

THE KNIGHTS OF MARSHALL AS A VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION

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I INTRODUCTION

In a letter, dated the 22nd of December 1970, to the Supreme Knight, the President of the Knights of Marshall, I formulated the subject of this paper as follows: "My aim is to study the role of the Knights of Marshall as a voluntary association in the changing Ghanaian society, or, in other words, the Knights of Marshall as a factor of social change within the Catholic Church and their influence on society in the course of time". It is up to the reader to judge how near I have come to this ambitious goal.

1. Definition:

I may suppose that the reader is familiar with the general notions about voluntary associations. Although 'voluntary' implies that one can choose to join, this does not prevent an association from drawing up strict membership rules, nor does it exclude the fact that to join may be a 'must' for reasons of social prestige or even for survival in an urban setting. In the Introduction to his West African Urbanization: A Study of Voluntary Associations In Social Change, Kenneth Little defines a voluntary association as "an institutionalized group in which membership is attained by joining" (1965:2) and Wallerstein in The Road to Independence: Ghana and Ivory Coast, Part II, speaks of "a group within a social structure, which possesses formal freedom of choice of the purpose and of the means to achieve it" (1964:83) Although both definitions are substantially the same, the first is the shorter, and for that reason preferable.

2. Classification:

A wide range of societies and unions come under the

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terms "institutionalized group within a social structure". This makes it necessary to bring some order in the chaos. Authors writing about voluntary associations arrive at all sorts of classifications, none of them really satisfactory, because in the same grouping they classify according to membership, (e.g. Tribal Union) according to the main objective, (e.g. mutual aid), to origin, (e.g. European, Christian), or to sex, (e.g. women's group). The fact that voluntary associations in urban societies are mostly multi-functional makes it very difficult to label them or to classify them. In his seminar on voluntary associations given in the Institute of African Studies during the Michaelmas Term of 1970, Professor S. Ottenberg proposed a division into six groups: 1) ethnic or tribal associations; 2) women's groups; 3) the so-called syncretist churches; 4) savings and loans clubs; 5) groups based on European models; and 6) labour unions and political parties. In Ottenberg's division the Knights of Marshall probably come under 5), but because of their activities also under 4).

Wallerstein, who is preoccupied with the political development does not even venture to classify, but sums up: e.g. political parties, pressure groups, trade unions, professional and economic interest associations, fraternal and mutual benefit societies, sports clubs, alumni-groups, social and educational groups. The last category also comprises religious groupings which he calls "a social and educational group within the church". He admits that several criteria are intermixed and only on practical grounds can he exclude an esoteric sect or an established hierarchical church itself. Here again the Knights could be placed in different groups.

Little divides the voluntary associations into three main groups: 1) tribal associations and syncretist cults; 2) mutual aid and recreation; and 3) modern associations, which are subdivided into 'Christian' societies and 'cultural' associations. Speaking about the 'Christian' societies he indicates that there are striking differences, but he is not very successful in grouping the "host of organisations" within the churches. An arduous task indeed! According to the Ghana Catholic Diary 1971, the diocese of Wa has 22 different lay

organisations, and in a well-established Catholic community like Sekondi there are 17 associations ranging from the Catholic Ewe union to St. Paul's choir. Busia in his Report on a Social Survey of Sekondi-Takoradi, has classified the voluntary associations in this twin-town according to interests as political, intellectual, social or religious. Speaking of the religious associations he classifies first according to denomination and within the church he divides them into: 1) solely religious, (e.g. Sacred Heart Confraternity); 2) religious and social, (Knights of Marshall and of St. John); 3) religious and educational, (Children of Mary); 4) choral, (St. Paul's choir) (1950:77). Writing about 'Urbanisation and Religion in Eastern Ghana', Flawoo practically eliminates the religious aspect and considers the Order of the Knights of Marshall as a Catholic Secret Lodge and defines the Order as a mutual aid association. This is not so far from the truth as we shall see. According to Flawoo, the Knights of Marshall form a voluntary association within another voluntary association: the Roman Catholic Church, which he sees as "a centre of social life in the community providing a field of activity, in which members could acquire status and leadership" (1959:84). Although a satisfactory classification is not yet found, a combination of Busia's and Flawoo's approach suits best the subject of this paper.

3. Some Data about the Catholic Church:

In order to understand the position of the Knights of Marshall within the church it might be useful to mention a few data about the organisation of the Catholic Church itself. The Catholic Church has a hierarchical structure after the pattern of the Roman Empire with the Pope or bishop of Rome as universal head. On the national level the Catholic Church is divided into one or more archdioceses and dioceses, each archdiocese with a group of dioceses forming an ecclesiastical province. At the head of a diocese is a bishop, who is directly responsible to the Holy See in Rome. In Ghana we have the archdiocese of Cape Coast for the Central Region, the diocese of Sekondi-Takoradi for the Western Region, that of Accra for the Eastern Region, that of Keta for the Volta Region, the diocese of Kumasi for Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo, and in the

Northern and Upper Regions the dioceses of Tamale, Navrongo and Wa. Together they form the ecclesiastical province of Ghana and the national bishops conference, which formulates policies, consists of 8 members, presided over by the arch-bishop.

