Compiled and adapted from“Missionaries and Anthropologist Cooperate in Research”   
by Jacob A. Loewen in *Readings in Missionary Anthropology II, Enlarged 1978 Edition,* pages 860 – 876

*This list was prepared with a view to facilitating intercultural understanding in multicultural groups. These questions should be used as a stimulus for discussion, not considered to be exhaustive. The questions should be answered considering what happens in the culture each person comes from, rather than giving the "correct" Christian answer. Westerners should also be careful in answering the questions and be ready to evaluate their own answers in terms of cultural values, rather than what is "scientifically right." If you think of any further questions (or areas) to add, please let us know so we can add them to the list and it can continually develop as a useful tool for others to use. If you are trying to understand a new culture in which you intend to minister, please refer to the source book for a more extensive list of questions.*

**Marriage**

1. Is there any type of engagement?
2. What are the ideals of engagement?
3. How is the marriage arrangement made?
4. What kinds of festivities take place?
5. Who initiates them?
6. Who serves as master of ceremonies?
7. Who makes the approach for marriage, the young man, the young woman, the parents, the uncle, or some other individual?
8. Is marriage an agreement between the two young people or between the families?
9. What is the goal of marriage?
10. Is there any education for marriage? Who gives it?
11. What is one’s relationship with one’s in-laws?
12. What is the relationship between the respective sets of parents?
13. What is the status relationship between husband and wife?
14. How do they treat their children?
15. Who punishes the wife if she makes a mistake?
16. Is divorce possible?
17. What is the ideal of marriage? What is the practice?
18. Which acts are termed adultery?
19. Who punishes the adulterer?
20. Who experiences shame in the case of adultery?
21. How many children does one want?
22. To which clan do the offspring belong?
23. Can women ever be inherited?
24. Were wives ever killed when the husband died?
25. Do wives or husbands ever bewitch their spouses? For what reasons? How? What must then be done?
26. Are women ever stolen to become wives? Will such a woman ever run away? What is her status then?
27. Is there trial marriage? For how long a period? Under what conditions? Is it considered good or bad?

**Sex relations and Pregnancy**

1. What are the beliefs concerning how a woman becomes pregnant?
2. What type of "spiritual" receptivity does a woman need to become pregnant?
3. Can a woman prevent pregnancy? What types of contraceptives (medical, traditional and spiritual) does she use?
4. What is conceived: the soul or the body?
5. Can the soul of the deceased be born another time?
6. What may a pregnant woman do or not do?
7. When does the soul take possession of the body of the newly conceived child? (at conception? At the first movement of the child? At birth? At some special ceremony?)
8. How many souls does a person get? How are these distinguished from each other?
9. Where does the soul originate from? (mother? Father? A receptacle of souls in the environment? The beyond?)
10. Who taught man the art of sex relations?
11. Where may sex relations be practiced? When? How often?
12. Who takes the initiative?
13. May a pregnant woman continue to have sex relations? What about a nursing woman or a menstruating woman?
14. What is the attitude towards abortion?
15. How is abortion practiced?
16. For what reasons is abortion justified?
17. Who performs abortion?
18. Why does a man become unfaithful to his wife? (bewitchment? Too strong sex drive? Stolen by another woman?)
19. Why does a woman become unfaithful to her husband?
20. Who should be punished? Who performs the punishment?
21. How are sexual relations perceived? (do they make you unclean? Leave "fire" in the body?)
22. How are the results of sexual relations dealt with? (e.g. ritual washing to be made clean) Do both men and women have to do it?

**Birth**

1. Who may be present at the delivery?
2. What is done with the afterbirth?
3. With what does one cut the umbilical cord?
4. How must the navel be cared for?
5. May evil spirits find entrance into the newly born body? How? How is this prevented? When is the danger of evil spirits greatest for the child?
6. Why is the top of the child’s head soft at birth?
7. Why are some children born prematurely?
8. Why are some children born in different positions? What do each of these mean?
9. Why is delivery occasionally so difficult?
10. How does one get twins? Are both permitted to live?
11. Why are some children born dead?
12. If children are killed at birth, who does the killing? Is this considered good? Is it punished? Who does the punishing? How? Does the relevant deity care? Is he/she involved in the punishing?
13. Which sex of the child makes the parents happier? Why?
14. Is there circumcision? Clitoridectomy (female circumcision)? Piercing of ear lobes or nasal septum? At what age? Who does it? Why is it done?

