INTEGRATIVE PROJECT: THE HAKKA OF TAIWAN

A Paper

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Part 1: Why This People Now?

The Hakka of Taiwan is a unique people group that has a rich history and much potential to play a key role in world evangelization. Their strategic value is significant. In this section, I shall make a case for the strategic importance of focusing our financial, prayer, and human resources on this people. Let us begin by delving into some historical facts concerning the Hakka of Taiwan.

First, the Hakka are historically a mobile people.\(^1\) Despite their strong Chinese roots, they have immigrated to Taiwan and beyond—even to the United States.\(^2\) To clarify the magnitude of this, approximately one fourth of overseas Chinese in the world today are Hakka.\(^3\) It is no wonder, then, that the title “Hakka” means “guest” or “sojourner.” Despite its negative connotation in our view, however, this term is welcomed by the people. In fact, it is what they call themselves.\(^4\)

Most historians believe that the Hakka, as a people group, originated in Northern China, and they are often considered part of the Han Chinese ethnicity. Their movement over the centuries has been determined by many things, from political and military upheaval to a lack of natural resources to sustain a growing population.\(^5\) More specifically, “they began to migrate to South China to avoid the wars and conflicts of the late Western Jin Dynasty (AD 265-316).”\(^6\) The Hakka people are characteristically “very adamant in defending their cultural heritage,”\(^7\) which is thought to be another main reason for escaping the turmoil and influence of China’s

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\(^1\) Liao, David C.E. *The Unresponsive: Resistant or Neglected?*, Moody Press, 1972, p. 69.
\(^4\) Liao, pp. 80-81.
\(^5\) Liao, p. 72.
northern regions; despite moving into many areas of the globe, they have a strong cultural heritage.

The Hakka have remained a distinct people, resisting assimilation to the majority populations. Many of their customs are centuries old, and they remain to this day. Religiously, according to SEND International, they “remain among the most conservative practitioners of traditional Chinese ancestor worship.”

Even Hakka language has endured the test of time. With strong support from the Taiwanese government, residents of all ethnicities are encouraged to learn Hakka, and schools are beginning to train more and more students in Hakka language and culture. This fact alone calls for a sensitive, culturally-relevant witness among the Hakka of Taiwan. The gospel must be shared without cultural baggage, and it must be received in a way that it becomes part of the Hakka way of life.

The earliest known attempt to evangelize the Hakka people was made in the year 1846. In this year, Charles Gutzlaff asked “Europe for workers to penetrate inland…where no missionary work was being done at that time.” This was the first call to service among the Hakka of China’s southern Guangdong province. Two men answered Gutzlaff’s call: Theodore Hamberg and Rudolf Lechler, both German missionaries from the Basel Mission. After many years, church membership was about twenty thousand, with the establishment of nearly 200 congregations and 100 schools.

Following this pioneering work, the English Presbyterian Mission began work among the Hakka. One thing that characterized their mission, as David Liao put it, is that “all work was

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10 Liao. p. 25.
11 Ibid.
carried out in the Hakka language.”\textsuperscript{13} This was the status of their work by the turn of the Twentieth Century: “By 1904 the Hakka Mission had two stations (with missionaries), thirty-nine congregations (among them thirteen were organized) with 989 communicants and a Christian community of 1,565.”\textsuperscript{14} In the midst of this, a seminary, hospital, and boys’ and girls’ schools were founded. Furthermore, by 1905, the Berlin Missionary Society “had twenty-one stations and 5,442 communicant members.”\textsuperscript{15} Other mission agencies involved in various ways during this early time—albeit with considerably smaller numbers—were the American Baptist Mission, the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodist Mission, the London Missionary Society, and the Southern Baptist Convention. All in all, the total number of Hakka Christians in Guangdong province soon after the turn of the century is estimated at 30,000.\textsuperscript{16}

As we have noted the evangelistic achievements within Protestant community, we should also take a moment to consider the work of the Roman Catholic Church. In this, I will focus primarily on their work in Taiwan, because their success among the Hakka of mainland China was rather limited and sporadic. In Taiwan, however, Liao makes a strong case for Roman Catholic success in reaching into predominately Hakka communities. As he stated in 1972:

If we take the average size of a Hakka congregation as being equal to the island-wide average size, the number of Hakka Catholics should be also one-tenth of the total membership, or 29,000, which is about six times the size of the Protestant Hakka community. Even if we take the size of an average Hakka congregation to be only one-third of the overall average size, as we find in the case of Hakka Protestants, there would still be at least some 10,000 Hakka Catholics—twice as many as Hakka Protestants.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{13} Liao, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. p. 30.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. p. 31.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. p. 38.
If this is the actual case of growth within the Roman Catholic Church of Taiwan, why is there such a seeming resistance among the Hakka to Protestant mission efforts?\textsuperscript{18}

As we have seen many historical reasons for focusing on the Hakka of Taiwan, we will also consider several biblical reasons. First of all, we know that we, as Christians, are sojourners and aliens in the world. In this way, we can relate to the Hakka people. We know, as the Apostle Peter wrote, that we “once were not a people but are now the people of God…”\textsuperscript{19} May we pray that the Hakka of Taiwan become a people of God.

