



CHAPTER 3

A CHINESE MISSIONARY IN LIBERIA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with the role Chinese missionaries can play in the cross-cultural setting of Africa in particular. It is also based on specific experiences of the author, who under the circumstances may be cited as a pioneering missionary. Therefore this Chapter will constitute a case study.

Chinese mission as a whole is still in its infant stages because there is so much for the Chinese to learn in terms of mission work. Missionaries must be encouraged to step forward in faith and not to assume that cross-cultural missions are only reserved for Western missionaries. The understanding underlying this work is that the Lord will use all races to fulfill His commission. In particular, He is going to mobilise people from the Third World to reach out to those parts of the world.

The author would like to also use this Chapter to develop a spiritual strategy for Chinese missionaries in the Third World mission fields. An evaluation will be made to assess the possibilities for Chinese missions to serve other countries both now and in the future.

This chapter will focus on the Gbandi tribe of Liberia. It will describe the tribe, deal with the different aspects of the mission work among them as well as make comparisons between the approaches of different missionaries working together in that region. Differences amongst missionaries can be quite large as they come from different nations, cultures and denominational backgrounds. The purpose of this Chapter is not meant to look down on missionaries from other countries, or to boast the capabilities of Chinese missionaries over others. On the contrary, Chinese missionaries look down upon their own abilities. Some lack the confidence to work with other races and is very reticent of doing cross-cultural work.

3.2 LIBERIA

3.2.1 The History of Liberia

Liberia was founded as a political nation by the American Colonization Society in an attempt to return freed slaves to the African continent. Multiple motives were behind this action, among others, to get rid of the "Negro problem" in America, to spread Christianity and also, out of goodwill, to enable blacks to return to their native land. As a result of this close relationship, Liberia was heavily influenced by American culture. As one can see, the pattern of the Liberian flag very much resembles that of the American flag. On their bank notes are written: "The Love of Liberty brought us here". The capital city, Monrovia, was named after the fifth American President, James Monroe, who was a major supporter of the society.



The Kru	40,5%. Over 18 ethnic groups with the largest the Bassa 348 000.
The West Atlantic	7,5%.
Others	2,7%.
Non-tribal	2,3%. English-speaking.

- Literacy is 64%, the official language is English. All languages total 34. Languages with Scriptures stand at 1 only with a Bible, 10 with New Testaments.
- The capital Monrovia (421 000 in 1984) is now inflated to 1 000 000 by the internally displaced (Johnstone 1993:352).

3.2.3 The Liberian Situation

3.2.3.1 Economy

The mining of iron ore and diamonds, export of rubber, timber and coffee and a large "flag of convenience" fleet of ships could have made this land prosper. Yet years of institutionalised corruption, control of trade by Lebanese and exclusive control of politics by the elite have prevented expected development. The destruction of the economy by the civil war may well take decades to restore.

3.2.3.2 Politics

In 1847 Liberia became Black Africa's first independent state. The dominance of Liberians of American origin ended in the coup in 1980. Subsequently, the military government became increasingly unstable.

(<http://allafrica.com/liberia/> June 6, 1999)

In 1980, Taylor from America returned to Liberia and became one of Doe's advisers, On Christmas Day, 1989, he led NPFL forces in an attack on Liberia's northern Nimba County. Within months Taylor's rebels had taken control of most of the countryside, and Doe was effectively trapped in Monrovia, the capital. Prince Yormie Johnson, leader of a rival rebel group, assassinated Doe in September 1990

(http://www.africana.com/Articles/tt_507.htm 23 Aug. 1999).

Massive corruption and repression of the Mano and Gio peoples provoked the 1989 revolution led by Charles Taylor. The war engulfed the country in an orgy of inter-tribal killings and ultimately three dominant forces contended for power. The military intervention of the West African States (ECOWAS) has proved a costly stalemate, with the Nigerian-led ECOMOG forces controlling Monrovia and Taylor's forces controlling much of the hinterland. Charles Taylor won elections held on July 19, 1997.

The Liberian Ministry of Information reported what President Charles Taylor said on 5th of June 2001 that if West African leaders became complacent about the war in Lofa, northern Liberia, the entire region could be endangered.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has called on Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to hold a summit as a confidence-building measure toward achieving

peace in and between their nations. His call came in the form of a report on displaced populations in the three countries that have one million war victims, including refugees and IDPs. Ordinary Liberians now subject Sierra Leonean refugees in neighbouring Liberia to daily maltreatment. Their security personnel following the recent escalation of fighting in the northern town of Zorzo, Lofa County Reports say the fighting was spear headed by Liberian dissidents aiming at overthrowing the NPFL rebel leader cum President Charles Taylor.

The UNHCR Representatives in Sierra Leone announced on 22 May that they have registered about 12 000 Liberian refugees who fled the ongoing war in Lofa in northern Liberia (<http://allafrica.com/liberia/> June 6, 2001).

3.2.3.3 Religion

Liberia was founded as a Christian state. There appears to be freedom of religion in theory, but in practice there is pressure on Christians to conform to occult secret societies. As many Christians and Muslims have fled the country, figures provided below are estimates only.

Traditional religions	49,4 %, of which maybe 10-15% claim to be "Christian". Secret societies are strongly entrenched and institutionalised. Relatively few Liberians are uninvolved.
Christian	37%.
Protestant	20,6%.

Roman Catholic 3%.

Growth 6,2%.

Missionaries to Liberia 353 people.

Muslim 13,3%. Majority are among the Mandingo and Vai.

Baha'i 0,3%.

(Johnstone 1993:352).

3.2.3.4 The Bloody Civil War

This is a political cancer poisoning much of West Africa. The military stalemate with mounting casualties, suffering and 50% of the population living as refugees, makes a compromise solution urgent. Lust for power, deep ethnic hatred and divisions among West African states about future strategy prevent peace. It is in everybody's interest that those leaders who prolonged the agony of all people for selfish gains to be disempowered and wise leaders should arise and bring peace and foster redevelopment (Johnstone 1993:352-353).

3.3 A CASE STUDY OF THE GBANDI TRIBE

3.3.1 Introduction

As the author worked in the remote countryside locale in the midst of the Gbandi tribe, some general information about these people is necessary.

3.3.2 The Gbandi Tribe

The Gbandi tribe migrated from the North and East of Africa and the Middle East to their present location many centuries ago, bringing with them remnants of the ancient cultures of Egypt and Arabia. Their dialect is a branch of the greater Mende languages of West Africa and is closely related to the Mende dialect of Sierra Leone, as well as the Loma and Kpele languages of Liberia.

The Gbandi tribe is made up of several clans. Those to the south include the Hassaalo and Lukasu, who have had strong Islamic influence coming in from Sierra Leone through the Mende and Mandingo peoples. The larger Tahamba tribe to the north has been resistant to Islam and has held more strongly to their traditional animistic beliefs, primarily due to the stronghold of the Poro (men's) and Sande (women's) Secret Societies.

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for the great majority of the Gbandi people. The Gbandi tribe is a society that has undergone tremendous social and economic changes in the past 20 years. Although they are still involved in Secret Societies, they are showing signs of becoming more receptive to change (Correy, interview in 1988, area director of SIM).

3.3.3 Geographic Location

The Gbandi tribe is located in North West Liberia. In the north it is bounded by the Republic of Guinea, in the east by the Ivory Coast and in the west by Sierra Leone, between the Kissi tribe to the West and the Loma tribe to the East. The population is about 71 000 and they occupied between 500 and 600 sq. miles of tropical forest and somewhat hilly land. They live surrounded by other tribal peoples. These regions range from 1 000 feet to 1 200 feet above sea level (Stapf 1969:12).

3.3.4 General Information

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents in a survey conducted by Hendrickson made no claim of understanding English, Liberia's official language. Only 10 % claimed to have more than a primary school education (1980:166). The Gbandi peasants have little formal education. Less than 10% of the peasants have 3 years of education, most of them are illiterate.

The Gbandi are farmers, hunters and businessmen. Agriculture is important, but less so than earlier days. The rural dwellers engage in four major occupations: Agriculture – 85 to 90%; Hunting – 2 to 3%; Coffee, Cocoa – 4 to 5%; Rubber – 8 to 9% (Gwinn 1992:642).

3.3.5 The Gbandi Religious Beliefs

“In the elaboration of cult and cosmological ideas there is a very widespread substratum of basic ideas that persists in the rituals, myths and folk tales of Liberia's West African peoples” (Ottenberg 1960:116).

In the following much use is made of the 1972 book by BG Dennis.

3.3.5.1 The Gbandi's Concept of Deity

Religion is very important and pervasive among the Gbandis, and unless a person understands it thoroughly, he will find it difficult, if not impossible, to understand Gbandi Devil Society. The Gbandi religion involves ultimate values for this people because it is intertwined in the fabric of their lives. There is neither an established day of worship nor a hut in which to worship. The Gbandis do not have a paid religious functionary person or can any village or any separate group be considered a typical community of worshippers. The entire Gbandiland constitutes the religious community and all the Gbandis are the worshippers. Nonetheless, a discussion of any religion, whether or not it has any of the above attributes, must rightly begin with the deities, the supernaturals, or the gods (Dennis 1972:167).

The Gbandis recognise at least four types of deities in the hierarchical structure of their society.

- First, there is God, the creator, who is supreme and who is the giver of all things, good and bad.

