

# LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

Edited by:

Svend E. Holsoe,  
University of Delaware

David M. Foley,  
University of Georgia

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Cover Photograph: Honorable S. Jangaba M. Johnson.

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## HONORABLE S. JANGABA M. JOHNSON: LIBERIAN ETHNOGRAPHER

Warren L. d'Azevedo

Many of those who have carried out ethnographic and historical research in Liberia since the 1950s have come to know and admire S. Jangaba M. Johnson for his role in furthering the study of the numerous indigenous cultures of his country and for the value of his own pioneering works. As one of the first and foremost ethnographers of Liberia, his accomplishments are all the more remarkable in view of the fact that he is largely self-trained. Born of Vai parents at Monrovia in 1895, he received his early schooling at missions in Sierra Leone. Returning to Liberia in 1923, he taught at mission schools in Pokpaa and Robertsport until 1934. From 1935 to 1951 he served in various government administrative capacities throughout the interior regions of Liberia. It is to this latter experience that he attributes his deep interest in culture history and ethnography, fields in which he was later to make important contributions.

During this earlier phase of his life there were few if any incentives or encouragements for individuals to pursue a career of independent scholarship, and what little was known about Liberia and its peoples had been written mainly by foreign observers. Prior to the mid-twentieth century Liberia constituted one of the least known ethnographic areas of West Africa. Though considerable research had been carried out in surrounding territories controlled by the British and French, less than a score of published works by European and American writers provided any but the most minimal knowledge about Liberian society and culture. With a few notable exceptions these writings were based upon little or no first-hand observation of local cultures and were often permeated with chauvinistic biases that repel the modern reader and cast doubts upon reliability. Significant works by Liberians such as the brilliant Edward Wilmot Blyden, the explorer Benjamin K. Anderson, and the historian Abayomi Karnga were for the most part ignored or unknown. The Republic of Liberia, involved as it was in the arduous tasks of state formation and the rigorous defense of its existence as the lone independent nation on the west coast of Africa, had little inclination to divert any but negligible resources into education or research. Its few scholars were trained abroad and pursued their later studies with little recognition or support, while foreign scholars were attracted to areas of Africa where specialized research had been stimulated by the needs of European colonial administrations and where facilities and other inducements obtained.



Honorable S. Jangaba M. Johnson

Since the 1950s, however, there has been a remarkable increase of interest in Liberian ethnography as well as in other aspects of political, historical and economic research on the part of European and American students. In the United States, alone, where the paucity of earlier study of Liberia is a curious fact in view of a long history of close association, the number of scholars who have carried out scientific field study in Liberia has increased from scarcely a handful twenty years ago to hundreds today. Over the past two decades there has been more systematic study of Liberian culture than in the entire previous one hundred years or more of its national existence. The rapid accumulation of knowledge about the region has progressed to the point where Liberia, rather than being an enigma on the western coast, emerges as one of the more complex and intriguing resources for the understanding of African society and culture.

Insofar as most of the research conducted in Liberia has been carried out by European or American investigators, there has been a tendency in the published commentary to overlook the crucial role that has been played by Liberian scholars and administrators. The rapid development of research by foreigners in the country has been attributed to the belated awareness of the importance of Africa in world affairs after the Second World War, and to the tardy recognition by Americans of the unique potentiality of Liberia as an effective friend and patron on the continent. It would be naive to suppose that the new resources that became available to research, and this timely reorientation of scientific concerns, were not affected by such considerations. At the same time, it is equally misleading to ignore the conditions in Liberia which provided a new climate of encouragement to investigation for both Liberians and foreigners.

In the 1940s and 1950s Liberians, responding to the stimulus of the new "open door" and "unification" policies of the late President W.V.S. Tubman, began to recognize the urgent need for improved knowledge of their own country and its people. An important and unprecedented step in this direction was the creation by the President of a Bureau of Folkways within the Department of Interior. This Bureau was transferred to the new Ministry of Information in 1962. Though its staff was small and its operations inadequately financed, it constituted the first government sponsored vehicle for cultural liason among disparate sectors of Liberian society and for the facilitation of study by visiting scholars. Moreover, it provided an official position and some support to a few individuals, among whom were two or three from tribal backgrounds, whose experience and abilities could now be directed in part to cultural studies and investigation.

In 1952 S. Jangaba M. Johnson was appointed Administrative Assistant and Research Officer to the new Bureau. During the following few years--together with Bai T. Moore, the late Oscar Norman and others--he initiated some of the first systematic studies of tribal cultures by Liberians. Much of this work antedated the more recent resurgence of research interest in Liberia on the part of foreign (and, particularly, American) social scientists. In 1954 he completed the research and writing of the first major monograph published by the Bureau (Traditional History, Customary Laws, Mores, Folkways and Legends of the Vai Tribe). He also contributed a section to the second publication of the Bureau which was a work

on the De people by Bai T. Moore (The Tribes of the Western Province and the Denwoin People, 1955). The results of his field study of groups in southeastern Liberia were presented in 1957 (Traditional History and Folklore of the Glebo Tribe), and in 1961 his two-volume work on the Gola appeared (Traditional History and Folklore of the Gola Tribe in Liberia). Unfortunately, due to Bureau policy at the time, the actual authors of monographs were not credited in publication. It is hoped that in future re-publications authorship will be noted so that these scholars can be identified by their colleagues at home and abroad.

These works are invaluable contributions to Liberian ethnography and ethno-history, and their importance must increase as time passes. They are written by an observer with intimate first-hand knowledge of the people and whose status in tribal cultural associations is such that he has received a respect and cooperation from them that would be accorded few other investigators. Much of the material which he has been able to collect would be difficult to elicit today due to the rapid economic and social changes that are taking place throughout Liberia, and the passing away of the generations that maintained detailed traditional knowledge. To western scholars the style and content of these studies may at times seem strange and reminiscent of a type of ethnographic reportage which has gone out of fashion. But those of us who have lived and worked among the people that he knows cannot but be struck by the rich and subtle resources of insight that his work contains. His access to the intricacies and meaning of custom and historical lore is profound, and much of the style and orientation of his writings derive from that of the elder native historians with whom he worked as well as from his own personal embeddedness in Liberian indigenous culture. In this sense his works are indispensable references for any ethnographer seeking to confirm and clarify his own observations.

Over the years S. Jangaba M. Johnson has written numerous articles and reports on other subjects including rare data on the Bele people, on archeological sites, on tribal history and cultural associations. When a government commission was formed to deal with the urgent problem of untangling the long-standing confusion in Liberian orthography for geographic place names and the identification of numerous obscure interior villages on the new air survey maps of the country, his vast experience proved to be an essential asset. Moreover, he has been (like his late esteemed colleague, the Honorable Zuki Kondokai of Jondu) a leading Liberian authority on the famous Vai script which he helped to standardize and which he used extensively in his research of Vai tradition and literature.

He has taken part in most of the crucial negotiations between government and tribal groups where matters of sacred tradition and indigenous rights were involved. In 1952, for example, he was acclaimed by leaders throughout the western interior, as well as by the government, for his masterful resolution of a serious Poro dispute between the Gola and the De peoples. He was praised for arranging an adjustment of grievances that had been the source of tension and disturbance for more than fifty years. At the same time he continued an active concern for the development of a new understanding between tribal and urban Liberians. In 1962--along with E. Reginald Townsend, former head of the Ministry of Information, and the



novelist and scholar Bai T. Moore--he conceived and helped to execute the plans for the new National Cultural Center in Monrovia. In 1967 he also took part in the formation of the Liberian Research Association, an event which was to stimulate the formation of an American counterpart (The Liberian Studies Conference) two years later. During this entire period of service he has given generously of his time and knowledge for the guidance and facilitation of research by young Liberians as well as many visiting scholars.

In 1972 Oldman Jangaba (a title of respect and affection among his friends and countrymen) was retired with honors from his long career with the Bureau of Folkways and the Ministry of Information. He was awarded a government pension by President William R. Tolbert Jr. and is entitled to wear the insignia of a Knight Official of the Star of African Redemption. The degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in the field of Social Anthropology was conferred upon him at the Commencement Convocation of the University of Liberia in December of 1973. His works, and those of other earlier Liberian scholars, are becoming known to a new and eagerly searching generation, and there has been a marked increase in emphasis on historical and ethnographic scholarship at the University of Liberia and other educational institutions in the country as more young people seek training in these fields. No small part of these developments must be attributed to the indefatigable and often unrewarded labours of men like Honorable S. Jangaba M. Johnson whose commitment to national unification and quest for new levels of understanding between the various cultural sectors of Liberian society has perservered through obstacles and discouragements that might have seemed insurmountable to others. It is gratifying that he is now beginning to receive the recognition long due him as a pioneer of Liberian ethnography and ethnohistory on the part of Liberians themselves. Retirement has provided him an opportunity to devote full time to the many scholarly projects he has planned in connection with his store of unpublished materials. The results are eagerly anticipated by all those for whom Liberia and its peoples are an abiding concern.



# PHOTOGRAMMETRY IN ARCHAEOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

Percy Tham

## INTRODUCTION

Aerial photographs have proved themselves to be an aid of great worth in archaeological research. The archaeologist trained in the interpretation of aerial photographs uses them to discover new sites, to identify and measure sites, and plan the work of excavation. Study of the surface traces which appear in the photographs enables him to make an intelligent appraisal of his project before setting foot on the ground. It is still rather rare, however, to find much application of photogrammetry in published materials. It is hoped that this account may be of interest.

It is a fact that ancient monuments and relics of the past have very much to tell us about the material and intellectual culture of a country. Advanced cultures of ancient times have vanished, wars have laid countries waste and destitution has followed in their wake. Monuments and relics do not vanish as fast, but the ravages of time will hide them gradually, until the human eye can no longer discern their existence. One reason for this is the fact that the survey view of a terrain will be lost to an eye looking from the ground. The logical bond, uniting different features on the ground, cannot be grasped.

Aerial photography provides the archaeologist with an important aid. The photograph is synonymous with the survey view that is lost from the ground. "The aerial photo sees all and does not forget anything" - this is a statement which clearly expresses the depth and the exactness of the photogrammetric image. This exactness may be illustrated by the fact that modern photogrammetric cameras in combination with first-rate aerial film will reproduce clearly enough an object 20 cm in size from a flight altitude of 1,000 metres. But the non-archaeologist, and even the amateur, has a chance to contribute to the discovery of the monuments and relics of the past.

1. This paper has been published by courtesy of LAMCO Joint Venture.

Especially the cartographer, generally well versed in the photogrammetric interpretation, will find features in his study of the terrain that will reveal themselves as unnatural or illogical. A close stereoscopic study using stereoscopes which highly magnify the details will often lead to the quite unexpected conclusion that the feature has an archaeological character.

This paper will deal with vanishing landmarks and some ancient relics in West Africa, in particular the native fortresses discovered during the construction period of LAMCO, the "Liberian American-Swedish Minerals Company", in a joint venture with Bethlehem Steel Corporation.

### LAMCO AND THE NEED FOR AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

When LAMCO had to face the need for an up-to-date mapping for the Nimba Mining Project, it was evident that the company had to consider a very important problem.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand it was obvious that the planning of the mine, the railway and the harbor must be based on aerial photography and mapping. On the other hand it was clear that the existing aerial map of Liberia, the American aerial mosaic based on aerial photographs taken in 1952-53, could be used only for the first outlines because it lacked a vertical control system. In order to save time, however, it was decided to start the planning by utilizing the existing American aerial material. Thus, at the end of 1956 the first map of the Nimba area was prepared by using photographs supplied by the United States Air Force. The required vertical control points were furnished by the Lamco geologists at Nimba by means of a barometric measurement. At the same time the laying out of the railway line, made by the SENTAB company in Stockholm as an interpretation study was pursued rapidly. This preliminary proposal for the railway line required up-to-date aerial photography. So, the first aerial photography was carried out in 1957 and the second in 1960 by Mapping Consultants Ltd., Stockholm.

In 1958, when it was decided that a more accurate mapping had to be undertaken, it was considered necessary to establish geodetic networks of such an order that an aerial mapping would give the accuracy needed even for large-scale maps. According to these plans, a first order geodetic network, called the Nimba Geodetic Network, was planned and included the total Nimba Concession Area and surroundings and it was carried out in 1958-59.

2. Percy Tham, "Vertical Parallaxes, Lens Distortion and Stereoscopic Model", Svensk Lantmäteritidskrift, III (1960), 2 - 24.

The next step was to connect the local Nimba network to the official map of Liberia, i.e. the co-ordinate system of the American aerial mosaics. The primary reason for this was the necessity to get the mapping areas of Nimba and Buchanan connected with the surrounding territory in the event that any measurements extended out of this area. It was also considered desirable to connect the areas because of the levelling system of the railway line connecting the two. When the connection problem was scrutinized it proved to be a complicated task. Only a few places identified on the American mosaics could be recognized on the Lamco photographs of 1957. So many changes had occurred that only the larger towns could be recognized. The only features well defined in both series of photographs were three places, one of which, Gbapa town, did not correspond to the others at all.

#### THE TWO TOWNS OF GBAPA

The town of Gbapa was well defined, but its location in the two editions of photographs did not correspond to each other. After analysis, this discrepancy of some 800 meters was explained. As a matter of fact Gbapa town had simply begun to move in 1953, which could be proved by a stereoscopic study of the pictures.<sup>3</sup> This fact was checked photogrammetrically in the following way. An excerpt of the American picture of 1953 showing Gbapa town and the corresponding picture of 1957, were brought to the same scale, and were studied stereoscopically together (Fig. 1). In this way, changes during the past four to five years could be studied closely. It was evident that the Gbapa town of 1953 had no obvious correspondence to the photography of 1957. However, the stereoscopic study revealed that a very small embryo of the New Gbapa town existed in 1953. Apparently the village authorities had decided to move the town because of the risk of its being inundated by the nearby river. It should be emphasized that the interpretative study of the 1957 photographs did not verify the existence of the Old Gbapa town.

An explanation of why the Old Gbapa town was moved, interesting not only from cartographic but also from a sociological viewpoint, was secured from a Liberian, Samuel Gbeyi. Gbeyi was the first Liberian employed by LAMCO, who entered the dense bush of the Nimba mountains.

The author spent a great deal of time with the town chiefs of the Nimba area and used Samuel Gbeyi as his interpreter. Samuel's father at that time was the town chief of the old Gbapa town. The author secured considerable information from Gbeyi, about

3. Percy Tham, "Photogrammetry in the Tropics", Svensk Lantmateritidskrift, III (1964), 519-522.

the move of the Old Gbapa town in 1953. His account has some historical interest:

"It was like this in the year 1952. Gbapa Old Town looked at that time very bad and the people had a hard time. 'How can we make our town prosper, because now people always go sick and our children are not happy in this town', said the former town chief Mr. Gbeyi and some other old men.

'Let me call some medicine man', said Chief Gbeyi, 'so he can tell us what to do with this town.' So, they sent for a medicine man who was a fortune-teller. The medicine man said, that if your people like to have your town prosper, they must move to a new town. 'There your town will grow up properly, and will be filled up with many strangers from different parts'.

Chief Gbeyi, the strong old man of Old Gbapa, told the people that he liked to move to the New Gbapa Town. 'The real reason why I like to move, it is because my father Mr. Lawo, and Mr. Yukpeyi, and Mr. Men-Kwiamie from Zain Town, near Lower Grassfield, these three old chiefs have already made arrangements for moving to the new town long ago. Therefore I agree to move in the New Gbapa Town', concluded old chief Gbeyi in his talk to the people of Gbapa.

And then, everybody of the Old Gbapa Town agreed and moved to the New Gbapa in the year of 1953. They said that because our old fathers have already made arrangements, let us move there, jointly and severally.

Samuel concludes, "Two things can break a town: number one is the war, and number two hard time.' But when people meet a hard time in a place they cannot move without the order of the medicine man who can judge what is bad and good."

#### TRADITIONAL TOWN FORTIFICATIONS

Photogrammetry's value to the archaeologist may be illustrated by its application to the study of fortified sites in Liberia. In order to guard against attack by raiding parties, many West Africans eschewed scattered homesteads in favor of towns where the population could be concentrated and defend itself more easily. The most important towns provide security not only for the inhabitants, but also served as a place of refuge in time of emergency for dwellers in the nearby "half-towns" who recognized the suzerainty of the paramount chief or king of these strongly fortified urban centers.

Two quite different types of town walls were utilized: (a) timber palisades or fences, and (b) walls constructed of mud or sun-dried clay. Photogrammetry is especially useful in studying such relics of the past.

In northern Kpelle country and adjacent regions, walls of sun-dried clay were dominant. The walls were made by piling up stiff, wet clay and pounding the sides and top to consolidate the mass as it dried and cracked.

It is probable that this idea was either introduced by the Mandingo or brought back by the people who had been to the sparsely wooded "Mandingo Plateau" to the northwest of Liberia where such defenses were the only sort that could be utilized. Remains of such walls are reported to have been found. According to statements made by old men, the Mano people living in what was formerly French territory first saw this sort of defence in Kpelle country and built similar ones around their own towns. Although the statement has been made that there were never moats around these Mano walled towns, the author had the impression when he visited and investigated the remains of the fortress on the Grassfield near the Lamco Sawmill that the distinct ditch around the wall was the remains of a moat.

It is stated that the best-preserved mud wall around Salayea in Kpelle country had a maximum height of eighteen feet. At the base it was five to six feet thick, and built in horizontal layers tapering gradually to a foot at the top. This was still well shielded from the rains by raffia-leaf thatch. After the wall surfaces dried, the cracks were filled with red clay and, after that, a heavy coating of white clay was applied and rubbed in, and was renewed from time to time.

The walls were plentifully supplied with loopholes about two and a half inches in diameter, for both downward and upward shooting. Living fences of thorny acacias, bombax, and other trees were planted at a distance of fifteen to twenty yards from the walls as a line of first defense.

#### DISCOVERY OF MANO FORTRESSES

Ring-shaped contours of more or less circular character have been discovered on the grassfields of the Nimba area and its surroundings by aerial photographs. Completely hidden by grass of one metre or more in height, such features of the terrain escape the eye on the ground.

The aerial photographs, however, studied in a stereoscopical way give a three-dimensional impression of all features in question and in this case of ring-shaped walls. They were walls around a settlement.

One of the three discovered walls was examined on the ground after a passage

had been cut through the high and very thick grass. In accordance with the photogrammetric interpretation an earth wall was found, about one to one and a half metres in height and three metres thick at the base.

The irregularity of the terrain was distinguished from the surrounding ground because the grass upon the crest of the earth wall had another color than the adjacent vegetation. This contrast was evident on the photographic negative. Thin shadow lines along the wall, and the symmetrical shape of the feature in question provided additional evidence.

The author reported his findings to G. W. Harley of the Ganta Mission.<sup>4</sup> He listened to the report with great interest and told the author that such old fortifications were familiar to him from his travels in Liberia. In his opinion these fortresses belonged to an epoch about two hundred years ago. His estimation agreed with the statement of the old town-chief Yeke in Yekepa, who estimated the age of the fortresses at about five generations.

The need for these native fortifications was explained by old Town-Chief Yeke of the Yekepa town, close to the Guinea border. Samuel Gbeyi was the interpreter.

At that time the Kpelle people and the Mano people were always fighting. When Kpelle was always attacking the old Gbonni Town, behind Kiton, the Gbonni people fled to the field (probably the field within the LAMCO industrial area). Then the Kpelle warriors retreated, whereupon the Gbonni people went back to Old Gbonni.

The fortress walls were high, and the mud had to be thrown up successively. During this construction the strongest warriors had to make a stand against the Kpelle attacks.

For the houses inside the wall, the material had to be taken from the mud there. A gate was suitably made of the big aerial roots of the Dahoma tree, forming flat pieces thick enough.

