

only talking in terms of the actual culture. If you examine polygamy at the ideal level, you will notice that our practices and proverbs are simply against polygamy. So we can go back to the ideal culture to show how the Church's teaching on monogamy is correct. And this is one of the many good aspects of the principle of *Sankofa* (Go back to your roots). We go back not into antiquity but to find out the abiding wholesome principles that have been buried under the rubble of modernity. For the rest, what the evangeliser is interested in is the actual culture. His message has to address what is happening and not what should happen.

IV

SCIENCES OF MAN

Before we deal with the way we should go back to our roots, let us have a quick look at the different sciences of man. There are many disciplines that deal with the human person and his activities. They resemble one another but they are not exactly the same.

1. **Physical Anthropology** is the science that deals with human beings as a species, not their activities. It deals with the evolution of human beings, from small particles to what we are now. It deals with the shape of human beings, their physique. Some of us are black, some are white, some are yellow, some have big buttocks. This is all part of nature's way of protecting human beings. For example, God has given the African what we call **melanin**. It is a very small lining in the skin which prevents the body from being harmed by the sun. Even though being black the African feels the heat more than the white European, the European without the melanin is easily injured by the rays of the sun. In the course of the centuries, what has been called *mutation* takes place so that the body is adapted to the environment. This is what is called **ecological adaptation**. For example, the Kalahari people have big buttocks which store fat. When the need arises, the body lives on the fat. In addition to all this, physical anthropology studies blood groups. Some people are in the 'A' group, others in the 'O' or 'B' group, and so on; it studies skulls and human bones in general and determines their age. Through physical anthropology, we get to know how long human beings have inhabited a particular area of our planet. We also get to know which areas were inhabited by human beings before any other area.
2. **Pre-historic Archaeology** tries to understand the past by examining the results of human activities. Pre-historic archaeologists would go to a place and dig up a pot or implements and study them. They deal with

things that human beings have left behind. In Egypt, Italy, Mexico and many other places, archaeologists are able to dig up houses, tombs, temples, even whole cities. By examining these remains of human activity, they are able to construct the past and determine what people did with a degree of accuracy.

3. **Ethnography** derives from two Greek words: *ethnos* (human being) and *graphé* (writing). Ethnography is the art of writing about human beings. It is a very difficult art. People tend to take in what they read as the truth and are conditioned by it. What you read in the newspapers tends to become part of you. Therefore, what you read must be correct. Ethnography is meant to describe exactly what is happening or has happened. Good ethnography is necessary for good Anthropology or Sociology. The anthropologist or sociologist depends upon what he reads to draw his conclusions and if what he reads is not correct, the conclusion too cannot be correct.

This is what happened when Europeans came to Africa. They were not able to describe exactly what they saw and presented the African in their books and articles to Europe as they thought they saw him. It is no wonder that the image created of the African was that of a "sub-human", "barbaric", "uncouth" or "strange" being. Unfortunately, this image lingers on in Europe and America even up to the present time.

As Religious, we have to observe, assess and evaluate things objectively to know what is actually the situation before we draw conclusions. Far too often we are prejudiced in our minds about what is happening and corrupt our apostolate because we base ourselves on bad ethnography.

4. **Ethnology** derives from the Greek words *ethnos* and *logos* (science). It tries to understand the present by reconstructing the past. For example, the Yoruba and the Asante have many things in common. The Yoruba have a special love for twins; the Asante are the same. According to the Yoruba, the first born is the younger and the second is the elder. The idea is that

when you are travelling, you let the small child walk in front of you. The same idea prevails among the Asante. An ethnologist would find this similarity interesting and may ask himself: *How can the Asante and the Yoruba have almost identical ideas about twins?* He will then try to find an answer to the question by going back to the past and trying probably to establish some historical connection between the Asante and the Yoruba.

The social structure of the Navaho Indians of America is just like that of the Asante in Ghana. I had heard about them in my studies. So when I went to America in 1974, I made it a point to go and see them in their reservation. I was fascinated when I could confirm the similarity between the two social structures. If I had been an ethnologist, I would then have begun to find out how such remarkable similarities came about. *Chisungu* is a puberty ceremony among the Bemba in Zambia. It is very similar to the *Bragoro* of the Asante in Ghana. As among the Asante, the Bemba *Chisungu* is only for girls and it is observed in much the same way as *Bragoro* is observed. An ethnologist would be very interested in finding out how this similarity arose. In the same way, an ethnologist may discover a musical instrument or a pot or an implement in one part of the world which is found in another location far away from this place. He might be able to establish a common origin for the two peoples who have them from examining these objects that he has found miles apart from one another.

5. **Psychology** is the science that deals with how the human mind works. Why are some people very kind and very nice? Why are some people very bad? What was at work in the mind of the murderer who, without qualms, hacked another person to pieces? What can be the cause of the hatred of this man for his parents? What was the childhood experience of this person which has made him so aggressive? and so on. These and a million other such questions are the concern of the psychologist. The human mind can be conditioned by the environment though but, normally, psychologists are interested mainly in the behaviour of persons resulting from how their minds work. In a recent case in England, a general

practitioner of medicine was found guilty of killing his female patients by giving them lethal injections. What would make such a person do a thing like this? That would be the task of the psychologist.

6. **History** deals with what happened in the past; what were the causes and what were the effects. In 1994/95, there was a savage conflict here in Ghana between the Dagomba and Nanumba and their supporters on one hand, and the Konkomba and Baasare and their allies on the other. What happened was that a misunderstanding ensued between a Konkomba and a Dagomba over the sale of a guinea fowl. In the end, the Konkomba guinea fowl seller is alleged to have been beaten up by the Dagomba man who did not understand why the Konkomba had refused to sell the guinea fowl to him for a price that he easily accepted from a fellow Konkomba for the same bird. As is well known, for Africans, to disgrace somebody is no small matter. The Konkomba man, feeling humiliated, later went and killed the Dagomba man. The Dagomba and the Nanumba heard about the incident and went to a Konkomba village and cut off the head of the Konkomba chief. A war had been started!! A historian would be extremely interested in knowing the causes - not just the proximate, but more importantly, the remote - of the war, what actually happened during the war, and what were the consequences of the war.

7. Our interest is in **Sociology** and **Social Anthropology**. These are sciences that deal with institutionalised behaviour patterns. They study peoples and the way they live, the roles they play in society, the day-to-day relationships between people; they deal with relationships between husband and wife, chief and subjects, children and their fathers; they concern institutions like marriage, funerals, puberty rites, and chieftaincy. They deal with people's religious ideas and thinking. They have to do with the laws governing the society. They treat so-called life-cycle ceremonies and so on.

