

Next Generation Missions

Present

Worlds Apart

A

**Cross-cultural Training Course
(*African Edition*)**

by

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Published by

Next Generation Missions

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Please note:

All references to Africa in this manual are referring to sub-Saharan Africa. Much of what is contained here does not apply to the northern or Islamic African cultures, which are very different. Muslim groups and families in the countries being covered will have radically different values and customs.

1. The Importance of Cultural Awareness

If we as Christians are seeking to influence people of another culture with the Gospel of Christ, it is extremely important that we do so in a culturally sensitive manner. If we fail in this area, our work will be constantly undermined and therefore less effective than it could be.

Our motivation to get things right is twofold. Firstly we want Christ's name to be honoured by the people we are trying to reach and secondly we do not want the reputation of the church, especially the one local to our mission work, to be damaged. We might also add, that it will not help us in our work, if our own reputation is damaged. Our ministry will be much more effective if we are able to build a reputation for cultural knowledge, respect and sensitivity.

We can't escape our own culture completely. It is indelibly printed in our psyche and will inevitably surface in response to 'triggering' circumstances. Likewise we can never fully adapt to another culture, but we can be careful to avoid misunderstandings, attitudes, words or actions that cause offense. The major aspects of a culture can be learned. If your work is specific to a particular area, it is your responsibility to learn as much as you can about the local culture, and how you should behave in it.



African Christians are generally very forgiving if we make mistakes, and they usually say nothing, especially if they can see that we are trying our best. If however, a pattern of cultural insensitivity is established, or worse an impression given that we are not trying because we do not care about it; then their natural respect for the foreign worker will disappear. Again, they will not usually say anything to your face, but among themselves they will deplore your behaviour.

2 Cultural Arrogance

Many cultures suffer from distorted self-image leading people to conclude that their culture is superior to others. The underlying error of this is believing that your cultural values are the only values that others should have. This gives rise to nationalism and repression of others. In the West we are as guilty as anyone of this arrogance. We consider ourselves technically advanced and therefore we are absolutely convinced that we know best in most situations.

This notion is particularly inappropriate when found among Christian workers, and I regret to have to say, it is an epidemic among us, and deeply ingrained into the psyche of many Christians in the west. I am constantly appalled by examples of this misconception. Many have gone from the *west-to-the-rest* to teach this or that. The appalling assumption behind it all is that we know better than they do, they need to learn from us, not us from them.

All cultures have been adversely affected by sin and generations of sinful people. Ours is no exception and we should remember this when observing things that we consider cultural weaknesses in other societies. For example, we may be dismayed at the status of women, or the corruption of public officials in the culture we are visiting. On the other hand the local people are probably horrified at the high divorce rate, pornography, child abuse, football hooliganism, homosexuality, adultery, juvenile delinquency and immodest female dress of our culture!

We should also avoid an over sentimental view of a new culture. Sin is sin wherever it is practised, and must be confronted with the gospel. All cultures and societies are hopelessly lost in sin and need a Saviour. This is why we go, and why we need to go with our eyes open and with a realistic view of all cultures, including our own.

All cultures have their strengths and their weaknesses. The greatest strength of our culture is that we inherit the benefits of centuries of Judeo-Christian beliefs and church history. This has given us a rich tradition of Bible scholarship and Christian writing unparalleled in any other language. We need to hold this gift with humility, it is something we were given. We build on foundations laid down through the centuries for us.



3. Horror Stories:

Below are a few of the many anecdotes I have seen, read about or heard of.

1. A team of young Americans on a short-term mission in west Africa would not shake hands with Africans, or sit on a seat where Africans had sat, without first spraying the seat with disinfectant spray. They also brought all their own food from America.

I don't blame these young Americans, I blame the unenlightened mission organisers who instructed them. In some quarters, Americans are thought to be more culturally insensitive than most others. It is a mistake to think this. Americans live in their own culturally isolated continent. It is all a question of education and preparation. On the contrary, the out-going nature, enthusiasm and generosity of most Americans can be a great asset to mission work.

2. A short-term team visiting a village in the former Transkai were served chicken for a meal. The poor widow in whose house they were had killed her last chicken to serve her honoured guests. One of the guests was heard to say in a loud voice 'Oh no, not chicken again'.

3. A short-term team were entertained at a large and very lavish lunch by a church composed of ethnically Asian Christians in Natal. The meal comprised mostly of delicious but hot curries - which were not to the taste of the guests. The insensitive guests complained long and loud to each other about the food they were being asked to eat. The offense caused to the hosts was so great, that they refused ever again to have anything to do with the agency that organised the team.

A total lack of cultural sensitivity and briefing were disastrously displayed in this story.

4. Four young men with a team in central Mozambique were asked to visit a remote village two hours walk away into the bush. Being adventurers at heart, they were keen to go. Upon arrival in the village, it had grown dark and it was time for the evening meal. Even though it was hard to see much with little light from the one lamp, to their surprise, they were all given a plate full of worms to eat! Its not so bad as it sounds, the worms were cooked and were a popular delicacy at that time of the year.

Being well briefed and culturally sensitive, they took a deep breath and ate the lot! The next morning, realising that the worms had been so popular with their guests, the villagers gave them another plateful for breakfast. However, now in the broad daylight, the boys were able to see something that the darkness of the night before had hidden from them; that the villagers, before they ate the worms, took the heads off!

None of the boys suffered any ill effects, and had a story to tell!

5. *An enthusiastic team of young English Christians visited a church in Kenya. Upon their arrival at the church, to the absolute horror of the local Christians, the English youngsters proceeded to hug anyone and everyone that they could get their hands on, male or female! This caused considerable controversy among the Kenyans and serious damaged relations with the visitors.*

6. *A young Tanzanian Christian who came to Britain for Bible training was asked what his greatest cultural shock was when he first arrived. He said it was when a female British Christian whom he had never met came and kissed him!*

Sin is Sin in any culture

An African man sold his twelve year old daughter to the local witchdoctor as a servant/sex slave so that he could buy beer, and the poor girl died of AIDS before her twentieth birthday

In an Arab country, a thirteen year old girl was raped by her brother and a gang of his drunken friends. The next day they told the local Mullah that it was her fault, that she had provoked them (not true). The girl was stoned to death in the town square for her `sin' and she took two hours to die.



Many vile and evil practices in the world are done in the name of culture or religion. As Christians we should humbly recognise our own culture's weaknesses and sin, but we confront sin wherever it is found; not in the name of our culture or nationality, but in the name of Christ and the standards God has set in Him for mankind.

4. What is Culture?

There have been many attempts to define culture in a few sentences. We unconsciously learn our culture as we grow up. It is the distinctive characteristics that, held commonly, make a group of people different in their behaviour, customs, language and beliefs, from other groups of people. It involves language, customs, sense of humour, values, religious beliefs, traditions, dress, food, manners, body language, authority, governance, rites of passage, institutions and family relationships.

Culture is a shared set of presuppositions that give us behavioural norms that provide us with a comfort zone that we are only conscious of when we are removed from it. It is a comfort derived from knowing that most members of our community will act in a similar manner in given circumstances. Put simply it is 'the way we do things around here'. When these standards can no longer be relied on, we can experience corresponding insecurity - like raising your hands in a church where this is just 'not done'.

When I was a young man, I drove a truck from Brussels to New Delhi in North India. It took three weeks and by the time we arrived I needed a haircut. I noticed a barber cutting hair under a tree by the roadside. So I asked him to cut mine. To my embarrassment, a crowd gradually gathered to watch this strange spectacle. Englishmen did not normally get their hair cut in such places. Being the source of such curiosity was culturally very uncomfortable for me. In any new culture you may be watched with curiosity by the locals and we usually find this unnerving.

The combination of how all these aspects of life are lived out will affect just about every part of the experience of people. It affects health, education, laws, marriage, employment, housing, agriculture, and hospitality, to name just a few defining characteristics of a distinct culture.

'Culture is the software of the mind'.

'A fish only discovers its need of water, when it is no longer in it. Our own culture is like water to a fish, we live and breathe through it'.

'Culture is a shared system of meanings. It dictates what we pay attention to, how we act, and what we value.'

5. How Others See Us

A useful exercise in trying to understand cultural differences, is to try to look at ourselves through the eyes of a first-time visitor from the third-world observing British culture. I once asked a young Nigerian Christian, studying at Birmingham University, 'What was your greatest cultural shock when you arrived in Britain?' Without hesitation, he said 'You put your old people in homes. We (in Nigeria) would never do that!'

