

LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

Edited by:

Svend E. Holsoe,
University of Delaware

Frederick D. McEvoy,
Marshall University

L I B E R I A N S T U D I E S J O U R N A L

EDITED BY

Svend E. Holsoe
University of Delaware

Frederick D. McEvoy
Marshall University

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Igolima T. D. Amachree
Western Illinois University

J. Bernard Blamo
University of Liberia

Mary Antoinette Brown Sherman
University of Liberia

George E. Brooks, Jr.
Indiana University

Warren L. d'Azevedo
University of Nevada

David Dalby
International African Institute

James L. Gibbs, Jr.
Stanford University

J. Gus Liebenow
Indiana University

Bai T. Moore
Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs & Tourism
Republic of Liberia

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| LANGUAGE IN LIBERIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE SETTLERS' PERSPECTIVE, by John V. Singler | 73 |
| BANDI ORAL NARRATIVES, by Patricia A. O'Connell | 87 |
| SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL FACTORS BEARING ON DIALECT BOUNDARIES IN SOUTHEASTERN LIBERIA, by Frederick D. McEvoy | 99 |
| SOME LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE IN THE STUDY OF KRU ETHNOLINGUISTIC AFFILIATION, by L. B. Breitborde | 109 |
| A SURVEY OF GREBO DIALECTS IN LIBERIA, by Frances Ingemann and John Duitsman | 121 |
| CONSIDERATIONS IN SPELLING LIBERIAN NAMES, by John Duitsman | 133 |
| INDEX | 144 |

Emphasizing the social sciences and humanities, the LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL is a semiannual publication devoted to studies of Africa's oldest republic. The annual subscription rate is \$8.00 for individuals and \$10.00 for libraries. Manuscripts, correspondence and subscriptions should be sent to Liberian Studies, Department of Anthropology, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19711. The views expressed herein are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or Liberian Studies.

Copyright 1981 by Liberian Studies.
ISSN 0024-1989

LANGUAGE IN LIBERIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY:

THE SETTLERS' PERSPECTIVE

John V. Singler
University of California, Los Angeles

Here, on this coast . . . is an organized community, republican in form and name; a people possessed of Christian institutions and civilized habits, with this one marked peculiarity, that is, that in color, race, and origin, they are identical with the masses around them; and yet speak the refined and cultivated English language.

--Alexander Crummel, Independence Day Oration, Harper, Liberia, July 26, 1860.

Part One: The Origins of Liberian Language Policy

However much the early Liberian settlers and American Colonization Society (ACS) agents may have differed over other matters, they displayed a striking unanimity on issues of language, establishing a language policy which has endured to the present. To be sure, Edward Wilmot Blyden did raise objections to this policy, but he seems to have stood alone. Indeed, only in the past decade has Liberian language policy undergone any modification. The policy under consideration--which spanned Liberian colony, commonwealth, and republic--sought to advance the English language. The language, when its use was thought about at all, was recognized as an essential component of the Western civilization to which Liberia stood committed and as a common bond which distinguished the settlers from the indigenous ethnic groups which surrounded them. Alexander Crummell, the most eloquent of the champions of English, went still further. In his 1860 Independence Day Oration in Harper, entitled "The English Language in Liberia," Crummell recalled the oration he had given two years previously, recounting that in that address he had

. . . pointed out among other providential events the fact, that the exile of our fathers from their African homes to America, had given us, their children, at least one item of compensation, namely, the possession of the Anglo-Saxon tongue; that this language put us in a position which none other on the globe could give us; and that it was impossible to estimate too highly, the prerogatives and the elevation the Almighty has bestowed upon us, in our having as our own, the speech of Chaucer and Shakespeare, of Milton and Wordsworth, or Bacon and Burke, of Franklin and Webster. . . .¹

Clearly, both the nature and depth of the settlers' feelings towards English originated in America. White Americans had rationalized their enslavement of Africans by claiming that the forfeiture of freedom was not too high a price for Africans to pay for the benefits to be realized by exposure to Western civilization and Christianity. Then, when a Liberian homeland for American blacks had been proposed and blacks were being encouraged to return to Africa, the ACS had to convince them that Liberia would be fundamentally American. Liberian Studies Journal, VII, 2 (1976-77)

rather than African, save for the crucial difference that blacks would enjoy the privileges denied them in America. The continuous attempt to maximize Liberia's appeal to American blacks was to shape the implementation of Liberian language policy throughout the nineteenth century. From the early years onward, the fundamental role of English in recruitment was that cited in the following excerpt from an article in an 1825 issue of the Boston Recorder:

The colony of Liberia presents many powerful inducements to the coloured population of our country, to become members of it. Those who go from the U.S. will have no new language to acquire. . . .²

In opposition to the ACS campaign was one waged by abolitionists, who saw Liberia as a slaveowners' ploy to rid the United States of politically articulate blacks. The rival campaigns of the ACS and the abolitionists were frequently fueled by claims about language in Liberia. For example, the following ACS-generated claims appeared in the Southern Literary Messenger in 1836:

We are perfectly serious in speaking of Liberian Literature. Yes--in Liberia, . . . where thirteen years and a half ago, the tangled and pathless forest frowned in a silence unbroken save by the roar of wild beast, . . . in Liberia, the English language is now spoken; the English spirit is breathed; English Literature exists; and with it, exist those comforts, virtues, and pleasures, which the existence of Literature necessarily implies. Plantations--farm houses--villages, built of brick, stone, and wood, . . . schools, in which hundreds are inducted into the pleasant pathway of knowledge--and (the most expressive sign of all) a NEWSPAPER, filled with instructive and entertaining matter. . . .³

At the same time, the abolitionists were circulating reports such as one which appeared in 1839 that, for every tribesman in Liberia who had been converted to Christianity,

. . . five Americans have pulled off their clothes and gone naked: and there is not a child now growing up in the Colony who would not prefer speaking Hebo [Grebo?] or Bassa to common English. . . .⁴

The ACS claim taken from the Southern Literary Messenger, while not constrained by reality, was at least based upon it. The same cannot be said of the abolitionists' statements of the type cited above. For, in fact, the settlers were generally quite contemptuous of the indigenous peoples--"these half cannibals," the Liberia Herald called them--and of the indigenous languages.⁵ Consider, for example, as indicative of settler and ACS attitudes Jehudi Ashmun's remarks that a language such as Day or Vai

. . . is very imperfect in its structure, wants precision, has no numerals above 100, and abounds in sounds absolutely inarticulate. I think not worth the labour of reducing it to a grammatical or graphical form.⁶

Of Bassa, he said that

. . . an European of education can scarcely credit the fact, that a jargon so rude in its structure, should exist as the medium of communication among rational beings.⁷

If one juxtaposes Ashmun's remarks with Crummell's exaltation of English as the "Great and ennobling language," the fundamental convictions which shaped Liberian language policy become clear.⁸ English, particularly in its role as a written language, was the vehicle through which Western culture could properly

be expressed. Moreover, as the repository of the literary tradition of English, it was an invaluable component of that culture. However, the advocacy of English, not simply for all dealings within the settler sphere but for dealings between the settlers' government and the tribesmen as well, should not be taken as entailing mass literacy among the settlers themselves. Nineteenth-century statistics presented by Shick (1971) reveal that, in the first two decades of the Liberian settlement, fewer than a quarter of the immigrants to Liberia possessed the fundamentals of literacy.⁹ If the rate of literacy among Liberian immigrants improved in later years, it did not do so appreciably, for in 1854 a colonist said of the new immigrants that "men of means. . . [are] . . . exceptions . . . to the common rule, that is the no money, no A.B.C. men, that come directly from the plantation &c. &c."¹⁰ Indeed, the majority of American emigrants came from the South and, if they spoke what other Southern blacks spoke, their speech was not so much a dialect of English as an English-based creole with marked West Indian and West African influence. Thus, there was among Liberian settlers a continuum that extended from non-literate speakers of an English-based creole to eminent essayists and orators like Blyden and Crummell. This range within the settler community will be considered in Part Three. What is immediately relevant is that--Blyden excepted--regardless of their educational status, whether they were literate or not, the settlers displayed a fervid devotion to English qua cultural and political symbol.¹¹ From Ashmun onward, this sentiment shaped Liberian policy even with regard to the indigenous ethnic groups.

The ACS agents and the settlers, their own efforts consumed in effecting their and Liberia's survival, sought missionaries for the proselytizing of the indigenous peoples. While the missionaries (that is, those missionaries not ultimately pressed into service ministering to the settlers' own needs, as most of them were) enjoyed a fair measure of autonomy in their dealings with tribesmen, Ashmun had set the course for language-based decisions. His remarks quoted above on the utter unsuitability of Dey, Vai, and Bassa were in response to a suggestion by Basel missionaries that they work in the vernacular languages of the Liberian coast.¹² Ashmun's solution, since he found indigenous languages to be unworthy vessels for Anglo-Saxon political institutions and for Christianity, is reflected in the following remark:

A . . . facility which few pagan tribes [elsewhere] offer to the American Missionary, is to be found in the circumstance, that every head man around us, and hundreds of their people speak, and can be made to understand our language without an interpreter.¹³

At another time, Ashmun wrote that "very many in all the maritime tribes, speak a corruption of the English language."¹⁴ The speech variety to which Ashmun was referring was the West African pidgin which had developed over the previous two centuries to facilitate trade with Europeans. Examples of it occurred from time to time in the columns of the *Liberia Herald*, as in 1834 when King Jo Harris, a Bassa chief, was quoted as saying,

I savey: you man for governor, tell governor, him send one punch rum for dash we, (meaning kings) top, tell him send two punch, one for me King Jo Harris, me one, and tother for dash all country gentlemen.¹⁵

Another example of the pidgin, taken again from the pages of the *Herald*, is the following monologue attributed to "Ynamby, a Mandingo who destroyed a Dey town belonging to King Softly":

. . . Now pose war done, what I go do for git money? I can git slave for work my farm? I can git plenty oomon (women)? Pose no war, I must put kinjar (a kind of wicker basket) my back all same slave. I get plenty oomon: ebery time I send all my friend, I say here you wife. . . .¹⁶

While acknowledging the early Liberian governments' commitment to English, one must not conclude that they forced English upon unwilling tribesmen. On the contrary, coastal tribesmen saw obvious economic advantages in the ability to speak the language of the foreign traders and pressed for opportunities for themselves and their children to learn English. One manifestation of this attraction to English was the popularity of the wardship system, whereby tribal parents entrusted their children to settler families in order to enable the children to learn Western ways, most especially English. So popular was this practice that the Liberia Herald reported in 1844 that "from all the adjacent tribes native children are poured in upon the settlers by their parents until they are really becoming a burden."¹⁷

Another indication of tribal interest in English was the oft-expressed desire of various coastal chiefs to have Western schools established in their domains. Thus, the Annual Report of the ACS in 1834 stated "that many of the chiefs have offered to make grants of land, on the simple condition, that their youth shall enjoy the advantages of an English education."¹⁸

The mutual desire of government officials and tribesmen to have the tribesmen learn English became an especially prominent part of government policy during the years from 1841 to 1856, when Joseph Jenkins Roberts was the head of state. Roberts sought to bring peace to the Liberian littoral by ridding the region of international slavetraders. To accomplish this, he and his representatives entered into treaties with tribal leaders. While it is hardly certain that these leaders understood that by these treaties they had ceded to the Liberian government their tribes' sovereignty, it does seem clear that--whatever the chiefs and headmen perceived the agreements to be--the promise of schools made the treaties perceptibly more attractive to them. In any event, when it came time for the fulfillment of these treaties, it was often the case, as it had been under earlier leaders, that the promise of schools was only a promise. The Liberian government and missionaries alike were encountering too many obstacles in maintaining an educational system for settlers' children to be able to establish and maintain schools for the indigenous peoples as well.

Part Two: Mandingo, Vai, and Grebo Literacy

Whether the efforts to bring English to the indigenous peoples were successful or not, clearly this was the thrust of this facet of Liberian language policy. And, related both to the settlers' high regard for English and to the tribesmen's desire to learn it was the fact that it is a written language. It was not, however, the only written language in nineteenth-century Liberia. Missionary efforts from 1835 to the end of the century established literacy among the Grebo in Grebo. The Muslim Mandingoes were literate in Arabic. Moreover, Ashmun's comments on the impracticality of writing Vai notwithstanding, Duwalu Bukele had in the early 1830's established a syllabary for Vai. To be sure, this latter fact did not become widely known outside the Vai region until the 1850's.

If part of the settlers' justification for asserting a right to govern the indigenous peoples was the settlers' claim to be bearers of a superior culture and if a key point in that claim was the possession of a written language, then the presence of non-Western literacy might seem to have been problematic for the settlers. In actuality, this seems to have been unequivocally true only in the case of the Grebo. In the other two cases, the fact that the literacy was perceived as having arisen independently of the settlers and Christian missionaries seems to have been taken as a sign of intellectual acuity and to have won for its possessors some measure of begrudged respect from the settlers. Indeed, a favorable response to Vai and Mandingo literacy indirectly supported the notion of the superiority of a literate culture over a non-literate one, a view which was central to the settlers' declaration of their own

right to rule.

Of these three instances, only Mandingo literacy antedated the settlers' arrival. And it may well have been the case that only a tiny fraction of the group's total population had more than a rudimentary knowledge of Arabic. Still, with Mandingo and the other non-Western literacies as with settler literacy, the most important aspect of literacy from a political perspective was its very existence even if only among a small percentage of the group as a whole.

With regard to the Vai, whether or not it was Lott Carey's short-lived Cape Mount school, the advent of Islam and the accompanying Arabic literary tradition, or stimulus diffusion from the Cherokee syllabary, or any combination of these three which provided the impetus for Bukele's script, Vai literacy was not perceived as having emanated from the example set by the settlers or the missionaries. Thus, the Vai, like the Mandingoes, were seen as possessing an independent tradition of literacy. And, while relations between the settlers and the Vai were often difficult throughout the nineteenth century, it does seem to have been the case that the settlers held a more favorable opinion of the Vai in the second half of the nineteenth century than of non-literate tribes. Consider, for example, President Stephen A. Benson's comment in his annual message to the legislature in December, 1858, that "the Veys . . . are intellectually in advance of many of the immigrants to this country from the United States."¹⁹ Moreover, it should be noted that, as the literate Mandingo kings Sao Boso and Sao Momolu before them had done, by the end of the century, ". . . individual Vai leadership . . . [had] . . . formed an aristocratic coalition with the Americo-Liberian leaders."²⁰ It is probably too strong a claim to suggest that the common bond of literacy was, by itself, sufficient to establish this alliance; nonetheless, it did obtain that the literate Vai, like the literate Mandingoes, joined forces with the settlers in opposition to the non-literate groups of western Liberia.

The circumstances affecting government language policy vis-a-vis the Grebo differ fundamentally from those relating to policy vis-a-vis the Vai and Mandingoes. To begin with, Grebo-settler interaction was at once far more extensive and intensive. There was but a single small settler town in the Vai region, Robertsport, founded in 1856. Additionally, Vai-settler contacts included settler efforts to pacify the Cape Mount area and to end the slave trade there. As for the Mandingoes, their contacts with the settlers were primarily commercial. This is not to say that settler relations with either the Vai or Mandingoes were free from strife; still, acrimonious incidents between the settlers and either of these groups do not compare in extent or duration with the settler-Grebo disputes. Maryland-in-Africa was in the heart of the Grebo region and contained several small settler communities. An additional feature which crucially distinguished the settler-Grebo relationship was the fact that the Maryland State Colonization Society (MSCS) treaties with the Grebo which had, in the 1830's, provided for the acquisition of land for the settlers differed from those drawn up by the ACS along the rest of the coast. Unlike the ACS, the MSCS inserted into the treaties timetables for the establishment of schools for tribal children and attempted to fulfill these promises. In all, twelve treaties were signed involving the transfer of land; eleven of them contained specific promises of schools. It was to meet this commitment to educate the Grebo that the MSCS entered into agreements with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) and the Protestant Episcopal Church, the only two groups in nineteenth-century Liberia who came to the mission field convinced of the absolute necessity of working among the tribes in the vernacular and who survived long enough to enjoy any success in establishing vernacular literacy. Though both groups may have been committed to vernacular literacy, they saw it simply as the first step in the dissemination of Western culture and language. Grebo was seen as being suitable only for an introduction to Christianity and its necessary adjunct, Westernization. Thus, these missionaries were no less convinced of the superiority of English than were

the settlers and government officials discussed previously. However, while extensive Grebo literacy may not have been envisioned by the missionaries as an end in itself, it proved to have political consequences which the missionaries had not foreseen. Thus, for example, the Cavalla Messenger, a newspaper written partially in English and partially in Grebo and containing articles on the front page in Grebo on the tribe's history,²¹ came to be a tool not only in the development of literacy but also in the creation of a nationalism and a Grebo awareness of their own cultural tradition. The extensive mission school system created a sizable readership for publications of this sort.

The second half of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century were marked by armed conflict between the Grebo and the settlers. Concurrently, after the orthographic reforms made by Bishop Johann Auer of the Episcopal Church in the 1870's, literacy in Grebo became widespread. In Cavalla, the site of the most extensive missionary activity, Auer reported that almost all of the men could read and write Grebo.²²

That vernacular literacy had political consequences seems clear. While the settlers, antagonistic to the Grebo, could be expected to dismiss Grebo literacy as derivative from the Western literary tradition which the settlers championed, to the Grebo themselves the growing number of books printed in their language stood as "a strength to tribal solidarity."²³ Thus, the rise of a competing nationalism and cultural tradition, both of which had been--at the very least--furthered by vernacular literacy, served to intensify Grebo opposition to the Maryland settlement.²⁴

To be sure, given the competition of settlers and Grebo for land and for control of the Cape Palmas region and given the negative attitude of the missionaries towards the settlers, Grebo-settler conflict might well have been inevitable even if there had been no work in vernacular literacy. Moreover, much of the Greboes' political activity had been the direct result of the literacy of some of their leaders in English (in addition to Grebo). Certainly, it was in English that leading Grebo nationalists had read the African Times accounts of the Fante Confederation on the Gold Coast, the political organization which provided the model for their own United Gedebo Kingdom in the 1870's. And it was also in English that the Grebo had in 1856 sent a letter to the British government expressing a willingness to be placed under the British flag and denying the validity of the colonists' claims to Grebo territory. Moreover, this letter began more than half a century of letters in English to foreign governments and the international press in efforts to gain assistance in the Grebo struggle to free themselves from settler control. It might have been the case that, had vernacular literacy not been established but instead an equal amount of effort devoted solely to English literacy among the Grebo, there would still have been organized and ongoing opposition to the settlers. On the other hand, the argument that widespread Grebo literacy furthered the acquisition of English literacy (and, consequently, provided an avenue to events and governments outside Liberia) receives support from the views of many twentieth-century educational theorists elsewhere in Africa that mother-tongue instruction in the early years of education ultimately provides a better grasp not only of the vernacular but of the European language of wider communication as well.

In the event, it obtained that vernacular literacy played a signal role in the development of Grebo opposition to the settlers and that, while the settlers seemed somewhat favorably disposed to those indigenous groups whom they perceived to have developed traditions of literacy independently of Western influence, a host of factors--some linguistic and some political--caused them to remain inimical to the Grebo and to missionary-implemented Grebo literacy.