The difference between the two sciences is that social anthropology tends to deal with simple societies and deal with them wholistically. Social

anthropologists rely more on first-hand information gained from field research, observation, participation in ceremonies and questions and answers.

Sociology normally studies complex societies. It selects themes for detailed analysis such as crowd behaviour at a football match, the influence of new ecclesial movements, the behaviour of lawyers or nurses or university students, the pre-occupation of women, the effects of massive migrations from country to country, etc. Sociology studies these themes in depth. While the sociologist would also do field research, he mostly relies on literary sources - newspapers, books, magazines, etc. Hence the sociologist needs the ethnographer more than the anthropologist.

As religious and evangelisers, we do need a little knowledge of all these sciences but what we need most is some knowledge of sociology and more particularly a good knowledge of social anthropology. It is such knowledge that gives us a true idea of the character of the people we are dealing with. Knowledge in anthropology tells us about the situation which we are going to operate in.

Some societies, they say, are at the beginning of this list and some are getting to the end.

We might explain the stages in the family system as postulated by the evolutionist.

Female Infanticide was practised because primitive man realised that girls were weak and could not cope with the harsh conditions that existed in the past.

Marriage by Capture was necessitated by the fact that because the girls had been killed, there were no women to marry in the group and so the only way to get wives was to capture them from other groups.

Promiscuous Polyandry was the natural consequence. Not many girls could be captured so the few that were captured were indiscriminately shared by the men who captured them.

Adelphic Polyandry, which means one woman marrying many brothers, was later adopted to avoid the danger of jealousies and conflicts that was created by men from different families marrying the same woman.

Matriliny was again the logical consequence of polyandry, whether promiscuous or adelphic. It was not possible for the father of the child to be determined and so the child belonged to the family of his mother.

Polygyny was introduced when female infanticide stopped and there were more than enough women for men to marry.

Patriline naturally followed polygyny since now the father of the child was known.

Monogamy resulted from the desire to avoid jealousies among women.

The **Family**, as it existed in Europe, then followed.

V

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Social Anthropology has passed through many stages to reach where it is now. Originally it was part of what was simply called Anthropology, which included Ethnology and Physical Anthropology. In the course of the times, Social Anthropology emerged as a separate independent discipline. It began with what is called the **Evolutionist Theory** which stipulated that all human institutions began from the same stage and are developing along the same lines. Evolutionists postulated that human beings as a whole had passed through three major stages in life: it all began with the stage of **savagery** when the human being had not invented anything apart from the stone or the club as an implement of war. The stage of savagery was left behind when the human being invented pottery. Then the human being entered the stage of **barbarism**. Barbarism gave way to civilisation with the invention of writing.

The hypothesis was that every institution as found in Europe was the best. All institutions in other parts of the world were heading towards the stage which the institutions in Europe had reached. Evolutionists would say, for instance, that the family, as found in Europe, went through the following stages:

- (a) female infanticide
- (b) marriage by capture
- (c) promiscuous polyandry
- (d) adelphic polyandry
- (e) matriline
- (f) polygyny
- (g) patriline
- (h) monogamy
- (i) the family as found in Europe.

This theory was soon discredited as totally worthless. To begin with, if initially all societies were killing their baby girls, where did the men go to capture girls? Then if the girl had been captured and was a stranger among the group, how could she look after her child whose father she did not know? And so on and so forth. The fact that these cases had been recorded in different parts of the world did not mean that therefore they followed one another. Evolutionism was clearly the result of fantasy and it gave way to **Diffusionism**.

This theory rightly condemned the reconstruction of the evolutionists as pure nonsense, a pure figment of fertile minds. But when the diffusionists came up with the proposition that all cultures had their source in Egypt from where they spread to all parts of the world, diffusionism too became discredited. Now no serious anthropologist subscribes to evolutionism or diffusionism.

To quote John Beattie: *The trouble with both of these approaches was, of course, that their advocates went far beyond the evidence, as they were bound to do so long as their interest was directed to the remote past, and to the very first beginnings of human institutions and beliefs. For such pre-historic times the only possible evidence must be archaeological, and where such evidence exists the information which it can give us, though highly important, is strictly limited. Thus archaeology can tell us what early men looked like, what they made, and, within very narrow limits, what they did. But it cannot tell us what they thought or believed, or (except in the most general way) the kind of social world they inhabited. Arguments from man's present to his past condition which are unsupported by good historical or archaeological evidence can never be other than merely speculative.*¹⁵

Functionalism-structuralism

Social Anthropologists, especially in Britain and France, therefore adopted the **Functionalist (Structural) Theory** with different shades.

Structuralism

If someone were asked to describe how people marry in his society, he would say something like: *When a boy wants to marry a girl, the boy would tell his father and the father would look for a girl, etc., etc.* But his description is only a format. It is not possible that everything is exactly what he has said. The marriages in his society must surely differ a little in their details. He is only describing the *structure* of the marriage. Structuralism states the obvious fact that when you are describing a custom, you can only point out the skeleton that must be filled in with the flesh.

Functionalism

Functionalism stipulates that the way an institution came about is of little relevance to our purpose. Social anthropologists are not interested principally in how an institution came about; they are in the first place interested in *what* the institution is doing in the society. What is the function, purpose, aim, effect, influence, impact of this institution on the people? Hence social anthropologists make the following points:

1. All institutions have their function, their effect in the society. There is no social institution that does not play some useful role for those who possess it.
2. All institutions in the society are inter-linked so that to destroy one carelessly is to destroy the whole society. It is therefore destructive to abolish a custom without having due regard to the baneful effects of such an action.

Even where a custom is seen as needing reform, we should not begin by condemning it. All customs have their function for the people. Everything that you find in the society, even if it appears to be wicked, has a function. Female circumcision has its function. I am not saying that you should approve of everything. All that I am saying is that every institution has its function. The function can be *intended* or *unintended*.

An example here will illustrate the point well. Girls' nubility rites among the Asante were forbidden by some Christian denominations on religious grounds. But these rites once had many praise-worthy unintended functions. They were, for example, the mainstay of juvenile morality. They also had moral, economic, political, solidarity, and social functions.

In the area of morality, in the past, if a girl had sex before the onset of her menstrual periods, the penalty was death, if she was caught. In some cases, the parents would also be killed. If she had sex but it was proved that she had had her menses, the verdict was exile or a very severe punishment. If she became pregnant, it was regarded as a very terrible thing. She had committed what was called *kyiribra* by conceiving prior to the nubility rites. There were all kinds of ceremonies to purify her, including the slaughtering of a sheep on her head. Because girls wanted to avoid *kyiribra* by all means, they always took good care of themselves. Because of what the neophyte received in gifts during her nubility rites, girls looked forward to the occasion when they would undergo the initiation ceremony. It helped them to be morally upright.