The Blay people settled in the area of the present day Nimba airstrip and built Bapa town. Probably the fortress on the airstrip was constructed by these people. At the same time, some other groups from Nya, Zah, Gba, Kulapa, Tuo and Dondie

4. See: George Schwab, Tribes of the Liberian Hinterland. Edited with additive material by George W. Harley (Cambridge, Mass. 1947); and Winifred J. Harley, A Third of Century with George Way Harley in Liberia (Newark, Del., 1973).



in combination built up the fortification at the savannah area close to the Old Yekepa Town, on the Liberia side, and to the Tuo Town, on the Guinea side of the border.

Three examples of such fortifications, revealed by stereoscopic studies of aerial photographs, in Liberia and at the Liberia-Guinea border, will be presented.

#### THE LOWER GRASSFIELD SITE AT NIMBA HEADQUARTERS CAMP

The aerial photograph shows the LAMCO airstrip on the lower grassfield close to the headquarters camp on the upper grassfield at Nimba. Along this field the runway is represented by the pale colored band caused by reflected light from the pale, brown-red itaberite ground material. At the end of this area, in a little more greyish tone, a semicircular contour is perceptible indicating the remains of an old ring-shaped fortification of mud walls. The sketch illustrates its position and dimension (Fig. 2). By a stereoscopic study of the original aerial photographs, not shown, the height of the walls can be determined.

According to Samuel Gbeyi, Town Chief Playe once built a town called Zain, quite close to the lower grassfield and the LAMCO airstrip. It is now not possible to find any remnants of this town, but its site can be recognized as the "LAMCO Garden" and the cotton trees may be a remnant of the time when the Town Chief Playe and his people were living there. They then moved and settled in Bapa Town.

#### THE GRASSFIELD SITE NEAR THE LAMCO SAW-MILL

In the middle of the Grassfield a single tree can be observed in the aerial photographs of 1960 (Fig. 3). Today the Lamco industrial area occupies the site and nothing can be seen on the ground of the remnants of the fortification walls.

But a close stereoscopic study of the aerial photographs will reveal an oval ring-shaped wall touching the tree. As mentioned earlier, this wall was examined at the site. Its position and approximate dimensions appear in Fig. 5, but this sketch has to be revised because it indicates a moat, and there were no moats around mud wall fortresses according to Dr. Harley. It may be that the ditch around the wall was formed when ground material was taken for the construction of the wall itself, technique that increased the height of the wall from outside.

THE SAVANNAH SITE AT THE GUINEA BORDER

On the savannah fields a ringshaped feature of a similar type indicating an old settlement is clearly visible. It is interesting, however, to observe that here two nearly concentric walls are recorded on the photographs (Fig. 4). An earlier suggestion that this was a consequence of the extension of the town is probably wrong. It seems to be more probable that these two walls were built as a double fortification because of the site's exposed position. The militant Kpelle people lived not far from this area.

The discovery of these old fortifications gives, of course, rise to many reflections. The basic one is obviously that the people in days of great anxiety preferred to leave their towns in the deep bush and move to open fields, building these fortresses for their defense.

Figure 1.

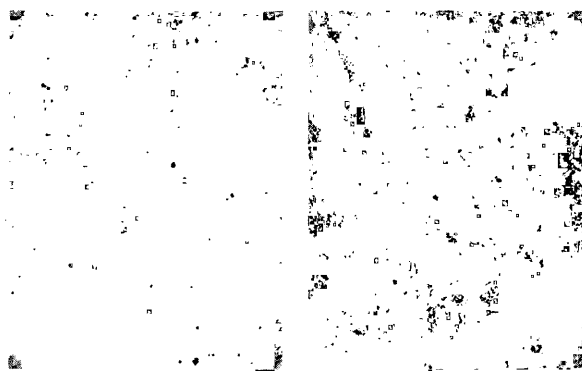


Fig. 1. Old and New Gbapa Town. The American photograph (left) shows Old Gbapa but also the embryo of New Gbapa. The Lamco photograph (right), taken by Mapping Consultants Ltd. about five years later, shows New Gbapa as well as the remnants of Old Gbapa. The pictures are stereoscopically orientated by means of the road and the creek at the top of the photograph. Scale about 1: 40,000.

Figure 2.

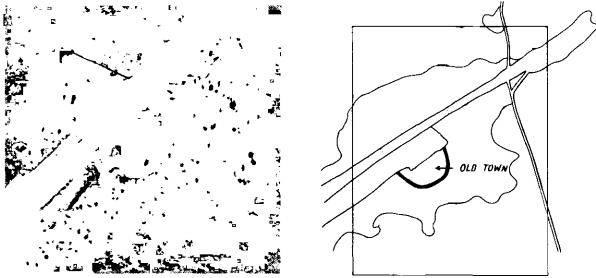


Fig. 2. Lower Grassfield at Nimba H.Q. Camp. The semicircular contour indicates the remnants of an old ring-shaped town wall. The scale of the guiding sketch is 1:12,000.

Figure 3.

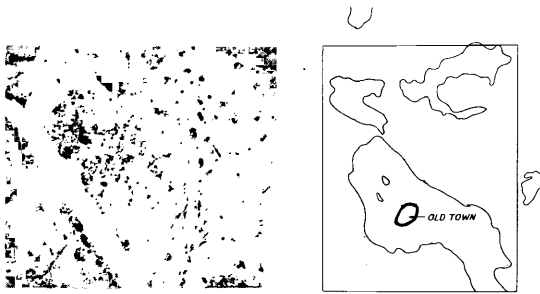


Fig. 3. Grassfield near the Lamco Sawmill. Touching the small by-pass road constructed by Lamco, an oval ring-shaped defense wall is perceptible. The sketch is at scale L:13,000. The old name of this town was Gbonni, called after the Old Gbonni town not far from the border town of Kitonh.

Figure 4.

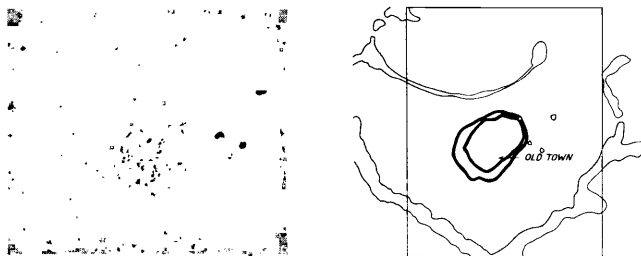


Fig. 4. Savannas at Guinea border. Two concentric walls indicate the successive growth of the original town. The scale of the sketch is 1: 10,00.

Figure 5.

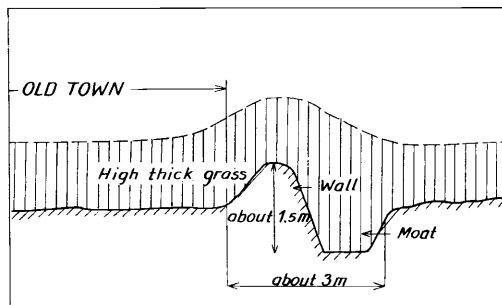


Fig. 5. A cross-section of the defense wall on the grassfield near the Lamco Sawmill.

## A KUWAA (BELLE) WORDLIST

Frances Ingemann and Richard Thompson

Kuwa<sup>1</sup> is a language related to the Kru group of languages, which is believed to be in the Kwa branch of Congo-Kordofanian, although no conclusive comparative evidence is available.<sup>2</sup> No linguistic analysis, wordlist or texts of the Kuwa language have ever been published.

The Kuwa people live in Lofa County, Liberia, and, at the time of the 1962 census, numbered 5,465. The majority of these people speak the Kuwa language. Most are bilingual, speaking (in addition to Kuwa) Bandi, Loma, or both. Kpelle is also spoken by a number of Kuwa people living near the Kpelle area. In many towns, Loma or Bandi or both are used interchangeably with Kuwa, and in some they have supplanted Kuwa as the principal means of communication. In the towns of Gonjade (by tradition the first town settled by the Kuwa), Belle Baloma, Fasama, and Mavodo,<sup>3</sup> Kuwa has remained the dominant language.

Kuwa is almost entirely surrounded by Southwestern Mande languages (Bandi, Loma and Kpelle). There is also a short boundary to the west with Gola, a Mel

1. Kuwa is generally called Belleh or Belle in Liberia and has also been called Kwaa by linguistics (see Diedrich Westermann and M. A. Bryan, Languages of West Africa, Handbook of African Languages 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 51). The latter is similar to the name by which the people refer to themselves and their language: Kùwaa. Because Kwaa might be confused with Kwa (the branch of Congo-Kordofanian), we have chosen to use Kuwa.

2. See Joseph Greenberg, The Languages of Africa (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, Publication 25, 1963), p. 39, and C. F. and F. M. Voegelin, "Languages of the World: African Fascicle One," Anthropological Linguistics, VI, 5 (1964) 14-6.

3. In Kuwa these towns are called Kò<sup>u</sup>jàdè, Baloma, Kpaakonù, and Maúfòdò.

(Southern West Atlantic) language. The Gola may have been the original inhabitants of the present-day Kuwaa territory, with the Mande peoples arriving after the Kuwaa.<sup>4</sup> Kuwaa is thus completely isolated from other Liberian Kru languages. Nevertheless, there are oral traditions that the Kuwaa people migrated to Liberia with other Kru peoples.<sup>5</sup>

A comparison of 206 words from the Swadesh list with 20 Krahn dialects, one Kru dialect (Tajuoohn) and one Grebo dialect (Kelipo) yielded 23-27 percent cognates on a conservative count (32-37 percent on a more liberal count). Comparisons of Kuwaa with Loma and Gola using the same word list show that borrowings from those languages can account for only a small number of the differences between Kuwaa and other Kru languages. For example, on a conservative count there is only a three percent difference between Gola-Kuwaa cognates and loanwords on the one hand and Gola-Krahn (Gbazohn dialect) cognates on the other (11 and 8 percent respectively). If more doubtful pairs are accepted as cognates, the difference is reduced to half a percent (15.6 and 15.1 respectively).

Since Gola and Krahn are not geographically adjacent, the possibility of direct loans must be discounted. It seems clear, therefore, that the divergence between Kuwaa and other Kru languages cannot be attributed to massive borrowing or a so-called 'mixed language' situation, but rather seems to be the result of normal historical processes.

The wordlist reproduced below is based on the Swadesh 200-word list with a few omissions and additions. It was prepared with the help of Francis Howard and Forkpa Cooper, both native speakers of Kuwaa, and does not differ greatly from lists which we elicited from other Kuwaa speakers. The words are written in an orthography which is phonemic except that ny represents the allophone of /y/ in initial position before a nasalized vowel and g represents the allophone of /v/ following a nasal consonant or a nasalized vowel.<sup>6</sup> Since vowels following nasal consonants (including ny) are automatically nasalized, the nasalization mark is omitted in these instances. Mid tone is unmarked.

4. Andreas Massing, "Materials for a History of Western Liberia: The Belle," Liberian Studies Journal III, 2 (1970-1), 182.

5. Ibid.

6. For a fuller description of the phonemes, see Richard Thompson and Frances Ingemann, "The Phonemes of Kuwaa" (forthcoming).

- |              |                |                |                 |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. all       | gbĩ            | 23. cloud      | ní dodo         |
| 2. and       | nè             | 24. claw/nail  | sowóì           |
| 3. animal    | nè mè          | 25. cold       | lòmù            |
| 4. ashes     | gbùwù          | 26. color      | towò            |
| 5. back      | budè           | 27. come       | jì              |
| 6. bad       | sĩ ĩ           | 28. cook       | fí, jɛ nɛ wù    |
| 7. bark      | kũũ            | 29. count      | teì             |
| 8. because   | èìdèsolodè     | 30. cut        | selì            |
|              | èìdèsolosèlèdè | 31. dance/play | làwò            |
| 9. belly     | màlũ           | 32. day        | kùlù            |
| 10. big      | gbàà           | 33. daytime    | sǎyǎ            |
| 11. bird     | nyàda          | 34. die        | fālǎ            |
| 12. bite     | nyì mì         | 35. dig        | bí ĩ            |
| 13. black    | sùúle          | 36. dirty      | nowò            |
| 14. blood    | tòyò           | 37. dog        | bèlè            |
| 15. blow     | tòì            | 38. drink      | namu            |
| 16. bone     | kwa            | 39. dry        | suyɛ            |
| 17. breast   | nyàlì          | 40. dull       | tɛɛ mu fālǎfālǎ |
| 18. breathe  | lǎǎ            | 41. dust       | fowo            |
| 19. brother  | bi             | 42. ear        | noi             |
| 20. burn     | kĩĩ            | 43. earth      | tàvì            |
| 21. child    | jí             | 44. eat        | jì              |
| 22. clothing | jújú           | 45. egg        | kèè mè          |

46. eight	kwatãã	69. good	kàí
47. eye	sĩ	70. grass	sĩnĩ
48. fall	bùlù	71. green	kpiyẽĩ
49. far	bãĩ	72. guts	kò
50. fat/grease	nòi	73. hair	dùĩ
51. father	tẽ	74. hand	fãã
52. fear	wàmù	75. he/she	wò
53. feather	dùĩ	76. head	wúlú
54. few	sówàĩ	77. hear	nyĩnĩ
55. fight	kùlú	78. heart	kùlu
56. fire	kã	79. heavy	wõmu
57. fish	sani	80. here	vè, fèlé
58. five	wààyò	81. hit	dùmànù, tubà
59. float	kpãõdè	82. hold	kãdè
60. flow	kúlò	83. horn	kũbé
61. flower	kàĩkáĩ	84. hot	tumu
62. fly	fewu	85. how	jé
63. fog	koo	86. hundred	kòlè wúlú kòlè
64. foot	koyà	87. hunt	sũdenè
65. four	nyìyè	88. husband	wò
66. fruit	fuyó	89. I	mà
67. full	sĩ	90. ice	kãgele
68. give	nì	91. if	ènèmá



92. in	nù	115. narrow	nubiyò
93. kill	java	116. navel	sĩyǎ
94. knee	kowúlú	117. near	fǎdè
95. know	sǐi	118. neck	fěle
96. lake	tòlò	119. new	dèelè
97. laugh	nyàmà	120. night	toolù
98. leaf	jàkì	121. nine	kōyiyě
99. left (side)	gbòònnù	122. nose	nyũ
100. leg	bò	123. old	lěēlěē
101. lie	fũ	124. one	dee
102. live	tàodè	125. other	těě
103. liver	fěle	126. person	wòlù
104. long	gbòlo	127. pull	kòlì
105. louse	kěĩ	128. push	tò
106. male	bolo	129. rain	ní
107. man	jì jì	130. red	tǎǎ
108. many	tègbèlě	131. right/ correct	ngààama
109. meat/flesh	jei	132. right(side)	jì jà
110. moon	kewu	133. river	nígbàà
111. mother	nu	134. road	gbùlu
112. mountain	kèi	135. root	jíí
113. mouth	wõ	136. rope	dòyò
114. name	nyelě		

137. rotten	tě <sup>h</sup> tě <sup>h</sup>	160. smoke	sòyò
138. round	kédě <sup>h</sup> ilě	161. smooth	tě <sup>h</sup> lě <sup>h</sup> γ <sup>h</sup> lě
139. rub	sídà, nyɔɔɔ	162. snake	gbě <sup>h</sup> ě
140. salt	kì jò	163. some	sũ
141. sand	jooli	164. spear	dě
142. say	ně, tã, siyàì	165. spit	tamù
143. scratch	kòì	166. split	làà
144. sea	jiwo	167. squeeze	nyàmù
145. see	sà	168. stab/ pierce/sew	tavà
146. seed	kwa	169. stand	wũnú
147. seven	kôlô	170. star	sijε kwei
148. sharp	tεemu bibi	171. stick	kãdà
149. shoot	fã	172. stone	túlé
150. short	kεlε	173. straight	folidě
151. sing	fà doyo	174. suck	dôlô
152. sister	binò	175. sun	kùlù
153. sit	kô	176. swell	fumu
154. six	folě	177. swim	dũlũ
155. skin	kũ	178. tail	nyí de wúlú
156. sky	sijε	179. take	júwà
157. sleep	wũni	180. ten	kuwa
158. small	biyò	181. that	dòò
159. smell	wáálí		

182. there	va, fèléva	203. we	à
183. they	wò	204. wet	jèkpe
184. thick	wõmunù	205. what?	deve
185. thin	fɛlɔ	206. when?	fè tòò
186. think	kùlà kùlu dè	207. where?	fèvɛ
187. this	wòlɔ	208. white	tũyě
188. three	tãã	209. who?	wovɛ
189. throw	mɛni	210. wide	nugbàà
190. tie	mùwã	211. wife	sɔ̀nò
191. tongue	mɛwũ	212. wind	fɪvɪ
192. tooth	kàlà	213. wing	kovi
193. town	jě	214. wipe	sẽ
194. tree/stick wood	tĩ	215. woman	nyinò
195. turn	siyãdè	216. woods/ forest	sũ
196. twenty	kuwa sɔ̃	217. work	jòwò
197. two	sɔ̃ɔ̃	218. worm	gbúnù
198. vomit	kòjè	219. year	tèl
199. walk	namu	220. yellow	kpeikolo
200. warm	labalaba	221. you (sg.)	mũ
201. wash	solo	222. you (p.)	nà
202. water	nímí		



## BRITISH REACTION TO THE FIRESTONE INVESTMENT IN LIBERIA

J. PAL CHAUDHURI

It is necessary to know the international rubber situation during the first quarter of the present century to understand the British reactions to the Firestone investment in Liberia. The British Rubber growers supplied about 70% of world production of rubber from the plantations of their colonies of Malaya and Ceylon. The Dutch were the only other important producer of rubber. Because of rapid introduction of the automobile in the U.S. A., about 65-70% of world production of rubber was consumed by the American Rubber Manufacturers. At the end of the First World War, however, a considerable quantity of crude rubber had accumulated due to scarcity of shipping facilities and increased yield from the newer plantations. This fact, coupled with "the collapse of the post war boom in America"<sup>1</sup> brought a crashing fall in price of rubber. From three shillings, the price fell to as low as ten pence a pound in the summer of 1920. The British Rubber growers were hard hit by the sudden drop in the price of rubber. To investigate the rubber situation and to propose appropriate remedies, a British Parliamentary Committee was appointed. It was headed by Sir James Stevenson, who was himself financially interested in rubber plantations.<sup>2</sup> Despite Dutch refusal to co-operate, the British went ahead and the Committee presented a complex unilateral scheme for a sliding scale of production and export controls to be enforced by the Colonial Governments of Malaya and Ceylon. Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for colonies endorsed this as he believed that one of the principal means of paying the war debt to America was in the provision of rubber.<sup>3</sup> The Stevenson Restrictions Act was passed and the Cabinet approved of it in 1922. As a result the price of rubber shot up to five shillings a pound.

1. J. W. F. Rowe, Studies in the Artificial Control of Raw Material Supplies (London, March 1931), No. 2. Rubber, Special Memorandum No. 34. Executive Committee of London and Cambridge Economic Service.

2. Detailed study of the international rubber situation and the Stevenson Restrictions Act can be found in Charles R. Whittlesey, Governmental Control of Crude Rubber, The Stevenson Plan (Princeton, 1931). The American reaction has been studied by Wayne Chatfield Taylor, The Firestone Operations in Liberia (New York, 1956).

3. London Evening Standard (March 12, 1923).

The Stevenson Restrictions Act pleased the rubber growers of the British Colonies. It was, however, unlikely that it would please the American consumers as well. At first, strangely enough, the Rubber Association of America welcomed the Act as it had substituted stability in price for the fluctuations of the previous few years. One important member of the Association, however, held contrary views. This was Harvey S. Firestone, who thought that the American rubber industry must free itself from its dependence on the British Empire. Disagreeing with its views, he resigned from the Association and went on attacking the cartel-controlled rubber industry. Firestone's proposal drew support from President Harding and Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. Hoover believed that, unless the Stevenson Plan was defeated, other "raw material monopolies" would be encouraged to extract tribute from the American people.<sup>4</sup> As the Dutch supply of rubber was inadequate to the needs of the expanding automobile industry of the U.S.A., the American rubber manufacturers were forced to depend on British supplies, even though the price was soaring high. Every time the Governor of Malaya increased the price of raw rubber a penny a pound, it cost the U.S.A. eight million dollars. Hoover ordered a Government survey of rubber producing lands and the U.S. Congress appropriated half a million dollars to pay the expenses.

