen stove is to be set in the northwest to act as a barrier to evil influences, since west and northwest are

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<sup>1</sup>Bill Moyers, 485.

considered unlucky.<sup>1</sup> Before a building is erected, *feng-shui* experts must be on the scene to determine the most auspicious direction it should face so as not to obstruct the flow of cosmic power that will bring fame and prosperity.

It should not be assumed that *feng-shui* is confined only to rural areas. Urbanization does not seem to pose any problem for the contemporary Chinese who believe in the phenomenon. City-dwellers may not have choice in the location and orientation of their apartments, but many still arrange their furniture on *feng-shui* principles, with a sofa facing south along a north wall, or a cabinet set to block potentially hostile lines of force from across the street.<sup>2</sup> The two buildings said to have the best *feng-shui* in Hong Kong are the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank Headquarters in Queens Road Central and the Peninsula Hotel in Kowloon. The best known geomancer, Mr. Choi Park-Lai explains, "If you look at the bank building, you can see it shaped rather like a Chinese laughing Buddha. It is guarded on each shoulder by another taller building. Also if you look over to the Star Ferry, you can see the movement of the water as if it is flowing toward the bank, then away up toward North Point.

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<sup>1</sup>Derek Walters, *Feng Shui: Perfect Placing for Your Happiness and Prosperity* (Singapore: Asiapac, 1988), 13.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel Overmyer, *Religions of China* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 61.

This is the flow of money into the bank."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Choi recalls a job in which he was called to assist. It was at the District Office where people were getting sick all the time. He went in and moved all the furniture around. No more sickness was reported after that.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Choi publishes Hong Kong's number one best-seller, the Chinese Almanac which sells over one million copies each year.<sup>3</sup>

#### Securing Supernatural Succor

As was the case in ancient China, fortune-telling thrives in contemporary Chinese societies. Irrespective of age, gender, or social station, many seek to peer into the future through the ancient craft of divination. In a study of religious trends in Taiwan, the Academia Sinica's Institute of Ethnology found that over half of all Taiwanese adults, including the highly educated, have had their fortunes cast.<sup>4</sup>

Conventional Chinese wisdom says that there is a natural force which can be utilized for one's ends through religious practices. If one does the right thing, a felicitous outcome can be expected. It is also believed

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<sup>1</sup>Frena Bloomfield, The Occult World of Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Publishing Co., 1980), 109.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 100.

<sup>4</sup>Sunny Hsiao, "Contemporary Views on Chinese Fortune Telling," Sinorama 15 (December 1990): 122.

that one's fate is predetermined,<sup>1</sup> but one's luck can be influenced by the gods. Many hold that only a few could achieve success in a competitive world and those who are successful make it not only because they are capable and diligent, but more importantly, because they are lucky. Luck, therefore, is a highly prized commodity which temple gods and ancestral spirits can appropriate.

The most popular form of securing supernatural assistance from the temple gods is by the use of fortune sticks. The deities are worshipped mainly to obtain their help to make one successful. In general, people usually go to the temples whose gods have the reputation of bringing luck and fortune. But when their prayers are not answered they move on to another god or another temple.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the use of fortune sticks in the temples, many choose to have their fortune told by professional fortune tellers.<sup>3</sup> In contemporary Chinese society, there is hardly any city, town, or village without its diviners or fortune tellers. Having one's fate told is almost a way of

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<sup>1</sup>Mr. Ta-Yu Kao, one of Taiwan's most famous physiognomists says, "Seventy percent of what happens in life comes from fate, but 30 percent is self-imposed." Kao's thinking appears representative of the contemporary Chinese. Mei-Chen Lu, "Hands-On Consultant," Free China Review 38 (June 1988): 22.

<sup>2</sup>Baker, "Hong Kong Man," 478.

<sup>3</sup>For a description of the Chinese art of divination, see Sunny Hsiao and Laura Li, "The ABC of Chinese Divination," Sinorama 15 (December 1990): 130-35.

life. The most common form of fortune telling is a system of Eight Character Readings which involve the date of birth, principles of *yin* and *yang*, and the Five Elements. Consultation of the Eight Character Readings are still considered advisable before the commencement of any new undertaking. It is a must when marriage is considered to ensure harmonious liaisons.

There are diverse varieties of fortune tellers. Some use fortune sticks, others use what are thought to be divinely inspired parakeets. Still others prefer tortoise shells for divination. Marjorie Buckle, one of the best-known fortune tellers in Hong Kong, uses a pack of cards to unfold the future.<sup>1</sup> Another famous astrologer uses the abacus to make predictions and he is so much in demand that his waiting list extends for a year.<sup>2</sup> Interest in various types of astrology has been considerable. Bookstores in Singapore regularly stockpile large quantities of paperbacks on the occult.<sup>3</sup> Newspapers run regular columns on horoscopes. Face and palm reading are also prevalent. One well-known palmist says, "We Chinese think the face tells more than the hand. The face is predetermined but the lines of the hand can change so much. However, they do help to tell about the motivation and the inner part of a person.

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<sup>1</sup>Bloomfield, Occult World of Hong Kong, 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>3</sup>Clammer, 52.

Of the face, the most important part is the eyes. That is where the changes in the heart can be seen. There are forty-eight different kinds of expressions in the eyes alone. And ten types of face shapes. Each one with its particular character delineation."<sup>1</sup>

In sum, the Chinese living in today's modern societies are inclined as ever to retain their long-held propensity for practicality. They show little interest in the metaphysical and the hereafter. Their this-worldly bent has not changed to any significant extent since time immemorial, especially in their earthly pursuit of success, wealth, and longevity. Living in a relatively affluent society, they appear to be just as solicitous to avoid evil forces and curry favor from supernatural sources as did their ancestors. Every stress is oriented toward utilization of the auspicious and avoidance of the malevolent. The Chinese emphasis on the functional significance of religion may be seen in all of this. The practice of religion in contemporary society is as utilitarian and instrumental as was traditionally the case-- to achieve practical ends. In all of this, the Chinese proclivity to practicality seems to have successfully weathered the strains of rapid social and economic change and has emerged as probably the most resilient of the five elements of worldview under consideration.

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<sup>1</sup>Bloomfield, Occult World of Hong Kong, 65.

Conclusion

The processes of modernization and secularization sweeping through East Asia have brought about transformation in its socio-cultural landscape. Various aspects of the traditional Chinese worldview have undergone diverse degrees of change and continuity. Some changes are more easily discernable than others. Where possible, the shape and delineation of these changes have been studied and documented.

A general pattern emerges from this research. On one hand, one sees evidences that suggest metamorphic changes in the hierarchical and other traditional aspects of the Chinese worldview. Though highly esteemed in the past, the long-standing hierarchical structure has been appreciably weakened, however. The family remains the most fundamental unit in society. It continues to perform many of its traditional functions such as rearing the young and caring for the old, although the extent of these functions has been curtailed considerably. The family is undergoing perhaps irreversible structural change from the extended to smaller and more adaptable nuclear-type family. Loyalties to one's family and lineage appear to be on the wane. There is a loosening of parental control, and filial piety is often called into question. Social change also brings about the elevation of women's status in family and society. Courtship and marriage have been redefined and taken on new

meaning and significance. Moreover, the traditional deference to elders seems to be languishing as society looks approvingly on the vigor and pliability of the younger generation.

On the other hand one sees little evidence of debilitating change in the last three strands of the Chinese worldview considered--particularity, harmony, and practicality. The Chinese propensity for reality-centered consciousness and concrete thinking has largely remained intact, although there are indications of change in the Chinese language that may adversely affect such pattern of thinking. The Chinese feelings for harmony in nature, in human and in community are very much in practice. Even more so is the legendary Chinese tolerance and syncretistic approach to religion. In terms of practicality, the Chinese are very much preoccupied with three this-worldly concerns-- success, wealth, and longevity.

In the ebb and flow of continuity and change, the Chinese of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore appear to have taken on many characteristics akin to their Western counterparts. Their worldview has been influenced by the complex process of secularization, and there is a new receptiveness to change, a bent to individualism, rationality, expediency, efficiency, flexibility, autonomy, relativity, contingency, and, to some extent, impersonality. Yet amidst the hustle and bustle of life, and partially

because of its many pressures, the contemporary Chinese express seemingly insatiable desire for something supernatural. They take time to have their fortunes told, to worship at the local temple, and to invoke the gods and spirits. Such are some of the attributes of the modern Chinese who consider themselves to be coming of age.

## CHAPTER V

### SOME MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

#### Introduction

Thus far the present study has considered the process of secularization in its Western and Eastern contexts and the ways it has influenced the traditional Chinese worldview. As noted in chapter 1, secularization in the West manifests itself predominantly in terms of religious decline, whereas in East Asia it is revealed more specifically in social and cultural change. The validity of this hypothesis has been substantiated by the findings in chapter 4. While the traditional Chinese worldview as we know it has undergone some change, it has also shown some degree of tenacity in retaining certain key traditional elements. Even then, the differences between the traditional and contemporary way of life are as enormous as they are radical. This complex situation in which the Chinese culture appears to be at its crossroads seems to pose significant missiological and theological implications for the church. These implications must first be considered against the backdrop of the present Chinese ambivalence to the process of secularization.

### Chinese Ambivalence to Change

The interplay of Chinese traditional forces and Western science and technology is one of the most striking features of modern East Asia. The process of secularization brings about change, and tradition is generally resistant to change. Some Chinese intellectuals both inside and outside China believe tradition and change must be held in tension so tradition can be preserved. Others in these three societies wonder how much longer the Chinese tradition will be able to withstand the onslaught of modernization and secularization without caving in. The ongoing debate between these two groups continues unabated. The three prevailing schools of thought regarding the perceived threat of foreign elements in secularization include (1) modernization without Westernization, (2) Westernization en masse, and (3) change within tradition.

#### Modernization without Westernization

After its humiliating defeat by the foreign powers in the nineteenth century, particularly the Opium War of 1839-42 and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, China was awakened to its glaring weakness and placid complacency. As the country began to reconstruct its social and economic infrastructure, Chinese intellectuals had to grapple with the thorny problem of how best to meet the challenge and aggression of the technologically superior West. Respected Chinese scholar and reformer Chang Chih-Tung (1837-1909)

advocated a policy of synthesizing Confucianism with Western technology and methodology. His philosophy is reflected in his famous dictum "chung hsueh wei ti, hsi hsueh wei yung" (Chinese learning for fundamental principles, Western learning for practical applications). His view received enthusiastic support from many intellectuals in his day, including Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925), one of modern China's most revered political figures and the first president of the republic that succeeded the Manchu. In his major work San Min Chu I (The Three Principles of the People), Sun made it clear that the Chinese would borrow from the West only what they needed and would not accept anything which went against the basic precepts of the Chinese civilization such as filial piety, frugality, preservation of "face," etc. Chinese identity must remain the same. It is significant that Sun was a professing Christian. Apparently he did not believe that in coming to faith in Jesus Christ he had "borrowed" from the West.

#### Westernization en Masse

The May Fourth Movement following the student demonstrations in Peking on May 4, 1919, represents a watershed period in which the traditional culture was called into question. The fall of the Manchus signaled the beginning of the break-up of Confucian orthodoxy. The disgust with warlord politics and the exposure to new ideas from the West precipitated an intellectual movement. Both

Chen Tu-Hsiu (1879-1942), dean of the liberal arts faculty of Peking University, and Hu Shih (1891-1962), American-trained scholar and pragmatist, contended that the norms and values of tradition, especially Confucian values were stumbling blocks to progress, and must therefore be radically excised from their ancestral roots. Since the interests of the nation must supersede tradition, China's past must be summarily discarded in order to accommodate the acquisition of Western techniques and the pursuit of Western standards of prosperity.

#### Change within Tradition

Contemporary thinkers in Chinese societies outside China no longer subscribe to the May Fourth philosophy. They no longer hold a dichotomous view that sets tradition against change. They believe that continuity and change are not necessarily mutually exclusive as Chang and Sun had thought. Rather, they are dialectically related and can be mutually reinforcing.<sup>1</sup> Ideas from the East and the West can be synthesized to effect a transformation within tradition. The result is to be Chinese modernization, not Chinese Westernization. This approach seems to enjoy the

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<sup>1</sup>Ambrose Y. C. King, Zhong Guo Xian Dai Hua Yu Zhi Shi Fen Zi (From Tradition to Modernity) (Taipei: China Times Publishing Co., 1977), and H. G. Yin, Zhong Guo Wen Hua De Zhan Wang (The Prospects of Chinese Culture) (Hong Kong: Culture Book House, 1969).

best of two worlds: modernization without sacrificing cultural integrity.

This concept of the creative transformation of tradition is akin to sinologist Fairbank's perception of "change within tradition."<sup>1</sup> Fairbank contends that traditional Chinese forms of thought and action have a tendency to continue as they are, and hence that it is more accurate to describe change in East Asia as "change within tradition" rather than radical transformation.

### Evaluation

To evaluate the three Chinese theoretical responses to secularization outlined above, it may be said that the first, in which modernization without Westernization is advocated, may be well intended, but the outcome is doubtful. Some assert that Western models of development are inextricably enmeshed with Western values and that invariably old traditions and old mores will be eroded and replaced by foreign values. Thus it is assumed that by adopting Western know-how, the infiltration of values incompatible with Chinese tradition is inevitable.

The second response in which indiscriminate and wholesale Westernization is recommended may have been desirable in the early twentieth century in China, but it is no longer alluring in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore

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<sup>1</sup>John K. Fairbank, et al, A History of East Asian Civilization, 5.

inasmuch as these societies have progressed economically. Moreover, the Chinese culture as a counterweight makes Westernization en masse unlikely.