Each diocese is again divided into parishes, which in Ghana are rather districts with a central or main station and several, sometimes over 50 outstations or local communities scattered over a wide area around it. The parish priest is in charge of the parish and he is directly responsible to the bishop. Although at present we find branches of the Knights of Marshall in 24 parishes, divided over 5 dioceses, all bishops of Ghana are patrons of the Order. The contacts between the Knights and the hierarchy are mainly at the local level, with the parish priest or one of his assistants who is their chaplain, and with the bishop of the diocese in which the particular branch is situated.

4. Research Method:

Most of the data was gathered through interviews. After reading about voluntary associations in general I contacted the chaplain of Council No.17 in Winneba, who furnished me with a copy of the constitution, laws and regulations of the Knights, their manual and some other interesting documents. After studying this material a questionnaire was drawn up and an interview with the Grand Knight of the Winneba Council arranged. Apart from the information gathered from it this interview served to test the formulation and the relevance of the questions. During a stay in Kumasi I was introduced to the Chairman of Council No.3 and this resulted in an invitation to their annual banquet at the City Hotel, where I also met the Ladies of Marshall. Meanwhile the Supreme Knight had arranged a meeting with the Supreme Council at Sekondi. With the help of a questionnaire comprising 40 questions I had a five-hour discussion with six members of the Standing Committee of the Supreme Council. It was to be expected that they were subjective and wanted to present a bright picture of their organisation, but also some critical remarks were made especially by the youngest member (35) of the group, who

represents the more modern trend in the organisation as I learned later. In order to get more reliable information I asked for the annual reports, but up till now I have not received them.

Back in Legon I interviewed Knights of three different councils, partly according to the same questionnaire. In order to obtain a more objective view on the Knights of Marshall I asked the opinion of various priests and of a very authoritative outsider, the Past Grand President of all West African Commanderies of the Knights of St. John, the sister or rather the step-brother organisation. After this I had another talk with the Grand Knight to clarify certain points, especially about the more secret or mystical aspects of the Order. As the need for more exact information was felt, we decided to draw up a short questionnaire to be sent to all members, but no results are available yet. Taking into account the time-factor this seemed to be the only method possible.

II. THE KNIGHTS OF MARSHALL

1. Origin:

In 1925 a group of young Catholic men of St. Paul's Church, Sekondi joined together and resolved to found a 'purely Catholic, friendly society' in West Africa. Who first came up with the idea and who furnished them with a copy of the constitution of the Knights of Columbus in America, history does not tell. Maybe their parish priest, but being Dutch it is not likely that he was familiar with this Catholic society in the U.S.A. Anyhow the Knights of Marshall are a copy of the Knights of Columbus, the initiation, order of meeting and even the rites are the same, according to insiders. The constitution, however, was adapted to the Ghanaian circumstances, but no substantial changes were made.

On several occasions the Marshalls tried to affiliate with the Knights of Columbus, but they could never guarantee that all members were practising Catholics, because several

were and still are living in polygamy. At the start half of the founders were not properly married. Today they feel strong enough and are proud to be a purely African organisation, having branches in Ghana and Togo.

The founders named their organisation after Sir James Marshall, a former Anglican minister and one of the prominent Catholic converts of nineteenth century England, who came to the Gold Coast in 1873 as 'chief magistrate and judicial assessor to the native tribes in the Gold Coast' and resided in Cape Coast. At that time there were no Catholic missionaries working in the Gold Coast. As a result of Marshall's endeavours the first two missionaries - French members of the Lyons Society for African Missions - landed at Elmina in 1880. As catholicism came with Columbus to America, in the same way the name of Sir James Marshall is connected with the coming of the Catholic Church to Ghana. In 1925, not yet half a century later, the Catholic Church with some 40,000 members was smaller than any of the three major Protestant denominations, and with some 80 schools and no Teacher Training College or Secondary School far behind in the educational field. Three, out of the founding group of thirteen, did not receive any formal education. Of the remaining ten, seven were educated at the Catholic School in Elmina and only one of them, also from Elmina, received secondary education at St. Gregory's Grammar School in Lagos, Nigeria. So the majority (8) of the group were Catholics from Elmina, who still pride themselves on the fact that they are the cradle of the Catholic Church in Ghana. Of the remaining five, only two were from Sekondi and the others from Shama, Cape Coast and Togo. Today the Catholics from Elmina still form a cohesive and rather exclusive group within the Catholic community of Sekondi.