Side by side with the Government project, Firestone employed his own investigators. The choice, however, was limited as by acquiescing to the award of mandates to Great Britain covering equatorial lands, the U.S.A. had given away the only possibility of establishing a source of rubber production directly under American political control.<sup>5</sup> The Philippines was the only exception. Therefore, Firestone tried for a large scale rubber planting in the Philippines. But the plan fell through "when a bill to change legal obstacles severely limiting land ownership by foreign companies never emerged from a succession of hearings in the Philippino Legislature".<sup>6</sup> Mexico and Sarawak were also tried as areas for possible development. A rubber estate in Mexico was leased by Firestone, but was abandoned after one year owing to unsettled political conditions and an inadequate labour force. A concession to plant rubber trees was offered in Sarawak. But the "white rajah" withdrew the offer under pressure from the British Government. Similar efforts to explore possibilities were made in Liberia as well. A team of experts was sent to Liberia in December 1923. Climate, soil and all other factors were found satisfactory. Negotiations were started with the Government of the Republic for a concession. "If this was not actually American soil under

4. Frank Chalk, "The Anatomy of an Investment," The Canadian Journal of African Studies, I, (March 1967), 12-32.

5. Henry Woodhouse, "America at the Mercy of British Rubber Monopoly," Current History, (April 1923), 134.

6. Taylor, The Firestone Operations, 47.

American flag, no other soil or flag might be expected to reflect more of the American spirit".<sup>7</sup>

The negotiations of the Firestone Company with the Liberian Government proved to be protracted. Preliminary explorations began in December 1923, but agreements were not entered into till 1926. The League of Nations published the text of these agreements six years after they were negotiated. As definite information about the terms of the agreements were not forthcoming, the interim period was marked by wild speculations and rampant rumors originating either in Monrovia, in London or in the U.S.A. Francis O'Meara, the British Chargé d'affaires at Monrovia, obtained information from different sources of varying credibility. A Vai Chief called Bey Solow who was an Associate Chief Justice of the Liberian Supreme Court and "very friendly to the British"<sup>8</sup> was one of O'Meara's informants. Bey Solow, however, was "usually in financial difficulties"<sup>9</sup> and figured in a number of shady transactions. The local Agent of the Elder Dempster Company sometimes gave O'Meara information about the Firestone scheme obtained from 'reliable sources'. One H.D. Scott, a British subject, previously in employment with the Firestone Company, used to tell the British Chargé d'affaires the inside story. Besides, there was Sydney de la Rue, the American General Receiver of the Liberian Customs, who had imposed on himself the task of transmitting information regarding the Firestone project. At times, O'Meara himself took 'discreet steps' to obtain copies of certain documents.<sup>10</sup> These copies, unfortunately, appeared to contain discrepancies when compared with those submitted to the State Department in Washington by Firestone. More reliable was the information received from the British Embassy in Washington. These were mainly based on verbal inquiries made at the U.S. Department of State. Whatever might be the source, by June 1925, it was known that the Firestone Company was going to obtain a very big concession from the Government of Liberia. It was also known that the Company would (i) acquire the British owned Mt. Barclay Plantation (ii) obtain a lease of a million acres for cultivating rubber in Liberia and (iii) improve the harbour at Monrovia and carry on development operations covering various fields in Liberia.

Rubber growing was the main aim, though ancillary development projects were talked about. In the circumstances, the implications of the schemes on the international rubber situation were studied. The views of Firestone and all other American sources, however, differed widely from the views expressed by British

7. James C. Young, *Liberia Rediscovered* (New York, 1934), 29

8. O'Meara to F.O., May 20, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

9. Bernard to D.O.T., May 4, 1928, F.O. 371/12765.

10. O'Meara to F.O., May 20, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

authorities or the Press. The New York Journal of Commerce on June 27, 1925 had the following reference to the Firestone rubber growing project in Liberia, "This is the first step in the plan of American manufacturers to break the power of the British monopoly under which the price of crude rubber has risen from 17 cents a pound to 85 cents during the past two years."<sup>11</sup> The same Journal commented, "it is expected that yields from the new acreage included in the concession will begin to be available after approximately five years, and that within seven years the concession will be supplying crude rubber in a volume sufficient to supply a substantial portion of the American needs." Firestone himself said that 250,000 tons of rubber, more than half the world's supply would be grown in Liberia in about six years.<sup>12</sup> The high production estimate announced by Firestone was, to say the least, very optimistic. Favourable climate and soil, an abundant supply of labour and friendly political conditions, he thought, would guarantee the operations. The techniques of planting employed would also help increase yield. Gooch, the chief plantation expert of the Company said that by using only carefully selected seed and by 'bud grafting' later from the trees with the best growths of bark, it would be possible to build up a young plantation consisting entirely of trees with very high potential yield.<sup>13</sup>

British sources, on the other hand, were very skeptical about the ultimate success of the scheme. E. Hyslop Bell, Chairman of the Niger Company Ltd., commenting on the possibility of America breaking the British rubber monopoly said, "... but unfortunately for himself, Mr. Firestone has chosen a scheme which is calculated to inspire laughter on the rubber market rather than alarm... he has bitten off a good deal more than he can chew."<sup>14</sup> To many Englishmen, who had had experience in West Africa or of planting in South East Asia, the scheme seemed commercially unworkable. Labour difficulties, they thought, would render implementation of the scheme impossible.<sup>15</sup> The Manchester Guardian reminded its readers of the failures of the British Companies. To sum up the views of the British Press and commercial circle, "It will be a failure on the grandiose scale reported."<sup>16</sup> Some newspapers went farther and regarded the whole scheme as a publicity stunt. In a humorously skeptical tone the correspondent of Truth commented:

"My respect for Mr. Firestone's business acumen has led me seriously to doubt whether one tenth of what appears in the newspapers concerning his planting ventures is true. Mr. Firestone's genius for publicity has discovered in Liberia and Florida a topic that has led the press of the world

11. West Africa, (July 18, 1925).

12. West Africa, (October 17, 1925).

13. Rule to F.O., Aug. 8, 1927, C.O. 267/618.

14. West Africa, (October 24, 1925).

15. Letter to the Editor, Financial Times (London), (July 1, 1925).

16. West Africa, (October 24, 1925).



to give him the finest series of free advertisement that any tire manufacturer has secured in the history of the industry."<sup>17</sup>

The interesting side of this speculation about Firestone's success was that some members of the British Legation at Monrovia thought that Firestone was not deeply committed to success in Liberia. As late as 1926, Smallbones, the British representative at Monrovia, thought that Firestone's real hopes lay in a plantation scheme in Sumatra, and that his interest in Liberia was merely in order to be able to create a bluff so as to secure more favourable terms in Sumatra.<sup>18</sup> The Colonial Office, however, did not doubt the seriousness of the scheme. The Liberian scheme, the Colonial Office thought, might make a little hole in the general British policy of establishing monopolies over raw materials to pay war debts, but "We have no real ground for any fears in that direction".<sup>19</sup> Confronted with all sorts of divergent views, the Foreign Office sought the opinions of the Department of Overseas Trade and was assured that, "in any circumstances Liberian production is never likely to exercise any appreciable effect upon the international rubber situation."<sup>20</sup> Indeed there was no fear that the British monopoly of rubber would be broken. Donald Ross, the Manager of the Firestone Company at Monrovia, himself thought that in view of the increased consumption of rubber in the U.S.A., even if the whole million acres of the concession were put under cultivation, they would "be no more than a flea bite in the world's consumption of rubber."<sup>21</sup>

But there was something more than just rubber growing in the Firestone scheme. Conceived in hostility towards a British monopoly, the whole project received an anti-British twist in Liberia. This was attributed to the background of Firestone, the interests he represented and the behaviour of the Firestone employees at Monrovia. The usual impression of Firestone was that he was 'strongly anti-British in sentiment'.<sup>22</sup> According to O'Meara, Firestone was closely associated with the Harriman-Goodrich-Ford interests. It was believed that this circle of American industrialists had always worked against British interests and was associated with German and Irish-American interests noted for their anti-British tendencies.<sup>23</sup> According to O'Meara the German American element in Ohio was furnishing many, if not most of the employees for the Company's Liberian project. The anti-British feeling, according to the British representatives, in this way crossed the Atlantic and

17. Truth as quoted by West Africa, (October 24, 1925).

18. Vansittart to Broderick, July 9, 1926, F. O. 371/11142.

19. Minutes, Aug. 13, 1925, C. O. 267/612.

20. D. O. T. to F. O., May 23, 1925, F. O. 371/10621

21. Harry J. Greenwall and Roland Wild, Unknown Liberia (London, 1936), 94.

22. F. O. Memorandum, June 2, 1925, F. O. 371/10621.

23. O'Meara to F. O. July 29, 1924, F. O. 458/70.

infected Liberia. "Their informal adviser is a Hungarian of German upbringing... they have ... associated with Germans [and] ... avoided the British firms."<sup>24</sup> The American Receiver General, Sydney de la Rue also was accused of pro-German proclivities. It so happened that there were several British subjects in the employment of Firestone Company in Liberia. The Firestone Manager at Monrovia was a Scotchman named Donald Ross. But even they did not escape the charge of being anti-British. According to Smallbones, "he [D.R.] has to prove himself more American than an American and that the only method of doing this is to be anti-British."<sup>25</sup> There was, however, no official approval from America of this 'anti-British' attitude. It was difficult for the British representatives to pin down accusations on Firestone employees. Even if accusation could be pinned down, it was more difficult to do anything about it. However, the British Chargé d'affaires did not forget to remind Sydney de la Rue of the possibility of reprisal by British ship owners against the Firestone Company. If the Firestone Company acquired a reputation of unfriendliness to British interests, it was hinted, British firms owning vessels might express their unwillingness to oblige the Firestone Company.<sup>26</sup>

British reactions to this exhibition of 'anti-British' tendencies by Firestone employees were not confined to the narrowness of Liberian discussions or correspondence. The officials of the Foreign Office shared the same opinion. They based their conclusion partly on the vehemence with which Mr. Firestone had conducted his campaign against the British rubber monopoly and partly on the reports they received from the British Legation at Monrovia. Castle, Head of the Western European Division of the U.S. Department of State, visited London in 1925. Liberia fell within the purview of Castle's department. In the course of conversation, Craigie of the Foreign Office asked Castle if Firestone was an Anglophobe. Castle denied that he was. If Firestone had any animus at all, Castle said, it was limited to the question of rubber. Castle strongly disapproved of the anti-British twist which had been given to the negotiations in Monrovia and promised to ask Firestone to give his employees in Liberia a word of caution on this point.<sup>27</sup> It is probably true that some of the employees of the Firestone Company misunderstood their role in Liberia, and, feeling that they were serving a concern whose purpose was opposed to British restrictions, erred through excess of zeal. It is, perhaps, equally true that the British representatives were over-sensitive and over-reacted to the words and deeds of the Firestone employees.

This over-reaction was the result of a genuine British fear that Liberia was slipping

24. O'Meara to F.O., June 29, 1924, F.O. 458/70.

25. Smallbones to Sydney de la Rue, Jan. 29, 1926, F.O. 458/92.

26. O'Meara to F.O., April 4, 1925, F.O. 371/10621

27. Report by Craigie, July 9, 1925, F.O. 371/10621

away from them. Germany, Britain's only serious commercial rival in Liberia had lost her rights and privileges at Versailles. It was a time for Britain to stabilize whatever she had achieved during the critical days of World War I. This would be rendered impossible if Firestone appeared on the Liberian scene. America's fading sentimental association was about to turn into formidable dominance over Liberia. What was more dangerous, it was believed that the Firestone Company was acting in close collaboration with the French. The French *Chargé d'affaires*, M. Bouet, "who practised as a Doctor of medicine in his ample leisure" was engaged as a Medical Adviser to the Company. His appointment had made Bouet quiet and well disposed towards the scheme. It was rumored that his wife had agreed to accept a car as a present from the Firestones. In the circumstances, the only conclusion the British *Chargé d'affaires* could draw was that the Company was determined to eliminate Britain as a political and economic force from Liberia. Once the French were bought off, the Firestone Company could achieve this by virtue of the unassailable position it was going to acquire in Liberia. Alternatively, the U.S. State Department could eliminate Britain from Liberia acting in collaboration with Firestone.

The exact terms of the agreements were yet to be known. Monrovia was full of gossip and speculation. O'Meara realized that there was much of the typical bombast,rodomontade and general childish nonsense 'inseparable from American politics mixed up in it.'<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, what was believed to be true was enough to rouse alarm in the minds of the officials at the Foreign Office. The news that Liberia had been offered a huge sum of money as a loan by the Firestone Company caused great concern. The employment of a large number of Americans for financial, judicial and general administration of the country was equally inimical to British interests. It became clear that these were efforts by Firestone to exclude the possibility of European intervention in Liberian affairs. "Proposals seem to contemplate wholesale Americanisation of this Republic" commented the Department of Overseas Trade.<sup>29</sup> It was thought that such a 'quasi-territorial enterprise' was bound to bear within itself possibilities for abuse too tempting to be resisted.<sup>30</sup> The Foreign Office felt that the scheme was going to be to Britain's detriment. British interests in Liberia were not immense. The scheme would probably give a finishing touch to the already dwindling interests.<sup>31</sup> The magnitude of the scheme and the report that there would be 300,000 natives working with 30,000 Americans in the plantations caused grave concern. The *London Morning Post* wrote, "such a proportion [white to black 1:10] is utterly unknown in other West African enterprise. When it is stated that the proposed force of 30,000 Americans will very far exceed the total European population of the

28. O'Meara to F.O., May 21, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

29. D.O.T. to F.O., May 23, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

30. British Legation to the Governor, Sierra Leone, Aug. 24, 1925, F.O. 458/81.

31. F.O. Minutes, June 22, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

four British dependencies ... with the British mandate territories of Togo and Cameroon added, this surprise will be better understood."<sup>32</sup>

One cannot possibly blame the Foreign Office, if it had thought that the project would result in wholesale Americanisation of Liberia. A similar fear was expressed by nearly all associations of African people and academics - white and black, when Firestone had actually gone into operation and more was known about the terms of the agreements. The general feeling was that the powers granted to the Firestone Company went far beyond the planting and tapping of rubber trees.<sup>33</sup> In an address delivered at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Dr. Azikiwe said, "like an octopus it has a stranglehold on Liberia which will ultimately threaten if not completely decimate the political existence of this lone African Republic."<sup>34</sup> Professor Frederick Starr expressed his apprehensions about the activities of the Company in Liberia in an address at a session on International Relations at the University of Oregon.<sup>35</sup> The Fourth Pan African Congress assembled in New York City in August 1927 expressed its alarm at the increasing power and influence of the owners of the Firestone Rubber Concessions.<sup>36</sup> The firm belief of the Universal Negro Improvement Association was that the Firestone concessions in Liberia would lead ultimately to seek the usurpation of the Government,<sup>37</sup> while later on George Padmore was to say that it was a simple fact of Liberia being taken over by Dollar Imperialism.<sup>38</sup>

If extinction of Liberia as an independent state, in the true sense of the term was inevitable with Firestone operating there equipped with such enormous powers, the functioning of the same Company with the full backing of the U.S. State Department would certainly mean a complete disaster to British interests in Liberia with wide repercussions on the whole West African coast. In other words, British interests were bound to suffer more if it was the U.S. State Department working through Firestone in Liberia. Many believed that the Firestone Concessions in Liberia were a triumph of those in American society who advocated the full use of America's power to pursue a strategy of dictation from strength over those who cherished self restraint and a minimum of interference in the internal affairs of another country.<sup>39</sup> The

32. Morning Post, (October 17, 1925), 8.

33. Paul Webbink, American Rubber Concessions Abroad (Washington, 1928), Editorial Research Reports (Serial).

34. N.B. Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," Journal of Negro History, XVII (January 1932), 30-50.

35. N.B. Azikiwe, Liberia in World Politics (London, 1934), 164.

36. West Africa, (Sept. 10, 1927).

37. R.L. Buell, Native Problems in Africa (New York, 1928), Vol. 2., 823.

38. George Padmore, Pan Africanism or Communism (London, 1956), 66.

39. Chalk, "The Anatomy of an Investment," 13.

suspicion that Hoover had helped Firestone take Liberia<sup>40</sup> and the charge of complicity in selling Liberia to Firestone<sup>41</sup> levelled against the Department of State were too strong to be cleared by the denials made by Castle and President King of Liberia of such a suggestion.<sup>42</sup>

It is not within the scope of this paper to measure the extent of involvement by the State Department, or the degree of coercion it used to obtain the terms accepted by Liberia; what remained beyond controversy was that the Foreign Office was not convinced by the statements issued by Castle and King. The scheme was reported to be so sweeping that the Foreign Office was disposed to think that the United States Government was taking more than the 'paternal interest' it professed to take in the project. Reporting an interview of Hines (Firestone's private secretary who went to Monrovia to negotiate the agreements) with President King, O'Meara wrote, "The President is said to have confided to one of the Cabinet that it looked as though the U.S. thought to buy a part of Africa in order to found an unofficial Colony".<sup>43</sup> The American strategy, as understood by the British Chargé d'affaires, was simple. There were two distinct schemes. One was being conducted by the U.S. State Department under the influence of the imperialist group of American politicians. The U.S. Government's main interest was in the coaling station for naval use. As Firestone did not quite trust the determination of the State Department, he was forcing the hand of the Department by forcing a loan of five million dollars on Liberia. The idea behind the loan was to persuade the American public to invest and then to clamour in the press for protection with the slogan, "Your money is at stake". American Government intervention then would follow.<sup>44</sup>

Under the circumstances, action was demanded of the Foreign Office to safeguard British interests of all sorts. General protests against the whole scheme could be lodged but it was difficult to find a suitable peg to hang these on. Liberia was an independent country; therefore, it was within her rights to enter into agreements to further her interests with another foreign Government or Company provided the terms of these agreements did not constitute a breach of privileges granted to Britain by a previous treaty. The Anglo-Liberian Treaty of 1848 was the only general treaty signed between Britain and Liberia. A copy of what was thought to be a draft agreement of the Liberian Government with the Firestone Company was sent for examination to the Commercial Relations and Treaties Department attached to the Board of Trade. The Department, after careful scrutiny, however, doubted "whether His

40. Azikiwe, Liberia in World Politics, 132 (quoting President Barclay of Liberia).

41. R. L. Buell, "Mr. Firestone's Liberia," The Nation, (May 2, 1926); The Times (Aug. 31, 1928) reporting Mr. Buell's address at the Institute of Politics at Williamstown.

42. New York Times (Sept. 3, 1928) and Chicago Tribune on (Sept. 1, 1928).

43. O'Meara to F. O., April 30, 1925, F. O. 371/10621.

44. O'Meara to F. O. May 21, 1925, F. O. 371/10621.

Majesty's Government could object on treaty grounds to the arrangements...made".<sup>45</sup>

The Treaty Department's observations made it impossible for the Foreign Office to adopt an attitude of official hostility towards the scheme in general. Attention, therefore, was turned to the protection of such specific British interests as were likely to suffer because of the concessions. Broadly speaking, these interests could be put under three headings. First, there were the interests of the British traders operating in Liberia. Secondly, there were the questions of naval strategy involving the security of the whole of British West Africa and the specific question of the safety of the British colony of Sierra Leone. Thirdly, there were the claims made by various British interests on the Liberian Administration that awaited a satisfactory settlement.