The Yoruba of Nigeria also had a similar institution. In the past, Yoruba girls, like Asante girls, had to go through a test of virginity and if they failed that test, they and their families were disgraced forever. Christianity came and stopped these puberty rites. What is the result now? Teenage pregnancy, abortions, prostitution, you name it. Human nature is human nature; you need something concrete and effective to put discipline into it. God had provided this for us in the nubility rites. We spurn them and end up with crimes that disgrace Christianity!!

Another example is the Krobo of Ghana. The Krobo people have earned a bad name because of the many prostitutes that come from there. But the point is that they do not want filth in their society. They cannot stand a girl who has not done the Dipo ceremony and engages in sex. As soon as such a girl is caught, she is punished by banishment. The poor girl, who may be 14 or 15 years old, with no job to do, rejected by her people, finding

If you ask the people, *why are you doing this?*, their answer is the *intended* function. Let me give a concrete, even if imaginary, example. You go to a certain village and you realise that every 2 months, people come together to kill a cow. You are an anthropologist, a missionary, a sister, a brother, working among these people. You want to find out whether this is acceptable or not. You ask the actors *why do you kill a cow every two months?* They may answer: *We kill a cow every two months as a sacrifice to the gods.* Their answer is the *intended* function. In this case, the intended function is **religious**. If the answer were *we want to feast*, the intended function would be **social**; if it is *because the chief wants us to do it*, the intended function would be **political**.

But supposing you continue, *are you going to throw the carcass away?* and the answer is, *no we are going to eat it*, then you have entered into the realm of **unintended** function which is known. The function is unintended in the sense that it is not the reason why they are killing the cow but they know that they will eat the cow. There are many societies, especially in East Africa, which live symbiotic lives with cows. They would never kill a cow to eat it but they kill cows often and eat them. They have an intended function which is religious and an unintended function which is biological. But apart from the intended function and the unintended but known function, there are many other functions which are unintended and unknown. For example, the killing of the cow brings the people together every two months. Here we have a situation of renewal of solidarity, friendship and love. These are very important functions. The killing of the cow offers an opportunity for reconciliation. People who are at loggerheads may have to patch up their differences before they take part in the sacrifice. The coming together every two months may be an occasion of renewal of fidelity to the chief. Here we have an unintended political function. There may be an economic function.

The point of functionalism, therefore, is that if you stop the ceremony because it has a religious function which you do not approve of, you have destroyed a lot in the society.

herself in a completely strange environment, has no way of getting her livelihood apart from engaging in prostitution. So you have a situation where the hatred of the Krobo for immoral behaviour in their society has created a situation where their girls practise prostitution more than girls from other places. This is an example of an unintended, unknown function. Dipo plays other important roles among the Krobo.

Functionalism's assertion that institutions are inter-connected is true. In studying any simple society in Africa, you can start with any subject and you will end up dealing with all the subjects. If you begin with economics, you will soon find yourself dealing with religion, law, kinship, whatever. We must, therefore, be very careful in abolishing customs. If you do not want to destroy a society, then do not start abolishing its customs. Take your time and study them. When you want to abolish something, try to get something comparable to take its place. The worst thing you could do is to abolish something and not propose something else in its place. That is why priests, brothers and sisters must be interested in the people, know their felt needs and try to help them to deal with them. If you want to bring in Jesus Christ, tell them about the problem. It may be obsession with witchcraft. But let them understand that the power of Jesus is capable of overcoming all obstacles in life.

Nobody wants to be left in a vacuum. In the 1840s, a missionary went to the Congo (the Democratic Republic) and converted a king and the king's son became a Bishop. This missionary was very zealous and preached Jesus Christ with zeal. These Congolese had a custom. When a powerful person died, they opened his skull and ate his brain. The priest was horrified at this practice and admonished his people: *This is horrible. How can you eat the brain of a human being?* They told him they wanted the powers of the dead to be passed on to them. They were not eating the brain as food but in order to be empowered by the dead person. He told them that it was all nonsensical and that if they wanted to be good Christians they had to stop the practice. After sometime, he started talking about the Sacraments and came to the Eucharist. He rightly stressed the real presence of the Body and Blood of

Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. One day one confused man asked him: *But Father, when you came first, we were eating the brain of our powerful dead people to receive their power and you told us to stop doing that. How come that you are now telling us to eat the Body and drink the Blood of Jesus Christ?* The priest had no convincing answer apart from saying: *I do not reply to such foolish questions.* Was the question foolish? People become Christians and then abandon the faith after some time because we have not been able to tell them exactly what the differences are between some practices in Christianity and what they believed in or practised before. Inculturation should help us to do this effectively.

Another example. In the olden days, we were not allowed to eat meat on Fridays. There were these Congolese who were nowhere near a river where they could get fish. One Friday a Church leader just could not stand it. There was plenty of meat in the forest. He killed an antelope, cooked it and was eating it when the priest suddenly appeared. In his surprise, he asked: *John, don't you know today is Friday?* The man replied, *I know, Father.* He continued: *But why then are you eating meat?* The man replied: *I am not eating meat.* The priest said, *Am I dreaming? If this is not meat, then what is it?* The man said: *Father, when you came here, I was called Kandagu but you poured water on me and called me John. So, this morning, I poured water on this and called it fish!!* The story may sound apocryphal but it appears to be quite true. It tells us how we have to carefully explain matters to our faithful. Proscribing practices without obvious reasons can be counter productive.

Interpretation of Customs

1. According to the functionalist theory, to interpret a custom, find out what the intended function is and what the unintended but known function also is. Try to find out for yourself also what the unintended and unknown function is. Then only will you be able to assess its importance in and to the society.

2. Another way of examining a custom is to interpret the institution at 3 levels: The first level is the *Exegetical Level* of interpretation. It is the same as the intended function of the functionalist scheme. You ask the people why they are doing what they are doing. Their answer is the exegesis of what is happening.

At the *Operational Level*, you, the investigator, take part in the ceremony, probably not an active part, but you go and observe; you watch, you ask questions, you challenge. For example you observe that no women are present. Then you see the cow being brought in and a certain man walking in to take a knife to slit its throat. You may notice that the by-standers are muttering something. Immediately after this, they cut up the cow and share the meat.

After you have observed all this for sometime, you begin to ask questions. Why were there no women present? Who was that man who actually slaughtered the cow? Is he always the same person? Does he belong to a group of people who do this? If so, who are they? Are they paid for it? What do the by-standers mutter? What is its significance to the occasion? Do they always say the same thing? Who were those who cut up the animal? and so forth. From these questions, you will know which elements of the ceremony are essential and which are not. You will also know why they are essential.

In relation to the ceremony itself, you will observe many other things: the preparation for the ceremony, when people gather, the friendly atmosphere and the solemnity at some point. All these and many others that you may observe are the unintended functions, known or unknown.

