

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF 'FAMILY'  
IN MEXICAN AND AFRICAN CULTURE

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Meanings in the Bible can vary according to different cultures. In some cultures, “brother’s keeper” in Genesis 4:9<sup>1</sup> is perceived that Cain’s appeal is relevant, while it can be viewed as nonsense in certain cultures such as China. For the Chinese people, it is the older brother’s duty to protect his younger brother. If the older brother fails in his duty, he can be punished (Gn 4:15). This is just one example.

The purpose of this paper is to provide different concept and understanding of diverse cultures so that missionaries can overcome cultural barriers and effectively share the gospel. Since the topic has vast scope of spectrum the researcher has narrowed the cultural boundary to Mexican and African cultures. The main focus is to aid helpful contextualization insights for Mexican or those who are accustomed to Mexican cultures to effectively minister in African context.

In this paper, the concept of family in Mexican culture and African culture will be discussed. The reason for using ‘family’ as the topic is that this concept is universal. Every culture has family. Anthropologists concur that “kinship is universal and in most societies plays a significant role in the socialization of individuals and the maintenance of group solidarity” (Abercrombie and Hill, 2006: 209). Also, the reason that the Mexican family and the African concept of family is relevant is that both cultures have uniqueness in perceiving the term. In Latin American culture, including Mexico, family system is regarded as the most significant relationship (Stephenson, 2003: 52). It is also regarded as the heart, the sustaining warmth and the driving force to overcome times of trouble (Fuentes, 1999: 347). Also in the African tribal system, deceased family members are still regarded as family members and revered.

This paper will focus on exploring both Mexican and African cultures followed by dealing with the biblical concept of family. Interactions with an interview<sup>2</sup> will be also added in this paper for the interview will provide much more detailed and accurate ideas concerning the topic. Afterward, strengths and weaknesses of each culture will be evaluated. Besides unveiling how the two cultures perceive the concept of family, another goal of this paper is to provide Mexican missionaries in Africa a tool to build bridges for effective mission work.

## II. THE FAMILY IN THE MEXICAN CULTURE: THE COMPADRAZGO SYSTEM IN MEXICO

When exploring the concept of family in a certain culture, there is always uniqueness. In some cultures, the concept of tribe<sup>3</sup> is a key to understanding families, and in some cultures like Korea, the concept of extended family cannot be neglected<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

<sup>2</sup> The writer interviewed a Korean missionary to Mexico.

<sup>3</sup> Most African Cultures cannot be discussed without this concept. Tribe itself is a family.

Likewise, in discussing the concept of family in Mexico, the family is emphasized through the concept of including the *compadrazgo* system (Condon, 1985: 25). This is an important characteristic of the Mexican culture in understanding the country.

In a practical level many missionaries who are ministering towards Latin Americans are and will have hard time to get adjusted to their culture without perceiving the concept of *compadrazgo*. A novice missionary to rural areas of Mexico will have a common initial impression of the natives. That is to say laziness, helpless, and overly dependant to missionaries. Missionaries will think that these people always wants from missionaries. Whenever they come across missionaries they are asking for money, shelter, and other goods. On the other had they neglect missionaries' requests. Specially missionaries who are from western countries who are accustomed to cause and effect will have hard time to understand that kind of situation. What seems to be wrong? Are the natives lazy and irresponsible people as western missionaries think? No. This is not a matter of people but a matter of ignorance of social system of Mexico, *compadrazgo*.

#### 1. Definition of Compadrazgo

What is *Compadrazgo*? "*Compadrazgo* is best described as a system of fictive kinship, with its origins in the medieval Catholic Church in Europe. It can be loosely translated as 'godparenthood'" (Scott and Marshall, 2009: 112). "They are considered companion parents who help with the raising of the family's children" (Barker, 2003: 86). According to Gudeman and Nutini's<sup>5</sup> definition of *compadrazgo*, "the Mesoamerican *compadrazgo* system is a syncretic transformation of the European catholic practice to invite godparents as spiritual sponsors when an individual is accepted as a member of the religious community" (Schneegg and White, 2008: 3). In distinction to kinship relationship, Barker says that it is people who are tied by historical ties instead of tied to a family through kinship network (Barker, 2003: 86). It is also often referred to as close friendship. In order to express reinforcing friendship, *compadre*<sup>6</sup> or *comadre* relationship is established (Novas 1994, 182).