Regarding the possible effects of the Firestone scheme on the position of British trade and banking business in Liberia, there were two opposing views. The initial reaction among the British traders was one of utmost disappointment. It was rumoured that Firestone had "plans for issue of token coinage and other schemes that the British Bank Manager [i.e. the Manager of the Bank of British West Africa - the only bank in Liberia at that time] regards as dangerous ... they think of starting shops to undercut British firms".<sup>46</sup> Basing its conclusions on these reports, the Board of Trade considered the scheme to be seriously prejudicial to British trade and interests. It was argued that control of everything by Firestone was inimical to British trade. The issue of token money circulating only at the stores to be established by the Firestone Company would naturally lead to a degree of subservience among native employees, and cultivate in them an instinctive tendency towards American goods.<sup>47</sup> Following a similar pattern of logic, some British firms expressed the desire to withdraw from Liberia. The Colonial Office and a section of the Foreign Office, however, held contrary views. The gist of their argument was that the advantage resulting from the development of Liberia by the Firestone scheme would, perhaps, outweigh its disadvantages. In a rather unusual minute A.E. Collins of the Colonial Office wrote, "We have already got under our own control a sufficient slice of Africa to provide openings for British capital and enterprise, and it seems to me that if there is any British capital going for investment in West Africa, it is much better from our point of view and almost any other - that it should percolate to our West African Colonies, and not Liberia".<sup>48</sup> Agreeing with this view, the Foreign Office thought that the investment by Firestone in Liberia was going to result in the circulation of more money in the country. It would also create a new class of wage earning natives. The British

45. Commercial Relations and Treaties Dept. to F.O., Aug. 18, 1924, F.O. 371/9554.

46. O'Meara to F.O., May 20, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

47. Board of Trade to F.O., June 25, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

48. Minutes, May 22, 1925, C.O. 267/612.

traders might very well flourish in the new situation provided the Liberian Government did not discriminate against the British traders. It was, however, difficult and futile to approach the Liberian Government for an assurance on equality of treatment for all foreign nationals trading in Liberia. Therefore, the U.S. State Department was approached through the British Embassy in Washington and the Foreign Office received assurances from Kellogg, the U.S. Secretary of State, that equality of treatment for all nationalities would be maintained in Liberia. The U.S. Government, the Foreign Office was assured, harboured no intentions with regard to Liberia which would infringe British rights and interests.<sup>49</sup>

Apart from the traders, the Bank of British West Africa, feared loss of business in Liberia. In a conversation with Craigie, however, Castle removed any such fear by stating that there was no intention of establishing a State Bank. The Bank of British West Africa had served Liberia very well and Castle saw no advantage in a change.<sup>50</sup> These assurances by the State Department satisfied the Foreign Office, but some regarded this complacency as "exchanging a certainty for a possibility". It should, perhaps, be noted that the Firestone Company transacted all its banking business through the British Bank which also worked as the depository of the funds required for the service of the new loan until the Bank decided on its own to retire from business in Liberia.

The question of naval strategy, involving the security of the whole of British West Africa and the specific question of the safety of the British Colony of Sierra Leone was, however, more vital. The system of security of British West African Colonies, based on naval strategy would probably be affected by the proposal for the establishment of a U.S. coaling station at Monrovia. Later on, it was found that there was no basis to this information. What was nearer to the truth was the scheme for developing the port of Monrovia: of the four agreements that the Liberian Government had entered into with the Firestone Company, one dealt with the possible development of this port. The Admiralty was approached to give its views on the effect this might have on the British Naval interests. It expressed the opinion that "British naval interests would not be adversely affected by the proposed development of the port of Monrovia".<sup>51</sup>

The security of Sierra Leone became an important determinant of the attitude of the Foreign Office after the War Office had expressed its views on the question of the building of railway lines in Liberia. It was thought that the Firestone Company contemplated constructing railway lines and developing roads and water communications.

49. Chilton to Austen Chamberlain, Oct. 9, 1925, F. O. 371/10621.

50. Report by Craigie, July 9, 1925, F. O. 371/10621.

51. Vansittart to O'Meara, July 16, 1925, F. O. 371/10621.

The War Office stated that the proposed railway could not be constructed without effective control being established over the country through which the railway would pass. The Liberian authorities were not capable of establishing that control. In the opinion of the War Office, therefore, the necessary operations would presumably be carried out by the French troops and these might lead to permanent French occupation of that part of the interior. This would mean the complete encirclement of Sierra Leone by French territory. Secondly, in the event of a war with France the harbour of Freetown would assume supreme strategic importance. The proposed railway lines would give the French an additional line of advance from the east along the Freetown-Pendembu railway. The Army Council, therefore, viewed with misgivings any proposals for railway construction in Liberia.<sup>52</sup> Obviously the Army Council's observations were based on two assumptions. First, the lines would connect Monrovia with French Guinea through the north west and with the borders of Ivory Coast through the east. Secondly, the lines would be constructed and controlled by the French.

Evidence suggests that the first assumption was correct. If there were railway lines to be constructed in Liberia, the possibility was that these would pass through the areas mentioned above. The association of the French with railway construction, which was the second assumption, was, in a way, a hangover from the past. The French had tried to obtain a railway concession in Liberia in 1918 to counterpoise the five million dollar loan proposed by the U.S. Government for Liberia. French efforts fell through, and so did the American loan proposal. The French interest in a Liberian railway was revived by Baron Lehman, the Liberian Minister in Paris. Ooms, the Secretary of the Liberian Legation in Paris, attended a Cabinet meeting at Monrovia.<sup>53</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that the French Foreign Office was directly involved in the project. Private interests, apparently, Franco-Dutch Banks, were to finance the scheme. But because of British protests and Liberian fears about French designs against Liberian independence, the matter was not allowed to proceed any farther. Consequently, the British *Chargé d'affaires* received an assurance from the Liberian Secretary of State to the effect that in the event of a railway line being constructed in Liberia, British firms would be given equal opportunity with firms of other nationalities to participate in concessions or syndicates and in contracts for materials.<sup>54</sup>

Liberia needed railways, and President King himself was convinced of this after his tour of Sierra Leone. Leslie Couper, the London Manager of the Bank of British West Africa, had publicly stated, "What is required vitally and urgently are railways

52. War Office to F. O., May 2, 1924, F. O. 371/9552.

53. O'Meara to F. O., Feb. 9, 1924, F. O. 371/9552.

54. Barclay to British *Chargé d'affaires*, May 21, 1924, F. O. 371/9552.



and roads and a big brother help in attaining these so badly needed facilities".<sup>55</sup> The Firestone loan was to be spent on overall development of the country. It was, therefore, assumed that the concession included, inter alia, provisions for roads and railway construction. Bouet, the French Chargé d'affaires was "anxious to make history before he retires" and showed "suspicious enthusiasm" over the railway scheme.<sup>56</sup> This suspicion, coupled with the fact that Bouet had a close association with the Firestone Company, led O'Meara to the conclusion that "the firm's men have ... played up to Monsieur Bouet's railway plans".<sup>57</sup> Encouraged by this the French Chargé d'affaires, perhaps, pursued policies that went beyond the intentions of the French Foreign Office. These convinced O'Meara that railway construction in Liberia was a part of a Firestone scheme and that part of the scheme would materialize with French help. Whatever might be the case, after the Foreign Office had learnt the views of the War Office, it just could not act as a dispassionate observer watching railways being built in Liberia. Even if the railways were under Liberian control it would not be difficult for the French to seize them in the event of a war and endanger the safety of Freetown. In another letter the War Office observed "these objections... also apply in a lesser degree to development of road and water communications in the same area".<sup>58</sup> In other words, it mattered very little, under whose auspices the development of communications took place in Liberia; as improved means of communications were considered to constitute a threat to the security of Sierra Leone, obstacles had to be created as to their construction.

Foreign Office officials responsible for the formulation of policies towards Liberia were not, however, unanimous about the wisdom of the War Office observations. One school of opinion within the Foreign Office thought that these conclusions were borne out of an exaggerated fear of a possibility of a French invasion. War with France was actually a remote possibility. The likelihood of France seizing Liberian roads and railways to invade Freetown was remote in the extreme and could only have been suggested by a man obsessed with memories of the German invasion of Belgium. T.M. Snow of the Foreign Office even reminded his colleagues of Lord Salisbury's dictum that military experts, if left to themselves, would fortify the planet against an invasion from Mars.<sup>59</sup> It was a question of a clash between the actual need of Liberia for development and a highly problematic need to defend Sierra Leone against the French. By opposing development in Liberia, Britain was volunteering to incur the stigma of being an opponent of civilization. At the same time, the Foreign Office realized the dangers that lay in ignoring the recommendations made by the War Office.

55. African World, (May 30, 1925).

56. Stevenson to F.O., Nov. 14, 1924, F.O. 371/9552.

57. O'Meara to F.O., May 21, 1925, F.O. 371/10621

58. War Office to F.O., May 23, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

59. Minute by T.M. Snow, F.O. 371/11996.

Under the circumstances, the only course it could prescribe to the British representative at Monrovia was to make intensive, furtive and unofficial efforts to frustrate any development scheme in Liberia. The overall attitude towards the Firestone scheme would be one of not encouraging it. The official action, however, would remain confined to endeavours to seek assurances of protection for British interests. Instructions were sent to O'Meara to discourage the scheme should proper opportunity arise. Railway schemes or road and water communications developments should be opposed. But "opposition ... should be of a discreet character. It would never do for the impression to gain ground in Liberia that His Majesty's Government are permanently opposed to any development of the interior of Liberia by means of roads, railways, etc."<sup>60</sup> But on no account should O'Meara take any overt part in the matter or lend himself to any campaign. "Exercise great tact ... and in no circumstances commit yourself in writing".<sup>61</sup> In short, if a spoke could be put in the wheel without exposing himself, O'Meara had the mandate to do it.

This spurred O'Meara into action. As a matter of fact he took a more vigorous line than the one the Foreign Office wanted him to take. His task was first to oppose the construction of railways and roads, and secondly to raise obstructions to the passage of the bill granting the Firestone concessions. But both should be done very tactfully.

Regarding railways, his arguments were that at that stage of economic development in Liberia, railways would be a waste. Production brings railways, he argued, but not vice-versa. In an interview with Edwin Barclay, the Liberian Secretary of State, O'Meara threw out some discreet warnings as to the danger of railway building by indicating the possibility of the French capturing the lines for use against Liberia.<sup>62</sup> The real strategic reasons involving the security of Freetown were not mentioned at all. Arguments in favour of construction of railways in Liberia were economically sensible. O'Meara's views, therefore, did not cut much ice. Realizing this, Smallbones, O'Meara's successor felt that it would be more satisfactory if, instead of merely resisting the rail schemes, the British Government had a positive alternative to offer to the Liberians, should the occasion arise.<sup>63</sup> The suggestion was that it would be useful if the British Government would examine the possibility of continuing the Freetown-Pendembu railway to Monrovia. As the suggestion concerned Sierra Leone most, the views of the Governor of Sierra Leone were asked for. Slater, the Governor of Sierra Leone consulted the General Manager of the Sierra Leone Government Railway, the Comptroller of Customs and the Officer commanding

60. F.O. to O'Meara, June 3, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

61. Vansittart to O'Meara, Aug. 16, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

62. O'Meara to F.O., June 2, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

63. Smallbones to Vansittart, July 31, 1926, C.O. 267/617.

the Troops of Sierra Leone. It was believed that the proposed extension might be commercially profitable as long as the port of Monrovia remained undeveloped. Strategically, the proposal was not likely to be of any direct advantage. On the other hand provided the gauge was different from that in use in French territory, the extension could not be a danger; on the contrary, if its construction had the assumed effect of forestalling a French railway, it would have obvious indirect advantages.<sup>64</sup> Slater, however, thought that the extension of a railway from a British colony to an independent country under Government auspices was bound to arouse suspicions. To avoid that, British private capital could be encouraged. The Department of Overseas Trade, however, considered it highly improbable that British capital would be attracted to such an undertaking.<sup>65</sup> The Colonial Office regarded the proposal as nebulous and very unusual. The Foreign Office, therefore, quickly poured cold water on it, and the suggestion died as suddenly as it was born.

It is, perhaps, safe to say that the Firestone Company never seriously thought of constructing a railway in Liberia. The U.S. Department of State was fully aware of the disagreement between the French and the British on the subject. It did not wish to enter into the controversy. An alternative British proposal was not feasible. The Foreign Office, therefore, had to remain satisfied with the assurances given by Castle that the loan money was not enough for construction of a railway.<sup>66</sup> The building of roads was more difficult to discourage, but, "happily nature intervenes by providing rivers and creeks very difficult to bridge."<sup>67</sup>

To create successful opposition to the Firestone scheme in general was not an easy job. At one stage it was contemplated that on specific points, the British Representative could act in concert with his French counterpart at Monrovia in making representations to the Liberian Government. The French did not particularly like the idea of wholesale Americanisation of the administration of Liberia. But the idea was dropped, as it was considered unwise to associate with the French who were at that time very unpopular at Monrovia. The task of rousing public opinion against the proposals, therefore, fell upon the British Legation working alone. O'Meara himself claimed that there was a faction in Liberian politics that was looking to him to give them a lead in opposing the scheme. Whether it was a statement of fact, or one way of boosting his own ego, it is difficult to say. But what was a fact is that a minority within the Cabinet was not favourably disposed towards the granting of so much power to a foreign Company. They particularly disliked the loan proposals. Differences of opinion and amendments proposed by the Liberian Legislature caused delay in having

64. Slater to C.O., April 4, 1927, F.O. 371/11996.

65. D.O.T. to F.O., June 9, 1927, F.O. 371/11996.

66. Report by Craigie, July 9, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

67. O'Meara to F.O., July 11, 1925, F.O. 371/10621.

the Agreements ratified by the Legislature. "I may say", wrote O'Meara, "that I view these differences and dissensions with considerable satisfaction".<sup>68</sup> A section of the Liberian press gave enough publicity to the darker side of the consequences of the Firestone investment. In an article entitled, "Firestone Company, Yes - but what about Liberia?" published in the Liberian News, the author, A. H. Butler, observed "The whole country is behind President King if he refused the proposals of the great Firestone Company in respect of the loan".<sup>69</sup> In the following issue, the same newspaper warned the Liberians of the dangers of accepting a loan from Firestone. "Remember Haiti and the American Occupation".<sup>70</sup> A handbill appeared in Monrovia bearing the headline, "American Occupation of Liberia Arranged by President King". This was said to be circulated by the members of the True Whig Party, but it was printed in Freetown and was possibly the work of the People's Party. The British firms in Monrovia carried on similar propaganda and the Foreign Office saw "no reason why they should not continue their action".<sup>71</sup>

From the very beginning, O'Meara was bubbling with ideas. In a private letter written to Vansittart of the Foreign Office he suggested, "In the last resort, we could render the Session [of the Liberian Legislature which was to discuss the Firestone proposals] impossible by asking the Bank [Bank of British West Africa] to withhold facilities".<sup>72</sup> He also thought that the Firestone Company could be embarrassed by raising the question of compensation for dispossessed natives. According to him, the natives would soon be converted into wage slaves - with little emphasis on the wage and a great deal on the slave. "Whether such a plan was commendable from the standpoint of ethics in International Relations, I do not know; but as neither party to the Agreement had troubled themselves about the position of the expropriated people, I can't see that they deserve any special consideration".<sup>73</sup> The Foreign Office, perhaps, did not work according to his suggestions, but it is a fact that at one stage it toyed with the idea of enlisting the help of the American author and scholar, R. L. Buell, reputed for his anti-Firestone and pro-native views.<sup>74</sup> It is probably only a suggestive coincidence that a petition was presented in July 1928 by Henry H. Junod, the President of the International Society for the Protection of the Natives, to the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. The petition asked that the Commission investigate the effects of the concession upon native labour.<sup>75</sup>

68. O'Meara to F. O., Feb. 17, 1925, F. O. 371/10621.

69. Liberian News, (May 1925).

70. Liberian News, (June 1925).

71. Craigie to Stevenson, Aug. 22, 1925, F. O. 458/82.

72. O'Meara to Vansittart, received March 26, 1925, F. O. 458/81.

73. O'Meara to F. O., Oct. 21, 1924, F. O. 458/70.

74. Minutes, June 27, 1928, F. O. 371/12764.

75. Paul Webbink, American Concessions, 754.

As many Liberians did not like the loan proposals, it was much easier for O'Meara to create public opinion against it. Firestone, on the other hand, insisted on a loan. Referring to the objections raised by the Liberian Government about the loan proposals, Firestone wrote to King, "I have two reasons for combining the planting and loan agreement and referring to your 1912 loan agreement with our Government. First, it establishes confidence in American investments not only for loans, but for much larger investments for rubber development. Second, the U. S. Government could not agree to assist a loan on unknown terms and conditions".<sup>76</sup> Whatever might be the ostensible reasons, the fact was that Britain and France had a say in the financial administration of Liberia because of their participation in the loan of 1912 and Firestone would not step in unless the possibilities of European intervention in Liberian financial affairs were excluded. Objections to the loans, therefore, virtually meant objection to the whole scheme. O'Meara and his successors in office worked with more zeal than caution in Monrovia, and it became common knowledge in Liberia and in the U.S.A. that the British Government was hostile to the proposed concessions. Statements appeared in the Liberian Press to the effect that the British Government had used its influence in the U. S. A. in the sense of trying to prevent the floatation of a loan to the African Republic. To these suggestions, a correspondent of West Africa wrote on August 28, 1926, "I am able to say on unquestionable authority ... that there is not a word of truth in these statements. If my esteemed contemporaries in Liberia will allow me to say so, they do their country no good by printing such mis-statements of facts." Firestone, however, had different views. Speaking from Akron, he stated "opposition to development of the Firestone concessions there, in the form of foreign propaganda has raised the closed door issue and still seeks by persistent efforts to place obstacles in the way of legitimate American enterprise and play into the hands of foreign interest."<sup>77</sup>

Safeguarding the claims of various British sources was much more legitimate and needed no covert action. These claims on Liberian Government were of three different categories. First, there were the minor claims arising out of isolated incidents. Secondly, there was the claim of the British Bondholders of the 1912 Gold Loan, and thirdly, there remained the more knotty claim of the Liberian Rubber Corporation. It was feared that the new concessions to Firestone and the loan proposals endangered the rights of the British subjects and companies in matters of obtaining a satisfactory settlement. A clear understanding had, therefore, to be obtained from the Liberian Government before it was too late.

In 1911, two Hindu traders, residents of Sierra Leone, were allegedly robbed by Liberian soldiers of their goods in the interior of Liberia. The value of their goods

76. Firestone to King, April 30, 1925, F. O. 458/82.

77. New York Herald Tribune, (September 2, 1928).

was probably sixty seven pounds and ten shillings. The claim was first put forward in 1913 at four hundred and fifty pounds. It was eventually settled at two hundred and fifty pounds, and the amount included "moral damages". The Liberian Government made a first payment of fifty pounds in 1922 and indicated that they might liquidate the remainder by installments. The Foreign Office regarded the case as a very fishy one, and decided not to press it. In addition, however, a small debt due by the Liberian Post Office to the General Post Office in London was being discharged by monthly payments through the Bank of British West Africa.