The third response to the process of secularization based on the assumption that modernization is possible within tradition seems to be a viable option. Research findings cited in chapter 4 on the changes in the Chinese worldview confirm Fairbank's assessment that most of the changes may be said to have occurred within the perimeter of the tradition. Many now embrace the theory of "industrialization with honor" and feel confident that the Chinese can maintain their traditional culture inviolate by rejecting Western values while simultaneously embracing Western technology. This implies that they can distinguish a process of modernization from the broad system of Western values and practices. The line of difference between the two, however, is not easy to draw or, once drawn, to hold on to. For this reason, some believe that "ethnic affirmation"<sup>1</sup> must be vigorously maintained in an effort to retain one's identity. Even then, some feel that becoming "modernized" without becoming Westernized is an unattainable compromise. They contend that it is impossible to modernize one aspect of society without endangering the entire

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<sup>1</sup>K. S. Yang and Michael H. Bond, "Ethnic Affirmation by Chinese Bilinguals," Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 11 (1980): 395-410.

fabric.<sup>1</sup> Western technology is inherently infectious if not subversive. It cannot be dissociated from other aspects of American and European civilization, nor can it be divorced from the Western worldview. Hence, letting in Western technology is like admitting the Trojan horse. Modernization may yet turn out to be the undoing of the Chinese culture.

Whether the Chinese will eventually lose their cultural continuity in time to come remains to be seen. Nevertheless, suffice it to say that the initial admiration of Western science and technology has now given way to severe soul-searching and a radical reassessment of traditional values. In fact, some argue that the current cultural renaissance and revival of traditional religion in contemporary Chinese society are actually a response to the challenge of rapid social change.<sup>2</sup> Chinese scholar Sun Longji, on the basis of his research in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, argues that a number of fundamental characteristics of the old culture, far from being threatened by "modernization," tend on the contrary to be

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<sup>1</sup>Steadman, 28.

<sup>2</sup>As shown in chapter 4, there is mounting evidence of a resurgence of traditional beliefs and practices, including a revival of interest in Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, as well as in fortune telling and geomancy.

intensified.<sup>1</sup> Sun's findings confirm the conclusion in chapter 4 that the tenacity of the Chinese cultural heritage has made change within tradition possible.

Chinese ambivalence to change is illustrative of the current mood in these three societies. But the concern of this study goes beyond such ambivalence. Research findings in chapter 4 demonstrate that the traditional Chinese worldview has not remained untouched in the processes of modernization and secularization, but has gone through critical change. Thus an understanding of the current Chinese worldview cannot be based on the old assumptions described in chapter 3, neither should the missionary challenge to win the modern Chinese in these societies be considered against the traditional background. As the Chinese are caught up in a flux of change, the missiological implications of the contemporary worldview are to be contemplated in the context of this change in order to be relevant. These implications are discussed in three broad areas in their natural sequence, namely, mission, conversion, and ecclesiology.

### Implications for Mission

#### Familial Tutelage

It is suggested in chapter 1 that one of the

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<sup>1</sup>Longji Sun, Zhong Guo Wen Hua Di Shen Ceng Jie Qou (The Deep Structure of the Chinese Culture) (Hong Kong: Yishan, 1985), 7.

outcomes of the process of secularization is the deliverance of people from a vast system of control, including familial control. According to chapter 4, this liberation seems to have taken place in the three contemporary Chinese societies, though deliverance there appears to be more from familial than ecclesiastical control as has been the case in the West. The traditional Chinese worldview had tended to be ethnocentric and autocratic. One's duty was first and foremost to the family and fellow kinsmen. Individual initiative and aspirations were of secondary consideration. Besides, the family system including the lineage was so strong that often an individual was considered more as a filial son than as a good citizen.

The process of modernization has drastically changed the status of the individual in the family and the community at large. Urbanization, modern education, and rising individual income and status have encouraged the transfiguration of the traditional family system from the extended to the nuclear. This familial transformation also means that the individual is no longer inextricably tied to the traditional family system and is more likely to be treated as free-standing person. The release of the Chinese from their familial tutelage should not be interpreted to mean that all family ties are gone and individualism reigns supreme. On the contrary, respect for parental authority is still conspicuous even though such authority is no longer

considered as binding. Filial piety is still considered a virtue and the extreme Western-type of individualism is not yet much in evidence.

#### Historical Tutelage

China is perhaps the only country in the world to have been culturally and, to a lesser degree, politically united for more than three thousand years. Naturally, the Chinese have a great sense of continuity with the past. Sinologists generally agree that the Chinese are a proud race largely because of this historical continuity. Missionaries to China often found the Chinese incredulous as to why they should give up their unbroken heritage for an "uncultured" foreign faith. Moreover, they regarded their country as the Middle Kingdom of the earth and tended to be incurably xenophobic. In this closed environment, history and culture exerted a formative influence on the populace.<sup>1</sup>

This influence, however, appears to be on the wane as quick-paced social and economic changes take place. The cultural cement that had held China together for millennia began to crack under contact with the modern world. As indicated in chapter 4, the contemporary Chinese are prone to look at their tradition, including the Confucian classics, more critically than ever before. Explicit and complacent confidence in the past is undermined and the

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<sup>1</sup>Fusan Zhao, Christianity in China (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1986), 1.

rationality of traditional beliefs is called in question. The Chinese today are more vocal and less hesitant to castigate, even publicly, those aspects of tradition they deem deleterious to progress.<sup>1</sup>

#### New-Found Freedom

The process of unshackling of the contemporary Chinese from the familial and historical tutelage contributes to a new personal freedom. First, many among the younger generation are free to choose their reference group from among peers or colleagues rather than having them dictated by kin. Second, this new freedom is associated with a weakening of traditional beliefs. More are now free to retain or discard their traditional religion. The trend in decline of adherence to Chinese traditional beliefs is evident from a survey of 1,025 Chinese Singaporean households in 1989.<sup>2</sup> The findings seem to be consistent with the results of a survey done twenty years earlier. In 1969, Tamney conducted a random sample survey of 287 University of Singapore students to ascertain their religious beliefs. About 39.4 percent professed to be Christians while 46.5 percent were either indifferent to, or had no religion. Only 7.4 percent said they believed in the

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<sup>1</sup>One of the best books in this area is Longji Sun's Zhong Guo Wen Hua Di Shen Ceng Jie Gou which is quoted above.

<sup>2</sup>"Religious Trends in Singapore," Singapore Bulletin 17 (October 1989): 15.

Chinese religions, meaning religions associated with the Chinese culture such as Buddhism, Taoism, and the traditional beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

The new freedom created by the processes of modernization and secularization undoubtedly provide new and perhaps unprecedented opportunities for the proclamation of the gospel. These new opportunities for gospel proclamation look more promising when one considers the new receptivity to the gospel among the contemporary Chinese described below.

#### New Receptivity

Besides new freedom, the liberating effect of secularization has created keen receptivity to the gospel among the Chinese in two specific groups: the youth and the English-educated.

Among the age groups, the youth appear to be most receptive to the gospel. A survey found that two-thirds of the Christians in Singapore were converted when they were between fourteen and nineteen years old, and those who considered themselves most committed were from the same age

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph B. Tamney, "An Analysis of the Decline of Allegiance to Chinese Religions: A Comparison of University Students and Their Parents," in Analysis of an Asian Society, comp. Riaz Hassan and Joseph B. Tamney (Singapore: n.p., 1969).

groups as well.<sup>1</sup> The high rate of baptism of young people presents the church with a long-coveted opportunity for evangelism. It was only about fifteen to twenty years ago that young people desiring to be baptized suffered severe parental opposition. Some were beaten and others were disowned by their families. The same antagonism still exists today but it is discernably less severe; there is thus a situation which is much more conducive to evangelism. This new receptivity is certainly one of the contributing factors to the large increase in the Christian population in Singapore in recent years.<sup>2</sup>

The English-educated appear to be more receptive to the gospel than the Chinese-educated. As discussed in chapter 4, education plays an important role in the development of East Asian countries and the effects of the introduction of the English language has had profound consequences. One of these is a seeming correlation between the English language and the receptivity of an individual to the Christian message. The report cited above notes that only one in ten of the Chinese-educated are followers of Christianity, whereas among the English-educated the ratio

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<sup>1</sup>Religious Conversion and Revivalism: A Study of Christianity in Singapore (Singapore: Ministry of Community Development, 1989), quoted in "Religious Trends in Singapore," 15-16.

<sup>2</sup>"Religious Trends in Singapore," 16.

is one in four.<sup>1</sup> The 1980 population census in Singapore reveals a similar situation. Of those who were literate only in English, 28.5 percent were Christians, whereas only 3.6 percent of those who were literate only in Chinese were Christians.<sup>2</sup> Sng and You give the following explanation for this new trend:

The replacement of the Asian languages by English as the main language of instruction in schools cannot but undermine the traditional values and outlook of a people. On the one hand, Western-type education encourages students to be more independent in their thinking. Such students are less prepared to accept traditional beliefs and practices uncritically. On the other hand, as students become more versatile in another language, they are exposed to the values and beliefs of another culture. This helps to remove some of the prejudices their forefathers might have had against embracing another religion. It is likely that the higher the educational level students attain, the more probable are these trends.<sup>3</sup>

The new generation of Chinese appears to differ from their forebears in their attitude toward Christianity. The former bristling antagonism seems to be subdued and replaced by a more hospitable openness. The fact that English is becoming more and more the lingua franca of contemporary Chinese urban societies highlights exciting new openings for the gospel.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>2</sup>Bobby E. K. Sng and Yon Poh Seng, Religious Trends in Singapore: With Special Reference to Christianity (Singapore: Graduates' Christian Fellowship and Fellowship of Evangelical Students, 1982), 27.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 46-7.

### Summary

The process of modernization in the three Chinese communities has produced a climate more favorable to the receptivity of the gospel. The changes include liberation from one's familial and historical tutelage. The Chinese are more free to think and act on their own without the control and scrutiny formerly exercised. New receptivity to the gospel is also found among the young and the English educated. The trend toward greater openness to the gospel implies that the church can look forward to a more fruitful response as it seeks to fulfil its mission to the contemporary Chinese.

### Implications for Conversion

An outcome of the opening of mission opportunities among the Chinese should be conversion to Christianity. A serious consideration of the process and meaning of conversion raises several important missiological concerns. In this section, attention is given to two of these issues. One has to do with the relationship between conversion and culture, the other relates to conversion in its wider context. Before delving into these two implications, however, it is necessary to examine the word "conversion" in its biblical context.

From the outset, as Peters clearly points out, it is well to recognize that the concept of conversion is deeply rooted in revelation:

The doctrine of conversion is written in bold letters across the pages of the Bible. It is set forth with great emphasis in the Old Testament, is strongly reiterated in the gospels, and boldly preached by the apostles. It is a concept deeply rooted in divine revelation. As such it has been recognized by Biblical theology and as such it was emphatically preached by our fathers in the faith.<sup>1</sup>

The word "conversion" and its related terms are a translation of the Hebrew verb שׁוּב (*shuv*) which is found approximately 1056 times in the Old Testament. It is used in a variety of ways and in general carries the meaning of returning, turning back, turning away.<sup>2</sup>

The word שׁוּב is used approximately 118 times in a moral and religious sense and carries the idea of religious conversion in the sense of turning away from sin, turning to the Lord, changing one's course of direction, action, attitude, and relationship.<sup>3</sup> In this meaning, שׁוּב has two

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Peters, "The Meaning of Conversion," Bibliotheca Sacra 120 (July-September 1963): 235.

<sup>2</sup> A more comprehensive definition is stated by Barth this way: "The Hebrew verb *shuv* refers to the occurrence of "turning" in the opposite direction. The direction in which a man went or looked and which determined his plans and actions is changed into a new, the opposite direction. It means the "re-orientation" towards a goal from which one has moved away previously. Equally in relation both to concrete and abstract things, *shuv* indicates a "return"; geographically it means returning to a former position; circumstantially, it means restoring a former state." Christoph Barth, "Notes on 'Return' in the Old Testament," The Ecumenical Review 19 (July 1967): 310.

<sup>3</sup>The following passages are listed for comparison: "Unto the Lord"--Deut 4:30; 30:2, 10; 1 Sam 7:3; 1 Kings 8:33; 2 Chron 6:38; 30:9; Neh 9:26; Job 22:23; Ps 22:23; 51:15; Isa 19:22; 55:7; 60:5; Jer 3:7; 4:1; 24:7; Lam 3:40; Hosea 12:7; 14:2-3; Joel 2:12-13; Mal 3:7. "From sins"--1 Kings 8:35; 2 Chron 6:26; Neh 9:35; Isa 59:20; Jer 25:5; Eze

implications. It means reversal from something and a returning to something else. The person who is converted leaves one context and way of life and turns to God.<sup>1</sup>

כָּוַן in its covenantal usage expresses a change of loyalty.<sup>2</sup> It is also a dynamic experience. To return to the covenant means to become open to God's righteous purpose in the future. It is not only a call back but also a call forward. כָּוַן therefore does not refer primarily to a past experience. Instead, it is a constant call to re-commitment, to the renewal of the covenant.

It is significant to note that conversion in the Old Testament has primarily a *collective* connotation. כָּוַן is frequently addressed to the whole people of God (Haggai 2:17 with Zechariah 1:3,4). It is used of the conversion of the

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18:28; 33:11, 14; Jonah 3:10.