Part Three: Language Within Settler Society

Though the settlers and their government have been described--particularly in this article--as champions of Western culture and especially of the English language, it has already been noted that their advocacy of English is not to be equated with a mastery of a standard variety of the language. To be sure, it had been intended by the ACS that, in the words of Henry Clay, "Every emigrant to Africa . . . [would be] a missionary, carrying with him credentials in the holy cause of civilization, religion, and free institutions."²⁵ However, most of the settlers had been denied the opportunity while in the United States to acquire even the most elementary components of literacy in English. Then, upon arriving in Liberia, they perforce were required to devote themselves to survival. Even with the aid of various missionary organizations, the government was never able to provide more than a small percentage of the settler children with any but the most basic of educations.

Still, there was a Liberian intelligentsia, small, perhaps, but influential. Its most distinguished members were John Russwurm, the second black to graduate from an American college and a schoolmate of Longfellow and Hawthorne; Alexander Crummell, a graduate of Queens College, Cambridge; and Edward Wilmot Blyden, the largely self-taught scholar who became nineteenth-century Africa's leading intellectual. The attitudes of these men and of all the intellectual elite towards English, particularly with reference to a definition of the role and proper standards for English in Liberia, gradually became the attitudes of all settlers, even illiterate ones.

The characteristic emphasis on style and insistence upon correct grammar reveals itself most clearly in the pages of the *Liberia Herald*, particularly in the Letters to the Editor, e.g.

Although we detest logomachy, yet we will venture to ask this monopolist of all sound sense and good morals what kind of grammar is included in the phrase "while themselves act the part."²⁶

I detest logomachy, but as you possess so great grammatical and philosophical acuteness, may I ask by what rule you justify this language, ["worst fatality."]. . . We seldom expect common sense where we find bad grammar.²⁷

. . . Mr Grammar--sharp-eyed critic whatever errors, may be made whether as it relates to the grammatical construction of the sentences (syntactically) or orthographical, as well as errors in punctuation, I trust you will not regard them as errors of the heart, but of the head and "view me not with a critic's eyes, but pass my imperfections by."²⁸

The attention to correctness in written forms was confined, of course, to the literate. The concern with rhetoric appealed to a far larger number and, coupled with the general interest current in nineteenth-century Liberia in intellectual self-development, spawned the myriad literary societies which sprang up in every settler town. Indeed, from the lyceum in Robertsport to the Maryland Academy of Philosophy in Harper, each of the major settler towns had--at least for a while--its athenaeum or library society or literary institute. Moreover, public speaking was considered an essential part of education at every level. For example, a report of an Infant School exhorted two of the participating students "to pay [a] little more attention to orthoepy and emphasis. No production, however, just in sentiment, or correct in diction, can have its full effect, if these qualities are wanting."²⁹ At the most advanced level of Liberian schooling, students at Liberia College were required to study rhetoric for one year and declamation for four.

The weight which Liberians attached to oratorical ability revealed itself most dramatically with the resignation in 1900 of President William D. Coleman in the face of overwhelming unpopularity. According to Delafosse, President Coleman had incurred the scorn of the electorate by his inability to speak in public. This failing was certainly not the sole cause for the President's downfall nor even one of the most important; nevertheless, Coleman's discomfort with "les grandes phrases ronflantes" did him irreparable damage.³⁰

The influence of the intellectual elite upon the attitudes of all the settlers with regard to language has been noted; however, perhaps still more important was their influence with the ACS and with missionary organizations. This can be seen in an examination of education in settler communities in the nineteenth century. The curriculum of these schools reflected a concern for language. At the Methodist school in White Plains in 1839, for example, students "in the first class"

. . . studied the English Grammar nearly through--made some progress in Geography--can cipher through the simple rules, and some in the compound rules;--they read in the English reader, and write fine hand tolerably.³¹

The less advanced students were "in the second class" and

. . . were spelling four letters at the commencement:--all these now, are good spellers in polysyllables, and readers in the Introduction to Popular Lessons:--they write fine hand legibly . . . and have made considerable progress in Grammar.³²

Later, Harriette Brittan said of a Monrovia elementary school: "In their spelling, little ones of seven years of age were spelling long words, such as 'hydrostatics,' &c."³³

To be sure, these educational undertakings had been beset with difficulties from the beginning. Not one of the colonists who arrived in the first few years had had even a "plain English education."³⁴ Then, in later years, when educated men did settle in Liberia, they preferred more lucrative jobs.

Yet, at times, the school system appeared to flourish, and the ACS agent would speak of the need for a high school. Generally, however, adversity prevailed. In 1830 the first issue of the Liberia Herald commented, "We shall ever feel a deep interest on the subject of education; as from it flows every comfort and blessing which society enjoys."³⁵ But that same year, a colonist wrote to the ACS that "the state of things, with regard to schools, is truly lamentable," and another complained that "many (a major part) of our children are growing up with but a slight knowledge of letters."³⁶

The fundamental problem which the ACS administrators faced in their efforts to establish a sound educational system was a chronic shortage of revenue. Most of the immigrants lacked a tradition of self-reliance, and many remained dependent upon the ACS long past the six-month acclimation period and thereby depleted the colony's treasury. The colonists were content to rely upon missionary organizations for the bulk of the schools, but these groups, too, most often operated in straitened circumstances. This shortage of funds in turn created a shortage both of properly trained teachers and of textbooks. Delafosse's comments at the beginning of this century undoubtedly held throughout the nineteenth century as well:

Les écoles sont monbreuses, mais les leçons y sont fort intermittentes et les professeurs, ne sachant rien en général, ne peuvent pas apprendre grand chose à leurs élèves. J'ai connus des maîtres et des maîtresses d'école qui ne parvenaient

à écrire une lettre que très difficilement et en faisant autant de fautes d'orthographe que des mots: que peuvent-ils bien enseigner à leurs élèves?³⁷

As regards textbooks, it was only in the closing decades of the past century and through the efforts of Julius C. Stevens that significant efforts were made to alleviate the shortage and also to produce special Liberian-oriented texts.

There were, then overwhelming difficulties which prevented education officials from providing mass education. In contrast was the comparative ease with which the settler intelligentsia sought and obtained sponsorship of advanced schools. The ACS was receptive because high schools and a college, whether they represented the most judicious use of available resources or not, enhanced Liberia's prestige among American blacks. And, throughout the nineteenth century, the hope of recruiting a greater number of American blacks, especially freedmen (in the years before the Emancipation Proclamation), continued to shape ACS decisions with regard to education and language in Liberia. Thus, the ACS and the Presbyterian and Methodist Mission Boards responded to the requests of the intelligentsia by developing high schools where the curriculum concentrated upon Greek, Latin, and mathematics. These schools were always severely restricted in size, both by a lack of qualified students and of qualified teachers. The enrollment of the Presbyterians' Alexander High School in 1855, for example, was ten students. Nonetheless, Liberians were convinced of the need for a college, and they found American support. Like Alexander High School, Liberia College stressed the classics and mathematics. In his inaugural address as President of the College in 1862, J. J. Roberts declared that

. . . all active, liberal, and high cultivated minds agree, that instruction in various languages, both ancient and modern, and especially a critical acquaintance with Greek and Latin, is indispensable to a polite and comprehensive education³⁸

That same day, in his inaugural address as Professor of the Greek and Latin Languages and Literature, Edward Blyden stated that

. . . The Greek language is artistic and complete in its grammatical structure--a language of gracefulness and beauty, and highly adapted to aesthetic culture . . . The famous advice of Horace will recur to the classical reader:

"Vox exemplaria Graece
Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna."

The Latin language must be studied, not only for the disciplinary influence of the study upon the mind, but for its vast resources; its inward treasures, as well as its outward relations . . . Its acquisition is really the key to a thorough knowledge of all the languages of the enlightened part of mankind³⁹

In 1863 the first class was admitted to the College, seven students who had passed an entrance examination in Greek, Latin, and mathematics. (The following year, English grammar and geography were added to the entrance examination.) Throughout the nineteenth century, the College rarely had more than ten students enrolled at any one time. In the first forty years of its operation, it graduated only ten students. Nevertheless, its very existence brought great pride to Liberians and to the ACS.

In the introduction to this study, it was noted that Edward Blyden was

the only man known to have questioned Liberian language policy. His opposition to the advancement of English evolved over the years and came to a head about the time of his appointment as President of Liberia College in 1880. In his inaugural address as President of the College the following year, he condemned both the period from the Late Middle Ages to the French Revolution and the period from the French Revolution to the time of his speech as racist epochs. Consequently, he argued, none of the literature from these two epochs ought to be studied by young blacks, lest they acquire a negative and distorted image of their race. Thus, Blyden proposed to remove virtually the whole of English literature from the curriculum of the College. The works, he said, of "Shakespeare and Milton, Gibbon and Macaulay, Hallam and Lecky, Froude, Stubbs and Green . . . are not the works on which the mind of the youthful African should be trained."⁴⁰

Although one of the conditions of Blyden's acceptance of the Presidency of the College had been that "a Native Teacher of Arabic and other West African Native Languages be employed" (a condition that was never met), the basis of the education which Blyden proposed was to be mathematics and the classics.⁴¹

By Classics I mean the Greek and Latin languages and their literature. In those languages there is not, as far as I know, a sentence, a word, or a syllable disparaging to the Negro. He may get nourishment from them without taking in any race poison.⁴²

There is no indication whatever that Blyden took any steps to implement the proposals contained in his address or even that he intended to do so. However, Blyden was at that time feuding with Arthur Barclay who, a few months after Blyden's inaugural address, reported in his newspaper *The Observer*:

We have learnt with astonishment that the Principal of the Preparatory Department of Liberia College has ceased, under direction of the President thereof, to teach English studies to any but the younger classes in the Department⁴³

Barclay's report provoked a furore in both Liberia and the United States. Not only the bulk of the settlers but also ACS officials in the U.S. and the blacks whom they hoped to induce to emigrate expressed alarm at Blyden's alleged action. To appease these groups, the trustees of the College issued a formal denial of *The Observer's* charge and distributed it on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁴ Clearly, then, Blyden--the only nineteenth-century Liberian leader known to have raised objections to the pre-eminence of English--produced no perceptible change in the language policy which characterized the century.

Part Four: Conclusion

This article has considered the language policies of the Liberian settlers and their government in the nineteenth century. In conclusion, although the settlers may have nodded at Vai and Mandingo literacy and may, because of the strong ABCFM and Episcopal presence, have been forced to reckon with Grebo literacy and its ramifications, the language about which policy was constructed was English. And, though the intelligentsia introduced Greek and Latin, the presence of these languages carries significance not per se but as an indication of the extent to which Liberian language policy was formulated with an eye to American recruitment rather than to Liberian realities and, more generally, the extent to which the thrust of Liberian language policy in the nineteenth century was Western rather than African.

FOOTNOTES

1. Crummell, Alexander, "The English Language in Liberia," The Future of Africa (New York, 1862), p. 9. Except where marked by brackets, all quotations from printed sources have been reproduced exactly as they appeared since it is often unclear whether what appeared in print represented peculiarities of the author's style or of the printer's.

2. Boston Recorder, quoted in African Repository, I (October, 1825), 254. The reference to language was intended to underscore the American quality of Liberia vis-a-vis the rest of Africa but also vis-a-vis Haiti, where blacks governed but where French was spoken (and Catholicism the dominant type of Christianity).

3. Southern Literary Messenger, quoted in African Repository, XII (1836), 118 (italics in the original).

4. Louis Sheridan, quoted in African Repository, XV (1839), 36.

5. Liberia Herald, quoted in African Repository, XI (1835), 338.

6. African Repository, I (1826), 261.

7. Ibid.

8. Crummell, "English Language", 54.

9. Tom W. Shick, "A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization from 1820 to 1843 with Special Reference to Mortality," Journal of African History, XII (1971), 49. Presumably, there is a typographical error and the literacy table pertains to immigrants to Liberia from 1820 to 1842 (rather than from 1820 to 1824).

10. Liberia Herald, (August 2, 1854).

11. Blyden's views with respect to English early in his career were essentially those of the Liberian intelligentsia; his views with respect to English late in his career were his entirely and his alone.

12. Though the comment by Ashmun on Bassa which was cited above gives no indication of this, his writings express the point of view that, if a missionary groups insisted upon working in an indigenous language, Bassa was the one which he felt to have displayed the most potential. The brief and unsuccessful activities of the Basel mission in Liberia in the period from 1828 to 1831 included work in Bassa. Then, in the early 1840's, there was a Baptist Mission Press which produced a primer and some religious works in Bassa. However, the Baptist work in Bassa was of too brief a duration and too limited a scope to be comparable, for example, to the ABCFM and Protestant Episcopal work in Grebo discussed below.

The rise of the Bassa VAH script is a twentieth-century phenomenon and is, consequently, outside the province of this article.

13. Quoted in Ralph Randolph Gurley, Life of Jehudi Ashmun (Washington, 1835), Appendix, p. 30.

14. African Repository, I (1826), 261.

15. Liberia Herald, quoted in African Repository, X (1834), 123-4 (parenthetical assistance provided in the original).

16. Liberia Herald, (April 15, 1836), 35 (again, parenthetical assistance provided in the original). Ynamby's example, coming from a man who lived sixty miles from the coast, suggests that the coastal pidgin may have followed the trade routes into the interior.

17. Liberia Herald, quoted in African Repository, XX, (1844), 243.

18. American Colonization Society, Annual Report, (Washington, 1834), 10.

19. African Repository, XXV, (1859), 132.

20. J. Gus Liebenow, Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege (Ithaca, 1970), 33.

21. Anna M. Scott, Day Dawn in Africa; or, Progress of the Protestant Episcopal Mission at Cape Palmas, West Africa (New York, 1858), 33.

22. Jane Martin, personal communication.

23. Gordon M. Haliburton, The Prophet Harris (London, 1971), 12.

24. Established in 1834, Maryland-in-Africa received its independence from the MSCS in 1854. It was informally allied to but independent of the rest of Liberia from its founding to 1857, when heavy war reverses forced it to join the Republic as a constituent county.

25. African Repository, V (1829), 208.

26. Liberia Herald, (May 3, 1843), 23. Though this example is characteristic of letters to the editor, it was actually written by the editor of the Herald and refers to an error in the Herald's competitor, Africa's Luminary.

A discussion of letters to the editor in nineteenth-century Liberian newspapers is contained in John V. Singler, "Language and the Liberian Government: Philosophy, Policy, and Practice, 1821-1976," unpublished M.A. thesis, (SOAS, University of London, 1976), Appendix A.

27. Liberia Herald, (October 29, 1834), 18-19.

28. Ibid., (September 26, 1855) (*italics in the original*).

29. Ibid., (April 15, 1836), 35.

30. Maurice Delafosse, "Un état Nègre: La République de Libéria," Renseignements Coloniaux et Documents, (1900), 173-4. The obvious question is how Coleman managed to get elected to the Presidency at all. His reputation as a good businessman had evidently carried him to the Vice Presidency under President Cheeseman. Upon Cheeseman's death, the Vice President took office and was subsequently elected to his own term. Perhaps it is fair to say that the electorate was willing to suspend judgment upon Coleman and his shortcomings until he had had a chance to show his strengths. However, his disastrous policy towards the tribes of the interior robbed him of the public's forbearance.

31. Africa's Luminary, (April 19, 1839), 11.

32. Ibid., 11.

33. Harriette G. Brittan, Scenes and Incidents of Every-Day Life in Africa (New York, 1969), 33.

34. Family Visitory, quoted in African Repository, I, (1825), 236. The most learned of the early colonists appears to have been Lott Carey, but he was self-taught.
35. Liberia Herald, quoted in African Repository, VI, (1830), 87.
36. George Erskine, quoted in African Repository, VI, (1830), 121; Anthony D. Williams, quoted in African Repository, VI, (1830), 211.
37. Delafosse, "Un état Negre", 187.
38. African Repository, XXXVIII, (1862), 333.
39. Ibid., 339-340. Though the ideas expressed by Roberts and Blyden might have seemed out of place on the shores of Africa, they were entirely consistent with the view of educators in the America from which Liberian settlers had come. (They were in line not merely with the ideas of New England colleges but also with those of the tiny colleges which dotted the Western frontier.)
40. Hollis Lynch, ed., Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden (London, 1971), 239.
41. The Observer, III, (February 12, 1880), 2.
42. African Repository, LIX, (1883), 14.
43. The Observer, IV, (August 25, 1881), 2.
44. If the American blacks' distress was in this instance caused by a misrepresentation of what Blyden had said, he later made statements which, even when accurately reported, proved to be unsettling. For example, in 1882, ostensibly on a tour to recruit emigrants from America, Blyden told an audience that most immigrants to Liberia were illiterate but that they generally became literate soon after their arrival because of the example set by literate Muslims from the interior. Given the bias which American blacks had acquired towards Africans, it would hardly seem an encouragement for it to be suggested to American blacks that, if they went to Liberia, they would be educationally inferior even to the indigenous peoples. (African Repository, LIX, (1883), 21.)

BANDI ORAL NARRATIVES

Patricia A. O'Connell

The fold material on which this article is based was recorded among the Bandi of northwestern Liberia from 1973 to 1975. The folktales were collected mainly in Bolahun, in the Wawoma Clan, but tales also were recorded in such surrounding Wawoma towns as Massambalahun and Kpangihimba.

In most cases, the folktale sessions I recorded were a direct result of my desire to hear Bandi stories. Children often came to my house and offered to tell stories; students did the same thing. In addition, I asked everyone I knew who were the best tale-tellers. When I was given a name, I would arrange to go to the person's home to listen and record tales.

Bandi tale-telling is not organized, nor are the tales presented to a large audience or in a public place. Many informants said they had been told their tales by parents or grandparents, occasionally in a one to one situation, usually in small family groups. Some stated that they learned their tales from other children when they were together after school and so on. Generally, tales were told inside a house or on the porch or around a fire close by the house.

The histories in this collection were recorded over as wide an area as possible, given the difficulties of transportation in the six Bandi Clans, in order to obtain an overall view of the major themes in Bandi historical narratives. Again, the information was elicited by direct request as there are no formalities surrounding this genre of folklore, and no occasion on which such material is imported to the public. In general, I visited town or clan chiefs and other old, respected men and asked if they would recount for me the history of the town, clan, tribe and so on. I sometimes requested information on specific culture heroes like Mambu or Hale when I had reason to believe the informant specialized in such a story. But I tried to let my informants judge what they considered to be relevant history. In addition, I also had senior students of the Episcopal Mission, Bolahun, collect their town histories for a class project. When I had amassed a number of narratives and a pattern began to emerge, I returned to those informants that I could, to ask questions to clarify information.

The Bandi are an ethnic group of some 28,000 people located in north-western Liberia near the Sierra Leone border.¹ They are believed to have first entered Liberia from the north in the centuries after the breakup of the Songhai Empire on the Niger,² and are related linguistically to other Mande-speaking peoples in Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Liberia.³ Their folklore is similar to at least one of their Mande-speaking neighbors, the Mende of Sierra Leone.⁴

The Bandi recognize two narrative forms, fɔwɔlɔ and gbengi. Fɔwɔlɔ means "matters concerning olden times" and is the general word for history. Other terms are used for the history of specific peoples and places, for example, Wawomahai means "matters concerning Wawoma /Clan/" and Kolahunhai means "matters concerning Kolahun." Gbengi is the word for folktale. These two forms are

clearly differentiated by the Bandi. A history is accepted as an account of real people and actual events while a folktale is said to be "just a story"; the characters that appear in it are archetypal and, as in any form of fiction, the resemblance to real people is coincidental.