More important was the question of the adjustment of the British Bondholder claims. In 1912, a loan of 1,700,000 dollars had been raised in Berlin, Amsterdam, Paris and London. In 1923 Liberia owed about 1,600,000 dollars on this loan. "Of this, the British held nearly 1,000,000 dollars".<sup>78</sup> The British Bondholders had pooled their interests and formed a "Council of Foreign Bondholders" to look after them. It is difficult to estimate the amount the Liberian Government owed to the British Bondholders in 1926 in view of the Bondholders' practice of sending coupons to New York for encashment in dollars, but the amount, perhaps, was about 85,000.<sup>79</sup> According to the Foreign Office, the draft Firestone Agreement was not very clear about the redemption of the old loan before the new loan was offered. Therefore, a note was sent to the Liberian Government through the British Legation. The note said, "His Majesty's Government may find it necessary in the interest of the British holders of 1912 loans to make reservations in regard to a proposal to alienate the security of that loan unless such proposal included arrangements for the redemption of the 1912 loan on terms offering at least the same security as exists at present".<sup>80</sup> A request was made to the U. S. State Department through the British Embassy in Washington to allay apprehensions. The British Ambassador, Sir E. Howard, was, however, assured by Castle that the draft agreement in the possession of his office provided in the plainest terms that the proceeds of the new loan should be used in the first place for the redemption of the Liberian Government's existing external obligations.<sup>81</sup> It turned out that there were serious discrepancies between the drafts received by the Foreign Office from Monrovia and those filed at the State Department. The Liberian Secretary of State assured the British Consul that in the event of a new loan being floated, the interests of the British and other holders of the bonds of the 1912 loan would be amply safeguarded.<sup>82</sup> The *Times*, on the 12th of May, 1927, announced that the holders of the 1912 Liberian Loan were required to present their Bonds for repayment by July 1, next. Bernard, the British Charge d'affaires, informed the Foreign

78. A Former President, "The Crisis in Liberia", *The Crisis*, (March 1923).

79. The Council of Foreign Bondholders to F. O., April 8, 1926, F. O. 371/11142.

80. F. O. to Smallbones, May 17, 1926, F. O. 371/11142.

81. E. Howard to F. O., May 6, 1926, F. O. 371/11142.

82. Barclay to Smallbones, May 17, 1926, F. O. 371/11142.

Office that "the Customs Receivership instituted under the Gold Loan of 1912 ceased to exist on the 30th June, 1927 upon the funding of the New Loan of 1926 by the Finance Corporation of America. Since the funding of the New Loan [1926], the Gold Loan [1912] has been paid off".<sup>83</sup>

The dispute over the title to the Liberian Rubber Corporation, however, was not that easy to solve. The Corporation was an English Company with only English shareholders. It was formed to acquire a concession originally granted in 1890 for collecting and exporting wild rubber from Liberia. In 1907, the Corporation under agreements with the Liberian Government, acquired lands under leases. In pursuance of these leases, a plantation known as Mount Barclay Plantation was established. The plantation extended to about 1800 acres. Owing to general financial stringency in England, and the low price of rubber, the Company was forced into voluntary liquidation, and a resolution for that purpose was passed in March, 1921.

Myring and Bennett, London Solicitors, were acting as the Company's official liquidator. Myring noticed a report appearing in The Times of the 16th October, 1925 saying that the Firestone Company had already taken over the Mount Barclay Plantation from British owners. In a letter to the Editor, he wrote that he had not been approached by anyone in regard to the sale of the property, and the announcement in the newspaper was the first intimation he had about the property being acquired from British owners. Myring addressed a letter to the Foreign Office stating his client Company's position and sought help from the Foreign Office in obtaining a just settlement of the case. The Foreign Office took up the case and kept writing to the Liberian Secretary of State. Both sides displayed remarkable ability in dealing with legal matters. Neither lost its enthusiasm to write bulky letters.

To cut a long story short, the Liberian arguments were: (a) "Both as a matter of Law and as a matter of international practice ... if the liquidator is of opinion that his alleged property rights have been illegally invaded by the Government of Liberia, the question should have been submitted to judicial enquiry by an appropriate action against the Government of Liberia".<sup>84</sup> (b) "The Government of Liberia consider that the rights of the Liberian (Rubber) Corporation in any property which they theretofore held in Liberia have been effectually extinguished by their abandonment of these rights".<sup>85</sup> (c) The Company had abandoned its rights by vacating the plantation physically and by expressing their desire not to continue operations in Liberia. (d) The Company owed a large sum of money (about £8,000) to the Liberian Government, and the liquidator had informed Dresselhuys, the Liberian Minister in London

83. Bernard to F.O., May 8, 1928, F.O. 371/11142.

84. Edwin Barclay to Smallbones, Feb. 17, 1926, F.O. 371/11142.

85. Ibid.

that he was waiting for the plantation to be seized by the Liberian Government whose claim could possibly be paid out of the proceeds of the sale of the plantation. (e) The Liberian Government, as ultimate owners of the estate of the Liberian Rubber Corporation, upon such declaration, took possession of plantation, which had completely been abandoned. (f) The matter was a legal matter and fell within the jurisdiction of the Liberian Courts. Therefore, the Liberian Government could not be called upon by His Majesty's Government to answer any demands made by way of diplomatic reclamation.<sup>86</sup>

In an attempt to rebut the arguments put forward by the Liberian Government, the liquidator and, therefore, the Foreign Office, advanced the following arguments. (a) There was a wide difference between the Corporation's physical vacation of the plantation and abandonment of their ultimate interests therein.<sup>87</sup> (b) The liquidator never said or conveyed in any manner that the Corporation had no intention of continuing its operations in Liberia or elsewhere.<sup>88</sup> (c) One half of the claims of the Liberian Government against the Company (i.e. half of £8,000) arose out of a demand for extra export duty which was contested by the Company. (d) In disposing of the Company's property, did the Liberian Government rely on any, and if so what, decision of a court of law? There was nothing whatsoever in the concession which justified seizure.<sup>89</sup>

Apparently, the Foreign Office was aware of the weaknesses in the case of the Company which had defaulted in payments to the Liberian Government and did not even care to employ a caretaker to look after the plantation. Had the Liberian Government not appointed a caretaker, the plantation would have returned to bush. The only weakness in the position taken by the Liberian Government was that it had not undergone the formality of referring the matter to a Judicial Court.

According to President King, Austen Chamberlain had informed him that the British Government was much embarrassed by the existence of the claim, since on the one hand they did not consider it to be a strong one, and on the other, they were constantly being pressed by the shareholders to effect its settlement.<sup>90</sup> This was denied by Chamberlain's Private Secretary,<sup>91</sup> but it is interesting to know that Mr. Hudson, the M.P. and son of Lord Furness who held the majority of shares in the defunct Corporation, held an important post in the Foreign Office before he was elected to Parliament. The U.S. Department of State had its doubts about the validity of the

86. Dresselhuys to F.O., May 15, 1926, F.O. 371/11142.

87. F.O. to Dresselhuys, May 17, 1926, F.O. 371/11142.

88. Myring to F.O., April 10, 1926, F.O. 371/11142.

89. F.O. to Smallbones, May 25, 1926, F.O. 371/11142.

90. Memo to T.M. Snow, Oct. 1, 1927, F.O. 371/11996.

91. H. Lloyd Thomas to F.O., Oct. 19, 1927, F.O. 371/11996.



claims of the Corporation. Castle laughingly suggested that the Corporation would never again have bothered about the property if Firestone had not come upon the scene.<sup>92</sup> The Liberian Administration held a similar view.

It is interesting to note that impartial observers of the Liberian scene were not at all impressed by the past performance of the Rubber Corporation, and refused to believe that the Corporation had any intention of resuming work on the plantation. Mr. W. Ingram Lyon, one of the Directors of The African World answering an enquiry from Mr. Leo Weinthal, the Editor of the newspaper, wrote, "I can discover no reason to differ from the opinions expressed by the Financial Times (December 12, 1905), Statist (December 18, 1905) that the concern was a ramp ... The Financial Times in July, 1912 called the concern a scandal, with which I agree".<sup>93</sup>

The liquidators wanted to avoid Liberian Courts on the grounds that the impartial administration of justice could not be expected from them. The legal adviser of Lord Furness was of the opinion that the case had not got a 'sporting chance' of succeeding.<sup>94</sup> Litigation would cost about £750. 0. Od. Even if legal action were successful, the Liberian Government would lack the physical means of turning out the Firestone Company from the plantation. They had already started tapping and exporting rubber from the plantation. A Mr. Wilson, who represented Lord Furness at a meeting at the Foreign Office, said that he would not advise Lord Furness to proceed to litigation. Myring was willing to submit the simple issue of fact as to abandonment or no abandonment to the arbitration of an independent international court.

The difficulties involved in litigation and the unwillingness of the liquidator to submit the case to a Liberian Court, forced the Foreign Office to seek remedy elsewhere. An amicable settlement reached outside court seemed to be a solution. Meanwhile, President King had come to Paris. Leo Weinthal, who had known the President for a long time and was 'persona grata' with him, volunteered to talk with him along those lines. Myring had valued the Corporation's property at £100,000. But later, he brought the figure down to £40,000. Should £40,000 be paid, he would withdraw the Corporation's claim. President King did not accept the validity of the Corporation's claim. So far as the Liberian Government was concerned, payment of money was out of the question. But in order not to impair Anglo-Liberian friendship, he indicated some indirect ways of compensating the Corporation. Leo Weinthal also had some proposals to make. But these were either impossible or impudent. Leo Weinthal's mission failed.

92. Broderick to Vansittart, June 11, 1926, F.O. 371/11142.

93. W. Ingram Lyon to Leo Weinthal, Sept. 22, 1927, F.O. 371/11996.

94. Minutes, Jan. 4, 1927, F.O. 371/11996.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office had laid the case before Sir Esme Howard in Washington. Sir Esme sent a note to Secretary Kellogg hinting that the claims of the Corporation were likely to invalidate the Firestone Agreements. "I feel it incumbent upon me to suggest that it will not be untimely to apprise the Firestone Company of the position".<sup>95</sup> The State Department stated that it could not accept responsibility for validity of the Firestone concessions. Castle, however, was 'convinced Firestone believed his agreement to be valid'.<sup>96</sup> The Foreign Office also explored the possibility of a deal between the Liberian Rubber Corporation and Firestone through Broderick, the British Embassy's Commercial Counsellor in Washington. But such a deal looked rather unlikely. "We [meaning himself and Sir Esme] know him [Firestone] fairly well - well enough to talk to him about this matter when time is ripe, but not well enough to induce him to part with nearly half a million dollars without a struggle",<sup>97</sup> wrote Broderick to Vansittart. The question remained undecided.

The reluctance of the Liberian Government to accept a loan from Firestone died down as Firestone created 'a special legal entity' called the Finance Corporation of America and asked the Liberian Government to accept the loan from it. The corporation was a Firestone subsidiary but, apparently, that did not bother the Liberian Government. After some minor adjustments had been made, the Plantation Agreements were signed and the Liberian Government accepted the loan as well. Despite British efforts, the terms were as Mr. Firestone wanted them to be. Firestone's desire to invest in Liberia was born out of a protest against the Stevenson Restrictions Act passed by the British Parliament. The interests of the American rubber manufacturers demanded that the American rubber industry be freed from British dependence. In the process the U.S.A. imposed a kind of economic imperialism on Liberia which conflicted with the economic, political and strategic interests of Britain - the largest colonial power. The reaction of the British Foreign Office to this American victory was best captured by Leslie Couper when he wrote, "I remember it must be nearly 20 years ago - being greeted by Walter Langley (of the Foreign Office) one day with the words 'you still got that pot of red paint in your hand for Liberia!' Now instead of red paint, the country is to be starred and striped."<sup>98</sup>

95. Sir E. Howard to Frank B. Kellogg, March 6, 1926, F.O. 371/11142.

96. Howard to F.O., May 6, 1926, F.O. 371/11142.

97. Broderick to Vansittart, July 11, 1926, F.O. 371/11142.

98. Leslie Couper to Vielliers, May 12, 1927, F.O. 371/11996.

## ANTI-COLONIALISM IN LIBERIAN FOREIGN POLICY: A CASE STUDY

D. ELWOOD DUNN

### INTRODUCTION

Two basic attitudes direct the foreign policy orientation of the Liberian Government: (1) policy affinity with the western democracies on the broad issues of war and peace,<sup>1</sup> and (2) anti-colonialism. The first has its origin in the history of Liberia, but was given new emphasis under the Tubman Presidency. Positive anti-colonialism is a much more recent phenomenon in Liberian policy, and can be traced to post-war developments in Africa.

The purpose of this essentially preliminary study is to examine the anti-colonial stance of post-war Liberia. We shall take one concrete issue in the United Nations as a test case.

One significant instance of the manifestation of Liberia's anti-colonialism was the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies (Libya, Italian Somaliland and Eritrea). The importance of this case lies in the fact that it figured in the U.N. during the period of little or no African influence -- 1948-1951.<sup>2</sup> This was unlike many other African colonial questions -- Algeria, Congo, Southern Africa -- that were, generally speaking, handled in an atmosphere of condensed solidarity by a relatively large number of independent African states.

1. See Tubman's First Inaugural Address of 1944 in R.E. Townsend, ed., President Tubman of Liberia Speaks (London, 1959), 17. See also the "Liberia will endeavor to remain a strong, healthy, and tested ally of the free world" speech at Dinner Tubman gave honoring visiting U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon, March 7, 1957, in E. R. Townsend & A.B. Jones, eds., Official Papers of President Tubman (London, 1968), 206.

2. If one excludes South Africa, there were only three independent African States at this time -- Egypt, Ethiopia and Liberia.

## ORIGIN AND FRAMEWORK OF THE CASE

In their preparations at Yalta for the San Francisco Conference that gave birth to the United Nations, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed that they (together with France and China) would include an international trusteeship system as part of the machinery for maintaining the future peace. Such a system, they agreed, would apply to existing mandates of the League of Nations, territories detached from enemy states as a result of the World War, and territories voluntarily placed under trusteeship. It was this understanding embodied in the working paper that emerged from the Yalta deliberations, that was formalized in Chapters XI, XII and XIII of the Charter of the United Nations.<sup>3</sup>

An example of the territories to be detached from enemy states as a result of World War II were the former Italian colonies. Initially, not much international attention was given to the question. No decision on the fate of Italy's African territories was contained in the Italian Military Armistice of September 3, 1943, and the Additional Conditions of the Armistice that were transmitted to Italy from Malta the following September.<sup>4</sup>

By the time of the Potsdam Conference (July 17 - August 2, 1945), some international concern became noticeable. "The disposal of all territory", it was decided, "previously belonging to Italy would be arranged during the preparation of the Peace Treaty with that country."<sup>5</sup> A Council of the Foreign Ministers of the big three was set up at Potsdam to continue the necessary preparatory work for the peace settlement. When the Council of Foreign Ministers (France was now included) met in London from September 11 to October 2, 1945 to look into the matter of the disposal of the former Italian colonies, it soon became apparent that they were as preoccupied by their own conflicting aims and interests as they were by the problem of how to reconcile them with the Charter of the United Nations.

The position of the United States at the London conference was that Italy, having shown herself incapable of administering the territories in question, the U. N. must now be charged with these colonies. The Soviet Union felt as did the United States,

3. Emil J. Sady, The U. N. and Dependent Peoples (N. Y., 1956), 20, 22.

4. Italy and the United Nations Report of a Study Group Set up by the Italian Society for International Organization (N. Y., 1959), 37.

5. Republique Francaise, Recueil de textes a l'Usage des Conference de la Paix, (Paris, 1946), Doc. No. VIII, 47, as quoted in Boutres Farajallah; Le Groupe Afro-Asiatique dans le Cadre des Nations Unies (Geneve, 1963), 139.

that the territories should not be returned to Italy, but there was disagreement on the question of collective trusteeship. The Soviet Union favored individual trusteeship. Both France and Britain had certain claims on parts of the territories that did not facilitate their dealing with the question. France militarily occupied the Fezzan (Libya) as a result of its conquest by Free French troops during the war, while Britain had similarly established a military administration over Cyrenaica and Tripolitania (Libya).<sup>6</sup> The British Premier, Mr. Churchill had declared in September 1943, Britain's special interest in Cyrenaica.<sup>7</sup> All of these positions were to undergo modifications; in fact, substantial changes, in the case of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Article 23 of the Peace Treaty with Italy states that the disposal of Libya, Italian Somaliland and Eritrea:

... shall be determined jointly by the Governments of the Soviet Union, of the United Kingdom, of the United States of America, and of France within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty (15 September 1947) in the manner laid down in the joint declaration of 10 February 1947, issued by said Governments which is reproduced in Annex XI.

Annex XI provided that:

... if with respect to any of these territories the Four Powers are unable to agree upon the disposal within one year from the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace with Italy (15 September 1947), the matter shall be referred to the General Assembly of the United Nations for a recommendation, and the Four Powers agree to accept the recommendations and to take the appropriate measures for giving effect to it.<sup>8</sup>

It was in keeping with these provisions that the Four Powers on September 15, 1948 informed the U.N. Secretary General (A/645) of their inability to reach an agreement regarding the future of the former Italian colonies and that therefore the matter was being handed over to the U.N.

It became a question that made it difficult, if not impossible for the major powers --- especially the United States and the Soviet Union -- to agree on, even though

6. Benjamin Rivlin, The U.N. and the Italian Colonies (N.Y., 1950), 5.

7. Andrian Pelt, Libyan Independence and the U.N. (New Haven, 1970), 53.

8. Yearbook of the U.N., 1948-49, 256.

initially it seemed of no relevance to their security interests. The passage of time brought realization to these nations that some of the areas were of strategic importance especially as the cold war gathered momentum. As will be seen, this did not fail to filter into the U.N. debate of the question.

There was a related reason for difficulty of agreement and the change of attitude on the part of the great powers. The general elections in Italy on April 18, 1948 gave victory to the Social Democrats and a decisive defeat to the Communists who had gained some power in post-war Italy. Following the formation of the De Gasperi Government on May 23, 1948, Italy joined the anti-Communist bloc of states. The question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies thus went to the U.N. inextricably knotted in the overall struggle for power. This was how the major powers treated it. For Liberia and Afro-Asia it seemed first and foremost, a question of ending European colonialism.

CONSIDERATION BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
2nd PART OF 3rd SESSION, APRIL-MAY 1948

The group of territories that made up the former Italian colonies -- Libya, Italian Somaliland and Eritrea -- was one of the few areas, if one leaves aside the Trust Territories, in which the U.N. had a direct role in shaping constitutional changes.<sup>9</sup>

For clarity in presentation we shall treat each area separately, even though the General Assembly had them grouped. While our major concern is that of the attitude of Liberia vis-a-vis the fate of these colonies, we must place her position in the context in which it was taken.

### Libya

Opinions expressed in the Assembly's First Committee were for the most part in favor of a unified and fully sovereign Libya incorporating Tripolitania, the Fezzan and Cyrenaica. The method of achieving this status, however, was the subject of lengthy debate.

The American representative said that any decision on Libya's future must be guided by the two basic principles of Chapter XI of the Charter that of primary interests of the inhabitants, and the need to safeguard international peace and security. In applying this to Libya he suggested that the Assembly speedily grant full

9. The others are the Netherlands East Indies, Palestine and North Korea. See Sady, U.N. and Dependent Peoples, 44.

independence because the inhabitants were advanced in self-government. But there was a further consideration -- the region was of strategic importance in the balance of power in the Mediterranean and the Near East. As such it should be placed under the U.N. Trusteeship System.<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Gromyko, the Soviet representative held the view that the administering powers (Britain and France) were devoting their attention to transforming the former Italian colony into strategic military bases for the armed forces of the United States and the United Kingdom. In that regards he cited a statement in The Economist (Aug. 1948) touching the strategic importance of Libya in the Eastern Mediterranean. He called for the establishment of a U.N. Trusteeship with the Trusteeship Council appointing an administrator, the latter being directly responsible for the Council.<sup>11</sup>

Liberia proposed independence for Libya following a period of U.N. Trusteeship, with the United Kingdom as the administering authority until such time as the U.N. could find a better formula for administering the territory.<sup>12</sup>

Several draft resolutions were submitted<sup>13</sup> -- A/C. 1/455, submitted by Iraq, recommended immediate independence for Libya. It was rejected 20-22-8 with Liberia and Ethiopia abstaining, while Egypt voted in favor.