<sup>1</sup>Gillespie further elaborates: "For the Hebrew, conversion was never just the experience of changing but included a goal of action on the part of the believer where the conception of God's will was being fulfilled in turning around. It was a movement back to knowing God." V. Gillespie, "Religious Conversion and Identity: A Study of Relationship" (Ph.D. diss., Clairmont Graduate School, 1973), 27.

<sup>2</sup>Jeremiah uses כָּוַן in the covenantal sense 48 times. W. L. Holladay, The Root Subh in the Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 128. Similarly, the word is used by Amos. When he calls on the people of Israel to prepare themselves to meet their God (4:12), Amos is, in fact, saying that it is also turning to them in order to bring about renewal of the covenant relationship. About 164 instances of covenantal כָּוַן are unevenly distributed throughout the Old Testament. Six are found in the Pentateuch, 18 in the former prophets, 113 in the later prophets. Out of the 164 cases, 48 are in the book of Jeremiah, and only 20 in Isaiah.

nation Israel, of a national act of returning to God after a national act of disobedience. It is not essentially a private experience or an individualistic decision, but a matter for Israel in toto. In the Old Testament context, conversion may be individualistic or collective, but it was always personal. This personal return to God is to be understood "as an indication and representation of the 'return' of the whole people' of Israel."<sup>1</sup> This observation has significant missiological implications on the principle of multi-individual conversion which is discussed below.

In the Septuagint, the Hebrew verb שׁוּב is translated by ἐπιστρέφειν (*epistrephein*), ἀποστρέφειν (*apostrephein*), and ἀναστρέφειν (*anastrephein*), words which express the same general idea as שׁוּב.<sup>2</sup> The New Testament follows the Septuagint and uses the same words to convey the Christian idea of conversion. Although these words describe only external motion, they all carry the idea of turning around in either a physical, mental, moral, or spiritual sense,

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<sup>1</sup>Barth, 310, 311.

<sup>2</sup>The meaning of the root word στρέφειν (*strephein*) is "to twist," or "to turn," or "to bend," or "to steer." See G. Bertram, "στρέφειν," in Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. G. Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:714. Stephen used the verb in Acts 7:39 for an inward turning of the heart of the Jewish fathers back to Egypt. In Acts 13:46, Paul and Barnabas are said to turn away from the Jews to the Gentiles because the former rejected the gospel.

notably a turning away from sin.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the words that indicate a turning away from sin toward God, the New Testament uses the word *μετάνοειν* (*metanoein*) which means to repent. Literally it means "to have a change of mind." Repentance involves a change of the total person--mind, heart, and will. It is a change of mind respecting God, respecting ourselves, respecting sin, and respecting righteousness. The change involves a person in his totality.

We have noted the root meaning of conversion as closely connected with a drastic change from the past, a turning away from sin while turning to God. Spiritual conversion means complete transformation. In addition, conversion in the Old Testament sense means a communal act,

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<sup>1</sup>William Barclay, Turning to God (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 20. Stephen used the verb in Acts 7:39 for an inward turning of the heart of the Jewish fathers back to Egypt. In Acts 13:46, Paul and Barnabas are said to be turning away from the Jews to the Gentiles because the former rejected the gospel. One of three compound verbs *ἐπιστρέφειν* represents an example of the idea of turning around. The word occurs about 40 times in the New Testament, with about half that number in the Gospel of Luke alone. When Gabriel appeared before Zechariah, the angel said that John the Baptist would be instrumental in turning or converting "many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God" (Luke 1:16). Christ said to Simon Peter, "When you have turned again [or have been converted], strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32). When Peter had indeed experienced that turning again, he challenged others to do likewise: "Repent (*μετανοήσατε*) therefore, and turn again (*ἐπιστρέψατε*), that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of Peter finally led to multi-conversions on the day of Pentecost. If he had not repented as he did, he would not have been a channel of the Holy Spirit to effect changes in the minds and hearts of his listeners.

representing Israel's collective decision of obedience to or rejection of God's words.

Conversion as a collective act has significant implication for mission. Luzbetak describes conversion this way: "Conversion means turning away from old ways to new ways, a basic reorientation in premises and goals, a whole-hearted acceptance of a new set of values affecting the 'convert' as well as his social groups, day in and day out, twenty-four hours of the day and in practically every sphere of activity--economic, social, and religious."<sup>1</sup> The process of conversion should involve not only complete transformation, but also a reevaluation on the part of the convert of his/her relationship to the cultural and social matrix of his/her life. Details of this context are discussed below.

#### Conversion and Culture

The relation between conversion and culture has long been debated. When new converts come into the church, how should they relate to their cultural past--food, dress, medicines, songs, dances, myths, rituals, etc.? Should the church insist on imposing its own "culture," or should the gospel be customized? Some maintain that conversion entails a clean break with one's former cultural ties. To them conversion means a change of culture at best, and alienation

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<sup>1</sup>Luzbetak, 6.

and rejection from one's culture and community at worst. Others interpret conversion in terms of a turning to Christ but without necessarily rejecting one's culture. Conversion to them means a new loyalty to Christ but not an abandonment of one's cultural roots.

The Willowbank Report provides sound principles on the relationship of culture and conversion. First, the radical nature of conversion should be recognized. Conversion involves a clean and complete break with the past. It is so radical that it is spoken of in terms of death. Severance from the past may be painful, but it is a necessary part of the Christian birth experience. Having parted company with the old, we put on the new. We become a new creation. Having died with Christ, we are alive evermore, with renewed strength and grace. This should be what conversion is all about.<sup>1</sup>

Second, conversion should not "deculturize" a convert.<sup>2</sup> One practice in the past has been that if one wanted to become a Christian, one almost had to abandon the

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<sup>1</sup>The Willowbank Report: Report of a Consultation on Gospel and Culture, 19-22. The Willowbank Report came from the Lausanne Theology and Education Group which met from January 6-13, 1978 at Willowbank, Somerset Bridge, Bermuda. The Theology and Education Group was one of the four working groups appointed by the International Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) to study the implications of the Lausanne Covenant, an important document outlining the basis and nature of evangelization. The Covenant was adopted during the LCWE's congress in 1974.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 20.

culture of one's own family and society. There is much within most cultures that is not contradictory to the gospel and may be retained and even strengthened in the new Christian community. There is no need to deculturize a convert and require the forsaking of practices that are not forbidden by the Scripture.

Cultures, however, are never perfect. The gospel stands in judgment of all cultures<sup>1</sup> Cultures are inherited by fallen beings. There is a sharp division between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. Niebuhr reiterates a fundamental theological conviction when he asserts that the good nature of humans has been corrupted by sin and that corrupt nature produces perverse culture and perverse culture corrupts nature.<sup>2</sup> There is thus an element of distortion in every culture. Because human culture has been divorced from the Christian faith and has been uprooted, we must make it subservient to the will of God, and to the truth of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the most controversial cultural issue for Chinese converts is ancestor worship. Some believe it to be a communication between the living and the dead, it

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<sup>1</sup>Hiebert, Anthropological Insights, 55.

<sup>2</sup>H. R. Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1975), 211.

<sup>3</sup>Lit-Sen Chang, Strategy of Missions in the Orient: Christian Impact on the Pagan World (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1970), 67.

acknowledges supernatural powers of the spirits of the deceased over the living descendants, and should thus be abandoned as a spiritualistic cult. Others take the position that ancestor worship serves only as a memorial to the dead. As such, no element of worship is present. It is neither the purpose nor intent of this study to evaluate this extremely complicated and paradoxical issue. Suffice it to say that in the evaluation of the ancestor cult in the light of the scriptures, cultural facts must also be taken into consideration. We must see how one can reinterpret some of the rites in order to create new meanings without compromising biblical criteria. The cultural mandate of the church is two-fold: First, to determine how far the Chinese may remain Chinese after conversion, and second, to formulate Christian alternatives to practices that are deemed unscriptural.

#### Conversion in Context

In chapter 3, we noted the emergence of the conjugal family and how this trend has tended to foster individualism in the present Chinese society. Although the individualistic tendency is on the rise, the sense of familial and communal solidarity has by no means been squelched. This group-orientation constitutes a key element in the consideration of Christian conversion in context.

The Individualistic Approach

Mission practice in the past has been inclined to the individualistic approach to conversion. The early Pietists in the seventeenth century were especially concerned with the salvation of individual souls. Pioneers such as Philip Spener (1635-1705) and August Herman Francke (1663-1727) concentrated their efforts on the individual. Their original aim was to promote personal piety, but their methodology was extended to their mission practices as well. Count Zinzendorf described his work as *Einzelbekehrung*, meaning "conversion of individuals."<sup>1</sup>

Missionary to India Henry Martyn (1781-1812) worked untiringly for the salvation of Muslims. In the midst of translation and debates, he never forgot his paramount concern for the individual. He finally did win one Muslim in Iran, and one of his final missionary acts was baptizing this individual.<sup>2</sup>

William Carey (1761-1834) believed as early as 1806 that the primary goal of mission was to win individuals, but he also maintained that the establishment of churches and schools go hand in hand with conversions.

McGavran styled the individualistic approach to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 178.

conversion "drip by drip evangelism."<sup>1</sup> As alluded to in chapter I, this practice was largely influenced by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The individual is regarded as an independent entity in society, and as such one has the right to make certain claims on the community in which one lives. Brunner described the philosophy of individualism a "Robinson Crusoe" affair. He regarded individualism as "an attempt to interpret the individual human being solely in the light of his own personality, and the society as the coalescence of such individuals."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the philosophy of individualism has invaded mission theology and practice. Many Christians consider it a precious spiritual heritage brought from Europe to America by the Puritans and Pietists. Instead of participating in growth, fellowship, service, and witness, Christians tend to live to themselves as individuals. The crucial ingredient of *koinonia* is absent, and there is hardly any communal relational responsibility. Francis Hsu has reasons to characterize the Western form of Christianity as essentially an individualistic religion that emphasizes a direct link between God and the human soul.<sup>3</sup> Hsu is right to a certain extent. To say that Christianity is an

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<sup>1</sup>Donald McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 337.

<sup>2</sup>Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative, trans. O. Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), 294.

<sup>3</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 254.

individualistic religion is saying only half truth. The other half is God's constant reference to his people as a group.

Kasdorf does not shrink from using the term "anathema" in describing individualism in conversion because Christian conversion is as much relational as it is personal.<sup>1</sup> He characterizes conversion this way:

These observations lead us to conclude that conversion is personal, but not individualistic; it is experienced by individuals, but it affects the community; it is expressed in a vertical relationship, but not without horizontal dimensions.<sup>2</sup>

Suffice it to say that an individualistic approach to conversion is not the only approach. While we must agree that individual conversion is the basis of mission, we should take exception to its exclusivity. We need to broaden the one-sided individualistic approach to include the individual's social context, that is, the group of which he or she is a part.

#### A Biblical Approach

Tippett<sup>3</sup> maintains that the basis of church growth is indeed the conversion of individuals. But sometimes the stress put on individual conversion obscures the fact that

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Kasdorf, Christian Conversion in Context (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), 108.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>3</sup>Alan R. Tippett, Church Growth and the Word of God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 31.

the Holy Spirit sometimes brings people to repentance in groups, families, and tribes. The Bible uses terminology such as "congregation," the "community of God," the "people of God," and "fellowship." In fact "the idea of congregation goes back to the collective worshipping body of the Psalms and beyond (Psalms 26:12; 68:26), even from the beginning of Israel's history as a nation." Israel is described as "the assembly of the congregation of Israel" (Exod 12:6). The assembly was a public decision-making group in which the leader made his announcements, and the people accepted or rejected them. We are told that Moses and Aaron "gathered together all the elders..., did signs in the sight of the people," and "the people believed...and bowed their heads and worshipped" (Exod 4:29-31).

Tippett points out that the Old Testament concept of the "people of God" is one of a cohesive unit. Such cohesiveness begins with the nuclear family and then expands to the extended family. This unit is expected to act inseparably under elected leaders chosen by God (Deut 1:13-18).<sup>1</sup>

Kin unit decision making can be seen in the New Testament. After healing the demoniac, Christ sent him back to his own home unit to testify to them what great things the Lord had done for him (Mark 5:19,20). The woman of Samaria came as an individual, but Jesus sent her back to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 32.

her kin. As a result, "many of the Samaritans believed in him because of the word of the woman who testified" (John 4:39). The Samaritans were so keen to learn more from Jesus that they invited him to stay with them. Apparently Jesus saw the potential of the group context in winning individuals. The result was "many more believed" (John 4:4).

The apostles likewise did not confine their efforts to individuals. Stories abound of whole families, and in some instances, entire villages coming to accept Christ abound. Acts 9:35 speaks of whole villages: "All the residents of Lydda and Sharon . . . turned to the Lord." Acts 14:1 notes, "Now at Iconium . . . a great company believed, both Jews and Greeks," among whom it seems were whole families. We also note in Acts 16:5 that "Lydia . . . was baptized, with her household." Acts 16:33, "The jailer . . . was baptized . . . with all his family."

The group approach to conversion is biblical and appears to be consistent with the group orientedness of the contemporary Chinese. It should therefore constitute a valid methodology in this context.

#### Multi-Individual Conversion

Pickett highlights the fact that an individual must be considered in his/her social context. Hence, group-consciousness must be part of mission strategy:

To group-conscious people the action of a group is

incomparably more important than the action of many isolated individuals, the corporate witness to Christ transcends in significance the personal witness, and the most effective demonstration of the power of Christ is the transformation of a group of believers.<sup>1</sup>

While it is true that one has to make one's own personal decision, one is seldom an isolated individual. A person is often an individual within a group.<sup>2</sup> This principle is especially significant for the Chinese society where by and large people are very much group-oriented. Living in large cities, many still adhere closely to the practice of the traditional extended family and group customs, although the structure of the extended family as such is being replaced by the conjugal family. The sociocultural context of an individual is still viewed with high regard. Group cohesiveness is still operative as a communal principle. Each individual represents a unique yet precise ethnic entity, however Westernized he/she may have become.