Bandi narratives also differ in other ways. Almost anyone can tell a story, men and women of any age and children, though middle-aged people are usually considered the best storytellers. They have "passed around" enough to have a good collection of stories and are old enough to tell them well. In the same way, some informants say men, because of their wider experience, are often better storytellers than women. Children tell stories badly. They create a confusing melange of motifs, leave out important parts and forget the song. There is a widespread belief that old people tell stories best, but it was difficult to find many old storytellers. People would be equally surprised if a young person told stories well or if an old one bothered to tell them at all. However, the few old informants contacted were usually very good.

History is usually only told by old men honored for their age and their traditional position in society. For example, in Wawoma Clan, of the two men considered to be the best historians, one is said to be the oldest man in the clan, the other is a former clan chief. Young men, educated men, and those who have spent long periods of time out of their clan are often said to "know nothing." Women can also tell history. These women are always old and hold important positions in the Bundu Society. In one town, Gondalahun, in Hembe Clan, the historian of note is an old woman, a Zo of very high rank. It is unusual for one person to tell both history and folktales.

The occasions on which each narrative form is told also differ. Folktales are usually told at night, when people have returned from the farm and want to relax. Moonlit nights are especially conducive to storytelling, as are cold nights in the dry season, when people have less farm work and can spend time gathered around fires telling tales and trying to keep warm. A folktale session may be casual, some suggesting, "A mu gbeŋgi vii," "Let's throw stories." An older person usually begins. Often one person dominates the session, although if others are anxious to tell their tales, they are always allowed to do so. Sometimes a contest between two tale-tellers occurs, with stories being "thrown" quickly, back and forth. Perhaps twenty stories will be told in a short time.

History, on the other hand, is rarely told, and at no specific times or occasions. Usually just one person gives information. There is little attempt to entertain and no sense of a contest with one of the listeners. Since many young people know nothing of their history, it is possible history is told today only when interested foreigners request it.

There are obvious differences in style between history and folktales. Folktales always begin with the word gbaise, which is untranslatable but which acts as the signal that what follows is a story. Many stories contain songs. The importance of songs in Bandi tales cannot be underestimated: they provide information essential to the plot as well as much of the humor, excitement, and of course, participation for the audience. Without songs, many tales would be more like plot summaries. Two types of tales, however, riddle tales and adventure tales, never have songs, perhaps because their formats provide alternate sources of entertainment. These types will be discussed more fully later. Again, stories often attempt to explain such matters as how jealousy came into the world or serve to caution about such dangers as those of loving a stranger. In some cases they will have formulaic endings, for instance, "That is how jealousy came into the world." Tales are rarely anchored to reality with real people or places but employ general terms like "the town" and "the farmer" and are replete with motifs, symbols, and formulas. Though allowance must be made for the prejudices of the informant, history does try to stick to facts;

it is likely that a history will be colored with story elements like magical occurrences and formulaic numbers. Such elements have become part of the genre, and must be separated from material that can be verified. As a brief example, one Bandi history, the history of Hale, while delivering important historical information, details how Hale was buried alive for seven days with seven arrows in his heart. Even memorates like those told by William Morlu contain formulas.

Histories seldom have any aspect of a performance. Folktales, on the other hand, demand audiences to sing the refrain to the songs; make comments that give impetus to the plot, and generally create an atmosphere that encourages the best in storytelling. The best tale-tellers have definite acting ability and use their voices and bodies to produce a show for the audience. History informants depend much less on gestures, though they may try to amaze their listeners with, for example, the number of men killed in a particular battle. They will emphasize the statistic with their voice.

A major Bandi folktale informant is Jimmy Yengbelahun, considered by most people to be the best storyteller in Bolahun. He is in his sixties, poor and crippled, and lives alone in a very small one room house. His status in the town is not high. He is a devout Christian and evangelist, hobbling every week to surrounding villages to preach. But when he tells a story, he is a star. He is able, by his voice, expressions and gestures to create a theatrical experience for his listeners. Even a person who did not understand Bandi could enjoy his performance. For example, one performance which I witnessed had his audience really laughing. He told the story of how the spider killed a baboon and made his head into a drum which he played when the baboon's relatives came looking for their brother. Jimmy Yengbelahun imitated the spider playing the drum by crouching down and making himself small and round, spider-like. He beat an imaginary drum, casting the self-satisfied looks of a triumphant trickster at the assembled people. He altered his voice for each part, spider and baboon relatives. When the spider first began the drum song using the baboon's head (and indicating this in his song) Jimmy's voice was low and conspiratorial, to the obvious enjoyment of his audience. It gradually built up until the song was loud enough supposedly, for the baboon's family to guess where their relative had gone.

Jimmy Yengbelahun's tales are usually short, clear and simple and they always contain songs. Sometimes they remind one of a musical which was a vehicle for a star; a simple plot but plenty of production numbers.

Probably the most important history informant in Wawaoma Clan is William Morlu. He is in his eighties and believed to be the oldest man in the Clan. He is remarkably, even stunningly spry (he has been seen running fast after a car in order to stop it to speak to someone). He is, and has been for many years, the headman for all the Mission laborers in Bolahun. He is said to know "all" the history and can tell the histories of the Rolling War, Hale, Mambu, the Government Wars, and the coming of the first whitemen to Wawoma. Morlu does not perform. Usually Morlu sits at a table and drinks gin - preferably Gordon's. Once he starts a particular historical narrative, he never stops. One always hears the story of Mambu from the beginning to the end. He uses facial expressions and gestures to some extent, even getting up from his chair to demonstrate a particular action which might not be clear to the listener. But his real strength as an informant lies in his colorful language - his Liberian English - his verbal landscape of Bandi country fifty years ago. Thus, his histories make better reading than Jimmy Yengbelahun's stories.

One essential difference between tales and histories is this: a tale is the result of a creative process while history is essentially a product of memory. History follows a pre-set path, determined by essential facts or beliefs. The best informants simply give more detailed accounts of events. The accounts are delivered as set pieces and it is difficult to gain more information by questioning. The Bandi historian often knows only one long

account of his town's or clan's past.

The good storyteller has a large number of possible themes and motifs to choose from. These are known by everyone, but it is the artistry in assembling them that creates a tale with good form. For example, one common element in Bandi tales is that of children being sent to a river to look for something lost. This can be called a core element or motif. To that can be added any number of beginnings. The jealous co-wife might send her counterpart's children to the river to look for her lost comb. Or an old woman might demand that some children search for a spoon which they borrowed from her, but lost when washing it in the river. Perhaps the children will look for the spoon by asking various fish if they have it. In the end, they might find that it is not a fish but the crocodile who has the spoon. When he politely returns it the story will end, stating, "this is why some people taboo crocodile." But it is also possible that the crocodile will become vexed with the children and eat them.

This same core element might lead into an entirely different motif. The jealous co-wife might send her counterpart's son to the river to search for a missing comb. When he dives under the water to look for it, he might discover a town and be presented with riches by the people there. This event will usually force the jealous woman to try having her son duplicate the first boy's good fortune. This attempt always fails. Certain themes tend to be associated with particular motifs, and this puts some limitations on the storyteller. For example, children who have lost spoons out of carelessness are more likely to be eaten by crocodiles. Also, particular elements are often associated with certain songs.

A Bandi storyteller, however, does not view tales in this way. He would most likely deny that there is a creative process involved. Most informants say that they learned their tales when young, either by listening to other people tell tales, or by memorizing the ones they thought especially good. They usually know perhaps twenty tales. Although tale-tellers recognize that there are variants of tales, saying that "Tales can sound the same but have different meanings," they feel the tales they tell are just like the original versions they heard. They say that they never change them except to shorten them for an unresponsive audience. How true this is is difficult to say. A Bandi storyteller views a tale differently than an outsider would. For example, he would say two tales with the same motifs and an accompanying song were the same, though they might have a number of differences. As long as one story had the same specific components of the other, and as long as it followed a certain pattern of tradition and logic, it is the same as the other.

In general, most Bandi Narrators probably do not alter their tales greatly from one session to another. Artistic inspiration is only occasionally activated by a good storyteller and then imitated by others. It is probable the form of most tales was basically set long ago. Minor improvisations are made, however. For example, one narrator might say a road to be traveled in a tale is as long as the road from Bolahun to Kolahun. Also tale-tellers might make amusing comparisons between fictitious and real persons in order to amuse a local audience. For example, one storyteller compared a jealous man in a tale to a notoriously jealous man in Bolahun. It is interesting that when asked to write out a tale, the informants often leave out these additions. They are aspects of the performance, not the literature. The question of the creative process is a complex one, and much more work needs to be done before it is clearly understood.

It should be noted here that Bandi informants do generally agree on what makes a tale good. A good tale is an "exciting" tale. This means a tale that builds tension like the one Jimmy Yengbelahun sang about the spider and the baboon. The audience is excited both by wondering when the baboons will realize their relative has been eaten and by worrying about what will happen to the spider. This tension can also be found in a dilemma or adventure or a comic

sequence like a spider fighting a boy made of gum.

Rich material can be found in both types of Bandi oral narratives, histories and folktales. The oldest histories are usually legends of tribal origin. The most important is a fragmentary account of a time when the Bandi were living northwest of their present site, in what is now Guinea. "During the Rolling War, the Loma pushed the Bandi and the Bandi pushed the Gola and the Gola pushed the Vai to the coast.⁵ This vast movement of peoples resembled the way a sleeping mat is rolled up and so got its name. Town histories give some support to the fact that present day Bandi country was originally occupied by the Gola. Gola origins are given to some towns and Gola names to certain landmarks in the area. Some informants confuse the Rolling War with Samori Toure's adventures in Guinea in the late 19th century, but most agree it took place much earlier than that. The activities of Samori Toure and his sofa loom large in this part of Liberia and it is understandable that his name is attached to any event in Guinea.

Another legend that concerns the Bandi before they migrated tells of how the Bandi and Kissi were under one chief and even joined the same bush schools. Unfortunately, a quarrel between two boys in the Poro Bush, one a Bandi and the other a Kissi, led to a war between two groups. The Bandi were defeated and they moved to where they now live. Other narratives about the origins of the Bandi say that the Mende occupied some part of the territory now belonging to the Bandi and they were drive out as the Bandi moved in.

Another legend, one that has mythic qualities, is the story of Hale. Hale is said to have been born in Halipo, in Tahamba Clan; and during a time of war he offered himself as a sacrifice to insure a Bandi victory and to promote their unity.

Halengi means one world. That time, war want to take the country. Then they go to the devil, way up in Guinea. We ask him, 'What can we do so the country cannot be spoiled?' He say, 'Well, the best way, you must get one man and sacrifice him. Don't kill him, but dig hole, bury him inside.' Before they bury him, they put seven arrows in his heart. They dig hole, put in plenty big, big sticks; put leaf, cover with dirt. After they bury Hale, seven days he cry. 'Mmm! mmm! mmm! Then he die. But he give law to the people. . . . The law, when you kill person, place there they carry you, tie you, put you down. The palce has seven roads. . . . They all get stick. They jump over the person. They say, 'Go! Go! Go! Go!' They take a road. Say, 'Go! Go! Go! Go!' They go back, take another road. Seven roads. When they come to the last road, they all knock the person and the person die.⁶

Hale is supposed to be buried near Bakanda in Tahamba Clan, and his grave at one time was a place of pilgrimage and sacrifice.

Bandi history narratives also include town histories. Most Bandi towns were founded either by Bandi warriors or Manding. The history of Gondalahun in Hembe Clan provided an example of a town founded by a warrior. The informant claims that three hundred and fifty years ago a boy named Gundobola was born to two Bandi who had been enslaved by the Gola in Gatema. When Gundo was fifteen, his parents were sacrificed by the Gola and he swore to avenge them. He escaped from the Gola and became a soldier for one Bandi chief and soon took command of this chief's whole army. The army conquered many towns and finally Gundo conquered and destroyed Gatema.

Gundobala left Gatema to return home. He camped near the

Wendia river. He had a vision in which he saw his father. His father told him to build a town. He and his men set to work brushing the area near the river. The next night he had another vision in which his father told him never to leave that place. He sent for women and built a town.⁷

It is interesting to note how town histories can vary. Another version of this town's history by a different informant is a memorate of the time when a man called Gundo Balla was driven from Jenne and founded Gundolahun. This was just before the Americo-Liberians moved into the interior.⁸

According to some histories the Manding began to come down during Samori Toure's conquests. But these accounts do not present a picture of hordes of Muslims thundering south on horseback, even though the Manding are said to have gone everywhere and to have conquered towns as far south as Monrovia. Town histories picture them as refugees, arriving singly or in small groups and peacefully settling down. One history tells of a Manding, said to be a great warrior, who arrives in Bandi country, and asks the people for land on which to found a town.⁹ Of course, all of this could be the Bandi interpretation of history.

Some Manding feature in the history of a town in another way. Many were itinerant medicine men, offering a form of protection to town chiefs. "If you had the power, the moment you would find a Manding, you called him to sit with you and make medicine for you so war would not catch your town."¹⁰ These medicine men were also consulted about the best site for a town by the Bandi founder. Manding women also peacefully founded towns like Bolahun and Massambalahun.

Some town histories link groups of towns into a sort of proto clan. Nine Bandi towns now in three different clans are linked together due to their ancestors' common interest in chasing young girls.

Our family, they call us Siibabo. Our old town is Bɔihewa, one old town up on the hill. Our people are so powerful, that when they come to the market, they see young girl, they catch them, take all, say, 'This is my wife.' Take all to Bɔihewa. Keep them there. Who come and say, 'That is my wife,' they kill that person. So the whole Bandi country sit down together. They say, 'Let us move the people from Bɔihewa.' The whole Bandi country fight one town. After this they move from Bɔihewa. They scatter to Yengelahun, Nyɔkoletahun, Koilahun, Kpengbelahun, Kamolahun, Makpilahun, Glima, Woiyahun and Jenne. These nine towns, that's our family.¹¹

Of course, many narratives concern wars. There are vague accounts of wars with the Kissi, in which the Bandi, with remarkable honesty, admit to being defeated; and detailed accounts of more localized wars. For example, towns in Wulukoha Clan tell of the invasion and conquest of their area by the Bandi-speaking Wulukkoḥa.¹² A major feature of Bandi history narratives, remembered especially in the southern Bandi towns, is the story of the Mende Chief Kai Lundu's pursuit of a renegade lieutenant of his, known to the Bandi as Mbawulome Lowoma.

After Sele Luo died, war began in Sierra Leone. Kai Lundu started the war. Kai Lundu started out to capture Mbawulome. When he got to the border of Hembe Clan he asked the people to let him pass. 'Give me the road.' The people said, 'There's no road for you. You have to fly up or pass under ground.' Now Kai Lundu was very powerful and when he heard this he started war with Hembe Clan. He broke towns. He came to Jenne and then

he went to Lumbumba. Then he went to Sierra Leone. He never reached to Mbawulome.¹³

The most important cycle of war legends and the richest in detail concerns Mambu and the Liberian Government's extension of control over Bandiland. This event scared the minds of a whole generation of Bandi. Almost all requests for history result first in an account of Mambu. Mambu was a Manding from Kamatahun in Hasala Clan. He was a powerful chief and medicine man who was supplied with soldiers by President Daniel Howard in order to bring the Bandi under government control. Mambu established the first barracks in Kamatahun in 1907 and with the soldiers "behind him" began his conquests. After several years of sporadic fighting in different towns, many recalcitrant Bandi chiefs were caught by Mambu, a Liberian, John Cooper, and their soldiers, and carried to Kolahun in Tahamba Clan and executed.

Then they take the soldiers, Mambu and John Cooper. They send these soldiers at night. They go lay down in the bush. They [the Bandi] had plenty drinks. The chiefs were glad. The dancers were dancing, dancing, dancing. When it was about five o'clock, all the people say, 'Now, no more fighting, let's all go home.'

They [the soldiers] give order to the bugler. The bugler played, 'ta, ta, ta, ta, ta.' Soldier come, go round them. Catch every big chief. Tie them, put sticks on their back. Bring them to Kolahun. They keep them there in jail. Then Willie Lomax come from Monrovia. He told Mambu and John Cooper, 'Let's kill all these people. When we kill them the war will finish.' Mambu say, 'I have more power past them. So we leave them.' Willie Lomax say, 'No.' He [Willie Lomax] say, 'My father has the country. You are chief, but I'm over you. When I give you an order you must take it.' Mambu say, 'I agree.'

They kill all the chiefs. They dig big hold in Kolahun. One grave. After they put them there, most of the people run ro Sierra Leone.¹⁴

It is relatively easy to understand why Mambu dominates Bandi history. First the events occurred during the lifetime of old men who are still alive. Second, Mambu brought about the most significant change since the Rolling War. Also, despite his involvement with the murder of the chiefs, Mambu has become a hero and a little glamour rubs off on anyone giving an account of him. One man even proudly exclaimed, 'I was a slave for Mambu.' The Bandi eventually assassinated Mambu near Glemah, but they accepted government.

Along with narratives about the advance of Liberian control is another kind of history narratives that concern the coming of the first whitemen. T. J. Alldridge, author of *The Sherbro and its Hinterland*, trekked through Bandiland in the late nineteenth century and is immortalized in Bandi annals as "Big Neck," who is chiefly remembered as paying three pence for butterflies. The American Holy Cross monks, an Episcopal order, settled in Bolahun in 1922 and began a school and a clinic.

There are two main types of Bandi folktales, trickster and non-trickster narratives. There are three tricksters in Bandi tales: guloi, the spider; ngusubang, the Hardheaded boy; and habe, the hare. The spider is a victim of overwhelming gluttony, driven to any trick in order to get food. But in the end, he himself is tricked. The following is a fine example of a spider tale and, in general, an example of a well-told Bandi tale. The informant, Anna Sowa,

is considered by some to be almost as good a storyteller as Jimmy Yengbelahun (who tells a variant of this tale).

Gbaise. There was a chief. This chief had only one child and this child was a boy. This boy was to succeed him when he died. The boy's name was Roman. One day the boy died and that was a very sad day. Every one was crying.

It happened that spider came that way and saw the people crying. He told them to keep quiet. They all kept quiet. He told them that he had been bringing dead bodies back to life and so he would help them. He told them to bring seventeen lappas, six hampers of rice, one tin of oil, and eight chickens. He said that they should put all these things with the dead body in one house and he would bring the boy back to life within eight days. They asked him his name and he said he was called Kajama.

They put all these things in a house and spider went there. He did nothing in there but eat the dead body and the other things they gave him. He stayed there until he had eaten all the things and the dead body. On the seventh night he left the town unknown to the people. He went far away and on the eighth day the people opened the house. Everything was gone when they opened the house. The people cried for a long time and then stopped.

After four years a feast was held in a nearby town and this same spider decided to go there. Now after eating Roman he had made the skull the bottom of a belly harp. He went to this feast. He was the best musician among his friends and this is what he played:

Chorus: Jin jin Kɔɔ masa (sound of belly harp)

Solo: Let me play the harp a little bit.

Chorus: Jin jin Kɔɔ masa.

Solo: Let me play the harp a little bit.

Chorus: Jin jin Kɔɔ masa.