Thus at the start the 'home-town' element was there, but the other members were there to demonstrate that it was not meant to be some sort of a tribal union. The 'historiographer' of the Supreme Council gave as reasons for starting the Knights that there was no society for the intelligentsia in the church. And he continued: "In 1882 a priest in the U.S.A. formed such a society which admitted only Catholics and this was necessary, because the educated Catholics drifted

away to the Freemasons and the Odd Fellows. This was also the case in the Gold Coast, because there were no Catholic schools". Indeed Freemasonry and all sorts of Lodges had been springing up in the Gold Coast since the 1870s according to Kimble and there is reason to believe that the educated young Catholics felt sharply that they were lagging behind, because they were not allowed to join these forbidden societies (1963:147-148). By the 18th of November 1926 preparations were so far advanced that the first council of the Knights of Marshall was opened at Sekondi. Three years later The Order received the episcopal approval of the bishop of Cape Coast.

2. Nature and Structure:

a) Nature

In Chapter 1 of the constitution we read: "The Order of the Knights of Marshall is not a Confraternity, but a Catholic, Friendly Society, based on a footing similar to the one adopted by the Knights of Columbus in America and ruled by laws and regulations duly approved by the ecclesiastical authorities". In connection with this I asked the Supreme Council: "Does 'Catholic, Friendly Society' indicate that the Order is more than a pious society like the Sacred Heart Confraternity and wants to play a social role?" In their answer they stressed that they were not a confraternity nor a pious society, and they compared their Order with the Katolik Mboa Kuw, ('help society'), which was founded in 1930 and was open to literates and illiterates equally. The Mboa Kuw follows also a ritual at the meetings and it is mainly a funeral society. By bringing up this comparison they indirectly showed me that they did not play much of a social role. This social aspect I considered so important that I questioned the Supreme Council and others further about it, but the results I leave till the evaluation under another heading.

b) Structure

"The Order of the Knights of Marshall shall be composed

of branches called 'councils'. Each council under the constitution is autonomous, electing its own executive", states father Menyah in his short historical sketch of the Knights of Marshall in 1948. In the same sketch it is emphasized that the Knights are an independent organisation. As it was written in the period of mounting nationalism also within the church, this document probably reflects the spirit of the time and gives us a clue to the post-war role of the Order. In the amended constitution of 1958 the terms 'autonomous' and 'independent' are not found. In fact each council chooses its own executive, and has the power to vote concerning the following: admission of new members; rejection of candidates; expulsion of members adjudged guilty; purchase or sale of an estate or building, or the erection or demolition of any such buildings; use of major capital belonging to the council for the good of the Order, and the deposition of Grand Knights before the expiration of their term of office. This is next to complete autonomy and all my informants stated that each council is financially autonomous. The total of fourteen offices is in keeping with what is often considered to be a typical phenomenon of voluntary associations in changing societies.

The council is ruled by the Grand Knight. He is the leader. He, and in his absence, his deputy, presides over the meeting. The reporting and the correspondence are the task of the secretary and his assistant. The finances are the domain of the treasurer, the financial secretary and the auditor. The chaplain is the spiritual adviser. He lectures on religious matters, leads the council in prayer and administers the oaths of the Order to the members. The captain of the sentinels is in charge of the council-chamber, the great ideal of every council is to have its own temple! He puts everything in readiness for the meetings, including on special occasions refreshments. The captain and his sentinels challenge all members before they enter the council-hall and receive the pass-word. The task of the reader and lecturer is very important, as he must instruct the new members, prepare the members for the higher degrees and teach the mystical course. This should require a special training. In fact most of them just hold the office, but never actually function. The office of collector of church-dues needs no explanation, neither that

of organist, although most councils do without it. The office of reporter, to-day they speak of chief propagandist, is not defined in the constitution, but his task is to promote the Order.

A sign that the level of education has gone up are the newly created offices for certain professionals such as the office of 'physician' for a medical member or 'advocate' for a lawyer. Being specialists in their field the members can approach them for professional assistance. All officers are elected for one year, but may be re-elected on the recommendation of the 'cabinet', a selection committee comprising the Grand Knight, Grand Adviser, the Immediate Past Grand Knight and the Advisory Board. Only the promotion of the Deputy Grand Knight to the seat of Grand Knight is automatic. After his term of office the Grand Knight receives the honorary title of Past Grand Knight, after that he climbs to Deputy Grand Adviser, Grand Adviser and Past Grand Adviser, the highest title within the council. As an experienced Knight his advice is regularly asked.