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<sup>4</sup> The Korean people are a male dominant society. Also, the culture is based on the concept of extended family. When generations (normally three generations to four) live together the mother's generations are excluded. Only the father's side is considered as the extended family. Thus, when a bride gets married, she will leave her original family and join her husband's family. Normally, her official records will transfer to her husband's family. Due to the industrialization and globalization, some of the past traditions have changed, but many traditions are still valid.

<sup>5</sup> See Gudeman, S. 1975. *Spiritual Relationships and Selecting a Godparent*. MAN 10:221-37 and Nutini, H.G. 1984. *Ritual Kinship*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>6</sup> When a *compadrazgo* relationship establishes, the biological father and godfather call each other *compadre* (Noble and Lacasa, 1990: 69).

## 2. Types of Compadrazgo

Hugo G. Nutini and Douglas R. White did an interesting research on the *compadrazgo* system in Tlaxcala, Mexico, analyzing the types of *compadrazgo*. The result shows that there were thirty one types of *compadrazgo*<sup>7</sup>(Nutini and White, 1977: 354-356). As the result showed, *compadrazgo* is the concept beyond the spiritual realm. It has more political and economical flavor in it. Scott and Marshall provide detailed information:

Co-parents with political and economic resources are sought by the biological parents of a child in order to ensure political protection and economic support for the whole family, or perhaps financial support for the child. (Scott and Marshall, 2009: 112)

## 3. Benefit, Impact, and Strength of Compadrazgo

What then do co-parents receive? What is the benefit of being co-parents? Being a co-parent is like a patron-client relationship<sup>8</sup>. Patron-client relationships or clientalism is a dyadic tie that a person of higher status provides protection and benefits for a person of lower status who in return gives general support, assistance, or personal service (Scott, 1972: 126-7).

How does the *compadrazgo* system impact Mexico besides kinship? According to the research concerning *compadrazgo* in Belén, Mexico, “among 257 couples forming the cohesive core of the *compadrazgo* network, more are born outside than inside Belén but 43% are born inside” (Schnegg and White, 2008: 12). What this signifies is how *compadrazgo* is influential compared to kinship. “It not only integrates people who live in Belén but forms a very well connected ‘invisible community’ extending beyond the physical boundaries of the village” (Schnegg and White, 2008: 12).

What is the strength of *compadrazgo*? The strength of *compadrazgo* is that it “overcomes the limitations of the locally endogamous kinship network” (Schnegg and White, 2008: 12). In other words, the system fills the weaknesses of a kinship relationship. It is regarded that in the Latin American culture, simply being born does not qualify a child as a member of community but the biological parents must be supplemented by social parents to provide the child or children social identity (Scott and Marshall, 2009: 112).

## III. THE FAMILY IN AFRICAN CULTURE: ANCESTRAL WORSHIP

In the previous section, *compadrazgo* system was introduced as a distinctive factor in understanding the concept of family in Latin America. In this section, ancestors will be a key

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<sup>7</sup> The examples are mainly divided in two categories. One is sacramental, including baptism, marriage, confirmation, erection of burial cross, first communion and so on. The other consists of non-sacramental items such as graduation, erection of a cross at the communal spring celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday, setting the foundation of the house, blessing of new cars and so on.

<sup>8</sup> Although *compadrazgo* system is based on patron and client relationship systems, it should be emphasized that patron-client relationships are not limited to *compadrazgo* (Scott and Marshall, 2009: 112).

concept to understand the meaning of African family. In this section, the definition or boundary of ancestors, the roles of ancestors and a brief process of native ritual to reach ancestors will be discussed.

### 1. Who are Ancestors?

The definition of ancestors can be made as “departed elders” (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tinou, 1999:61), “the dead progenitors of a family, clan, or tribe” (Amanze, 2003, 43) or “dead members of a social group as long as the living members of that group pay regular cultic homage to him or her” (Amanze, 2003: 43). Ancestors are considered as influential beings because there are no distinctions made between living elders and ancestors (McCall, 1995: 256). This means that the ancestors influence their descendants’ lives and the descendants depend on them (Triebel, 2002: 188). This idea shapes and forms the concept of solidarity. For the African people, tribe or community is more important than individuals. Thus, “it is the responsibility of everyone to further and strengthen the life of one’s own community” (Triebel, 2002: 189). In order to fulfill this responsibility, one has to know about the origin of life, that is, the ancestors who are the beginning of life (Triebel, 2002: 189). If one disrespects ancestors, it is not only sin to them but against the whole extended family (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tinou, 1999: 61). Thus, ancestors in Africa are part of their family as well as the beginning of their life.