**Weaning and toilet training**

1. How is a child weaned? At what age?
2. Can a woman become pregnant while she is nursing?
3. Can a mother’s milk be destroyed or damaged? How? What effect does this have?
4. How does the child receive toilet training? At what age does one begin?
5. What are the methods of toilet training?
6. By what age is the child expected to be toilet trained? If they are not, what happens?
7. If the child is delayed in their toilet training who punishes the child and how?

**Children**

1. With whom does a child have the most intimate relationship?
2. Who loves the child most? How does this person show their love?
3. Who does the child love most? How does he/she show it?
4. Who trains the children after weaning?
5. Who wants more children, the husband or the wife?
6. How does the child get his/her name? When?
7. Can the child change his/her name?
8. Does a person have several names?
9. Must names be kept secret? If so, who may know the intimate name of a person?
10. Can power be inherited with a name? May one speak the name of a dead person? If not, for how long is it taboo?
11. What is expected from children? Males? Females?
12. Who is considered smarter? - boys or girls?
13. At what age is a child responsible for him/herself?
14. How are children protected from illness?
15. Does one pay attention to the birthday?
16. What is viewed as children’s work?
17. Who instructs a girl in the art of housekeeping?
18. Who instructs boys? In what?
19. Is there any special training for children before puberty?

**Boys and Young Men**

1. How does a boy become a youth? At what age?
2. How does he become recognized as a young man?
3. When does he become ready for marriage?
4. What characteristics do women look for in a man?
5. What is called handsome in a man?
6. What are the responsibilities of the youth?
7. Is there any young men’s society? What function does it fill?

**Girls and Young Women**

1. How does a girl become a young woman and ready for marriage?
2. Is virginity expected before marriage?
3. Does anyone pay attention to her first menstruation? How? Who initiates this celebration? What is the intent of this celebration?
4. What are the qualities that one looks for in a young woman?
5. What is considered beautiful?
6. How does courtship take place? Who takes the initiative?
7. What type of contacts between sexes are permitted before marriage?
8. Do parents seek to protect the girl?
9. Is virginity a cultural ideal? If it is not realized, how is this rationalized?
10. What is done with the premarital child? The extra-marital child?
11. Which would be considered worse, for a girl to sleep with a married man, or with and unmarried youth?
12. Do all girls get married?
13. If they don’t marry, why don’t they marry and who looks after them?

**Adults**

1. What kind of class distinctions are there?
2. How does one become leader? A wise man? counselor? warrior? hunter? worker? shaman?
3. Must one have power in order to become a man of worth?
4. How does one earn rank?
5. Can rank be inherited? Through what lineage?
6. Can one rise in status? Can one lose one’s status?
7. Is there any struggle for status?
8. Is there any kind of election or choosing for leadership?
9. Are there judges who will classify people?
10. What different professions are recognised?
11. What is the division of labor between men and women? Between leaders and followers?
12. Can women become leaders? In what areas?
13. Does the wife of a leader have any more authority than an ordinary woman?
14. Can a foreigner be accepted into the social group? Can he/she initiate this?
15. How important are family relationships? What are the outer boundaries of the extended family group?
16. For what purposes is the family important? Marriage? Festivity? Soul power? Status?
17. How many different ranks of status are recognized?
18. How does a person mark the transition from one rank of status to the next?
19. Does he need a sponsor from above to move up in status? Does he need supernatural sponsorship?
20. Is supernatural power available to both sexes?
21. Do different spirits favor different sexes?
22. Is there any struggle for power?
23. Are any age groups recognized?
24. Are there any voluntary associations? Are they graded in status?
25. What is the status of widows? Widowers? Who looks after them?