Second, let us not be like the Pharisees, traveling long distances to win a single convert.\textsuperscript{20} The Hakka, as a communal people, are much more likely to turn to Christ as a group. We should focus our ministries on winning whole families and community groups, laying aside our Western tendencies toward individualism—even toward advocating personal decisions to follow Jesus. A ministry among the Hakka will be more effective if we think in community terms.

Third, let us follow the example of Job. Strangers were welcome at his home, “for [his] door was always open to the traveler.”\textsuperscript{21} The Hakka are strangers by nature; some have chosen to settle in Taiwan, but wherever they are encountered, they should be welcome in our homes and in our lives. May we proclaim the gospel in their midst and believe as the Prophet Isaiah did: “For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.”\textsuperscript{22} After all is said and done, salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit, so let us be obedient to spread the gospel to the Hakka of Taiwan, understanding that the Lord will change their hearts toward His. He will open their eyes to see.

\textsuperscript{18} This question will be explored in Part 6 of this paper.
\textsuperscript{19} 1 Peter 2:10a, NKJV
\textsuperscript{20} Matthew 23:15
\textsuperscript{21} Job 31:32, NIV
\textsuperscript{22} Isaiah 52:15b, NIV
The strategic priority in reaching the Hakka of Taiwan is also found in their potential to reach other people groups. The Hakka of mainland China is one clear group that could be reached by Taiwanese Hakka missionaries. Even before cross-cultural missionaries began evangelizing in Taiwan, the Mainland Hakka were coming to know the Lord. With a population of 25+ million, however, they still represent a strong missionary opportunity. The language and customs are essentially the same; they are simply divided by a few degrees of geography.

Further, approximately 2,000 Hakka live in four villages on China’s Hainan Island. Unfortunately, according to Paul Hattaway of Asia Harvest, they “speak a language unintelligible with the Hakka on the Chinese Mainland.” Even so, their customs are similar to that of other Hakka, which may represent an open door into their society. Nonetheless, if we speak of priority as reaching the greatest number of people, work among the Hakka of Hainan Island might prove the least of on our list. If, though, we, as Jesus did, care about the “least of these,” perhaps these 2,000 precious souls do matter as a potential mission field for the Hakka of Taiwan.

As alluded to above, the Hakka Diaspora also represents a strategic mission field. Hattaway concludes that the Hakka are a major immigrant people in roughly 20 countries worldwide. The numbers are virtually impossible to calculate, but it is safe to say that there are several million Hakka displaced around the globe.

The She nationality of China’s Mainland is perhaps the most strategic non-Hakka people group that might be affected by Hakka missions. They are just under one million people, most of

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23 Hattaway, p. 166.
24 Ibid., p. 167.
25 Matthew 25:40,45
26 Hattaway, pp. 604-05. Besides China and Taiwan, the most populous communities of Hakka live in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand, with a combined Hakka population of approximately two million.
whom live in the mountainous areas of Fujian Province.\textsuperscript{27} The She are one of the 55 official minority groups of China, and have, for the most part, assimilated to the majority culture and language of the area. For most She, Hakka is their first language.\textsuperscript{28} This language connection is the strategic bridge that would certainly aid in the evangelization of this growing unreached people group. With far less than 1\% Christian adherents,\textsuperscript{29} the She are greatly in need of the gospel.

As an unreached people group itself, there are many indicators that the Hakka of Taiwan is also in great need of the gospel. For this analysis, I shall use information from the Joshua Project.\textsuperscript{30} First, the percentage of evangelical Christians is a mere 0.2\%; all Christian adherents total a meager 2.5\% of the nearly three million people. Second, there is no reproducing church planting movement among the Hakka of Taiwan. A vision for sending Hakka on mission to other peoples has not yet been established.

On the flipside, however, a functioning agency partnership is working with the Hakka, and a group of churches have been planted. Films, literature, radio, and the Bible are all available in the Hakka language. It is only a matter of time when we will see a breakthrough in the Hakka of Taiwan, and, by God’s grace and help, we can be part of making it happen. This unreached people group has the potential to reach many more peoples, but it must first be reached.