“Gbandis believe that after God created the heavens and the earth, he left the world and went to heaven. He left behind however three powers for mankind:

- the Spirit of the ancestors;
- the power of the mountains and the rivers; and

- the powers of witchcraft and the Devil (Chan 1997:182-189; translated by Chiang).

- Second, there are the ancestor spirits. These spirits are the intermediaries between the living and the supreme God. The Gbandis believe that the living can never communicate with the supreme God because they are too sinful to associate directly with God. The ancestors, who have been purged by the penalty of death, are now in a position to intercede on behalf of the living members of their kin group. They are always in the presence of the living members of their families, to mete out punishments or rewards to them. The ancestor spirits are always just in their judgment, and they are ardently devoted to the protection and well-being of the members of their kinship groups. They must be consulted by either the whole kinship group, the family, or the individual members of the family before any undertaking, large or small, is begun. Before the family members eat or drink these spirits must be fed or given drink by one member's spilling a little on the floor. The elder of each household addressed the ancestor spirits by name when a big decision is to be made or an important matter comes before the family. They are consulted about everything in the affairs of life. They are said to be very jealous and very demanding at all times, and therefore they must be satisfied. The Gbandis firmly believe that the living is only happy if the ancestor spirits are made happy. Therefore, in Gbandi society written rules or laws are not needed to regulate an individual's behaviour, nor is anyone needed to enforce such rules or laws. The watchful eyes of the ancestor spirits are forever upon every adult in Gbandi society. One cannot bring disgrace upon one's ancestor; hence there is a built-in social control

system in Gbandiland that needs no explicit law or policemen to enforce it.

- The next group of deities, third in importance, are the non-ancestor spirits. They are, at times, unpredictable in behaviour. They can be mischievous and unrestrained, harmless nuisances, simply to amuse themselves. They are said to have the ability to transform themselves into any form they desire - a man or woman, a young or old person, an animal or a plant, or any other object. Because of their flexibility they are said to be unpredictable in their behaviour. The non-ancestor spirits can also be manipulated by some individuals who claim to understand them either through a friendship with such spirits or through some secret powers which they have over these spirits. Such individuals are said to have complete control over these spirits and they can use them to benefit either themselves or their friends, or to harm their enemies. On the whole, these spirits are unlike the ancestor spirits in that they are controlled by those individuals who understand them. They neither punish nor reward; they only do what is requested. They may be extremely good or extremely bad, depending on what their manipulator wishes. They are said to live under water or in a very thick forest, but they can usually appear to those who know them, either in a dream or in a pre-arranged meeting at some secret place.
- The fourth group of deities are the natural forces or natural phenomena such as lightning, thunder, rain, rocks, trees, or a particular forest. All these are also subject to manipulation. Because of their presence in the bush, one cannot have sexual intercourse there or do anything else which might

pollute the bush, thereby offending them. They are a bit more difficult to understand and they are not particularly friendly. They can be used by the ancestor spirits or non-ancestor spirits as well as by those of the living who are trained to deal with them (see Dennis 1972:169).

3.3.5.2 Death

The death of an adult among the Gbandis is an affair which brings together all the members of the kinship group. Reasons are sought for the death. There are usually three possible reasons given for the death of an adult: the ancestors wanted him, someone bewitched him, or a witch within himself killed him. The third cause of death is relatively easy for the Gbandi to test. A piece of the liver of the deceased is placed into a receptacle of water. If it sinks, then his death was caused by a witch within himself, but if it floats, then someone else killed him.

No one ever deliberately joins with a witch. Those who have a witch never know they have one. It is found that the deceased had a witch, the family is deeply shamed. In that case the body is usually buried very carefully by a doctor to make sure that the spirit of the deceased does not wander aimlessly to harass the living. However, later there may be disturbances, especially at night. Sometimes a whole village is believed to be harassed by such a spirit. It usually starts with the members of one household who, for one reason or another, start yelling very loudly. Once such a cry is heard, the whole village joins in. If the villagers continue to be restless at night, a doctor is employed to help the situation. He usually recommends that the body be removed from the

grave and burned in a designated place. The burning of the corpse, in most cases, ends the harassment of the village. It is believed that such a person does not join the ancestor spirit hierarchy and does not become reincarnated. Those who die because of being bewitched by other witches do join the honoured group of ancestor spirits and do become reincarnated as children (Dennis 1972:174).

3.3.5.3 Life After Death

The Gbandis do have a concept of heaven and hell, but both heaven and hell are part of the social world shaped by the living and the dead. Heaven is designed for most people because the creator wants his work of creation to continue throughout eternity. This gives rise to belief in reincarnation. Those who are reincarnated are those in heaven, because they never die. Those whose bodies are subject to cremation are those in hell, because they are subject to eternal death by total destruction. For the Gbandis, heaven means eternal life and hell means fire. Hell does not mean everlasting fire, as implied in Christianity; for the Gbandis, destruction by fire is complete and immediate extinction. Therefore, those whose bodies are judged unfit are cremated at once, and their destruction is complete and final.

The Gbandis do not believe that death is an end to everything except for those who are cremated. They believe that there are individuals who are not ready for heaven, the spirit community, or cremation. These individuals are said to leave their community for a faraway land after death. There they remain as living persons and send gifts to their families. These individuals are ready and

willing to meet any of their old acquaintances who are still living and have not yet heard of their death. At times, it is believed, these dead who return to life can send gifts and messages via these old acquaintances to their families. They may even live a happy life with a new family and pursue a business life in their new environment. They may live in such a condition as long as no one who knows about their death sees them; if this should happen, they are said to die again immediately and go to live in another community. They will continue to do this until they are ready to settle down in their own community with the ancestor spirits (Dennis 1972:178).

3.3.5.4 Magic and Religion

The use of the terms "religion" and magic as though they were separate concepts is a Western creation with a Western bias. They are one and the same to the Gbandis, as is probably the case with other indigenous Africans. Magic is but another phase of religion, not a different realm of a belief system. Magic as religion may be used to promote good or to promote evil. It may be used to help, to cure, or to harm. The magician may be an individual with epileptic seizures who, when he has a seizure, is considered to be communicating with the spirit community. The individual may be a *towonggbe*; the most appropriate English equivalent of this word would be "fortune-teller". There are many forms of *towonggbe*. Some practitioners may use ashes; others sand; others a calabash (a gourd) with other paraphernalia; and still others may use rocks or stones, and so on. The Muslims use writing from the Koran and beads for the same purpose. One can readily see the lack of a distinction between religion and magic. Magic, as well as prayer to the

ancestor spirits, may be used to manipulate people, as in the case of love potions or harmful medicines. Magic may be used to control spirits. Charms and amulets are employed by the practitioners of magic to ward off injury and evil. A mother may obtain a talisman from a practitioner to protect her infant from harm. A person may employ a magical technique himself or he may seek the services of a regular practitioner.

Closely related to religion and magic is sorcery or kala. It is even more closely related to what is called "witchcraft." As a matter of fact, the distinction between witchcraft and sorcery is an academic one, because the Gbandis do not usually differentiate sorcery from witchcraft. If such a differentiation is made, it is on the basis of one's becoming a sorcerer or a witch, rather than on their function. In the case of sorcery, one has to learn the practice consciously; in the case of witchcraft, one does not consciously become a witch or practice witchcraft (Dennis 1972:182).

3.3.5.5 The Devil Society

The Poro is (one of the Devil Society's name) present when a boy is born, as he grows up, when he is initiated, when he joins the adult society, when he marries, when he is involved in disputes, when his children grow up and marry and when he dies. In some cases, the Poro may be further in the background, in others more dominant, but it is always there, confirming and authenticating his actions (Gay 1967:12-13).

The Taninahun village of the Gbandi tribe was once filled with witchcraft and evil spirits. Just behind the Chiangs' house was the meeting place of the Secret Society, also known as the Devil Society. The society spoke of a Male Devil and a Female Devil. Almost once a week either the Male Devil or the Female Devil would arrive at the village. When a so-called Devil came, they would shout, dance, jump and sing until morning. The Devil's messenger would announce the Devil's imminent arrival 5 minutes in advance by ringing a bell and saying, "The Devil is coming, everyone should run indoors". When the "Male Devil" came to the Taninahun village, all the women ran into their homes, closing their doors and windows. No one stayed outside and no one was allowed to see the Devil. If you saw the Devil, the Devil would kill you or curse you. The only exception to this rule was Gbandis belonging to the Devil cult, these people were allowed outside. When the "Female Devil" came, all the men ran indoors instead. Missionaries would also hide whenever the bell announcing the coming of the Devil was rung.

This Witchcraft/devil-worship was the main hindrance to the Gbandi believing in the Gospel. Villagers were often not allowed to come and attend worship in church, fearing that disasters caused by witchcraft may befall them (Grinker and Steiner 1997:304). "The SOS Children's Village reported that some of their children had been 'eaten by the Devil' .

3.3.5.6 The Ways of the Secret Society

The Secret Society is also called the Bush Society. When boys are 8 years old, they are considered qualified to join the Secret Society. Before the boys

join the Society, their parents would prepare spears and javelins for them to fight the monster of the bush. The monster is actually the leader of the Secret, or Devil, Society. Although children are generally panicky and frightened before this initiation rite, they are encouraged by their parents to handle this situation with bravery. The night before the rite, the child's mothers would utter the ritual words: "My son, I believe you are able to kill the monster" and the fathers would say: "Remember to bring back the skull of the monster". The grandmothers would shout from the next room: "Remember to bring back some teeth of the monster for me to use as a plug for my jar". The child would then answer in a trembling voice: "Yes, Yes".