In 24 towns in Ghana, as well as in two towns in Togo, there are such councils, some are flourishing, especially in the large towns. Others, particularly those in rural towns, are on the point of dying out, mainly because they lack qualified men to hold the offices. Above these 26 councils is the Supreme Council as the governing body of the Order of the Knights of Marshall. To the Supreme Council belong: all foundation members, non-foundation members holding 'supreme offices' and two high ranking officers elected from each council. The Supreme Council meeting is held annually, formerly in Sekondi, nowadays they rotate. Last year's meeting, at which 100 members were present, was held in Legon. The Supreme Council has legislative and disciplinary powers, and acts as a court of appeal for members of the councils. In theory its powers are impressive: "Supreme Council has full power and authority to adopt and promulgate prescriptions or formulate new laws....", but in practice the exercise of its power depends on the co-operation of the local officers, because the councils are autonomous. The officers of the Supreme Council together with the Supreme Council members residing in Sekondi form the Standing Committee of 24, which

"shall meet to deal with any business received by the supreme secretary". The most important man is the Supreme Knight, who is the President of the Supreme Council. He deals with and has authority over all councils of the Order. He, too, has a deputy who is automatically promoted to the office of Supreme Knight. First in rank are the Supreme Director, to be compared with the Grand Adviser at the local level, and his deputy, but their task is more concerned with directing the affairs of the Order, admonishing and stimulating the brothers, and presenting the degrees, certificates and jewels to meritorious members. Also the other offices can be compared to the respective offices at the local level.

3. Objectives:

The original aim was rather negative: to prevent young Catholics from joining Freemasons and 'Odd Fellows'. Or as Flawoo has it: "The immediate purpose in each congregation is to group together prominent Catholic gentlemen and to give them an association similar in structure to the 'Odd Fellows' and masonic Lodges forbidden by the Roman Catholic Church" (1959:94). The constitution gives as chief aim of the Order: "Fostering of fraternal Catholic spirit among its members, furtherance of Catholic education and charity". To this the charter adds: "Helping those who are in distress; assuming responsibility of seeing that fellow brothers are attended by a priest in time of illness; undertaking the funeral arrangements for a deceased member according to the prescriptions of the Order; succouring the widows and orphans by giving material assistance; and giving mutual assistance to its members". So the Order has the elements of a brotherhood, a social club, a funeral society, a help and mutual aid society, and it is also a charitable society. I have tried hard to find out which objectives were the most important in practice. As was to be expected at the meeting with the Supreme Council the spiritual or religious aim was considered primary. The Supreme Knight strongly emphasized the brotherhood of men and he continued: "Love is the fountain of all and must imbue everything". In inquiring after the motives for joining, however, I got quite a different picture.

4. Membership:a) Motives:

Of course there are plenty of motives for people to join the Knights. They feel at home, because they are at a brotherly meeting. They expect help (loans!). They gain spiritually and materially, but probably the latter appeals more. They improve their social position. One said: "I found my former friends to be socially advanced. I wanted to be with their class". Another remarked: "It is striking to see that so many Knights make progress in life, they drive in big cars etc...." According to another informant his first contact with the Knights of Marshall was at the burial of a colleague, who was a Knight. The Knights' burial ritual attracted him and he too wanted to be sure of a fine burial. Next to the religious motive of advancing one's religious knowledge, of knowing the Catholic religion better, there is in all the informants the social motive of friendliness and brotherhood, of knowing far more people, of getting more social contacts and standing. "We feel as a Catholic elite", one said, but only in the material sense, added another, because the majority of members do not improve their lives as Christians and look for the material benefits.

b) Norms:

The constitution states that "all literate male Catholics between the ages of 21 and 45 years, who are practising Catholics and who have not had previous conviction for felonious act, shall be eligible for membership".

(1) Literates:

According to Little (1965:4), a literate person is one who has attended school for a number of years, but without necessarily completing his education at secondary school or its equivalent. As I said before, three of the founders in 1926 had no formal education. Probably they

spoke some English and were at the utmost semi-literates. Only one of the founding members completed secondary school and because of this was an educated person according to Little's classification. With the development of education in Ghana this has changed considerably. The supreme secretary estimates that at present 50% of the Knights received only primary education, so are literates. Another 20% completed secondary school or its equivalent (Teacher Training). The remaining 30% completed university. As there are no statistics available, verification could only be based on a few samples. After ample investigation I would say that some 10% are graduates, e.g. Kumasi Council has only six graduates out of a total of over 200 members. In the coastal towns this percentage will be higher, due to a longer tradition of Catholic education, but 30% is definitely too high. The supreme secretary in more respects tended to be optimistic. According to him the Order had 2600 members. In a second interview with the Supreme Knight, however, this lowered to 2,000, which is probably fairly correct, if we include the delinquent members, who lose their benefits because of non-payment, but are not suspended. One informant estimated: 1,000 active members is the maximum. Samples of the regular attendance confirm this: In Winneba 18 to 20 out of 32 members attend regularly; in the collapsing Konongo Council only 12 out of 50; in Kumasi 40 to 50 out of over 200 at ordinary councils and 120 to 150 at ceremonial councils on the occasion of the installation of new members or new officers. This is consistent with the motives of many members. The degree of literacy has increased considerably and the fact that English is used throughout the meetings and in the reports causes little difficulty, although a secretary, who received only primary education, is not well equipped to correspond and report in English. They just do not answer letters, which makes communication with the Supreme Council practically impossible. The Supreme Council stressed that study is one of the aspects of the Knights and therefore they consider the use of English as a means of improving their English especially for those who received only primary education.