\textbf{Part 2: Understanding the Hakka of Taiwan}

The Hakka of Taiwan live in various regions of the island, including Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Miaoli, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung counties. These areas stretch from North to South along the

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 480.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
western side of Taiwan. Two main missionary teams, among others, are already engaged in ministry among the Hakka: Hakka Ministries and Hope for a Hakka Harvest.\textsuperscript{31} The former team is a group with Youth with a Mission (YWAM), localized in Miaoli County in the North.\textsuperscript{32} The latter is with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and has team members spread throughout the island, but a major portion of their work takes place in southern Taiwan in Meinung, Kaohsiung County. They are presently the only mission agency attempting to reach the Hakka in the South. The only other major concentration of Hakka is along the East Coast Rift Valley, where about 150,000 Hakka reside. This is a remote area and difficult to access from the rest of the island.\textsuperscript{33}

Moreover, the Hakka communities of Taiwan tend to be separate from the general population of Hokklo (Taiwanese). Their high value of culture and customs has much to do with this phenomenon. As these areas are relatively distinct and homogeneous, it is easy to know where to begin evangelizing the Hakka. Of course, this decision would best be made in conjunction with, and while being sensitive to, current missionary efforts. How we might approach first sharing the gospel with them is another issue entirely—an issue I will attempt to address further in this section.

According to Paul G. Hiebert, there are three dimensions of culture, roughly: beliefs, feelings, and allegiances.\textsuperscript{34} In the category of belief, it is necessary to understand the animistic traditions of the Hakka people. Along this same vein, we will consider their adherence to ancestor worship later in this section.

\textsuperscript{31} Their websites are www.hakkaministries.org and www.hakkaharvest.com, respectively.
\textsuperscript{32} With approximately three million Hakka in North Taiwan (compared with 500,000 in the South), this is also where most other mission agencies choose to work.
Two examples of Hakka taboos have to do with disturbing household gods and ghosts. The first example is best represented as the full story from one of the YWAM missionaries:

Eva was enjoying a nice night of ping-pong at the neighbor's house, casually letting out short whistles whenever the ball landed off the table. After a while, her playing partner nervously approached and asked Eva if she would please stop making those noises. [It] seems that (according to Hakka superstition) whistling after dark actually attracts wandering ghosts.

The second example is from the same missionary, Eva, who inadvertently leaned against a stove at a Hakka friend’s house. She was quickly pulled aside. Her friend suggested that she not lean against the stove for fear of upsetting the kitchen god who lived there. Religious life is central to the Hakka of Taiwan, but, as stated above, this will be a topic of more detailed discussion.

I have found that issues of feeling and allegiance are difficult to distinguish. Nonetheless, I shall outline several brief examples from these categories. To start with, walking hand in hand with someone of the same gender has a certain connotation in most of the world, but is perfectly acceptable in Hakka culture and suggests nothing besides platonic friendship.

Furthermore, if a dog eats a neighbor’s chicken, a reconciliation dinner is typically held, in which the shame-ridden neighbor prepares a meal including the perpetrating dog as its main course. It is most-assuredly the last meal for that dog! As long as we are speaking of get-togethers, it is against Hakka custom to use the restroom at during your first visit as a guest at a friend’s house. This can become particularly difficult because excellent hospitality is also according to Hakka tradition, so parties may last well into the evening.

Finally, as a matter of Asian custom not strictly related to the Hakka is the notion of declining an invitation until it is offered at least three times, at which point it is appropriate to accept. These cultural dimensions—and more—must be considered before attempting to

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35 Each of these cultural examples has been drawn from YWAM missionary stories found at http://www.hakkaministries.org/hakkas/insidelook.htm.
evangelize the Hakka of Taiwan. It is easy to see many ways in which to offend or lose face when acting contrary to Hakka beliefs, feelings, and allegiances.

Hakka language is another important factor in evangelizing and discipling this hard to reach people group. The Hakka are very proud of their language and highly value education, so it is being passed down generation to generation. It has been shown, however, that Hakka churches are much in need of Hakka-speaking church workers. In fact, the lack of such qualified personnel is the “most frequently mentioned failure on the part of the church.”37 We must be sensitive to this and proactive when it comes to training ministers and missionaries in the Hakka language for work with the Hakka people.

Hattaway notes how important language is to the Hakka. He states: “As part of the careful preservation of their language, when a non-Hakka woman marries into a Hakka family she is required to learn the Hakka language.”38 As noted in the previous section, the entire Bible is available in Hakka, along with the Jesus film, and many other literature and media presentations of the gospel. These, however, will only be effective to the extent that there are missionaries conversant in Hakka to follow up the message.