The next day all the boys gather together in a big room inside the bush where they remain for four days. At night, the voice of the devil comes to terrify the children while they are sleeping. Some children are completely terrified while they are in the bush, but most try to be brave. After the voice of the monster was heard, there comes a command that every child must obey and not defy. Firstly, the monster will order them to imitate the voice of a frog and learn to swim on the floor, or to fly like a bird in the dark room. When they are tired, the children fall asleep again. Some time later, a big hand may suddenly throw the children a basket of hot peppers and say: "All those that are heroes, take and eat". Different commands are issued every night. As days go on, the commands get more difficult. On the last day, the monster would shout to the boys, "Open the gate and come out". When all the boys come out, the monster moves ahead of them and goes into the gate of a fence. Inside the fence is the Bush School.

When the boys enter the Bush School, two voices of the monster can be heard, saying, "I am going to eat them all"; and "I believe you will be able to make it". The first voice says, "Who is the first one that has come here to die"? Then there comes a terrible sound, "Ha! Ha! I have eaten one now". The monster "eats" the children one by one and their childhoods are considered to be dead and buried. From then on, the children become new persons (Chan 1997:193, translated by writer).

The children learn from the Bush School how to rule their families. They learn about the secret of sex, as well as the rituals of devil dancing and witchcraft. They also gain knowledge of country medicine, agriculture and the worship of heaven and earth (Gay 1973:123-140).

When the children come out of the bush school, the whole village would be very happy. This is the moment of great family pride and all the elements of family rivalry are demonstrated at this time. First, each family tries to buy the best and most expensive suit for its graduate(s). Second, each tries to present such gift to its graduate(s). And third, each tries to contribute conspicuously to the public feast that terminates the school session in order to gain public praise and recognition. The feast lasts about two weeks at the end of which, each graduate is given a new name (Dennis 1972:140).

The child is painted with white clay and remains in the thatch shelter until the 'moon shines'. At this point, they are dressed in new clothes, given new names and brought back to the town for a grand celebration. They wear the finest clothes their relatives can provide, as well as a white cloth

draped around the head and body to show they are 'new-born' to the tribe. In effect, the 'forest thing' has been persuaded to give them back to their people, to disgorge them after this period in his stomach, to give them new birth. There would be a great dance and feast in the village, lasting through the night. Guns are fired, goats and sheep are killed, old women would shed their dignity and dance, girls look at boys and boys at girls for the first time in months or years and the town welcomes back those who were 'dead'. During all these activities, the children maintain unusual sobriety and restraint (Gay 1967:18).

3.3.5.7 Muslim Influence

The Mandingo people (a tribe of roving traders everywhere in West Africa) are very strong Muslim traders as well as being great promoters of their faith. They often stop the village people from believing in Jesus. The Gbandi tribe in the countryside is considered to be unreached. They can be divided into the following religious categories:

Muslim	50%
Devil Society	49%
Christian	1%.

3.3.6 Life Style

The Gbandi people have come into contact with the outside world since 1970. Soon afterwards, they were cut off from outside influences. These people are

stocky and extremely hardy. They like colourful clothes and are very friendly to their guests. Whilst they are starting to embrace Western values, particularly materialistic ones, many of them are still staunch Secret Society members (Correy 1988 D.S interview by author).

The Gbandi tribal people speak Gbandi. The Gbandi grammar has 85 pronouns and 40 tenses; its grammar is more difficult than that of English. They are very friendly, they greet each other everyday with handshakes. Polowu is a Muslim town. People there take baths twice a day, one before sunrise and one after sunset. Most of the Gandhi people are farmers. They plant rice, coffee, cocoa and palm oil. They hunt at night.

Since the Gandhi do not have kitchens, they normally cook outside of the house. Three stones hold up the pot. One missionary once used these three stones to explain about the Trinity. Pre-marital sexual relationships are prevalent.

3.4 CHRISTIAN MISSION AMONG THE GBANDI

3.4.1 Introduction

Because of its early history as a country that repatriated freed slaves, Liberia played a significant role in the evangelization of West Africa. There is quite a mission history connected to the country. However, as SIM (the original Sudan Interior Mission) is the pioneer mission in the Gandhi area, we are here only paying attention to that mission.

3.4.2 History of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM)

Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) is the former name of "Society for International Ministries". Its pioneer missionaries, Walter Gowns, Thomas Kent and Rowland Bingham set out in 1893 to try to open Africa's vast "Sudan" area to the Gospel. The result – two graves for the three brave pioneers. The only survivor, Bingham, made a second attempt later to bring the Gospel to Sudan. That, too, ended in defeat. Indeed, the difficulties encountered then were so great that the mere fact that the Sudan Interior Mission could be planted in Africa was a miracle in itself. In the first seven years only one African came forward to accept Jesus. There was once a grievous remark which goes like this, "dead missionaries are greater in number than the Africans who are won to Christ". Some also gravely commented that, "Africa is the tomb of the white man" (Bingham 1991:68).

Apart from the other work that the SIM did in Liberia, they especially became known for their radio programmes. Until its destruction in 1990, SIM's Radio ELWA (Eternal Love Winning Africa) used to be Africa's best-known station, with 270 hours per week broadcasting time in 46 languages. It was a serious loss when this whole centre was looted and destroyed during the civil war. Although it was later put back into operation, it is now only a shadow of its previous success.

On the ELWA campus was established also a hospital with 50 beds, an operating room, an X-ray room and a delivery room. This mission station also served as the SIM headquarters with a number of missionaries connected to

the different departments. They also established an ELWA Missionary Kids School.

One of the significant outreach areas was on the Firestone Rubber Plantation. This is the biggest rubber plantation in the world, with one million acres of land and a hundred thousand workers. There are about 94 villages surrounding the plantation; each village has 1 000 to 2 000 residents. Missionaries are called to teach the Bible and to help establish churches there.

Bible Translation work has been gravely disrupted by the civil war. There were ten existing translation projects, but a further 11-13 were yet to be tackled (Johnstone 1993:353). Because of the disruptions many pastors and Christians have lost all their belongings. In particular, there is a great lack of Bibles, New Testaments and other Christian literature. The Christian Literature Centre (CLC)'s bookstore in Monrovia was looted at one time although it was restocked later. As a whole, local believers need the provision of more Christian literature (Johnstone 1993:353).

3.4.3 History of SIM's Work among the Gbandi

Although SIM started their work in Monrovia at a much earlier date, it was only in 1981 that John Correy started researching the Gbandi tribe. For almost thirty years SIM had not reached out to the rural tribal people. Outreach to the Gbandi is a very recent endeavour and the Gbandi church has only existed for about ten years. Indeed, church planting to the Gbandi tribe who lived in Northern Liberia is a pioneer ministry. The Chiang family arrived at the end of 1983.

The area where the Gbandi tribe lives is approximately one day away from Monrovia by car, or one and half hours by airplane. In this area, there is no supply of either water or electricity. Some of the village people still live a very primitive life and do not wear any clothing.

3.4.4 Difficulties Faced by Missionaries in the Cross-cultural Environment

3.4.4.1 The White Man's Grave

In the early days of missions, missionaries to Africa died within 1 year of their arrival, not because of violence or civil war, but mainly because of malaria, yellow fever and hepatitis. For example, the Church Missionary Society sent 79 missionaries to Liberia in 1830; 44 died in the first year. The American Presbyterian Mission sent 75 missionaries; 31 died in the first year. In 1988, the first Methodist Missionary groups cried out, "Even though thousands of missionaries die in West Africa, we will never give up Africa".

In his diary, Willis R Hotchkiss said, "In Africa I was sick 30 times in 4 years and was attacked by wild animals 3 times. Yet I will exalt Jesus' name in this dark land" (Chan 1997:169-170 Translated by writer).

3.4.4.2 Cultural Adjustment

- **Cultural Adjustment**

In the 1980s the team of missionaries working with the Gbandis had 19 people altogether. Some were from America, others were from Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan. These missionaries came from different cultures, backgrounds and denominations. One of the big problems was that different missionaries sometimes gave different instructions and confused the African church leaders. Despite their high respect for missionaries, African church leaders would likely consider missionaries more difficult to work with than the African people.

- **Cultural Shock**

The missionary team for the Gbandis came from 9 different countries and have varying cultural backgrounds and languages. They all experienced cultural shock from associating with each other as well as living with the Gbandi tribe. Eventually, the Mission's Director considered it better for different country's missionary groups to be separated into different villages. As a result, they were all isolated but lost their teamwork motivation. Some of the missionaries ended up getting spiritual depression and became easy prey to Satan's power.

3.4.5 Religious³ Reasons Hindering Gbandi People from Following Christ

3.4.5.1 The Devil Society

The society forces every child from 8 years old and above to join the Secret

³ In this section the material from anthropological studies have been consulted on the Gbandi tribe.