### 2. The Role of Ancestors

The most crucial role of ancestors is mediators. They are the way to reach the “Supreme God”<sup>9</sup> (Amanze, 2003: 47). This puts African people into obligation to venerate and rely on their ancestors. Another role of ancestors is that “they are the representatives of law and order” (Triebel, 2002: 189). What this means is that ancestors will punish those who offend them and grant blessings to the ones who follow their orders (Nxumalo, 1980: 10). The punishment and blessing is related to their everyday life. Harvest, misfortune, illness and death are the typical phenomena that are regarded as everyday life (Triebel, 2002: 189). Many also believe that “Barrenness” (McCall, 1995: 266) and “traffic accident” (Triebel, 2002: 190) are impacted by the ancestral spirits.

### 3. The Process of Ancestor Veneration

The process of ritual varies according to the region. However, the main points are shared in common. In general, the ritual consists of gathering in a sacred place, offering, prayer and a meal feast. The sacred place is recognized as the tomb or graveyard of their ancestor. The tomb or graveyard is not necessarily a bush or underground. The Nigeria people build houses<sup>10</sup> above the

<sup>9</sup> There is hierarchism in the spiritual realm; whenever there is a request, it is invoked to the invisible father and he forwards the message to the next ancestor above him (Amanze, 2003: 47). It is believed in African people that there is a supreme being who created the universe.

<sup>10</sup> To be exact, the living room is built on the grave to discuss family concerns with the buried

ancestor's tomb (McCall, 1995: 260). After entering the sacred place, an animal and alcohol is used for an offering. Normally "innards such as heart, kidneys, liver and blood" are burned (Triebel, 2002: 191). Afterwards, alcohol is poured for the ritual<sup>11</sup>. Prayer involves calling upon the names of the ancestors. The names of the ancestors are called upwards beginning from the nearest forefather. The prayer consists of invoking, complaint and petition. When the rituals are done in order, the meal feast climaxes the final stage. The meal is from the left over meats from the offering.

What can be concluded from the concept of ancestors in the African context? As Stinton points out, "they continue the ties of kinship beyond death, linking together family and clan members in the visible and invisible worlds" (Stinton, 2004: 114). In that sense "kinship lies at the very heart of ancestral concepts" (Stinton, 2004: 114). In other words, without recognizing the ancestors, it is impossible to discuss the concept of African kinship or family. In the center of African kinship, ancestral worship functions as a trap, or an obligation. Due to the fact that their ancestors have power to punish or bless them, and they are the way to reach the Supreme Being, it is inevitable to worship their fathers. Also, the fact that the deceased forefathers are regarded as members of the African family fosters ancestral veneration. Thus, ancestral veneration in Africa is involved in everyday family life rather than only a ritual means.

#### IV. BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF FAMILY

The family theme appears throughout the Bible. According to the *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, "The Hebrew Bible tells the story of one set of families, while the extended household of the Greco-Roman world provides the backdrop to the NT" (Drane, 2000: 494). In our everyday life, as Christians we confess God as our Father, and we are his children. In relationship to the Trinity, God is the Father, and Jesus is God, the Son.

##### 1. Family in the Old Testament

Genesis is the book of beginnings. The book testifies to the beginning of family. When God created the universe, he created systems too. He created seasons, weather cycle, and even the system of human society. He created the system of family by marriage paradigm (Köstenberger, 2004: 32-37). This marriage system in the Bible is based on covenantal theme. Calvin supports this view: "Just as God draws the elect believer into a covenant relationship with him, Calvin argues, so God draws husband and wife into a covenant relationship with each other" (Tarwater, 2005: 4).

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ancestor.

<sup>11</sup> In Nigeria descendants pour beer through the hole in the middle of the room where the ancestor is buried under it or on the ground of the ritual site, the founder's ground to summon the ancestors to join the feast (McCall, 1995: 260).