It would take a whole book to describe all the aspects of British life that other cultures find notable. Here are a few for us to think about:

Educational and career achievements are a major source of status in the society and self worth.

We measure success by our wealth and the material things that we possess.

We place a high value on scientific analysis of anything.

We are very time and calendar orientated. We do most things at a set time.

We almost never talk to strangers - except when walking our dogs!

We tend to neglect wider family relationships

Most of us do not have to worry about where we will get food from, - we are free from this fear.

We are not worried about moving house several times. We are often keen to move from our parents' house.

We stress the 'right' to privacy.

We put great emphasis on completing the task.

We are very poor at hospitality.

Our women like to dress in a way often considered immodest by many other cultures.

Children have little respect for their parents.

Pornography is everywhere.

Very few practice any religion.

My friend John, once described to me his traumatic first encounter with the cold-hearted British culture. John is a pastor from Ghana, who came to Birmingham on a scholarship to study theology. His account went something like this:

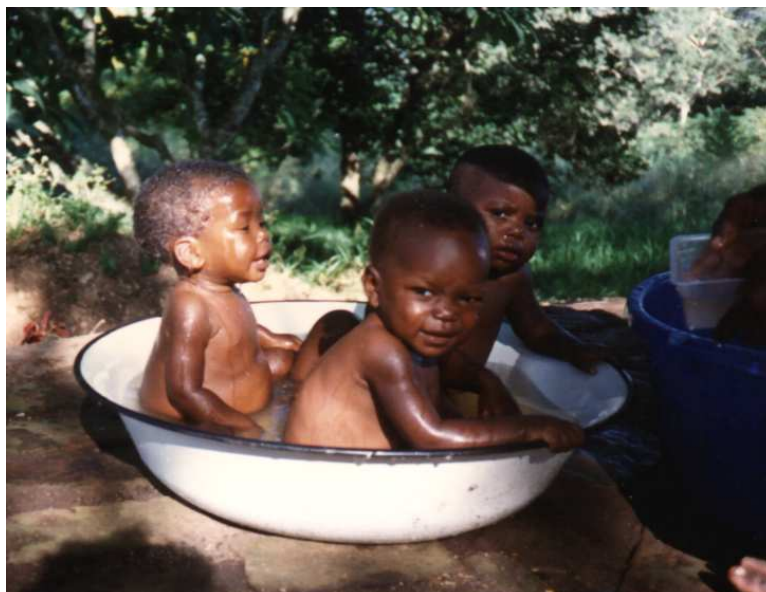
‘When I arrived at the airport, I was surprised that no one met me, I felt very nervous and alone. I had to find my way to Birmingham and then to the college. When I arrived at the college, there was no one there to meet me either. I was told where my room was and given a key.

After sitting for a while, I thought, where shall I find food? I asked several people who passed in the corridor. They all said that I should ‘go to Sainsbury’s’. I didn’t know what this ‘Sainsbury’s’ was, but I followed directions until I found it was a shop and went inside. I wandered round for a long time wondering what was in all the packets. I bought some tea and some bread, - they were things I could recognise. So that is what I lived on for the first four days.

When my wife and child arrived to join me a year later, a kind lady from the church came round and gave her a bunch of flowers. My wife was a bit embarrassed because she didn’t know what to do with them. She asked me why had they been brought? She asked if we were meant to eat them?’

John explained to me that in Ghana, if a new family arrives to live in a village, the whole village will greet them and help them for the first few days to settle in. The villagers will bring cooked food during this time, they will show the family where to get water and anything else they need. If they need to construct a hut, others will help them. Small children will be cared for while the parents work on the house.

John also had noticed that in Britain, if a visitor unexpectedly arrives at your house to visit you (a unusual thing in itself) and you are eating a meal when they arrive. You politely explain that you are eating and show them into another room, promising to be with them in a few minutes. ‘This would never happen in my culture’ he explained. ‘Anyone who arrives, even unexpected, at meal times, is fed.’ Even if that means the family go without.’ He said “we have a proverb in Ghana that says ‘Let your children go hungry, but have a good reputation’.”



6. Examples of Cultural Practices:

Indians will not marry or work outside of their caste.

In many third-world cultures, the left hand is considered unclean.

Jews circumcise their boys at eight days old.

Moslems circumcise their boys when they reach 13 years old.

Some cultures have dowries paid for brides.

Some cultures have arranged marriages.

Some people love to eat certain insects.

Some will not eat pork.

Some will not eat beef.

One tribe in Africa lives on blood and milk.

Some tribes scar their faces.

Some believe in one god, some in millions.

In some cultures women are covered in public.

In some they can wear bikinis!

In some cultures there are religious clothes

In some it is holy to be naked.

In Saudi Arabia it is illegal for women to drive a car.

Some men dance with women.

In others men only dance with other men.

Dancing is a religious activity in some cultures.

In others it is recreational, for some it is both.

Some take off their shoes to worship, others don't.

Some have religious feasts, others fast.

Idiomatic Speech

The use of idioms in our everyday speech greatly differs from person to person. Probably all of us use idiomatic speech and culture-specific references without thinking about it. We must remember that these are very culture-specific and should be avoided when trying to communicate with any other culture. Even our American cousins are baffled by many of our expressions, many of which are rooted in our history. Some examples:

Idioms

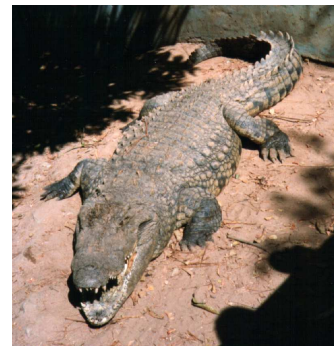
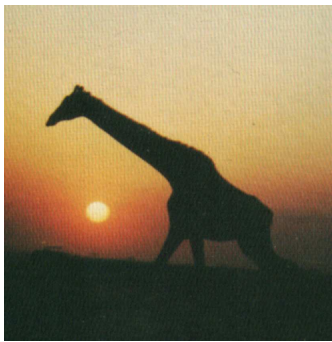
See the light
Touch base
Press-ganged
Short straw
Over the top
Steam rolled
I was 'let down'
His chickens came home to roost
The whole nine yards
The goose that laid the 'golden egg'.
I was 'hailed over the coals'
He was 'sent to Coventry'
That's 'cool'
It's a 'racing certainty'.
He's in the 'dog house' again.
He's a 'big wig'
Hold your horses
She's a 'big-hearted' person
'I bet' that's the reason
I was 'really mad'
He is 'mad' about football
He's a 'chip off the old block'
That was the 'last straw'
He came in like a 'new broom'
I was chased 'from pillar to post'
She was 'dressed to kill'
Dressed up to the nines
It was 'raining cats and dogs'
I was 'over the moon'
I was speechless
I was 'gutted'
He was 'batting on a sticky wicket'
I was 'skating on thin ice'

References that need thought

Sunbathing
Dog and cat food
Pets such as gold fish etc
Going to the beach
Time is money
The job centre
Growing flowers
Old folks' home
Sky scrapers
Kentucky fried chicken
Alcohol
Cinema, or films
Pork or pigs
Christmas shopping
The January sales
Deserts and desserts
Snow and ice
Bigamy
Skiing and ice skating
Kissing in public
Investment schemes
Certain sports and hobbies
Microwaves
Software
Camels and Kangaroos
Drugs
Remote control
Space shuttle
Submarines
Going to a party
Moving house
Caravans
Working like a slave

Culture-specific references

When you are invited to speak to an audience from any other culture, think carefully through what you are going to say and the illustrations that you want to use. The simple question to ask yourself is 'will my audience understand what I am talking about?' Unless the answer is definitely 'yes', then avoid that reference. It is often helpful to ask an African pastor for an appropriate alternative. Many years ago, I made the mistake of referring to a church steeple while speaking in Turkey. My translator turned to me and said 'Brother, what is a steeple?' Another example : the Bible is full of references to sheep. Are there sheep in the area where you are? Would it be better to refer to goats?



Local Residents

7. World View

Every culture has a 'world view' that is the *context* for their culture. It is the 'seed corn' from which a culture, with its myriad of details, grows. Our own culture stems from centuries of Judeo-Christian beliefs, heavily influenced by Greek-Roman philosophy. A world view is essentially a religious view.

Even those who claim no religious view have a replacement philosophy that fills the religion-shaped hole in their world view..

The Western traditional world view has been that there is one God in heaven that made everything. He is a moral being and so are we. When we die we will face the consequences of how we lived on the earth for all eternity. Therefore we cannot treat each other badly and expect to get away unpunished, if not in this life, in the next. So treating our fellow beings badly is innately considered a bad thing by most of the people.