Society. “The Poro School is indeed the highest arbiter in Gbandi. The Poro leaders are respected by kings, chiefs and commoners alike” (Dennis 1972:142). Children have to live in the bush for 2 years and separated from their families. After that these children become dedicated members of the Devil society for the duration of their lives. Both male and female children are circumcised and some children ended up dying because of this. In some ways, this arrangement is similar to enrolment into the army or the Muslim Madressah. “The sign of membership of the Devil Society is, therefore, a most painful ordeal” (Maugham 1969:240).

3.4.5.2 Human Sacrifice

There are scholars who write about the prevalence of ritual murder and human sacrifice as part of the “ancient and blood-thirsty religious order of the Leopards” (Junge 1953:185). From time to time someone may report that So-and-so was bewitched and killed himself or even simply that so-and-so was killed by witchcraft (Grinker and Steiner 1997:306).

There are also many sensational stories to this effect. For instance, there was a missionary couple who lived in the countryside. The Devil Society came one day and tied their bodies up with ropes. Then they used knives to dig out the victim’s eyes and hearts for making country medicine. The former President, Samuel Dou, also came to the village one day to meet the Secret Society. The “Devil” gave him country medicine (made from children’s eyes and hearts) and said, “If you eat this medicine you will have more power and will continue to be president”.

3.4.5.3 Witchcraft

Gbandis believe witches can leave their bodies and fly about doing harm, or turn into animals for doing mischief. They also believe that witches can cause lightning to strike their enemies. In addition, people think an old person may attempt to bewitch and 'eat' his children or grandchildren, without being aware of the deed he is doing at the time. It is also believed that every witch will eventually die of witchcraft himself (Gay 1967:23).

It is believed that when a piece of the liver of a dead person is placed in a receptacle of water and it sinks, then his death was caused by a witch within himself; but if it floats, then someone else killed him (Dennis 1972:174).

3.4.5.4 Divination

On the subject of divination, Gay has the following to say:

"Divination is an important aid in decision-making. We have already seen how a question may be answered by using two split kola nuts. They are thrown on the ground and their position, facing up or facing down, determines the answer. All the while the diviner talks to the kola nuts and consults his medicine, which may be an herb or some other charm wrapped in a leaf.

More common however is the use of ordeals. In this, the accused person is required to undergo an ordeal in order to establish his guilt or innocence. He may be required to drink a liquid containing a poisonous

substance. If he vomits it and thus lives, he is innocent. He may be required to put his hand in a pot of boiling liquid. If it does not burn him, he is innocent. He may be required to have a red-hot cutlass laid against his skin. If he is not burned, he is innocent" (Gay 1967:24).

3.4.5.5 Ancestor Spirits

It is well known that the spiritual realm is very important in the African world-view. Human beings are also in a sense spiritual beings, especially after their death. "A human being is usually held by 4 parts: the soul that survives; the soul that lives as an animal wild in the bush; the shadow cast by the body; the soul that acts in dreams" (Kingsley 1901:170).

"Life for the African means 'life force' or 'life potency', which comes primarily from ancestors and is passed on to descendants" (Nida 1990:60). Mbiti describes the deceased as the "living dead" - they remain part of the community. The ancestor spirits are considered always just in their judgements and they are ardently devoted to the protection and well being of the members of their kinship groups. Before the family members eat or drink, these spirits must be fed or given drink by one member spilling a little of the food and drink on the floor. The Gbandis firmly believe that the living can only be happy if the ancestor spirits are made happy. Therefore, written rules or laws are not needed in Gbandi society to regulate an individual's behaviour, nor is anybody needed to enforce such rules or laws. The ancestor spirits' watchful eyes are forever upon every adult in Gbandi society (Dennis 1972:168).

3.4.5.6 Herbal Medicine

Herbal medicine is based on the witchcraft practiced in the Devil Society. Whenever Gbandis are ill, they will use country medicine, which is closely tied to their religion.

3.4.5.7 Hindered by Islamic Faith

Islamic faith came to the Gbandis from North Africa. "The Muslim religion crossed the Sahara desert about the eleventh century AD. The Tarik, a history of the Western Sudan written in the 17th century by Amir Es Sardi contains a reference to a prince of the Songhai Kingdom, who about 1000 A.D., became a follower of Muhammad" (Ellis 1914:95-96). In Islamic schools, boys are taught Arabic and some of them become quite proficient in it. Instruction is given in this language in order that the Koran and other works in Arabic may be read.

How did the Muslims reach the interior villages of the Gbandi tribes? It seems as if Mandingo Muslim merchants moved into the Gbandi villages and influenced the people to become Muslims⁴. What were the reasons why Islam was so easily accepted by the Gbandi? (Dennis 1972:179) gives a few reasons :

⁴ An additional reason that the author has identified, regarding why a village would not convert to Christianity, is because missionaries do not want to live inside the village. This is contrast with the Muslim traders who live in Gbandi villages.

- The Islamic religion represents a source of power arising from the sought-after ability to read and write.
- The Islamic religion also gives one the power to tell fortunes and to make charms, which are imbued with magical powers to accomplish various things.
- One does not have to leave home to become a follower of Islam.
- Islam allows men to have up to four wives.

Islam's rapid expansion seems to have slowed down. The Muslim Mandingos's support for the previous, regime and their relative wealth provoked a cruel response from other tribes. Nearly all the Mandingo have been killed or fled to Guinea and up to 1 000 mosques destroyed or damaged. Liberia was once a major centre for Islamic growth in West Africa and this was one of the factors that provoked war (Johnstone 1993:353).

3.4.6 Problems Found in Gbandi Churches

3.4.6.1 Nurture

There is a great need for Bibles but the rural churches are very poor and cannot afford to buy them. Even if they managed to get hold of a Bible, it is still not very useful to them because many of them can neither read nor write English. Because of this need, Bible translation is urgently underway. The Lutheran Mission has completed the translation of the four gospels.

Apart from reading material, there is a great need for workers too. Most of the young workers do not have sufficient theological training (Corey 1992, SIM area director).

3.4.6.2 Morality

Sexual promiscuity in Gbandi abounds and in most cases, Gbandi women are relatively free to have extramarital sexual relations with other men (Dennis 1972:86-87). Polygamy is accepted in Gbandi society. The town folk give a particular explanation of this: When the first wife gets pregnant, she cannot work in the rice farm nor cook for her husband. According to the Bush Society's law, the husband will not be permitted to sleep with his wife for 2 years after she has become pregnant. Often therefore the wife will suggest for her husband to marry another woman in order to get a helper. The first wife has more power and can lord over the second one.

It is the desire of almost all Gbandi young men who may have a claim of high birth to get two or more wives. At the same time, every Gbandi young woman of high social standing may also wish to marry a man who has a number of wives. The number of wives is indicative of high social status. Some Gbandi people become polygamous not because they want to but because they are encouraged by relatives and friends to do so (Barrett 1986:325).

Most Gbandis have no more than one or two wives. The chiefs, however, may have 20-30 wives. The number of wives a chief has is directly related to the size of his rice farm (Dennis 1972:84). The first gift a Gbandi will give to a town chief is usually a chicken. As a second gift a goat will be offered; the third time the chief will receive a cow and the final time the chief will be offered the daughter of the villager as a gift.

The Bible stipulates that church leaders cannot have more than one wife and this turns out to be one of the biggest problems that the Gbandi Churches have to face. With such a cultural hindrance, one can hardly find anybody within the Gbandi Tribe who is willing to be a leader of the church.

3.5 A COMPARISON OF THE CULTURES OF THE GBANDI, THE ASIANS AND AMERICANS

3.5.1 Regarding Family Structure

- Gbandi people are generally more family and people oriented than Westerners. Grandparents and relatives live together in an extended household arrangement. In comparison, the Chinese are also family oriented while Westerners are more insular.
- It is not unusual for the Gbandi people to have about 25 people all living under one roof. The Chinese, on the other hand, usually have about 10 people, including grandparents, living in one house. The Americans tend to have at maximum about 4 persons staying together. It is true to say that "Western industrialisation has destroyed traditional family structures" (Bauer 1992:66-67).
- Gbandi people live in a polygamist society. As for the Chinese, many people were also polygamists in the earlier days. Americans, on the other

hand, are monogamists.

- A Gbandi bride on her wedding day traditionally wears brown, a Chinese bride wears red, while an American bride wears white.
- For funerals, Chinese wear white instead of the black of the traditional American.

3.5.2 Social Behaviour

- Generally speaking, both Gbandi tribal people and Chinese welcome visitors on an informal basis. Americans normally prefer people to make appointments beforehand.
- When mistakes are made, the Gbandi would prefer private rebuking. Similarly, Chinese also prefer to be criticised in private, as they do not want to lose face. As for the Americans, they normally choose to rebuke people openly to clear any dispute in public.
- Gbandi people seldom keep their promises. Chinese sometimes are inclined to forget what they have promised. Americans generally are more serious in trying to keep their promises.
- Both the Gbandi and the Chinese traditionally conduct business through verbal agreements and trust. Americans, on the other hand, prefer to base agreements on written documents, receipts, letters, certificates etc.

- The Gbandi people treat hospitality as a priority. Chinese commonly like to urge visitors, regardless of whether they were invited or just came by themselves, to eat something at their house. Americans usually do not practice an open house policy, but would show hospitality if you were invited into their homes.