Solo: Jin jin, jin jin jin.

Chorus: Jin jin Kɔɔ masa.

Solo: Jin jin, jin jin jin.

Chorus: Jin jin Kɔɔ masa.

Solo: I am playing the harp a little bit.

Solo: Roman.

Chorus: Jin jin Kɔɔ masa.

Solo: Roman's head is the belly harp (very low).

Solo: Roman (very low).

Chorus: Jin jin Kɔɔ masa.

Solo: Roman.

Even though he called Roman's name low the people suspected him and began paying him more to hear the song correctly. Stupidly spider went on singing:

Chorus: Jin jin Kɔɔ masa.

Solo: I am playing the belly harp a little bit.

Solo: Roman.

Chorus: Jin jin Kɔɔ masa.

Solo: I am playing the belly harp a little bit.

Solo: Roman.

They secretly hired people to catch him. They caught and tied him. They tied him so hard that his arms became smaller and this was passed on to his children's children. Spiders' arms were bigger at first but being that he was tied so tight they became smaller.¹⁵

In one tale, the spider and the tortoise go to dig up yams during the "hungry time," the time preceding the harvest when many people have exhausted the supply of rice they had from the previous year. It soon becomes difficult even to find yams, and the spider decides on a trick which he hopes will secure him all of the yams. As soon as the two friends are about to eat the yams, the spider shouts that the devil is coming, and the tortoise, who is not a member of the Poro Society, runs away. In the end, the spider is out-manuevered by the tortoise and loses the yams he has hoarded. The Poro Society is the secret mens' society which is still very powerful among most people in this part of Liberia. All boys have to be initiated into the society if they wish to be considered men of the tribe. The devils are masked dancers who embody the highest powers of the society. Non-members are not even allowed to see certain masked dancer, under pain of death. The word for masked figure used in most tales is nani, a general term which does not specify a particular spirit. The women have a similar society, the Bundu Society, but among the Bandi their society has no masked dancers.

One motif often found in spider tales is that of the spider being tricked by a boy fashioned out of a sap the Bandi call malangi. The spider thinks the boy is real and when it refuses to speak to him, he begins to abuse it, then hit it and soon he is stuck fast to it. This is an obvious analog to the tarbaby stories found in Black American folklore.

The second trickster is habe, the hare, the cleverest animal in the bush. There is a West African hare, the Togo Hare, but no one has ever seen one in Bandi country and most people identify the small Royal Antelope as habe, though they call it rabbit in Liberian English. This question of identifying tricksters is an interesting one. A people adjacent to the Bandi, the Kissi, have a trickster in their tales, called saluku which they call in English, a bear. They all agree that they have never seen one but maintain they are plentiful up north in Guinea and that they are very large and attack people. No amount of questioning ever resulted in finding out just what kind of animal saluku is though some informants have said it is a big red deer. The other trickster of the Kissi is also called rabbit. In Bandi tales habe is usually found outwitting the leopard. In one story, the leopard goes to a farm where the deer and habe are plowing. The leopard does not have any spots and only habe sees a few spots under the leopard's arm and realizes what he really is. Habe sings a song to the deer, mentioning that one plower has spotted armpits, but he is too dense to catch his meaning and is eaten by the leopard while habe effects an escape.

The third trickster is a boy, sometimes called ngusubang, or hardheaded. He is also often said to be fully matured at birth or, conversely, unable to walk until very late. This boy can be either harmful or helpful. In one story, this trickster is able to rid the town of an evil old woman; in another tale he routs a ghost which has been troubling people on the road. But in a third tale, he cuts off a man's testicles. The man is understandably angry, throws the trickster into a hamper and tells his son to guard him. Of course, the hard-headed boy is able to trick the son into taking his palce in the hamper. When the father returns, he burns the hamper with his own son inside.

There are many themes and motifs in non-trickster folktales and only a summary of the main ones will be attempted. Probably the most common theme is that of the jealous co-wife, accompanied by the motif of revenge on children. One good example of this theme is in the story of a jealous woman who sends her

co-wife's son to the river to wash her dishes. The boy loses one of her spoons in the river and reports this to the jealous co-wife. Despite the danger, she insists he go back to the river and dive for the spoon. In various tales, the jealous co-wife repeatedly takes revenge on her counterpart's children. She abandons them in the bush, throws them into the river, prevents them from joining the Bush Schools; she beats them, starves them, kills them. Another motif often found in these tales is that of the jealous co-wife who tries to duplicate the good fortune of the other woman's child. In the above tale, the little boy dives for the spoon and reaches a fine city under the water where, by successfully passing a test, he gains all sorts of riches. The jealous co-wife then sends her own son to dive in the river, but when he returns he has only snakes and wild animals. In another story, a woman's child dies in the Bundu Bush and her co-wife is pleased until the dead girl appears to her mother in a dream, and gives her all sorts of things like "cars, airplanes and railroads." The jealous co-wife kills her own daughter in another vain attempt at duplication. Her daughter appears to her in a dream and tells her to go to her grave, and in a suitably gothic ending the grave opens; but instead of modern conveniences the woman only finds her daughter's skull. She is condemned to wander the town frightening little children with the skull in order to steal food from them. Also associated with this theme is the motif of a woman who is barren but who finds a tree or bird which turns into a child on the condition that the woman never reveal the truth. Of course, the jealous co-wife reveals the true nature of the child to the husband. Also similar is the story of the wife who is really a man, a fact that her husband, curiously enough, never notices. But the jealous co-wife hints at this - a woman always knows - and the husband insists that all his wives dance naked so that he can see if there is any truth in what he has heard. Both of these tales can have happy endings attached to them.

Men, especially chiefs who have many wives, are also jealous. Little sympathy is spared in Bandi folklore for such men and they are usually portrayed as foolish. In one tale, a comic classic, a stranger tries to dupe such a chief and sleep with one of his wives. Unfortunately, the woman dies during the adulterous act and the lover, in a tour-de-force of trickery, is able to convince the chief that he was the cause of his own wife's death. Jealous chiefs can be cruel, however, and one motif that occurs with this theme is that of a woman who has to give away a baby she had by a lover for fear her husband will kill it. Sometimes two themes are combined as in one tale in which the jealous co-wife teels the jealous husband about the baby one of his wives has had by a lover.

A third theme found in non-trickster folkstories stresses the danger of loving a stranger. Strangers, especially attractive ones, are often genii, ghosts or animals in disguise. A motif used here has the stranger appearing at a feast to play a drum and attracting a foolish girl who follows him home. She discovers too late that he is really not what he seems. This theme can be given ghoulish details by a good storyteller, and in one variation, a ghost sinks its fingernails into the girl's throat, drawing blood. The common victim of the stranger-lover is the man or woman who is "interested in sex too much." Their over-active libidos always entangle them with lovers who are more likely to be pythons than people., and who swallow them, "beautiful white teeth and all." Also a victim is the girl who refuses to marry anyone with a defect, and finds herself married to a perfect genii. In some Bandi tales, swamps and palm trees change into handsome men and marry unsuspecting girls.

One popular theme deals with people who refuse good advice. The most common example in Bandi folktales tells of a man who farms in an area he has been advised to avoid. The farm is actually the province of spirits and when he goes to harvest his rice, they compel him to trample it. Another motif has a girl ignoring her parents' advice not to sit on a certain rock. When she does, she sticks to it and is captured by a genii. Some notice should be taken of the minor star of some of these tales, the genii (as it is called in Liberian

English). Genii, ginangi, are amoral and troublesome spirits able to appear in both human and animal form and who have power over men. In Bandi tales they may, for example, kidnap children, change into handsome strangers and seduce foolish girls, or trouble people traveling on the road. It is interesting to note that the backdrop for such events are often rivers and roads which function as symbols of all that is unsafe - far from the secure town center. Rocks and bald rock mountains, fasai, often harbor spirits - according to Bandi belief. The perennial victim of devils and genii is often called Kpana, the name given to the last girl to enter the Bundu bush. She is the girl who follows the stranger, ignores advice and so on. These elements provide the spice - pepper, of course - in Bandi tales, giving them a very special flavor.

Other themes feature a boy who has a long series of adventures, usually sided by a magic ring or lantern that grants wishes, or relates contests between animals which result in the defeat of a proud animal who was sure he would win. The classic race between the deer and the snail is an example of this motif. If it seems fitting, the storyteller will add an ending line which offers an explanation of the tale, such as "that is how wickedness came into the world," or "that is why some people taboo crocodile."

Dilemma tales are also popular. These often relate the feats of three extraordinary men who cooperate, for example, in rescuing a girl swallowed by a big fish. In the end, the audience is asked to choose which of the three men deserves to marry the girl and a lively discussion ensues. The Bandi feel there is a correct answer.

There is much more work to be done in both collecting and analyzing Bandi oral narratives, and this article only attempts to provide an introduction to the rich variety of material awaiting the researcher.

FOOTNOTES

1. J. Gus Liebenow, Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 32.

2. Ibid., 35.

3. Ibid., 37.

4. Conversation with Donald J. Cosentino, candidate for a Ph.D. in Department of African Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin, Bolahun, Liberia, 12 April 1974.

5. Interview with William Morlu, Bolahun, 12 May 1974.

6. Ibid., 19 February 1974.

7. Interview with Boakai Taylor, Gondalahun, 5 August 1974. Collected by Gabriel Kowo.

8. Interview with Krubah, Gondalahun, 8 December 1974.

9. Interview with Konyon, Tawulahun, 25 April 1973. Collected by Daniel M. Jusu.

10. Interview with William Morlu, Bolahun, 20 July 1974.

11. Morlu, 19 February 1974.
12. Interview with Yallah, Honiyahun, 30 April 1973. Collected by Emmanuel K. Ngaima.
13. Interview with Chief Lasanna Konneh, Jenne, 9 March 1975.
14. Interview with William Morlu, Bolahun, 18 April 1973.
15. Tale told by Anna Sowa, Bolahun, 20 January 1974.

SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL FACTORS BEARING ON DIALECT
BOUNDARIES IN SOUTHEASTERN LIBERIA¹

Frederick D. McEvoy
Marshall University

The section of coastal West Africa now included in the extreme south-eastern portion of Liberia and the adjoining southwestern region of the Ivory Coast has been long occupied by peoples who speak various dialects of Kru or Grebo, two languages which together with Dei, Bassa, Krahn, Bakwe, and Bété have been classified as the Kru branch of the Kwa subfamily of the Niger-Congo language stock (Greenberg 1963). No completely satisfactory taxonomy of relationships among the languages within the Kru branch, or among dialects within any one of the included languages, has yet been devised, although some French scholars in the past have attempted internal classifications of the Kru languages (e.g., Delafosse 1904; de Lavergne de Tressan 1953).² I would not presume the ability to propose here any new classification of these languages or dialects. Rather, my concern is to discuss an apparently close correspondence of distinctive dialects in this region with the "traditional" boundaries of the many relatively small but autonomous polities that seem to have characterized the region prior to the establishment of Liberian and French colonial hegemony.

After first reviewing some of the factors or conditions that seem on present evidence to have contributed in the more distant past to the emergence, formation, or "isolation" of seemingly distinctive dialects, I will examine certain relevant features of the social and political organization of the Sabo, who like many of the other small tribes in the region claim for themselves a separate historical and linguistic identity (see McEvoy 1977). In this discussion I particularly emphasize the observed phenomenon of predominantly intra-tribal marriage, a social practice that in the past appears to have had the effect of reinforcing dialect boundaries. Finally I briefly summarize some more recently important economic, political, social, and linguistic processes and conditions which appear to me to be counteracting the conditions that earlier tended to isolate quite localized linguistic communities (a term suggested by Gumperz, 1962) and which today may be contributing to the re-coalescence of previously diverging dialects.

Isolating Conditions

Technological Considerations. Like most of the peoples in the area, the Sabo depended primarily upon the practice of slash-and-burn cultivation of upland rice, an activity which requires over the long term a sizeable territory for the proper regrowth, or bush fallow, of previously cultivated rice farms. Rice was, and is, supplemented by the cultivation of other crops not only on rice-farmsites but also on the margins of villages. Perhaps more importantly, farming was complemented by the collection of both semi-wild (or semidomesticated) and wild plant foods from old farms in the process of regrowth and from the high forest. Although the Sabo had a number of kinds of domesticated animals, it would appear that forest hunting, trapping, and to a somewhat less extent, fishing provided them with most of their meat supplies (McEvoy 1971b: Liberian Studies Journal, VII, 2 (1976-77)

315-369). Although I have not attempted to calculate them mathematically, it seems reasonable to suggest that the territorial requirements for forest hunting and gathering, in combination with those long-term territorial needs imposed by a slash-and-burn agricultural technology, would contribute importantly to the relative isolation of the small local populations dependent upon these technologies, and would thus contribute at least indirectly to the isolation of linguistic behavioral interaction.

Settlement Patterns and Tribal Identities. The largely traditional and still prevalent settlement pattern in southeastern Liberia is another factor or condition which would seem to have contributed to the process of dialect isolation. In spite of recent changes in some aspects of the settlement patterns resulting from road construction and plantation development in the area since World War II, most of the Sabo population as well as the populations of other tribes in the area still live in settlements that might be characterized as "country towns" (McEvoy 1971b: 159ff). Most forest villages, according to my informants, were formerly palisaded in defense against raiding by men of other villages and tribes. Many pottery-bearing archaeological sites in the area are located on the tops of hills, and oral traditions suggest that hilltops were the preferred, and probably necessary, locations for villages during a long period preceding Liberian conquest and pacification of the area (McEvoy 1971a). Many villages today are still located on or near hilltops, or in other defensible positions. Although they are perhaps an exaggeration of the real conditions obtaining in the pre-Liberian era (see McEvoy 1977), the remarks of an English trader who claimed to have visited the area before World War I are suggestive:

...although the natives are in many respects similar in type and tribal characteristics, the inhabitants of each town seem to form a separate community, having no connections whatsoever with the other people in the district. It frequently happens that natives in towns as close to each other as half a mile speak a different language, and have beliefs and customs foreign to the other...A native kind or chief means nothing outside his own small domain, and more often than not, very little within (Taylor 1939: 26; cf. d'Ollone 1901, Schwab 1947, and Holas 1952).

In the southeastern Liberian hinterland, the administrative units through which the tribal peoples have been indirectly governed in more recent decades bear no necessary relation with traditional polities. Some administrative paramount and clan chiefdoms comprise several peoples who, by their own traditions, are historically and linguistically distinct as well as politically autonomous. Still other chiefdoms, like that in which the Sabo were organized at the time of my research, comprise a single traditional dako, a social grouping of consideration importance to the possible understanding of dialect boundaries in the area.

Excluding for now those persons from villages of another dako, primarily women who have married Sabo men, and other "strangers" (dawei) residing for various reasons in one or another Sabo village, the present day Sabo conceive of themselves as a dako: a "nation," a "tribe," or a "people" who are descended patrilineally not from a single ancestor but rather from several founding ancestors. According to the oral traditions furnished me, these men with their wives and children long ago migrated from an area called Paapeti, and finally settled an unknown number of generations ago in the area now occupied by their descendants, who are organized into a number of patrilineal sibs (singularly referred to as a tua). Traditions like this appear to be common among many of the Grebo, Kru, and Krahn peoples (McEvoy 1971a, 1971b, 1977; cf. Davis 1976; Schröder and Seibel 1974; Kurtz n.d.; and Holas 1952). Not all of the Sabo sibs, however, trace descent from the "original" Sabo migrants--some sibs are said to have been absorbed into the dako in more recent times, and one or two

others may represent descendants of a people (said to be the Jlaos, now found near Sasstown) who had evacuated the area prior to the Sabo founders' arrival. The Sabo claim to have moved into the supposedly Jlaos villages and to have taken up the abandoned Jlaos farms.

Saobli, the "country" or territory occupied by the Sabo dako, is bounded by largely natural features that are said (by the Sabo) to be well known and respected by the five dakwe whose own "countries" adjoin that of the Sabo: Palipo, Baworobo, Tuobo, Nyitiabo, and Ketibo. Informants in the 1960s admitted that much of Sabo tribal history parallels in many respects the historical traditions given by informants from some of the contiguous peoples, but nonetheless insist on a separate Sabo historical identity. Similarly, Sabo informants admitted a general linguistic relatedness to these neighboring dakwe as well as to other Kru- and Grebo-speaking peoples known to them, but still claim for themselves (as, in turn, do the others) a distinctiveness of dialect, marked especially by slight differences in accent, intonation, and such other features as nasalization (McEvoy 1977).

Tribal Identities and Linguistic Differences. The Grebo dialect spoken by the Sabo, called Saowi, appears on impressionistic evidence to be most nearly like the dialects used by the Tuobo and Nyitiabo, two of the contiguous dakwe. Not surprisingly, the Sabo claim close historical connections with both peoples in their oral traditions. The Webos, another dako whose territory is not contiguous to Saobli but with whom the Sabo also claim certain kinds of historical connections, speak a dialect which is noticeably different from Saowi. The Palipo, or as they term themselves, Podupo, speak a dialect which in daily discourse appears to be quite similar though not identical to Saowi. Again, distinctiveness of dialect is claimed by both peoples, and like the differences between the Sabo and Palipo dialects is emphasized, even exaggerated at times of ritual confrontation between representatives of the two dakwe, as for example at funeral tribunals (kubati) following the death of a person with significant kin in each dako. Similar distinctions are also maintained between the Sabo and the people called Barobo or Baworobo by the Liberian government but who call themselves Guloo (Kurtz, personal communication).

Unfortunately I cannot here offer any precise measure of the similarity or dissimilarity of any of these several self-claimed distinctive dialects that neighbor on the Sabo linguistic community (but see the article by Ingemann and Duitsman, this volume). I suspect, however, that the proportion of shared vocabulary between Saowi and each of the contiguous dialects would be somewhat higher than that shared by the Sabo and the Tiepo, a non-contiguous people whose territory is about two days' walk west of Saobli. During my field research, I collected at the same time comparative word-lists from a Sabo informant and a Tiepo informant, both of whom were employed by me as research assistants and interpreters in my study of Sabo labor migration. The word-list, containing 217 items, provided me with 216 paired terms (I was not able to collect one term in one of the dialects); two additional terms were, however, collected, making a total of 218 pairs.³ The results of a comparative analysis of the word-lists for the two dialects are indicated below in Table 1.

When the identical terms are combined with those that are probably cognate, the shared vocabulary amounts to 77.1%. If the possibly cognate terms from the two dialects are added to this figure, the similarity between Saowi and the Tiepo dialect is increased to 83.5%. To these two percentages I have applied the various formulae published by Gudchinsky (1956) in her article on lexicostatistics. The results of my calculations are shown in Table 2. The figures indicating estimated elapsed time, in years, since divergence of the two dialects are somewhat interesting because of their bearing on certain historical interpretations for the area of West Africa under discussion here, but space limitations preclude detailed consideration. The calculated degrees of lexical

relationship, or "dips," suggest that Saowi and the Tiepo dialect are either (a) rather divergent dialects of the same language if the 83.5% shared vocabulary is correct, or (b) dialects representing quite closely related languages within the same family if the 77.1% shared vocabulary is the more correct comparison.⁴ In either case, it seems clear from these data as well as from informants' statements that the dialects spoken by Sabo and Tiepo are related closely enough for intelligibility, but nonetheless distinct linguistically.