(ii) Practising Catholics:

This is the crucial norm. A practising Catholic is

obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. If you are not married in church, because you have more than one wife, you are excluded from the sacraments. As Christian marriage has from the start been the stumbling block, the application or manipulation of this norm has played the greatest part in the history of the Knights. As was said earlier, they could not affiliate with the Knights of Columbus, because not all members were communicants. At the start 50% of the founding members were not communicants, because they had not 'performed' Christian marriage. Their 'theology' was based on the parable of the prodigal son. We are not a club of saints, but we allow sinners in so as to convert them and to encourage them to regulate their marriage, is their reasoning. At first the clergy were lenient with them; moreover from 1926 to 1936 the Knights were only in Sekondi. So it was a local affair. When Council No.2 in Saltpond was opened in 1936, the trouble started. The Knights of Marshall were cried down as polygamists and indeed most of the founders and original members did have two, or three wives. The clergy feared that the Marshalls were using Freemasonic books. Moreover the new English Bishop of Cape Coast was against secret societies and had started his Catholic Young Men's Society, just for religious instruction and entertainment, but there was nothing secret about it. As the Catholic men were not interested in just a society, but in a secret society, a new secret society was started in Saltpond: the Knights of St. John, in 1937.

This was a frontal attack on the Marshalls, because the number of properly married Catholics was very limited. There was no place for two such societies. The new Catholic secret society was semi-military. They were strict in applying the rule that you have to be a communicant and consequently a member taking a second wife was expelled. As the Marshalls accepted expelled members from the Knights of St. John the strife between them grew worse. So there is no ostracism on the part of the Marshalls, a normal practice between similar voluntary associations according to Little. Until recently the atmosphere has been icy and now the relations are still uneasy.

The Knights of St. John lay far more stress on the religious aspect. Practically all activities are religious and once a month there is a general Holy Communion for all Knights. Their propaganda is that they are better Catholics, which entails the danger of pharisaism!

The bishop of Cape Coast, "fearing it might share the fate of other well-intentioned organisations within the vicariate through mismanagement and other causes", did not give the Knights of St. John permission for extension till 1943. Keeping strictly to the norm of being communicants has hampered the Johns in their expansion. At present there are 12 commanderies with 1,000 members altogether. Also the social level is lower, as 'most of them are small boys without influential jobs', according to the Past Grand President of the West African Commanderies of the Knights of St. John. It is interesting to note that the Marshalls took the challenge and started three other councils in the years 1936-1937 in Kumasi, Keta and Lome. In the forties eight new councils were started, but in the fifties only one, which is significant. According to the Supreme Knight this was due to the role the Marshalls played in the Kumasi-church fight over the new bishop in 1951. A group of Ashanti-Catholics wanted an Ashanti-priest as a bishop, but Rome appointed a Dutchman. The Marshalls, mostly Ashantis, opposed the new bishop and received him with stones etc., while the Johns supported him. It is to be noted that the Fantis formed a strong and influential part of the Catholic community in Kumasi, so that it ran also along tribal lines. Because of their attitude towards the bishop the Marshalls were called bad Catholics, polygamists etc. The fight became rough: the chaplain of St. John was stabbed in the back, the dissidents came with cutlasses to the cathedral, burnt the bishop's throne and broke his staff, and this went on for years, although the group was in the minority. Obviously this caused blame to be thrown on the Marshalls, as they were associated with it, and it was only in the sixties that the Order expanded further with 11 new councils. According to the Supreme Council this new growth is mainly due to the fact that they are stricter on the point of admitting non-communicants. This observation is not exact, as six councils were started before a resolution on this point was passed at the annual meeting in April 1965. The resolution was not

carried out, because a letter to all brother-chaplains, dated 18 May 1966, stated: "The Supreme Council learned with much dismay the branding of the Noble Order as a society of non-communicants, polygamists etc. In some circles of the church, and as a result the Noble Order would not allow its honour and prestige to be put into disrepute. Therefore the Supreme Council resolved that: 1) No more non-communicants are to be admitted into the Order. 2) All non-communicants within the Noble Order are given a year from now to become communicants. Expel non-communicants from 1st April 1966". This severe stand is meant to improve the "church" quality of the members and the Supreme Council is convinced, at least the six members I met, that they are following the right policy. In the meantime there are still many non-communicants in the Order. In Kumasi 20%, and in Konongo the majority are non-communicants. Many councils, especially in Ashanti and the Volta Region, cannot promise to amend. Some informants assured me that the majority of the members do not agree with the Supreme Council and are in favour of removing the clause about communicants. When a speaker at the annual banquet of the Knights in Kumasi raised this problem and challenged the Supreme Knight to change this rule, the bishop of Kumasi rose to declare that he squarely backed the speaker. So the issue is still open.

