

## Constructing a Worldview Profile

### **CONSTRUCTING A WORLDVIEW A Cultural-Social-Religious Profile of a Target People A Development Process and Instrument**

This document contains both the process for developing and a model instrument for use in constructing the worldview of a people. It is designed for use among a target population that can usually be identified by culture, language and geography. The questions are primarily illustrative of those needed in identifying and consequently describing a people's worldview. For many target populations this set of questions might be complete and sufficient for identifying the worldview. However, in a number of situations, other questions will need to be considered and some of the existing ones adapted. In such situations, this is a model more than an actual questionnaire that will be used.

*Definition of Worldview.* A worldview is a profile of the way the people within a specified culture live, act, think, work and relate. It is a "map" or a culture's social, religious, economic and political views and relationships. Anthropologists refer to the process of constructing a worldview as an "ethnographic interview" or ethnographic study of a people. An ethnography is a description of the behavior and lifestyle of a people--a community, a society, or a culture.

*Reasons for identifying a people's worldview.* The need for identifying and constructing a people's worldview can be understood through the following reasons.

1. To construct a worldview of the target people through the use of socio-anthropological instruments. (The cultural, economic and religious views and beliefs of the people will be described). In working with a people cross-culturally, it is foundational to know their worldview.
2. To determine the particular views of a people and contrast them with other people's worldviews and the Christian worldview specifically.
3. To identify the major issues that an individual working in a cross-cultural situation will encounter.
4. To identify and list the barriers and bridges that should be addressed if Christianity is to have the opportunity of impacting the people's worldview.
5. To serve as the basis for combining the worldview and the essential Bible truths in developing lesson plans with specific objectives to be accomplished during Biblical presentations.
6. To provide the basis for choosing the appropriate themes, issues and stories for those involved in Chronological Bible Storying.
7. To impact the target people's worldview so that individuals can have a chance to understand the gospel and consider Christ as a legitimate alternative.
8. To know where to position the people on the learning scale and on the gospel receptivity

scale as part of the process of targeting them.

9. To prepare presentations that will help the recipients avoid syncretism should the people prove positive toward the gospel of Christ.

*The steps in constructing a people's worldview.* In identifying and constructing a people's worldview, the following steps should be followed.

1. Research any available anthropological studies and dissertations to find any completed ethnographic interviews, people profiles or worldviews that are recent and reliable. If the research has already been done, duplication of the work is unnecessary.

2. Draw a map of the geographic boundaries of the people. Determine and mark the ethnographic center of the people.

3. Gather demographic information on the people who live within the culture.

3.1. Population by male and female. If possible, secure the population of the people according to the standard age categories and construct a population pyramid.

3.2. Population rate of increase.

3.3. Population density per square kilometer or per square mile.

3.4. Crude birth rate and crude death rate.

3.5. Fetal and infant mortality rate.

3.6. Marriage and divorce rates.

3.7. Migration rates. (If possible, secure the rate of migration into and out of the target population.)

3.8. Marital status: Single, Married, Divorced, Separated and Widowed. (This may not be available nor easily attained in more primitive situations.)

3.9. Educational status: Percent of population that enrolls in primary school, percent of the population that goes beyond primary grades to secondary level, enrollment in primary level, enrollment in secondary level, enrollment in advanced education beyond secondary level by category if possible.

3.10. Literacy status: Percent of non-literates (illiterates or pre-literates), Percent of functional illiterates, Percent of semi-literates, and Percent of literates (Preferably the percent of the population that has gone beyond at least eight grade levels of schooling.) Literacy is generally defined by Grey of UNESCO as: "A person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group."

3.11. Linguistic data. Secure data on the language or dialect versions of the language among the target population.

3.12. Religious data. Secure this data according to any religious groups that exist among the target people.

Note: In some cases a number of the items in the demographic list will not be available.

4. Conduct a worldview study or ethnographic study of the target people. This is a descriptive study of a specific culture, an in-depth observation and information gathering process resulting in an analysis of the culture. The interviews that are conducted are often referred to as ethnographic interviews. The choice of informants/translators is very important. The research should be representative.

5. Construct a people profile, an ethnographic monograph or worldview document.

6. As a part of the worldview construction process, one will want to compare the people's ethnography or worldview to the Christian, Biblical view of the Christian life. Prepare a list of similarities and barriers to the Gospel and to a Christian lifestyle.