At the *Positional Level* of interpretation, you do not consider the custom at all. You rather consider the cow. What is the role of the cow in the society at large? What are cows generally used for? What is the significance of the use of the cow, in pacifying offended people? What is the role of cattle breeding? Is the cow an important economic asset? What are the

mythical ideas about cows? The overall conception of the people about the cow will help the investigator to better understand the sacrifice. If the cow is the most important object you can give to any person, then these people consider the sacrifice very important indeed.

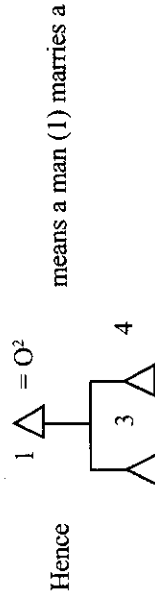
SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF AFRICAN SOCIETIES

In Europe and America, a child is as much related to the father as to the mother. Sociologically, the relationship between the father and the mother is the same. Those societies are called **Agnatic** or **Cognatic** societies. A cognatic society is a society, therefore, in which sociologically, there is no difference between the relationship of a child to his mother and the relationship of the same child to his father.

Lines

African societies are generally not cognatic or agnatic. They are mostly **lineal**. They follow lines of descent. Everywhere in the world, biologically, your father is your father and your mother is your mother. Father, mother and children form what is called the **nuclear** family. In Africa, biologically, the child belongs to both parents, as is the case in Europe and America, but sociologically, this is not the case. The child follows one line - that of the father or that of the mother. That is why African societies are called lineal societies.

From now on let us use the triangle sign (\triangle) to mean a man, the equal sign ($=$) to mean marriage, the circle (O) to mean a woman, the perpendicular line, supported by the horizontal line, (\perp) to mean birth.



woman (2) and they give birth to two children (3 & 4)

In some societies in Africa, the child belongs to the line of the father and in other societies the child belongs to the line of the mother. Those societies in which the child belongs to the line of the father are called **patrilineal** societies. Patrilineal societies account for about 89% of African societies. Those societies in which the child follows the line of the mother are called **matrilineal** societies and they number about 9%.

In-between the patrilineal and the matrilineal models, there is the **bi-lineal** society which would form about 1% of the societies of Africa. These are societies in which in some respects the child goes to the father's side and in other respects he goes to the mother's side. I am told that the Dagaaba society of Ghana is bi-lineal. In relation to immovable property, the Dagao belongs to his mother's side. When it comes to movable property, he tends towards the father's side. In other words, when it comes to inheriting a farm or a house, the Dagao would be matrilineal but when it comes to becoming a chief, he would be patrilineal.

Clans

Hence the social structure of African societies is lineal. Whether you are dealing with a patrilineal society or a matrilineal or a bi-lineal society, a person belongs to a definite group. These groups are normally called **clans** or **lineages**. A lineage is the part of the clan in a particular place, village or town. A person who does not belong to a clan of his society cannot claim membership of the ethnic group. These clans differ in number from one society to another. In a given society, they may be only 2 in number; in another society, they may be 3 or 8 or 10 or 12 or 20. Whatever the number is, each clan has its own name. The 8 clans of the Akan of Ghana are: **Bretuo, Agona, Asona, Aduana, Oyoko, Asene, Asakyiri and Ekoona**. No one can claim to be an Akan if he does not belong to one of these. The name of a particular clan may differ from place to place within the Akan set-up but this does not in any way create discrepancies in any given clan.

There are some 45 ethnic groups in Ghana. All of them are patrilineal except the Akan. However, in demographic terms, the Akan, who are only one of 45 ethnic

groups, would number about 60% of the total population of the country. The Akan people are divided into the Fante and the Twi. The Twi people are divided into several sub-tribes - Asante, Akwapim, Brong, Akyem, Kwahu, etc. In each of them, there are the same Akan clans, to one of which everybody must belong.

In a patrilineal society, the man is very important. He it is who must continue the clan. If all the children were to be women, the clan would be extinguished. Hence in patrilineal societies, men will do anything to get male children. Matrilineal societies, on the other hand, depend upon the woman for the continuity of the clan. Hence here the woman is of vital importance. For a man in a patrilineal society and a woman in a matrilineal society not to have children is considered a curse, near genocide. Obviously all Africans, whether they are men or women, whether they are patrilineal or matrilineal, want to have children. But the pressure of child-bearing, of generation is more on the man in a patrilineal society than on the woman and more on the woman in a matrilineal society than on the man. Let us represent the situation diagrammatically (see Table 1 on page 68).

In diagram A, 1 marries 2. We put the perpendicular line under number 1 to show that we are dealing with a patrilineal society and that the marriage between 1 and 2 has produced 3 and 4. 3 and 4 both belong to the clan of 1, namely P but not to the clan of 2K. 5 and 6 are the children of 3, and 7 and 8 the children of 4. All four of them belong to clan P. But at the next generation, whereas the child of 5, who is 9, belongs to clan P, the child of 6, number 10, does not belong to clan P but to the clan of her husband. In the same way, the child of 7, who is 11, belongs to clan P but the child of 8, who is 12, belongs not to P but to the clan of his father, who is the husband of his mother. In other words, whereas 5 and 7 continue the clan, the clan ends with 6 and 8.

In diagram B, the opposite is the case. 1 marries 2. We are dealing with a matrilineal society and so we put the line under 2. The children born to the

marriage, 3 and 4, belong to the clan of 2, that is, K. 5, 6, 7 and 8 all belong to K, the clan of their mother. But 9 and 11 would not belong to K; they belong to the clan of their mother, but 10 and 12 belong to clan K because of their mother who belongs to clan K. 6, 8, 10 and 12 are going to continue the clan.

In diagram C, the situation is a bit more complicated. In some respects, the children belong to P and in some respects they belong to K. We shall not bother too much about the bi-lineal situation since with the understanding of the patrilineal and matrilineal cases the bilineal one becomes clear.

Principles of Lineal Societies

The first principle of lineal societies is the principle of **Exogamy**. Exogamy means marriage outside one's clan. Endogamy, on the other hand, would mean that one could marry in one's own clan. In Africa, in lineal societies, you cannot marry within your clan; you marry outside your clan. A man from clan 'A' can marry anybody apart from a woman from clan 'A'. For example, if I happen to go to Cape Coast and meet a beautiful woman and want to marry her and the woman happens to come from the *Àkoôna* clan, I cannot marry her. Such a marriage, if it took place, would be considered incestuous since both of us come from the same clan and are, therefore, believed to have descended from the same ancestress. The biological degree of relationship and the spatial distance between us is of no consequence here.