(iii) Financial Bar:

The factor of literacy and the norm of being a communicant already exclude a lot of possible members. Moreover the financial side excludes all the lower income bracket as the initiation fees, regalia and black suit together come to N200.

5. Spiritual Aspects:

From the objectives we know that priority is given to the spiritual side, but how is this realized? To my rather general question: "In what way has the task and role of the Order changed in the course of time?" The youngest (35) of the six Supreme Council members - the others were

between 50 and 60 years, answered that only in 1969 the Knights reviewed their position and decided, inspired by the documents of Vatican II, to promote new ideas in the church and in public life. To my last question: 'Will the spiritual or the social role prevail in the future?' They answered: 'the spiritual role will prevail', but no reasons were given. In fact they were not able to give much content to this spiritual role. Their answer seems to explain the fact that during the interview they repeatedly emphasized their loyalty to the hierarchy. They want to remain a church-organisation, although outsiders (and insiders) criticize them as just being a friendly society.

Asked about the topics of the lectures my informants answered that the topics were mostly religious. Moreover the rituals are spiritual and also the symbols they use. In connection with the religious topics they study psychology, as they are interested in "the working of the mind and in the mind forces". Some of the books they use were shown to me, but judging from the titles they had more to do with religion than with psychology. The Supreme Knight assured me that their interest in psychology had nothing to do with magnetism or hypnoticism. Yet in the Winneba council a lecture was given on 'mental magic'. Continuing on this track I wanted to know more about the spiritual training, the degree work and the mystical courses of the higher degrees.

Altogether there are 20 degrees, of which the degrees one to ten form the initiation and consequently are obligatory for everybody. From the short contents of the first six degrees I gathered that they are a training in asceticism along the orthodox lines: mind - and will training. The aspirant starts by studying the constitution and "everything about the Lodge". Moreover he is taught to speak English properly. Further he has to learn the catechism and some important facts about the history of the church.

Asked about the results, the Supreme Knight answered: "All depends on the standards in the area". The supreme lecturer is at the head of the educational section and it is his task to prepare a course and to give lectures in the different councils. Being headmaster of a secondary school

he, however, cannot devote much time to his task in the Order. In fact the spiritual training for the greater part depends on the enthusiasm of the chaplains. For a long time, however, the relations with the clergy have been strained. At present some chaplains are enthusiastic and try to make the best of it, others are not interested or even negative. Moreover successful guidance in these matters is hardly possible without personal counselling.

On the subject of the mystical courses my informants were rather reticent. The degrees 11 to 20 are divided into four classes. On promotion to a higher class the successful knight is awarded a jewel, which is shown on his regalia (a grey or velvet collar). Special-feats are required to be promoted. The lecturer has a key post, next to the chaplain, but outside the major towns there are no good lecturers. According to an informant the lecturers have failed to lead the new members through the degree courses. They are elected in name, but most of them never function, because they have not been trained for their task. Perhaps this opinion is too pessimistic, but I am inclined to support it. Practically all priests I met complained: "too much show, outwardness. Most members do not improve at all and the good ones were good and active in the parish before they joined the Marshalls". Maybe their spiritual ideals are far too high and ambitious. Anyway nobody wished to confirm that the Marshalls form a Catholic elite in the spiritual sense. If we look at the material aspects, this might become clearer.

6. Material Aspects:

As the material side is very often the most important in voluntary associations, I paid special attention to these chapters in the constitution. As noted above the aspiring member must have a certain financial basis, as the initiation fees amount to N£50, the regalia with 200% import tax N£50 and a black suit N£100. So including the initiation banquet which is paid by the Initiates it comes to more than N£200. Obviously these financial obligations bar many people. The contributions, monthly and yearly dues amounted to £2.1 in 1958 and have gone up considerably since. At present the

members of the Kumasi Council pay N£16 per annum in dues only. Besides this they frequently make voluntary contributions to all sorts of causes: e.g. a new throne for the bishop of Sekondi-Takoradi; for a new bishop's house in the same town N£2,000; for a Nigerian member in want N£40; for medicine for a sick member N£24. A report in The Standard, March 28, 1971 states that the Kumasi Council realized an amount of N£1,200.00 in aid of a Catholic press for the Ashanti diocese. Whereas the Knights of St. John seldom make voluntary contributions, the Marshalls collect far more money than the Johns, says their Past Grand President. One informant noted that this is going so far that the greater part of the monthly meeting is devoted to reports, financial statements and the payment of dues.