3.5.3 Business Ethics

- Both Gbandi and Chinese people traditionally like to do things through relationships. If cross-cultural relationships have not been established, both cultures would prefer not to work with strangers who are new to their society. Americans, however, would evaluate cooperation opportunities more on credentials and ability. They rely on laws, principles and standards as the foundation for getting business done.
- The Gbandi are not good at planning and tend to do things impulsively. Chinese people do plan, but do not often carry out their plan as originally intended. Americans generally plan and then carry out their plans.
- Both Gbandi and Chinese people commonly accept bribes as if it is something natural. On the other hand, Americans mostly consider accepting bribes as unethical.
- Gbandi people do things jointly. For example, on rice farms everyone from town chief down to the common folk's children are able to work together in harmony. Chinese people tend to be rather individualistic and lack teamwork skills. As for Americans, they generally have good teamwork skills

and in all circumstances are able to maintain certain degrees of relationship amongst structured working teams.

- Both Gbandi and Chinese people are relatively weak in organisational skills, while Americans in general are very good at organisation and administration.
- When Gbandi people receive their salaries, they like to spend it quickly. Chinese people, on the other hand, prefer to save their money. They may appear poor outwardly, but actually hoard their money. Americans adopt a more balanced approach in handling their money.
- The Gbandi people do not care about the future. They cut down the banana crops while they are still green; it's hard for people to buy a long banana in Liberia! When the papayas are still small, they cut them down quickly and they kill hens which have not yet laid eggs. Chinese people are the exact opposite of this. They are so concerned about the future that they do not enjoy the present⁵. The Americans are more practical.

3.5.4 Differences of Character

- Gbandi people easily express their feelings to others. They would openly

⁵ This is illustrated by the following story. When a Chinese beggar sees an egg, he will start to dream about that egg. He thinks, "If this egg delivers a hen, the hen will deliver another 20 eggs. Then I will have 20 chickens. And when they grow up I can start a Chinese restaurant. Then I can sell chicken rice every day. I will earn a lot of money. I will get a girl friend, buy a new house, a new car...I will become a millionaire". He jumps for joy, but carelessly tramples on the only egg.

reveal their emotions of joy, anger, sorrow and delight. As for the Chinese, they tend to behave just the opposite. They hold back their emotions, in particular in public and are thus reserved. In the case of the Americans, they express their emotions as and when they see fit.

- Both the Gbandi and Chinese people tend to be more emotional than rational, whilst the Americans appear to be more rational than emotional.
- Gbandi people love hearing stories and at the same time, have difficulty comprehending mathematics or logic. The Chinese are inclined to love story telling also, whereas the Americans, on the other hand, are more attracted to serious matters such as theories, logic and methodologies.
- The Gbandi people normally have difficulty with numbers and statistics. If you ask a Gbandi his age, he will probably answer, "I don't know". Since they do not have birth certificates, they may also say: "My mother told me that, at the time when I was born, the tree in front of my house was still short. But now you see it is taller than our house. So this is my age". Chinese generally do not like numbers too much, whereas the Americans in comparison work with numbers well.
- For Americans in general, the number 13 is regarded as a bad (unlucky) number. Chinese take the number 4 as an unlucky number.
- Gbandi people have a relaxed concept of time. They can easily be one or two days late for appointments. For example, if they say, "we will meet

tomorrow", their tomorrow means when the sun next rises. If the following day is very cloudy, you will be kept waiting for an extra day. The Chinese tend to be late by about 20 minutes, whilst the Americans are usually punctual.

- Gbandi people are never too serious. When someone dies the relatives and friends of the deceased will cry for a while but will start singing and dancing very soon afterwards. They tend to play various games and sports at funerals. The Chinese people, on the other hand, take everything very seriously. When someone dies, they may cry for a whole week and then continue mourning for a whole month. Americans seem to have disciplined schedules for mourning.

- Gbandi people are generally unselfish and willing to share what they have. For example, if you give one banana to a Gbandi boy and he subsequently meets five children, he will share a piece of the banana with each child. As for the Chinese, they will probably finish eating first before going out. In the case of the American, it is likely that they would continue eating the banana while the five children are watching.

- Americans generally are more conscious of other people. They would turn down the volume of their radios, or perhaps use walkmans. They would make an effort to avoid disturbing others' quiet lives. Gbandi people, on the other hand, prefer to buy big and powerful cassette recorders. They say: "We turn the radio up loud so that everyone in town can hear it. Unlike the white man, we are willing to share. White men are so selfish - they play music just for themselves on their walkmans". As for the Chinese, it is a usual

practice for their music shops to turn up their music louder than nearby similar shops in order to attract the attention of potential customers.

3.5.5 Matters of Authority

- With the Gbandi people, a town chief possesses great authority and can lord over others like a dictator. In earlier days, the Chinese followed a similar pattern as can be seen in the dictatorial authority of Communist China. As for the Americans, although they respect able and talented people, they would prefer democracy and are against dictatorship.
- Both the Gbandi and Chinese people use corporal punishment to discipline their children. In 1994, a Los Angeles newspaper once reported an incident of a grandfather who came from Mainland China to America for just one week, during which time he was put in jail for physically punishing his naughty grandson. The child's schoolteacher considered the grandfather guilty of abuse. The American educational law backed up this opinion. In Chinese culture, though, physical punishment is accepted as a legitimate disciplinary method.
- Gbandi people worship heroes. Chinese in general also worship and follow the example of authoritative heroes. As for the Americans, they favour democracy and are against authority although they do have heroes who set trends.
- Both Gbandi and Chinese people pay great respect to the elderly. Young

men do not speak freely in front of the aged. The Americans respect a person's ability and credentials more than his age.

- While the Gbandi people tend to rely on witchcraft for guidance, Chinese like to seek counsel from fortune-tellers. Americans, on the other hand, normally seek guidance from pastors, counselors or lawyers.

3.5.6 Issues Regarding Worldviews

- The Gbandi world centers around self, family, the universe and spirit. As Dr Kalu once said, "A man's life comes from reincarnation. Men revolve from walking on the face of the earth to beneath the earth and then back up to the earth. Death is not the end of life; instead, our lives are brought back to earth after we have lived under the earth for a period of time. We come back to the earth again in bodily form. The responsibility of mankind is to keep the balance and harmony which exists between self, family, the universe and spirit" (Chan 1997:227, translated by Writer).

- The worldview of Chinese people is composed mainly of their family and their own country. The Americans tend to have wider worldly concerns and many are interested in international politics.

3.5.7 Regarding Men and Women

- Gbandi tribal men and women do not work together. Each sex has different jobs and roles to perform. Chinese and American men and women

normally work together.

- The society of the Gbandi tribes is a male-dominated society in which women have hardly any rights. Chinese society is traditionally also male-centred. American society however pays more respect to the genders - "ladies first" is one of the mottos of their culture and feminist movements give equal rights to women.
- Gbandi people are married through matchmaking. In earlier Chinese culture, people were married through matchmaking too. Americans prefer having freedom of choice regarding life partners, considering their choice of marriage to be an exclusively personal right.
- Gbandi men normally would not help with any housework. In the early Chinese culture, men would not do any housework either. In America, both men and women usually share the housework.
- Gbandi people usually greet one another with a hug. As for the Chinese, they tend to greet each other with a bow. Hugging is considered embarrassing and even sinful, as Chinese culture does not encourage body contact. Americans quite often greet each other with hugs and even kisses.
- Gbandi people are generally sexually ignorant. Chinese culture stresses chastity and people are encouraged to avert sex issues. Americans on the other hand are very open about sexuality.

- In the Gbandi culture a woman who is dissatisfied with her marriage may leave her husband and return to her family. The family must pay back any bride price received, as well as pay the court costs. The man is almost never wrong in such cases (Gay 1967:13). In America, though, men normally have to pay women in order to settle divorce cases.

3.5.8 Regarding Religion

- Gbandi people believe in the Devil society and ancestral spirits. Similarly, Chinese have polytheistic religions and ancestral spirits. Instead, the Americans normally believe in either monotheism (one God) or atheism and regard science highly and in many cases as the final authority.
- In Gbandi culture, either the entire colony turns to Christ, or no one at all. If the town chief accepts Christ, then the entire village will probably turn to Christ. This phenomenon is similar in China. Americans, on the other hand, are more individualistic and independent. This is why Americans prefer evangelism methods such as door-to-door personal evangelism.
- Gbandis believe in reincarnation. Chinese Buddhism also stresses the importance of reincarnation and takes it as a central belief. Americans, however don't believe in reincarnation.

3.6 STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY AMERICAN MISSIONARIES

3.6.1 Pioneer Work of the American Episcopal Mission

The American Episcopal Church mission was the first mission that came to the Gbandi land. Their Liberia headquarters was established at the Bolahun town. The leader of the Episcopal missionaries was Father Parsell. He is now 85 years old. He was the pioneer missionary in Gbandi and started working there in 1935. He established 18 churches. The missionaries he sent to preach in different towns did not have any Bible college training.

When Father Parsell finally retired and left Liberia for his American homeland, all 18 Episcopal mission workers eventually returned to their former occupations. As a consequence, no church leaders were left in Liberia. Former church buildings were used for other purposes. Clearly, the problem with the Episcopal mission was that they have not made disciples to ensure work continuity.

3.6.2 American Lutheran Bible Translation

Lutheran missionaries made an attempt to translate the Bible into the Gbandi tribal language. This is very difficult because the Gbandi do not have a written language. The missionaries had to first construct a written language for the Gbandi people before they could start translating the Bible. Ten years later this work is still not completed. The book of Matthew has already been translated although it was not yet published.