TABLE 1

DIAGRAM A

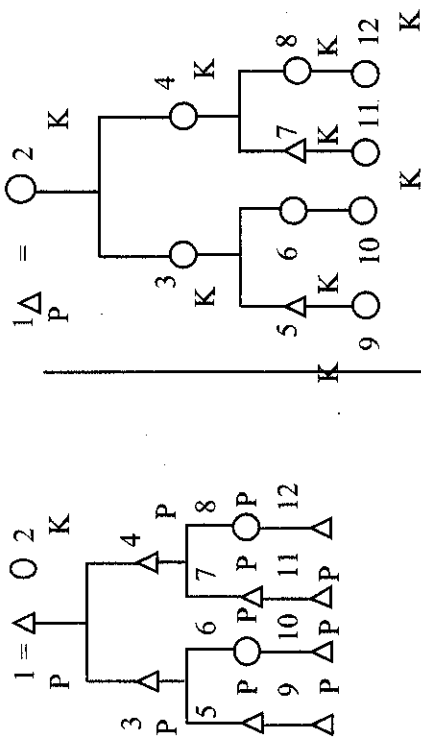


DIAGRAM B

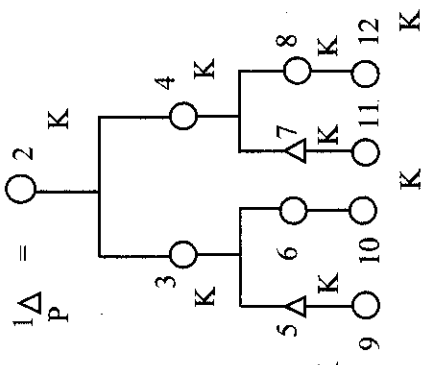
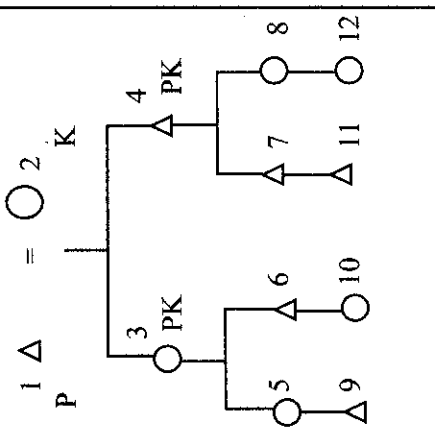


DIAGRAM C



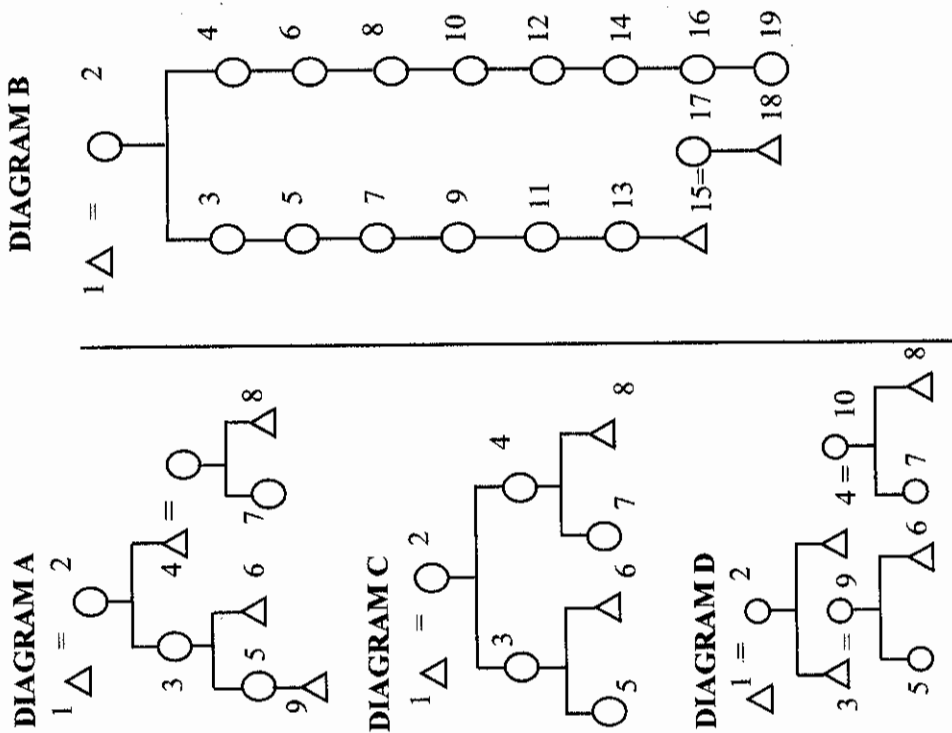
The rule of exogamy can create a pastoral problem. According to Church law, so long as I am not related to a woman in the 4th degree of consanguinity, I can marry her, provided, of course, that there are no other impediments. But traditionally, this is not automatically the case. On the other hand, among the Asante, I can marry my mother's brother's daughter who is related to me in the 4th degree of consanguinity because she does not belong to my clan. But marriage between people related in the 4th degree of consanguinity is canonically forbidden.

Let us explain these diagrammatically again (see Table 2 on page 70).

All diagrams deal with matrilineal Asante. In diagram A, a woman (2) married to 1 begets 3 and 4. Therefore 3 and 4 are sister and brother. 3 gives birth to 5 and 6. And 4 gives birth to 7 and 8. Since 3 and 4 are of different sexes, their children are called cross-cousins in English. So 5 is a cross-cousin of 8, and 6 a cross-cousin of 7. Marriages between cross-cousins are not only allowed but even preferred. So according to the Asante, 5 can marry 8 or 6, 7. After such a marriage is arranged, there are many advantages.

4 is the brother of 3 whose child is 5. So 4 has authority over 5, and naturally, 4 has authority over 8 who is his own son. When 8 marries 5, the husband is the son of 4 and the wife is the niece of 4. 5 and 8 may even have lived together. 4 will see to it that the marriage between his son and his sister's daughter goes well. The same applies to 6 and 7 but in the case of 6 and 7, it is the daughter of 4 who is married to the son of 4's sister, 3. So 4 has the same authority over the marriage between 6 and 7 as he had over the marriage between 8 and 5. The important thing is that in that diagram, 7 and 8 belong to a clan totally different from that of 5 and 6. 5 and 6 derive their clan from 3 who derives it from 2. 4 derives his clan from 2 too but his wife cannot belong to the same clan since the clans are exogamous. So his children belong to his wife's clan.