Table 1

Percentages of Shared Vocabulary

| Comparison of Terms | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|--------|------------|
| Identical | 61 | 27.98 |
| Different, probably cognate | 107 | 49.08 |
| Different, possibly cognate | 14 | 6.42 |
| Apparently not cognate | 36 | 16.51 |
| Total | 218 | 99.99 |

Table 2

Lexico-Statistical Analysis of Saowi-Tiepo Comparison

| Percent of Shared Vocabulary | Degrees of Lexical Relationship (Dips) | Time Since Separation (Years) | Time Period of Separation |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 77.1% | 8.43 + .81 | 602 + 58 | 1308-1424 AD |
| 83.5% | 5.81 ± .94 | 415 ± 67 | 1486-1620 AD |

Endogamous Marriage Patterns. An examination of Sabo marriage patterns reveals data that support an inference of relatively effective linguistic isolation among peoples in the area. Social interactions networks deriving from the locational patterns of marriage have some bearing on the problem of dialect boundaries and their maintenance.

Two major social mechanisms uniting the populations of the four Sabo villages within the dako are (a) membership in the patrilineal sibs, or tuas that are dispersed among the villages, and to some extent, across dako boundaries (McEvoy 1977), and (b) the institution of marriage, which in an abstract sense is regulated by tua or sib exogamy. Marriage between members of the same patrilineal sib is prohibited, as is marriage between persons whose mothers are members of the same sib. In addition, a person may not marry a member of his (or her) father's mother's tua so long as either of the two connecting relatives is alive. The Sabo expressed some preference for marriage between a young man and a girl belonging to one of the sibs to which another of his own father's other wives belongs.⁵ A marriage of this type, a fairly common

occurrence, tends to reinforce the stability of previous marital alliances between the sibs concerned, and in turn the previously existing marriages tend to stabilize the new marriage. A son may inherit no more than one of his dead father's other wives, and no more than one of a dead brother's widows.

Traditionally bridewealth was given in behalf of a young man by the headman of his tua, but in the past three or four decades an apparently increasing number of young men have provided their own bridewealth with wages earned as migrant laborers. If his own tua lacked the resources to provide him with bridewealth, the young man could invoke certain residual rights with respect to his mother's sib (McEvoy 1977: 72f). He could "go to his mother's people," and from them, take a woman married to a male member of that group, without (ideally) fear of negative sanction provided that a compensatory gift equivalent to bridewealth were later given to the mother's sib. In many such cases, however, the woman "taken" under such circumstances was actually a widow who had been unable to select a suitable leviratic successor to her dead husband from among the men belonging to that tua. Leviratic widow inheritance is very common among the Sabo, but as I have noted, men are restricted to the inheritance of a single widow of one's dead brother or sib-brother, or of one's dead father (see McEvoy 1971b: 190-225 for a more detailed discussion).

During my field research I conducted a virtually complete census of the second largest of the four Sabo villages, and in addition, collected smaller non-randomized census samples in the three other villages. Additional census data were collected from 34 adult male migrants at Firestone's Cavalla plantation (McEvoy 1971b: 115-153; cf. McEvoy 1979). These census data provide information on 402 Sabo marriages, including in addition to primary marriages, numerous secondary leviratic marriages, divorce and re-marriages, secondary "matrilateral" marriages (a shorter term for those secondary marriages in which a man has gone "to his mother's people for a woman"), and various other refinements of these types.

Of the 323 women in the sample, 76 had been involved in more than one marriage. 48 of the 76 had been involved in at least one secondary leviratic marriage. 43 had been inherited by sib-brothers or actual brothers of the dead husbands and as a consequence, remained residents of the villages where they had initially married. Nine women had been widowed and inherited twice, and two of the nine had been inherited three times (each thus having a total of four husbands). Of the seven women inherited two times, five remarried a second time from within the male population of their first (and second) husbands. In terms of locational analysis, then, secondary marriages are in the main a function of the residential location of primary marriages.

As Table 3 and 4 illustrate, there is a well-defined pattern of marriage within the dako despite the fact that a proportion of marriages do take place across dako boundaries (McEvoy 1977: 71ff). Marriage tends to take place within a fairly restricted geographical area extending only relatively short distances beyond tribal boundaries. This is indicated most clearly by the data from the village for which I have virtually complete census information (Table 3). Information was recorded for a total of 165 primary marriages.⁶ 74 of these primary marriages had occurred at various times in the recent past, but were no longer viable, usually because one or the other spouse, or both, were deceased. The other 91 primary marriages were viable at the time of census. In all of the 165 marriages analyzed in Table 3, one or the other of the spouses was a citizen of the village (i.e., the offspring of a male citizen of the village).

These data draw support from the 137 marriages for which I recorded information in non-randomized census samples in the three other Sabo villages and among Sabo migrants at the Firestone Cavalla Plantation (Table 4). Percentages in each of the categories differ somewhat, but in general, support

the notion of a relatively strong tendency toward endogamous marriage within the dako.

Table 3
Primary Marriages in a Sabo Village *

| Origin of Spouses | Non-Viable Marriages | | Viable Marriages | | Total | |
|--|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Both spouses from same village | 28 | 37.8 | 34 | 37.3 | 62 | 37.6 |
| One spouse from village, other from another Sabo village | 35 | 47.3 | 36 | 39.6 | 71 | 43.0 |
| One spouse from village, other from a contiguous <u>dako</u> | 9 | 12.2 | 14 | 15.4 | 23 | 13.9 |
| One spouse from village, other from a non-contiguous group | 2 | 2.7 | 7 | 7.7 | 9 | 5.5 |
| Total | 74 | 100.0 | 91 | 100.0 | 165 | 100.0 |

* See also McEvoy 1971b: 223ff and accompanying tables.

Table 4
Other Sabo Primary Marriages *

| Origin of Spouses | Non-Viable Marriages | | Viable Marriages | | Total | |
|--|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Both spouses from same village | 24 | 48.0 | 44 | 50.6 | 68 | 49.6 |
| Both spouses Sabo, but from different villages | 10 | 20.0 | 14 | 16.1 | 24 | 17.5 |
| Both spouses Sabo, but village of one spouse not known | 5 | 10.0 | 2 | 2.3 | 7 | 5.1 |
| One spouse Sabo, other from a contiguous <u>dako</u> | 9 | 18.0 | 17 | 19.5 | 26 | 19.0 |
| One spouse Sabo, other from a non-contiguous group | 2 | 4.0 | 10 | 11.5 | 12 | 8.7 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 87 | 100.0 | 137 | 100.0 |

* See also McEvoy 1971b: 223ff and accompanying tables.

In connection with the following section of this paper, it is important to note those rather few marriages in which one spouse was Sabo and the other spouse's tribe of origin was one whose territory was not contiguous to Sa bli. With the exception of just two, all of these marriages involved Sabo males who were employed for wages in the area of the particular non-contiguous tribe at the time of marriage. In the other two cases, the Sabo spouse was a female who at the time of marriage was living with her father, who himself was employed outside the "ring" of contiguous tribes. Thus it would appear, at least on the basis of my limited data, that marriage outside what I have termed the linguistic community is likely a function of extra-territorial wage-work--in other words, a relatively recent phenomenon.

Except under relatively unusual circumstances, visiting patterns between villages usually entail visits among the networks of social relations deriving from marriages. Circumstances include visits to neighboring villages within the dako, and the villages in contiguous dakwe where an individual has affinal or matrilineal kin. Most often, visits are occasions when the individual's natal citizenship must be stressed (and hence, one's "linguistic identity"). Funerals, with their attendant tribunals (kubati), significant disputes between kin or between sibs or lineages, or other important ritual occasions, are all times when the distinctive diacritical features of the different linguistic dialects are especially emphasized. As Blom remarked some years ago,

...significant differences in speech between various kinds of groups that are in frequent contact are not in themselves responsible for the establishment and maintenance of social boundaries. These differences rather reflect features of social organization through a process of social codification, and thus serve as idioms of identification with particular group values, whether sanctioned internally or forced upon the group by outsiders (Blom 1969: 83).

Within the ecological framework of southeastern Liberia, where the neighboring peoples (or dakwe) occupy similar but somewhat distinct niches, and where virtually all of the languages or dialects are closely related, the emphasis placed by local populations on distinctive tribal and linguistic identities would seem especially crucial. Linguists and others conducting taxonomic research in the area would do well to define first the "lines of weakness in communication" that separate the Grebo and Kru local linguistic communities, giving especial attention to the seemingly close correspondence of traditional socio-political boundaries with the dialectic boundaries that mark distinctive peoples.

Conditions Favoring Reconciliation

Several "new" economic, political, social, and linguistic processes and conditions over the past one hundred fifty years or so may be serving to counteract, to some extent, the earlier conditions that favored the linguistic isolation of small local communities. Space limitations preclude any full discussion here, but I shall summarize a few of them.

Probably the most important has been the phenomenon of extra-territorial wage-labor migration (McEvoy 1970, 1971b, 1977, 1979; Davis 1976; Brooks 1972). Most peoples in the southeast of Liberia and the southwestern Ivory Coast are deeply involved in such migration at the present time, and have been for a very long time. Kru and Grebo peoples have long been famous for their almost legendary willingness to leave tribal villages to work for wages, becoming especially noted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for their services as "Kru-men" in various tasks that have been "traditionally" associated with European trading and shipping activities along the length of the West African

coast and beyond. In more recent times, they have become equally well known for working in numerous other occupations. Since about the middle of the nineteenth century, some of the hinterland Grebo- and Kru-speaking peoples, among them the Sabo and their neighbors, have been increasingly drawn (as well as driven by their increasing need for cash and material goods not locally available) into migratory wage-labor. Thus, over at least the past century, men from the formerly isolated interior dakwe have become increasingly aware of linguistic relationships between their own and other Kru and Grebo dialects. To some unknown extent, they also gained greater awareness and use of other types of unrelated African languages. There have been considerable borrowing and modification of terms from other languages, including such European languages as English, Dutch, German, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

The establishment of Liberian hegemony over the southeastern hinterland during the first three decades of this century has also had linguistic consequences. There were numerous voluntary migrations from Liberia into the Ivory Coast to escape taxation and punishment by the Liberian government, and similar movements by Ivorian Grebo peoples in the reverse direction to escape French taxation and forced labor demands (de Coutouly 1920; Schröder and Seibel 1974: 21ff). Among the consequences of the Kru wars in Liberia was the resettlement of dakwe, or parts of dakwe, on both voluntary and coercive bases (Holas 1952: 74-79). All of these political conditions and processes would seem to have contributed to inter-dialect borrowing by the peoples in southeastern Liberia.

Finally, the establishment of large-scale multi-ethnic employment centers, such as Firestone's Cavalla Plantation in southeastern Liberia, would seem also to have tended to create the conditions under which previously diverging dialects of closely related languages might begin to undergo a process of possible reacoalescence. I have suggested elsewhere the possibility that there may exist a kind of Kru "pidjin" which is used to facilitate communication at such centers (McEvoy 1977, note 11), especially between migrants speaking dialects or languages that are not immediately mutually intelligible. There appears to be an increasing amount of marriage between persons originating from widely separated linguistic communities, largely fostered by the larger populations available in the large-scale employment centers. An increase in the number of peoples (tribes) with whom marriage relations can be established would also seem to favor an increase in the number of linguistic features that could be shared. The more distant the linguistic relationship, the more need there would seem to be for "borrowing" to facilitate communication.

All of these conditions, enhanced by the increasing ease of travel made possible by road construction and the availability of transport, as well as by the more peaceful political conditions in the area since 1935, have tended to make linguistic boundaries more fluid, and consequently, possibly more difficult to discern with real precision. These factors, including the possibility of the reacoalescence of previously divergent dialects and languages, may have very real implications for linguistic research on the genetic and historical relationships among the dialects and languages of the Kru branch.

FOOTNOTES

1. This paper is based in part on ethnographic field research in southeastern Liberia from October 1966 to February 1968. My research on labor migration was funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, and was supervised by Professor Vernon R. Dorjahn, Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon. The original draft of this paper was written in November 1969, and

was presented at the 1969 Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in New Orleans. The present version has been only slightly revised from its original form.

2. Davis (1976), a culture historian, has criticized with some justification these particular classifications. In the years since my own field research, Ingemann, Duitsman, and other linguists have contributed significantly to the better understanding of the Kruan languages and the problems of comprehending their internal relationships (see Ingemann and Duitsman, this volume).

3. The word list, a variation of the Swadesh list, was supplied me by Professors John Gay (Cuttington College) and Ronald Kurtz (Grinnell College), on behalf of the Linguistic Association of Liberia.

4. The lower percentage of shared vocabulary items places the two dialects within the 0-7 dip range that Gudchinsky suggests is indicative for relationship as dialects within the same language. The higher percentage would place them very near the lower end of the 7-35 dip range indicative of linguistic relatedness as different languages within the same family (Gudchinsky 1956: 207). Either of the time periods suggested for separation of Tiepo and Saowí might correspond to periods of upheaval in the Sudan area to the north.

5. A person of either sex is not considered by the Sabo to be biologically related to the father's other wives, even though these other wives' children are ego's brothers and sisters--see my longer discussion in my doctoral dissertation (McEvoy 1971b: 190ff).

6. See my discussion of "primary" and "secondary" marriages elsewhere (McEvoy 1971b: 210ff).

REFERENCES

Blom, J.-P., 1969, Ethnic and Cultural Differentiation. In, F. Barth, ed., Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. New York: Little, Brown, pp. 74-85.

Brooks, G., 1972, The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century. Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Monograph Series, No.1.

Coutouly, F. de, 1920, Note sur les migrations Krou contemporaines. Bulletin du Comité de l'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française 3: 498-507.

Davis, R., 1976, Ethnohistorical Studies on the Kru Coast. Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Monograph Series, No. 5.

Delafosse, M., 1904, Vocabulaires comparatifs de plus de 60 langues ou dialectes parlés à la Côte d'Ivoire et dans les régions limitrophes. Paris, Leroux.

Greenberg, J. H., 1963, The Languages of Africa. IJAL 29, no. 1, part 2 (Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folk-lore, Linguistics, Publication 25). Bloomington.

Gudchinsky, S. C., 1956, The ABC's of Lexicostatistics (Glottochronology). Word 12: 175-210.

Gumperz, J. J., 1962, Types of linguistic communities. Anthropological Linguistics 4: 28-40.

Holas, B., 1952, Mission dans l'est Liberien: resultats demographiques ethnologiques et anthropometriques. Dakar: Institut Francaise D'Afrique Noire, Memoire 14.

Kurtz, R., n.d., Ethnographic Survey of Southeastern Liberia: The Grebo-Speaking Peoples. Draft Manuscript.

de Lavergne de Tressan, M., 1953, Inventaire linguistique de l'Afrique occidentale francaise et du Togo. Dakar: L'Institut Francaise e'Afrique Noire.

McEvoy, F. D., 1970, Traditional and Contemporary Patterns in Sabo Labor Migration. Liberian Studies Journal 2: 153-166.

_____, 1971a, Some Proposals for Liberian Archeology. Liberian Studies Journal 3: 129-141

_____, 1971b, History, Tradition, and Kinship as Factors in Modern Sabo Labor Migration. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon. University Microfilms.

_____, 1977, Understanding Ethnic Realities Among the Grebo and Kru Peoples of West Africa. Africa 47 (1): 62-80.

_____, 1979, Sabo Migrant Households: Some Economic Causes and Implications of Demographic Variation. In, V. R. Dorjahn and B. L. Issac, eds., Studies in the Economic Anthropology of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Monograph Series, in press.

d'Ollone, H. M. G., 1901, De la Cote d'Ivoire du Soudan et la Guinee: Mission Hostains-d'Ollone. Paris: Hachette.

Schröder, G. and Seibel, D., 1974, Ethnographic Survey of Southeastern Liberia: The Liberian Kran and the Sapo. Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Monograph Series, No. 3.

Schwab, G., 1947, Tribes of the Liberian Hinterland. Cambridge: Harvard University, Peabody Museum Papers, vol. 31.

Taylor, H. R., 1939, Jungle Trader. London: Jarrolds.

SOME LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE
IN THE
STUDY OF KRU ETHNIC AND LINGUISTIC AFFILIATION¹

L. B. Breitborde
Beloit College

So he has to hurry up in order to appropriate to himself as much as he can on the boat that takes him back to his beloved "We" country... (Kingsley 1899:429) [my underline]

This arises, I think, not from the difficulty of learning their language, but from the ease and fluency with which they speak their version of our own - Kru-English or "trade English," as it is called, and it is therefore unnecessary for a hot and wearied white man to learn "Kru mouth." (Kingsley 1897:648-649) [my underline]

In these two passages are examples of a phenomenon which, although familiar in travellers' accounts and in the genre of literature of which they are representative, is not unrelated to still unresolved problems in the history and sociology of parts of the West African coast. Here, in two early descriptions of the lands and peoples in this part of the world, Mary H. Kingsley has used a technique which is usually quite acceptable and rather expectable in descriptive accounts: that is, to provide "translations" of key phrases and concepts. However, regardless of their success in conveying to readers the author's intimate knowledge of her subjects, it is possible to call such "translations" into question. In doing so, one does not endeavor to discredit the accounts of adventurers and travellers. Rather, it could be claimed that the discrepancies between the indigenous terms and their being rendered in English as "'We' country" (probably Kru: /àà bliɛ/, 'our country') and "'Kru mouth'" (probably Kru: /klaɔ̃ wĩ/, 'Kru language') suggest a widely occurring feature in the work of more scientifically oriented writers which, in being questioned here, may help one to recognize some unavoidable limitations on the interpretation of records of past events and relationships among the peoples of the Grain Coast.

This paper will focus on some issues regarding the interpretation of words and reports of related linguistic phenomena, all of which are linked to discussions of the relations among indigenous social groups on the Grain Coast. Like the case for other Liberian peoples (e.g., d'Azevedo 1972), as well as for many African peoples in general, the ways in which the Kru can be regarded as a people or a language are known to be quite complex, involving accounts of, on the other hand, the confederation of over forty distinct social groups of the hinterland into one "tribe", and, on the other hand, the inclusion of over forty dialects in the category Kru language. Several issues in the published accounts of Kru ethnic and linguistic affiliation are considered here in light of linguistic evidence available to historians, anthropologists, and linguists who work in this area. Four specific cases are examined: (1) the use of the indigenous term klaɔ̃ as an ethnic label; (2) the phonological mechanisms involved in a common legend of the origins of the Kru polity; (3) the identification of

subtribes among the Kru; and (4) linguistic and social structural aspects of the conceptualization of differences among Kru dialects.

Section 1: Homonymy and Ethnic Labels

It is widely acknowledged today that the Kru tribe is the product of political and economic relations among over forty indigenous social groups residing along or adjacent to the southeastern Liberian coast, and between those groups and representatives of the Monrovia government. Several shared traditions of migrations, similarities of cultural practices and beliefs, and common interests in trading activities were the content of sets of relationships which were shaped during a period of time which began roughly at the arrival of the European traders (Davis 1976:17-26, 169-187; Brooks 1972:1-59), and which ended with the recognition of a Kru "tribe" by the Liberian government in the nineteenth century (Davis 1976:31-66, also see McEvoy 1977). Through the process of the development of those social relationships, the term Kru was established as the ethnic label designating these people (and their tribe). The most feasible explanation for the origins of the term Kru (which exists in no indigenous Kru dialect) is through the British having rendered as Croo, Kroo, Crew, and Krew what the earlier Dutch traders had recorded as Crouw (Davis 1976:2). It is felt that Crouw was the attempt of the Dutch navigators to transcribe an indigenous term kraɔ (Johnston 1906, v.i:84,88). The English mispronouncing the Dutch transcription was most likely fostered by the involvement of the coastal peoples in work as ship laborers; hence the almost certain role in this process of the linguistic confusion with the English word crew.