Another important piece is still missing from the equation. This, I believe, is summed up best by a quote from the Taiping leader, Chung Wang, a Hakka:

You have had the Gospel for upwards of 1,800 years;39 we only, as it were, eight days. Your knowledge of it ought to be correct and extensive; ours must necessarily be limited and imperfect. You must therefore bear with us for the present, and we will gradually improve…. We are determined to uproot idolatry, and plant Christianity in its place.40

36 Liao, p. 166.
37 Ibid., p. 59.
38 Hattaway, p. 166.
39 Chung Wang was speaking in the 1800s to a group of missionaries, urging them to patience with his people.
40 Hattaway, p. 166.
Certainly there has been widespread evangelism since Wang spoke nearly 200 years ago, but the principle behind his words remains. We should understand the naïveté of the Hakka in respect to the gospel, and approach them in a loving and patient way.

As we know, it is critical to understand where people are so that we can determine how they might change. Let us now transition to an exploration of the status of religion among the Hakka of Taiwan. They predominately function with an animistic worldview, where spirits are said to “animate” most inanimate things. Another aspect of Hakka religious belief is what we will call “ancestor practices.” This ought to be distinguished from “ancestor worship” because of the cultural expression of these practices: the fact that it is more a matter of showing respect and honoring one’s ancestors, not worshipping them. Ancestor practices are nothing like the religious observances of the temple.⁴¹

Hakka beliefs stem from a worldview that every person has three souls. When a person dies “these souls head off to different places:” one soul remains in the body and is buried, one soul ends up in hell, and one soul enters the family ancestor tablet.⁴² Although this is in sharp contrast to biblical teachings and can be point of contention when ministering to Hakka, I believe it is not a salvation issue.

Many missionaries would simply dismiss Hakka ancestor practices as idolatry, without considering its cultural expression. As Joel Nordtvedt, a missionary with the Lutheran Brethren, argues:

For most Hakka Chinese whom I have interviewed, ancestor practices are not the same as the worship of the gods. When a Hakka person worships a god at a local temple, it is to ask for some favor that can be granted by the powerful spirit.

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Generally speaking, however, the purpose of ancestor worship is not to ask for favors but to do one's filial duty. Christians are seen by traditional Hakka as not showing proper respect to ancestors, which may be a barrier to their acceptance of the gospel. Filial piety, however, is a biblical concept.

Nordtvedt admonishes us to take a second look at ancestor practices and consider ways that we might show the Hakka that we care and respect for our ancestors as well (e.g. by placing pictures of our ancestors in prominent places, etc.).

Ernest Boehr, of the Evangelical Alliance Mission, spent 23 years among the Hakka people of Taiwan. He explains how Hakka funeral rights were redeemed by Christian missionaries to proclaim the truth of God in the midst of death. Here is an excerpt from his writings:

The seven-week memorial for old mother Yeh became an excellent opportunity for teaching about life and death and what Christ accomplished in his death and resurrection. Each week for seven weeks, Rev. Johansen went in to Henglung to hold services in the home. This took the place of the heathen rites of having a monk come in each week to report the progress of the soul through hell. It was a very satisfying time for the family. They felt they had done all they could for the departed.

Boehr goes on to explain that several churches were planted following this time, demonstrating that traditional Hakka practices may be redeemed for Christ’s sake without completely denying their cultural significance in the lives of the people.

Part 3: Mobilizing the Needed Missionaries

44 See 1 Timothy 5:8. Of course, the Christian view of filial piety is restricted to this lifetime, while the Hakka would assert that it extends to the next. Correcting this view, Nordtvedt maintains, should be a matter of discipleship, not a prerequisite to salvation.
Throughout this section, we will explore possible ways of becoming involved and starting meaningful work with the Hakka of Taiwan. In order for success in this endeavor, it is crucial that all groups appreciate and apply the basic principles of incarnational ministry: understanding Hakka worldview, responding to their felt needs, and being prepared for battle.

Most of the Hakka live according to an animistic worldview. It is necessary, therefore, to address their felt needs based on this system of belief. For instance, I believe we should share the fact that God is more powerful than their household gods, and there is no need to fear them. As Phillip Elkins put it, “we [have] residing in us continually a Spirit that [does] not tolerate other spirits. The Spirit in us is more powerful than any other spirit.”[^47] While addressing felt needs, we should also be aware of the potential for “interpersonal conflict and setbacks in our ministry goals.”[^48] Let us now briefly attend to this issue.

Unfortunately, it is almost inevitable that conflict arise in ministry situations. This conflict usually serves to divide the work and the people of God. It is a tool of the devil to hinder the advancement of God’s kingdom. Let us not succumb to conflict unless it is absolutely required for the continuance of effective ministry (e.g. to stop heretical teaching). We must recognize that setbacks, too, may be an opportunity for renewed growth and are often a necessary part of the missionary task. May we understand this as we undertake work among the Hakka of Taiwan.