TABLE 2



Another advantage in these cross marriages is that if 4 has a property and he dies, he will be succeeded by 6. If, in the meantime, 6 is married to 7, then there will not be too much resentment on the part of 8 who is also a man and might naturally want to inherit his father, 4, because, after all, the property is being utilised by 6 with 7, who is his sister. If it is 5 who is married to 8, the property will go to 6 but at the next level, the property will go to 9, who is the son of 8. So even though at the genealogical level 8 did not succeed his father, at the next level 8's son is succeeding his father. And so resentments are reduced.

In the case of diagram C, 3 and 4 are women. Both derive their clan from 2 and they pass on the clan to their children, 5 and 6, in the case of 3; 7 and 8, in the case of 4. So, unlike the case of diagram A, in the case of diagram C, 5, 6, 7, and 8 all belong to the same clan and so marriage between 5 and 8 is forbidden and marriage between 6 and 7 is also forbidden.

In the case of diagram D, 3 and 4 are men. 3 begets 5 and 6, and 4 begets 7 and 8. 3 and 4 do not and cannot pass their clan on to their children. They got their clan from 2 but being men, they cannot transmit it. So 5 and 6 belong to the clan of 9 which cannot be the same as the clan of 2. And 7 and 8 belong to the clan of 10 which cannot be the same as the clan of 2. All the same, in this case too, 5 and 8 cannot marry and 6 and 7 cannot marry. Here there is a paternal principle that is at work and this will be explained later.

In short then, the situation is that cross-cousins can marry but parallel-cousins cannot marry. In diagram C, 5 and 6 are parallel-cousins of 7 and 8 because 3 and 4 are of the same sex and 5 and 6 are parallel-cousins of 7 and 8 in diagram D because 3 and 4 are of the same sex. When we take diagram A, we run against the law of the Church. Canon 108 says:

§1: *Consanguinity is reckoned by lines and degrees.*

§2: In the direct line there are as many degrees as there are generations, that is, as there are persons, not counting the common ancestor.

§3: In the collateral line there are as many degrees as there are persons in both lines together, not counting the common ancestor.

Therefore, in diagram A, 5 is related to 8 in the 4th degree collateral line since we are to count the number of persons in the line and subtract one, and 6 and 7 are also related in the 4th degree collateral line. But Canon 1091, §1 & 2 says:

§1: *Marriage is invalid between those related by consanguinity in all degrees of the direct line, whether ascending or descending, legitimate or natural.*

§2: *In the collateral line, it is invalid up to the fourth degree inclusive.*

So here is a case where custom would allow a marriage which Canon Law forbids. If, however, we take diagram B, we have a situation where, according to custom, 15 cannot marry 16 although they are related in the 14th degree collateral line. This is, as is clear from the diagram, because 3 and 4, the children of 2, derive their clan from 2. 5 derives his clan from 3, 6 from 4, 7 from 5, 8 from 6; 9 from 7; 10 from 8; 11 from 9; 12 from 10; 13 from 11; 14 from 12; 15 from 13; 16 from 14. The same clan runs through all of them up to number 15. So, irrespective of the degree of relationship, 15 cannot marry 16. However, a child of 16 can marry the child of 15 because the child of 15 belongs to the clan of his mother, 17. Hence, 18 can marry 19 or, for that matter, 16, 14, 12; 10, 8, even 6 since he belongs to a totally different clan from these.

The second principle is that men are more important in patrilineal societies than women and women are more important in matrilineal societies than men. This system has a direct effect on vocations to celibate life. Normally, you have more girls becoming sisters in patrilineal societies than men becoming priests or brothers. In the same way, normally you have more men adopting the celibate life of priests and brothers in matrilineal societies than girls adopting religious life. The statistics of the vocations in Ghana easily prove this.

Obviously there may be exceptions here and there. For example, even though the Upper East Region of Ghana is patrilineal, there appears to be more priests there than sisters. There is a reason for it which is intriguing. Parents want their boys to marry but the bride wealth can be very high. Sometimes the men do not have the bride wealth and so they give their daughters in marriage and get the bride wealth for their daughters and use it to get wives for their sons. Some of the men do not get the bride wealth and so decide to become priests and brothers.

These lineal structures are found in India, America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacifics and many other simple societies.

Thirdly, these characteristics of lineal situations indicate to us a peculiar approach to vocations drive. In Europe and America, you do not belong to any side; you belong to both. Relationships are based on biological factors. In lineal societies, sociological considerations are as important as the biological ones. Catholicism has introduced celibate life into society. In your vocation animation, bear in mind that boys are not easily amenable to becoming priests and brothers in patrilineal societies and remember also that it is difficult to get girls in matrilineal societies to become sisters. It is true that social change is taking place everywhere, but at the end of the day, it is not easy to break with custom.

In some other respects, the vow of poverty can put a great strain on you. What happens if your people call on you for help? You have a responsibility towards your clan, especially if you are the eldest son in a family. The Bishops of Ghana were recently talking about the motivation of priests and seminarians. This is a problem that exists all over the world. In 1994, Bishops who were below 5 years in the episcopacy attended a workshop in Rome organised by the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. The Congregation organised another one for older Bishops who were 5 years or more in the episcopacy the following year. When we came to talk about vocations, all of us complained about the suspect nature of the motivation

of priests these days. It is a serious problem. What is worse, you hear some priests are building houses; they are doing this and that. Priests have become materialistic, money-minded. All this may be due to socio-cultural pressures from the family. If such priests use the money they have received as personal gifts or otherwise got personally, there would be no problem but some simply use Church money, thus becoming embezzlers.

Fourthly, in lineal societies, property, possessions and wealth, in the ideal situation, are collectively owned. The land belongs to the clan. Sometimes the herd of cattle belongs to the clan. In the coastal areas, the property can be nets, boats, guns, etc. There is no question of one man saying *this is for me*. This happens both in matrilineal and patrilineal societies.

One of the new introductions to African life is this phenomenon of specialisation. In the past, when there was no formal schooling, in the village when a man was a farmer, the male children in the clan became farmers. With the introduction of formal schooling, the idea of collective ownership is gradually giving way to individual ownership. The ideal situation where property was shared by the head of the clan for individual use by members of the clan is fast disappearing.

Fifthly, succession, inheritance and rank are lineally determined. One gets these from one's clan. You inherit in your clan, you succeed in your clan, you get your rank from your clan. One who is a member of a royal clan can become a chief or a queenmother. The practice elsewhere of people automatically succeeding to an office does not obtain here. Except in a few cases, one does not know who is going to succeed a chief as all the men in the clan are eligible.

There are two ways of acquiring an office - by **ascription** or by **acquisition**. The office is ascribed when it is given by reason of membership of a clan, that is by reason of birth. It is acquired when the individual obtains it by dint of hard work.

Succession deals with an office, for example, the Vice Chancellorship of a university, the directorship of an Institute or chiefship, the Superior Generalship of a Congregation, etc. Inheritance deals with the passing of property on to somebody. The two may be combined. For example, if I am a chief and I die, my brother may inherit and succeed me at the same time. But in normal life, the two do not go together. One can inherit without necessarily succeeding and one can succeed without necessarily inheriting.

