

FIELD POLICIES AND PROBLEMS

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FRENCH INDO-CHINA.

We were particularly favored at the beginning of our work in French Indo-China by having an experienced Superintendent, Rev. R.A. Jaffray, who was also a missionary statesman; and by our being under a Board that has kept up-to-date with missionary administration. Mr. Snead's visit to the field in 1927 as representative of the New York Board gave great impetus to the development of policies, which we shall enumerate, and to the organization of the Annamese Church. From the outset, three major principles were set forth:

1. Governing Principles.

1. Rapid and extensive evangelism.
2. Formation of Bible Schools at the earliest possible moment.
3. Self support and organization of the Indigenous Church.

The operation and development of these policies in Indo-China and East Siam may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Evangelism. We planned the occupation of all main centers as rapidly as possible. Not only so, but we occupied adjacent unevangelized mission fields even when we were barely getting under way in areas already occupied, e.g. occupation of Cambodia, East Siam, Laos, and Tribes areas. From strategic centers, we are pressing out and on to the vast areas that are as yet unreached---there are still scores of such areas in Indochina.

The principle of team work, District unity, and co-operation is important in the development of unevangelized areas. Sometimes it has been necessary for a missionary in one district to surrender a valuable native helper in order to buy up the opportunity in another district, where there was a particularly urgent need for a key man.

This principle applies not only to Native workers but to missionaries also, as in the case of the Gunthers leaving Cambodia in order to open East Siam. Had we waited even another month the doors might have been closed in East Siam as far as our Mission was concerned. Giving up the Gunthers meant a real sacrifice on the part of the missionaries and work in Cambodia. Similar sacrifices have been made by those in Annamese work in order to release missionaries for work among the Tribes.

Whenever this principle is not observed it almost invariably affects the area where there is unwillingness to co-operate, as well as the loss suffered by failure to meet the urgent need in the other district.

District subsidy is indispensable for rapid advance. This calls for the pooling of our resources in order to carry out a definite program. These funds are administered by the Executive Committee.

The spirit of revival and entire consecration is the secret of evangelism. In Indochina we have had many gracious manifestations of Divine favor, each advance step has been made by prayer and revival effort. Outstanding help from visiting evangelists was realized through:

Wilson Wong-----1923  
Dr Goforth-----1928

Timothy Dzaio-----1937  
Dr. John Soong----1938

Following Dr. Soong's visit to Indochina last May, our workers and christians were broken and humbled before God and have gone forth in a new spirit of revival. Hundreds have been won to Christ during recent summer months. But the subject of revival is a separate study.

2. BIBLE SCHOOLS. We have now eight Bible Schools with at least 250 students. These are located as follows:

Annamese Schools	1.	Tourane	Annam	over 100 students
	2.	Hanoi	Tonkin	
	3.	Cantho	Cochinchina	
Cambodia	4.	Battambang		
Siam	5.	Khon Kaen		
Laos	6.	Vientiane		
Tribes	7.	Dalat	Annam	
	8.	Barmethuot	Annam	

Courses in our Annamese Schools follow the regular Nyack curriculum, and in other areas the standard is being raised gradually. It must be kept in mind that in Indochina, we have a variety of races from the lowest aboriginals who inhabit the jungles and plateaus of the hinterland, to those whose minds are quite equal to students in this country.

### 3. SELF SUPPORT.

(a.) In the churches. The method of self support which has proved most successful in Indochina is that of a temporary subsidy which is gradually withdrawn. We have tried and are still trying other methods; each region is studied separately and each case is judged on its own merits. Immediate self support has been possible in a few instances but the main thing is to bring the church to self support as rapidly as possible using the method best fitted to the particular situation. A few years ago, in our enthusiasm, the emphasis was self support but to-day without any let-up in our efforts towards self-support, the main emphasis is prayer, revival and evangelism. There are over sixty fully self supporting churches in Indochina, about one half of the total number of organised church groups.

In general, we have followed a scale where 10 members give a certain sum towards the pastor's support, say seven piasters out of twenty-five. Each additional 10 members must increase their gifts until a membership of 100 brings the church to full self-support. Rice is sometimes given in place of money. Boosting members and pastors up the self-support ladder was no small problem and only after 10 years of persistent effort were we enabled to lay the foundation for an organised indigenous church, with Districts and General Assembly.

(b) In the Bible Schools. Self support was realised in the Tourane Bible School, and there is still a large measure of it but we had to ease up when we found that too many students were coming whose parents or relatives could afford to support them, while some poorer students who ought to come were left out. It is very difficult for the majority of prospective students in Indochina to secure a job which will give them enough money to support themselves in school, or to work their way through school.