When God brought Eve to Adam, they became a husband and wife, a family before God. As the witness, God gave them a covenantal command<sup>12</sup>. The reason that this command is crucial is that it comes even before the covenant of works in Genesis chapter three. Therefore, what Genesis signifies is that God is the author of family. The family theme continues through the patriarchal times too. When God had called Abraham to form a nation, it was to achieve a “stable family structure” (Steinmetz, 1991: 134).

Then what does family mean in the Old Testament times? Families in the Old Testament times were more like a tribe than a modern day’s family. Köstenberger gives good explanation:

Unlike the modern western notion of a nuclear family consisting of husband, wife, and children, ancient Israelite households were comprised of large extended families, also including a couple’s married children’s families, any as of yet unmarried sons and daughters, and male and female hired servants and slaves along with their families. (Köstenberger, 2004: 94)

Members of family in the Old Testament not only include direct blood line but also servants and slaves as well. Although the social status of slaves and servants remain inferior, they were regarded as members of family. Hargar<sup>13</sup> was a slave girl but was a wife in a sense that she bore a son to Abraham. As a sign of members of Abraham’s household, Abraham circumcised Ishmael and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money (Gen 17:23). This clearly shows the broader boundary than that of modern families.

During those times, a father’s obligation was to protect and provide security for the family and to treat them with dignity while being submissive to the husband’s and father’s authority was a requirement for wife and children (Köstenberger, 2004: 94-101; Block 2003, 48).

One crucial aspect that should not be neglected in understanding family in the Old Testament times is the concept of the fall. Drane argues:

The fall so disrupted the marriage relationship (Gen 3:16) that men and women were sometimes unable to realize God’s intention for it (Gen 2:24), becoming unfaithful to one another. One story after another shows the integrity of the family being threatened by brutality and violence<sup>14</sup>. (Drane, 2000: 496)

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<sup>12</sup> And God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 1:28).

<sup>13</sup> Although Hargar was regarded as a wife she was still considered as a concubine of Abraham. There are distinctive factors that divides wife and concubine. Such example can be found in Genesis 24 where the servant of Abraham pays the bride fee.

<sup>14</sup> Jacob deceived his brother (Gen 27:1-45), Jacob’s sons sold Joseph (Gen 37:1-36) and so on (Drane, 2000: 496).

This theme carries on through the times of Kings<sup>15</sup> and exiles<sup>16</sup>. The negative aspect of family in the Old Testament functioned as a request to expect the restoration of family.

## 2. Family in the New Testament

The concept of family in the New Testament is much broader than the Old Testament. The book of Galatians uses the phrase “children of Abraham” many times. There are many views on who are the “children of Abraham”<sup>17</sup>. Among the diverse views, it is convincing to argue that the concept of the phrase refers to “metaphorical kinship” (Rhoads 2004, 285). In describing the phrase, Paul includes adopted ones, slaves, freedmen, minors, and guardians who are not blood bond kinship (Rhoads, 2004: 285). What does this signify? How did Paul get this idea? He got this idea from the Christ Jesus.

When Jesus was once asked, “Who are my mother and my brother” Jesus replied, “Behold my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God he is my brother and sister and mother” (Matt 10:35-37). The text teaches that “family must never stand in the way of following God’s will” (Pinson, 1981: 25). This does not mean that this teaching can be misused to justify doing church works vigorously<sup>18</sup>. What Jesus meant was an emphasis. Jesus tried to make an emphasis on the superiority of God. According to this principle then, the boundary of family that Jesus is drawing is beyond nuclear family, tribal kinship or a boundary of *compadrazgo*. This statement that Jesus made is a powerful mission calling. Anyone who is doing God’s will, regardless of skin color or biological blood bound, is God’s family. In other words, through faith, people become one family in God<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, as the second Adam, Jesus restored the sinful world. By fulfilling the Law and requirement of God, and by being the substitute sacrifice offering, he gave his life and through faith we became the new creation. He not only restored our identity but as a new creation, he restored the whole world. He is the way and the truth and life (Jn 14:6). Thus through Jesus Christ, the fallen nature of family in the Old Testament can be restored.

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<sup>15</sup> See 2 Kings 8-12.

<sup>16</sup> According to Is 5:8-10, Amos 2:6-8; 4:1-3, the Israelites sold their family as slaves. (Drane, 2000: 495)

<sup>17</sup> Some sociologists arguing that the “children of Abraham” is “fictive kinship relationships” while some argue “surrogate family,” suggesting that the relationships are an alternative family to blood relations (Rhoads, 2004: 285)

<sup>18</sup> Jesus loved his mother. One of the last things that he did on the cross was to ask his beloved disciple to take care of her (Pinson, 1981: 25).