The missionaries in charge of this Gbandi translation work, Don and Diny Kovac, reported a strange phenomenon. Don said that every time he and his wife came to stay in Taninahun, his wife got sick. Every time they went back to the mission headquarters, though, his wife would recover. This probably can be attributed to spiritual affliction. The important lesson to be learnt from this is that the translation of the Bible will have to be accompanied by spiritual warfare.

3.6.3 American Missionaries of SIM

- The houses of the American missionaries were far better than the Gbandi village houses. The Americans opted not to live in Gbandi town houses, but to build their own houses 10 km away from town. In doing so, they ensured that they could enjoy more privacy.
- Anyone wishing to visit the American missionaries had to make an appointment. Unexpected visits would normally not be entertained.
- The Americans normally had no desire to learn the Gbandi language. They thought that English would be good enough. They expected Chinese missionaries to learn and use English as well.
- The Americans routinely drove some 30 to 50 km to different villages for open-air evangelism. They would generally conduct such evangelism once per week to each of the seven villages.
- When American missionaries were planting churches or planning

outreach strategies, they would only invite missionary peers to join them. They regarded the local leaders as not able to participate.

- When American missionaries visit a village, the Gbandi people would always show their hospitality and prepare food for them. But when a black church leader once visited the house of an American, they told him, “Sorry, it is our lunch time, please sit in the living room and wait until we finish our lunch”.
- The SIM team was composed of American, British, Australian, German, Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese members. Most of the missionaries, however, chose to follow the strategy of the Americans, because they are always in the majority and regard the American way as the best way in the world.
- A major problem which Western missionaries normally have great difficulty overcoming is their sense of racial or cultural superiority.

3.7 STRATEGY ADOPTED BY THE CHINESE MISSIONARIES

This thesis is basically about the cross-cultural work of Chinese missionaries, the lessons learnt and the contrasts with the traditional Western missionaries. For the purpose of this study, emphasis will be placed on the Chinese approach.

3.7.1 Living Among the Gbandi

For the first four years of their mission, the Chinese missionaries lived in Taninahun among the Devil Society town people. They rented the old chief's town house, which had no kitchen and no inside toilet. So, with the helping hands of a visiting American friend, the Chinese missionaries dug their own toilet holes and wells, as well as constructed a better kitchen. Since there was no power supply, the missionaries had to use kerosene lamps for evening church services and Bible studies. They spent three years learning the Gbandi tribal language. The most important thing in working with Gbandis is to learn and blend in with their culture. For example, daily greetings are part of their culture. Even the Town Chief would have to greet the 200 to 400 people every day. If missionaries do not greet the Gbandis in accordance with their custom, they will be considered proud and unapproachable. When the Chinese missionaries first arrived at the countryside, the entire village came out to meet them. Never before had they seen Chinese people and Chinese babies!

For their second term, the missionaries moved to another village - Polowu. The population of Polowu was about 927 people. This was both a Devil Society and a Muslim village. The town chief told Chiang, "You are welcome to stay in our village. We have longed for a white man to stay in our village and now I am so glad to see you here. I believe you will be a great blessing to our town". Chiang replied, "I am not a white man, I am yellow". However, the town chief insisted that, "If you are not black, then you are white". Chiang looked around for lodging in Polowu. The town chief offered, "You may choose any house in Polowu". Chiang was alarmed and asked, "If the house that I like already has someone living in it, what will you do?" He said, "I will

drive them out so that you can move in". For the love for the Gbandi people, the Chinese could not accept this offer, but moved into a vacant new house. The kitchen of this house had a screened window built by a German missionary friend who also helped the Chiangs to build a Chinese style stove. The first afternoon when the Chiangs were at home and his wife cooked a Chinese lunch, the kitchen suddenly turned very dark. It was because all the villagers came gathering outside the kitchen window to watch Chinese cooking and they were blocking the sunlight!

When the missionaries intended to take a little rest at noontime, their room also became dark because of the many town folks outside their window. For a while, the Chinese felt like they were living in a zoo and the whole world was looking on.

The missionary's wife provided medical care for the town folks from morning to evening. One afternoon a loud crying could be heard across the town. A woman came to knock on the missionaries' door and requested them to go out and see what was wrong. They found a dying old lady surrounded by people who were trying to feed her with rice despite her coughing and vomiting. These people said, "We must feed her, otherwise when she dies she will become a hunger Devil and come back to haunt our town". Grace told them, "Stop feeding her; let me pray for her instead". She then prayed to God over the old woman, returned home and administered pneumonia medicine to her. The next day the woman felt better and after a few days she recovered completely. All the town people said, "Grace is a good doctor". Whenever Grace prescribed medicine to her patients, she always laid hands on them and

prayed for them. The school principal once made this comment, “Grace’s medicine is different from country medicine as it includes prayer”.

3.7.2 Bridge Between Man and God

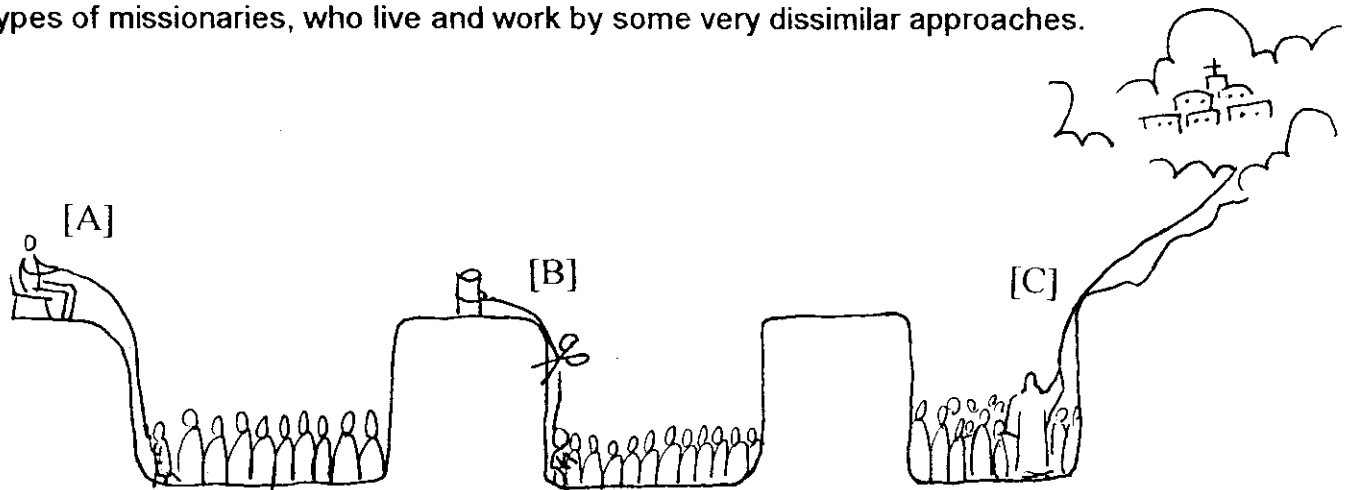
Everyday, from dawn to dusk, many patients came to the Chiang’s house for medical care. On the other hand, through the announcements from the Chiangs’ radio contact, they knew that there were at least two to three deaths that occur daily at nearby villages. If the missionaries placed too much emphasis on theology and preach by reasoning and logic only, the Gbandi people would find it very difficult to understand what they were teaching. They may have felt that the missionaries’ God is not practical and does not care about their needs. They may even form a biased view about God as being unfair, merciless, cruel and not truly an incarnated God, “The Word became Flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14).

Missionaries have a duty to bring people to the “Word” and that include becoming “Flesh”. This is not an easy task. Practical things need to be done, such as living in the midst of people, being humble, experiencing miracles through faith and prescribing power healing. In other words, we have to act in accordance with the Bible’s teaching, “Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22, New International Version).

Christians should be “in the world” and not “of the world” in order to be pleasing to God. While Christians are enmeshed in the activities of their surrounding

worldly cultures, they at the same time should also possess and act on a set of value other than that which the world holds.

From what Chiang had observed in the mission field, there are three major types of missionaries, who live and work by some very dissimilar approaches.



(Three Type of Missionaries)

- **The first type of missionary** sticks to his own culture, customs, language and way of doing things regardless of where he dwells. For example, some American missionaries in Liberia made no attempt to adapt to an African life style. Such missionaries may still bring in the Bible and Gospel, but the African will not be able to understand it too well. While they read the Book, they cannot see their life in it. While they hear the Word, they cannot see how it teaches. This is because there is no incarnational life of Christ being lived out before them. Under such circumstances, we found that not many people turned to Christ.

- **The second type of missionary** behaves just the opposite. They give up their own culture, customs, language, life style and standards and accept the foreign culture completely. They do not see themselves as different from

the African people and may even marry locals. As a consequence, the African people feel there is nothing special about the missionary and may even look down upon him. People may also fail to see the missionary's cultural roots or his relationship with God. We have observed burnout cases that happened under such circumstances. This type of missionary may have tried too hard to please people and, in the meantime, forgot that it is crucial to receive power from above.