**Relatives**

1. What kind of relatives are recognized? From mother’s side? From father’s side?
2. How many generations are distinguished in kinship?
3. What is the responsibility of the mother? Father? Grandfather? Grandmother? Paternal uncle? Maternal uncle? Paternal aunt? Maternal aunt?
4. Are orphans recognized?
5. Who is responsible for orphans?
6. Are the relatives on the mother’s side considered blood relatives?
7. How is incest defined?
8. Which individuals are excluded from marriage because of blood relationship?
9. What would be the results of incest?
10. Who punishes incest?
11. Is the relevant deity concerned about it?
12. Which kind of marriages would be preferred?
13. With whom can one joke?
14. Who must a woman avoid?
15. Who must a man avoid?
16. Is there any type of child adoption?
17. What rights do adopted children have?
18. Are adopted children considered blood relatives?

**Old People**

1. What is the attitude towards old age?
2. Are old people honored?
3. Are old people killed?
4. Are old people considered wise?
5. Do old people have authority?
6. Where does one seek advice?
7. Do grandparents have responsibility for grandchildren?
8. Where do old people live?
9. What are the responsibilities of the old people in the household? In child training? At festivities?
10. Are the souls of old people considered stronger, wiser, better than those of young people?
11. Who tells the stories?
12. Is there any ranking the in the right to speak?
13. Why do people get old?
14. Does the soul also get old?
15. Are old people dangerous to children?
16. Why do women stop menstruating?
17. Do old people have any special organization?

**Death and Burial**

1. Is mercy killing of the old practiced? Of crippled children? How is this explained?
2. Is natural death recognized?
3. Why do people die?
4. At what point does the soul leave the body in connection with death?
5. Where does it go?
6. Must the soul do certain things?
7. Do souls leave the body willingly?
8. What is the relationship of the souls of the dead to living people?
9. May souls of the dead do damage? How? How can one protect himself against them?
10. How are people buried? Describe what happens and why each thing is done.
11. Is there a special burial place?
12. How long can the body be left before they must be buried?
13. Can/is the body burned? Why/Why not?
14. Are the possessions of the dead person buried/burned with them? Why?
15. What happens to the possessions of the dead person if they are not destroyed?
16. Are there different kinds of burials for different kinds of death?
17. What is done with the bodies of leaders?
18. What must the widow or widower do?
19. How long does the soul remain in the vicinity after death?
20. To which different areas can a soul go after death?
21. How does it travel to these places?
22. How long does the mourning period last?
23. What external signs of mourning does a man, woman, child or other relative have?
24. How long must one wait before one can remarry after the death of the marriage partner?
25. What are the results if these rules are not obeyed?
26. Was reburial ever practiced? For what reasons?

**God**

1. Is God kindly disposed towards humans?
2. How does He show this?
3. How often does He show this?
4. Does He punish? How often? How? (sickness, death, loss of property or honor/respect)
5. Is He like a policeman who watches behavior?
6. When is God kind?
7. What kind of gifts can one make to Him?
8. By what standards does God judge? Violation of taboo? Violation of laws? Neglect of worship?
9. How can one placate God’s anger?
10. May God’s name be freely used? not be used? Why?
11. In what ways is God like people?

**Spirit World**

1. Are there ranks of spirits?
2. Can spirits be controlled by men?
3. How is this control exercised? (e.g. magic, special words, ceremonies, rituals, sacrifices)
4. How does a spirit gain entrance to a human body? Which is the port of entry?
5. How does the spirit leave the body?
6. Can he be made to leave the body? How?
7. How does one know of the presence of a spirit in the body?
8. Why does a spirit do harm to a man?
9. Why does a spirit do kind things to a man?
10. If a spirit is resident in a man, which is the seat of its residence? (e.g. liver, heart, belly)
11. What types of witchcraft are there?
12. Can anyone practice sorcery or witchcraft?
13. Can one do harm with body hair, fingernails, names, body fluids, clothes or any kind of personal property?
14. Can harm be done through curses?
15. Can good be done through blessings?
16. Are certain places recognized as the habitation of spirits?
17. What happens when a person dreams? (Can the soul or spirit leave the body during dreams?)
18. Can one lose his/her soul or spirit?
19. Is there a special spirit world? Where is it located?
20. What is the relationship of Christian angels to the spirit world?