Our culture is undergoing a profound change. Moral relativism is rapidly replacing the moral absolutes of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Belief in reincarnation (a Hindu/Buddhist belief) is gaining ground quickly. This belief represents a directly opposite view to the Judeo-Christian one. It states that you are punished in this life for what you did bad in a previous life, instead of being punished in a future life for the sins of this life!

Some other world views, sometimes held by many millions of people:

There is more than one god - there are many.

Reincarnation, from which salvation is to escape to annihilation

We are all part of God and God is in us all.

We are surrounded by thousands of spirits, who control our destiny.

God did not make the world, it is an accident of nature.

We are overlooked in this life by 'spirit guides' or 'ascended masters'

Through study, meditation, enlightenment and various spiritual exercises, we can become one ourselves.

Fatalism/Karma/Inshallah - we have no control over our circumstances or the ability to influence what happens to us - there are no 'accidents'.

Atheism - no God, no life after death, we are just advanced animals.

8. Whose Culture

A Ghanaian Pastor once said to me "When you talk about 'African culture', It scares me, because in my country there are 40 languages, and each one has a different culture!". He also admitted, "We Africans are as bad, because we talk about 'European Culture'!" With this in mind, and realising the limited scope of our study, most African Pastors - including my Ghanaian friend - will agree that there are significant areas of commonality in their many and varied cultures.

The common characteristics are what we must concentrate on in our study. It is the responsibility of individual workers to *investigate* the particular and local cultural characteristics of the area, tribe or religious group, where they work. Also to examine how cultural issues affect their own particular type of work; rural or urban, church planting or development work, radio broadcasting or literature production. Cultural considerations will affect all, but in slightly different ways.

For example, the female dress code will be very different in a large urban setting, than it is in a traditional rural area. Broadcasters of sermons over the radio, must bear in mind that preaching illustrations must cater for a wide cultural audience, both rural and urban, and of different religious backgrounds. It is all right to use illustrations about the sea, when speaking in a coastal town, but would be puzzling to un-schooled people in a rural setting in landlocked Zambia or Zimbabwe.

Try to avoid all references and illustrations that are culture-specific

9. African World View

A lack of understanding of the African world view, sometimes called their 'paradigm', has been and remains the greatest obstacle to cross-cultural communications.

Dr. Osadolor Imasogie writes plainly about what he sees as the greatest weakness of the African church; a problem that many western workers are reluctant to describe. That the majority of African Christians - though they populate the churches in great numbers - have a relatively shallow experience of Christianity. Evidenced by their habit of reverting to traditional remedies whenever a crisis or significant event arises in their lives. The crisis may be a sick child, a need for a job, contracting a disease, debt, an angry neighbour's curse, an unfaithful husband or a barren wife. The significant event may be a marriage, the birth of a child, puberty, the death of a family member, or even seed sowing time.

Africans, no matter what their education or standing in society, be they farmer, scientist or politician, tend to share a common world view: they as individuals and families believe that they are surrounded by many spirits who have the power to influence the course of their lives, for good or bad. Western missionaries may or may not be in agreement with this foundational belief, depending on their particular theological outlook. What cannot be ignored is the fact that Africans *do believe* this!

Where Western Christians and certainly the Bible (whatever your theological view) part company with the African world view, is that they believe these spirits can, through mediums/witchdoctors, be *negotiated* with or *appeased* or influenced in any way to their benefit. The appeasement regime may be through any of a multitude of rituals, charms, spells, offerings or blood covenants. Another point of disagreement is that many of these spirits are called ancestral spirits. Their dead relatives are still involved in the lives of the living, and they will have an adverse effect in your life if you offend them, or fail in some way to honour them. One of the main barriers to improving agricultural methods of poor subsistence farmers in some areas, is the real fear that if they adopt different methods to their forefathers, they will offend their ancestral spirits. With the younger, more educated generation in many African countries, these traditional beliefs are being eroded and progress is now a possibility.

There is a debate over the identity of 'ancestral spirits'. Are they the actual *ghostly* spirits of dead relatives? Is father or grandfather floating around watching and either approving or disapproving of what their offspring are doing? This is the way most westerners interpret the phrase 'ancestral spirits'. There is little or no scriptural evidence for this possibility. Pastor Robert Bwalya of Bethel Church in Ndola, Zambia is very experienced in this area and has a team of workers ministering successfully in deliverance and healing. He insists that this type of spirit is an impersonating spirit. These spirits operate on the lie that they oppressed the ancestor, therefore they have an excuse or a foothold to oppress the descendant. He says that they are in fact ordinary demons using an ancestral myth to convince the victims of their existence, their influence on their lives and the attention, allegiance and in fact worship that they derive from perpetuating the myth that they can be negotiated with, offended, appeased, mediated, and generally influenced by the living descendants.



The cultures of Africa are inevitably changing. There are considerable differences between rural and urban cultures. The base culture is a rural agrarian culture that has been in place and relatively undisturbed for centuries. It is essentially pre-industrial and adapted to life prior to the 19th century. In the West we have developed from a similar base to where we are now—an educated, industrial, and scientifically based culture and economy over the past 600 years. For the past 100 years Africa has been trying to develop into an industrial society in a fraction of the time it took us. Although contact with Europeans has had some benefits, the fact remains that they have largely been excluded from the management and decision-making processes.

10. Conflicting World Views

For centuries, the Africans have - in common with most of mankind - had a concept of the most high God. Regardless of how accurate their concept; it is a mistake to dismiss it. The early missionaries often dismissed much of the African world view and their concept of God, as superstition that could be just forgotten about.

Their problem was; that the African did not, and could not abandon their deep-seated religious paradigm, without a convincing and all-embracing alternative - which often the missionaries failed to provide. The missionaries described a God and a world view that was observed through the 'tunnel vision' of European culture and world view.

Osadolor Imasogie sums up the situations for us:

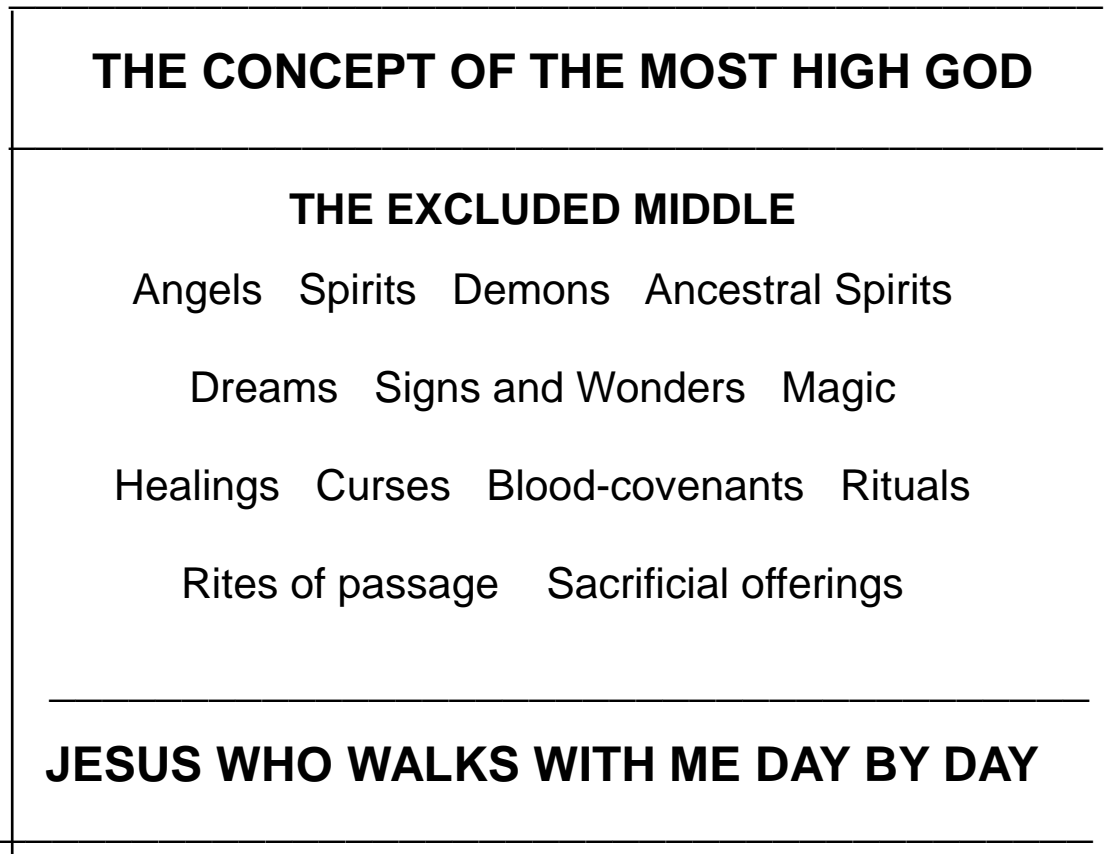
'For the mid-nineteenth century missionary, this African world view did not make sense. This lack of empathy for such an African self-understanding was complicated by the missionaries' preconceived idea that Africans were so primitive that they did not even have a concept of God. Coming from a quasi-scientific world view the missionary could not perceive spiritual realities in the same way as the African he encountered did. His perception of the African was that he must be living in a dream world to believe the things that he did. Because the Africans world view differed so radically from his own, the missionary concluded that the African had no concept of God. The missionary was convinced that since the African bowed down to "wood and stones," it was his privilege to introduce the African to the concept of God for the first time.,