## II FIELD GOVERNMENT.

Before we mention some of our Problems, it is necessary to give a resumé of field government.

### 1. MISSION GOVERNMENT.

a. Field Chairman. The six fields of Indochina meet annually in one Conference. At

each conference the nomination is made to the New York Board of Field Chairman, who is appointed by that Body. Thus far, the term of a Chairman has varied from three to four years but a nomination is required each year.

b. General Executive Committee: The General Executive Committee is elected annually by Conference, with representatives from the following areas---one member for each area: Tonkin, Annam, Cochinchina, Cambodia, Siam, Laos, Tribes; with the Chairman, a total of eight members.

c. Sub-treasurer for Siam. Conference also nominates to the New York Board a sub-treasurer for Siam, who is usually the representative on the Executive Committee.

d. Annamese sub-committee. Two additional foreign missionaries from the Annamese field are elected by Conference to serve on the Annamese sub-committee which handles routine Mission business in the three Annamese fields. This committee is composed of members from Annamese fields on the General Executive Committee and the two additional representatives appointed by Conference.

e. Joint Executive Committee. The Annamese sub-committee (foreign) meeting jointly with the General Executive Committee of the Annamese Evangelical Church (native), is known as the Joint Executive Committee. This Joint Committee handles all important Church business. Its value as a spiritual and administrative force cannot be overestimated.

f. Regional Conferences. During the year Regional Conferences are held in Cambodia, Siam and Laos, where all the missionaries of each country meet ~~once~~ with the Chairman for prayer and fellowship and to discuss local business.

2. NATIVE CHURCH GOVERNMENT. In discussing Native Church Government we deal particularly with the Annamese Church, organized as the Annamese Evangelical Church. The same principles apply to the organization of the Church in Cambodia, Siam and Laos and among the Tribes, but there are important differences in the application of principles of government in the last named areas. We will speak more of this when we come to the discussion of Problems.

The general organization of the Annamese Church is three-fold:

Local Church-----with pastor, Executive Committee and Board of Deacons  
District-----with Executive Committee and District Chairman.  
Synod or General Assembly-----with Committee and President.

The entire Annamese area is at present divided into three Districts: Cochinchina, Annam and Tonkin.

The setup of the Annamese Church is patterned after the Alliance Home Organisation but is more definite and detailed. The situation in America that called for the formation of Alliance Branches which have now become a combination of Branch and Church, does not, of course, exist in Indochina. But we do believe there is a broadness of missionary outlook and fellowship with all true Believers regardless of denominational affiliations in the Alliance Branch, that should characterize the Church in Indochina. Thus far we do not have any other <sup>Evangelical</sup> Denomination in our Annamese field but we do have the missionary program to the 80 Tribes and to millions of Annamese who are still unevangelised. We trust also that in the development of the work in America, Alliance Churches will never cease to be Alliance Branches.

Each local church is guaranteed full liberty in local church matters but the Constitution calls for a certain amount of uniformity and provides for efficient administrative management.

The local church calls its own pastor but this call must be approved by the District and General Executive Committee. Appointments are made by the District or General Committee. No church is required to accept a pastor whom it does not want but on the other hand, no church is ever left without a pastor. If the local committee does not find one, the District makes a temporary appointment.

A local church calls a pastor for a period of two years by a majority congregational vote but after that a pastor must receive an 80 per cent vote by the congregation. Otherwise, he is moved to another church.

Foreign missionaries are not members of the Annamese District Conference or General Assembly. Their relationship is purely advisory and spiritual. We rejoice at what God has done in the lives of our Annamese leaders. The wisdom, love and spiritual unity manifested in the business sessions at Conferences is a miracle of Grace.

### III

### PROBLEMS.

This is a vast subject and here again we can only summarize. Happily it is easy to forget past problems.

1. Church Discipline Annamese by nature are severe and their discipline is sometimes harsh but a deeper experience of the love of Christ is giving them the right balance. There have been a few cases of a serious nature, where missionaries have been a great help by their counsel. One brilliant young Annamese leader, who became president of the Church, wielded an unusual influence over workers and christians who almost idolised him. For years the missionaries feared that this young man was headed in the wrong direction but it seemed impossible to bring any definite charge against him. Pride and self will are very ~~elusive~~ elusive in church councils. Finally he went too far and was called upon by his own committee to change his attitude. Instead of humbling himself, this young leader attempted to split the work and for a time things looked very serious, but God gave victory and the whole church was strengthened. Today a greater emphasis is being placed by our Annamese christians on spiritual qualifications than was the case before this problem had to be faced.