The mutual help between the members is substantial and for instance the monthly sick allowance is far higher than the ten shillings indicated in the constitution. "We collect what is needed, they say, and individually the Knights are very generous". There is also a considerable after-life benefit and a monthly allowance for the widow and for each child for one year after the death of the Knight. Each council is free to increase the amounts indicated in the constitution. Furthermore, the Knights are requested to deposit money in the Knights of Marshall's Savings Bank and to contribute to the Trust Fund. These two institutions are to be kept separately from the monthly dues and the other taxes of the Order. The Savings Bank gives loans to members of that branch only, and only after they have deposited N£100 in monthly shares. The invested savings in the Trust Fund are to be paid to his next of kin as mentioned by the deceased member in his after-life benefit form. When a member is in "just and honest financial trouble" he may apply for a loan from the Trust Fund. The constitution, in the chapter about the Trust Fund, states: "It shall be compulsory that all members of councils shall contribute towards the K.M.T.F. not only for the good of the society, but also to offer an ample opportunity to each and all for raising fairly big loans to meet unforeseen emergency cases and also for the benefit of their children, family or the next of kin after their decease in accordance". However, as the councils are autonomous it is up to each council to start their own Savings Bank and Trust Fund. In fact some councils

have not started yet. In my opinion these financial branches are not everywhere well developed at all! In Konongo, Kumasi and Winneba they have neither Savings Bank nor Trust Fund, and in Accra these institutions are not working properly. In Konongo they are trying a new scheme of contributing 50Np. monthly. In Kumasi they decided to join the Government shares and loans scheme so as to increase their funds. I agree with the Supreme Council that the Knights of Marshall do not form a financial power. 'We have, they say, some money to keep us going and the members are always willing to contribute, if we make an appeal to them'. Several reasons for this shaky financial position can be given. First of all the councils prefer to manage their own finances and accept no control from the Supreme Council. A historical ground for distrust could be that in the thirties the Sekondi Council was branded for its financial mismanagement. There was the notorious case of a founder-knight who went on a fund raising tour through Nigeria for the first Catholic Secondary School in the Gold Coast, but back home he could not answer for the money. Because of the financial autonomy several councils are in debt at present. Loans are quickly asked for, but not always refunded. If a council gives a loan of N£150 to a brother-knight involved in a court-case to bail him out, but he fails to pay it back, such a council may forfeit all its yearly dues. In the constitution precise precautions are laid down as regards loans. In theory only partakers in the Savings Bank and Trust Fund can get loans, but in practice it is different, because a brother-knight in want must be helped. In some councils the treasurer does not give loans, but individual members give loans to brother-knights. We may suppose that these money lenders are careful enough to inquire first and they won't lend to a delinquent member who is months in arrears with his dues. Anyway, not to refund a loan is a stain on one's knighthood. What I gathered from my information was confirmed by the Supreme Council: "the economic or financial aspect of the Order has become more predominant". There are signs in the Order that the material side will be emphasized even more in the future. A speaker at the annual banquet of the Accra council urged the Supreme Council to speed up its new financial plans and he drew the attention of his audience to the formidable financial power of the Knights of Columbus in America.

7. Its Functioning as a Voluntary Association

From what has been said so far one can gather that the Knights of Marshall function as a Voluntary Association at different levels. So we can be brief on this.

a) For Its Members:

The most striking feature of this organisation is its brotherhood. The Knights are brothers and always and everywhere they help each other, not only on the local, but also on the national level. When visiting another town, a Knight contacts the local council and is allowed to join their meetings. Besides this brotherly love and solidarity, a sign that voluntary associations may serve many of the same needs as a kingroup or lineage, there is the educational aspect. We mentioned the improvement of English, the study of the Catholic religion and the obtaining of some more general knowledge. The multiplicity of offices offers the opportunity to acquire new skills very useful in a changing society, such as the running of a group, ways of conducting a meeting, processes of recording and voting, and speaking in public. All this can help the members to improve their social position, but the older Knights assist the junior brother also in a more direct way by helping him into employment. If two men apply for a post, the brother-knight is given preference. The secret signs and grips, only known to the brother-knights may be very useful in certain situations, for instance, to contact the judge in court!

The Order offers a Knight the opportunity of widening his personal contacts, and as we have seen, better social contacts are a strong motive for joining. At the annual banquet, at social evenings, outings and picnics, together with the Ladies of Marshall, and not to forget at occasional funerals, plenty of social contacts are offered. The Knights and their Ladies, organized in much the same way, form a social club. So an ambitious young Knight can build up a network of communications. More material are the mutual help, the loans and the assistance in a court case, in sickness and financial need. In case of death there remain the funeral ritual and the after-life benefits. In connection with this