African Response

In this century, countless millions of Africans have become Christians, and the amazing church growth continues today. A word of caution is necessary here. Africans respond very easily, often for motives that are not all obvious to the Western visitor. If you preach to Africans as a visitor, they will usually respond to any appeal that you make.

This may be genuine, it may be because the African is naturally more spiritual. It may be out of politeness to the visitor. It may be because you are praying or laying hands on people, and they just want the visitor to pray for them. Sometimes it can be a kind of spiritual insurance which says "This sounds like a very powerful spirit, I had better not offend him! I shall respond as the preacher wants" It is often better to let the African pastors make the appeal and pray for people. *In Africa, the discipling after the response is more important than the response.*

Glenn Schwartz provides us with a helpful diagram to illustrate the gap between the European missionary world view and that of the African:



The arrival of Pentecostal and charismatic theology in Africa, has in many parts of the African church begun to address this problem. The average African lived in fear of the middle box of our illustration. Enlightened teaching on the Holy Spirit has begun the mammoth task of convincing Africans, that the Spirit of The Most High God will enter their spirits, and take up permanent residence. That this Great High Spirit is infinitely more powerful than any other spirit, and that they have protection, and need not live in fear any more. That they are free from the bondage that the contents of the central box represents. In short, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer to everything.

11. Aspects of African Culture

Tradition

Tradition is a powerful force in the lives of Africans. Traditions of family and tribe. The practices and customs that result are so numerous, that no book could begin to describe them all. Some are harmless, many others are intrinsically bound up in spirit and ancestor worship. Generally Africans are afraid to break traditions because it will offend their ancestral spirits and result in harm or disaster in their lives. Modern education of the younger generation is helping to combat this.

This centuries old aspect of African culture has far reaching effects. For an African to grow into the man or woman that God wants them to be, the hold of many of these traditions has to be broken. One of the side effects of this culture is that Africans have a tendency to do a job or perform a task, always exactly as they were first shown. This does have some advantages. It is a disadvantage in that innovation and adaptation to changing conditions and materials is often lacking.

D Crawford went as a missionary to central Africa in 1889, before any modern roads were built. He observed the ancient narrow paths on which people always walked single file. They crossed Africa for hundreds of miles. He used the manner of their use as a metaphor for the way Africans always trod the same path as those who had gone before. He translated an ancient Bantu song:

*"A well-worn trail is a very good thing,
It must lead up to a very great king;
And so with customs of days of yore,
We do what millions have done before."*

The Family

Generally Africans are much more family-orientated than we are in the west. Family ties and loyalty are stronger, and make great demands on the members. In the west, if are introduced to a person at a party, probably the first question that will be asked is 'what do you do?'. This is because we tend to assess people by their occupation and their education. In Africa this is not so. If your are introduced to a new African friend; inevitably the first questions are 'Are you married?', 'Do you have any children?' 'What are their ages?' etc. I have never been asked what my job is. The African will express great delight if you say that you have eight children! (I only have three) Their interest is the family.

Africans help each other financially, with employment, and problems are shared and tackled together. When marriage is proposed, both families are involved in the negotiations and arrangements, particularly when dowries are involved. Polygamy is accepted in some societies, particularly in rural areas. Aged relatives are very respected. Retired people are traditionally given special responsibilities in the village such as instructing young wives and helping to mediate in disputes. Anyone who is earning is expected to contribute to the family income even if they have left the family home.

Family loyalty and family opinion are very strong controlling elements. If an African has money and his brother needs some of it, family loyalty demands that he share what he has. Not to do so would offend all the family, may even result in ostracisation. It might offend the ancestors. Africans who might steal, will not usually steal from their family, it is considered far worse than it would be in our culture.

Gender Issues

Many pages could be written on this topic, but the scope of our study will permit mention of only a few of the main points.

The women's liberation movement in African is way behind! It often causes anguish to visitors to see that women are often treated as very much second class. I remember being shocked in rural Malawi, when a pastor's wife brought me a cup of tea when I was sitting with pastors under a tree in a village, she approached me over the last three metres on her knees!

Married couples do not show affection to each other in public. They usually will not even touch or hold hands. I remember causing embarrassment to a pastor and his wife in Mozambique by trying to get them to stand shoulder to shoulder so that I could take their photo. The western Christian practice of hugging the other gender just as a friendly greeting, is very inappropriate.

Hugging other men is gaining ground among some men who have been exposed enough to western Christians or have visited the West. Nevertheless, the handshake (learn the African three-stage handshake) is still the most appropriate greeting. With the opposite gender, a brief, light handshake is polite.

It is not polite to look into the eyes of the opposite gender. This may be regarded as a sign of romantic interest in that person. The open friendly manner of some western females has often been misinterpreted by African men for a deeper interest. Both men and women need to behave in a more conservative way than they would at home. Avoid paying too much attention to any one particular person of the opposite gender. Never beckon anyone with your fingers, especially with the palm uppermost. It will usually be regarded as rude or even an insult, particularly to females. Even shouting to call someone may be considered rude. Take the time to go to the person and ask them politely to come with you or send someone to convey the message.

The Hospitality Culture

Africans, even when they are very poor, are wonderful hosts. They will treat you like royalty, give guests the best of everything - the best of their food, accommodation, time and effort. This is not peculiar to Africa, many cultures around the world have a great tradition of hospitality to the guest or stranger in their midst. It is in the West that we are sadly behind much of the world in this area. As Westerners we benefit from this culture when visiting, but we should also learn from it.

Being good guests

If you visit Africa, even via radio or video, you are not there to ferment a cultural revolution and promote European values. The correct behavior is to co-operate with the culture at the points where it touches you, your behaviour and your hosts. In the west, if you are a guest for a meal, you might help collect up the used dishes, take them to the kitchen and help with the washing up or stack them in the dishwasher. This would usually cause offense in an African home. It is their pleasure to wait on their guests and their guests never do any of the chores. Never go uninvited in to the kitchen at all.

In some hospitality-orientated societies, particularly places like eastern Europe, it is best not to indulge in the western habit of admiring certain items in the house such as ornaments or paintings. They will often then embarrass you by wanting to give it to you. I once admired a beautiful hand-made mandolin in the home of a Romanian friend, he then insisted on giving it to me!

Food

Whole libraries of books have been written about culture-specific foods. We may have enjoyed cooking from a Chinese or Indian recipe book. Food probably only comes behind language and religion in identifying culture. Most cultures are very proud of their specific favourite dishes, some are even called 'national dishes'. Most important of all is the local 'staple' food. In most cases it is rather bland and tasteless. Examples are potatoes, bread, rice, chappati, naan bread, boiled maize, and millet.

In just about every culture -including our own - having guests for a meal is a special occasion. It serves a more important function than just feeding the hungry guests a meal. Whatever the culture, it is important to discover the behavioural norms for guests at meal times.

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In Africa there are some general points that should be observed everywhere. Most important is never to refuse to receive food that has been prepared for you. This is an insult to the host. It may be that you have eaten a large meal just an hour ago, or the food offered is a local 'speciality' and the very sight and smell of it makes you feel sick! Nevertheless, you should receive it with thanks and an appreciative smile.

You do not necessarily have to eat it all, or even much of it. Ask for a spare plate and transfer what you can eat from your plate to the spare plate and eat that. The host will not be offended. You can at this stage say that you did not eat much because you were not hungry, or you are not feeling too well, etc.