Discipline has been necessary in one or two instances where moral lapses occurred. Restoration <sup>to service</sup> has only been made after a long interval and where there is satisfactory evidence of repentance and consecration.

Divorce questions have brought many problems in a land where there is so much infidelity. Only the Scriptural ground for divorce is recognised and the influence of the Church is gradually being felt throughout the land. A great deal of <sup>teaching</sup> has been necessary on this subject in the churches because of attempts by some <sup>weak believers</sup> to make exceptions.

There has been a tendency on the part of some preachers and committees to be hasty in the matter of ex-communication, instead of taking disciplinary action in an attempt to win the party who has sinned. Sometimes preacher and committee are more concerned with their own honor than with the Lords.

2. Self support. For many years, self support was a great problem. Pastors and Christians alike opposed it. They said it was not at all consistent with the doctrine of Grace. We were accused of being cruel and heartless in our attempts to make them stand by faith without Mission subsidy. But the effort was well worth while and great spiritual blessing came, when the Churches found the abundance of God's supply as they trusted Him. New problems arose during the financial depression. The Mission and missionaries gave some help through the District committees in self supporting areas where there was a great shortage. Did this spiritual New Deal bring them back from self support to the old dependance on the Mission? By no means! they were encouraged to move forward and help was only temporary. This spoke well for the spiritual growth of the Annamese church. Of course our new deal did not involve billions!

3. Problems in Buddhist Fields--Cambodia, Laos, Siam.

Severe Government opposition in Cambodia has been a great obstacle to the evangelisation of that land, nevertheless in some areas a large tolerance has been manifested. For a time we attempted to locate preachers by supplying them with a small capital which enabled them to run a farm or a jitney but more and more we realize the importance of support by the offerings of believers.

In all Buddhist areas the problem of self-support is difficult because of the passive attitude of the people. There is a great deal of laziness and poverty but the standard of wages is high. We are seeking a native ministry that will start with a small enough subsidy to make self support possible. ~~There are many who will not stand~~ Only revival will bring us through in these countries.

4. In Annam our Annamese leaders were enthusiastic when it was suggested that churches be endowed by gifts of rice fields, <sup>from native villages</sup> but we have steadfastly held before them the goal of a Heavenly Organisation where all support is voluntary.

5. Many villages in Tonkin are communal i.e. the land is owned jointly by all members of the community. Often an entire village offers to become christian provided they are assisted in some legal matter. Christian groups in some Tonkinese villages have used their share of the land formerly used to support temple worship, for the construction of churches. This has caused much feeling in some instances particularly where some enquirers were far from being true believers.

6. Relationship between missionaries and native workers. Ten years ago, when Joint Executive Committee met, it was customary for Annamese members of that committee to politely assent to almost every suggestion made by the Foreign Committee. This assent was sometimes only apparent, ~~an~~ <sup>an</sup> outward politeness while real feelings were hidden beneath the surface until they met by themselves. To-day the situation is changed, Annamese and missionaries meet on a basis of equality in every sense of the word. Our Annamese brethren are as polite as ever but with deeper spiritual experience and discernment they do not hesitate to show initiative and ofttimes we missionaries find it necessary to follow their advice.

There has been no disposition on the part of the Annamese to claim the right to administer foreign funds. In principle it is recognised that foreign funds are administered by the Foreign committee and Annamese funds by the Annamese committee but in practise the Mission has often found it best to confer with our Annamese brethren regarding the use of Foreign funds and to administer them through the Native Church.

Apart from a deep experience of sanctification and death to self, it is difficult for most missionaries to give real precedence to their native brethren and to act as spiritual advisors in the background rather than missionary dictators. There is no greater avenue for the furtherance of fellowship and unity between foreign and native workers, than the ever deepening manifestation of the crucified spirit on the part of the missionary. When the Annamese leader recognizes this spirit in his foreign co-worker there are no bounds to the loyalty and devotion of that worker to the cause of Christ among his own Annamese brethren. On the other hand, if a missionary manifests a severe or selfish attitude towards a native worker or leader and insists on his rights instead of yielding a matter that was not of vital importance, serious prejudices arise which could have been avoided and which break the unity of the Spirit.

7. On all Missian fields there are differences of viewpoint between missionaries and Indochina has been no exception but we do praise God for victory in every case where there has been difficulty and for an ever increasing unity under the leadership of the Holy Spirit that is enabling us to go forward as one.

hold our own, in fact, we will surely slip back but with revival and the power of the Holy Spirit, we shall yet see many thousands won to the Lord ere He returns.