An Indian draft (A/C. 1/448) would have Libya placed under U.N. collective Trusteeship, with independence or union with adjacent territories according to the expressed wishes of the people. This eventually would be after a period of not less than ten years, and not more than twenty years. The first and second parts of the paragraph were both rejected 19-29-9 and 33-4-20, respectively.

Egypt proposed several amendments to the sub-committee's<sup>14</sup> recommendations. A first amendment (A/C. 1/468) called for the deletion of the provision granting Libya independence provided the Assembly decided that this move was appropriate. It was rejected 20-17-21. A second amendment wished a replacement of the sub-committee's proposals for individual trusteeship for each of Libya's three regions by a plan that would place a United Libya under U.N. Trusteeship. The Egyptian

10. United Nations, Official Records of the General Assembly (ORGA), 238th Meeting (Mtg.) 1949, 6.

11. Ibid, 240th Mtg., April 9, 1949, 22-23. See also U.N. Doc. A/C. 1/433.

12. U.N., ORGA, First Committee, 245th Mtg., 19 April 1949, 71.

13. Yearbook of the United Nations, 1948-49, 258.

14. The sub-committee or "subcommittee 15" was created by the First Committee to coordinate the latter's deliberations on the item: disposal of the Former Italian Colonies.

amendment proposed the conferral of the functions of the administering authority on five powers including Egypt. The first part of the amendment was rejected 32-10-17.

The sub-committee studied the various draft resolutions and proposals submitted to the First Committee, and it presented draft resolution A/C. 1/466 providing for Libya's independence after ten years under U. N. trusteeship. Recommended as the administering authorities were Britain (Cyrenaica), France (the Fezzan), and Italy (Tripolitania).

Paragraph by paragraph the provisions of the sub-committee's amended draft resolution was voted upon. The first operative (a) paragraph calling for U. N. trusteeship for Cyrenaica with Britain as the administering authority was adopted 35-17-5. The second operative (b) paragraph calling for U. N. trusteeship for the Fezzan with France as the administering authority was adopted 32-16-9. The third operative paragraph (c) calling for U. N. trusteeship for Tripolitania by the end of 1951 with Italy as the administering authority, and providing that during the interim period Britain would administer the region with the assistance of an Advisory Council of six members, was adopted 32-17-8.

This was embodied in the First Committee's report to the Assembly (A/873) and formed the basis for debate in the plenary session.

While the United States and France would accept the report as it stood, most of the other members harboured reservations on specifics. Especially controversial was the proposal that Italy return to Libya as the administering authority for the Tripolitanian region.

At the 217th meeting of the Assembly's plenary session (May 17, 1949) Liberia's representative, Mr. Henry Ford Cooper was given the podium. Speaking pointedly to the question of Italy's return to Libya and the overall spirit in which proposed draft A/873 was arrived at, Cooper said that despite all the principles of democracy embodied in the U. N. Charter and other documents of relevance to the issue, draft A/873 was tantamount to saying that "democracy" was another word for "oppression." The proposed draft was saying in effect that self-determination was the right only of the strong, that the world was under the dominion of the god of the golden calf, upon whose altar must be sacrificed all that was just, all that was human, in order to appease its insatiable appetites.<sup>15</sup>

It needs to be recalled here that Italy, in the eyes of the West had returned to respectability with the 1948 election victory of the Social Democrats and the defeat of

15. U. N., ORGA, 217th Mtg. of Plenary Session, 569.



the Communists. This, together with other points of differences between West and East reflected in the sub-committee's proposal, was what Mr. Cooper had reference to in part -- the question of power politics. Liberia's anti-colonial stance did not set well with this big-power diplomacy. And so Cooper called for a return to first principles -- the U.N. Charter and the terms of the Peace Treaty with Italy.

The proposed resolution was at variance with both of the above mentioned instruments (Charter and Peace Treaty). Continuing his statement, Mr. Cooper referred to paragraph I of the proposed resolution providing for Italy's administration of Tripolitania under the U.N. until 1951. He said that the appointment of an advisory council for the interim period (1949-1951) at the end of which it would be decided whether the democratic favour of Italy was still tainted by fascism. If Italy required three years of experience in democracy before it could be entrusted with the administration of Libya, why did not the same principles apply to former Italian Somaliland?<sup>16</sup> That question had not been answered.<sup>17</sup>

Amendments and proposals along the lines of those made in committee were submitted in plenary. The pattern of expression in committee was repeated in plenary.

Part A of the First Committee's report (A/873), was amended, was voted upon by paragraphs. The proposal to grant Libya independence after ten years was adopted 48-8-0, Liberia, voting in favor.

The proposals calling for British and French administration (under U.N. Trusteeship) of Cyrenaica (a) and the Fezzan (b) were adopted by vote of 36-17-6 and 36-15-7, respectively.

At the 218th plenary meeting, oral amendments by Argentina and Iraq regarding the suggested Advisory Council to assist in the administration of Tripolitania were adopted, but the Committee's proposal, as amended, that Tripolitania be placed under U.N. Trusteeship by the end of 1951, with Italy as the administering authority, failed the two-thirds majority required. It was rejected 33-17-8.

The third session of the General Assembly ended with Libya's future essentially undecided.

16. Italy was suggested as the administering authority for Somaliland placed under U.N. Trusteeship for a ten-year period.

17. U.N., ORGA, 217th Mtg. of Plenary Session, 270.

TABLE I  
TABLE SAMPLING AFRICAN VOTES ON THE FUTURE OF LIBYA  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY - 3rd SESSION

	IRAQI DRAFT		INDIAN DRAFT PARA. 2		EGYPTIAN AMENDMENT to 1st PART of 1st PARA. of SUB-COM-		EGYPTIAN AMENDMENT to REST of PARA. I of SUB-COMMIT- TEE DRAFT		SUB-COMMITTEE 15 DRAFT		
									Line (a)	Line (b)	Line (c)
	1st COMMITTEE	PLENARY	1st COMMITTEE	PLENARY	1st COMMITTEE	PLENARY	1st COMMITTEE	PLENARY	1st COMMITTEE PLENARY	1st COMMITTEE PLENARY	1st COMMITTEE PLENARY
LIBERIA	A	Y	A	-	A	Y	A	A	Y Y	N Y	A A
EGYPT	Y	Y	A	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	N N	N N	N N
ETHIOPIA	A	A	A	-	A	Y	A	A	A A	Y Y	N A
	R	R	R		R	AD	R	R		AD	AD
	22-20-8	27-23-9	33-4-20		20-17-21	36-16-8	32-10-17	41-10-8	35-17-5	36-17-6	32-16-9
									36-15-17		36-17-8
									33-17-18		

## Key to Votes

Y = YES

R = REJECTED

N = NO

A = ABSTAIN

AD = ADOPTED

Former Italian Somaliland

The prevailing views in the First Committee were that the territory be placed under U.N. Trusteeship as a step to ultimate independence. Italy was most frequently suggested as the administering authority. Truly, Africa was still under the colonial yoke. But the three African states then members of the U.N., which included Liberia, tried to speak on Africa's behalf.

The Liberian position at this point was that Italian Somaliland be placed under Trusteeship with Britain as the administering authority. If the British were to decline the responsibility then Ethiopia was to be substituted. Incidentally, Ethiopia's original stance on the matter was that she be charged with administration on behalf of the U.N. Liberia was firmly opposed to any form of administrative responsibility for Italy.<sup>18</sup>

Several draft proposals were submitted by the nations. After examining the various proposals and drafts, the sub-committee recommended to the First Committee (A/C. 1/466) that the territory be placed under U.N. Trusteeship with Italy as the administering authority. The Committee adopted this by a vote of 36-17-5.

Between the 216th and the 219th plenary sessions, the question was reviewed on the basis of the General Committee's report (A/873).

The proposal to have Italy administer the territory was vigorously opposed by a number of Afro-Asian representatives, among them, Liberia's Ambassador Henry Ford Cooper. These representatives emphasized the objections which had been recorded by many groups of the indigenous population of the territory.

Ambassador Cooper was suspicious of the motives behind the proposed solution regarding Somaliland. If the intention was to grant complete independence to the people of that territory, why was not a date fixed for the end of the period of trusteeship as had been done in the case of Libya? Cooper was fearful lest Somaliland under trusteeship and administered by Italy be transformed, "by an automatic and imperceptible process," into a colony.<sup>19</sup>

Liberia desired immediate independence for Somaliland. If the General Assembly considered the territory unprepared, then Liberia would propose the following amendment to paragraph two of the Committee's recommendations: "that former Italian Somaliland be placed under the International Trusteeship System, with Italy as the administering authority for a period of fifteen years, after which time the General

18. Yearbook of the United Nations, 1948-49, 58-59.

19. U.N. ORGA, 217th Mtg. of Plenary Session, 2nd part, 3rd Session, 570.

Assembly will consider whether the inhabitants have made significant progress to warrant their independence."20

The rejection of this amendment, Cooper said, would leave Liberia with no alternative but to refrain from being a party to a decision contrary to all the assurances that had been given. As an African state, Liberia could not support a plan which threatened the peoples of Africa with permanent subjugation.<sup>21</sup> The Liberian amendment was rejected 23-19-9, and Liberia, true to its word, voted against the Committee's proposal.

TABLE II

TABLE SAMPLING AFRICAN VOTES ON THE FUTURE OF SOMALILAND  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY - 3rd SESSION

	SOVIET DRAFT	INDIAN DRAFT	IRAQI DRAFT	SUB-COMMITTEE DRAFT		
	Paragraphs					
	A			B		
	1st Committee	1st Committee	1st Committee	1st Committee	1st Committee	Plenary
LIBERIA	A	A	A	A	N	N
EGYPT	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
ETHIOPIA	Y	A	Y	N	N	N
	33-14-10 R	29-19-9 R	36-12-10 R	46-4-15 R	36-17-5 AD	35-19-4 R

Y = YES

R = REJECTED

N = NO

A = ABSTAIN

AD = ADOPTED

20. Ibid. ; Doc. A/886.

21. Ibid., 571

What seems like a slight contradiction is the fact that Liberia had declared in Committee eternal hostility toward Italy having any responsibility in the administration of the territory. How is it then, that she suggested a fifteen year Italian administration of the territory under U.N. trusteeship during discussion in plenary? Was this only a reflection of her preoccupation with the question of a fixed date? Former Secretary of State, J. Rudolph Grimes<sup>22</sup> would probably explain this by reference to the give-and-take of international parliamentary democracy. The temptation is great to link this *mini volte face* with mild pressures from the United States, whose representative was of the opinion that Italy was entitled to bear its share of the great task of assisting the peoples of Africa in their political and economic evolution.<sup>23</sup> Liberia's "no" vote on the Committee's proposal, however, left the original stand intact.

The fourth General Assembly's deliberations on Italian Somaliland were concluded following the rejection by 35-19-4 of the sub-committee's draft regarding that territory. The draft failed because it did not meet the two-thirds majority requirement.

#### Eritrea

Opinions advanced in the First Committee were predominately in favor of incorporating part of Eritrea into Ethiopia. Wide disagreement developed, however, regarding the exact areas involved. Independence was not a serious issue. Because Liberia's initial position on this issue was almost wholly in accord with Ethiopian claims, we shall first outline the Ethiopian attitude.

It was during the second part of the third session of the General Assembly that the Ethiopian representative, Mr. Ato Abte-Wold Akloulou, stressed the importance of the question to his country. According to the summary record of the 238th meeting of the First Committee, the Ethiopian delegate considered that it was democratic and liberal Italy which before the days of fascism, had devoted itself to detailed and methodical preparation for the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935-1936 by invading Eritrea in 1885, and then invading Ethiopia in 1894-1895 and 1895-1896. The starting point of the invasion of 1935-1936 lay both in Eritrea and in former Italian Somaliland. Ethiopia still feared Italy for the policy of pressure and imperialism which she had already displayed. This consideration and the fact that the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia had a common historical origin made the union of the two territories the only natural solution.

22. The writer had an interview with Tubman's last Secretary of State in New York at the Liberian Mission to the United Nations in the Fall of 1971.

23. Yearbook of the United Nations, 1949, 262.

Ethiopia advocated such a move.<sup>24</sup>

Indian and Iraqi draft resolutions separately calling for the dispatch to Eritrea of a U.N. Commission to determine the wishes of the people, as to whether they desired to be united with Ethiopia, were both rejected.

TABLE III  
TABLE SAMPLING AFRICAN VOTES ON THE FUTURE OF  
ERITREA, GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 3rd SESSION

	SOVIET DRAFT	INDIAN DRAFT	IRAQI DRAFT	SUB-COMM. 15 PARAGRAPH 1st PART		PARAGRAPH 2nd PART	
	1st Comm.	1st Comm.	1st Comm.	1st Comm.	Plenary	1st Comm.	Plenary
LIBERIA	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	A	Y
EGYPT	A	A	A	Y	Y	Y	Y
ETHIOPIA	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
	31-12-11 <u>R</u>	33-4-20 <u>R</u>	35-12-12 <u>R</u>	36-6-15 <u>AD</u>	37-11-10 <u>AD</u>	19-16-21 <u>R</u>	28-22-8 <u>R</u>

Key to Votes

Y = YES

R = REJECTED

N = NO

A = ABSTAIN

AD = ADOPTED

24. U.N. ORGA, First Committee, 238th Meeting, 13-14.

Provisions approaching those proposed for Libya were contained in a Soviet draft (A/C. /433-Rev. 1), with the added provision conceding that Ethiopia have an outlet to the sea through the port of Assab. That too was rejected.

The recommendations (A/C/ 1/466) of the sub-committee contained the following: (a) that Eritrea (not including the western province) be incorporated into Ethiopia under terms and conditions which would include providing adequate guarantees for the protection of minorities and, without prejudice to the sovereignty of Ethiopia, appropriate municipal charters for the cities of Asmara and Massawa; (b) that the western province be incorporated into the adjacent Sudan (then a British possession).<sup>25</sup>

When the vote was taken in the First Committee, part one of paragraph three, or (a) above, was adopted 36-6-15, while part two, or (b) was rejected 19-16-21. The voting was somewhat repeated in plenary. This time the first part was adopted by 37-11-10. Part two was rejected 28-22-8.

Upon the rejection of the First Committee's draft resolution as a whole, the General Assembly decided in resolution 287 (III) to postpone discussion of the item until the fourth regular session.

#### CONSIDERATION BY THE 4th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (1949)

The Assembly's unfinished business regarding the former Italian colonies was taken up during the 4th session.

#### Libya Solution

In the First Committee most member states spoke in favor of self-government for Libya following a brief period of transition. Ambassador Cooper said that Liberia would support the proposed solution for Libya as it stood because of its basic interest in the independence of Libya, "notwithstanding the form of its future Government."<sup>26</sup>

25. Yearbook of the United Nations, 1949, 20.

26. Here Cooper meant that Liberia had reservations about a proposed unitary Libya implied in the draft resolution. In fact, Liberia supported a British amendment that would have left the question of governmental form entirely up to the people of Libya. Most knowledgeable observers saw the British proposal as an attempt to balkanize an independent Libya in order to maintain western divided influence. See Pelt, Libyan Independence, 99-102.

Cooper also mentioned that the sub-committee's recommendations regarding Libya were in conformity with the U.N. Charter and the Peace Treaty with Italy.<sup>27</sup>

Sub-committee 17, appointed by the General Committee to coordinate drafts and suggestions, submitted to the latter a draft resolution regarding the disposal of the former Italian colonies. With minor amendments, the draft was adopted in Committee by a vote of 50-0-6, with the three African states of Liberia, Ethiopia, and Egypt. voting in favor. This near-unanimous acceptance of the proposed solution was repeated during the plenary session where the vote was 49-0-9. Because of the importance of resolution 289 (IV/A) for Libyan independence we take the liberty to quote relevant portions.

The General Assembly...with respect to Libya recommends: that Libya, comprising Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan, shall be constituted an independent and sovereign state; that this independence shall become effective as soon as possible and in any case not later than 1 January 1951; that a constitution for Libya, including the form of the Government, shall be determined by representatives of the inhabitants of Cyrenaica. Tripolitania and the Fezzan meeting and consulting together in a National Assembly; that for the purpose of assisting the people of Libya in the formulation of the constitution and the establishment of an independent Government, there shall be a United Nations Commissioner in Libya appointed by the General Assembly and a Council to aid and advise him... "28

It was thus that the people of Libya were given an opportunity to prepare for their independence and determine the shape of their future state. The implementation of the resolution is not within the scope of this study.<sup>29</sup> It will suffice to conclude that once the U. N. had declared on the matter, the mechanism for implementing the resolution was at once set in motion. On the 24th of December 1951 Libya became an independent state.

27. U. N., ORGA, 314th Meeting, First Committee, November 7, 1949, 204.

28. Yearbook of the U. N., 1949, 275-276 for full text of the resolution.

29. For details on this see the important and comprehensive work of Pelt, Libyan Independence, especially beginning with Chapter Two. (Pelt served as U. N. Commissioner for Libya).



Italian Somaliland

On the question of Somaliland the 4th General Assembly's discussion centered around Section B (Somaliland) of the sub-committee's draft A/C. 1/522. It recommended that the territory be an independent state, with independence to become effective at the end of ten years under U.N. Trusteeship with Italy as the administering authority. Responsibility for drafting a trusteeship agreement for submission to the Assembly was left to the administering authority and the Trusteeship Council.<sup>30</sup>

No less than seventeen amendments to the draft resolution were proposed in addition to a number of oral amendments. Ethiopia and Liberia were highly critical of the draft. Ethiopia warned that to leave the proposed solution as it stood would give rise to troubles in East Africa for many years to come.<sup>31</sup>

During the 314th meeting of the First Committee the Liberian representative registered his country's disapproval of the sub-committee's proposal. Ambassador Henry Ford Cooper remarked that Whereas in the case of Libya and Eritrea, the interests and welfare of the indigenous people constituted the guiding principle, Somaliland represented the consolation of Italy for the loss of its two former colonies. That had become the paramount concept when the future of Somaliland was being considered by the sub-committee. The Liberian delegation was not sure as to whether the Somalis would welcome such a solution despite the many attributes given the new democratic Italy. The representatives of Somaliland did not seem to be impressed by the new title given to Italy since the return of that country to Somaliland symbolized to them the return of foreign rule. The Ambassador assured his audience that Liberia had no quarrel with Italy but that Liberia's policy was guided by the wishes of the inhabitants of the territory. Those wishes, as far as Liberia saw them, were not reflected in the sub-committee's report.<sup>32</sup>

There was no substantial change of position when the plenary session took up the question.<sup>33</sup> The British delegate did, however, succeed to an extent in reassuring the opposition to the proposed solution that Italy was returning to the area "under the arc-lights of international publicity."<sup>34</sup>

30. Yearbook of the U.N., 1949, 266.

31. Ibid., 279. The Ethiopian delegate had specific references to the return of Italy to the area.

32. U.N. ORGA, Summary records, 314th Mtg., First Comm., Nov. 7, 1949, 204.

33. Liberia's Ambassador C.D.B. King reregistered his country's opposition to the plan at the 247th Mtg. of the plenary session on November 19, 1949.

34. Yearbook of the U.N., 1949, 273.

In the end, the "yeas" carried the day. By a vote of 48-7-3 Section B of the First Committee's draft resolution was adopted and became Resolution 289 (IB/B). It read in parts as follows:

The General Assembly...with respect to Italian Somaliland recommends: that Italian Somaliland shall be an independent sovereign state; that this independence shall become effective at the end of ten years from the date of the approval of a Trusteeship Agreement by the General Assembly; that during the period mentioned in paragraph two, Italian Somaliland shall be placed under the International Trusteeship System with Italy as the Administering Authority; that the Administering Authority shall be aided and advised by an Advisory Council composed of representatives of the following states: Columbia, Egypt and the Philippines...<sup>35</sup>

Egypt voted in favor of the resolution. Ethiopia against, and Liberia abstained. The Liberian abstention rather than a categorical "no" vote is not easy to understand. Could one not attribute it to a reconsidered position in the light of the British assurance above mentioned, and in spite of the earlier somewhat categorical position?