Though the Chinese are being liberated from the tutelage of the family, the fact remains that from time to time some youth still suffer persecution or even ostracism when becoming Christian. Their parent's opposition is largely based on the belief that when they die, their "unfilial" Christian children will not provide them with

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<sup>1</sup>J. Waskom Pickett, Christian Mass Movements in India (New York: Abingdon Press, 1933), 333.

<sup>2</sup>Alan R. Tippett, People Movements in Southern Polynesia (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 207.

sustenance in the nether world. The worst scenario the parents fear is that they will eventually become vagabond spirits roaming from place to place, spirits that are looked upon with abject contempt and pity. The worst imaginable plight to a Chinese after death is to be without living descendants. Seen in this background, it is not difficult to recognize why baptizing converts against the wishes of the parents or family constitutes a most unfilial act and represents a gross and blatant insult to the Chinese family and ancestry. The one-against-all mission practice of winning converts tends to create acrimonious resentment and sometimes irreconcilable alienation. It is no wonder that Christianity has been accused of being a divisive religion for disjointing family members, and a hypocritical religion for not practicing what it preaches, an obvious reference to the fifth commandment.

Biblically and socially speaking, multi-personal conversion<sup>1</sup> is a legitimate means of mission. It is akin to the Chinese worldview in group consciousness, mutual dependence, and social harmony. The traditional one-by-one-against-a-social-tide conversion is a slow and painful way to grow. But where families and whole social groups hear the Word and come to Christ together, there is far less

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<sup>1</sup>Some call it multi-individual conversion. Apparently the new term is used to differentiate it from the term "group conversion" which unfortunately has the connotation of baptism en masse without much prior preparation and study.

social dislocation and less searing wounds between members of the same family. Normal, healthy, and cohesive relationships can remain intact. The converts are less likely to renounce their Christian faith under the power of an unconverted group spirit.

#### Summary

Christian conversion has both cultural and social implications. It is more than a spiritual experience, for it involves not only a person's soul, but his culture as well. A change of behavior involves a change in relationship to culture. A distinction needs to be made, however, between the gospel and what might be called a Christian culture, for no society is a perfect expression of the gospel. On the other hand, although the gospel belongs to no culture, God's revelation is always expressed within cultural forms.

This recognition should not hide the radical nature of conversion. The transformation brought about should be revolutionary. It means a basic re-orientation of premises and goals, a whole hearted acceptance of a new set of values. Coming to faith in Christ establishes a new center, a new frame of reference in one's life. Conversion does not necessarily imply that one forsakes one's culture, but it does mean that there will be a radical and critical new way of looking at one's culture. Inevitably this will mean a rejection by the new Christian of what now appears from the

Christian standpoint to be negative in his or her culture and a strengthening of that which is of value.

Besides its cultural context, conversion has a social dimension. Conversion always takes place within a relational framework akin to one's social environment. As such one should concentrate on the communal setting to which the convert belongs. In so doing, the church cannot only avoid painful dislocation, extraction, and regression but is likely to bring about fruitful growth.

#### Implications for Ecclesiology

Mission leads to conversion, and conversion to incorporation within the local church through baptism. Three aspects of the church are considered here: the church as the Body of Christ, the church as a worshiping community, and the church as a herald.

#### The Church as the Body of Christ

The traditional Chinese found security and support in their primary relationships to family and kinship, and as indicated in chapter 3, this is the main reason why they had little need to venture out of this network of human ties. With the modification of the family system in the contemporary societies as described in chapter 4, these primary ties have been weakened considerably. The former centripetal relationships are now confined largely to the nuclear family.

To reach the contemporary Chinese, one must consider the nature of the church. How should the present situation in the Chinese societies inform our ecclesiology? What does it mean to be a church in the contemporary scene? What kind of a church can best speak to the modern Chinese? Three avenues are proposed here: the church as surrogate family, as a plausibility structure, and as networking.

### Surrogate Family

In the near absence of strong and close-knit consanguine relationships, the church should assume the role of a surrogate family to the Chinese. The void created by the erosion of primary ties should now be filled by the Body of Christ in which the contemporary Chinese can find a network of human ties akin to that found in the traditional society.

The new surrogative role of the church is rooted in the concept of the church as the body of Christ. The word "church" in English comes from the Greek *ekklesia* which had a double meaning. It referred to the act of calling and the result of that act, the assembly or congregation. The New Testament does not use *ekklesia* to designate a building, an organization, or a denomination. *Ekklesia* always carried the meaning of the people of God through Christ.

There are a number of images related to the nature of the church. Three of the metaphors from the New

Testament are highlighted here.<sup>1</sup> First, there is the "people of God" metaphor. In the Old Testament God repeatedly calls the children of Israel His people. "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Ezek 37:27). The prophet Hosea also makes the same point, "I will have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who are not my people, 'you are my people' and they will say 'Thou Art my God'" (NASB).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps 1 Peter 2:9,10 stand out more than other passages in the New Testament accenting the significance of the people of God as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."

Second, there is the "body of Christ" image. This is the most prominent image in Paul's epistles and is the only one with no Old Testament equivalent.<sup>3</sup> Christ is spoken of as the Head of the body which is the church, with members having different functions such as apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, and speakers in tongues, etc. (1 Cor 12:28). Despite its diversity, there is to be unity, for "you are

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<sup>1</sup>John R. W. Stott, One People: Helping Your Church Become a Caring Community (Old Tappan, NJ: Power Books, 1982), 26-9. See also Paul S. Minear, Images of the Church in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

<sup>2</sup>Paul quotes these two OT passages in 2 Cor 6:16 and Rom 9:25-26. In both references he makes direct application to the Christians. (See also Gal 6:16, 2 Cor 6:18, Titus 2:14).

<sup>3</sup>Stott, 29.

the body of Christ" (1 Cor 12:27).

Third, there is the "household of God" metaphor. Israel had been called God's son (Hos 11:1) in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Christians may call God "Abba Father" (Rom 8:15)<sup>1</sup> after having been adopted into His royal family. Christ Himself declares that "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt 12:49-50).<sup>2</sup> In Acts, Christians are sometimes known simply as the "brethren" (Acts 15:22). It is because "you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). In this household, barriers are abolished. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). Consequently, the days of discrimination are over. In Col 3:11 Paul uses four striking phrases: "fellow citizens," "fellow heirs," "fellow members," and "fellow partakers" to underscore the undifferentiated participation of all God's people in His blessings in a communal setting.

All three of these images portray the concept of the people of God as a community. By virtue of Christ's redemptive act, the people of God make up one body. Members of the church are linked not only to Christ but also to each

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<sup>1</sup>See also 1 John 2:29-3:3; 3:9, 10; Gal 4:4-7.

<sup>2</sup>See also Mark 3:34-35; Luke 8:19-21.

other in mutual functional dependence, in corporate worship and fellowship, and in ministry.

The communal aspect of the church is most crucial to the nurturing of new Chinese converts. When converted, the Chinese go from one social context to another. If the church as their new social framework provides the same warmth and mutual functional support as their former one did, the transition to Christianity will have been successful, and the chances of long-term survival as Christians enhanced. In cases where members are rejected by their former social group, the church as a community can step in to provide care and support. In any case, the surrogative role of the church provides the converts with a substitutionary kinship system that should parallel or even surpass their former primary relationships. The warmth and mutuality found in the Body of Christ should form a viable basis of new relationships for the contemporary Chinese.

#### Plausibility Structure

The church as the body of Christ should not only serve as a surrogative kin group to the Chinese, it should provide the setting in which the meaning system of its members is realized. According to Berger a social group of this kind functions as a plausibility structure:

Worlds are socially constructed and socially maintained. Their continuing reality, both objective (as common, taken-for-granted facticity) and subjective (as facticity imposing itself on individual consciousness), depends upon specific social processes,

namely those processes that ongoingly reconstruct and maintain the particular worlds in question. Conversely, the interruption of these social processes threatens the (objective and subject) reality of the worlds in question. Thus each world requires a social "base" for its continuing existence as a world that is real to actual human beings. This "base" may be called its plausibility structure.<sup>1</sup>

Berger goes on to describe why all religious traditions require specific communities of believers such as the Christian *koinonia* for their continuing plausibility. Berger maintains that religious experience is greatly enhanced by the function of these social structures which define and maintain belief systems and associated behavioral expectations. To a great extent, what is real and true for a person is what the group affirms as being real and true. When these social structures falter, the nomos of reality may turn into anomy. When they thrive, they give the believers social support and reinforce their worldview.<sup>2</sup>

Plausibility structure may be especially helpful in providing and maintaining meaning system of groups in high-tech societies where people experience a host of complex personal and social predicaments. Not the least of these problems is the sense of isolation. Living in highrise buildings, many feel alienated and segregated. Urbanization has narrowed the physical distance between people but

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<sup>1</sup>Berger, The Sacred Canopy, 45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. See also Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 119-68.

widened their social distance.<sup>1</sup>

Besides increasing isolation, people tend to experience a loss of the meaning of existence as well. Jacques Ellul calls the forces at work in a technological world "The Technique"--a pervasive method of problem-solving that asks, "How can we best solve this problem now?" rather than, "What is the ultimate objective?"<sup>2</sup> People feel they are treated as a means to an end without regard to personhood or the meaning of existence. As attested in chapter 4, Chinese in East Asia to a large measure have also experienced meaninglessness and loneliness.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck state succinctly, "The individual is not a human being except as he is part of a social order."<sup>3</sup> Since time immemorial, human beings have learned that they cannot live without friends. As Herbert

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<sup>1</sup>This social phenomenon has been demonstrated by findings from research conducted in public housing areas. Some findings from Singapore include Riaz Hassan, "Social and Psychological Implications of High Density," Ekistics 39 (June 1975): 382-6; Mui-Teng Yap, "Privacy and Neighborliness," B.Sc. academic exercise, University of Singapore, 1975; and Soo-Hong Lim, "Relocation, Social Network and Neighboring Interaction in a Block of Flats: A Case Study," B.Sc. academic exercise, University of Singapore, 1973.

<sup>2</sup>Jacques Ellul, The Technological Society, trans. by John Wilkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 3-22. Ellul's latest book The Technological Bluff is another penetrating critique of modern society. He shows how we have mistakenly allowed technology to deceive us into seeing global and individual problems in terms of technical progress. See The Technological Bluff, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>3</sup>Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 18.

Martin says, "The greatest generic bond that makes the world consciously kin is the will to friendship. It is the heart's desire, the world's need."<sup>1</sup>

What kind of a church is likely to appeal to the contemporary Chinese? A church that provides social and psychological security and support in place of primary relationships; a church which functions as a plausibility structure through which a meaning system may be communicated and made meaningful.

#### Social Networking

Not only can the church assume a surrogate role and function as a plausibility structure, it can also use social networking as a basis for reaching the contemporary Chinese.

The church as a plausibility structure underlines the potentiality of doing evangelism in a "natural way." Traditionally, missionary evangelistic methodology has been dominated by two main approaches. First, the content-oriented approach emphasizes on the imparting of certain correct information in a teacher-student situation, and second, the confrontationally oriented approach that accentuates the use of the right technique in a salesman-

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Martin, A Philosophy of Friendship (New York: Dial Press, 1935), 194.

customer situation.<sup>1</sup> These conventional approaches often have limited member participation and the meager result has been disappointing. But working through a pre-existing social group represents an alternate strategy. Research from the various churches has amply validated the notion that the best potential means of recruiting converts is along the lines of pre-existing social relationships.<sup>2</sup> Natural ties of friendship are there. McGavran calls these "the bridges of God."<sup>3</sup> Others name it friendship evangelism or the relationally oriented approach in which conversion is a process of genuine relationship of caring, listening, sharing, and growing in a friend to friend situation. Parish consultant Lyle Schaller after twenty-five years of research indicates that two-thirds to three-quarters of converts come from their own kinship and friendship network. In fast growing churches, the range is between 65 to 85 percent, and in the fastest growing churches, converts won

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<sup>1</sup>W. Charles Arn, "Evangelism or Disciple Making?" in Church Growth: State of the Art, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986), 63.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Oscar Lewis, "Seventh-day Adventists in a Mexican Village," in Process and Pattern in Culture: Essays in Honor of Julian H. Steward, ed. Robert A. Manners (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1964); John Lofland, Doomsday Cult (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1966); Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine, "Five Factors Crucial to the Growth and Spread of a Modern Religious Movement," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 7 (Spring 1968): 23-40.

<sup>3</sup>Donald A. McGavran, The Bridges of God (New York: Friendship Press, 1981).

through the kinship and friendship network account for about 90 percent of all baptisms.<sup>1</sup>

It has been found that converts won through the relational approach are not likely to leave the church after joining. Again, the key is in the plausibility structures. In a social group situation, converts are able to sustain their commitment because their beliefs are constantly affirmed and revitalized by the group. Schaller's research reveals that "the ones least likely to become inactive members are those who become part of a group, where membership in that face-to-face small group is meaningful *before* formally uniting with that congregation. They are assimilated *before* they join."<sup>2</sup> In a study comparing active and inactive members, it was found that those who continued as active church members had been exposed to an average of 5.79 different Christian influences prior to their commitment, whereas dropouts had only 2.16 exposures by comparison.<sup>3</sup> Though Schaller's research was conducted in the West, it is expected that the same principle applies in the East, for the functions of plausibility structures are likely to transcend cultural and national boundaries.