Your host may or may not eat with you. Pass no comment on this. Often, the host's family will eat separately. The food you have handed back will not be wasted, other members of the family, particularly the children will eat it. In fact the rest of the family may not eat until you have had everything that you want. If you eat everything in the house, so that the children get nothing, the host will consider that he has treated his honoured guests correctly.

In many cultures the hosts like you to have two or three helpings. This is particularly true in eastern Europe. A good rule for yourself is *'take a little - eat slowly.'* In Africa you can show that you have had enough by leaving just a little on your plate. If you clear your plate, the host will want you to fill your plate again.

If you are not provided with cutlery, eat with your fingers and try to act as though you have done this all your life! I once had the embarrassment when eating in a Cantonese restaurant in Canton, of having to ask for a spoon because I just could not get the hang of chopsticks!

Alcohol

The majority of ordinary people in Africa have a different attitude to alcohol than we do in the developed world. There is not much of what we call 'social drinking'. The majority of the alcohol is cheap and is consumed until the person is hopelessly drunk. It is often a form of escapism. For this reason, the Christian community do not drink, and anyone who does is seen as a non-Christian sinner. One of the marks of the person who becomes a Christian is that they give up drinking. Many Christians in Africa are convinced that Christ did not drink alcohol, and that references to wine in the Bible refer to non-alcoholic grape juice.

For these reasons, Christians from the developed world who go to work in Africa should not drink any alcohol at all. They may even want to consider giving up alcohol entirely, even while away from Africa, until their time there is completed. This way they can honestly say that they do not drink alcohol. It is worth remembering that in our own churches, it was until fairly recently, considered an inappropriate thing for Christians to do. There are also still many churches here that still have this attitude to alcohol. The reason may well be the same as in Africa. Alcohol abuse was a serious social problem that was addressed by the early Methodists and later the Salvation Army.



Sense of Humour

It is a plain fact that different cultures tend to laugh at different things and in different contexts. It is most important to remember this. In the West, it has become culturally acceptable to laugh or make jokes in church. In many other cultures, such behaviour would be considered irreverent or inappropriate.

I have seen a situation where, in a large mission dining room in Africa, it became the habit of the young western workers to usually sit together for meals, and inevitably, the joking, the teasing and loud laughter would begin. Gradually some of the African workers stopped coming there for meals. The behaviour of the young workers was culturally inappropriate and made the local workers feel uncomfortable. Africans can find teasing offensive if they are not used to our humour.

In my experience, Africans do not laugh at our type of jokes. I have tried hard to get an African to laugh at my jokes, but they just do not see anything to laugh at. They tend to laugh at what we might call slap-stick humour. If a man trying to carry too much on his bicycle falls off, the people around him will probably have a good laugh at the situation. The man who has fallen off will also join in the laughter. An English girl trying to balance a bucket of water on her head in front of African women will cause hysterics. A favorite topic for humour among Africans is often the strange things 'that the white man does'! For example, one African was heard telling a group that the white man becomes bored with his house after 5 years, and so he moves. They thought this 'moving house' idea was very funny. Africans live for many generations in the same ancestral place.

fooling around or horse-play is considered undignified, particularly by Christians. Our habit of teasing others is not appropriate when directed at Africans, they will often take offence at this.

In some cultures, humour depends heavily on irony or cynicism. This is true in Russian and eastern and central Europe. In the old days in Moscow, there was nothing to buy in the shops and most work situations were over-manned, so that little work needed to be done in an average worker's day. One of the jokes was 'we pretend to work, and you pretend to pay us!' Now Muscovites may say to a visitor from the West, 'we are pretending to reform, and you are pretending to help us!'



African Christians tend to be more conservative than their neighbours. In towns you will now see some women wearing trousers or knee-length skirts. In rural situations only long skirts or dresses are worn. You will very rarely see an African woman wearing shorts. Uncovering the knees or wearing see-through clothes is very inappropriate for women.

African men rarely wear shorts in public. They may in their home or for sports or sometimes for manual work. Being bare-chested is not a thing African men usually do unless again they are doing demanding manual work. Men walking around naked except for a pair of shorts is usually considered as very undignified.

Pastors usually wear smart suits, it is a sort of status symbol, and it is expected.

Keeping Your Cool

In Africa, losing your temper or becoming irate with someone, is considered very bad indeed. Far worse than lying or stealing. You have lost your dignity and everyone around you will deplore this behaviour. Unfortunately, the white man has become known for this. Patience and dignity are highly valued and you, as a respected guest in the country are expected to behave in an exemplary manner and keep your cool composure whatever the provocation. If you lose your cool - you lose respect.

If you lose your calm with someone who has institutionalised authority over you, such as a policemen or a customs officer, it will definitely be counter productive. The official you are upset with may well take a delight in 'winding you up' further! The best way to motivate officials (apart from bribery) is to be very polite, respectful but not timid. Be persistent and appeal to them for help, stressing that this is God's work, you are a missionary and God will bless them for being so helpful.



MOZAMBICAN CHILDREN



MISSIONARY PAUL
PASTOR MISHACK

Lies, damn lies and things you like to hear.

Anyone who works in Africa will know that when you ask an African a question, the answer may not always be the whole truth or sometimes, anything like the truth, but it will be *what the African thinks you want to hear!*

The example you will invariably be given is a story of when they were asked to give someone a lift to their village. The question is always 'Is it far?' - the answer is always 'No it is not very far'. The second question is usually 'Is it a good road?' The answer is always 'Yes the road is fine'. To the annoyance of the foreign driver, the journey takes over an hour, and the road is so bad, you suspect that it has done serious damage to your vehicle! You then think, 'WHY IS THIS MAN LYING TO ME?' I have discussed this phenomena with three pastors from three African countries, and asked them why this happens. First of all, they laughed a lot and admitted that this was a common thing. They gave me three different answers!

Pastor one: He explained that in the village it is not polite to give the chief any bad news, you only ever told him what he wanted to hear, out of respect. This pastor explained that my passenger was only treating me with respect, like he would the chief! I was less than convinced.

Pastor two: Explained that in his country, people had to walk long distances and it often took all day to get to where you were going. So when they see another person coming the opposite way, they would ask if it was very far to the town. This person would always say 'No it is not far, keep going, you will soon be there'. This is regardless of the distance. This is said to encourage the walker and to lift his spirits and help him on his way. This is why you are always told 'It is not far.'

I asked pastor three, not to give me an immediate answer, but to think about it over night. The next day he came with his answer. His answer was the most logical of all. He said 'Well, in a car, the journey is not very far!'

The Greeting

Compared to Africans, we are very casual and often flippant in the way we greet people. If we pass someone we know in the street, we may say a brief hello or perhaps just smile and wave. Africans are much more elaborate in their greetings, especially if meeting a relative they may not have seen for a while. Good manners dictate that a greeting is accompanied by customary inquiries about the well being of a person's wife, children, parents, job, crops; etc. Passing on relevant news and gossip is part of this delightful custom.

The general pace of life in Africa usually allows this custom. In the West we are much more concerned with getting on with the task in hand. In Africa, even sworn enemies will often feel obliged to greet each other politely as they pass in the street. It is important for westerners to remember this when in Africa. To pass someone first thing in the morning, even if you don't know them, without saying good morning is rude.

A friend of mine from Liverpool, who has been farming in Zimbabwe for fifteen years told me how after many years in Africa he still forgets this custom. He related how he went out from his house one morning with a task on his mind that needed to be done. He immediately saw the worker who could do it. So he called him over and asked him to do the job. The worker paused, smiled and said "Good morning Mr. -----, How are you today? My friend smiled, apologised and said "I am fine thank you, how are you; etc.; etc.?"

Worship

Worship is one of the aspects of life that is most influenced by culture. The famous British reserve is a serious barrier to freedom of expression. The African by nature has no such inhibitions. It is possible to visit urban denominational churches in Africa and find that the western style of worship has been imposed upon them. This is not so in the majority of African churches where you will find a riot of exuberant expression. Loud singing, clapping and often dancing. Their songs are often repetitive and very rhythmic. The best reaction from Westerners is just to join in and enjoy "letting your hair down!"

Some missionaries have in the past banned African drums from church meetings. This is because of the association of drums and certain rhythms with witchcraft and the practice of working up into a frenzy and possession by spirits. One African pastor observing the drums in British charismatic churches said to me, 'You can worship God with your drums, but I can't with mine?' In my experience, good African pastors and church elders are very adept at spotting when anyone in their meetings is getting carried away, and then dealing with the situation. They consider this a very minor fault compared with western young ladies coming to church in tight trousers and low-cut tops, etc.