I asked: Have the Knights of Marshall helped to form a Catholic elite? Since the concept is ambiguous in the literature about urbanization I had some difficulty in bringing home to my informants what I meant by an 'elite'. Following Little's concept of an African elite I looked for: persons in senior ranks of Administration as ministers, party leaders, top civil servants; persons in professional occupations as doctors, lawyers, university teachers, heads of important secondary schools; holders of traditional titles, and fourthly prosperous businessmen. Indeed some Knights are in high social positions and in this respect they have been far more successful than the Johns. Of the six members of the Supreme Council I met, four were businessmen, of whom at least one was very prosperous, and the other two a doctor and a senior customs officer. One of the members of the Kumasi Council is the holder of a traditional title. The Winneba Council, as is to be expected, consists almost entirely of teachers. Among the Knights in Sekondi are two barkeepers and even a taxi driver, which might be an indication of the economic possibilities of these occupations. Many Knights belong to the socio-economic top level of the church. Whatever they understand by 'elite', the Knights think they have helped to form a Catholic 'elite'. They say: 'We are an 'elite'. We are the strongest, best organised society within the Catholic 'elite'. People take us to be the 'elite' etc...' Commenting on this, one Knight said: 'We are an 'elite' only in the material sense, because we think we are big men'. The Supreme Knight put it like this: 'We have reached a standard, superior to other organisations. When people come to a certain standard, they want to belong to that class, to the 'elite''. Anyhow the Knights enjoy prestige within the Catholic community and by that attract the social climber.

b) Within the Church:

Considering yourself the Catholic 'elite' implies that you play or wish to play a role within the church. If the church were only a spiritual community their role would be very limited, although all informants stress that the spiritual role will prevail over the social one in the future.

but this is more of an ideal or wishful thinking, than is in accordance with the facts. They function in special festive church ceremonies as an escort or guard of honour and they seem very attached to this ceremonial task. They are inward-looking and think only of their own spiritual well being. At present there is a slow change in outlook, but this is really a tug of war, since the majority of the Supreme Council are very conservative and advanced in age. As I said, a more progressive stream is at work and as a consequence the Knights reviewed their position and in 1969 decided, inspired by the documents of Vatican II, to promote new ideas within the church and in public life. The effects of the change are not yet perceptible and up till now their functioning within the church has been mainly in the material sphere, in the form of frequently large donations. Furthermore Knights are on the Boards of Governors of Catholic Schools, they are chairmen at the church harvests, chairmen of the church committees etc. The Knights are encouraged to take responsible posts within the church. The Supreme Knight is also national president of the Vincent de Paul Society, a Catholic charitable organisation. Many Knights belong to other Catholic associations, but a Knight of Marshall cannot at the same time belong to the Knights of St. John. Knights feel confident in the forefront, but many are not well equipped for leadership. Their influence on the hierarchy is not felt, although they sometimes go to the bishop with a request or complaint. Obviously the bishops are pleased with the material contribution the Knights make to the church. More leadership training is necessary, if they wish to play a greater spiritual role in the future.

c) Within Society:

The Knights are a strictly non-political organisation. No party politics is discussed inside the meeting place, although they know that brother knights belong to different political parties and so are divided over political issues. Sometimes tribal and political differences overrule the brotherhood, as in Kumasi in the fifties between the Fantis and the Ashantis. No lectures on political issues are given and seldom on actual problems. I took the cholera epidemic as an example. Only in

the Supreme Council was a lecture on the disease and its treatment given, but absolutely no evaluation of the government policy and the cholera campaign. There are plans for lectures on more contemporary topics, but so far they have not materialized. Moreover the discussion of current issues does not fit into the order of the meetings, because they follow rituals. In various conflicts in the past between Church and State the Knights supported the Catholic view and sent protest telegrams to Parliament. In the past the Knights operated practically within the church only! Or in their own words within the church the Knights work as a body and outside the church as individuals. The Knights are members of different professional and tribal associations, e.g. the Ewe union, the teachers union, credit unions, and youth associations. All informants agreed that the Knights did not play a social role worth mentioning within society. It is only now that some have begun to think about the task of the Catholic layman in the modern world. This definitely means something other than helping each other to climb the social ladder.

III. Conclusions

The Knights of Marshall form an indigenous voluntary association, at least as far as the name they chose which is connected with the history of the Gold Coast goes. It was founded by Ghanaians. There was no expatriate, not even a missionary, among the founding members. In fact the role and position of the chaplain was for a long time vague and uncertain. The suspicions and aversion straining the relations between the clergy and the Order show that the Knights of Marshall were never controlled by the clergy. Yet it is a modern association, since it has been modelled on the constitution of the Knights of Columbus in the United States of America. The association has functioned and functions still in the process of social change for a growing number of Catholics. It helps its members, in order of priority, materially, socially, educationally and religiously. The significance of the Knights of Marshall as a voluntary association in a changing society is much the same as that

of societies like the Odd Fellows, Freemasons and other Lodges, which all give priority to the interests of their members. The sense of brotherhood is very strong and affects the social and everyday life of the members. The association is multifunctional, but not all functions operate in each council in the same way. The Knights give considerable, material support to the church, but, although there are outstanding Christians among them, their spiritual contribution remains questionable. Notwithstanding deficiencies due to lack of leadership and spiritual guidance the Order has played its part for nearly half a century and this inspires confidence that the Knights of Marshall will prosper in the future.

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