All these concepts have similarities in the bible. The bible talks of the priestly clans, the kingly clans and the prophetic clans. Whereas David's son succeeded him as king, Isaiah's son did not succeed him as prophet. In one case, we are talking about succession and inheritance, in the other, only succession.

Sixthly, in lineal societies, kinship terminologies describe not only biological relationships but equally importantly, also sociological relationships. What is kinship terminology? Kinship terminologies are words used to describe consanguineous relationships. For example, to the question: *What is this woman to you?*, the answer may be: *This woman is my sister?* *Sister* is a kinship term. Sister, mother, daughter, son, are all kinship terms. Kinship terminology can be acquired by reason of marriage and then they describe relationships by affinity. If the question was *what is this woman to you?* and the answer, *She is my brother's wife*, "brother's wife" would be a kinship term but, this time, deriving from affinity.

In English, when you say somebody is your father, you are using the word 'father' biologically (one who is responsible for your birth). Sometimes by legal gymnastics you can call your wife's father 'father-in-law' or when you adopt a child, the child can call you *father*. But these are exceptions to the rule, for normally a person has one father and one mother. In the same way, in English, when you call somebody mother, it can only be one *woman*. However, in Africa, my father's brothers are my "fathers". My mother's sisters are my mothers; my mother's sister's children are my brothers and sisters. We are here dealing with what has been called the principle of the *identity of the*

sibling group. Siblings are identified in such a way that they treat one another's children as their own. If a man dies leaving children behind, his brothers would treat them as if they were their own natural sons and daughters.

Let us consider the issue diagrammatically again (see Table 3 on page 77).

In diagram A, 1 is the father of 2, 3, 4 and 5 so 2, 3, 4, and 5 are brothers. 6 and 7 are the sons of 2, 8 and 9 of 3, 10 and 11 of 4, 12 and 13 of 5. In English, only 6 and 7 would call 2 father, only 8 and 9 would call 3 father, only 10 and 11 would call 4 father, and only 12 and 13 would call 5 father. 3 would be an uncle to 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13. 2 would be an uncle to 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13. 2, 3 and 5 would be uncles to 10 and 11; 2, 3, 4 would be uncles to 12 and 13. This is not so in a lineal situation. 6 and 7, in our situation, would refer to 3, 4 and 5 with the same term as they would use to refer to 2, their father. Hence, as is the case in Asante, if 2 is *Agya* to them, then 3, 4 and 5 are all *Agya*. They may clarify it with 'senior' or 'junior', depending upon whether 2 is senior to 3, 4, 5 or two of them and so on. For 8 and 9, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are *Agya*; for 10 and 11, 2, 3 and 5 are also *Agya*. Not only that; since 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 refer to 2, 3, 4, 5 as *Agya*, they in turn are considered as brothers. There is no word for 'cousin'. The children of each one of them would call all the rest *Agya* and they will regard themselves as brothers and sisters.

What is even more important, on the death of one of them, say 4, the rest, that is, 2, 3 and 5, will look after 10 and 11 as if they were their own natural children. In fact, because 4 is dead, 2, 3 and 5 would tend to treat 10 and 11 better than they would treat their own natural children. Even when the brothers, 2, 3, 4 and 5, are alive and one of them, say 3, is not treating his own children, 8 and 9, the way he should, 8 and 9 will report the matter to the eldest, say 2, and 2 would take 3 to task.

TABLE 3

DIAGRAM A

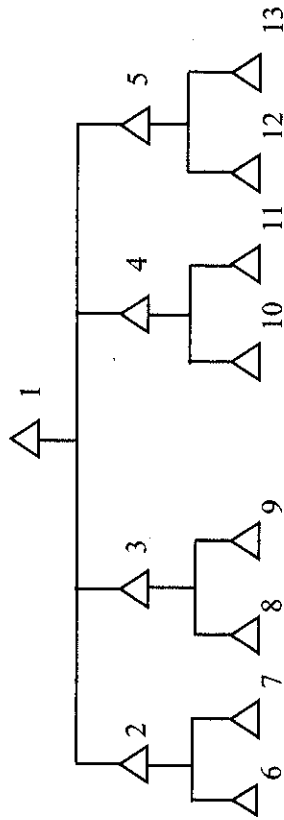
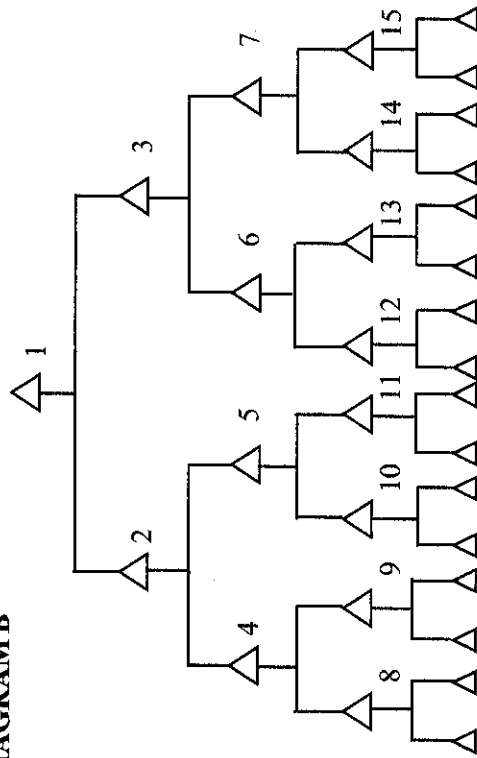


DIAGRAM B



16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

When Africans talk about a family, we are not talking about father, mother and children. We are talking about a much more extended family. In the course of time, the clan extends and branches spring up. Every clan is extending all the time. This is what we call **segmentation**. When segmentation takes place, members of the same clan find themselves dispersed. Some may even be found outside the ethnic group but when something happens, when there is a good to be achieved or an evil to be expelled, the members come together to achieve it or to repel it. This is what we call the principle of **fission and fusion**.

Diagram B of Table 3 is an illustration of the principle of segmentation and the principle of fission and fusion. At the first level, we have only one man; at the second level we have two people, at the third level we have four people; at the fourth level we have eight people. At the next level we have sixteen people. If we continue, even with two people being born by one person, at the next level we would have thirty-two, then sixty-four. The clan is expanding all the time and that is segmentation. A time comes when, for example, number 15 may not know 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. Number 19 may have heard of number 7 and that is all. Number 22 may be living far away from home. Yet if something were to happen to number 5, people from 16-31, 8-15, 2 and 3, if they are still alive, would rally to his support or to his defence. That is the principle of fission and fusion. This principle of fission and fusion is very important in any African society. No matter how widely spread members of a clan are, they always refer back to their roots. It can be compared to an accordion. To produce its desired effect, you keep stretching and folding it, as it were.