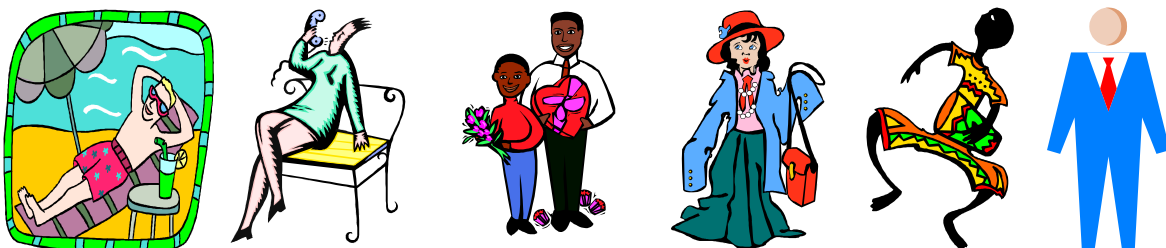
Dress Codes

This is a greater area of concern for females from the West than for males. In our society, we have become very permissive and immodest in female dress. This is unfortunately also true of Christians, who have been influenced by worldly values. Most other cultures are much more conservative than our own. In Africa there is often a difference between urban and rural codes. In the larger cities, particularly young people are adopting western styles of dress. African men rarely wear shorts in public, it is considered undignified. Little boys wear shorts, not men.

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Living in the 'Now'

One of the most difficult aspects of African culture for westerners to understand is the fact that most Africans live for the moment and often ignore the future, or the consequences for the future of present actions. For example, investing money in farming equipment for the benefit that it will bring in the future is not a natural thing for Africans to do.

Missionary friends in Malawi had a very good African worker who maintained their vegetable gardens, did odd jobs and looked after their flock of about 200 chickens. My friends paid him well and were about to help him with building a better house for him and his family. They were due to be away on a short trip, so they gave the worker money to purchase feed for the chickens while they were away. Instead of using the money for the chicken feed, he went out with his friends and spent it on getting drunk and staying drunk until the money had gone. When my friends returned, the chickens were almost dead from starvation. The worker lost his job, his new house, and the means to support his wife and children. If he had thought of the future consequences of his actions, he would not have done what he did. I could tell many similar stories to this one.

One theory for this behaviour pattern is that concept of cause and effect rests upon a grasp of logic, which is a uniquely Greek attitude that we have inherited over centuries and has no precedent in Africa.

Theft and Bribery

In Africa theft and bribery are not considered such a serious sin by ordinary people as it is here. Africans have a different set of values. It is much more serious to lose your temper. One theory for this is the centuries-old tradition of the man of the family or the men of the village or tribe going out to hunt to provide for the others back home. The hunting may even be in the form of taking from other tribes or villages. It may have involved taking other people's crops or animals, or even enslaving others. So there is a long tradition of taking from others what you need for your family and it was not considered wrong. This was considered the men's duty and manly role in life.

Cattle stealing by certain tribes who have that tradition still goes on in some areas, by tribes who are feared by other local inhabitants. Northern Uganda is an example. Even hunting for wild animals was considered a territorial thing. You kept others out of your area if you could, to preserve the wildlife stock and wild fruit for your own use. In the days of slave trade, many of the slaves taken by the white man from Africa, were sold to the slavers by other Africans who were of a different, often dominant tribe.

Westerners are often dismayed by what they see as a jealousy culture, particularly in rural villages. If one man gets ahead financially of everyone else, it is often disapproved of. Even to the point of the other villages stealing from that person or vandalising their property or crops. This may come from a long-standing fear of being dominated by other more powerful people. This may also be behind the tradition of communal ownership within a village. You can't steal what is already yours! This tradition is fast dying out. Just as strong, is the tradition that you never steal from your own (extended) family or clan. This should be seen alongside the tradition that you must give to your brother if he needs what you have and you have more than you need. This tradition is commonly seen today in the sharing in a family of the costs of education for the children.

12. Dependency

The long established problem of missionaries creating a dependence culture in Africa and other third-world situations is a vast subject far outside the scope of this study. It is a problem that has defeated the efforts of some of the finest missionaries ever to follow God's call. The problem is the subject of new and enlightened study by various people whom God is using to bring some light to the subject.

I only mention it here to highlight the need for anyone who is working for God in third world situations to study the latest Christian thinking on the subject, and to be prepared to expose what they do to the challenges and questions that may arise as a result.

13. Leadership

In the west, leadership in any sphere is often gained by education, natural drive, superior intelligence and hard work. When we describe the qualities we would like a leader to have, they are often not the qualities that helped that person attain their position. They may have arrived at the position by being motivated, thrusting, pushing past others etc. Once in the position we want them to be pastoral, considerate, encouraging and to empower the people they lead. This is one of the great anomalies of our society.

In Africa the achievement of leadership at a macro level has often been by corruption, nepotism, a violent coup or intrigue, and only occasionally by democracy or ability. Leadership at the micro level of village chief or even the church pastor, is achieved by means that are largely a mystery to western observers. The qualities possessed by the man (and it is usually a man's role in African culture) who emerges as a leader are not readily understood by us. *This phenomenon has far-reaching implications for those in missionary work who are seeking to identify, train, and encourage leaders or potential leaders.* Once again

we have to guard against our cultural arrogance in thinking we know all the answers on this.

Leadership in Africa at the micro level seems to 'emerge' in a way that is perhaps akin to the way leaders 'emerge' in a class of children at school in our society. Any school class tutor can tell you who are the leaders in their class, but may not be able to tell you why they are, or what exactly gives them influence with the rest.

In Africa, work groups are often made up from members of the same tribe. To appoint a leader from another tribe would be disastrous. Subordinates do not speak freely in front of more senior people and face to face discussion is less common.

It is an interesting fact that in the 'Project Timothy' training programme for church leaders in the African churches of South Africa, twenty five percent of the enrolled pastors were illiterate. These are men who are *already leaders of their churches*. How is it possible for so many pastors to be in a position of leading others, many of them educated, when they are not educated? The answer is simply that Africans are not looking for the same qualities in men and women that we are.

Most of the successful pastors that I have met in Africa, are men with qualities recognised by Africans but not necessarily by us. They are men who would be leaders, or at least influential, whatever they did in life. If they were subsistence farmers (I have met many who are) in a remote village, they would still emerge as influential in the village.

Classifying these qualities as 'spiritual' qualities is not the complete answer. There are some successful (success measured by large congregations) church leaders who sadly lack spiritual qualities.

Some Western Bible college teachers in Africa wonder why a student who is bright, friendly, spiritual and hard working, does not go on to build a successful church. Others who seemingly are not better students, go back to their home area and have amazing success. One of the mistakes has been to try to identify future leaders by our own standards. If a young man is intelligent, speaks good English, has a friendly smile, is an extrovert etc. , we choose him for training. When he is trained, we might put him in a church or in a church planting endeavour, and say to the people 'here is your new pastor'. His success will largely depend not on our selection criteria, but on these hard-to-identify qualities that African leaders have. The success of 'Project Timothy' in South Africa, is largely due to the fact that they are giving much-needed training to men and women who *have already emerged as leaders* in their own right.



A United Nations soldier being taken for a walk by children in Mozambique

14. Promises, promises, from my 'wealthy' brother

Westerners who have visited Africa are often perplexed when an African that they have met, asks them for gifts or financial help. We consider this an impertinence or an abuse of the brief friendship that has been established, or at least bad manners.

This is not the case. It is a normal thing in Africa to ask a friend who is obviously much richer than you to help you. They will not be offended if you politely refuse. Then we must take into account, the obligations of helping family members as has been mentioned in a previous chapter. As Christians we enthusiastically go to Africa declaring that we are all 'brothers and sisters' and that we are 'all one in Christ.' We are then surprised when an African asks his 'wealthy brother' to help in the customary way!

Another problem that often occurs - and not just in Africa - is the habit that enthusiastic visitors from the west have of getting carried away with the needs they see, and promising to do this or that or send help. When they return home the enthusiasm often wanes, or they find they cannot deliver what they promised in their enthusiasm. Even saying to an African that you "will try to help" or that you "will pray about it" will usually be interpreted as a promise to actually do it!

It is better to surprise an African with the unexpected help you have been able to give, than to disappoint them by not giving the help they thought you were going to give.



15 CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is a much misunderstood phenomenon. Workers going on a short-term mission or visit of less than two months are unlikely to experience real culture shock.

The reaction that is often mistaken for real culture shock is what we might call the 'wow factor'. This is an initial reaction on arriving in the new culture. It is the wide-eyed amazement at just how different everything is.