**The Human Soul**

1. What are the basic parts of man?
2. What is human personality?
3. What remains after the death of a person?
4. How is the remaining part of a dead man related to the living person?
5. Is the soul or spirit related to man’s breath? His blood?
6. Do animals have a similar nonphysical aspect about them?
7. With what does one think?
8. With what does one feel? Love? Hate? Desire?
9. Are thinking and desiring related?
10. What is the seat of emotions? (e.g. heart, liver, spleen)
11. Are certain body parts good? Are others considered bad?
12. Does man have several natures? (e.g. higher, better nature and lower, worse nature)
13. With what does a person feel it if he does wrong?
14. Can soul and spirit be distinguished?
15. How are these related to the brain? To the personality?
16. Does a tribe have a common spirit or soul?
17. Will relationship in life be carried on by souls after death?
18. Can one feel the presence of spirits? How does one feel it?

**Witchcraft**

1. Who can become a shaman?
2. How is the shaman chosen?
3. Does a shaman become possessed by spirits?
4. Does he have power over the spirits?
5. Can anyone practice sorcery or witchcraft?
6. Can one do harm with body hair, fingernails, names, exuvia, clothes, or any kind of personal property?
7. Can spirits be caught?
8. Can they be misled?
9. Can sorcery be practiced without any kind of contact?
10. Can one carry some type of spirit protection with him? How does one acquire this?
11. Is the shaman paid? When?
12. Can the shaman foretell events? How?

**Sin**

1. What is good and what is bad?
2. Is there badness apart from morality?
3. Will good and bad deeds bring natural results in reward or judgment?
4. For what offenses is a child punished?
5. What crimes or wrongs does a family punish?
6. What is punished by the clan/village/larger social grouping?
7. Does punishment have any kind of religious sanction?
8. For what reason would the spirits punish man?
9. For what reason would God punish men during life?
10. Is there any grading of punishment?
11. How does one know which sins are worse than others?
12. Can one become punishable through ignorance?
13. Will good deeds be rewarded?
14. Which deeds get social recognition?
15. Is there any distinction between the holy and the profane?
16. Is there any kind of holy - evil distinction?
17. Is there any distinction between holiness and goodness?
18. Are members of the family/clan/village/larger social grouping ever avoided because of deeds?
19. What deeds would cause such treatment?
20. How strong is the avoidance? Must the culprits go away?
21. Is a moral transgression more serious than a taboo?
22. Are there certain wrongs that cannot be forgiven? (by men) Why are they unpardonable?
23. How does one determine guilt? (e.g. the witness of others? Confession of the individual? A vision or declaration by a prophet?)
24. How does the individual punish or avenge wrongs?
25. What wrongs does the group punish?
26. How does the group punish?
27. Are there any wrongs that are against the whole society?

**Taboo**

***Taboo is different from sin in that taboo is negative magic. If one disobeys a taboo, it will avenge itself.***

1. Are there any deeds considered taboo?
2. Are there taboo people?
3. Are there any taboo objects?
4. Are there any taboo words or names (e.g. the names of the dead)?
5. How was the taboo created?
6. How does the taboo manifest itself? (Must it not be touched, looked at, mentioned, eaten?)
7. What is the result of the violation of a taboo?
8. Who empowers the taboo?
9. Is there any relationship between taboo and morality?
10. Can one taboo object pass the taboo on to others? How?
11. Is there any difference between holy things and unclean things?

**The Universe**

1. Where does the world come from?
2. When was it made?
3. Who made it?
4. Who made the people?
5. Is there only one world in existence?
6. Is there an underworld?
7. How did it get there?
8. Is it populated? By whom?
9. Have people from the underworld ever visited the present world?
10. Have people from the present world ever been able to visit the underworld? How?
11. Is there an upper world? Who lives there?
12. What is the relationship between people and animals?
13. Why are some animals enemies of man?
14. What are the stars and what do they mean?
15. Where did the rainbow come from and what does it mean?
16. How many seasons are there and how are they distinguished?
17. How is the earth made fertile?
18. Is there any relationship between human fertility and the fertility of the earth?
19. What is the relationship between man and the earth?