The principle of fission and fusion has an application to societies or institutes or congregations within the Church. The congregation expands and goes into new areas but in the interest of the congregation, members come together on a regular basis.

To sum up:

1. Lineal societies are exogamous.

2. Men are of extreme importance in patrilineal societies and women in matrilineal societies.
3. There is a correlation between the type of society we are dealing with and vocations to the celibate life.
4. Property is owned collectively.
5. Succession, inheritance and rank are determined lineally.
6. Kinship terminology describes sociological as much as biological relationships.
7. In some cases, pressure may be brought to bear upon the religious and priests to fulfil a clan obligation.
8. We repeat here that inculturation has a wider scope than drumming and dancing. The principles of lineal societies are very important and must not be neglected. A case in point is fission and fusion. Religious and priests must make it their point to come together for conferences, seminars, religious exercises like retreats, ordinations, professions, jubilees and so on. In this way, they strengthen the bonds between us.
There is something that religious must bear in mind. Important as cultural imperatives are, when problems arise in your congregation or community, try to go beyond what culture dictates. There may be certain attitudes which make sense in the culture but not in a religious community of priests, brothers and sisters. You have adopted a new family and that new family does not allow you to do certain things.
9. The clan system brings about togetherness; it brings about security; it gives the individual dignity; it gives the individual a point of reference. You can always go back to your people; you are secure with your people; you are at home with your people. This is **ethnicity**. Ethnicity is a gift of

God and must not be toyed with. It provides love for the individual. In the ideal situation, there should be no needy individual in the clan. These are wonderful values that the African Family exhibits.

When the Bishops of Africa were going to meet in Johannesburg in 1997, I was asked to prepare the *Lineamenta*, the working paper document on: "Church as Family of God". Four Bishops were asked to prepare the *Instrumentum Laboris* from the answers to the questions provoked by the *Lineamenta*.

10. Both the *Lineamenta* and the *Instrumentum Laboris* made a very good point, namely, that it is not everything in the African family that can be praised. In fact, several elements are counter-productive.

The African Family may have wonderful values but the same African Family may have counter-values that are causing problems in Africa - ethnocentrism, tribalism, excessive particularism. That is why the Pope said all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism must be avoided at all costs.

His words can hardly be misunderstood:

Not only did the Synod speak of inculturation, but it also made use of it, taking the Church as God's Family as its guiding idea for the evangelization of Africa. The Synod Fathers acknowledged it as an expression of the Church's nature particularly appropriate for Africa. For this image emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust. The new evangelization will thus aim at building up the Church as Family, avoiding all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism, trying instead to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among the particular Churches, without undue ethnic considerations. "It is earnestly to be hoped that theologians in Africa will work out the theology of the Church as Family with all the riches contained in this concept, showing its complementarity with other images of the Church". (Ecclesia in Africa, No. 63)

What is ethnocentrism? It is the mentality that "my people are better than everybody else. Other people do not matter." Tribalism, with all its ambiguities, can be so perverted that it becomes an example of this. The Church embraces everybody. It does not make distinctions at all. In his address in the house of Cornelius, St. Peter said: *I now really understand that God has no favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him*" (Acts 10:34-35).

We love children but if the person who has no children is regarded as cursed and ridiculed, then there is something wrong.

The love of children, and the desire to have children, is beautiful. But if it is so imperative that the man or woman who cannot have children is held in disgrace, then it has gone too far. The worth of a woman cannot simply be judged by her ability to bear children. When absolutized, this value becomes a disvalue. (Peter Schineller, S.J., *A Handbook on Inculturation*, p. 80)

11. This is what we should avoid. Our families want prestige, honour, false solidarity, money, possessions. These are values that are counter to the values of the Kingdom of God - justice, unity, mercy, love, holiness, etc. Whereas we want to make use of the beautiful values in the African cultures, we must be very careful to avoid falling into the pitfall of ethnic arrogance and insensitivity. We must realise that there is a higher good. We must listen to the Lord whom we are serving: *It is written, love your neighbour and hate your enemy but I tell you, love your enemy.*¹⁶

It is not everything that comes from the lineal societies that is good. Some elements are very "evil". We have, for example, widowhood rites; some of them are terrible. During some widowhood rites, among other things, the widow is made to sleep on the bare floor with a stone as her pillow; pepper is thrown into her eyes during the time of mourning. Sometimes such customs have religious beliefs as their basis. With reference to the widowhood rites, it is believed that widows have to do something to get rid of the spirits of their dead husbands who will haunt them if they omit the rites.

Many Ghanaian women are very well educated. In the 60s, led by a judge called Mrs. Annie Jiagge, the educated ones were trying to do something about these practices which they considered to be cruel to women. They even sought legal legislation against some of them. But believe it or not, the women themselves opposed these attempts at reform on grounds of their belief.

The point is that there are certain aspects of the lineal family that are wrong. If you extend it to the tribe, then you can understand the inward-looking attitude of the people. The Pope has advised us to explore this concept of "Church as Family" to see which aspects of it can be utilised, which purified and which discarded completely.

Patrilineal Fathers and Matrilineal Fathers

12. There is an interesting observation that I would like to make here. It has been found out that in patrilineal societies where much more is centred on the man and his group than on the woman and her group, the relationship between a person and his mother's group is very cordial. The mother's brothers and their children have a special love for the mother's children. It is unconditional love in the sense that it is not because the mother's children expect anything from their mother's side that they go there, but they go there simply because of the natural relationships. The mother's people who have given the mother in marriage to another man rally round her and her children and establish very good cordial rapport. The patrilineal father may have the rights over the children but the real affection is for matrilineal brothers.

In the same way, in matrilineal societies, the relationship between a man and his group on the one hand and his children on the other is extremely cordial. People tend to like their father's brothers' children with whom they have no material relationship. The love between father and children is a love for the sake of love. The children can never succeed the father and so

it is not because of his property that they go to him. In fact, they often protect the father against the machinations of his people, especially his sister's children who have the right to inherit him.

In patrilineal societies, the love between the father and his children can be vitiated. The child is a potential rival of the father. The death of the father, in a way, profits him. It paves the way for him to inherit the father or succeed him. Sometimes it happens that children commit patricide out of greed or jealousy. A thing like this cannot happen in a matrilineal society. In fact, to counter-balance the potential rivalry between father and children in patrilineal societies, in some African ethnic groups, the first son can never succeed his father or inherit him. The death of the father, therefore, does not profit him and so he tends to protect the father against his younger brothers who could be dangerous.