The 'wow factor' is a confusing reaction that can range from delight to panic. Delight at the warm welcome or the open, smiling reaction of ordinary people to a foreign guest in their country. Fascination at the noise, customs, architecture, food and even the dress of people in their new surroundings.

Panic at the unaccustomed heat, the flies or your reaction to the first time you have to use a 'long-drop' pit latrine, or even worse a 'short-drop' one! I well remember the panic I felt at my first taste of a real Indian curry - which nearly blew the top of my head off - and was cheerfully told that I would be eating curry two or three times a day, and I was due to be there for two years!

Real culture shock is a more serious problem. With me, it came on after about six months in India, and lasted three months. During that time I hated India and everything to do with it. I thought the whole place was stupid, the people, the rickshaws, the crowded roads, the cows, the temples and especially the food were all at the very bottom of my esteem scale.

I craved anything that was remotely English. Food was top of the list. I craved Cadbury's chocolate, and chips (French fries to our North American cousins). I couldn't stand curry, rice or chapatti. For three months I lived on bread and eggs. Then after three months I came out of it. I began to love the people, enjoy the food and admire the positive aspects of Indian culture.

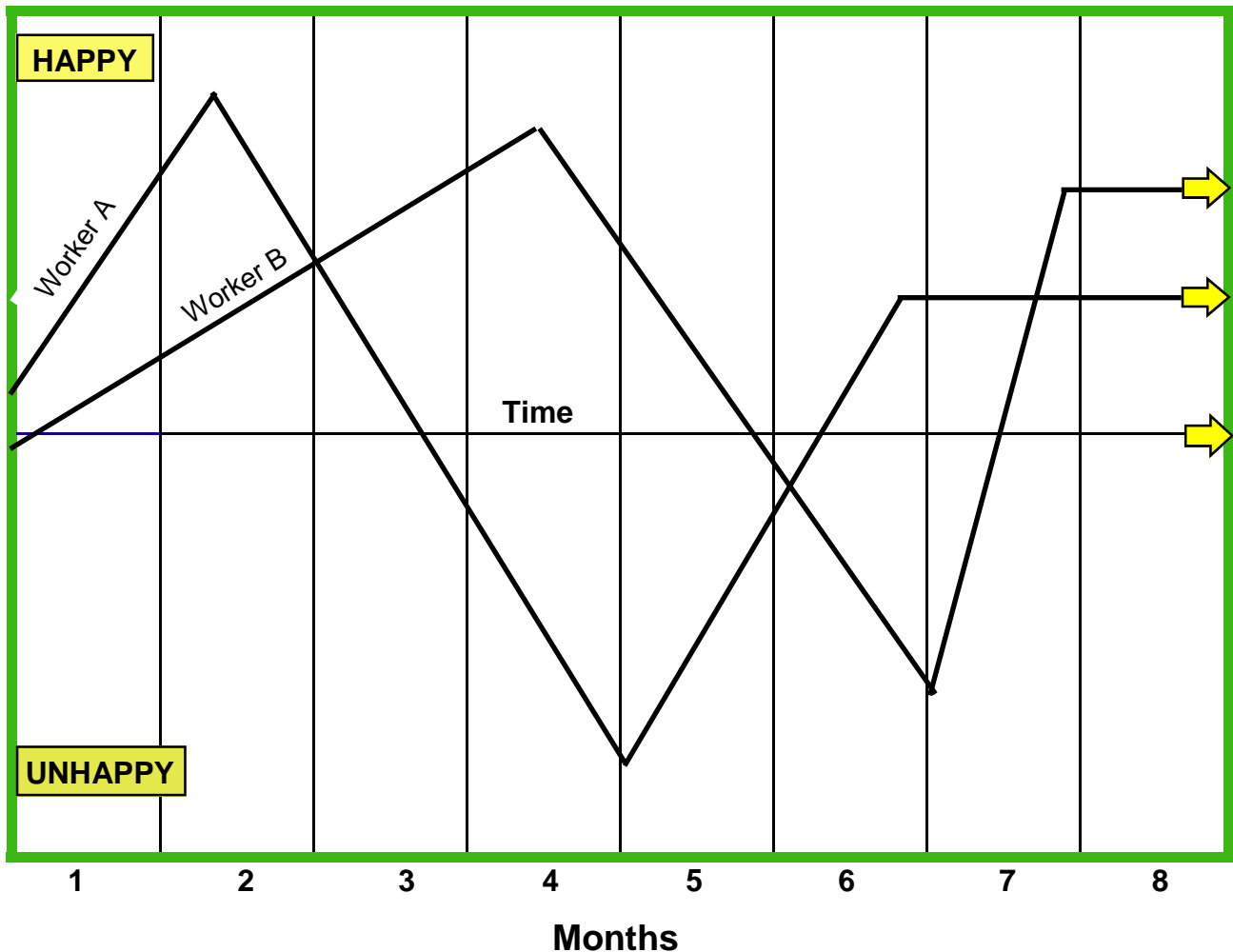
My lasting memories and emotions of India are pleasant ones. Many years on, I still love curries and get a surge of pleasure any time I hear a high-pitched female voice singing the Indian 'cinema music' that is a familiar background noise you hear when walking through an Indian town.

Other symptoms of culture shock: homesickness, loss of interest, irritation, loss of appetite, poor concentration, tiredness, a feeling of guilt, anger, disturbed sleep, a breakdown in good relationships.

The best way to cope with culture shock is to *recognise it* for what it is and pray that it will soon pass, because it surely will. Nothing is worse than believing it is going to carry on. My nephew even had severe culture shock after living in the USA for several months. He now loves it and has a permanent job there.

Typical Culture Shock Patterns

Culture shock will typically begin after 3-6 months in the new culture and may last 3-6



Worker A has never lived away from home before and has limited travel experience. Worker B is an experienced traveller and has lived away from home before

Culture shock to some degree or other will effect most mission workers who are in a foreign culture. Its effects are lessened if the worker is a seasoned traveller and has an adventurous outlook on life.

The effect is lessened even more if the worker is situated in a 'cultural bubble' which may be a mission location with western standards of accommodation and fellow westerners around and able to still use their own language and style of worship.

16. REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

Some advice for workers returning from abroad.

This often occurs after returning home and is potentially a much more serious problem than culture shock while abroad. It can begin very soon after returning home and can continue for up to a year and in some rare cases last years. The negative effects of this phenomena can last a lifetime.

In its most extreme form it can lead to depression, post traumatic stress and serious mental illness, affecting not only the individual, but also their family. This is particularly so if it is affecting the father of a family. It is often the case that the longer you have been away, the more difficult the adjustment

The Symptoms

Initially it can just be a feeling of being out of place, that you don't belong in the place *where you belong!* Your values may have changed to the point where you are disgusted with the worldliness and materialism of our wasteful western consumer society. You may find it a frustration that your own friends, family or church just can't see the emptiness of it all.

Whilst away your attitudes to many things and your interests may have radically changed. So the friends and colleagues that you had so much in common with before you went, are now less interesting to be with. They may see the change in you and feel uneasy with you. That precious camaraderie that you once enjoyed - and have been so looking forward to renewing - has gone. There is a sense of loss, disappointment and even grief. The great homecoming that you had anticipated so much is a disappointment and a frustration.

You may experience a great frustration at your own inability to communicate just how poor are the good people you have been with, compared to the affluence of life-style of your surroundings.

Your whole society, including family and friends are now very devalued in your eyes. The country and culture that you were once proud of, seem to have lost much of their value to you.

You begin to feel guilty about having come home at all! Questions arise such as 'what am I doing here, when there is such need over there?', or 'have I completely missed God's guidance?'

So many people that you meet are not interested, or not interested enough, in what you have been doing or the people you have been with while you were away. People smile and greet you and ask 'Did you had a good time?' Their eyes glaze after a few sentences and your realise they aren't really that interested.

However, it's good to try and arrange to share briefly with the church and have some visual aids, to make it more interesting to the congregation:

- an evening for you to show photos and videos should be encouraged. Writing an article for the church magazine is another outlet. The church that is so locked into their pattern of meeting/service that they can't find time for this is in a very sad state!

The church has a great responsibility of care for returning workers. Enlightened and educated pastoral care should await them. They may be very wounded by bad experiences while abroad. I can immediately think of three returned workers, over a one-year period who each sat down in my office, and when I asked them to tell me about their experiences abroad, they started to cry. Each church should have a debriefing plan for returning workers, it is a serious responsibility.