**Property**

1. What is the relationship between man and the earth?
2. Are certain areas privately owned?
3. How did the current owners (in terms of nation or tribe) get possession of their land?
4. What type of property can one own?
5. Can one own land?
6. Can one own fruit trees?
7. Are clothes private property?
8. Are names private?
9. Are songs private property? Can everyone sing certain songs?
10. Do people have their own private magical charms?
11. Will the magical charm of one person work for another?
12. Can names be inherited? Along which lines of inheritance?
13. May ceremonial objects be sold?
14. How is private property sold? How is the exchange effected? Who is responsible for setting the price – the buyer or the seller? Is such an exchange termed ‘giving’?
15. Can borrowing become permanent?

**Food**

1. What are the food staples?
2. Who does the planting? The gathering?
3. Are there any special ceremonies connected with planting or harvesting?
4. What determines the rhythm of life and festivities?
5. Can one eat all types of meat?
6. Which foods, meats, plants must be avoided by sick people? Pregnant women? Children? By the aged?
7. If food is given as a gift, does it have to be reciprocated? How is this done?
8. Who cooks?
9. Does all the family eat together?
10. If there is a shortage of food, who eats first, who eats last?
11. How does one show that one likes the taste of food?
12. Are there any polite gestures for eating?
13. What is the worst thing you can think of having to eat?

**Festivities**

1. What kind of festivities are celebrated? (e.g. fertility festivals for women or crops, birth or name, puberty, engagement, wedding, special ceremonies relating to war, hunt, religion, officials, rank, mourning, burial, victory, dedication of property, secret societies, clan/family)
2. Where do they take place?
3. When?
4. Who initiates them?
5. What are the principal characteristics of the festivals?
6. What are they to serve?
7. Who are the principal participants? What do they do? Or what is done to them?
8. What is the origin of the celebration?
9. Is there any instruction bound up with the festival? Who gives the instruction?
10. Are certain rules of the society relaxed during the festival period? How long does the lax period last? For whom are the rules relaxed? What is the purpose of this liberty?
11. What is the attitude towards drunken behavior?
12. Who takes care of the drunks?

**Work**

1. What is considered men’s work?
2. What is considered women’s work?
3. Are there special times when certain jobs cannot be done?
4. For which work must one begin as an apprentice?
5. What happens if a man does woman’s work?
6. Can one hire other people to do one’s work?
7. Does one have to work in exchange, or can one give gifts or pay wages?

**Clothing and ornamentation**

1. Describe the clothing of daily life, festive life, dancing and for special ceremonies.
2. Describe the ornaments that are worn daily, for special festivals, for weddings, war, leaders …
3. How do men wear their hair?
4. How do women wear their hair?
5. How do children wear their hair?
6. May hair be cut?
7. Does the cut of the hair distinguish rank? Age?
8. Is there filing of teeth? Capping of teeth with gold? Does this have any meaning?
9. Is there any meaning in any of the ornamentation worn?
10. What types of tattooing are practiced? Why?

**War**

1. Who is permitted to go to war?
2. Is there a proper time for fighting and how is that time determined?
3. What preparations does the warrior make?
4. Is it necessary to abstain from sex relations? Why?
5. With whom do they fight? Why?
6. Are prisoners taken? Who?
7. How are they disposed of?
8. How is bravery rewarded?
9. What is an example of a brave act?
10. By what mechanism can prisoners be freed?
11. Do prisoners ever try to escape?
12. What kind of weapons are used for war?
13. Do the weapons have to be dedicated?
14. Are there specialists in making weapons?
15. Are there any deities or spirits of war?
16. Do people paint for going into war?
17. Is there any special clothing for war?
18. Is there a special war cry?
19. What role do women and children have in war?