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PEOPLE AS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BEINGS CS501

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SPIRIT OF THE RAINFOREST ANALYTICAL PAPER

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This is is an analytical paper from the book, *Spirit Of The Rainforest A Yanomamo Shaman's Story.*The book was published by Island Press, and the publishing date is 2019 in Chicago. The author of the book is Mark Andrew Ritchie.

The paper is focused on specific themes from the readings of the book such as culture, gospel, mision in the story of Yanomamo coming to faith. In addition, I will conclude with personal reflection and Missional significance to me.

SUMMARY - PAGES:1 - 248

The book depicts the author, Mark Ritchie who becomes friends with Jungleman from the rainforest who shares his culture, and his experiences with him, as a child,and as an adult. This book has several segments to it; for example, a prologue, an introduction, a part one, and two. Both parts one, and two, have their titles, and sub-titles to follow. In his prologue titled; A Long Story Goes Before a Fight, is when Jungleman describes to the author his story including the vengeance his group has for their opponents; as both villagers positioned themselves to fight.[1] Explaining that he is "a man of the spirit world." In part one of the book, Jungleman shares with the author that he has many names, and that one of his names is Jungleman.[2] Jungleman and his fellow fighters are from Honey Village (which he shared with the author, the origination of the name of his village), and their opponents are from Mouth Village. For most of the boo, Jungleman shares with the author, the spirit world that he was born into, lived, and understands. In his story to the author, he provided the author with the names of the

[1] Pg. 5-11
[2] Pg. 15

different spirits, his own encounters with the different spirits (including his first encounter as a child as he reports to his mother as a child).

ANALYZE THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE YANOMAMO CULTURE

After listening to, or reading Yanomamo Shaman's story and his culture with all those babies women and older adults, and believing that there is such normalcy to the culture in fighting as the only way to settle a dispute, what are things that come to mind in someone from another culture and knows nothing about the Yanomamo and their culture? Would these individuals say that this is a barbaric culture? Or would they become biblical and think that the Bible states that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?[3] Or should human beings give other human beings the respect that should be given to them. As Dr. Stanley John shares in one of his lectures on culture, that: we should not judge a culture on our values but instead judge a culture on their values; by virtue that "humans create their own world, and ascribe meaning that constitutes culture.[4] In addition, Spradley points out that:

> Culture does not provide a cognitive map, but rather a set of principles for map making and navigation. In addition, Spradley shares that different cultures are like different schools of navigation to cope with different terrains, and seas.[5]

Should we then, as missionaries focus our attention on mentally processing the culture of The Yanomamo Shaman's culture as distinctive, and at the same time that we must

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[3] Jeremiah 17:19
[4] See Culture & Meaning lecture 2 by Stanley John, P.h.D. at Alliance Seminary & Universityin Spring 2023 01/21/23.
[5] David Mcurdy, etal. "Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology."15(2016):12

understand their culture (and all other cultures outside of ours), in their own terms, and what they value, and why they value what they value.[6]

According to Rynkiewich, we as missionaries must focus our posture, and our cognition, with a mind-set od Cultural Relativism.He describes Cultural Relativism as:

> That the assumption that each culture is unique, has an inherent logic to its structure, and has parts that are functionally interrelated. Thus, each culture can be understood, and appreciated only in its own context.[7]

ANALYSIS OF WHAT THE GOSPEL (GOOD NEWS) MEANS FOR THE YANOMAMO CULTURE

I would say that the Yanomamo tribe lived a life of only what they knew, and what made sense to them, and so they embraced the life they were born into, practiced, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. However, when the "good Spirit" the Yai-pada the gospel message was introduced by the nabas at first, (the white foreigners),[8] At first, the message that Jungleman received, was that the spirit "Ya-pada" was not a good spirit; instead, he was informed that this new spirit was an enemy spirit. However, eventually the Yanamos realized that what they thought was a bad spirit, that this was not the case, that the truth is, the new spirit is a good spirit. For example, the nabas informed them that the new spirit cares about them, and that he wants a better life for them. In addition, the nabas shared that only when they get rid of their spirits, that the good caring spirit will become their spirit.[9] Also, that, that is the reason why their spirits do not like him.

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[6] See Culture & Meaning lecture # 2 Stanley John, P.h.D. at Alliance Theological Seminary & University Spring 2023 01/21/23
[7] Michael Rynkiewich, *Soul, Self, and Society:A Post Modern Anthropology for Mission in a Post Colonial World.* Cascade Books,(2011): 27
[8] Pg. 87
[9] Pg. 86

With the spiritual transformation that the Yanomamo experiences with accepting the Gospel, they realized that there is a better way to live than the way that they were accustomed to live. For example, that instead of living a life of unrest with other villagers, a life of revenge, unforgiveness, and pure bitterness for those who might have done them wrong at any time. Their acceptance of the Good News have brought them to a place, and posture in life of forgiveness, and experiencing a life of transformation in their world view as a whole; and a peace that they knew nothing about, or desired of, before accepting The Good News. The Good News has given them the knowledge and experience of peace, love for others, and even respect for other people. The old customs of the Yamomamo became the past of the Honey Village.