While many have taken pains to account for the use of the word Kru as an ethnic label, there has not been a similar amount of consideration of the question of the origins of the indigenous term klaɔ as that term in the indigenous dialects which corresponds to Kru. The issue has at least been noted:

Work on ships and in ports very likely has affected the concepts of the boundaries of the Kru Coast held by the coastal peoples themselves, and the "crewman" element of the etymology, while perhaps not the original source of the term "Kru," may have influenced many groups...to consider themselves Kru in the "crew" sense, and possibly after a time in the Krao (sic) sense also (Davis 1976:9).

And from the historical research that has been conducted, it may be possible to suggest a means whereby klaɔ became the equivalent of Kru.

One of the earliest groups to have been associated with European trading activities was the people of a coastal settlement called watɔ; the people are today associated with the settlement of Settra Kru. Along with several nearby settlements in the central area of the Kru Coast, they are known collectively as the Five Towns, or mama klaɔ people. The indigenous nature of the social and linguistic unity of these settlements as "Kla" people is unclear (Davis 1976:95-103), but by the middle of the nineteenth century the term klaɔ (=kla + ɔ)² was used to label not only watɔ but also the several adjoining peoples in this coastal section (Davis 1976:9). It is the speech of these people that is labelled Kra and cited by many as the "proper", "true", or "real" Kru (Koelle 1854 and cited in Davis 1976:3; Dalby and Hair 1964:190-191; de Lavergne de Tressan 1953:133-143; Greenberg 1966). Thus, the label for the indigenous group first involved to a large extent with European trade gradually became the label by which other indigenous people linked to these activities called themselves:

There is evidence to indicate that, as the government itself began to conceive of a certain stretch of coast as the Kru Coast,

and adopted a unified policy toward that stretch of coast, the towns on the coast began reacting in a like manner to the government, that is, presenting themselves as the Kru Coast, not as a series of isolated and often mutually hostile settlements (Davis 1976:11).

In the process whereby distinct social groups occupying separate settlements became the Kru, they also seem to have become klaɔ, according to their indigenous dialects.

Moreover, both the terms kru and klaɔ as ethnic labels share a common element that has in the past only been reported for the former term. Both terms, Kru and klaɔ, share an element in their etymology which is based in the occupational nature of the early relationships between indigenous peoples and Europeans, i.e., as ship laborers. In fact, the ambiguity based in the crew vs. Kru homonymy is paralleled by the polysemy of the indigenous term klaɔ. For, in Monrovia, klaɔ is also used to describe the work gangs on board ships, i.e.,

mɛ̃ klaɔ 'ship's crew'

This latter point should in no way be surprising. Considering what little is known of the grammatical and lexical structure of any Kru dialect today, it does not take too much imagination to suggest the kinds of confusion that must have existed in the communication between European traders and their indigenous shipmates. Ethnic and occupational labels must have been among the primary ways in which people referred to each other from quite early on in the interactions involving trade and ship labor. That confusion in communication would have given rise to ambiguities in both "indigenous" and externally-based ethnic labels is not unexpected. Rather, given the fact that the more-than-forty named, indigenous social groups were subsumed under one label in the indigenous dialects, it would be highly tenuous to suggest that the application of this "indigenous" ethnic label could have evolved free from the social and linguistic factors which clearly shaped the use and referents of Kru.

Section 2: Phonology and Ethnic Origins

Among several accounts of the origins of the tribal name Kru is one which claims that the term did not originate from European vocabulary, nor from European mispronunciation of the indigenous term klaɔ. Rather, one tradition among certain Kru groups today tells of an early king of Settra Kru, named Kulu, who aided the slave traders in return for the freedom and safety of his family. Kulu marked the foreheads of his relatives with a distinctive pattern of scarification in order to visibly distinguish them from potential slaves. This scarification pattern would eventually become known as the "Kru mark", as those people so decorated became known to the slavers as "Kulu's men" and eventually "Krumen" (Davis 1976:4).

Setting aside the question of historical evidence which might support or refute this legend, there is clearly a linguistic aspect to this tradition which provides a mechanism through which the evolution of the word Kulu into Kru could occur. Here, what is at work is a phonological feature which Kru dialects share with many other Kwa languages. In the phonological analyses of such languages a frequently encountered problem concerns the status of some "extra-short" vowels which occur in consonant clusters. These vowels are certainly present phonetically, but the question is whether they are phonemic, i.e., whether they are minimally distinctive features of sound.

Phonemes are those sounds which are minimally distinctive in that differences between them affect the meanings of words. For example, /t/ and /d/ are phonemes of English as evidenced by the words tab and dab which differ

only in the occurrence of /t/ and /d/, which have different meanings. In contrast, phonetic differences are those which the linguist can hear and represent, but which do not necessarily contrast meaningfully (in the above sense). Nor are they necessarily perceived by speakers of the language in question. For example, the /t/s in tab and in stab are not the same phonetically, since in tab the /t/ is aspirated, or phonetically [t^h], while the /t/ in stab is unaspirated [t]. The phonetic difference between [t] and [t^h] in these two words does not alter their meanings, nor is the difference perceived by most speakers of the language.

In the case of Kru considered here, the question is whether the extra-short vowels in consonant clusters are only phonetic, so that consonant clusters would be represented as /CC/ (where the corresponding phonetic representation would be [C^VC]), or whether these short vowels are phonemic, which would result in the representation of consonant clusters as /CVC/. The way in which a solution to such problems would proceed is through the careful examination of these clusters in comparison with other phonological features, including tone (Welmers 1973:26-28).

There is evidence that these short vowels have been a problem for some time in attempts to transcribe Kru words in legal and historical documents. For example, the Act of 1916 of the Liberian National Legislature, which incorporated the urban Kru population into the Municipal Corporation of Krutown, lists among the six sections into which the Kru peoples were grouped one called Jiwroh. Today, the name of this section is spelled Jloh, and rendered phonemically as /jɪɔ/. Here the status of a short vowel which can be heard in the pronunciation [j¹ɪɔ] illustrates not only the phonological phenomenon, but also is the basis for the variety of spellings which have been adopted in the attempt to represent the pronunciation of the name.

With regard to the Kulu tradition, when this story was told to me the name of the king was pronounced /kulu/ ([kulu]); but by the end of the story, the name, when used as an ethnic label (i.e., Kulu's men or Krumen), was pronounced /klu/. This latter pronunciation /klu/ could represent either the phonetic [klu] or [k^ulu], or perhaps even [kulu]. The (potentially) common phonetic representation links the king's name to the ethnic label. Thus, here a phonological characteristic of Kru dialects, namely the occurrence of phonetically short vowels in consonant clusters, is the linguistic mechanism which underlies the logic of the relationship of the ethnic label to the name of an early king in this tradition.³

Section 3: Polysemy and Sociogeographical Alignment

Two works have recently appeared which contribute to the study of the history of the Kru Coast. The first is the 1972 study by Brooks, and the second the 1976 study by Davis. Davis' study, which is avowedly ethnohistorical focuses largely on the relations among indigenous social groups as they are known to have existed on the coast; while Brooks, basing his work primarily on the records of European ship captains, focuses on the social "groups" defined in these maritime accounts as "Fishmen", "Kroomen", and "Bushmen" (1972:71-112). In fact he devotes a special section of his study to solving the question:

Who then were the people termed 'Fishmen', 'Kroomen', and 'Bushmen' by nineteenth century observers? (1972:71)

He eventually suggests that the Fishmen were part of a movement of fishing peoples who migrated from the Niger River westward along the African coast and who established small fishing hamlets adjacent or attached to indigenous settlements (1972:111-112). This allows a view of current-day Kru peoples as

being descended from ancestors who can be described as the offspring of "Fishmen-Kru and Bushmen-Kru" alliances, for example (here with reference to the people of the central coastal, or Five Towns, area (1972:107)).

Although Brooks does emphasize the difficulties of the reliability of data drawn primarily from maritime commercial sources (1972:72), there is, perhaps, a crucial aspect of this data which is not underscored - namely, the assessment of the data in light of what most certainly must have been difficulties in communication between Kru mariners and their European employers. It takes no more than an awareness of our current lack of knowledge of most of the Kru dialects to begin to appreciate the communicative difficulties that must have existed two hundred years ago. Considering the linguistic and social science tools current researchers have available, and the fact that almost every researcher who works in the Kru Coast area offers different definitions of social groups and social organizational principles, what could be expected of an eighteenth century sea captain talking to this foreign seamen about the nature of their homes and villages? When a sea captain asked two centuries ago, "Who are you?", or, pointing to others on shore, "Who are they?", what kinds of ethnic, occupational, religious, and political referents might have been intended in the answers of the ancestors of the Liberian Kru?

One thing which emerges from a consideration of Brooks' work in conjunction with Davis', is that the indigenous social units of the Kru peoples on the coast did not correspond exactly to the categories "Fishmen", "Bushmen", and "Kroomen" that appear in the accounts of travellers and sea captains. In section 1 above, we discussed the ambiguities in the term "Krooman" where a reference linked to occupation (e.g., working on board ships) may have been the response to a question intended to elicit ethnic origins. For the term "Bushman", it is known that the label seems to have been used in a perjorative way to refer to interior peoples. It was applied in a relative fashion - when the coastal people referred to the peoples to their east, in the interior, they referred to them as "Bushmen". When these "Bushmen" referred to peoples further in the interior (i.e., "behind them"), then they referred to them as "Bushmen"; and so on. It is not clear whether any group ever actually referred to themselves as "Bushmen". Finally, with regard to "Fishmen", all accounts which mention them list among the common elements of their various definitions their occupation as fishermen and handlers of canoes (Brooks 1972:107). Considering the many migrations and movements of groups of indigenous peoples along the coast prior to and during the period of European trade, the repeated and mostly unsuccessful struggles of the interior groups to establish themselves on the coast, and the almost certain difficulties and confusions in the efficacy of communication between indigenous peoples and foreigners, it is probably safe to suggest only that "Fishmen", "Bushmen", and "Kroomen" were the ways in which foreigners understood the indigenous people to be referring to themselves. To suggest firm ethnic or social bases for the distinctions among these terms of reference is quite tenuous.

Certainly there is no clearcut answer today for questions of ethnic identity which were asked two centuries ago. But it is important to recognize at least that any language has the capacity to express political, ethnic, and a host of other social alignments and in a clear and unambiguous way. And there is no reason to believe that the speech of indigenous Kru Coast peoples was an exception to this rule. In fact, certain aspects of Kru dialects are known which enable one to at least begin to disambiguate what otherwise might seem the confused or unclear references of certain key sociological terms. And one example that can be considered here concerns the semantics of the terms which label the indigenous social groups in the Kru hinterland, those units which Davis has shown to have been the key social groups from whose interrelationships the Kru polity emerged.

dakɛ (sing. dakɔ) are the indigenous, named, localized units of the Kru.

They have been variously defined by Fraenkel (1977:154), Zetterstrom (1969), Davis (1976:23) and Korte and Massing (1971:119), and seem to be social units occupying a distinct territory and which consist of a number of exogamous localized patrilineals.

Names of *dak* have both geographical and social referents (cf. Fraenkel 1966:158). The *dak* is the social group defined by patrilineal links and with a territorial concomitant. A *dak* may be viewed, then, as a social structural unit based on a principle of patrilineation which, viewed conceptually, is distinct from its manifestation at a certain point in time as a set of persons residing in a certain location.⁴ Thus, *dak* names are polysemous. Is there a way, then, to specify the social group referent of a *dak* name, as opposed to the location referent of the same *dak* name? That is, is there a way to specify the people rather than the place?

In fact, there is. The suffix /-ɔ/ is used in Kru dialects to denote a social group. The most obvious example of this is the term used in all dialects to express the "Kru people", i.e., *klaɔ*, where the /-ɔ/ is the suffix which has been added to the word /kla/. *Kla* appears in the literature as the name of the central area of the Kru Coast, discussed above, and called the Five Towns. It is the speech of peoples of the Five Towns area that is considered by many researchers as proper Kru and which has been labelled by the term *Kra* (also discussed above). Whether the term *Kla* ever existed in an indigenous dialect as a place name, and, if so, when the suffix /-ɔ/ became attached to it as the term was extended in use to refer to a larger set of social groups in the hinterland, are not known.⁵

But at the level of *dak* organization, there are clearcut cases which show how the presence and absence of this suffix determines the reference of names. For example, the town of Settra Kru is associated with a particular *dak*. When the geographical locality is being referred to, its name is rendered *wita*. When the *dak*, or social group, is being referred to, its name is rendered *witaɔ*. Similarly for *gbeta* and *gbetaɔ*, *nifa* and *nifaɔ*, *nyɔmala* and *nyɔmalaɔ*, etc. There are what seem to be exceptions, however. For example, *kaba* is the name for both the social group and its locality; similarly *kulu*, *buu*, *jaɔ*, and some others. These exceptions may actually be regular rule-governed occurrences; it is possible that the underlying phonological rules may account for the assimilation of the /-ɔ/ sound, or its deletion, in some contexts. But this is not known at this time.

What is important to note here is that there is evidence, at least, of a phonological and syntactic mechanism which disambiguates the social from the territorial senses which are juxtaposed in the polysemy of *dak* names. One would like to imagine what questions might have been asked two centuries ago with the benefit of this knowledge of syntactic and other linguistic mechanisms which structure the meanings of terms used to refer to social groups. Or one might ask now, what other properties of the grammatical structure of Kru dialects are linked to extra-linguistic socially-relevant phenomena? While we cannot criticize deceased sea captains and travellers for their lack of linguistic skills, it is clear that the value of current research will be limited by its neglect of language as a source of information and insight into features of social organization.

Section 4: Social Alignments and Dialect Differences

The notion of Kru as an ethnic group involves the examination of certain historical aspects of indigenous social groups on the Kru Coast. From the early involvement of certain few of these *dak* in European trade, and the initial association of the label *klaɔ* with those few *dak*, the term *klaɔ* was eventually extended to members of other *dak* who became involved in these

activities. Through the history of the association of dakɛ with each other, with European traders, and eventually with the Liberian government, a Kru polity emerged, composed of over forty dakɛ.

The question of the nature of the Kru "tribe" and its emergence from an agglomeration of those indigenous social groups becomes relevant for the study of the Kru language when it is realized that this "agglomeration" also brought together speakers of a variety of related dialects which are collectively known today as "Kru". And the linguistic diversity partly concealed by the notion of a Kru "language" is based on the association of these individual dialects with the indigenous social groups that comprise the Kru tribe.

In 1974 a team from the Institute of Liberian Languages conducted a survey of Kru dialects, i.e., the dialects spoken by people who consider themselves to be Kru (Duitsman, Bertkau, and Laesch 1975; henceforth, Duitsman 1975). The survey data were collected by the team travelling throughout Sinoe County and adjacent areas and questioning people in various locations about "who they are" and "what they speak". The survey team identified forty-five dakɛ in the hinterland. This compilation is in accord with the list of dakɛ which comprise the Monrovia Kru Corporation, which I elicited.⁶

According to the survey and my own data, Kru speakers label all the dialects spoken by the people who comprise the Kru polity as klaɔ, the same label used to refer to Kru as an ethnic group. However, at another level of classification, Kru speakers make a distinction between coastal Kru dialects and interior Kru dialects. Interior dialects are termed tajussɔ and most of their native speakers are in all probability descendants of interior peoples who more than a century ago tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to reach the coast. The speech of coastal speakers, who are the main body of Kru speakers, is termed klaɔ, the same term as is used to refer to the "Kru language" in general (Duitsman 1975:77-79). Therefore, while tajussɔ contrasts with klaɔ at the level of coastal vs. interior distinctions, klaɔ is also used as the label encompassing all dialects spoken by the Kru people, in addition to all Kru people themselves. But there is no syntactic or phonological marking to distinguish the "total Kru" referent of klaɔ from its "coastal" (vs. interior) referent. Here, the context would disambiguate.⁷

The dialect surveyors elicited two-hundred-item word lists for thirty-seven of the forty-five dialects and calculated the percentage of lexical cognates for each pair of dialects. In addition, twelve representative dialects were tested for mutual intelligibility based on the comprehension of short narratives. On the basis of this, they found that the klaɔ/tajussɔ distinction emerged statistically to the extent that the percentage of lexical cognates in klaɔ and tajussɔ dialects falls well below the cut-off point usually applied in distinguishing between two different languages (rather than between two dialects the same language). That is, on lexicostatistical grounds, tajussɔ is a different "language" than is klaɔ, and is actually more closely related to other interior Liberian dialects whose speakers are included as part of neighboring tribal political units (Duitsman 1975:79,97-98). In this regard, one important result of the survey was the statistical confirmation of informant's claims that klaɔ (coastal) speakers cannot understand tajussɔ, but that tajussɔ speakers can understand klaɔ. There is, then, what is described as "one-way" intelligibility between klaɔ and tajussɔ dialects.⁸

While this statistical confirmation of linguistic discontinuity within the Kru dialects was a major contribution for the Kru dialect survey to have made, perhaps an equally important factor which is evidenced by the survey data seems to have been overlooked. A large number of dialect pairs are reported to have cognate scores of 95 percent, or higher. Some dialect pairs have cognate scores of 99 percent. These are exceptionally high percentages and this suggests that there are dialects which on linguistic

grounds are so similar as to be identical, yet which are distinguished by Kru speakers as distinct varieties. This might be due, of course, to the fact that linguistic factors other than lexical differences are operating here. But, from another point of view, this phenomenon may suggest that discriminations among social groups are the basis for claimed differences among varieties of Kru speech. It is the distinction between speakers as members of different social groups which underlies the claim that dakɔ-associated varieties are distinctive. That is, the speech of dakɔ X is considered a unique variety because it is the speech of dakɔ X speakers, and not of dakɔ Y speakers, nor dakɔ Z speakers, etc. This view is consistent with the distinction which I found between the informant's varying abilities to discriminate among and identify different dialects, on the one hand, and the invocation of a general principle of informants concerning the association of dialects with dakɔ, on the other hand: that general principle being, in effect, that every dakɔ speaks differently. We might now modify that principle to read: every dakɔ is considered to speak differently, whether they do or do not! Or, in social analytical terms, social distinctions, rather than linguistic structure, may be the basis for the conceptualization (and perhaps even the perception) of dialect differences (cf. Wolff 1959, 1967).

Conclusions

Those who study African history, social organization, and linguistics find not only that they cross each other's paths in their field work - they are bound to their colleagues by a common interest and experience in Africa - but also that their methods and the results of their work contribute to the research of their colleagues. A historian may find, for example, that an understanding of an indigenous term is crucial for his explanation of some event or political process. Or an anthropologist discovers that he must find a way to understand the idiom in which is expressed the nature of some institutional complex in the culture he studies. Or a linguist realizes that he cannot begin to understand a language without an appreciation of the social organization of its speakers and their customs. These cases, and the many more which they represent, are indicative of the ways in which the advances within one discipline lead to the need for new and different kinds of input from other disciplines in order to meet rigorous standards of analysis. Certainly, with regard to language and social science, this is no novel suggestion (cf. Whiteley 1966; Dalby 1970). What has been attempted here is to examine these kinds of consideration in terms of empirical data made available by published studies of the southeastern Liberian coast and recently completely sociolinguistic fieldwork.