<sup>19</sup> Abraham was considered as righteousness because he had faith. Likewise when people “have faith *like* Abraham had faith, they can be considered children of Abraham. . .In this way, Judeans and Gentiles alike who have faith in Christ will have the same status before God (as Judeans and Gentiles) and will be in mutual relationship (as “brothers”) with each other” (Rhoads, 2004: 287).



## V. INTERVIEW AND INTERACTIONS

The interview was done by a Korean missionary in Mexico. For the confidentiality of the interview contents and the interviewee, the name of the missionary will not be exposed in this paper. In this section, based on the brief summarized answers of the interview questions, the contents that were dealt with in the earlier sections of the papers (Mexican, African and biblical concept of family) will be interacted. The result was that the answers did not conflict with the data that was processed in this paper. Rather the interview supplemented the resources. There will be two paragraphs for each question. The first paragraph will be the actual summarized interview answer and the second paragraph will be an interaction and evaluation of the answer.

### 1. What does the concept of "family" mean to Mexican people?

Family is highly important. It is the base of society and the force that moves the nation. Family is like a first school. In a loving environment, parents provide their children a worldview that helps them to be consistent, righteous, and competent members of society.

Like the biblical notion that the family began from the beginning of creation, Mexican people share the same thought. In the Mexican peoples' minds, family is regarded as the foundation of society. What this means is that grasping the notion of family and connecting with biblical ideas will be a great bridge to reach the Mexican people.

### 2. How big is the boundary of family?

In Mexico, there are over 24,000,000 families. Among these families, 77.9% are nuclear family, and 28.4% are female headship family. Recent statistics show that there are changes occurring in Mexican families. People, especially young people, think that they feel more comfortable with close friends than distant families. This kind of thought is expanding right now, and there are some who accept friends as family members.

The thought that people tend to include close friends as their family members can be said as the result of *compadrazgo*. As Novas points out in the earlier part of this paper, *compadrazgo* system is often referred to close friendship and it is an expression of reinforcing friendship (Novas, 1994: 182).

### 3. Is there anything like ancestral veneration or worship?

During the winter times in November 1-2, Mexican people celebrate the "Day of the dead". These days are times of family gatherings. People decorate the tombstone of the deceased family with orange flowers and celebrate by eating skull shaped chocolate cookies, bread of the dead, wine, and so on. The bread of the dead normally consists of three layers or storage. The first layer means the physical earth. The second level is the spiritual realm. That is why a picture of the deceased family member hangs on this layer. The third layer means the realm of the gods. When

the day of the dead begins at 12:00 in the morning on November 1st, people ring a bell 12 times. Then souls of little children come down and eat the chocolate skulls and bread. On the next day, people offer tobaccos and wines instead of cookies and bread for the day is the day of adult souls.

It is hard to identify whether the deceased family members have power to grant blessings and curses upon people but one aspect that can be emphasized here is that the bond ship of family continues. By the three levels of the realms, one can find that there is hierarchism in the spiritual world similar to the way the African people believe. The different aspect from the African tradition is their emphasis on celebration. African people tend to focus on rituals whereas Mexicans on celebration. Although there are still mystical factors remaining in Mexican tradition, it will be a great bridge to link the celebration aspect with the biblical teachings. Death itself is a curse but for reborn Christians death can be overcome by believing in Christ. Like Christ, the resurrection can be a celebrative factor that believers can enjoy.

4. What is the relationship between the concept of family and *Compadrazgo*? And how can a missionary use the concept of family and the concept of *compadrazgo* for effective ministry in Mexico?

*Compadrazgo* supplements family system. There are no possibilities that this will reduce the authority of biological parents. On the contrary, parents regard *compadrazgo* as a good tradition for godparents who will support financially. In the past, there were many godparents among distant relatives, but after urbanization during the 1970s, people from outside the family bond became godparents. People in Mexico feel more necessity for *compadrazgo* as more nuclear families occur in urban areas.