Regardless of whether previous job opportunities remain available to the returned worker, they must recognise that they have changed. Hopefully they now see the spiritual values of life as paramount. New opportunities to serve God are now open, simply because they have more to offer. So in whatever job they find they must see it as their new mission field where they can apply their new spiritual growth. This lifts the job onto a completely different plane. Here is great worth; they are still on a mission, but it is local!

In the church you should patiently await the new opportunities for service that will inevitably come your way. Tell people about the new opportunities that you were given abroad and the new skills you have. Remember that humility is important. Don't run away with the idea that you are now so much superior to many others. This will be the real test of maturity gained! Remember the definition of a 'big shot'? It is a 'little shot' away from home!

Life has to go on, you can't live in the past. There is a balanced attitude to past experiences. Learn from them, value them, apply the lessons learned, keep up correspondence, look at the photos occasionally, but *be determined to move on*. I once worked next to a Christian man who almost every day would tell me of some interesting, funny or exciting experience that he had had while in the Middle East. What was sad about it, was that it was not Christian work, it was his national military service; and it had been fifteen years before!

N.B. Interhealth offer a full tropical medical examination, by a specialist, for returned workers at a reasonable charge. Local G.P.s often lack experience in tropical medicine.



17. Cultural Adaptability Test

Determine to what extent the following statements describe your thinking or approach to life. If the statement is very descriptive of you put a 5 in the space provided, if it is not at all descriptive of you, put a 1. Half-way put a 3, use 2 or 4 if they are more appropriate

* If a customer gives me a deposit for goods and asks me to hold them for him, I would be very unlikely to sell them to another customer before the first one returns.

* I would always pick up hitch hikers, even if I have friends in the vehicle who would be cramped.

* Each day I plan my schedule and I am annoyed when it gets interrupted.

* I have sympathy with people who steal from a corrupt government.

* It is better to please someone than to tell them the truth.

* I seek out friends and enjoy talking about most subjects that come up.

* I regard visiting my relatives as an important recreational activity.

* When I set myself a goal, I dedicate myself to reaching it even if other areas of my life suffer as a result.

* If offered promotion which entailed moving to another city, I would not be held back by relationships with family and friends.

* I always wear a watch and refer to it regularly in order not to be late for anything.

* If I am going to preach at a neighbouring church, I would not make myself late by stopping to talk to my uncle for an hour and a half if I happened to meet him on the journey.

* I do not take sides in a discussion until I have heard all the arguments.

* I agree with the statement - "The end justifies the means."

* I argue my point to the end even if I know I am wrong.

* I talk with others about my problems and ask them for advice.

* I have set specific goals for what I want to accomplish in the next five years.

* I can't stand using toilets that are a filthy hole in the ground.

* At parties I make a great effort to talk to people I don't know.

* I enjoy almost any kind of food.

* I get embarrassed when people stare at me.

* I absolutely hate waiting in long queues.

* I easily get angry when people in uniform are rude to me.

* Getting lost in a strange place doesn't worry me.

* I think it is very rude to keep people waiting.

* I am a fairly patient person.

* Spiders and insects don't worry me much.

* I tend to take too much luggage on holiday.

* I enjoy traveling, even if it is very hot.

* I am a heavy sleeper, noises don't usually wake me.

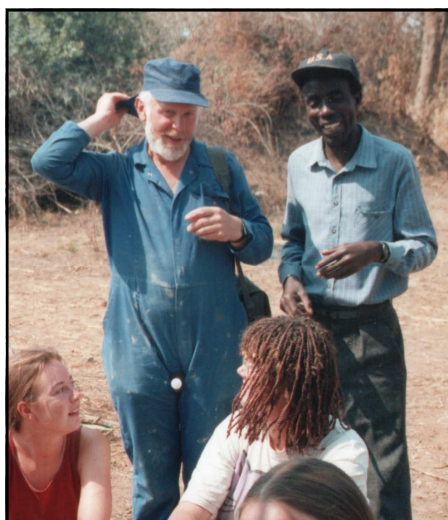
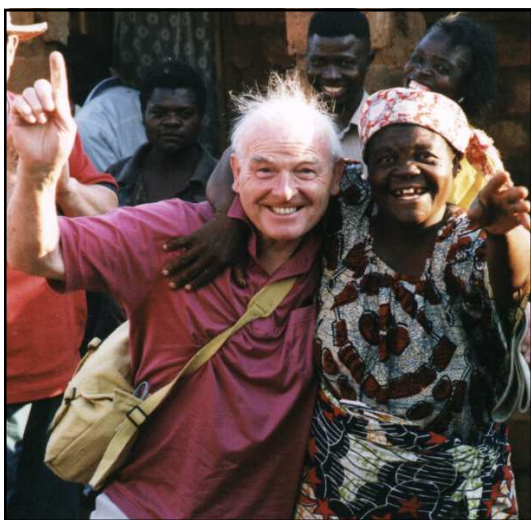
* I get upset when I see women treated less well than men.

Results

1. Add up your scores for your circles and squares separately.
2. With your circles score, if it is below 45, take the amount you are below, and add it to your squares score.
3. This is your final score.
4. If on your circles you are above 45, take the amount you are above, and subtract it from your squares score
5. This is your final score.

SCORES Circles: ○ Squares: □ **Total:** _____

In this rather unscientific test; the average score is 45. If you score above this, you are more culturally adaptable than average. A score of 50 is a high one, and means that you are very adaptable. People who get low scores shouldn't worry, it just means that you may have to work a little harder at it. It certainly doesn't mean that you are not suitable for short term missions, this is just one of many factors that make up a person's suitability.



Below is an extract from 'Entering Another's World', published by St. Johns Extension Studies, Nottingham. A longer course on culture that I recommend.

Several African friends assure me that the 'communalism' that this story is an illustration of is fast dying out in most parts of Africa.

18 OWNERSHIP OF A GUN by William D Reyburn

Living in an African village caused us to become aware of the effect of other formative attitudes in our backgrounds. One of these in particular is the idea of personal ownership. While living in the South Cameroon village of Aloum among the Bulu in order to learn the language, we were received from the first day with intense reception and hospitality. We were given Bulu family names; the village danced for several nights, and we were loaded with the gift of a goat and all kinds of tropical fruits.

We had been invited to Aloum, and we were not fully prepared psychologically to understand how such an adoption was conceived within Bulu thinking. Slowly we came to learn that our possessions were no longer private property, but were to be available for the collective use of the sub-clan where we had been adopted. We were able to adjust to this way of doing because we had about the same material status as the others in the village. Their demands upon our things were not as great as their generous hospitality with which they provided nearly all our food.

Then one night I caught a new vision of the implication of our relation to the people of Aloum. A stranger had appeared in the village, and we learnt that Aloum was the home of his mother's brother. It was the case of the nephew in the town of his maternal Uncle, a most interesting social relationship in the patriarchal societies in Africa. After dark when the leading men in the village had gathered in the men's club house, I drifted over and sat down among them to listen to their conversations. The fires in the floor threw shadows which appeared to dance up and down on the mud walls. Finally silence fell over their conversations, and the chief of the village arose and began to speak in very hushed tones. Several young men arose from their positions by the fires and moved outside to take up a listening post to make sure that no uninvited persons would overhear the development of these important events. The chief spoke of the welcome of his nephew into the village and guaranteed him a safe sojourn while he was there. After these introductory formalities were finished the chief began to extol his nephew as a great elephant hunter. I was still totally ignorant of how this affected me. I listened as he eulogised his nephew's virtue as a skilled hunter.

caused little shadows to run back and forth on his dark face and body. "Obam Nna," he addressed me. A broad smile exposed a gleaming set of teeth. "We're going to present our gun to my nephew now. Go get it."

I hesitated a brief moment but then arose and crossed the moonlit courtyard to our thatched-covered house where Maria and some village women sat talking. I kept hearing in my ears: "We're going to present our gun... our gun...". Almost as if it were a broken record stuck on the plural possessive pronoun it kept repeating in my ears, "ngale jangan... ngale jangan...". Before I reached the house I had thought of half a dozen very good reasons why I should say no. However I got the gun and some shells and started back to the clubhouse. As I re-entered the room I caught again the sense of the world of Obam Nna. If I were to be Obam Nna, I should have to cease to be William Reyburn. In order to be Obam Nna, I had to crucify William Reyburn every day. In the world of Obam Nna I no longer owned a gun as in the world of William Reyburn. I handed the gun to the chief and, although he didn't know it, along with it went the surrender of a very stingy idea of private ownership.