7. General categories to be considered for inclusion in the ethnographic or worldview instrument.

- Life Cycle The Supernatural
- Birth Fate if the dead
- Naming Spirits
- Weaning Prophets
- Betrothal Shrines
- Marriage Sacred Objects
- Separation/Divorce
- Household Habits Forms of Ritual
- Food Prayer
- Personal Hygiene Offerings
- Cleaning Ordeals
- Oaths
- Public Life Divinations
- Language
- Labor
- Relationships (SIL World view items cover the dimensions of cognitive, expressive, & evaluation)
- Instructions to Children Housing & Architecture
- Danger "Other world" beliefs
- Taboos Yearly activities
- Customs Typical male and female lives
- Beliefs Space & time information
- Fears Daily social situations
- Kinship Rites of intensification
- Rites of transformation

- Cultural Structures Rites of crisis
- Housing Ritual events & actors
- Architectural designs Ritual symbols
- Dress habits and rules
- Cultivation
- Manufacture

Note: This list has been adapted from James P. Spradely's The Ethnographic interview, page 103 and SIL World View Workshop Format document.

**CONSTRUCTING A WORLDVIEW**  
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**A Development Process and Instrument**

This instrument is designed to be used during the ethnographic interviews among the target population as one gathers information in order to construct a people profile, a worldview of the culture. Adaptation of this instrument for use in varied settings is recommended. Answers to the questions should, if at all possible, be secured on-site, within the culture being studied. It is best that the research or survey be accomplished among those people who live in the ethnographic center of the culture. Avoid surveying only fringe people, or people who are no longer living within the boundaries of the culture being studied. Individuals being interviewed should be like the majority of the people within the culture.

1. Family Structure.

- 1.1. Is the family monogamous or polygamous? Describe the characteristics and conditions.
- 1.2. Is the family matriarchal or patriarchal? Describe the "head of the house."
- 1.3. What are the authority lines in the family? Who makes decisions--how, when and why?
- 1.4. What are the expectations and rules for getting permission?
- 1.5. What are the expectations and rules for getting forgiveness?
- 1.6. What are the roles and consequent relationships between family members? Include husband, wife, children, relatives. What is the difference at different levels in the society and for the different ages? Who is responsible for whom, when and how?
- 1.7. Identify kinship lines and patterns of the extended family.
- 1.8. How do families support themselves in this culture? What are the traditional and non-traditional means of support?
- 1.9. How does the family structure change as a result of death, marriage, separation, incapacity, incompetence or other significant changes?

- 1.10. How is a family's heritage passed from one generation to the next?
- 1.11. Do families have totems? What are typical ones and how are they used?
- 1.12. How is authentic news passed on within the family?
- 1.13. What are the rules of inheritance?
- 1.14. What are the sexual and mating roles and rules in the family? What are marriage rites and rules?
- 1.15. How are grievances settled within a family? What are the rules concerning mistreatment, separation, divorce, or a mistress?
- 1.16. What are the child-rearing practices and traditions?
- 1.17. How do children choose their life vocation, their role in the community?
- 1.18. What are the special days or events for families?
- 1.19. How is the family changing?
- 1.20. How does an individual defend himself or herself within the family?

## 2. Social Structure.

- 2.1. How is the society of a (community organized? What are the typical, the common homogenous and heterogeneous facets of society?
- 2.2. How do different families relate to each other? How do families meet other families in the community? What are the rules of meeting and making friends?
- 2.3. How is one's place in a village society or a community determined? Is there a cast system or other type of structure within the culture?
- 2.4. How does society relate to foreigners? Foreigners from another city, another race, another tribe, another country? What are the attitudes and rules of relating?
- 2.5. How is real estate handled? What are the rules of ownership, selling and buying?
- 2.6. How do individuals become an adult? Are there rules of recognition and rites of passage? At what age or ages do they occur? What are the circumstances of their occurrence?
- 2.7. What rights do individuals have within a community, within society? What rights do families have? What rights do clans have within society? What

rights do males have? What rights do females have?