Since the resolution's implementation does not here concern us, let it simply be recalled that the former Italian Somaliland (to which was attached British Somaliland) became an independent state in 1960.

#### Eritrea

As for Eritrea, the 4th session of the General Assembly registered differences of opinion much more pronounced than in either of the two other cases (Libya and Somaliland). There was, however, a consensus that showed a real desire to respond to Ethiopia's claim.

Section C (Eritrea) of the sub-committee's draft provided for the establishment of a Commission to ascertain more amply the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants and to examine the question of its disposal. A further stipulation was that a report and proposal or proposals be communicated to the Secretary General not later than June 15, 1950.

35. Yearbook of the United Nations, 1949, 276.

During the debate in the First Committee, Liberia indicated support for the draft, especially the provision for the dispatch of a Commission to verify the desires of the inhabitants of the area. Ethiopia, the state most directly involved, remained opposed to all solutions that fell short of purely and simply placing Eritrea under the Ethiopian Crown.

When the final vote was taken the proposed draft was carried by a vote of 47-5-6. Egypt voted in favor, while Liberia and Ethiopia abstained. Liberia abstained probably to show solidarity with Ethiopia, for she had said that she would support the original draft resolution.

The stipulation in Resolution 289 (IV/C) that a Commission be sent to Eritrea to study the situation and make recommendations by the time the 5th General Assembly met, was the note on which the 4th General Assembly ended its debate on Eritrea.

#### CONSIDERATION OF ERITREA BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, FIFTH SESSION, 1950 (SOLUTION)

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The U. N. Commission for Eritrea submitted its report in keeping with Resolution 289 (IV/C). Being unable to report a unanimous conclusion, the Commission's submissions consisted of two memoranda; one submitted by three of its members (Burma, Norway and South Africa), and the other by the remaining two (Guatemala and Pakistan).<sup>36</sup>

As the Ad Hoc Political Committee, to which the matter was referred, met to study the question, five draft resolutions were submitted, the most important of which was a fourteen-power draft, that had Liberia and the United States among the joint sponsors. Draft resolution A/AC. 38/L. 37 & Correspondence 1 recommended a detailed plan by which Eritrea would constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia and under Ethiopian sovereignty. The joint draft provided for a transition period not to extend beyond 15 September 1952, during which the necessary constitutional arrangements would be made with full U. N. assistance.<sup>37</sup>

In his intervention in the debate in the Ad Hoc Political Committee, the Liberian representative noted that owing to the varying opinions of the Eritrean population, it was very difficult to determine the exact wishes of the people. Incidentally, according to the report (U. N. Commission on Eritrea), the various Eritrean political

36. Yearbook of the United Nations, 1950, 363. The memoranda are here summarized.

37: Yearbook of the United Nations, 1950, 364.

parties claimed to represent the views of 3,500,000 members, whereas the total population was estimated at only one million.<sup>38</sup>

After ruling out a plebiscite because of the "backwardness" of the population the Liberian delegate stressed that considerations other than the wishes of the people must be resorted to. In that regard he stressed certain facts. One was that all members of the Commission had admitted that a sizeable part of the population had a certain affinity with the Ethiopian people. Another fact was that economically Eritrea could not stand alone. This too was a unanimous opinion of the Commission.<sup>39</sup>

In the light of those ethnic and economic considerations, and in view of the fact that it was impossible to ascertain the wishes of the population, Liberia felt that the solution of uniting Eritrea with Ethiopia by means of a federation was the most logical. Liberia would lend its support to the joint draft "provided the federation was carried out in such a manner as to take into account the legitimate claims and aspirations of the Ethiopian Government."<sup>40</sup>

The Ad Hoc Political Committee at its 55th meeting accepted by a vote of 38-14-8 the fourteen-power draft, in addition to a five-power draft (A/AC. 38L.59) calling for the establishment of a committee (member named) to nominate a candidate or candidates for the post of U.N. Commissioner for Eritrea. These then, formed the report of the Ad Hoc Political Committee to the General Assembly's plenary meeting.

With Ethiopia's declared acceptance of the federation plan, the Assembly proceeded to endorsing the Committee's report. The fourteen-power draft, part of the resolution A/1561/Add 1 was adopted as a whole by a vote of 46-10-4. It then became Resolution 390 (V/A). The rest of the Committee's report became Resolution 390 (V/B).

When in 1952 Eritrea was attached to Ethiopia by a federal link, Resolution 390 (V/A&B) was fully implemented.

38. U.N., ORGA, Ad Hoc Pol. Committee, 39th Mtg., 235.

39. Ibid, 236.

40. Ibid.

TABLE IV

TABLE SAMPLING AFRICAN VOTES ON THE FUTURE OF  
ERITREA, GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 5th SESSION (1950)

	PAKISTANI DRAFT 1st Paragraph Committee	IRAQI DRAFT 1st Operative Para-Committee	14 - POWER DRAFT	
			Committee	Plenary
LIBERIA	N	N	Y	Y
EGYPT	A	A	Y	Y
ETHIOPIA	N	N	Y	Y
	29-16-14 <u>R</u>	28-21-11 <u>R</u>	38-14-8 <u>AD</u>	46-10-4 <u>AD</u>

## Key to Votes

Y = YES

N = NO

AD = ADOPTED

R = REJECTED

A = ABSTAIN

CONCLUSIONS

Disagreement among the major powers following the post-war settlement was the most immediate and perhaps the basic reason why the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies was placed before the United Nations General Assembly. It is understandable then, that the big power differences which led to the U. N. being seized with the question would be reflected in the deliberations. The positions taken by the Afro-Asian states pointed to two main factors: the interests of the major powers and the individual or collective interests of Afro-Asia.

As for big power interests, it must be recalled that these fell under the gathering shadows of the cold war. It was during this period (late 1940's early 1950's) that the Soviet Union's expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean -- Greece and Turkey -- led to American reaction in the form of the Truman Doctrine. Winning over Afro-Asia to their respective positions in this war for power and influence became crucial

to the American and Soviet blocs.

But the individual or group interests of Afro-Asian states were also significant determinants. For Liberia, it appears, ending European colonial rule over Africa was the overriding principle. Throughout the debate on the disposal of the former Italian colonies, the Liberian core position remained directed to rapid independence for the territories concerned, or on solutions with that objective.

This anti-colonial stand was, however, tempered by another facet of Liberian policy -- policy affinity with the West. It was this latter consideration that led Liberia to equivocate prior to the final voting on the fate of Somaliland. Liberia had indicated its opposition to the designation of Italy as the administering authority for the territory. Rather than casting a categorical "no" vote in the end, Liberia abstained. This Liberian abstention was perhaps a direct response to British reassurances that Italy was returning to Africa under the light of international publicity. Ought there be much difficulty in linking this to mild pressures from the United States?

In this early stage of the diplomatic war to rid Africa of European colonial rule, Liberia attempted, and to some extent succeeded, in identifying with the aspirations of newly emerging Africa. This attitude was to be taken even further following the Accra deliberations of 1958. This instance of positivism in the Liberian stand, notwithstanding, when one looks at the pro-West leanings of the Liberian regime, the following observation emerges: there seemed no serious clash between the two major facets of Liberian policy primarily because of the nature and time of the case. Despite the often forceful manner of Liberian expression, the final solutions were not harmful to the interests of the West.

# A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF MEDICAL PRACTICES IN TWO KPELLE TRANSITIONAL COMMUNITIES

Timothy T. Ross

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this preliminary study is to understand better the medical treatment practices in two Kpelle communities in northeastern Liberia. This study hopes to elucidate through a sample population of parents in two age groups, each group further divided into men and women's groups, the treatment response pattern to a list of ten illnesses common to the area. The four parent groups were asked to respond to what treatment practice would be used after home medicine was found ineffective, and which of those would be used for a series of eight age groups ranging from a newborn infant to an elderly inactive adult. This study hopes to further previous research (Orr, 1968; O'Grady, 1969; Sharp, 1969; Gay, 1973) in the understanding of decision making processes, and factors characterizing Kpelle medical treatment practices.

## WORKING HYPOTHESIS

It was hypothesized that patterns of medical treatment practices in two Kpelle communities sampled would be characterized by the following:

- I. The greatest frequency of traditional medical treatments reported by parents 20-40 years of age would occur in the treatment of the very young newborn infant, because of supernatural beliefs surrounding child-birth and serious illnesses in the time shortly thereafter.
- II. A high frequency of traditional medical treatment would exist in the treatment of the elderly who as a group would have more traditional medical beliefs, and are outside the control of the parents' decision-making process.

- III. The greatest frequency of traditional medical treatment reported by the four parent groups sampled, would be in the women and older age group as possessing a greater tendency toward traditional medical treatment with a more conservative attitude toward Western medical treatment.

## METHODS

The information for this study was gathered from two agriculturally based, neighboring Kpelle villages, Sinyea and Galai, seven miles south of Gbarnga, the county government center of Bong County of northeastern Liberia. The two communities are located on a secondary road, approximately one and four miles, respectively, off the main road and the same distance from Phebe Hospital, the major Western health care center in the area.

The questionnaire concerning medical treatment was administered through a systematic randomized sampling of households, designed to insure an equal spatial representation of all areas in the two villages. A total sample of 114 parents was made forming two age groups; the first parent group 20-30 years of age, the second 31-40 years of age, with each age group subdivided into men and women's groups. The ethnic composition of the sample was 106 Kpelle, (93%) and 8 representing five other Liberian tribes, (7%). Every parent between the ages of 20 and 40 years of age present in the sample households was questioned. The total sample size represents 31% in Galai and 20% in Sinyea of the total parent population, 20-40 years of age, in these two villages.

The medical treatment section presented to the parents was set up in a tabular form with the ten illnesses on the vertical axis, the eight age groups reading left to right, ranging from a newborn infant to an elderly inactive adult. Great attention was given to establish conceptual and linguistic equivalence of the questionnaire items; the pretesting combined back translation and field interviewing. The original questionnaire was translated into Kpelle; then another translator independently translated this Kpelle version back into English (back translation). Original and retranslated English versions were compared and any discrepancies clarified and corrected. The Kpelle version was then pretested in interviews with individuals, with probes used to assess the meaning of the questions and terms. The back translation attempted to reach linguistic equivalence, while the field interviewing attempted to approach conceptual equivalence in the meaning of the questions and terms. Five treatment choices were offered as possible responses and assigned a numeral. They are as follows: (1) country or Kpelle doctor (a local bonesetter or herbatist), (2) strong zoe (powerful medicine man), (3) kwii or Western doctor (paramedic, assistant, or village clinic nurse), (4) kwii or Western hospital (Western physicians and hospital staff); other treatment responses and cases where no treatment would be attempted are specified as such and given a value of zero. This survey method provided for the collection of treatment responses to each illness for each of eight age groups. The mean was then calculated for each age and illness and these



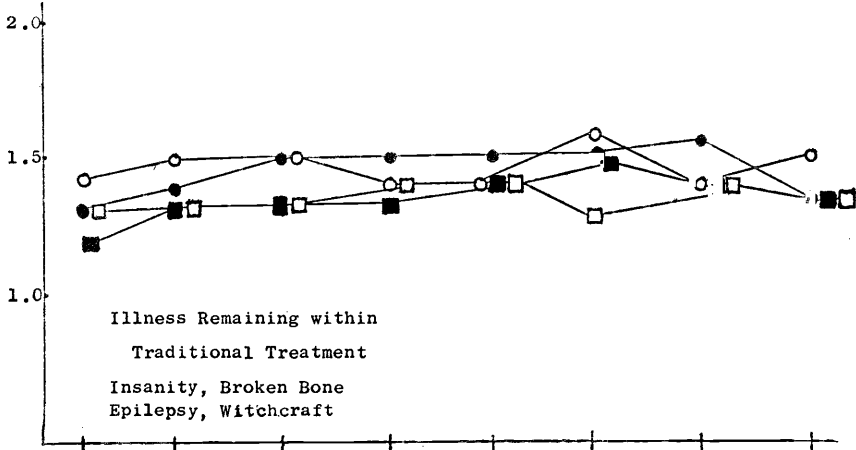
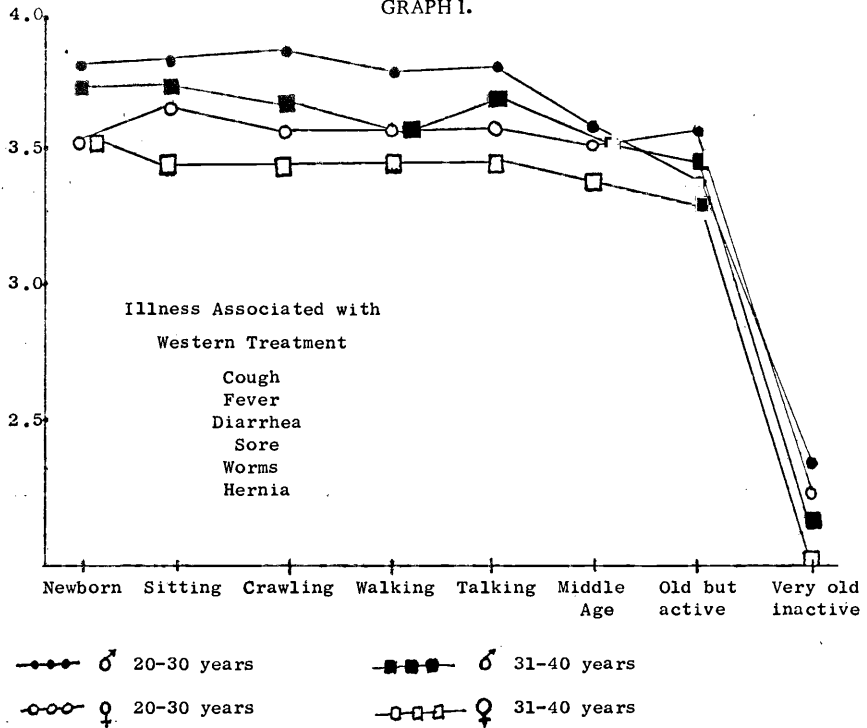
## QUESTIONNAIRE

What medical treatment would be used for each of the following if home medicine was found to be ineffective?

	Newborn	Sitting	Crawling	Walking	Talking	Getting Old	Old but Active	Very Old Inactive
Severe Cough								
High Fever								
Severe Diarrhea								
Severe Sore								
Hernia								
Worms								
Witchcraft								
Broken Bone								
Insanity								
Epilepsy								

Treatment Choices: 1. Country doctor      4. Kwii hospital  
 2. Strong zoe                                      5. Other - please name  
 3. Kwii doctor

GRAPH 1.



were represented graphically. The relative numerical scale is constructed so that a mean value of 2 or less indicates the general response of a traditional treatment. A mean value of greater than 2 would indicate the general response of a Western treatment.

Biases in the sample may have arisen in the following ways: first, the sample may be somewhat less than truly representative due to the number of parents which remain on the farm during the farm working season (when this sample was taken) which would prevent them from being represented in the sample. Secondly, a small number of those questioned openly refused to respond or were uncooperative to our questioning. Thirdly, age estimates were, at times, only approximate, since many of those sampled did not know their age in years.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample population of parents, 20-40 years of age, in this study represents an important segment as far as influencers of behavior and as decision makers in the community. This group's realm of decision making, as seen in these results, seem to extend to their own peer group, to those younger, and to their children.

The results from the survey show a pattern not entirely predicted or foreseen in the initial hypothesis. The findings, shown graphically, illustrate the consistently high incidence of kwii (Western) medical treatment for six illnesses in all age levels, with the exception of the last two adult age categories, where there is a significant drop into the area of traditional medical treatment (graph 1).

Secondly, it is seen that for the 'illnesses' of witchcraft, broken bone, insanity, and epilepsy, a traditional medical treatment is sought. The contrast between the first six and the last four illnesses can be readily seen (graph 2). These results are consistent with other findings, (Sharp, 1969; Gay, 1973).

Thirdly, the differences on the basis of sex and the two age groups show some significance, although differences are not as great as might have been predicted. The results indicate that women and the older age group reported a greater tendency toward traditional medical treatment, with a lower frequency of Western medical treatment.

In considering the results, two notable observations can be made. First, there is a significant drop from Western to traditional treatment in the last two adult age categories, while all other groups report preferences for Western medical treatment for these illnesses; second, there is generally a more traditional, less Western treatment preference indicated by women and the two older groups.

Of the parents sampled in this study, the group's realm of decision making seems to extend to their own peer group of parents, to those younger, and to their children. Their decision making does not seem to extend to older groups. Therefore, their own orientation and value system may not be imposed on this group. It has also been reported in this study that for persons falling in the oldest group, in serious cases, no treatment would be attempted, and they are not likely to be

brought to the Western hospital as patients. When seriously ill, their death is foreseen and hospitalization is viewed as a waste of funds (O'Grady, 1969).

Women as a group are likely to seek treatment for their children, yet are shown as being more conservative with respect to Western medical treatment. The differences by age group may be explained partially by the fact that persons attending the Western hospital are primarily young adults in the 25-30 age group (O'Grady, 1969) and by the fact that the older age group holds more firmly to traditional methods and beliefs.

#### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

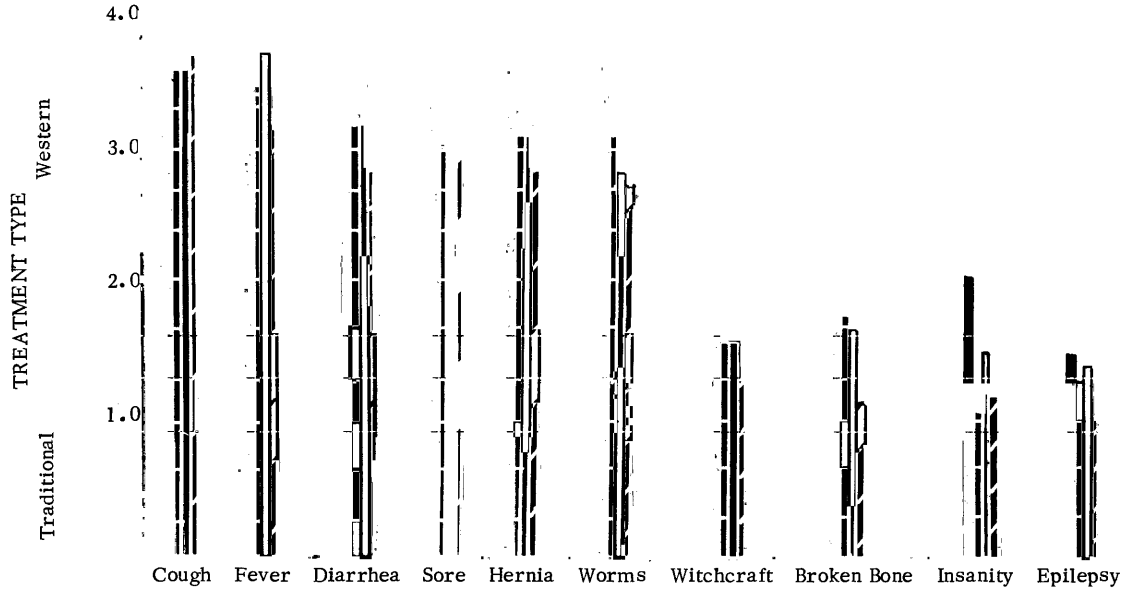
- I. In six of the illnesses, at all age levels, (with the exception of the last two adult age categories) there is a consistent preference for Western medical treatment. The contrast is great between these two groups of illnesses and their treatment.
- II. The reported differences on the basis of sex and the two age groups may be significant, although individual differences are not great.
  - A. In nine out of ten illnesses presented, the female parents, as a group, reported a more favorable response to traditional treatment.
  - B. In nine out of ten illnesses presented, the male parents, as a group, reported a more favorable response to Western treatment.
  - C. In eight out of ten illnesses presented, the older, 31-40 years female parents group reported the most favorable response to traditional medical treatment.
  - D. In seven out of ten illnesses presented, the younger, 20-30 years male parents group reported the most favorable response to Western medical treatment.