Besides donor-supported missionary work, there is an opportunity for self-supporting tentmakers in and among the Hakka. Tentmakers, as Ruth E. Siemens writes, “are missions-committed Christians who support themselves abroad in secular work, as they engage in cross-

[^48]: Ibid., p. 672.
cultural evangelism, on the job and in their free time.”

Because of the importance of education in Hakka culture, one tentmaking strategy is to work as a teacher. As was said earlier, the Hakka language is highly regarded, protected, and passed on to future generations. To work as a teacher of Hakka language, especially to non-Hakka people, would establish a degree of credibility and enable one to build gospel bridge relationships in the community. Many universities throughout Taiwan have founded centers for Hakka study. These would be ideal places to seek employment as a qualified Hakka linguist and teacher. The drawbacks to this type of ministry include the distance created between the university teacher and the quintessential Hakka person and the relatively low marketplace availability of university professorships.

All along the way, I would strive to maintain close contact with one or the other of the two main missionary teams working in the area. If nothing else, they would have insight into what works and what does not as well as knowledge about what ministries are already taking place. If there is something established in the education field, for instance, it would be best for me and my team to work in conjunction with their current efforts.

If, in this missionary task, I am to be a learner, trader, and storyteller among the Hakka, what might my roles look like in the first year? In the initial couple of months, I would dedicate myself to language acquisition and meeting new people on a daily basis. I would center my efforts on meeting those in my immediate work and residential context. Language is the key component here, because, as Donald N. Larson puts it, “when I make serious efforts to learn it, they know that I me mean business—that they are worth something to me because I try to

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communicate on their terms.” 50 After learning some basics of the Hakka language and building initial relationships in the community, it is important that I add the role of trader.

As a trader, my goal would be to fit in and establish relationships. 51 A tentmaking strategy can help in this process. As Larson writes, “If I have come with some recognizable commercial purpose, my motives tend to make sense.” 52 The key component to this role, however, is the exchange of information one to another. I should arrive equipped with pictures and cultural information to share in exchange for information in my host culture. 53

After six months, Larson suggests adding the third role of storyteller. Now that it is easier to communicate with the Hakka in their language, I can begin telling Bible stories and sharing my personal testimony of faith. Again, I would first and foremost aim at sharing with those in my immediate context, but would now find myself prepared to share stories with a wider audience because of increased language proficiency, although my relationships might not be as strongly established in the greater community. After several months of this, I would be ready for another role to play in Hakka society, ad infinitum. 54 Throughout the whole first year and beyond, language study would remain a principal focus of my time and resources.

Now that we have a better idea of how long-term workers might be involved with the Hakka of Taiwan, let us consider a few ways that short-term workers might help to advance the gospel among this people. One main question should be answered for these groups or individuals: Does this effort promote and extend the work of the long-term missionaries? This will be the final topic of this section.

51 Ibid., p. 441.
52 Ibid., p. 440.
53 Ibid., pp. 440-41.
54 Ibid., p. 442.
First, short-term teams could be helpful, particularly in the North, where various factory ministries are currently active. I envision summer-break children’s ministry among the children of factory workers. Second, I see the potential for interns in Hakka churches, serving in a support capacity with local pastors and missionaries. Third, trips to the East Coast Rift Valley might help to promote the gospel among the 150,000 people who have little or no exposure to it. In this case, I could see a partnership established with the SBC missionary in that area. With only one Christian worker in that region, I am sure there are many ways a short-term team might be effectively utilized.

In addition, the YWAM team lists several opportunities for short-term mission: prayer walking; holding evangelistic seminars on marriage, child raising, or business; performing open-air drama, singing, or dance routines; serving practically through cleaning, painting, repairing, or babysitting; teaching evangelistic English classes; building relationships through basketball, badminton, hiking, or tennis. God might use any of these opportunities to give the short-term workers a heart to continue long-term with the Hakka of Taiwan.

**Part 4: Development and Resource Mobilization**

When speaking of getting resources to the Hakka people, we must ask ourselves: What are their needs, and how can we address them? In this section, we will deal with various scenarios that might arise in the areas of development work and the mobilization of resources.

If provided funds for an experienced development worker to join my team for three years, I would choose to invite Ann Croft because of her work with the Fulani people of northern Nigeria. Her heart was always for the people, and she sought to serve them in ways that met their greatest needs. The Fulani, like the Hakka, are facing some of the economic problems that come

from the “growing pressure of urbanization.” The livelihood of the Hakka has long been in agriculture, particularly in tobacco and beetle nuts. With the expansion of cities, increased commercialization, and tourism, the Hakka have turned to marketing goods. Agriculture continues to wane. I think Croft’s experiences would match well with Hakka struggles.