2.8. How are leaders chosen? Who is eligible? When are they eligible?

2.8.1. Under what conditions and by what rules are they chosen?

2.8.2. How are leaders recognized by society, by the community?

2.8.3. How are leaders changed?

2.8.4. What are the rights and responsibilities of leaders?

2.8.5. How do leaders lose the right to lead?

2.8.6. How do individuals relate to their leaders?

2.8.7. How do leaders relate to other leaders in the culture?

2.9. What are the basic values within society that give it cohesion and security?

2.10. What are the basic taboos within society?

2.11. What are common traditions within society?

2.12. What are the valued arts or artforms in society?

2.13. What are the learning preferences of the people? Are most of the people oral communicators or are they mostly literate communicators?

2.14. How is communication carried out? With whom? What are the rules?

2.15. What are the channels for news? Who can bear news? How? When and how is news recognized as official and authentic? Is there a certain place, time or artform whereby truth or authentic and authoritative news is given to the community?

2.16. How are individuals "educated" concerning rules within the community, society and the culture?

2.17. How are individuals educated? Is there a formal education system such as schools? Is it for everyone? Is it pervasive? Is it respected? Is it effective?

2.18. Describe the vocational respect ladder within society? What are the levels?

2.19. Describe how the society looks upon marriage? What are the rules in society concerning courtship, engagement, marriage and divorce?

2.20. What are the rules of dress within society?

2.21. Describe law and order within society? Structure? Processes?

2.22. Describe medical care within the society? Type? Structure? Practitioners?

### 3. Religious Structure.

3.1. Describe the predominate religious system or systems in society?

3.2. Does the religion express belief in a god or gods? Name & describe them. If they have a pluralistic belief in gods, what are the relationships between the gods?

3.3. Chart and describe the people's spirit world (beings, places and status).

3.4. Where does the power and authority reside in the religion/s? What is the source of the authority and the power?

3.5. Do the people believe in miracles and magic? Are they superstitious?

3.6. What part do deceased ancestors play in the religion? Is there interaction between the living and the dead?

3.7. What are the primary documents of the religion?

3.8. What are the common religious rites and events?

3.9. What is their view about the Godhead and the position of God?

3.10. What are the characteristics of the God within their religion?

3.11. What are the basic beliefs? About God? About good and evil? About life? About the source of life & creation? About death? About mankind? About spirits? About wrong, sin and guilt? About eternity? About salvation? About life after death? About sickness? About securing converts or adherents? About deviates from the religion? About women?

3.12. How does an individual relate to the religion? Is personal choice respected?

3.13. How does religion involve society? How does it relate to society? How does society relate to religion? What position does religion have within society?

3.14. How does religion involve family?

3.15. How does religion view foreigners?

3.16. How does religion view other religions?

3.17. Who are the religious leaders? How are they chosen? Under what conditions and by what rules? How are religious leaders recognized and sanctioned?

3.18. Does the religion teach and do the believers use charms, amulets and enter into magical rites?

3.19. What is the relationship between the seen world and the unseen world?

3.20. Is/are the religion/s animistic or mixed with animism?

#### 4. Economic Structure.

4.1. Is society's economic structure agrarian, industrial or mixed?

4.2. What are the primary drivers of the economy? Capitalism, socialism or others? Describe the economy.

4.3. What are the primary economic and vocational categories and divisions in the economy?

4.4. What are the structural patterns within society?

4.5. How are prices determined? What are the major influences on prices?

4.6. Who is in control of the flow of money?

4.7. Who is in control of the financial institutions? Are their private financial processes as strong or influential as the public institutions?

4.8. Describe the traditional classes in the economy? Lower/Middle/Upper

4.9. Is a barter culture in existence? Does it predominate? Is it significant?

4.10. How does the economy relate to other countries?

4.11. How is social security provided? Within family, social or governmental structure?

#### 5. National Political Structure.

5.1. How does the national political structure differ from the local structure?

This category varies so much in approach and sensitivity, that it is best for this to be constructed locally.

SOURCES: This list has been adapted from a number of anthropological and sociological instruments. The more influential ones were: John Apeh's *Social Structure and Church Planting: A Study of the Cultural Concerns of the Receptors of the Gospel*; James P. Spradely's *The Ethnographic Interview*; Summer Institute of Linguistic's "World View

Workshop Format" document; and various other anthropological and sociological documents.