#### CONCLUSION

Medical practices of the Kpelle are deeply centered in the family, social tradition and consciousness of the people. Traditional medical treatments show a number of diverse forms which include charms, herbs, divination, secret societies, and evil medicine, which, ipso facto, lends difficulty to the study of medical practices.

This study found that the Western hospital played a role for the people as an alternative to home medicine for the illnesses of cough, fever, diarrhea and other common ailments, as well as being a respected place for operations and diseases which cause longterm disability for physical work. Common illnesses, then, which are easily treated, are in principle taken directly to the hospital. Maladies involving spiritual beliefs must be treated by a zoe or other strong healer in the

# TREATMENT RESPONSE FOR TEN COMMON ILLNESSES



GRAPH 2.

MEDICAL TREATMENT PRACTICES

20-30 years ♂  
20-30 years ♀

31-40 years ♂  
31-40 years ♀

TREATMENT CHOICES  
1. Country doctor  
2. Strong zoe  
3. Kwii doctor  
4. Kwii hospital

village. Primarily the zoe is sought for the treatment in cases of insanity, epilepsy, witchcraft, and chronic illnesses where the malady is attributed to the influence of spirits. Very infrequently is the zoe consulted for common illnesses. The Kpelle country doctor most often treats common illnesses, and also cases of broken bones and witchcraft. Home treatment is the form of the initial treatment, and when the patient is not in an acute condition. Home treatments for cough, fever, sore, diarrhea, worms, epilepsy and insanity have been found acceptable by approximately one-third of sampled household heads (Gay, 1973).

Kpelle medical beliefs, like other aspects of the Kpelle culture, consists of two levels (Sharp, 1969; Christianson, 1973; Gay, 1973) which are neither mutually exclusive nor contradictory. One level deals in medical practices on an overt level of direct symptoms, with definite intervention and modernizing decision making. The other level, that of the covert, about which nothing can be said publicly, is manifested in secret societies, traditional treatment and spiritual beliefs (Gay, 1973). This two-fold nature, then, becomes evident as two thought forms existing together in the Kpelle society. One form is an inductive self-conscious form, characterized by an outlook of tradition alteration and modernization. This form is typified by Western medical treatment in this study. The second is a tradition-conscious form, observed in the uncritical acceptance of custom, and maintained by supportive reinforcement from the society's tradition. This second form is represented in the diversity of traditional medical practices. On the society level, it is probable that in the future with increasing modernization, the inductive self-conscious thought form will increase in influence. This modernizing force could very well extend to other aspects of traditional life style in the society, producing a departure from the rich traditional past. In the process of transition, traditional medicine might well be reduced of spiritual significance, and Western medicine for a long time yet to come be viewed as mechanistic and an incomprehensible expression of the physical world.

On one hand is the Western overt medical practices that is increasing in acceptance and attractiveness, while on the other hand is the traditional covert and spiritual medical practices, secret-based and involving status. The Kpelle medical practices in this study display this twofold nature and are deeply imbedded in a complex order of social, emotional, and psychological factors whose influence extends to virtually all levels of the society.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Michael Cole, John Gay, Joseph A. Glick, and Donald W. Sharp. *THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF LEARNING AND THINKING: AN EXPLORATION IN EXPERIMENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY*. New York: Basic Books, 1971. 304 Pp. \$10.00

A product of a long-term interdisciplinary effort, *The Cultural Context of Learning and Thinking* was produced under the leadership of Michael Cole now of Rockefeller University and draws on psychology, anthropology, education, and linguistics in a lucidly written presentation admirably free of specialist jargon. Based on field research among the Kpelle, the numerically predominant people of Liberia, the authors apply anthropology in an attempt to understand African difficulties in learning Western mathematics. It is experimental in its approach and is consequently at the cutting edge of anthropological work.

Following an interdisciplinary review in introduction, the second chapter, "An Unorthodox Ethnography," is the anthropological heart of the book. Although it draws to some extent on the work of James Gibbs, particularly an unpublished court case that illustrates formal Kpelle argumentation, the authors found on the whole that the standard ethnographic approach was too broad for the "micro-ethnology" that they required. Information for various sources, including the authors' own field work, was selected with attention to the authors' special concern with understanding the relationship between features of Kpelle culture and individual learning and problem-solving processes. The dearth of appropriate data was a principal difficulty with the study, perhaps due to the fact that the team was essentially attempting to practice anthropology with limited background in the field. Even though the book is sub-titled as being "experimental anthropology," Cole is by training and experience a mathematical psychologist, Glick is a psychologist, and Sharp is a product of the interdisciplinary social science program at the University of California, Irvine. Only John Gay, who is formally a mathematician and an Episcopal missionary, is anthropologically oriented through his work at Cuttington College since 1958.

The anthropological theory brought to the task is not much more elaborate than the premise that "people will be good at doing the things that are important to them and that they have occasion to do often" and the doctrine of psychic unity that postulates no fundamental differences in thought processes among different human groups (page 214). A principal finding as reported in the conclusion is little more than the assertion that

If experiments are occasions to demonstrate the use of skills, then failure to apply the skills that we assume are used in natural contexts becomes, not an illustration of cultural inferiority, but rather a fact to be explained through study and further experimentation. We assume that in these cases, skills are available but for some reason the context does not trigger their use. (p. 217)

One can be fully in sympathy with this point of view and at the same time question whether this almost circular reasoning ignores the problem by explaining away any and all findings where Kpelle and Western performance would differ.

The third chapter turns to a selective study of the Kpelle language, focusing on

certain natural-world objects in the Kpelle noun system, rather than a complete analysis of the grammar and vocabulary which would have been beyond their means and would have taken attention from the main issues. The basis of their approach was a *Sen* (Kpelle for thing) chart in order to determine through experiments (including free association, sentence substitution, and sorting) how the Kpelle classify reality. The general chart shows a basic division between town things and forest things, and has some especially interesting features. Town things are sub-divided into playing things, people, town works, town animals, working things, and the earth. People include status and appearance as well as the expected categories children, adults, etc. Town animals include birds. The earth is a major subclass of both town and forest things. Among forest things the subclass water foods includes water, oil, and honey. Among forest things are the subclass evil things including poro head, sande head, fearful things, witches, genii, dwarfs, and spirits. Although the way in which the Kpelle classify reality appears to differ in some respects from a Western division, the authors fail to show how they build on this fact.

The fourth, fifth, and six chapters are the psychological heart of the book with seven complex psychological experiments presented in great detail which, however, provides very little in the way of useful results.

The seventh chapter, "Conclusions," might more appropriately be titled "Summary and Implications for American Minority Groups." No conclusions as such are presented, and it becomes apparent at this point in the book how considerable is the gap between the attempt and the results. The term "exploration" in the sub-title appears less modest.

In addition to the seven chapters forming the main body of the text, the book contains eleven appendices containing details considered necessary to support the psychological findings and an extensive and up-to-date bibliography of 160 items including no less than fourteen references to other works by the authors. The only errors noted were bibliographical: an incorrect citation to B. B. Murdock, Jr. (1962), rather than to G. P. Murdock (1969), page 31, and omission of Boas in the bibliography, although noted on page 215. The book has an adequate nine-page author and conceptual index.

The book is based on a particular problem in applied anthropology: Liberian tribal children experience a great deal of difficulty with Western mathematics. The goal of the research program was stated variously as learning about the kinds of mathematical knowledge that Kpelle children bring to school so that Western mathematics can be taught (p. xi) and helping Kpelle children break through the traditional unquestioning habits of authoritative justification.<sup>1</sup> It is not immediately

1. John H. Gay, "Education and Mathematics among the Kpelle of Liberia," (Paper presented at the Commission Interunions de l'Enseignement des Sciences, Dakar, January 18, 1965), 6.

apparent that Cole's team has helped us to find the keys to teaching the logical concepts of Western thought to a people whose intellectual framework has a radically dissimilar base. In personal conversation Cole implies that their success was limited to clearing away the intellectual garbage in our understanding of the Kpelle. They saw their basic task as disproving inaccurate views Westerners hold about the Kpelle. They did not meet anyone in Liberia, Cole says, whether Peace Corps teachers, missionaries, or other Liberians, who did not think that the Kpelle were stupid. Therefore, Cole and company set out to show that the Kpelle were not stupid, and in achieving this limited goal they were much more successful.

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Benjamin C. Dennis, THE GBANDES: A PEOPLE OF THE LIBERIAN HINTERLAND. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Company, 1972. 331 Pp. \$15.00.

Competent ethnographic accounts of indigenous peoples in Liberia are rare. The older works such as those by Westermann, Schwab, or Germann<sup>1</sup> were based on brief pioneer field work and have become outdated by the many changes which have occurred in the life of the people they studied. The findings of more recent research of the 1950s and '60s are contained in dissertations or articles on specific topics written largely for professional journals. They do not provide in easily accessible form a complete picture of the culture of any one ethnic group.<sup>2</sup> For two tribes found within Liberia, the Mende and the Kissi, one can turn to ethnographies which resulted from research among the same people in neighboring countries.<sup>3</sup> The information offered to a wider circle of readers in general works on Liberia only confirms our lack of easily available, up to date, coherent accounts of indigenous cultures.

Given this paucity of ethnographic material, the recent publication of The Gbandes should be welcomed. The work is one of only a few ethnographies written by trained social scientists who are themselves Africans. Professor Dennis has PhD degrees in both anthropology and sociology and, although himself Mende, he was closely associated with Gbande culture throughout his early years. This arouses one's expectations. Unfortunately, these expectations are unfulfilled.

As a former participant in the culture of the Gbande, Professor Dennis has had access to certain spheres of their life, their thought and values, which would be largely unavailable to an outside observer. He gives us interesting accounts of domestic life, glimpses into attitudes and relationships among kin and neighbors, information on socialization of children that come from personal experience. Gbande expressions of art, their folklore, and various crafts and skills are described in detail. The illustrations in the book are well done.

1. Diedrich H. Westermann, Die Kpelle: Ein Negerstamm in Liberia (Göttingen, 1921). See also Chaps. 5-9 in James L. Sibley and Diedrich H. Westermann, Liberia, Old and New : A Study of Its Social and Economic Background with Possibilities of Development (New York, 1928). George Schwab, Tribes of the Liberian Hinterland, edited with additional material by George W. Harley. Papers of the Peabody Museum, Vol. 31 (Cambridge, Mass., 1947). Paul Germann, Die Volkerstämme im Norden von Liberia (Leipzig, 1933).

2. An exception is the chapter on the Kpelle by Gibbs in the book he edited which provides a brief but comprehensive view of Kpelle culture. See James L. Gibbs, Jr. (Ed.), Peoples of Africa (New York, 1965), 197-240. Recent publications coming out of the Ethnographic Survey of Southeastern Liberia sponsored by the Tubman Center of African Culture in 1967 also furnish basic data on some Liberian peoples.

3. Kenneth Little, The Mende of Sierra Leone: A West African People in Transition, Revised edition (London, 1967); Denise Paulme, Les Gens du Riz: Kissi de Haute-Guinée Française (Paris, 1954).

Throughout much of the book, the reader gets the impression that Professor Dennis has written with a general audience in mind, one that he assumes has very little knowledge of African culture. This is commendable. Too few anthropologists write in a style directed to the nonprofessional. It is unfortunate that this attempt to explain aspects of Gbnde culture sometimes leads to a patronizing tone and to such gratuitous clarifications as, "Witches are not limited to women or old ladies on brooms, as witches are often portrayed by Western people(p. 240)." Nevertheless, this work furnishes information on a wide range of cultural features and portrays the life of the Gbnde with enthusiasm.

My misgivings and unfulfilled expectations derive from a serious flaw that runs throughout the book. Whether an ethnographer writes for the public at large or for his colleagues, it is incumbent upon him to be accurate in his presentation of data and precise in his use of the concepts and terminology of his discipline. If he is not, general readers are misinformed and his colleagues are exasperated. The Gbandes, unfortunately, both misinforms and exasperates.

For example, the maps in the book are inaccurate and therefore misleading for anyone unacquainted with Liberia. From the first map (p. 2) one receives the impression that the Gbnde occupy all of northwestern Liberia. The Loma, Kpelle, Gissie (Kissi) are all located in Guinea, and the Belle to the southwest of the Gbnde are placed in Gola territory. The second map (p. 11) identifies as "Cities of Gbandeland" such places as Vorjamine (Voinjama?), which the author rather arbitrarily transplants to Macenta, and Belleyallah (sic), which he confuses with Bopolu. One can, of course, always check for accuracy by referring to another map. But for other aspects of an ethnography . . . ?

Professor Dennis asserts that the Liberian hinterland, including the Gbnde area, "has the heaviest rainfall (p.4)." this will be news to the inhabitants of the Liberian littoral.<sup>4</sup> He twice says that the Gbnde practice "intensive" subsistence agriculture (pp. 4-5), but his subsequent description of the farming practice--which

4. The area occupied by the Gbnde has an average annual rainfall of 110 inches; coastal areas average 150 inches, and a high of 170 inches has been reported in Robertsport. See M. Sachtlér, General Report on National Forest Inventory in Liberia. Technical Report No. 1 of the German Forestry Mission to Liberia in Cooperation with the Bureau of Forest and Wildlife Conservation, Department of Agriculture, Republic of Liberia, 1968.

is, of course, extensive slash-and-burn cultivation--contradicts this statement.

There are other inconsistencies that do not inspire confidence in his handling of data. I mention only a few. At one point he writes, "The form of Gbnde marriage is polygyny. However not many Gbnde marriages are polygynous (p. 84)." Later he states, "Households are polygynous among the Gbndes ... (p. 93)." In a discussion of Gbnde political roles the author comments, "The district chiefs are now members of the Liberian Senate and House of Representatives (p. 258)," whereas three pages later while discussing the same chiefs he observes, "As yet, I know of no chief who has been selected from among the Gbndes for the House of Representatives (p. 261)." At one point, he refers to their membership "in Congress (p. 258)." In explaining the procedure for the selection of a paramount chief by ballot, Professor Dennis asserts that, "The position of paramount chief requires a college education and postgraduate work (p. 260)." Of course, this must be interpreted as either irony or wishful thinking, but the uninformed reader may well conclude that this is a criterion for selection, albeit an odd one.

When describing certain traditional practices or features of a culture, ethnographers are not always explicit as to whether these are still in force. In general, by the use of the present or past tense, Professor Dennis indicates when customs have changed. But there are some lapses which would lead the reader to believe, for instance, that all Gbnde men still wear traditional loin cloths and short gowns as daily dress (p. 59), that iron money is the only medium of exchange used in the markets at Kolahun and Bolahun (p. 63), and that official messages are still relayed by runner "from Monrovia" to government outposts in the Gbnde area (p. 163).

Even though the work is directed to a wide audience, there are some sections that are replete with scholarly discussion and vocabulary. The biggest problem that his colleagues in the social sciences will have with Professor Dennis's ethnography is the imprecise, or idiosyncratic, use of some technical terms. This is especially apparent in his treatment of social organization.

The author's use of accepted terminology in describing Gbnde residence patterns shows utter confusion (p. 94-95). His discussion of the kinship terms employed by "nephews and nieces" for "mother's brother" or "father's sister" is in error. The term *jaagbe* is not reciprocal (p. 107). To refer to Gbnde marriage as "exogamous marriage par excellence" simply because the Gbnde proscribe cross and parallel cousin marriage is perhaps forgivable (p. 88). When, however, without any further explanation, the author writes, "... Gbnde society is delineated into a type of moiety (sic), or rather a superficial moiety (sic) in which the rules of endogamy and exogamy are enforced (p. 93)," our curiosity is aroused. When no more information is offered to justify the use of the term "moiety," one begins to wonder if Professor Dennis knows whereof he speaks. Our suspicions are strengthened when we come to the section on Gbnde political organization and discover "what is known as the Gbnde state (p. 249-250)," but then go on to read about functionaries created by the Liberian government. We never learn anything about traditional Gbnde political organization, except for one reference to a legendary "king," that would justify the use of the term "state" for Gbnde

society.

There are Africans, novelists and journalists among them, who write well about their own people and serve as their advocates to an uninformed public. The role of the social scientist is somewhat different. It is to use the tools of his discipline--the methodology for data collection and the concepts for their analysis--that will interpret and explain a way of life, the workings of a social system, the integrity of a culture. The author of The Gbandes has simply failed to use well the tools of his trade.

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George E. Brooks, Jr., *THE KRU MARINER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: An Historical Compendium*. Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Association in America, Inc., 1972. 123 Pp. \$4.50

In his book, *The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century*, George Brooks makes a valuable contribution to the field of Liberian historical research. This scholarly and well-documented historical compendium is divided into two sections. The first deals with the Kru people in their employment on the European trading ships and in the African ports along the Atlantic seaboard in the nineteenth century. The second section attempts to ascertain the origin of the Kru people, their ethnic identity and their geographical boundaries.

The eighty thousand Kru people who inhabit Liberia are far more widely known than their numbers would warrant. Even now large colonies of Kru people exist in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. During the nineteenth century and during the first four decades of the present one there was a constant flow of men from the Kru Coast to the major ports of West Africa. Little has been written about these people and it is only in the last decade that systematic research has begun among the Kru people.

Obtaining historical data on the Kru people is a very difficult task. The Kru people themselves have no written documents concerning their origin or history. What knowledge we do have of the Kru people is derived from oral tradition, reports and archives of the Liberian Government, colonial documents concerning Kru people in the former British colonies, journals of missionaries, logs, and accounts of trading vessels which used the Kru as Laborers, stewards, deck hands, and intermediaries in trading with other Africans.

George Brooks tackles the problem of research on the Kru with honesty and with a healthy respect for the limitations under which he worked. He cautions the reader that his work is an initial piece of research, cites the limitations of the research and presents his conclusions in a very tentative manner.

The principal contribution of this compendium is that it presents us with data on the Kru people which is amply documented with references from diverse sources. The constant references to journals, reports, logs and other documents would provide a very good starting point for someone who wishes to pursue further research on the Kru people. This contribution alone would justify the publishing of the monograph. There is also a good bibliography.

In the first section of the monograph the treatment of such topics as Kru employment in Freetown, their recruitment as trade-men and mariners and their service on men-of-war ships gives us a well-rounded view of the contribution of these people to commerce along the West Coast of Africa. Because of the heat, the many days in port, and the long voyages European sailors needed the assistance of Africans. The men of the Kru tribe provided the labor and the trading skills which helped to make shipping commerce successful along the West Coast of Africa in the nineteenth century. From tributes to Kru men by European shipmasters one gets the picture of a group of strong, hard-working, creative and loyal men who provided an invaluable contribution to trading vessels in the nineteenth century.

In the second section of his monograph, George Brooks attempts to identify the

ethnic and geographic boundaries of the Kru tribe. In the documents he quotes many different terms such as "bushman", "Krumen", "Fishmen", and uses them to identify the African seafaring men who worked on the European trading vessels. Since there is neither political nor social unity among the various peoples called "Kru" and since there is widespread migration among these peoples, Brooks is able to offer only tentative conclusions on the origins, identity and the geographical boundaries of these people.

The brief section on the social structure of the Kru people tends to confuse rather than clarify the structure of the social organization of the Kru. In an historical work such as this, the section on the social organization should have either been expanded to present a clearer picture of the social organization or omitted altogether.

The monograph is not a popularly written history. It is tedious to read and often repetitious. However, since it is the first published historical monograph on the Kru, the repetitious nature of the historical account and the constant references to original research material are an asset rather than a liability for anyone who would seriously want to study the Kru or to do research on this important group of West African peoples.

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