In order to get others involved in Hakka evangelization, I would also like to raise up a prayer force. My method of challenging and equipping a group of people to pray might look something like “10 Seconds for Taiwan,” a monthly e-mail sponsored by several mission agencies ministering among the working class of Taiwan. People must be knowledgeable about the group for whom they are praying, so informational tidbits would accompany each message, and a prayer would be stated for all to follow and add to as the Lord leads. A website would be created for people to sign up for the e-mail updates. A link to this site would accompany any correspondence initiated by the Hakka missionary team.

Prayer evangelism could also be utilized in our outreach. This is where whole cities are the focus of concerted prayer for the purpose of seeing the evidence of God’s power displayed in answered prayer. As Ed Silvoso explains, “When we pray for felt needs and God answers, their eyes are opened to the reality and power of God, and this in turn leads them to recognize their need for salvation.” This, I believe, can be a powerful way to reach the Hakka of Taiwan. This effort, of course, would be targeted toward Hakka believers and local missionaries who are on the frontline of prayer for the people with whom they live and work.

For a video presentation to advertise the Hakka of Taiwan, I would have it focus on the retiring Baby Boomer generation of the United States. The three key points would be:

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1) Less than 1% of Hakka are Christian.\(^59\)
2) The Hakka have been neglected over the years, with evangelistic preference given to other people groups.
3) The Hakka are located in three main areas of Taiwan (North, South, and East Coast Rift Valley), where they work primarily in factories and agriculture.

The three potential responses would be:

1) Will you commit to praying for the Hakka of Taiwan?
2) Will you donate of your time and/or resources for the work among the Hakka?
3) Will you consider going short-term or long-term, as a way to serve God in your retirement years?

As a video, much of the emphasis would be placed on the visuals, but the ideas mentioned above might serve as an outline to consider.

After support has been garnered, a vision trip for pastors and church leaders might help build significant, ongoing commitment for the Hakka. Because most international flights enter Taiwan through Taipei in the North, our 5-6 day trip would start there. A day or two would be spent visiting factories where many Hakka work; time would be spared to meet some of the key missionaries of YWAM’s Hakka Ministries. A day would be spent traveling to southern Taiwan to visit the Hakka of Meinung, while taking in some cultural sights along the way. A day would be spent visiting Hakka fields and marketplaces, including the popular Hakka museum in that area. The trip would be set so that the group of pastors and church leaders would be able to attend a Hakka church service on their second-to-last day and fly out of Taipei the following morning.

In closing this section, I will list here the top three prayers I want God to answer on behalf of the Hakka of Taiwan.

1. That a church planting movement be established.
2. That the Hakka of Taiwan would be able to not only reach their own people with the gospel but reach out to other Hakka of East Asia and around the world.

\(^{59}\) Some estimates place this number as low as 0.2 percent.
3. That all Hakka would have at least one opportunity to respond to the gospel in their lifetime.

Part 5: Envisioning a Multiplying Church Planting Movement

In this section we will look at various dimensions of what a flourishing gospel movement among the Hakka of Taiwan might look like. Corporate Christian meetings might be gatherings of several family units in a house church setting. This is the example we see in the work of the Johansen’s among the Hakka. The gospel typically spreads through networks of close relatives, friends, and neighbors. Additionally, the house church model works “because the natural setting of the home is neither foreign nor unnerving.” The group meetings are always held in the evening when people have free time away from work.

Each meeting would include Bible study, worship, and prayer, all preferably in the Hakka language. As of the mid-1970s, however, there was only one hymnbook available in Hakka, which included 150 traditional hymns translated into Hakka. I am unaware whether or not any contemporary choruses are available in Hakka nor if there are any original Hakka worship songs. If there are, these would be used as much as possible. It is a tragedy that the majority of Bible versions and songs only exist in Taiwanese or Mandarin.

As stated above, most evangelization will occur within the close-knit family structure. The church itself will be most effectively led by Hakka ministers, especially those within the

60 Boehr, p. 675.
61 Ibid.
62 Liao, pp. 61-62.
63 David Liao records that a one-language policy had been adopted early on by the Taiwan Presbyterian Church, the largest denomination on the island. As the majority language of Taiwan, Taiwanese was held as the one and only official language of the church. Liao goes on to write, “On a visit to a rural Hakka church, [I] asked the [Taiwanese] pastor why he still preached in [Taiwanese] since he could also speak good Hakka. He replied, ‘I have been requested by the Hakka Christians to do so, because certain Christian tenets can be adequately expressed only in [Taiwanese]’” (p. 62).
family networks. Regular training of these small-group lay leaders would be necessary for this sort of ministry as the church expands.