**CONSTRUCTING A WORLDVIEW**  
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**A Supplement Instrument for Chronological Bible Storying**

This instrument is a supplement to the larger worldview instrument and is not a substitute for that document. The larger document is needed during the storying planning process in identifying the similarities and barriers to the Gospel. The information coming from this documentation process is needed in determining story style and formats.

1. Literacy.

1. 1. What is the literacy level of the population? Government's figure? Other authoritative figures?
- 1.2. How is literacy defined by the government?
- 1.3. What is the illiteracy level of the population?
- 1.4. Functional illiteracy level of the population (percent or population that has not made it to or has not gone beyond the 6th grade level in school.)

Percent of the total population classified as illiterate and functionally illiterate combined. Combine the percentage figures of 1.3. and 1.4. This figure, or percentage figure, is the oral communication percent of the population. A combined percentage of 50% or more indicates that the target population is clearly an oral communication culture.

2. Heritage information.

- 2.1. Do the people have a heritage that is passed on to successive generations?
- 2.2. Is the people's heritage passed on by members of society to today's generation of children?
- 2.3. What is the current status of the heritage information?
  - 2.3.1. Was it originally orally communicated?
  - 2.3.2. Has it been reduced to writing?
  - 2.3.3. Has it been recorded in audio or video format?
  - 2.3.4. Does the oral format also exist today?
  - 2.3.5. In what language or languages does this information reside?
  - 2.3.6. Is the heritage passed on privately or publicly?

2.3.7. Is the heritage passed on through ritualistic rites?

2.4. How have the people traditionally passed on their heritage to the next generation?

2.5. In what way is the heritage information passed on today?

2.6. Is there a fairy tale/folklore collection that is distinct from the heritage collection?

2.7. Do the people have totems?

2.8. Are characteristics and values assigned to certain animals for use in stories?

2.9. Is there a primary, well known, and public heritage story of the people that has been produced in a textual format?

2.10. Do the people use storytelling as an artform to tell their heritage stories?

2.11. Do families perpetuate their heritage primarily by storytelling?

2.12. Is there a special time when the heritage stories are told?

2.13. Is there a specified place where heritage stories are told?

2.14. Are the heritage stories taught in the school system?

2.15. Are the heritage stories considered to be true, or are they understood to be mythological?

### 3. Storytelling.

3.1. Is storytelling common among the people?

3.2. Are there special words in the language for storytelling? Are there words that set apart storytelling from any heritage rituals that are told? Do they share the same terms?

3.3. Are stories told among the people that are distinctly different from the heritage stories?

3.4. Is there formal and informal storytelling?

3.5. Who tells stories? Do men and women tell stories to the same audience? Do young and old tell stories before the same audience?

3.6. Are individuals designated formally or known informally as storytellers?

- 3.7. Is storytelling an artform among the people? What are the primary artforms of the people?
- 3.8. What is/are the dominant artform/s?  
Narrative/Drama/Chanting/Singing/Drums/Mixture
- 3.9. Are the religion/s of the people perpetuated by storytelling or variations of that methodology?
- 3.10. How carefully do storytellers stick to the story? Are changes or variations acceptable?
- 3.11. Does the audience participate in the story and interact with the storyteller?
- 3.12. In cases when songs are used in conjunction with stories, is the vocabulary of the songs the same as the stories?
- 3.13. Are stories told competitively?
- 3.14. What mnemonic conventions are used in telling the stories which aid memory and capture the bearer's attention?
- 3.15. How are stories introduced? What are the introductory words and phrases that are used by storytellers? Do some of the phrases denote that a story is mythological and other phrases that the story is true, an historical event?
- 3.16. How is repetition achieved within the story? Is there repetition, and how often does it occur within a given story?
- 3.17. Are imitation and mimicry common parts of the storytellers style?
- 3.18. Describe the use of tone by the storyteller.
- 3.19. Are the introductions and conclusions of the stories very similar? Are there stock phrases, or certain formulas that are common to the introductions and conclusions of many of the stories?
- 3.20. How is the moral of the story revealed? Are individuals left to themselves to discover the moral of each of the stories? Are there language markers that identify the moral of the story? Is the moral positioned in a certain place so as to be identified?
- 3.21. How much exposition, explaining of the story, is done by the storyteller?
- 3.22. Is there some kind of discussion or application of the story that takes place after a story is told?
- 3.23. How is the change of time, or a shift in movement, or focus within the