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<sup>1</sup>Lyle E. Schaller, "Six Targets for Growth," The Lutheran 13 (September 3, 1975): 11-13.

<sup>2</sup>Lyle E. Schaller, Assimilating New Members (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 76.

<sup>3</sup>Flavil Yeakley, Why Churches Grow (Arvada, CO: Christian Communications, 1979), 65.

The importance of social contacts through networking not only highlights perhaps the most successful means of evangelism, it also underlines the crucial role the laity play in creating and maintaining these social contacts. Witnessing is the responsibility of all believers, not exclusively the pastor's. Moreover, a Christian's daily work is to be considered an avenue for service. The laity are said to be the "dispersion of the church."<sup>1</sup> They can penetrate more deeply into diverse social networks than the average pastor has access to. Elton Trueblood calls this witnessing approach the "strategy of penetration."<sup>2</sup> Trueblood notes that Christ's figures of speech such as salt, light, keys, bread, water, and leaven all have a commonality, that is, they represent some kind of penetration. He explains:

The purpose of the salt is to penetrate meat and thus preserve it; the function of the light is to penetrate the darkness; the only use of the keys is to penetrate the lock; bread is worthless until it penetrates the body; water penetrates the hard crust of the earth; leaven penetrates the dough, to make it rise.<sup>3</sup>

Just as these figures show unequivocally the function of the laity in their daily spheres of work and influence, the Chinese members should be taught how they can

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<sup>1</sup>Hendrik Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 181.

<sup>2</sup>D. Elton Trueblood, The Company of the Committed (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 68.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

effectively work through their social network to utilize the bridges of God. Indeed, the success of the lay people's ministry must be measured not by how many attend church each week but by what they do during the week.

Social contacts among the kin and friends underscore yet another significance of social networking, that of the cell groups. In recent years, there has been skepticism about large organizations, and in the midst of increasing impersonality and anonymity many religious organizations have turned to operating in small groups, base communities, house-groups, and the like.<sup>1</sup> The phenomenal success of the world's largest church, the Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, is based upon the establishment of cell groups.<sup>2</sup> Its formula of achievement in phenomenal church growth has been adopted worldwide. Even Billy Graham who is renowned for his large scale crusades is now incorporating principles of cell groups in his public meetings. For instance, the Hong Kong Billy Graham Crusade in 1989 has been extended by video in 1991 to 70,000 locations in thirty countries in Asia. In Singapore, the plan calls for the saturation of the entire island with hundreds of "television house parties." In each

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<sup>1</sup>Leslie Newbigin, "Mission in the 1990s: Two Views," International Bulletin of Missionary Research 13 (July 1989): 102.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Yonggi Cho, Successful Home Cell Groups (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1981). See also John N. Vaughan, The World's 20 Largest Churches: Church Growth Principles in Action (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 35-49.

host family where the party is to be held, nonbelievers are invited to view the video cassettes of the Hong Kong Crusade.<sup>1</sup> The principle of networking appears to be a workable approach in these Chinese communities.

Francis Hsu says it right, "For the Chinese, his family and its direct and widest extension, the clan, are the beginning and end of his human universe."<sup>2</sup> The church as the body of Christ and the surrogate family of the Chinese provides a natural network of relationships. Such networking among friends and acquaintances is not only culturally congruous to the Chinese, but also conducive to greater chances of success in evangelism among the Chinese.

#### Summary

The church as the Body of Christ must respond to the new generation of Chinese according to their present needs: the weakening or loss of meaning and of primary relationships. These needs may be fulfilled by the church playing the role of a surrogate family in which Christian friendships take the place of primary relationships. The church also functions as a plausibility maintenance structure in which the Chinese find meaning in a group context. Finally, the church may capitalize upon the method

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<sup>1</sup>Richard S. Greene, "Thirty Countries, 70,000 Crusades Bring Gospel to Millions," Decision 32 (April 1991): 28-9.

<sup>2</sup>Hsu, Clan, Caste, and Club, 234.

of networking through which the Chinese may be won to Christ by personal social contacts.

#### The Church as Worshiping Community

The church as the Body of Christ is also a worshipping community in the "breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Worship as a communal act is a regular and integral part of the church.

How does our understanding of the Chinese worldview enlighten us on the type of worship service with which the Chinese are comfortable and find profitable? To elucidate this question, we return to the conclusions in chapters 3 and 4 pertaining to the Chinese esteem for particularity and practicality.

#### Worship as Concrete Experience

The Chinese bent to concreteness should inform the way worship is conducted. Worship should be so designed to stress its tangible nature. Nowhere is this nature demonstrated more clearly than in holy communion. The bread and wine as concrete symbols of Christ's body and blood are commemorations of His atoning sacrifice and anticipation of His soon return. Whether in sacrament or sermon, worship that appeals to the Chinese mind appears to possess this tangibility of reality. In such worship, the reality is affirmed--the reality of divine action delivering humans from their sin and death and bringing them to participate in

eternal life. Thus the soteriological nature of God's saving act in human history must be emphasized alongside the concrete reality of this act.

Perhaps because of this affinity to concreteness, the communion service should be held more frequently. More emphasis should also be given to the ordinance of humility as an explicit memorial of Christ's condescension. Baptism as a tangible expression of Christ's death and resurrection and as a symbol of being dead to sin and alive to God should also be carefully planned and elaborately enacted.

The visual-oriented Chinese are also likely to be captivated by a generous use of visual aids in worship service. Sight and sound engage the senses and heighten one's perception of symbols such as the bread and wine. When worship is perceived as a concrete event or experience, it becomes an encounter between worshiper and God. Music and drama are effective facilitators of such encounter.

#### Music

Music is a powerful aid to worship because it is a more expressive medium than ordinary speech.<sup>1</sup> It helps to verbalize praise and supplication and serves to concretize expressions and give them a sense of realness.

Most Chinese worship services today use Western music with Chinese words. Often this Anglo-Chinese blend

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<sup>1</sup>James F. White, Introduction to Christian Worship (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 99.

appears to be a mismatch that bears little resemblance to indigenous Chinese music. Nida tells of the experience of a taxi driver in India who was asked by a man just when the services in a certain Christian church would be over. The taxi man replied, "I don't know, but there are always four noises, and there have already been two!"<sup>1</sup> We have no reason to believe the Chinese carry their tune in "Christian" music any better than their Indian counterparts, for Francis Hsu spells out clearly that Chinese music by Western standards is considered primitive:

Two characteristics distinguish Chinese music from its well-developed Western counterpart: the absence of harmony and an emphasis on the programmatic. No matter how many instruments perform at the same time, Chinese music is always in unison. Musical theory is unelaborated, musical instruments are never standardized, music scales are not variegated, and the total musical repertoire is extremely small in view of both China's size and its long history.<sup>2</sup>

Hsu's comment may be the reason why when some Chinese try to sing hymns set to Western music, they simply "murder" the tune. But in the past five years in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, Chinese Christian artists have produced new series of Christian songs and music that have a distinctive Chinese flavor. The new trend may be the beginning of an new era in the indigenization of Christian worship, particularly of songs and music which should be

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 175.

<sup>2</sup>Hsu, American and Chinese, 390.

invaluable tools to communicate the gospel on a familiar wavelength to the present-day Chinese.

#### Drama

Weber observes that illiterates have the tendency to think in concrete terms and that their communication is often pictorial, symbolic, and dramatic. He recommends dramatic method of communication as the most effective means of reaching them.<sup>1</sup> Though most Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are literate, communication through drama also should be a powerful means of getting across the gospel message. A review of Chinese Christian literature reveals very little regarding experimentation with drama.

Traditionally, the Chinese drama or operas enjoyed immense popularity. They had become an important part of the Chinese national life. Lin explains it this way:

Apart from teaching the people an intense love of music, it has taught the Chinese people, over ninety percent of whom are illiterate, a knowledge of history truly amazing, crystallizing, as it were, the folklore and entire historical and literary tradition in plays of characters that have captured the heart and imagination of the common men and women.<sup>2</sup>

Lin goes on to describe how Chinese operas, besides popularizing history and music, helped to shape the morality of the Chinese people. Through stories with human

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<sup>1</sup>H. R. Weber, The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates: Based on a Missionary Experience in Indonesia (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1960), 70.

<sup>2</sup>Yu-tang Lin, 265.

characters, operas provided concrete conceptions of good and evil conduct.<sup>1</sup>

The use of drama in gospel presentation has been found to be successful in many places. While Hindu villagers soon become tired of the Western style of preaching and leave, they will stay half the night to see a drama to its end. In South India, for example, the performance of Christian dramas or "burrakathas" usually lasts long into the night.<sup>2</sup>

Bong-Rin Ro relates his experience in a evangelistic crusade in Rangoon, Burma. No foreign missionaries have been in Burma since 1966. But his heart thrilled as he witnessed a dramatic presentation at the crusade by nine theology students of the life experiences of Ko Tha Byn, the first Burmese convert who had been a gang leader and killed more than 30 people before his conversion through the ministry of Adoniram Judson. At the end of the drama, about 20 people responded to an invitation to accept Christ.<sup>3</sup> The success of the crusade underscores the functionality of using a non-traditional mode of presenting the gospel in ways understandable to the local people.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 266.

<sup>2</sup>Luke and Carmen, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup>Bong-Rin Ro, "Contextualization: Asian Theology," in The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts, ed. Bong-Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 68.

The employment of drama has been found politically effective in the People's Republic of China. Drama was used to indoctrinate people and "convert" them to the Maoist cause. This utilization of drama to inform illiterates was a continuation of the earlier imperial pattern of contracting playwrights and actors' guilds to promote ideas that would be "evangelistically" supportive of government policies.<sup>1</sup>

Drama is a powerful means of communication because it is more than a mere enactment of a story--it is the reliving of an experience and the reaffirmation of a conviction. Nida maintains that drama involves complete identification, not merely with words, but with actions. He reckons it is the "closest approximation to the living reality that symbolism can ever have."<sup>2</sup>

The Chinese, with their bent toward reality-oriented thinking and living, should find a dramatic presentation of the gospel more in line with their linguistic composition and thought pattern than abstract preaching. Both music and drama heighten worship as a concrete experience.

#### Reorientation of Preaching

The Chinese affinity for concrete thinking also should inform preaching. Since the Chinese attach great

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Hunter, Brain-Washing in Red China (New York: Vanguard Press, 1953), 114-46.

<sup>2</sup>Nida, Message and Mission, 176-7.

significance to historical particularities, a reality-centered orientation will be the prime consideration in our discussion of the form and content of preaching.

In East Asia, one sometimes witnesses a legacy of the missionary era, that is, a Western style of preaching even though the Chinese language is used. The most common phenomenon is a three-point didactic sermon, usually philosophical and abstract in substance and form. Most pragmatic Chinese find such preaching difficult to grasp, let alone to respond to. A cognitive approach to preaching is alien to the Chinese mind, as are transplanted Western models of church music, worship service, architecture, hymns, and evangelistic crusades. Even courses offered at theological seminaries in East Asia are inherited from the West with little or no modification.<sup>1</sup> This is not to say the West has nothing to offer. The point is that the missionary approach should not be a direct foreign transplantation that gives little consideration to the cultural context of the target audience. In short, methodologies must first be "climatized" or sinicized so that they may grow and prosper under indigenous conditions. The fact that Buddhism found it necessary to change its language from the universal to the particular in order to "fit-in" with the Chinese should be a lesson to the church.

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Harvie M. Conn and Samuel F. Rowen, eds., Mission and Theological Education in World Perspective (Farmington, MI: Associates of Urbanus, 1984).

The Form: Situation-oriented  
Preaching

The Chinese bent toward situation-centered thinking lends itself to narrative preaching. A story, whether actual or analogical, depicts situations that the mind perceives as involving events and characters. The drama in a story may have taken place years ago, but when it is narrated, it assumes an existential attribute so that the listeners can almost "see," "hear," and "feel" what is going on.

Narrative preaching is sometimes called story preaching. Whatever it may be termed, it is the approach to preaching in which narrative is used as a vehicle of communication. Narrative preaching generally finds receptive acceptance among the Chinese because they often communicate with one another in story form. Whether it is settling disputes or negotiating a business contract, a direct confrontational mode of communication is foreign to the Chinese. They prefer an indirect manner which introduces the form before revealing the content. The form is invariably a story or an analogy of some kind. One needs to listen attentively and patiently to catch "the point" which usually comes at the end of the story, and the end may not be in sight until after some time.

Ideology aside, Mao Tse-Tung was a master storyteller. His story language commanded enormous respect among the populace. The following is one of the analogies he

cited in the conflict between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party:

To whom should the fruits of victory in the War of Resistance belong? It is very obvious. Take a peach tree for example. When the tree yields peaches they are the fruits of victory. Who is entitled to pick the peaches? Ask who planted and watered the tree. Chiang Kai-Shek squatting on the mountain did not carry a single bucket of water, and yet he is now stretching out his arm from afar to pick the peaches. "I, Chiang Kai-shek, own these peaches," he says, "I am the landlord, you are my serfs and I won't allow you to pick any." We have refuted him in the press. We say, "You never carried any water, so you have no right to pick the peaches. We the people of the Liberated Areas watered the tree day in day out and have the most right to gather the fruit."<sup>1</sup>

Hsu maintains that storytelling has always been part of Chinese life and culture. Since most Chinese in traditional China were illiterate, storytelling was a major form of disseminating information to the masses:

Storytelling is one of the most ubiquitous forms of entertainment in China. Storytellers are found in every market place and temple fair, and in all cities and towns. They are in great demand during the ancestral festival of the Seventh Moon and the Spring Festival at the end of the Chinese year. They are frequently hired to entertain guests at a wedding, funeral, or birthday celebration. They may recite a single episode or they may be commissioned to tell an entire novel from beginning to end. They tell their tales in different ways: some by talking; others by interspersing their talk with singing, since most of the popular novels are also available in lyric form. As a matter of fact, storytelling most decidedly antedated written fiction in the vernacular in China.<sup>2</sup>

In contemporary Chinese societies, novels and

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<sup>1</sup>Mao Tse-Tung, Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. IV (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1969), 16.