Due to the language issue, it may be best for the growing Hakka church to remain distinct and separate from the existing majority Taiwanese church. So much cultural and linguistic baggage has already been attached to the gospel and church life that to simply incorporate with the Taiwanese church, the Hakka church might lose its own identity. With its identity, I am afraid it would also lose its strength in reaching its own people with the gospel.

When the newly established church is able, first missionary efforts might be directed toward the Hakka of Mainland China. This should occur after the existing church in Taiwan is able to effectively reach those within its borders. Then it should be prepared to reach beyond Taiwan in mission.

Church life for the Hakka of Taiwan will purposely differ from the church I presently attend in many ways. First, it will be an informal system of house churches as opposed to large congregational meetings in a formal church building. Second, services will be conducted in the minority language (Hakka), whereas services at my home church are in the majority language (English). Third, lay leadership will have a predominant role in Hakka churches, which is another distinctive from the professional ministers at my church. Fourth, cross-cultural workers will have some role in starting and supporting Hakka church efforts at least in the early years. My church was started and is supported by members of the majority culture in the States. Lastly, funerals and other religious events will be conducted in accordance with Hakka traditional and culture, utilizing functional substitutes wherever necessary. We shall now examine some of the basic commands of Christ as they relate to the Hakka church.
George Patterson outlines seven basic commands of Christ as the following: repentance and belief, baptism, practical love for God and neighbor, the Lord’s Supper, prayer, giving, and discipling. Repentance and belief will most likely involve a group decision and turning to Christ. I suspect that individual faith decisions are few and far between. Baptism, I believe, should occur immediately (or as soon as possible) following repentance and belief. This might take place as a family event in a nearby lake or river. Inasmuch as possible, sharing this declaration of faith in a public way is encouraged.

Loving God and others in a practical way might take the form of invitations to tea or other family-to-family gatherings. I can easily envision Hakka tea (Pengfeng) as the liquid component to the Lord’s Supper, while Persimmon cakes represent the body of Christ. These are both foods that are special in Hakka culture.

Prayer should take place in the heart language of the people: Hakka. It should take place as openly as is comfortable for the Hakka believers, so that all may join in praying together. In years past, it might have made sense for giving to involve portions of the tobacco, rice, or beetle nut harvest, but today offerings and gifts would probably best be in the form of regular currency. Last but not least, discipling of others might be most effective from one family to another. One-on-one disciple making is does not seem appropriate for Hakka culture.

In all of this, certain sufferings might occur within the new body of believers. Foremost of these would be a certain difficulty in relating with others in their community because of seeming disloyalty on the part of the Hakka Christians to traditional Hakka beliefs and practices. Functional substitutes are extremely important regarding this point. If the church is able to express Christianity in a culturally appropriate and acceptable way, this sort of social suffering

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65 Council for Hakka Affairs, Executive Wan, Republic of China (Taiwan), <http://www.hakka.gov.tw/>.
might be alleviated. Most likely, this would not be an issue of shared suffering in the missionary’s experience.
Part 6: Timeline for a Reproducing Taiwanese Hakka Church

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<td>Missionaries learn Hakka</td>
<td>Missionary-led small group</td>
<td>First family turns to Christ</td>
<td>A lay leader is trained &amp;</td>
<td>House churches begin to</td>
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<td>language &amp; culture</td>
<td>Bible study is started</td>
<td>&amp; are baptized</td>
<td>discipled along with his/her</td>
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Missionary-led small group Bible study is started
First family turns to Christ & are baptized
A lay leader is trained & discipled along with his/her family by the missionary family
Non-Christian friends, family, & neighbors begin attending the first house church
House churches begin to multiply

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<td>Churches spread to other</td>
<td>Whole regions are effectively</td>
<td>The first Hakka missionaries</td>
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<td>nearby communities</td>
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2013 Churches spread to other nearby communities
2019 Whole regions are effectively evangelized
2020 The first Hakka missionaries are sent to Mainland China
Major road blocks that stand in the way of Hakka evangelization include: a stubbornness of identity, a misconception of Christian filial piety, a lack of Hakka-language churches, and a lack of cross-cultural workers. These areas will be explored in more detail in this final section. We will end with an examination of some practical questions that might face the emerging Hakka church.

First of all, the Hakka of Taiwan have a stubbornness of identity so that they do not adapt well to outside influences. They, as a people, have resisted change for so long that it seems nearly impossible to do so now. Adopting Christianity—becoming a “Christian” people—is such a difficult change. The task of the missionary, then, is to represent the Christian faith in such a way that it is not viewed as a dramatic change but acceptable as an integral part of Hakka culture.

