

### The Family Lineage (Solar System on Earth)

The English terms “clan” and “lineage” are widely but often inaccurately used by writers of African history.

The family lineage (called *Ginne/Jenne*, and meaning *ancestor*) consists of a number of family units who share the same female line. The female transmitted the solar blood. She is/was the sun of the family, just like the solar system. Therefore, each planet revolves in its own egg-shaped orbit, around her.

The Ashanti/Asante of present-day Ghana describe this lineage as Abu-sua, exactly the same as in ancient Egypt and modern-day rural Egyptians. *Sua* denotes *female* (or *female organ*). *Abu* means *founder/father/leader*. Abu-sua members perform regular ceremonies to honor the Abu-sua ancestors, whose spirits (energies) are believed to always be present.

Each family has a leader, or family head, who is responsible for the material and spiritual welfare of every member of the Abu-sua. A number of sub-heads are also selected from each household within the large village of Abu-sua relatives. This leader controls the land farmed by the members. He also maintains law, order, justice, and harmony. The elders settle internal disputes among members of the Abu-sua.

Members of the same family lineage cannot marry, because it is considered to be contrary to the nature of creation and its continuance.

The term, *clan*, is a vague term that is used by Western academicians to degrade people.

In many African societies, family lineage forms the basic (and only) political unit within a polity/village.

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## Polity/Village (Stellar System on Earth)

A polity is like a small stellar system that revolves around a common purpose. A single extended family may occupy an entire village, and in this case the family and village organization are identical. More usually, however, the village consists of a number of extended families living in compounds clustered within a narrow area, or scattered about in groups, which are often at considerable distances from one another. The families may be closely related by kinship ties, or they may be unrelated groups sharing common interests.

In the regions where people have been attacked by foreigners, which created refugees, the village community commonly consists of families of totally different ethnic stock. In such cases the family organization has given way to that of village communities, in which the blood relationship ties have lost much of their binding force.

Autonomous food-producing village polities are widespread throughout Africa. They form a basic sociopolitical format varying from a few families (25-50 people), to up to several thousand. Settlement patterns range from compacted villages to widely dispersed neighborhoods with farm fields and pasture interspersed between households.

The polity is widely viewed as divided into founders and their lineage descendants, as owners of the land, and later arrivals, who often have lower status, access to more distant farmlands, and less access to political offices. Although not all members of a village necessarily share blood ties, the head of the Abu-sua lineage and other Abu-sua elders lead the community. The most common institution of authority is the headman, elected from the founder lineage, and a council of respected elders from the established lin-

eages of the community. This eldership assists the headman in the governance of the community. It serves as a court, helps the headman allocate access to resources, carries out rituals, and organizes public works.

Other offices include that of village spiritual intermediary, which may be differentiated from headman. He links the community ritually to the authority of the local spirits of the land and the ghosts of past leaders whose aid and retributions he interprets.

Most offices are open to all prospects. Village headship is generally hereditary with some tendencies toward primogeniture, though personal qualities play an important qualifying role.

The term, *tribe*, is used to demean African societies. It is another uninformed, vague, abstract term.

## Alliance of Individual Polities (Galaxy on Earth)

In our modern times, after the social upheaval of the Industrial Revolution, and the creation of urban areas, we have forgotten the importance of the local community. Each local community knows its own affairs more than anyone else. In the United States, they recognize this fact (even though they don't apply it) when they say, "*All politics are local.*"

To harmonize with the universe, a large society should be like a galaxy composed of several planetary groups (analogous to family lineages). No planetary group dominates an-

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other. They are all independent groups that harmonize about common interests, like a galaxy.

The so-called village-state (nome/province) government in ancient Egypt, and later in sub-Saharan Africa, is a form of a commonwealth-type government, where coalitions are formed to share specific duties and responsibilities that can benefit all of them. This is a true grass-roots democracy.

Relations between polities are carried on through trade, marriage relations, joint communal hunts, and inheritable peace treaties between polities.

Alliances can be resolved, changed or restructured. We should not misunderstand this to mean upheaval.

Two forms of supralocal, governments — chieftaincies and states — evolved throughout Africa.

1. Chieftaincies emerge when a local chief becomes a chief of chiefs, recognized as a leader of a set of polities. This “paramount chief” heads a council of leaders, including members of his own chiefly lineage.

The primary duty of paramount chiefs is to represent their polity to foreign authorities. In the secular world, this means relations through alliances, traditional ceremonies, and gift exchanges or treaties of non-aggression and rights of passage. Chiefs supplicate spirits of the land to renew its fertility and engage the help of chiefly ancestors to foster polity welfare.

Authority is not monopolized by an elite group, but is shared horizontally among society’s components. They have/had little or no centralized bureaucracies. Many

parts of western Africa had traditions of these non-coercive political organizations, before Islamic and European centralized forms of government arrived, bringing with them unending misery.

2. Kingdoms/chieftaincies tended to form in clusters, with one or more larger units toward the center of the cluster, and a host of smaller ones scattered around the periphery. Even the smaller kingdoms, however, contrasted sharply with the loose family or lineage institutions of those societies that had never been organized in this way.

The chieftaincy was mostly a kind of theocracy, organized under a priest-king and his ritual assistants. Sometimes, it tended to become something nearer to a bureaucracy. The administration traditionally involved the daily affairs and relationships between the segments of the society. The pinnacle and central symbol was the leader and his dynastic lineage. A council of nobles made up the inner council of advisors.

It is commonly accepted that the forms of an organized government developed among sub-Saharan Africa, and was probably first evident at some time in the first millennium of the Common Era (CE), displaying a common pattern similar to that of ancient Egypt.

The Egyptian model was diffused through the rest of the continent, as detailed throughout this book.

## Relationship Between Land and People


In order to maintain order and harmony, the primor-

dial spirits of a land/site must accommodate newcomers and a new relationship will have to be forged. In effect, the rights of a group, defined by common genealogical descent were linked to a particular place and the settlements within it.

In other words, when people move to a new area, they must gain acceptance from the ancestor spirits still dwelling in that land, before they can settle. The newcomers are also fully aware that they never “own” the land — they are just sharing it for the time they occupy human/physical form.

Ancient Egyptians and other African traditions recognize and respect the supernatural residents of the land — any land. These spirits of place (trees, rock outcroppings, a river, snakes, or other animals and objects) were identified and placated by the original founders, who had migrated to the new site from a previous one. Spirits of the land might vary with each place or be so closely identified with a group’s welfare that they were carried to a new place, as part of the continuity of a group to its former home.

In the new place, these spiritual migrants join the local spirit population, in a new covenant created by the founders of a settlement between themselves and the local spirits. This covenant legitimized their arrival. In return for regular rites and prayers to these spirits, the founders could claim perpetual access to local resources. In so doing, they became the lineage in charge of the hereditary local priesthood and village headship, and were recognized as “tenants of the place” by later human arrivals. Both sets of spirits, those of family and those of place, demanded loyalty to communal virtues and to the authority of the elders in defending ancient beliefs and practices.

 It is this type of thinking that made local African people report that the newcomers (from the Nile