- **The third type of missionary** is like Jesus who, while keeping his identity, became a human being and conformed to human culture. He knows who He is but, where necessary, would be willing to give up His rights. This is the essence of incarnation – the message comes not only in words, but also in flesh and life. If truth is only proclaimed in speech and not put into action in daily life, it would have no real meaning. Wisdom would be emptiness unless it is lived out in deeds and actions. Therefore, God has always chosen to use human beings instead of mere words to witness His grace. God uses the message, but also the messenger; not only the Bible, but also the church. Jesus was in the world, but not of it. As a summary, “The Christian message is a life message, not simply a word message” (Kraft 1991:41).

3.7.3 Working Together

3.7.3.1 To Serve and not to be Served

Almost all missionaries in Liberia have hired either a housemaid or a houseboy. A missionary once said to Chiang's wife, “Grace! You seem to be doing

everything by yourself. Why not get a housemaid?" Grace replied, "We don't want to have a servant because as Jesus said, 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve' (Matthew 20:28). If we hire a housemaid, then the people may say, 'We serve them. They don't serve us'. We would prefer to be able to say to them, 'You are our bosses and we are your servants. Our coming isn't about you serving us, but about us serving you. It is not what you can do for us, but what we can do for you'". The Chiangs preferred not to act like early day colonialists who had slaves to serve them; they wished to see people living and treating each other equally. It is as Joinet said (in Kritzing, Meiring, Saayman 1994:67):

"Then bit by bit, painfully, I try to learn how to listen, how to give my opinion when it is asked for, without imposing it, leaving the decision to those who I have come to serve".

3.7.3.2 Having Dialogues with Local Leaders

It is wrong for missionaries to plan church growth strategies without seeking the views of the local black leaders. Chiang always went to see the leaders first, so that they could work together with them for devising church growth plans. He gathered the leaders' opinions and tried to do it their way as far as possible.

3.7.3.3 Understanding People

We cannot expect to communicate well with a person, unless we know something about how he looks upon the world and why he responds to it as he

does. One cannot communicate with people without knowing either their traditional language patterns, or their views of the world (Nida 1990:220).

Missionaries should therefore learn and understand the culture in which they serve. Sometimes Gbandi people came up with better ideas than the missionaries. A black church leader once said to a missionary, "You white people say you are one in unity, but actually you are not in unity, because amongst you everybody has a different idea of how baptism should be carried out. As for us, we Gbandi people are really in unity because we all work together, sleep together, eat together and have the same mind and heart, so there is no division among us". It is necessary to work together with the Gbandi people and to observe their standards and needs. When we humble ourselves and listen to them, they would listen to us in return.

Therefore, "How does one become a successful missionary"? The answer is to "take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30). Many missionaries fail in the mission field not because of their lack of abilities, talents, or academic qualifications, but because of their attitudes of superiority. They regard their ways as the only ways of doing things. When the locals do not accept their way, they then become angry. They fail, because they are not gentle and humble enough. They are "not gentle", so the burden becomes heavy. They are "not humble", so the yoke becomes too heavy and difficult to bear.

3.7.3.4 Walking with Jesus Day by Day

Chiang led Bible studies every morning. At 6:00 am people would come for a one-hour devotion and they would come again at 8:00 pm every night for another hour of Bible study. From Monday to Sunday, 14 times a week, the people would be able to study God's word.

This routine started one day when a church leader came and asked Chiang, "The Muslims pray five times a day. What about Christians? How many times should we pray together?" Chiang answered, "If we pray two times, it should be enough. Come every morning at 6:00 am for our one-hour devotions and every night at 8:00 pm for our one-hour Bible study". So, from that day onwards, the leaders started coming from Monday to Saturday, 14 hours a week, to study God's Word. Every morning, the leaders would ring the church bell. When the town people heard the bell, they would come to church faithfully. This routine continued for 8 years. They would come for Bible studies, despite heavy rain and bad weather. Once the leader rang the bell at 4:00 am in the morning. Chiang woke up and asked him, "Why did you ring the bell so early?" He answered, "Because I don't have a watch!"

3.7.4 Making Disciples

3.7.4.1 Disciple Training Centre

In 1984 a disciple-training center was commenced. 15 students from 10 different churches came together for discipleship training. They were taught how to live together in the Disciple Training Center and the missionaries ate together with the Gbandi church leaders every day.

3.7.4.2 Building up Disciples

It is important to equip the believers so that they may conduct ministry by themselves in the future. Chiang taught Simble, the school principal, every day about the Bible, how to preach and how to become a good shepherd. A few years after Chiang left Liberia, Simble became a sturdy church leader and preacher.

John Nevius (1958:27), the 19th century missiologist, said:

“Young converts, before they are advanced to positions of prominence and responsibility, should also be trained. A man may be carried through a course of theological training, freed from the struggle of ordinary life by having all his wants provided for and yet get very little of this disciplinary training which is so important”.

3.7.4.3 Training Gbandi Sunday School Teachers

Chiang's wife conducted a personal Bible study for women and Sunday school teachers. She would first teach them Bible stories in English. The Sunday school teachers would then teach the stories to Gbandi children in their own mother tongue.

3.7.4.4 Providing Learning Materials

In order to sustain their growth, the Chinese missionaries provided the Gbandi

believers with the Bible, spiritual literature and theological books. They also helped with scholarships.

3.7.5 Open Air Evangelism in the Villages

Among the Gbandi tribes it is customary for all the relatives of a sick patient to join together around his bed and to have the medicine man chanting on and on through the night until the patient either shows definite signs of improvement or dies instead. As for the Christians, they would also meet together when a person was critically ill. They would sing hymns and pray while many of the sick person's relatives looked on. Throughout the whole night, while many of the relatives stay on, scripture readings on records would be played on and on. By morning, most of the people would be able to recite by memory the repeatedly played scriptures (Nida 1990:112).

One day the old town chief died. All the village people mourned him. According to the local custom, no one was allowed to leave the town or go to their farm. The school was closed; everyone had to help with the preparations for the 7-day-long funeral. Most people from the other 10 towns also came. Simultaneously, the Devil Society leader came for a Bush funeral and the Muslim leader came to conduct a Muslim funeral. At night the people brought a big cassette recorder to the town hall and placed it near the dead body. To them there is no essential difference between a living and a recently died man. The dead person only lacks the power to move and speak; but so does the sleeper.

Because of the radio announcements of funerals, many of the other villages would also come. In just a few hours, a variety of activities would start, including: dancing, a big feast, a football game, a baseball game, the arrival of the Muslim leader and the members of the Devil Society, loud pop music dancing. Funerals are considered to be ideal dating occasions, because it is not easy otherwise to meet so many potential girlfriends and boyfriends from 20 different villages.

Chiang seized the opportunity and asked them: "As you already have so many activities, would you like to have one more?" They asked him, "What kind of programme do you have?" He replied, "An open-air evangelical meeting for funerals, with a slide show". They then said, "OK". So, Chiang put up a big light and started an open-air meeting. A lot of people gathered around, as they had never seen a slide show before. Almost everyone, including people from other towns, came to join the open-air meeting. The dead man's family was very glad to have a heavenly blessing upon them and they were proud to have Chiang presenting the open air programme at their relative's funeral. From that day onwards, whenever someone died, the people would come and ask Chiang if he would like to do something for the funeral. Chiang would use a 12-volt battery for power in order to present a slide show concerning Jesus' story. On one occasion the Muslim people showed keen interest in this and told Chiang: "We now need to go inside the Mosque to pray. Please wait for us. After prayer we would like to continue viewing your slide show."

3.7.6 Bible Study / Bible Teaching in Public Schools

The Lord opened the door for Chiang to teach in five different public schools. Chiang taught the Bible and all students got the necessary books and other materials. The schoolteachers were very eager to have Bible studies for themselves also. Therefore, Chiang held a special Bible study class for the teachers as well.

3.7.7 Recognising Indigenous Ways

- **Drama**

With the Gbandi drama is a highly important means of religious communication and expression. However, in the church it is lacking and therefore falls outside their concepts of communication (Nida 1990:61).

- **Dance**

In addition to music, dance is also a good means of communication.

- **The younger generation**

The younger generation of the Gbandi tribe is very different from the older generation. They are influenced by the Western lifestyle. The traditionalists stick to the old patterns of culture and prefer to remain in the villages, or are at least emotionally tied to them. On the other hand, the "school people" are trying to adjust to the ways of the predominant culture, namely, the white way of life, with its Christian worldview. These more educated young people have completely repudiated traditional African concepts of authority and leadership. This causes serious problems in Gbandi society, so many Gbandi parents stop their children from coming to church. The parents are afraid that their children will leave traditional ways behind. Such attitudes increase the difficulty of

missionary work among the youth. Many young men are like coconuts - their outsides are black, but their insides are white.

- **Self esteem**

The black men did not know that they were black until the day they first saw a white man. They then started to feel inferior. Sometimes the Gbandi paint their naked bodies white and go without clothes to emulate white men. However, after they have taken a bath, they of course would become black again. The missionaries have to help the people to regain self-esteem and not estrange them from their roots.

3.7.8 March for Jesus

Gbandi people will beat drums, cluster around the witchcraft man who, surrounded with all his paraphernalia - rattles, wands, sticks and drums – chants over a small fire, cuts a big tree down and carries it and all the people look on in amazement and wonder.

Chiang did something similar in the march. For night programmes, he brought a car battery with a powerful light, drums and all kinds of musical instruments for the church people to use. They began singing aloud and marching around the town – like the Israelites did around the city of Jericho. About 20 children followed the adults. Soon there were 100 to 400 people marching and singing aloud. More adults joined them. Finally, the whole town came out for an open-air meeting.

