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RECOMMENDED APPROACHES FOR THE GOSPEL:

“The Dai are a tribal group that seems to have quite a bit of ethnic cohesion and prestige. The Gospel will bring change to these people, beginning at their worldview level. We must design strategies that will bring as little disruption as possible to their lives, allowing them to continue feeling good about themselves as a people. Eventually, westernization and modernization may be disruptive to their present way of life. We must prepare them through Christ for what may lie ahead.”

“Probably the best approach would be to identify Christian Dai people presently living in some of these other countries (Burma, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand), and mobilize them to be instrumental in being vehicles for Gospel entry. Believers from these countries won’t have the cultural barriers to cross that we westerners will, nor will they have as much difficulty getting into south China as we will. It may be very difficult to locate some, but missionaries presently working in Thailand should be a good source of information. If this does not pan out, we still need to do our homework.”

“First, study carefully and research the Dai culture “on location.” Study the people and their customs. Find out what is important to them and what is not. Ask what it is that occupies their attention and captures their interest. Find out what are their basic assumptions, allegiances, values, patterns of behavior, and social organization. Determine their methods of social control and structures of religious belief and behavior. This would be a good place to start.”

“Next, we need to analyze and investigate in detail the basic assumptions, values, themes, and allegiances the Dai culture contains. Find out how its members see the universe around them. Later, these elements need to be arranged into a hierarchy of major themes.”

“After this is complete, we will have a better idea of how to develop strategy to reach the Dai. The major worldview themes of the Dai should now be evaluated in the light of the Gospel. Discover which themes represent particularly promising points of engagement for the Gospel. Seek to uncover the ultimate allegiance, final authority, and ultimate security of the Dai people. Develop a systematic plan to introduce Christ exactly at this point.”

“There is a great deal of folk literature that the Dai have preserved over the years. Much of it is written and should be studied thoroughly for redemptive analogy possibilities. I believe the Water Splashing Festival has great potential. It is a well-known folk tale that the Dai celebrate on an annual basis. It is a story of how the devil had full control over the Dai people, keeping them in fear and submission. He was defeated when his head was severed by a young maiden. The maiden continues to hold his head because if it is put down, it catches on fire and destroys everything valuable – their homes, their rice, and their forests. Christ has defeated the devil permanently. His head was not severed, it was crushed at the cross. He no longer has power over our lives. We are free from his control and the fear of his vengeance (Tom Elkins, 1988).”