<sup>2</sup>Hsu, Americans and Chinese, 41.

stories are as ubiquitous as storytellers of old. Everyday newspapers run half a dozen ancient as well as modern story serials, and these are the first things many readers read in the mornings. Stories made into movies or television mini-series also attract large numbers of viewers.

In the West, communication of the gospel through narratives is emerging as one of the major forms of preaching in the eighties.<sup>1</sup> A number of preachers and authors who used this approach appear to have been successful. Among them are C. S. Lewis whose writings have been known to reach the hearts of common people. John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, for a number of years, was the second most widely read English book. Some call it the most influential religious book in English literature. Both Lewis and Bunyan used story as the vehicle for communicating the gospel.

Stories are widely known as a universal mode of communication. Wilder believes that in actuality the Gospels are oral forms of communication that generally

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<sup>1</sup>A number of books tout this approach. A representative sampling would include George M. Bass, The Story and the Song (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing Co.); Edmund Steimle, Morris Niedenthal, and Charles L. Rice, Preaching the Story (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Richard A. Jensen, Telling the Story: Variety and Imagination in Preaching (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980); Eugene L. Lowry, The Homiletical Plot (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), and idem, Doing Time in the Pulpit: The Relationship between Narrative and Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985).

appear in three literary forms: drama, narrative, and poetry.

The Word of God found its appropriate vehicles both in the sense of images and of forms. Within limits one can say that to this very day and always Christianity will most characteristically communicate itself at least in these three modes: the drama, the narrative, the poem--just as it will always be bound in some degree to its primordial symbols, no matter how much the world may change. In a double sense Father Thornton's statement holds true: "The contents of the revelation are mysteriously inseparable from the forms in which they are conveyed."<sup>1</sup>

Wilder's point is well taken. If the gospel is to be effectively communicated, it should be done in the forms of the culture in which it finds itself. The content and the form should be inseparable. They are the configuration of the biblical text in its totality. The content should not be wrangled out of the form of the text in the process of sermon construction. Jensen concurs with Wilder when he says:

The biblical writers very often communicate with us through stories. Why should we de-story these stories in our sermons and simply pass on the point of the story to our listeners? Why should we rip the content out of the form as our normal homiletical process? If the story (or whatever literary form the text may take) is of no matter why didn't the biblical writer just tell us the point in the first place? Why didn't the author of Genesis 2-3 just tell us what sin is? Why did he or she tell a story? And if that biblical author carefully constructed a "sin story" why do we always feel compelled to improve on the story by preaching on the point?

A holistic exegesis must be directed at both form and content. It is not enough to get the meaning out of

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<sup>1</sup>Amos Wilder, Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 43.

the text and into the sermon. We must pay attention to the total configuration of textual form/content.<sup>1</sup>

From the evidence gathered above, situation-centered preaching in the form of narrative appears to be congruent to Chinese thought patterns. Most Chinese worshippers should appreciate this type of preaching more readily than they do the abstract kind. Though the form of preaching is important, the content should also be considered. This is the subject of the following section.

#### The Content: Meaning-Oriented Preaching

Secularization has contributed to a host of problems among the contemporary Chinese, not the least of which is a sense of meaninglessness or loss of purpose in life. If the communication of the gospel is to be effective, the content of preaching should address this problem.

The social and health problems produced by the technological age and rapid economic advancement have been referred to as the "human cost of development." In Taiwan, for instance, severe alcoholism among the Han Chinese population has increased over the past forty years by 100 to 200 fold, compared to the ten-fold increase in real per capita Gross National Product (GNP) over the same period.<sup>2</sup> Hong Kong has earned the reputation of being the "stress

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<sup>1</sup>Jensen, 129.

<sup>2</sup>"The Human Cost of Development," Free China Review 40 (May 1990): 1.

city" of Asia. Its competitive lifestyle accounts for 700 suicides and 1,700 suicide attempts each year.<sup>1</sup> In Singapore, reports indicate a three-and-a-half-fold increase of young psychiatric patients at a government child psychiatric clinic from 245 in 1975 to 983 in 1985. A corresponding rise of patient count for psychiatrists in private practice is also evident. Among the factors cited are stress and pressure from high parental expectations, inability to cope with studies and examinations, and relationship problems.<sup>2</sup>

A corollary of meaninglessness is fear. It has been found among the contemporary Chinese that the worst fear is probably the fear of the dead.<sup>3</sup> Most Chinese fear contact with the spirit of a deceased person. Others are fearful over the uncertainty of the future. As pointed in chapter 4, this probably explains why astrology is a growing business in these three societies.

Undoubtedly, rapid economic development has brought material wealth and a higher standard of living. But not everything is as rosy as one would hope. Contemporary urban Chinese are in a period of transition from a traditional

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Holley, "Good News in Hong Kong," Decision 31 (May 1990): 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ai-Phang Ho, "Getting on with Life," Mirror 26 (15 March, 1990): 10.

<sup>3</sup>Griffiths, 65; and Ray Nyce, "The Gospel and Chinese Religions Today," Southeast Asia Journal of Theology 14 (1973): 48.

order of life to a more Western mode of living. Changes in Europe took place over several centuries, whereas the changes in East Asia occur in decades. Obviously, not all can cope with the pace and magnitude of change. The gradual evolution of traditional culture into a hybrid culture between the East and the West produces a loss of the meaning of life for many.

Berger's thesis is that the process of secularization will not go on endlessly from which there is no return. It is his opinion that the human need for meaning eventually establishes the internal limits of secularization. Individuals yearn to grasp the reality in which they live in order to be able to feel that their lives are meaningful.<sup>1</sup> The irony is that secularization tends to undermine the traditional theodicies that have provided meaning during meaning-threatening experiences.<sup>2</sup> Most religions offer theodicies of suffering and death. Berger states, "The sacred cosmos, which transcends and includes man in its ordering of reality, thus provides man's ultimate shield against the terror of anomy."<sup>3</sup> But modern society is less capable of providing this "sacred canopy" because the meaning-providing efficacy of culture and religion have

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<sup>1</sup>Berger, The Homeless Mind, 15.

<sup>2</sup>McGuire, 29. See also Berger, The Sacred Canopy, 24.

<sup>3</sup>Berger, The Sacred Canopy, 27.

become somewhat impotent. Where there is no meaning, there is chaos and disorientation.

Since meaning is fundamental to a sense of order, preaching must provide this meaning system to satisfy the Chinese gnawing hunger for peace and assurance. Effective preaching to the Chinese must spell out fundamental answers to allay fears. Besides, it must confront the problems related to the bondage of meaninglessness. It must also address questions of loneliness and discontentment. It must speak to the need for a sense of wholeness of person which can be found only in God.

#### Summary

In view of the Chinese esteem for particularity, we need to rethink the entire spectrum of worship and evaluate how well it is in-tune with the Chinese mind. Meaningful worship to the contemporary Chinese means worship as a concrete experience. It must engage the senses and it must afford opportunities for expressions of faith, principally through music and dramas. As for preaching, the traditional three-point sermon does little to synchronize with Chinese patterns of thought. But situation-oriented and need-oriented preaching seems to appeal more directly to the Chinese mind than the logical-abstract type.

#### The Church as Herald

The church in the contemporary Chinese society is

more than the Body of Christ and a worshiping community. It is a herald as well. It is to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.<sup>1</sup>

To reach the Chinese with the gospel, the message must be presented in a manner that appeals to 1) their worldview and 2) their existential needs. Two major obstacles that impede this kind of communication include the Chinese perception of an uncomfortable dualism in Christianity and the void of what Hiebert calls "the excluded middle." These concerns are described and addressed in the two following sections: wholism and functionality.

### Wholism

One of the most conspicuous themes of the Chinese worldview as alluded to in chapters 3 and 4 is its vision of unity. The Chinese believe all things and events belong to one undifferentiated reality. The totality of reality in all its dimensions are interdependent. The Chinese regard

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<sup>1</sup>The church as herald is one of the models taken from Avery Dulles' Models of the Church (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1978), 76-88. Obviously the church as herald does not adequately represent the totality of the church. One may look at the church as a servant, a prophetic voice, a sign of God's kingdom, or an interim worshiping community for the nurture and support of God's people during the period between the two Advents of Jesus Christ, to be replaced at the Second Advent by the Kingdom--visibly and powerfully displayed--"that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24-28). However, only the herald model is used here to accentuate the importance of the gospel message commissioned by God and carried by the church as God's mouthpiece.

the internal reality of humans and the external reality of the cosmos as interconnected and therefore as comprising one whole. The two have an intrinsic relationship that is characterized by harmony. This wholistic worldview permeates and regulates every aspect of the Chinese way of life and thinking. Accordingly Chinese thought tends to be intuitive, concrete, wholistic, and paradoxical. This Chinese traditional proclivity to harmony has not changed much through the years. In fact chapter 4 suggests that most contemporary Chinese are still very much predisposed to this worldview assumption.

How does Christianity with its perceived dualism<sup>1</sup> find a hearing among the Chinese? Most Chinese have never quite understood the brand of Christianity interpreted and practiced in the West. To them Western thinking is alien to their thought pattern. Westerners tend to express ideas in bi-polar terms: good or evil, right or wrong, black or white, true or false, matter or spirit, science or religion. This dualism is rooted in the Graeco-Roman view of the world and enshrined in Platonic philosophy. On this view, what is not good must be evil and what is not evil must be good. No room is given to the gray area which recognizes the

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<sup>1</sup>This aspect of Christianity should by no means be equated with Manichaeism, a Gnostic religion that maintained the theme of dualism as a means of explaining the existence and relationships of good and evil in the universe. Though expressions of dualism in Christianity are limited, Christianity is often perceived by the Chinese as a dualistic religion.

possibility of something as neither good nor evil, or, good and evil at the same time. Undoubtedly this Western dualism made rational enquiry and scientific discoveries possible, but it remains a stumbling block to the Chinese. Christianity appears to them to be a religion of conflict because most Christian thoughts are expressed in bipolar terms such as secular and sacred. But to the Chinese, proposals framed in the form of antitheses simply do not exist. The Chinese think it wrong to speak in terms of a tension between two seemingly opposite entities. To them, each entity must be defined in terms of the other for each is fulfilled in a totality constituted by both. On this view both are therefore necessary and neither is complete without the other.

Presentation of the gospel to the contemporary Chinese must avoid the either/or dichotomy and maximize a both/and approach. To facilitate this approach, a theology of wholism is needed. Basic elements of this theology should include inclusivity, the great controversy theme, and the doctrine of man.

#### Inclusivity

Most Chinese regard Christianity as an exclusive religion. Its exclusivity is due in part to what the Chinese perceive as its dualism. One may argue that Christianity is indeed an exclusive religion for good reasons. The uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ is

nonnegotiable. The scandal of the cross is an exclusive reality. All forms of religious faith are not of equal validity and worthwhileness to the God who is over all. In fact the first word of the gospel is "Repent!" All humanly contrived religion is to some degree human-centered and hence what Karl Barth called "*Unglaube!*"

While one is unapologetic in admitting that Christianity is an exclusive religion, one may also point out that the way the gospel is presented does not have to be needlessly exclusive. A more inclusive manner of communication will certainly make the gospel more "at home" to the Chinese worldview. The Chinese who are used to accepting and living with contradictions should have no trouble understanding God as the God of transcendence as well as the God of immanence, Christ as at once man and God, and the Holy Spirit as residing in the heart and in the world. The gospel expressed in inclusive terms may find a more ready acceptance among the contemporary Chinese.

#### Great Controversy Theme

The subject of great controversy<sup>1</sup> preached by the Seventh-day Adventists appears apropos to reinforce the wholistic approach to the gospel. The great controversy is a comprehensive theme of God's salvific action in the history of the universe. It accents (1) the reality of

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<sup>1</sup>See Seventh-day Adventists Believe, 99-105.

evil, and (2) the great cosmic struggle between God and Satan that involves the entire universe. The conflict that started in heaven (Rev 12) continues today involving all God's children on planet earth (Eph 6:12). The struggle will end with God's final triumph at the Second Advent of Christ when Satan is destroyed. Thus the great conflict that began with Eden lost will end with Eden restored.

The great controversy theme may be significant to the contemporary Chinese in three ways. First, it gives a wholistic view of human and cosmic reality that is analogous to Chinese assumptions of wholism. Second, it reveals the origin of evil and answers questions on the whys and wherefores of human suffering. Though the co-existence of good and evil appears to be dualistic, this time-conditioned dualism is set in the context of the cosmic reality of wholeness. Third, it provides assurance pertaining to the eventual elimination of evil and the restoration of all things. The world that has been fragmented by evil will once again be made whole.