Secondly, we have seen that filial piety is a vitally important issue to the Hakka people. Respecting and honoring one’s elders and ancestors necessary to their way of life. As a Christian worker in the Hakka context, we ought to do our best to live out true Christian filial piety, demonstrating in a real way that they do not have to denounce that aspect of their life and culture in order to accept Christ.

Thirdly, there is a lack of Hakka-language churches in Taiwan. We know that the gospel is spread via close social networks of relatives, friends, and neighbors. This is an “insider movement.” As Rebecca Lewis writes:

…insider movements are about the gospel spreading inside pre-existing relational or identity networks (communities or families) and letting it grow up in whatever form those networks choose under the authority of Scripture and the Holy Spirit. The pre-existing network becomes the believing community or “church”…. 66

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We should make every attempt to encourage an appropriate expression of Christianity within Hakka society. Ultimately, Hakka believers should determine what shape the church takes. I am convinced, though, that this will be a Hakka-speaking church, as Hakka is the heart language of the people.

Fourthly, there is a lack of cross-cultural workers among the Hakka of Taiwan. Of the approximately 800 missionaries in Taiwan, a mere 30-40 of those work with Hakka. Again, we should ask ourselves: *why is there such a seeming resistance among the Hakka to Protestant mission efforts?* As we learned in the first section of this paper, the Roman Catholic Church saw much better success in Hakka church attendance than their Protestant counterparts. Liao claims that the Hakka have been neglected by Protestant mission in Taiwan. He states, “This point is all the more convincing when we find out the Roman Catholic Church has assigned twenty percent of its priests and sisters to Hsinchu diocese, the predominantly Hakka areas….” When we contrast 20 percent with the less than 5 percent of Protestant missionaries, we see that he is unmistakably—and regretfully—right. The harvest is ripe, but the workers are few.

We shall now consider an exit strategy for missionaries. The model we will use identifies four levels of missionary commitment: the pioneer, parent, partner, and participant stages. The pioneer stage is when the missionary first encounters the Hakka of Taiwan. The parent stage starts when Hakka leadership begins to be trained. The partner stage is when Hakka leaders work side-by-side the cross-cultural workers, as equals. Finally, the participant stage begins when missionary involvement is by invitation only; Hakka leadership determines the level of involvement.

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68 Liao, p. 59.
69 Matthew 9:37
In the end, missionaries should aim to work themselves out of a job by equipping indigenous workers to take their place. The difficulty is remaining sensitive to the time when it is right to leave. The typical indicator of completion is when a strong, reproducing, self-evangelizing church has been established. Missionaries should leave to pursue whatever God has for them next, which may or may not include work among a similar unreached people group.

The emerging Hakka church should be indigenous from the start. This will inevitably fight the missionary tendency to pull early converts out of their families into the comforting arms of the mission community. Mission among the Hakka should be about establishing a thriving, indigenous church planting movement.

This emerging church can be very open and visible in the community. On the one hand, new Hakka Christians enjoy religious freedom in Taiwan, and they are able to establish churches with no threat from the government. On the other hand, a myriad of social pressures might exist for the first Hakka converts. However, as more and more families turn to Christ, the issue of acceptability should change. It remains true that the one surefire way to draw people toward Christ is to be open and honest about your faith. I would hope and pray that God give the early Hakka believers the strength and courage to open their homes and hearts to sharing the Good News with their relatives, friends, and neighbors.

As stated in the previous section, I believe that baptism should take place immediately following repentance and belief in Christ for salvation. In this way, a connection might be made between the decision of repentance and turning to Christ and the act of dying to oneself and rising as a new person in Christ in the act of baptism. Following this important time, many biblical truths should be taught the new Hakka Christian as a matter of discipleship.
I will end with some thoughts regarding William Carey’s famous statement: “Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.” In this study, I have come to realize that the Hakka of Taiwan are not particularly hardhearted or resistant to the gospel—not any more so than other unreached people of the world. It is true: the Hakka of Taiwan have been neglected over the years by churches and mission agencies that would rather work with a more receptive people. The Hakka need a chance to hear—and a chance to respond! I believe that we should attempt great things for God among the Hakka of Taiwan. God has said that He draws all people to Himself. Mission is His work and His alone. In this fact, we can rely. In this assurance, we can expect great things.

71 John 6:44
To Be Explored Further:

a. The current availability of Hakka worship songs
b. The current status of Roman Catholic missionary and church planting work among the Hakka of Taiwan
c. The current status of Hakka-led missionary efforts, if any
d. Info about regular, organized community religious events/gatherings, if any
e. Hakka beliefs regarding eschatology
f. Common Hakka stories/fables, especially those related to religion
g. Current development work happening in Hakka areas of Taiwan
h. Actual examples of strategic timelines by mission agencies attempting to reach the Hakka of Taiwan
Works Cited


 Works Cited (Cont.)