There is no doubt in my mind as a reader, that the description of the Yai-Paida depicts the themes of The Good News. For example, the understanding that the Yanomamo has, and gives about Yai-pada, is that he was a baby, and became a Yanomamo, he demonstrated to people the need to live differently, and that although he (the Yai-Pada spirit), was aware that he would be killed in the end,"he did it all anyway." Also, that Yai-pada gave his life for all of "us" Yanomamo.[10] During this discussion about the Yai-pada and his attributes (byShoefoot), it is also shared that his land is beautiful, and that it is something that they all know.[11] There is no doubt that the Good News brought transformation to the people of Honey village as they took a step of faith in Yai-Paida. However, Jungleman shares that there are still people all over the jungle who continues to fight and kill, and that Honey Village is the only place where the people do not continue to kill and fight.[12]

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[10] Pg. 162
[11] Ibid.
[12] pg. 246

MISSION - ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF HOW THE PEOPLE CAME TO PUT THEIR FAITH IN GOD

Regarding the process of how the Yanomamo came to put their faith in God, by coming to the realization that their lives were miserable, and that they needed a change. This came about by first hearing the Gospel message, and having the desire to yield themselves to the One whom they were told can and will provide a better life for them. It is quite refreshing that according to Jungleman, that often, men do travel to other villages to try to have them stop the wars.[13]

This is why it is so important that we as children of God need to spread The Gospel to a dying world because, the Word of God distinctly states in the Book of Romans, that:

> For whosoever shall call upon the name
> Of The Lord, shall be saved. (13)
>
> How then shall they call on him in whom
> they have not believed? and how shall
> They believe in him of whom they have
> not heard? And how shall they hear
> without a preacher? (14) KJV

[14]

Yes, it is noted that according to Jungleman, that people continue to struggle with their old habits and new found faith. This nothing new, to the believer because, sanctification is a process. The Apostle Paul made it clear of the experiences he has had at times to live a sanctified life, that as a Believer, the things that he would have

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[13] Pg. 246
[14] See Romans 13-14 KJV.

wanted to do as a Believer,he did not do; but the things that he hated to do as a Believer in Christ, that he did.[15]

PERSONAL REFLECTION & CONCLUSION - MISSIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

For me, I remembered a summer before my teenaged years, when a Sunday night I went to church with cousins that I spent this particular summer with. I went to church with them, I answered the altar call, and gave my life to Jesus Christ. At that time I attended the Anglican Church, this was something new for me. (the delivery of the message i.e.), "you must be born again." I accepted the Good News message, and thank God that I have no regrets in serving my God, through Jesus Christ, The Lord of my life.

There are many themes, and documentation that have been of great significance to me with this course where missiology is concern. For example, to be aware of any form of or traits of ethnocentrism that I must be careful not to prejudge other people's behavior by using my own culture; primarily through my own values and feelings.[16]

I also pay close attention to a testimony documentedd by the Late Evangelist Billy Graham. He shared his feelings about taking a course in Anthropology and that it helped him just in case he wanted to go on to become a missionary; and that this course helped him with the first church he pastored. [17] He also shared that he his one regret was that he did not continue to a P.h.D. in anthropology.What really struck me is that he further stated that:

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[15] See Romans 7:15 KJV.
[16] See Michael Rynkiewich, "Soul, Self, And Society: A Postmodern Anthropology for Mission in a Post colonial World," (2011) pg.24
[17] Pg. 7:Ibid.

> Harder to take than that, though, was the superior
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> attitude some of them (referring to fellow missionaries), had toward the new believers and people from other denominations who were coming our way. It was judgmental attitude based on different styles and associations.[18]

Another significant documented information in missiology regarding culture is,that people's action toward things is "on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them."[19] In regards to culture, James Spradley states that in order of a person to discover the hidden principles of another way of life, the researcher must become a student."[20] What I have gained from this instruction regarding culture, and ethnography Is that I must immerse myself in the group; that I must not just observe the people, That must become a part of the group.

This course has certainly changed my worldview on many things regarding missiology. For example, I always thought that knowing or understanding the language, and has a Servant's heart would be enough for reaching the people as a missionary. I have really Grown in my worldview about missiology that it is more than loving missions, but that it Certainly exceedes far beyond such a concept. For example,

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[18] Ibid.
[19] David Mcurdy, etal. "Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology, Boston, Pearson, 15th ed. Pg. 11
[20] Ibid. pg. 7

In my conclusion, I can only say that when it comes on to the theme of culture, and doings, as a missionary, I join with the old phrase, to “seek first

to understand, then to be understood.”[21]

[21] Inspired by the “Prayer of Saint Francis.”