#### The Doctrine of Human Nature

The Seventh-day Adventist wholistic view of human nature may provide yet another answer to the problems caused by dualistic theological thinking. Adventists recognize the created unity of human beings. God breathed the breath of life into the lifeless matter formed by the dust of the ground, and "man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). The

union of dust with the breath of life resulted in a living being, or soul. Each person is created in the image of God as a whole being, physically, mentally, and spiritually integrated (3 John 2). In fact, Paul's call for sanctification is based on the wholistic three-fold union, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23). The three are indivisible. The soundness of mind depends on the wholeness of body, and vice versa. The state of the mind is inseparable from the condition of the body or spirit. Thus Adventists consider that the maintenance of a level of health which engenders a sound mind is as much a religious duty as going to church.

Like the Chinese, Adventists also believe each person is part of the physical universe. As such each is subject to natural laws as much as is the physical world. Compliance with these laws promotes physical health, whereas disobedience to them produces broken body and spirit.

The Adventist doctrine of human nature has important missiological implications. Adventists reject Platonic concepts of dualism and think in terms of harmony of soul and body; so do the Chinese. Both agree that harmony fosters happiness and health. Chinese believe that harmony among the cosmic forces brings health, happiness and prosperity, and Adventists regard the harmonious

relationship between body, mind, and spirit as fundamental for the total well-being of the individual. Moreover, Adventists hold that while the maintenance of health and happiness is possible on this earth, final and perfect restoration is yet to come. Harmony is possible both now and in the future.

#### Implications of a Wholistic Theology

A theology of wholism applies not only to the presentation of the gospel to the Chinese, it is also pertinent to the ongoing Chinese Christian life. To some Chinese who are used to going to the temple every day, attending church only once a week seems incongruous. If religion is significant to one's life, then it should be significant every day. Thus church life to the Chinese should be a seven-day-a-week affair. To call Chinese Adventists "Seven-days Adventists" may be closer to the truth than may be realized, for religion is a full-time undertaking for the Chinese. The implication of this is that the church may find it beneficial to open its doors more than once or twice a week to those who wish to pray or meditate.

To the wholistic-oriented Chinese, Christianity appears to be a religion of the mind, not of the body or of the spirit. The compartmentalization of sacred and secular is as puzzling as is incongruent. Christian church services are often regarded by the Chinese as a little rituals

believers go through each week. After the service is over the believers lead their own "worldly" lives the rest of the week. Religion as the Chinese understand it is an overarching and all-encompassing experience. It is deeply embedded in life. It is more than a system of beliefs. To be a Chinese Christian means full participation in church and its functions. The Chinese want to know what Christianity has to say about other dimensions of one's personal life--vocations, money, economic struggles, education, family, health, and the like. It would appear to be necessary for the church to expand its church life so as to include activities and programs beyond the spiritual realm in order to satisfy the needs and provide fulfillment for Chinese Christians.

### Functionality

Another obstacle to be overcome in making the gospel meaningful to the Chinese is the void of the so-called Excluded Middle.

### The Excluded Middle

The this-worldly propensity of the Chinese and their almost obsessive concern for success, wealth, and longevity has been addressed at length in chapters 3 and 4. We have also considered how this tendency prompts them to seek to elude evil forces and secure supernatural assistance. This common practice of getting in touch with the supernatural

was prevalent in ancient China and, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, remains popular in contemporary Chinese societies. Increased wealth notwithstanding, the Chinese still flock to diviners and palm-readers, even in highly urbanized areas.

Hiebert uses what he calls an analytical framework to explicate religious systems.<sup>1</sup> The framework has three levels that explain questions that arise out of everyday life. In the West these three levels are reduced to two, namely science and religion (Figure 1). Science is a system of explanation that answers questions about the nature of the world. It includes the social sciences that deal with social problems and conflict and the natural sciences that seek to understand nature. At the other pole, religion provides a system of explanation that gives meaning to ultimate concerns such as origins, destiny, and the purpose of life. The Western worldview provides answers at only these two explanatory levels. A middle zone is missing which Hiebert calls the "excluded middle."<sup>2</sup>

The excluded middle zone has to do with power within

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<sup>1</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," Missiology: An International Review 10 (January 1982): 35-47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 43. Hiebert believes the bifurcation between science and religion is an outcome of Platonic dualism which has been discussed earlier in this chapter. See also Rodger K. Bufford, The Human Reflex: Behavioral Psychology in Biblical Perspective (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 30.

folk religion, animism, magic, and astrology. It answers to questions pertaining to the sorrows of this present life and the uncertainty of the future. It also deals with concerns such as getting well from sickness, formulae for success in business, assurance of a male heir, luck and good grades in

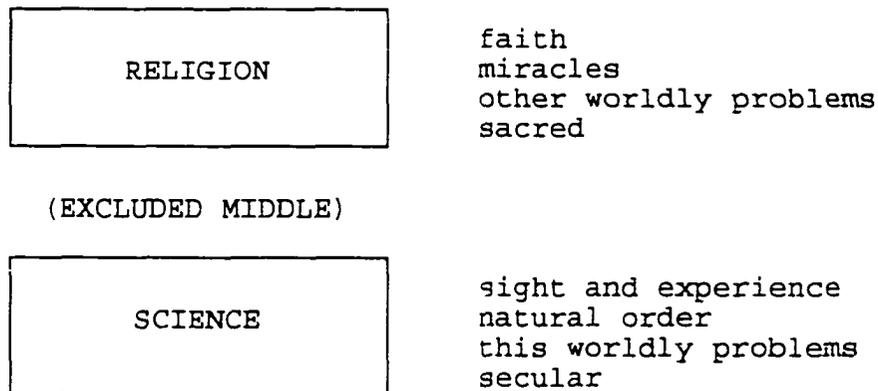


Fig. 1. A Western two-tiered view of reality

examinations, and the like. According to Hiebert, the Western worldview does not provide adequate explanations to these matters. It is impotent to give direct answers as do diviners to the everyday problems people encounter.

The problem of the excluded middle is a thorny issue. Some Christians have suggested the use of signs and healings as answers to the problem. Others feel that the charismatic movement provides an experiential fulfillment not found in the conventional Christian church. Whatever the merits of these solutions, the functional approach proposed below deserves attention, for it is more compatible

with the Chinese worldview than those listed above.

#### The Functional Approach

The Chinese passion for pragmatism and functionalism and the way this influences all aspects of Chinese life and thought has been noted in chapters 3 and 4. The contemporary Chinese as we understand them appear to be as this-worldly as ever. Concern for the here and now continues to preoccupy their minds to the exclusion of anything metaphysical.

The Chinese pragmatic concern for this present life represents one of the most vital entry points for the gospel. Long time Adventist missionary to China and Taiwan Milton Lee speaks from experience as he summarizes his philosophy of his work among the Chinese. He says the Chinese "are more impressed by a practical religion that will help them meet today's real problems, rather than one which promises only future bliss."<sup>1</sup> Lee's comment reflects his insider wisdom about the Chinese mind. Indeed, if ever the Chinese are to be won, the gospel must be presented in a less content-oriented, dogma-oriented, and cognition-oriented fashion and in more functional, pragmatic, and experiential terms. Important though the doctrinal systems are, they mean very little to the Chinese. The traditional

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<sup>1</sup>Milton Lee, "Presenting the Christian Gospel to the Chinese," unpublished mimeographed paper, p. 1, Far Eastern Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

content-oriented approach has not worked well during the past two centuries and is unlikely to work now or in the future. The Chinese must see that the gospel answers their needs. They must be convinced what the gospel does before they are convinced of what it *is*. If the gospel does not speak to their instinctive passion for the here and now, it has not spoken. The bottom line of religion to the Chinese is its functionality. If it is functional, it is likely to gain acceptance. If it is not, it may be rejected no matter how grand and majestic the truth is.

In practical terms, the Chinese esteem for functionality indicates the desirability of a major shift in mission strategy. Perhaps we should preach and teach fewer moral discourses that are lists of dos and don'ts with little to say about "what do I get out of this?" We could incorporate into our evangelistic strategy more life-oriented, meaning-oriented, health-oriented, and wholistic-oriented programs. A functional approach of this kind should take precedence over eschatology, important though that may be. This approach should make the gospel more conducive to the Chinese mode of thinking and serve as a powerful entering wedge.

After the gospel has gained entry, the process of discipleship begins. This is where church doctrines come in. An analysis of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 reveals four key words: *πορευθέντες* "going," *μαθητεύσατε*

"teach," ("disciple") βαπτίζοντες "baptizing," and διδάσκοντες "teaching." Of those four words, only "disciple" or "make disciple" is an imperative or a direct command. The other three are participles. The imperative of the mandate, then, according to Matthew is "to make disciples" of all nations. The going, teaching, and baptizing are the means of accomplishing the mandate. They are not ends in themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The other four accounts of the Great Commission do not expand on this focus. They do, however, add to the list of the means available to reach it. Mark 16:15,16 includes baptizing, and adds preaching. Luke 24:47,48 restates preaching, and adds witnessing. John 20:21 mentions sending. Acts 1:8 repeats witnessing and adds the geographical aspect of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. So, together with going, baptizing, and teaching, preaching and witnessing are added as part of the process of disciple making. Peter Wagner suggests that preaching is a *presoteric* (before salvation) activity, baptizing is a *consoteric* (with salvation) activity, and teaching is a *postsoteric* (after salvation) activity.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the functional

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Peters, A Biblical Theology of Missions (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 182; and C. Peter Wagner, Frontiers in Missionary Strategy (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 22.

<sup>2</sup>Wagner, 22.

approach to evangelism for the Chinese is never complete without the postsoteric teaching ministry. The former is life-oriented. The purpose is to gain a beachhead on the soul. The latter is characterized by a more doctrinal approach through which the convert is taught how to begin a new life in Christ.

#### Summary

The wholistic and harmonious worldview of the Chinese must be allowed to inform the way the gospel message is presented. An effectual gospel presentation may include both wholistic and functional approaches. The wholistic method may focus on the great controversy theme and the doctrine of the human nature. A wholistic message implies an all-embracing approach which includes the social and physical, as well as the spiritual dimensions of life. The functional approach is equally important. The gospel should be presented in terms of function rather than content, since the Chinese are more interested in what religion does than in what it is. Both the wholistic and functional approaches should serve as tenable bridges to reach the Chinese in the cultural context in which they live and think.

#### Summary and Conclusion

The twin processes of modernization and secularization have brought about great social change in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Increasingly the Chinese

have come to view modernity with nervous ambivalence and restless misgivings, for decades of rapid industrial and economic development have taken a heavy human toll in terms of social, physical, and psychological problems. The struggle has been to emulate the West while at the same time preserving the Chinese cultural heritage.

It is observed that this complex situation has several significant implications for the church. First, the transitional period from the traditional to the modern has precipitated a degree of freedom from familial and historical tutelage. Former ties to the family and tradition have been eroded. The loosening of rigid and authoritarian controls signals the dawning of fresh and unprecedented opportunities for mission among the contemporary Chinese.

Second, the Chinese group consciousness calls for a collective missiological approach. Although the traditional hierarchical structures have been weakened considerably, the modern Chinese remain gregarious and, therefore, a group orientedness should inform our evangelistic strategy. More emphasis should be placed on the group and less on the traditional individualistic mode of conversion.

Third, consideration should be given to the shape and social functions of the Chinese Christian church. The church is the Body of Christ whose function it is to provide fellowship and to create a meaning-reifying community for

believers. The church is also a community in which worship is a corporate as well as a concrete experience, and preaching is both situation-oriented and meaning-oriented. Further, the church is God's mouthpiece through which the gospel is to be presented wholistically. The Chinese regard for practicality implies that the traditional doctrinal style of preaching be de-emphasized and a more pragmatic and functional approach be adopted.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The purpose of this study is essentially missiological. The ultimate concern throughout has been the communication of the gospel to contemporary Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Hence, a sequence of thought has been pursued, beginning with a study of the process of secularization in Western society, moving to a description of the traditional Chinese worldview, and utilizing these as a base which seeks to investigate the effects of the twin processes of modernization and secularization on that worldview. It does not seem possible to grapple with the theoretical issues involved in the evangelization of the Chinese in these communities without a basic understanding of the process of change that have taken place in their societies during the past half century. The study moves to a conclusion with an analysis of the missiological implications which most closely compared to the worldview themes examined in chapter 4, and as such reflect the findings of the entire study.

Secularization is a process closely associated with the rise of modern Western civilization. Most sociologists

locate its origins in the Renaissance, and agree that it was strengthened by the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. The rise of rational sciences, the development of modern education and the modern state all contributed to the process. In this study secularization is defined as a process of fundamental social change in which traditional meaning systems and the worldview assumptions that underlie them undergo loss, replacement, or modification.

Secularization being a multi-dimensional process is a worldwide phenomenon, affecting Eastern as well as Western societies. The scope of its influence is universal, but the outcomes are different in different societies.

Secularization in the West has been characterized by a decline in institutional religion, with the result that organized religion has lost much of its former status and influence in society. The weakening of the social influence of religion has been partly attributed to the process of institutional differentiation in which the various spheres in society were separated from one another with the result that each developed its own specialized form in restricted spheres of influence. A corollary of the process of differentiation has been the privatization of the spiritual sphere into which religion has been confined and practiced. These developments have fostered the rise of individualism. Besides differentiation, privatization, and individualism,

the process of secularization also has led to the displacement of religious interpretations of reality by rational scientific explanation based on empirical evidence. As a consequence the world is less likely to be perceived as a sacred phenomenon and life is not generally regarded as an unfathomable mystery.

The processes of modernization and secularization have followed a different pattern in the Eastern societies where religion is not institutionalized and religion and culture are enmeshed as one. In that context, secularization is generally characterized by social and cultural changes that have weakened but not obliterated the traditional meaning systems that have guided society. The result has been a reorientation of some values and modification of social structures.