Four aspects of the nature of Kru as an ethnic and linguistic unit have been considered. The first two sections concerned the indigenous terminological expression of the notion of the "Kru people". It was shown that the indigenous term klap is characterized by the same kinds of "ethnic vs. occupational" ambiguity that has been thought to exist for the externally-based label Kru. And, a feature of Kru phonology was shown to link the ethnic label to its origins as the name of an early king, according to one legend. In this way, both the use of the ethnic label and one native hypothesis as to its origin are shown to have linguistic dimensions.

The last two sections focused on the linguistic reflection of the internal structure of Kru as an ethnic and linguistic unit. The indigenous social units of which the Kru are composed - i.e., dakɔ - were shown to have social as well as territorial concomitants. And it was demonstrated that there are syntactic and phonological features which distinguish between the social groups and their territory, in spite of the common name by which they are both labelled. Finally, in the examination of purely linguistic evidence concerning the degree of difference among dakɔ-associated dialects which comprise the Kru language,

what emerged was the suggestion that the distinctions among *dakɔ* as social groups are actually the source for correlated language variation.

In three of these four cases, the focus has been on the linguistic dimension of social phenomena; while in the last case it was suggested that some linguistic phenomena cannot be understood adequately without an understanding of social facts. That a discussion of linguistic aspects of social phenomena should involve a consideration of social aspects of linguistic phenomena is indicative of the kinds of ways in which concerns with language and society intersect. For example, the fact that the indigenous term *klaɔ* parallels the term *Kru* in certain kinds of ambiguity is not only interesting in-and-of itself, but also because it is a new piece of evidence which supports the notion of some "occupational vs. ethnic" confusion in the etymology of the word *Kru*. And the realization that social groups can be distinguished by syntactic and phonological marking in their names is interesting not only because it may help us to assess the accuracy of some primary historical sources, but also because it suggests a source of data which can contribute to future studies of Liberian society, culture and history. As advances in Liberian social research demand new standards of rigor in the analysis of the complexities of political, economic, religious and other social relationships - and their history - researchers will seek new sources of data in which the social and historical processes being studied might be expressed. This paper suggests ways in which language and its structure can, for such researchers, serve those purposes.

FOOTNOTES

1. This paper results from data collected in conjunction with a study of urban language variation and social structure. Fieldwork in Monrovia from December 1974 through May 1976 was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, Fulbright-Hays program, and the National Institute of Mental Health. Much of what is discussed here is adapted from Chapter II ("Sources of *Kru* Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity") of Breitborde 1977.

2. The suffix */-ɔ/* here distinguishes the social group from the territory which it occupies. See discussion in Section 3 below.

3. When speakers pronounce the ethnic label *Kru*, they invariably do so with the */r/* corresponding to English */r/*. No such sound occurs in any *Kru* dialect, where *[l]* and *[r]* are allophones of flab */l/* (Rickard 1970:2; Lightfoot 1974:426). This English pronunciation for the ethnic label was not used in any of the accounts of the *Kulu* legend which were told to me. In those accounts, speakers pronounced the ethnic term derived from "*Kulu's* men" and "*Krumen*" as */klu/*, where the */l/* is the *Kru* flap. Thus, their pronunciations of *Kru* in the story differed from their usual pronunciations of *Kru* in normal conversation. In trying to listen closely to these pronunciations in the course of hearing the story, it was difficult to ascertain whether these utterances should be further characterized by the articulatory position of "tongue-in-cheek" - but I have my suspicions.

4. In fact, part of a *dakɔ* may be removed from its territorial concomitant, i.e., some members may reside outside the territory associated with the *dakɔ*. In Monrovia, members of each hinterland *dakɔ* are organized into units which form the basis of the administrative organization of urban *Kru* (Fraenkel 1964:79-84). All the Monrovia *Kru* are organized on the basis of their *dakɔ* membership into several sections which comprise the Municipal Corporation of Krutown, established by an act of the Liberian National Legislature in 1916.

5. The situation could be more complex than this. The present-day term /klaḡ/ does not necessarily have to break down neatly into /kla/ + /-ḡ/. It could also have as its underlying forms /klaḡ(?)/ + /-ḡ/, with a phonological rule deleting the final /ḡ/ in the environment of the suffix /-ḡ/. It is not possible to resolve this issue with available data, but see the reference to jaḡ below.

6. There is one discrepancy between the dialect survey list and my list of dakḡ on the Kru Corporation. The dialect survey fails to list kpleḡḡ. The reasons for this are not clear, but one may briefly be suggested: kpleḡḡ has been incorporated into a township (Barclayville) and the survey team may not have visited there - they seem to have made a general principle of not considering speakers in township areas.

7. The linguistic and ethnic referents of klaḡ are disambiguated by use of suffixes /-pɪ/, 'male person, member'; /-pra/, 'female person, member'; /nyɪ/, 'people'; and /wɪ/, 'language'; as in

| | |
|----------|--------------|
| klaḡ-pɪ | Kru man |
| klaḡ-pra | Kru woman |
| klaḡ nyɪ | Kru people |
| klaḡ wɪ | Kru language |

8. The reasons for the proficiencies of tajuḡsḡ speakers in understanding klaḡ are based in the social relations and contacts between coastal and interior groups over time. In the economic competition that characterized the relations between these two areas, the coastal people were dominant. The interior people frequently travelled to the coast and had to deal with members of coastal dakḡ, and their speech, as middlemen in trade. For an interior man to find work on a ship he had to attach himself to some coastal man who supplied ship labor. And until recently, for a child to go beyond grade school, he had to travel to the coast. Whether there are aspects of linguistic structure that "interact" with these social and historical data to account for these differences in understanding must await more analyses of Kru dialects (cf. Duitsman 1975:88). Whatever the cause, the existence of a kind of non-reciprocal intelligibility in Kru dialects is certain.

REFERENCES CITED

Breitborde, L. B., "The Social Structural Basis of Linguistic Variation in an Urban African Neighborhood," Ph. D. Dissertation, The University of Rochester, 1977.

Brooks, George C., Jr., The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century: An Historical Compendium. Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Association, 1972.

Dalby, David, Introduction. In, Language and History in Africa. New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, vii-xvii, 1970.

Dalby, David, and P. E. H. Hair, "Le langage de Guynée": a sixteenth century vocabulary from the Pepper Coast. African Language Studies 5:174-191, 1964.

Davis, Ronald W., Ethnohistorical Studies on the Kru Coast. Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Association, 1976.

d'Azévedo, Warren L., Tribe and Chiefdom on the Windward Coast. Rural Africana 15:10-29, 1971.

- Duitsman, John, Jana Bertkau and James Laesch, A survey of Kru dialects. Studies in African Linguistics 6:77-103, 1975.
- Fraenkel, Merran, Tribe and Class in Monrovia. London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1964.
- Fraenkel, Merran, Social change on the Kru Coast of Liberia. Africa 36:154-172, 1966.
- Greenberg, Joseph, The Languages of Africa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966.
- Johnston, Sir Harry H., Liberia. London: Hutchinson, 1906.
- Kingsley, Mary H., Travels in West Africa: Congo Francais, Corisco, and Cameroons. London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd. [3rd edition, London: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1965. Citations from 1965 edition].
- Kingsley, Mary H., West African Studies. London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1899.
- Koelle, Sigmund, Polyglotta Africana. London: Church Missionary Society House, 1854.
- Korte, Werner, and Andreas Massing, Institutional change among the Kru, Liberia - transformative response to change. Africana Collecta 2:117-140, 1971.
- Lavergne de Tressan, M. de, Inventaire Linguistique de l'Afrique Occidentale Française et du Togo. Dakar: IFAN, 1953.
- Lightfoot, Nancy, Tones on Kru monosyllables. Anthropological Linguistics 16:425-441, 1974.
- McEvoy, F. D., Understanding ethnic realities among the Grebo and Kru peoples of West Africa. Africa 47:62-80, 1977.
- Rickard, David T., Kru Grammar: A Preliminary Study. Monrovia: United Methodist Church Department of Literacy Work and Literature Production, mimeo, 1970.
- Welmrs, William E., African Language Structures. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.
- Whiteley, W. H., Social anthropology, meaning and linguistics. Man 1:139-157, 1966.
- Wolff, Hans, Intelligibility and inter-ethnic attitudes. Anthropological Linguistics 1:34-41, 1959.
- Wolff, Hans, Language, ethnic identity and social change in southern Nigeria. Anthropological Linguistics 9:18-25, 1967.
- Zetterström, Kjell, Preliminary Report on the Kru. Ethnographic Survey of Southeastern Liberia. Robertsport, Liberia: Tubman Center of African Culture.

A SURVEY OF GREBO DIALECTS IN LIBERIA

Frances Ingemann and John Duitsman
University of Kansas The Institute for Liberian Languages
Monrovia

Languages of the Kruan group cover roughly the southern half of Liberia. A series of dialect surveys of this area were undertaken starting in 1971 by the Institute for Liberian Languages in cooperation with the University of Liberia and the Ministry of Education. The primary purpose of these surveys was to find out whether the dialects traditionally grouped under the names of Bassa, Belle, Dei, Grebo, Krahn and Kru were sufficiently similar to constitute single languages each. A secondary purpose was to establish the relationships between languages and between the dialects within languages. Previously published results of these surveys are Ingemann et al.¹ (1972) for Krahn, Ingemann (1973), and Duitsman et al. (1975) for Kru. See also Ingemann and Thompson (1972-74) for information on the relationship of Belle to other Kruan dialects.

Other surveys reported in unpublished manuscripts are Duitsman et al. (1972) for Ivorian Guéré, Bertkau et al. (1974) for Bassa, and Dawson (1974) for southwestern Ivorian dialects.

The dialects which are usually called Grebo are spoken in Southeastern Liberia in Maryland, Grand Gedeh and Sino Counties. The best known of these dialects in Glebo, spoken in the Cape Palmas area. It has been the subject of numerous linguistic studies from Wilson (1838a, 1838b) to Innes (1966, 1967) and unpublished Peace Corps materials also prepared in the 1960's.

People familiar with the area have, however, long recognized that other Grebo dialects differed from that of Cape Palmas and they have informally distinguished 'seaside' Grebo (i.e. Glebo) from 'interior' (or 'bush') Grebo. The only published study of a dialect other than Glebo is by Edward Sapir (1931:30), who classified what he called Gweabo as a separate language:

The true 'Grebo'... speak a language which is quite different from Gweabo, though closely related to it, being intermediate between it and Kru.

In discussing the history of Southeastern Liberia, Schröder and Seibel (1974:22) state:

It is known that the Glebo tribe, from which the rest of the group took its name, arrived on the coast in 1701, arriving by sea from an area on the coast farther to the east. The interior Grebo tribes seem to have taken up their present locations somewhat earlier.

Linguistic diversity among the Grebo groups is therefore not simply attributable to the splitting off of linguistically homogeneous groups in the area which they now occupy but reflects in part divergence which began before migration to what is now Liberia.

Liberian Studies Journal, VII, 2 (1976-77)

The data for this study were collected in July-August 1972 and December 1972-January 1973.² Samples were taken from 25 dialects generally included in Grebo. Informants were all native speakers who used this dialect for daily communication and were for the most part interviewed in their dialect areas.

In planning the survey, we used a work copy of a map prepared by Ronald Kurtz of the Peoples of Southeastern Liberia, subsequently published in revised form in Schröder and Seibel (1974). As we traveled through the area, we also sought information from local people as to the languages and dialects spoken in their area. Because of time limitations, we did not attempt to study sub-dialects which informants indicated to us existed within major dialect areas. We were assured in all instances that these differences were rather small and that people communicated with ease. The dialects surveyed were:

| Name used in this survey ³ | Name on the Map of Peoples of Southeastern Liberia |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Wedebo | gwalo |
| Kplebo | kplio |
| Glebo | glebo |
| Jabo | jao |
| Nyabo | nyabo |
| Wrelpo | wiebo |
| Gedebo | klɛo |
| Gbolo | gboloo |
| Nyenebo | nyineao |
| Dorobo | doolu |
| Borobo | guloo (Barrobo) |
| Trembo | sewo |
| Nitiabo | nitjao |
| Sabo | sao |
| Tuobo | tuwoo |
| Palipo | polupo |
| Gbebo | gbeypo |
| Chedepo | chelepō |
| Jedebo | jidepo |
| Tienpo | tiempo |
| Klepo | kelipo |
| Fopo | fopo |
| Bua | buau |
| Kitiapo | nokwe (kitibo) |
| Webó | wepo |

Word Lists

The word list used in the survey was based on the Swadesh 200 word list as it appears in Samarin's *Field Linguistics* (220), which actually contains over 200 items because it conflates two versions of the list. We omitted a few words which proved difficult to elicit or did not exist in the environment. In all, 212 were retained but occasionally we failed to elicit some of the words in some of the dialects so that the actual number of words compared for each pair of dialects ranged from 212 to 197.

Cognates shared by Grebo dialects (see Table 1) range from 91% to 61%. Insofar as possible, the dialects have been arranged on the table so as to show groupings of those which share the most cognates.

A word of caution about these data must be inserted at this point. We neither speak nor have carefully studied any of the dialects surveyed. We had to rely upon people from each dialect area who knew English either to act as

| | WEDEBO | KPLEBO | GLEBO | JABO | NYABO | WRELPO | GEDEBO | GBOLO | NYENEBO | DOROBO | BOROBO | TREMO | NITIABO | SABO | TUOBO | PALIPO | GBEPO | CHEDEPO | JEDEBO | TIENPO | KLEPO | FOPO | BUA | KITIABO | WEBO |
|---------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------|-------|---------|-------|-------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| WEDEBO | 78 | | 68 75 | 76 71 | 73 68 | 73 70 | 68 73 | 76 72 | 73 77 | 73 73 | | | 68 68 | 65 71 | 69 69 | 62 67 | 68 71 | 66 71 | 63 68 | 63 66 | 67 72 | 67 72 | 68 75 | 61 63 | 64 65 |
| KPLEBO | 78 | | 70 75 | 73 70 | 73 70 | 73 70 | 70 72 | 77 73 | 73 77 | 73 73 | | | 71 71 | 69 69 | | 67 67 | 71 71 | 66 71 | 63 68 | 63 66 | 67 72 | 72 72 | 75 75 | 63 63 | 65 65 |
| GLEBO | 68 70 | | | 77 79 | 74 72 | 73 71 | 68 65 | 68 68 | 67 67 | 70 65 | | | 67 70 | 65 65 | | 65 67 | 68 70 | 63 66 | 63 64 | 63 67 | | 66 66 | | 61 61 | 69 69 |
| JABO | 75 75 | | 77 77 | | 88 80 | 80 78 | 80 81 | 78 75 | 74 74 | 76 70 | | | 74 76 | 70 68 | | 69 70 | 70 67 | 66 65 | 64 66 | 67 67 | | 67 70 | | 64 64 | 69 69 |
| NYABO | 76 73 | | 79 88 | | 86 82 | 81 81 | 81 81 | 77 74 | 75 75 | 68 68 | | | 75 75 | 68 68 | | 70 68 | 67 65 | 66 66 | 67 67 | | | 65 68 | | 66 66 | 73 73 |
| WRELPO | 71 70 | | 74 80 | 86 77 | 79 77 | 78 71 | 72 69 | 78 71 | 69 69 | 63 63 | | | 69 69 | 63 63 | | 66 67 | 65 63 | 62 62 | 65 65 | | | 64 66 | | 62 62 | 68 68 |
| GEDEBO | 73 73 | | 72 80 | 82 77 | | 88 84 | 87 80 | 79 79 | 75 73 | 71 71 | | | 75 73 | 71 71 | | 68 68 | 69 66 | 67 66 | 66 66 | | | 65 67 | | 68 68 | 73 73 |
| GBOLO | 68 70 | | 73 78 | 81 79 | 88 85 | 85 85 | 78 78 | 75 74 | 71 71 | | | | 75 74 | 71 71 | | 71 68 | 68 65 | 65 64 | 64 64 | | | 66 67 | | 69 69 | 72 72 |
| NYENEBO | 73 72 | | 71 80 | 81 77 | 84 85 | | 91 84 | 81 76 | 77 75 | | | | 76 77 | 75 75 | | 69 70 | 70 68 | 67 69 | 66 66 | | | 66 70 | | 70 70 | 73 73 |
| DOROBO | 76 77 | | 68 81 | 81 78 | 87 85 | 91 89 | 84 89 | 78 78 | 78 78 | | | | 78 78 | 78 78 | | 69 70 | 70 68 | 66 70 | 67 67 | | | 66 71 | | 69 69 | 71 71 |
| BOROBO | 73 73 | | 65 78 | 77 71 | 80 78 | 84 89 | 79 79 | 79 80 | 80 80 | | | | 79 80 | 80 80 | | 72 71 | 71 70 | 69 72 | 68 68 | | | 68 75 | | 67 67 | 72 72 |
| TREMO | 73 73 | | 68 75 | 74 72 | 79 78 | 81 84 | 79 79 | 70 70 | 73 70 | | | | 70 73 | 70 70 | | 66 68 | 68 64 | 64 66 | 66 66 | | | 62 68 | | 66 66 | 67 67 |
| NITIABO | 68 71 | | 67 74 | 75 69 | 75 75 | 76 76 | 78 79 | 70 70 | 88 84 | | | | | 88 84 | | 77 75 | 75 73 | 74 72 | 72 72 | | | 71 73 | | 77 75 | 75 75 |
| SABO | 68 71 | | 70 76 | 75 69 | 73 74 | 77 77 | 78 80 | 73 73 | 88 86 | | | | 88 86 | 86 86 | | 80 80 | 80 74 | 73 74 | 74 74 | | | 70 75 | | 73 73 | 73 73 |
| TUOBO | 65 69 | | 65 70 | 68 63 | 71 71 | 75 75 | 78 80 | 70 70 | 84 86 | | | | 84 86 | 86 86 | | 79 78 | 79 74 | 74 74 | 74 74 | | | 71 74 | | 75 75 | 75 75 |
| PALIPO | 62 67 | | 65 69 | 70 66 | 68 71 | 69 69 | 72 66 | 66 66 | 77 80 | 79 79 | | | 77 80 | 79 79 | | | 82 84 | 79 78 | 76 76 | | | 74 72 | | 71 68 | 68 68 |
| GBEPO | 68 71 | | 67 70 | 68 67 | 68 68 | 70 70 | 71 68 | 68 68 | 75 80 | 78 78 | | | 75 80 | 78 78 | | 82 82 | 91 83 | 81 77 | 77 77 | | | 73 75 | | 68 68 | 68 68 |
| CHEDEPO | 66 71 | | 68 70 | 67 65 | 69 68 | 70 70 | 71 68 | 68 68 | 75 80 | 79 79 | | | 75 80 | 79 79 | | 84 91 | | 88 86 | 80 80 | | | 78 75 | | 68 67 | 67 67 |
| JEDEBO | 63 68 | | 63 66 | 65 63 | 66 65 | 68 68 | 70 64 | 64 64 | 73 74 | 74 74 | | | 73 74 | 74 74 | | 79 83 | 88 88 | 82 80 | 80 80 | | | 75 75 | | 67 67 | 62 62 |
| TIENPO | 63 66 | | 63 64 | 66 62 | 67 65 | 67 66 | 69 64 | 64 64 | 74 73 | 74 74 | | | 74 73 | 74 74 | | 78 81 | 86 82 | 82 79 | 79 79 | | | 77 72 | | 67 67 | 64 64 |
| KLEPO | 67 72 | | 65 67 | 67 65 | 66 64 | 69 70 | 72 66 | 66 66 | 72 74 | 74 74 | | | 72 74 | 74 74 | | 76 77 | 80 80 | 79 79 | 79 79 | | | 70 70 | | 66 66 | 65 65 |
| FOPO | 67 72 | | 66 67 | 65 64 | 65 66 | 66 66 | 68 62 | 62 62 | 71 70 | 71 71 | | | 71 70 | 71 71 | | 74 73 | 78 75 | 77 70 | 70 70 | | | 76 76 | | 62 62 | 62 62 |
| BUA | 68 75 | | 66 70 | 68 66 | 67 67 | 70 71 | 75 68 | 68 68 | 73 75 | 74 74 | | | 73 75 | 74 74 | | 72 75 | 75 75 | 72 70 | 70 70 | | | 76 76 | | 62 65 | 65 65 |
| KITIABO | 61 63 | | 61 64 | 66 62 | 68 69 | 70 69 | 67 66 | 66 66 | 77 73 | 75 75 | | | 77 73 | 75 75 | | 71 68 | 68 67 | 67 66 | 66 66 | | | 62 62 | | 74 74 | 74 74 |
| WEBO | 64 65 | | 69 69 | 73 68 | 73 72 | 73 71 | 72 67 | 67 67 | 75 73 | 75 75 | | | 75 73 | 75 75 | | 68 68 | 67 62 | 64 65 | 65 65 | | | 62 65 | | 74 74 | 74 74 |

TABLE 1. PERCENT OF COGNATES FOR 25 GREBO DIALECTS

informants or to serve as interpreters for others. Sometimes their knowledge of English was scanty. It is possible, therefore, that there may be errors in the word lists although we took special care when a response was not cognate with other dialects previously collected. Because phonological reconstructions have not been undertaken for these dialects, cognates could not be established on a rigorous basis. Although we were able to observe a few regular sound correspondences, we had in many instances to rely on general phonological resemblance. It is probable that some loan-words have been included as cognates and that we have not counted some words which actually are cognates. Nevertheless, we feel that the results overall are valid and that further investigations will produce at most only minor modifications.