The lesson we have learned from this is that in order to win people over we need to let them become involved in familiar activities, in order to conform to their own culture. Influence does not come merely through words, but also through effective music, drama and indigenous art.

3.7.9 Music Ministry

"Music is a kind of language which, with its distinctive messages, is a remarkable means of communication. Although the component parts of music cannot be equated with the words and syntax of a language, nevertheless, music is a kind of code. Each type of music has its own elements and manner of encoding" (Nida 1990:39).

and

"The growing body of literature devoted to African music is unanimous in pointing to the exceptional position which it occupies in the life of the African people. Music infuses all the activities of the African from the cradle to the grave: 'whatever the occasion, music will be there, not as an embellishment, but as a functional part of his activity; it is the only constant factor which permeates the very fiber of African social and personal life' (Hailey 1956:67).

Gbandi music is composed mainly of two key verses that are repeated again and again. Some of the songs are probably for the worship of the Devil. This is why Chiang made an effort to translate Gospel songs into Gbandi and taught these songs in five different public schools. All the students loved to sing these kinds of Gospel songs. During their National Day, all of the students would sing Christian songs while marching around the Muslim towns.

3.7.10 Gbandi Tribe Conference

The Church leaders and missionaries usually organise four conferences per year. The Gbandi Church Conference camps are held in very remote regions and usually last from 3 days to a week. About 15 Gbandi churches unite together for these camps.

3.8 THE WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Harry Boer, in his book *Pentecost and Missions*, speaks about the importance of the Holy Spirit in mission:

...the Spirit of life, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of witness, the Spirit of fellowship, all of which speak of the dynamic of action. It is not we who gather the Church, but He, through His Word and Spirit. We may be bound by our limited vision, the Spirit is not bound (Boer 1961:208).

And:

Because the Spirit indwells the Church, the Church is a witnessing Church (Boer 1961:213),

The Holy Spirit is the essence of the missionary proclamation of the Church. It is He who bears the witness of the Church, His is the life that her witness transmits, His the communion that unites the saints, His the unity that make the Church one. For He is the life of the new creation, He is the power of the new aeon, He is the glory of Christ (see Boer 1961:254).

3.8.1 Gbandi Church Leaders

The satanic realm should be taken quite seriously. An old man Pehe was the church leader for the Polowu church. When Chiang started a church, Pehe was the one who rang the bell for morning devotions every day and was very faithful to serve the Lord. Pehe even offered his house for church meetings. He once was an important member of The Devil Worship Society.

About every 5 years there is a grand sacrifice ritual of the Secret Society. Those who belong to the Secret Society must come and join the ritual. When Pehe was summoned to participate, he said, "No, I will not go to the sacrifices any more". They were shocked and asked, "Why?" and he answered, "I have become a Christian and so now I belong to Jesus. I have already dedicated my life to Jesus". They then threatened, "If you do not come, you will be in danger! The Society can hang you in the bush, tie you on the tree and burn you with fire, or hang you on the tree without food until you die". This church leader firmly replied, "I belong to Jesus. I have no part in the Devil Society. If they want to kill me, it is okay, because I am old enough. If I die I can go to see Jesus. How sweet it would be to be with Jesus in heaven".

Hearing this, all the missionaries and church people prayed very hard on his behalf. The most dangerous period was the final week of their Sacrifice Time. The missionaries asked God to send His angels to protect Pehe from harm. The Lord answered their prayer. No one came to kill Pehe and he is still alive today. This is a miracle that is made possible through prayers. Jesus overcame Satan's power.

3.8.2 Power of the Gospel

The major reason for the explosive and extensive spreading of the Gospel in Gbandi society was not due to social and political changes, or human's thirst for worshipping God, but the power of the Gospel itself. The majority of the rural Christians turned to Christ mainly because the missionaries witnessed through their own daily life and also the people had personal experience of miracles and signs. For instance, research done in Gbandi showed that about 70 % of the Gbandi Christians were converted after they were healed from a certain illness. The love, faith and abundant life of Christians are also good testimonies and attract people to Christ. In a few years time, the church had grown from just 1 church to 20 churches (Corey 1992, SIM area director).

3.8.3 A Witch Accepted Christ

As already indicated, the village witchdoctors and their witchcraft act as a hindrance to the Gbandis' believing of the gospel and because of this the village people are not allowed to come to church to attend worship.

On one occasion, after Chiang finished giving a speech, an old witch woman came up to give her testimony. This woman said she had had an unusual dream one night. In her dream, a group of male devils wanted to come into the village of Taninahun. After making a lot of noise with their drums, the devils somehow still could not enter. She thought to herself, "That's strange; why can't they come in"? Then she saw there was light shining down from above. At first she wondered what kind of light it was. Then she realised that "Oh! It's the light of the church"!

We know that Africans believe very much in dreams and that Witchcraft and the Secret Society are things that belong to darkness. Through dreams people discover that the true light of Jesus Christ is more powerful than the darkness of Evil Spirits. The town chief therefore said at one time, "Thank you for bringing the light to our village". We hope this light of truth will continue to shine upon Africa, the land of darkness.

3.8.4 A Man Risen from the Dead

One night Chiang went to conduct a service in a village called Dambu. As the service started, Chiang led in the opening prayer. After he prayed for a little while, he suddenly felt that the place was exceptionally quiet. He opened his eyes and found that everyone had left except his interpreter. He asked what had happened and was told that someone had died in town and that it drew the attention of all the people. Chiang asked his interpreter, "Shall we go also and pay our respects as well?" So they went. When they arrived at the dead man's house, the whole town was already there - about 900 people in

total! Chiang could not enter through the front door, so the interpreter led him around through the back door and found an old man lying on the floor. He then asked all elders to kneel and pray together with him before the Lord. After about 10 minutes, Chiang suddenly found that the old man's eyes had opened and after a while he stood up. The whole town jumped with joy and sang aloud together: "Victory, Victory! Hallelujah!" Chiang asked the old man, "We are having a meeting tonight. Would you like to join us?" and he said, "Yes". As this man went behind Chiang, the whole town followed. God is very humoured, the old man may have just fainted but all his wives thought he was dead. After this incident, the place soon became very crowded with worshippers and the old man came to the meetings as well.

3.8.5 Worship of the Tree God

We learned from a young man that there was an old woman who lived in a big 'Spirit Tree' at the edge of his village. This old woman allegedly could bring babies to women who brought sacrifices to her and performed the necessary rites. This example highlights how myth has been used to solve the problem of sterility faced by many people. If a woman wants a child, she must go to this tree at dawn to plead for a baby. After beseeching the old woman, she must pick a small branch from the tree, tie it to her back for a whole day and then put it under her mat at night. Through this use of imitative magic she hopes to become pregnant. The underlying assumption is the congruence between ritual actions and pragmatic results" (Gay 1967:20, 22).

There was a church leader of Fasavolu who was called Hina. He once read the Bible aloud under a big tree. A group of women from the Bush Society came to worship the tree and sing and dance around it. The church leader asked the women: "What are you doing here?" They said, "We are worshipping our Tree God." Hina then said, "How can the tree be a God? The tree can fall any time. We should worship instead the True God who created the heavens and the earth". However, the women would not listen to him and they continued their dancing. The next morning, the women found that the three big trees had fallen down and they were filled with anger. They ran up to the Town Chief and accused the church leader, saying: "Our trees fell because this man cursed our Tree God". The Town Chief then asked the church leader: "Why did you curse their God?" He answered, "I did not curse their God, I just said that the tree is not a true God. Rather, the one who created the tree is the true God who is worthy of worship". The chief agreed with him and said, "Yes, you are right". Maybe the best explanation for this event is the faithfulness of the church leader who brought spiritual warfare to the entire town.

3.8 CONCLUSION – POSSIBILITY OF THIRD WORLD MISSION

- In the SIM Liberia headquarters, John Shea once said to a Chinese missionary, "I am so glad to have Asian missionaries joining SIM. I found your culture closer to the black culture than the white culture. The Chinese culture is also easier for local black people to accept. We hope more Chinese would come to Liberia and join our mission so that the Chinese can be a bridge between the White and the Black people".

- A Chinese story about how human beings were created goes like this. God made men out of flour and baked them inside the oven. At the first trial, because of over baking, the product was a black man. At the second trial, God took it out too soon and the product was a white man. At the third trial, God took it out at just the right time and the product was a yellow man.

This story illustrates that Chinese are both neither too white nor too black – just in between. Chinese philosophy also emphasises the importance of “the Golden Mean.” Therefore, it would be good for Chinese people, being the middle people, to become missionaries.

- Once an artist looked at a picture Chiang had just painted and commented, “It is good. However, if you put more colour in it, it will become more beautiful”. Yes, as we are approaching the last days, we need to put in more efforts, such as intercultural and interdenominational missions, in order to beautify our work. For the sake of God's kingdom, we need to break through racial differences. What a wonderful unity it would be!
- In the more than one hundred years of service SIM has had in general only whites working amongst the blacks, just like there were only black and white TVs in the old days. In recent years, as the yellow race “Chinese” has joined, SIM no longer features black and white TVs only, but have colour TVs also. Hopefully, the mixing of different cultures in SIM would make SIM more beautiful than before!