It will be a powerful tool for evangelism. When a missionary functions as a godfather with the love of Christ and helps support them, it will be effective for missionary work in Mexico. Also, as godparents, it will be a good opportunity to build deep relationships with the biological parents which will provide good evangelism opportunities. There were many offers made to me that I should become godparents for them (natives). It would make a good case study to determine if a missionary becomes a godparent whether that relationship can be an effective tool for evangelism on the mission fields.

As it was denoted in this paper, the strength of *compadrazgo* is that it “overcomes the limitations of the locally endogamous kinship network” (Schnegg and White, 2008: 12). This can be utilized as a reaching point to Mexicans. Countries where Confucianism is dominant, such as Korea and Japan are inclined towards the biological family that it will be an obstacle to teach the concept of oneness in Christ. However, for Latin Americans who are accustomed to the *compadrazgo* system, it will be much easier to build bridges of biblical concept of family in Christ through faith.

## VI. EVALUATION AND APPLICATIONS

Both Mexican and African cultures have pros and cons. In the Mexican culture, strength can be found in the boundary of family. For Mexicans, as it was emphasized above, non-biological kinship can be perceived easily. However, the down side of this aspect is that in explaining a relationship with God, *compadrazgo* can lose the true meaning of God and his people's relationship. It gives an image of patron-client relationship. People might think that they must show royalty to God because he is the provider.

For the African tradition, ancestral veneration can be regarded as idolatry. It is sin to put deceased parents as a mediator to reach the supreme being. However, the good side of this tradition is that the concept of mediator, supreme being, concept of hierarchism, and solidarity are found in the Bible. Jesus is our ancestor, God is the Supreme Being who is the creator of the universe, and at the top of the hierarchy exists God. The concept of solidarity relates with biblical teaching. Humanity fell when Adam fell as the representative of humanity. Likewise humanity rose up with Christ for he represented humanity. For African people, these factors can be bridged and contextualized.

Then what can be a common denominator for the African and Mexican concept of family? What can be a connecting bridge that links African and Mexican cultures? Though the boundary and character might be different, how they regard the importance of honoring parents and family is the same. African tribal rituals for ancestors derives from honoring their parents. The concept of solidarity shows the importance of family and community. The concept of *compadrazgo* shows how important Mexican people view family and community. Celebrating the "Day of the dead" also signifies how Mexican people honor and love their family members. In that regards both cultures do have some of connection with biblical ideas of honoring parents<sup>20</sup>. Family love and honoring parents are universal aspects of every culture. How this concept is executed can vary, but it is human nature to love family members. This concept is a strong connection not only with the biblical principal of family but also a strong connection between Mexican and African culture.

Then what will be a recommended approach for a Mexican missionary or a person who is accustomed to Mexican culture to effectively reach out to an African culture or someone whose background is tribal social system? That is to bring some of the aspects from the concept of *compadrazgo* into African culture. This enables them to overcome the boundary of there strong bondage within their tribes. *Compadrazgo* system can show a possibility to expand their notion of family towards non-biological and not tribal parties. This enables 2 things. First it helps African cultures to be equiped with a better understanding of the concept of atonement. Despite the fact that Christ has no biological relationship with them, since He provided the eternal life, restoring the lost relationship with God, and the citizenship of heaven, it is their responsibility to accept Jesus as their savior and to receive God as their father worshiping him forever. *Compadrazgo* actually helps them to perceive this concept better than a African Tribal system. Another thing that this concept

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<sup>20</sup> Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16; Mt 15:4,6; 19:19; Mk 7:10; 10:19; Lk 18:20.

is beneficial for African cultures is that it helps them to have better understanding of foreign missionaries. Even though they are from outside of African tribal and biological system they can still function as their leaders. Bringing compadrazgo can establish father-children relationship. Missionaries can fill both their physical needs and spiritual needs whereas people provide royalty and cooperation to missionary works

## VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, aspects of family in Mexican culture and African culture were explored. Each culture had characteristics. Each culture had weaknesses and strengths to connect with biblical standards. Besides linking the two cultures with biblical standards, these two cultures directly shared the same ground. Though the way of expressing family values may be different, the concept of love of family and honoring parents were evident in both cultures.

There is no culture in this world that is 100% wrong, and there is no culture that is 100% right. Every culture must stand before Christ. One culture can have more biblical understanding of certain biblical principles. For missionaries, it will be a powerful and effective strategy to use strengths of the cultures that they are ministering. In addition, it will be even more effective if a missionary can find a common ground that his native culture and the culture that he is ministering share together.

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