This study of secularization is intended to serve as a framework upon which the influence of modernization and secularization upon the worldview of the Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore may be examined. A worldview is a set of philosophical assumptions or presuppositions that a social group espouses in common. Worldview lies at the very core of culture; it is the way a group understands reality and itself. Most core assumptions constituting a worldview are learnt early in life and are deeply embedded in a person's consciousness. People in traditional societies do not usually think about their philosophical assumptions,

much less examine them. For this reason they generally believe their assumptions to be true and valid. Though hidden and often unobtrusive, a worldview has a profound influence upon a people's way of thinking and living.

For the purposes of evaluation, this study has utilized a theoretical paradigm comprised of five basic facets of the Chinese worldview. This paradigm includes hierarchy, antiquity, particularity, harmony, and practicality. Taken as a whole, this theoretical framework typifies the way traditional Chinese in general perceived reality and themselves.

The traditional Chinese esteem for hierarchy is expressed in a concern for the maintenance of proper rank in the social order, i.e., scholar-administrator, farmer, artisan, and merchant; and for proper relationships, i.e., men over women, parents over children, masters over peasants, etc.

The family, the most basic Chinese institution, was largely extended and patrilineal in structure. It was hierarchical as well as authoritarian. Parental authority over children was almost absolute, and filial piety was rigorously taught and often inordinately imposed. In the male-dominated society, women were subordinate and subservient to men. Marriage was arranged by parents and often without the consent of the betrothed.

The lineage was also an important component in the

kinship system in traditional China. It commanded awesome power and reverential respect and was one of the prime reasons for the Chinese propensity to group orientation. Most Chinese felt secure in the primary family and lineage relationships that provided emotional, moral, and economic support. Thus individual success did not so much hinge on individual performance as on the group performance. The group also arbitrated disputes and sought to preserve the "face" of the parties involved.

The Chinese reverence for antiquity was revealed in an obsessive concern with history. Past events and experiences evoked a sense of relevance and often served as blueprints for the future as well as the present. The aged were regarded as the repository of years of accumulated wisdom and were eulogized and highly exalted. They were often consulted and their advice taken seriously. The Chinese preoccupation with the past can also be seen in the importance attached to their ancestors and to the religious activities developed to worship them and gain their favor. The ancestors, they believed, could bestow protection, blessings, and good fortune on their living descendants only if they were properly cared for and regularly worshipped through elaborate rituals. The Chinese orientation to the past has been described by Western sociologists as synonymous with changelessness and deemed detrimental to progress.

The Chinese affinity for particularity constituted another dimension of their worldview assumptions. The Chinese tended to think in concrete terms. Both the Classics and the Chinese language contributed to this disposition. The Five Classics taught the importance of historical particularities. Attention was given to specific instances instead of general principles. The Chinese language being hieroglyphic presented characters in visually vivid forms which naturally reinforced the reality-centered pattern of thinking and writing. An important outcome of this inclination has been the non-development of science.

The Chinese affinity for harmony brought humans and nature together inasmuch as heaven and earth were regarded as parts of a comprehensive whole. Death belonged to the same realm of reality as life. Departed ancestors and living descendants were closely connected. This tendency to harmony was partly influenced by Confucius' Doctrine of the Golden Mean in which moderation was prized as a virtue in life. This proclivity contributed to the Chinese inclusive approach to religion, stressing respect and appreciation for polarities rather than contempt and antagonism, complementariness rather than contrariness. The affinity for harmony also predisposed the Chinese to syncretism, the espousal of one or more Chinese religions simultaneously.

The Chinese esteem for practicality indicated a functional approach to life. In matters relating to

principles, there was much greater interest in the utilitarian rather than the metaphysical. The this-worldly aspects of life were concentrated upon and relatively little attention was given to the hereafter. This affinity for practicality contributed to the anthropocentric tendency among the Chinese who for centuries prided themselves as being the center of world civilization. Chinese functionality has also made the Chinese known for their pragmatism in politics, religion, and other spheres of life.

The traditional Chinese worldview as portrayed above has not remained immutable in contemporary Chinese societies in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Forces of modernization and secularization have resulted in social and cultural changes that are altering dimensions of life and thought, often imperceptibly and sometimes significantly. The collision between external pressures and indigenous traditions has probably produced more profound mutations for East Asian Chinese than the Chinese in mainland China had experienced in the previous two thousand years. The traditional way of life and thinking, which had so long served as an insulating and protecting husk, giving a sense of security and complacency, have begun to crack.

In many ways the change experienced in contemporary Chinese societies is fundamental reorientation of thinking, reorientation of the worldview, so to speak. Individuals are being asked to accept new thinking, new social

relationships, and more particularly, to reconstruct their views on life and reality. Almost simultaneously, they are encouraged to modify or abandon many time-honored attachments to traditional values and ways of coping with reality.

The type and scope of Chinese worldview change is neither complete nor definite. However, given the findings of this study, we have been able to identify a pattern of change and continuity that characterizes the contemporary Chinese. The two major areas of Chinese worldview undergoing attrition are those relating to hierarchy and antiquity. There has been little sign of change in the other three areas: particularity, harmony, and practicality.

As regards hierarchical relationships the extended family system is on the wane. By and large it has been replaced by a trend toward a smaller conjugal family system. Filial piety, though still affirmed as a cardinal Chinese virtue, has been rid of its former authoritarian elements and replaced by respect and mutuality between parent and child. The growing sense of mutuality reflects the rising status and independence of the individual. The Chinese are less likely to be tied to the family and lineage and are more likely to form associations outside the family circle inasmuch as the family system has lost some of its former almost inextricably closely woven relationship. With the

availability of education and the rise of personal income, the former low status of women is also on the ascendance. Marriage is now less likely to be a parental choice, and divorce is more commonplace. The power of lineage organization is also on the wane. Changing situations have made it necessary for lineages to play a smaller social role. The Chinese group consciousness, though enervated and somewhat modified into a semi-individualistic orientation, remains an important part of the cultural milieu.

The present study has also discovered a languishing of the traditional Chinese esteem for antiquity. Contemporary urban Chinese are more committed to innovation and more oriented to the present and future than to the past. The formerly undisputed past has been called into question and many have come to view the backward-looking stance as a stumbling block to progress. Although ancestor worship is still practiced by the older generation, the frequency and intensity of its observance appears to be declining. Deference to the elders is also on the wane. The elders in society, though still reasonably well taken care of physically by family members, have suffered marked depreciation in power and prestige. In fact, the latest trend has been toward sending aged parents into nursing homes, an idea which most Chinese viewed with unspeakable abhorrence until recently, for sending the aged away from home was tantamount to abandonment--the anathema of filial

piety. While the influence of the aged is on the wane, educated and progressive young people are emerging from their formerly passive role in the family and society to enjoy a marked elevation of status and importance.

While the first two dimensions of the traditional Chinese worldview show signs of change, the last three seem to have withstood the socio-economic pressures of the processes of modernization and secularization. Little evidence of debilitating change has been detected. The Chinese propensity for concrete thinking is still very much apparent today largely because the hieroglyphic Chinese linguistics remains mostly unaltered. The Chinese persist in their aversion to counterfactual expressions and are hesitant to make the cognitive shift from reality-centered patterns of thought to the abstract realm. Despite the apparent reluctance, the contemporary trend suggests a switch in favor of a theoretical thought pattern akin to the West, a trend that is partly due to the strong emphasis on science and technology education in these societies.

The Chinese affinity for harmony continues to be a meaningful part of the prevailing worldview. Like their forebears, modern Chinese solicit natural, personal and communal equilibrium. Many still vouch for the veracity of *yin-yang* cosmology. The legendary religious tolerance and inclusivity continue to characterize the contemporary Chinese.

The esteem for practicality has not been changed by the new social and economic conditions--if anything it has been intensified. The modern Chinese are as functional and pragmatic as ever. Despite the increase in the level of education attained and their preoccupation with success, wealth, and longevity, they continue to seek to elude evil forces and secure favors from ancestors and other gods through various means of fortune telling. And more often than not, it is the traditional rather than the modern practitioners of these arts that are patronized.

The patterns of change and continuity found in this study have tended to challenge the thesis that the process of secularization is irreversible. Secularization may have weakened the influence of religion and precipitated a degree of cultural change in the Chinese societies studied, but it is unlikely to bring about more than limited change in the foreseeable future. It is too simplistic to assume that millennia of culture can be obliterated within a few decades. The inertia of the Chinese tradition is a potent force which has exhibited a remarkable degree of persistence and tenacity. The Chinese Confucian ideology and ethical orientation appear to have exerted a stabilizing influence during changing modern conditions. While elements of the tradition have been debilitated, the essentials of Chinese culture are maintained and a viable intergroup ethos is perpetuated.

The conclusion of the present study also rejects the idea that traditional and modern forms are always in conflict. Most contemporary Chinese adopt a hybrid worldview in which new modes of thinking and living which approximate Western concepts of social and economic development are grafted on to their traditional systems of values. Norms regarding the family constitute a case in point. Traditional family norms and some norms typical of the conjugal family coexist. Such coexistence is deemed functionally possible and desirable in the contemporary milieu.

This curious mosaic of the traditional and modern serves as the backdrop against which the missiological implications of secularization should be considered. In anticipation of this, we have sought to review three broad areas of missiological significance: mission, conversion and the church.

1. Secularization has increased the potential receptivity of the contemporary Chinese to the gospel, because secularization is increasingly delivering them from the traditional tight control of family obligations and the kinship system. This emancipation is creating both personal freedom and an openness to the gospel.

2. The Chinese proclivity for gregariousness suggests that a group approach to Christian conversion should be taken into consideration in mission strategy.

This has proved very effective in other societies and it needs to be explored in the contemporary Chinese setting. The possibilities of conversion may increase when preparation for conversion is conducted in the context of the group to which the prospective converts belong. The traditional individualistic, one-against-all approach to conversion appears to be at odds with the instinctive Chinese communal spirit. Multi-individual conversions, on the other hand, appear more analogous to the Chinese craving for mutual dependence and group incorporation and should therefore be explored in depth.

3. The biblical witness regarding the nature of the church as a corporate body which provides mutual comfort, support, and fellowship to its members should also be considered. Most contemporary Chinese are at the crossroads of transition. Even while embracing Western technology, they are deeply concerned with the continued stability of their own culture. They are ambivalent about change, wondering how in the midst of change and constancy the Chinese cultural heritage is going to end up. The church should be able to provide intellectual and social support during this period of uncertainty.

As the Body of Christ the church should function as a surrogate family to the Chinese. In so doing, the church provides not only a plausibility structure where a meaning system is reified, but also fellowship through social

networking and cell groups. The church as worshipping community furnishes a tangible and experiential environment conducive to the Chinese affinity to concreteness. The concept of the church as a herald calls for the community of faith to preach, teach, and demonstrate the gospel wholistically and functionally.

McGavran's words "winning the winnable while they are winnable"<sup>1</sup> seems a fitting conclusion to this dissertation. The contemporary Chinese of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore appear to be winnable in the present period of political transition and personal uncertainty. Secularization has created a counter movement to traditional cultural identity. Most Chinese are torn between Westernization and traditional orthodoxy. They are unsettled about change and feel somewhat sandwiched between Western influence and Chinese culture. Meanwhile the challenges of everyday life and the search for meaning continue to drive them to seek solace and solutions to their questions beyond themselves. Thus the partial emancipation from the past, the uncertainty of the present, and ambivalence about the future produce favorable opportunities for the communication of the gospel. Suffice it to say that the present condition appears to be a winnable situation that should be exploited with the gospel.

In the final analysis, mission remains God's

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<sup>1</sup>McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, 291.

prerogative. Though a missionary mandate is given to the church, God initiated mission in the first place. Certainly this gospel mandate must be carried out with great intelligence, ingenuity and devotion. But human effort must never overshadow God's sovereignty, for mission is first and foremost the work of God Himself. Missionary strategy must therefore be subservient to God's providential leading. And after all is said and done, glory is to be given to God for the building up of His kingdom and the ultimate restoration of mankind, including the Chinese.

This dissertation is a pilot, exploratory study designed to probe the Chinese mind in its former and present milieu. Comparisons of the different research cited are difficult to undertake, since different definitions and methodologies were used. Thus our findings have proved to be more suggestive than definitive. Although the various results obtained from this study fall into a pattern, and although the interpretations seem plausible, the findings and interpretations expressed here should be regarded as tentative until they have been applied existentially and the results critically evaluated.

The result of this study reveals several areas of concern that should probably be addressed in the future. These pertain largely to the practical methodology of doing mission. This dissertation highlights some implications and possibilities for mission in terms of the contemporary

Chinese worldview. Because the suggestions are mostly theoretical, research is needed to field-test the conclusions and recommendations made. Only then will it be possible to construct a practical strategy for evangelistic work among the Chinese.

Another area of possible further research would be on "doing" theology the Chinese way. Since theology is not done in a vacuum, the description of the contemporary Chinese mind in this dissertation should provide a valuable source for a theological construction of basic yet seemingly unfathomable Christian concepts of God, sin, incarnation, atonement, and salvation.

The sinicization of patterns of public worship represents another area of concern that calls for more study. Research is needed to ascertain how a reality-centered approach in terms of drama, music, and other means can actually be carried out as an aid to the presentation of the gospel to the Chinese.

All in all, a second dissertation is needed that will cope with the vast task of applying the insights suggested in the theoretical development of this dissertation to an equally comprehensive study of the evangelistic task in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore.

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