Although the Swadesh list was originally devised with the hope of estimating the approximate date at which related languages began to diverge from each other, many linguists are skeptical of the reliability of such dating. See Hymes 1960 for a review article on lexicostatistics. Bergsland and Vogt (1962) give examples of glottochronological datings which do not fit known historical facts. Some scholars have attempted to refine the method but to date, its validity has not been demonstrated. For example, Kruskal et al. (1973:35) say:

The primary result which we would like to obtain from this work is the family tree for each family, together with the estimated divergence time for each node of the tree... The tree for Indo-European is of special interest, because it will permit the first severe test of our methodology, and hopefully provide validation. However, we are not yet ready to present such final results.

Because any dating attempted at this time might be more misleading than enlightening, we have refrained from providing such estimates. However, it is unlikely that the divergences could have occurred within in a few hundred years.

The question of how divergent dialects must be to be considered different languages has never been resolved. As a guide, we might look to cognate percentages between what are generally recognized as distinct European languages. For example,

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Czech-Russian | 74% |
| English-German | 60% |
| English-Czech | 25% (Fairbanks 1955:118) |

Swadesh (1954:326) suggested that 81% cognates or better indicate that the dialects belong to the same language.

By this criterion, there would be 11 Grebo languages. Eight of the dialects surveyed would be considered separate languages since they do not show 81% cognates with any other dialect. In addition there would be three other languages, each consisting of several dialects. The list of languages for the area would be as follows:

1. Wedebo
2. Kplebo
3. Glebo
4. Jabo, Nyabo, Wrelpo, Gedebo, Gbolo, Nyenebo, Dorobo, Borobo and Trembo
5. Nitiabo, Sabo and Tuobo
6. Palipo, Gbepo, Chedepo, Jedebo, and Tienpo
7. Klepo
8. Fopo
9. Bua

10. Kitiapo
11. Webo

A more stringent proposal is that of Dyen (1965:18):

If two lists score 70.0 percent or more with each other or with the same list, they are assigned to the same language. In fact, if a chain of percentages 70.0 or higher connect a set of lists, they are all assigned to the same language.

According to these criteria, all the dialects would belong to the same language.

Glaro is mistakenly included within the Grebo area on the map of People of Southeastern Liberia. However, cognates with Grebo range only from 52% to 60%. The earlier Krahn survey showed that Glaro is 69% to 90% cognate with Krahn dialects.

Within Liberia the closest relationship of Grebo dialects to those outside the Grebo area is between Jedebo and ~~sabo~~, a Tajuozohn Kru dialect, which is 74%.⁴ There are many dialects in the Ivory Coast which are reportedly very close to Grebo. Systematic comparison of the dialects across the political boundaries has not been undertaken.

Mutual Intelligibility

Definitions distinguishing between language and dialect often include mutual intelligibility as a criterion. In order to obtain information about intelligibility in the Grebo area, we devised a test based on the method first proposed by Voegelin and Harris (1951).⁵

We collected narrative samples from 24 of the Grebo dialects⁶ by asking speakers to relate some incident which would not be known beyond their immediate area. We requested speakers to avoid using English loanwords insofar as possible. However, because English loanwords are so prevalent in Liberian languages, many speakers found it impossible to eliminate them entirely from their speech. English loanwords were not counted in scoring comprehension.

From these narratives we selected excerpts of approximately 100 words in length, which we asked listeners in each dialect area to translate into their own dialect. Two separate test tapes were prepared so that whenever we had two good narratives from different speakers of the same dialect, we could use different passages with different listeners. In this way, we attempted to control for the fact that some passages (or some speakers) might be easier to comprehend than others. Dialects for which two different excerpts were used were Nyabo, Kitiapo, Webo, Sabo, Gbepo, Palipo, and Jedebo. Three excerpts from Kplebo were used. Because of logistic problems, it was not possible to obtain all the passages before intelligibility testing began nor did time permit us to return to all areas to fill in the gaps. As a result, Wedebo, Trembo, Fopo, and Tienpo were heard by listeners from only a few dialects. Interspersed among the Grebo dialects were excerpts from Glio, Glaro, Sikohn, and Tajuozohn to test intelligibility of dialects located near Grebo but belonging to other groups.

For listeners we used only people who had not resided in another dialect area and who had not traveled extensively. All listeners were tested in their own dialect area. When possible we had two listeners for each dialect but for seven dialects (Wedebo, Trembo, Borobo, Myenebo, Fopo, Tienpo and Jadebo) we had only one.

In order to minimize errors that might arise from failure to remember correctly, the test tape was stopped at natural pauses to allow the listener to translate into his dialect what he had just heard. Usually the tape was stopped after one or two breath groups. A brief practice passage was played at the beginning of each session to acquaint the listener with the task. This practice passage was not scored. The listener's response was recorded for later translation into English. If a listener failed to understand the first three or four segments of a passage, the tape was moved ahead to the next dialect.

After a listener had heard and attempted to translate all the passages on a test tape, his responses were played back phrase by phrase to someone from that dialect who knew English (in a few instances this was the listener himself). The English interpreter repeated the responses in the dialect slowly so that they could be written down and then he translated them into English. By this means we were able to assess the listener's accuracy with a minimum of interference from changes which might otherwise have been introduced by the interpreter.

At a later date the translations were compared with the original text and scored on a scale of 1 to 6 as follows:

- 1 = no errors
- 2 = 1 or 2 errors
- 3 = 3 or 4 errors
- 4 = more than 4 errors but the main outlines of the narrative were understood
- 5 = only isolated words and phrases correct
- 6 = nothing understood

Omissions of content words and phrases were counted as errors.

The results of the intelligibility test are given in Table 2. When there was more than one listener, the numbers in the table represent averages of the two or three scores rounded down (i.e., a 3 and a 4 were entered in the table as 3). The non-Grebo dialects have been omitted from the table because Grebo listeners were usually able to understand nothing. Only occasionally was a listener able to pick up a few words.

When interpreting the figures on the table, it is important to note that listeners did not always score perfectly on passages from their own dialects. This is due mostly to careless omissions since omissions were counted as errors. Nevertheless there may have been some utterances which were difficult to understand.

Probably the most useful division regarding intelligibility is between those that are easy to understand (scoring 1, 2 or 3) and those that permitted little or no comprehensions (5 and 6), with those scoring 4 a marginal type.

Examination of the results reveal that in some instances a pair of dialects are not equally intelligible. Because of the limited number of passages and listeners in the present study, this could reflect a difference in difficulty in the passages or ability of the listeners. It is unlikely, however, that all the differences can be explained by these factors since the same phenomenon has been observed in other studies (Wolff 1959; Casad 1974). When dialects are not mutually intelligible, the differences can usually be attributed to motivational factors for understanding another dialect such as prestige or economic usefulness. Sound changes may also make it more difficult to recognize cognates in one direction than another.

| | | P A S S A G E S | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|-----------------|--------|-------|------|-------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------|-------|---------|------|-------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------|-----|---------|------|
| L I S T E N E R S | | WEDEBO | KPLEBO | GLEBO | JABO | NYABO | GEDEBO | GBOLO | NYENEBO | DOROBO | BOROBO | TREMO | NITIABO | SABO | TUOBO | PALIPO | GBEPO | CHEDEPO | JEDEBO | TIENPO | KLEPO | FOPO | BUA | KITIABO | WEBO |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | WEDEBO | - | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | - | 6 | - | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| | KPLEBO | - | 2 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | - | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | - | 5 | - | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | GLEBO | 5 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | JABO | 5 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | NYABO | - | 6 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | - | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | - | 6 | - | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| | GEDEBO | - | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | - | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | - | 2 | - | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| | GBOLO | - | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | - | 5 | - | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| | NYENEBO | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | DOROBO | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 | - | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| | BOROBO | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | - | 4 | - | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| | TREMO | - | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 2 | - | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | - | 5 | - | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| | NITIABO | - | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | - | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | - | 3 | - | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| | SABO | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | TUOBO | - | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | - | 3 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 2 | - | 3 | - | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| | PALIPO | - | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 3 | - | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | - | 3 | - | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| | GBEPO | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| | CHEDEPO | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| | JEDEBO | - | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | - | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | 2 | - | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| | TIENPO | - | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 4 | - | 4 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | - | 2 | - | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | KLEPO | - | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 | - | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | - | 2 | - | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| | FOPO | - | 4 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 4 | - | 4 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | - | 2 | - | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| | BUA | - | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 4 | - | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | - | 4 | - | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| | KITIABO | - | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | - | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | - | 4 | - | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| | WEBO | - | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | - | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 4 | - | 5 | - | 2 | 3 | 1 |

TABLE 2. AVERAGED INTELLIGIBILITY SCORES FOR 24 GREBO DIALECTS: 1 = no errors
6 = nothing understood
- = not tested

Comparison of Results

When we compare intelligibility scores with the percentages of cognates on the word list, we find that percentages of 90% or above consistently result in high intelligibility. Below that, intelligibility begins to be impaired but above 85% instances of easy intelligibility outnumber instances of communication difficulty. At 85% and below the difficulties increase rapidly. At 81% and below instances of easy communication can almost without exception be explained by geographic proximity. These percentages hold true not only for Grebo but also for other Kruan groups which have been surveyed.

These observations are consistent with the findings of Ladefoged et al. (1972) of a correlation between intelligibility and geographic proximity in Uganda. It would appear that intelligibility between two geographically adjacent groups which do not share a large number of cognates can be better explained as partial language learning than resulting from dialect similarity since dialects with similar numbers of cognates but not geographically adjacent are not mutually intelligible. This conclusion brings into question definitions of language which are based on chains of mutually intelligible dialects.

Conclusions

For practical purposes of literacy and mass media communication, it would seem reasonable to start with the groups previously arrived at using the 81 % cutoff and modify them in the light of the data on intelligibility and other factors. For example, Klepo, which would have been an isolate, can clearly be included with the other geographically adjacent dialects. Kitiapo and Webó may be included with Nitiabo, Sabo, and Tuobo. Unfortunately, intelligibility data are incomplete for Fopo and Wedebo, but it is probably that they can be grouped with Bua and Kplebo respectively.

On the other hand, it may be that Jabó, Nyabo, Wrelpo, Gedebo, Gbolo, Nyenebo, Dorobo, Borobo, and Trembo are not sufficiently similar and that Jabó, Nyabo and Wrelpo should be considered a separate group. The status of Trembo is marginal. Although it shows many cognates and mutual intelligibility with Borobo and Dorobo, there are greater differences with the remaining dialects.

Glebo clearly does not fit in well with other dialects. Glebo speakers only understand with ease the geographically adjacent Jabó and Nyabo. Conversely, despite the prestige which Glebo has enjoyed both through use in publication and on the radio and through being the dialect area in which the major commercial, educational and governmental center of the region is located, it is not widely understood by speakers of other dialects who have not traveled. It is possible that Glebo, Jabó, Nyabo and Wrelpo could be grouped together, but Glebo is not the most linguistically suitable dialect for speakers of the other dialects to use, and it is highly unlikely, given the great pride which Glebo speakers take in the fact that their dialect has a written tradition going back over a hundred years, that Glebo speakers would be willing to use another dialect.

From this survey, it would appear that the following dialect groups should be considered in developing a language policy:

1. Wedebo and Kplebo
2. Glebo
3. Jabó, Nyabo, Wrelpo
4. Gedebo, Gbolo, Nyenebo, Dorobo, Borobo and Trembo
5. Nitiabo, Sabo, Tuobo, Kitiapo and Webó
6. Fopo and Bua
7. Palipo, Gbepo, Chedepo, Jedebó, Tienpo and Kplepo

Further divisions may be necessary for purposes of initial literacy materials if careful study reveals structural differences of such magnitude that they would make a single set of materials unfeasible. In addition, sociological factors not taken into account in this investigation must be considered. Linguistic data are important but not the only factor in determining language policy.

FOOTNOTES

* This paper was presented at the Liberian Studies Association Conference, April 10, 1976.

1. This survey of Krahn was originally presented as a paper at the Tenth Congress of the West African Linguistic Society in 1972 and a revised version of the paper was published that same year in the *University of Liberia Journal*. Unfortunately, that issue of the journal was lost in shipment from the printer. We have not heard of plans to reprint the issue.

2. This work was supported by grants from the University of Liberia and the Institute for Liberian Languages. William Doe participated in collecting data during the first part of the survey. Because of his untimely death in 1973, he was unable to contribute to the analysis of the data. We wish to thank the many Liberian government officials and missionaries who assisted us during the course of the survey. We are also grateful to the Grebo people who generously took time to provide us with samples of their dialects.

3. The names are given in the spelling approved by Dr. A. E. Nyema Jones, Minister of Lands and Mines and Secretary of the Liberian Board of Geographic Names.

4. Duitsman et al. (1975) gives higher percentages for Jedebo compared with Kru dialects, including 81% cognate with Tajuoohn. These higher figures are probably an artifact of the difference in word lists used. Duitsman et al. discarded a number of words which were used in the present survey and included a few others which were found to show a fairly high degree of consistency within the area. For comparability with internal Grebo dialect relationships, we retain the percentage based on the same procedures used in the Grebo survey. However, because of the difference in elicitation, only 186 of the 212 words were available for comparison.

5. A recent treatment of dialect intelligibility testing may be found in Casad (1974).

6. Wrelpo was omitted because of time limitations and the smallness of the group. Because the Wrelpo area was not accessible by car, wordlists were obtained at the district headquarters bordering on the Wrelpo area from men who had come there a few days previously. These men had had extensive contact with other dialects and so were not suitable as listeners.

REFERENCES

Berksland, Knut, and Hans Vogt. 1962. 'On the Validity of Glotto-chronology.' *Current Anthropology* 3:115-129.

Bertkau, Jana, Joseph Gbadyu, John Duitsman and Edward Mueller. 1974. 'A Survey of Bassa Dialects.' Unpublished ms.

- Casad, Eugene H. 1974. DIALECT INTELLIGIBILITY TESTING. (Publications in Linguistics and Related Fields, 38) Norman, Oklahoma: Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Dawson, Keith R. 1974. 'The Krou Dialect Cluster (Ivorian Kru or Ivorian Grebo).' Unpublished ms.
- Duitsman, John, Jana Bertkau, and James Laesch. 1975. 'A Survey of Kru Dialects.' Studies in African Linguistics 6:77-103.
- Duitsman, John, Neil Campbell, and Nicodeme Kwejige. 1972. 'A Survey of the Guere Dialects in the Ivory Coast.' Unpublished manuscript.
- Dyen, Isidore. 1965. A LEXICOSTATISTICAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE AUSTRONE-
SIAN LANGUAGES. (Indiana University Publications in Anthropology and Linguistics, Memoir 19) Supplement to IJAL Vol. 31, No. 1.
- Fairbanks, Gordon H. 1955. 'A Note on Glottochronology.' IJAL 21.116-120.
- Hymes, Dell H. 1960. 'Lexicostatistics So Far.' Current Anthropology 1:3-44.
- Ingemann, Frances. 1973. 'Kruan Languages in Liberia.' Mid-America Linguistic Conference Papers, 1972, ed. by J. H. Battle and John Schweitzer, 107-113. Stillwater, Oklahoma: Oklahoma State University.
- Ingemann, Frances, John Duitsman, and William Doe. 1972. 'A Survey of the Krahn Dialects in Liberia.' University of Liberia Journal.
- Ingemann, Frances, and Richard Thompson. 1972-74. 'A Kuwaa (Belle) Wordlist.' Liberian Studies Journal 5:17-23.
- Innes, Gordon. 1966. AN INTRODUCTION TO GREBO. London: Luzac.
- _____. 1967. A GREBO-ENGLISH DICTIONARY. (West African Language Monographs, 6) London: Cambridge University Press.
- Kruskal, Joseph B., Isidore Dyen, and Paul Black. 1973. 'Some Results from the Vocabulary Method of Reconstructing Language Trees.' Lexicostatistics in Genetic Linguistics, ed. by Isidore Dyen, 30-55. The Hague: Mouton.
- Ladefoged, Peter, Ruth Glick, and Clive Criper. 1972. LANGUAGE IN UGANDA. London: Oxford University Press.
- Samarin, William. 1967. FIELD LINGUISTICS. New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston.
- Sapir, Edward. 1931. 'Notes on the Gwebo Language of Liberia.' Language 7:30-41.
- Schröder, Günter, and Dieter Seibel. 1974. ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF SOUTHEASTERN LIBERIA: THE LIBERIAN KRAHN AND THE SAPO. (Liberian Studies Monograph Series, 4.) Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Association in America.
- Swadesh, Morris. 1954. 'Perspectives and Problems of Amerindian Comparative Linguistics.' Word 10:306-332.
- Voegelin, C. F. and Z. S. Harris. 1951. 'Methods for Determining Intelligibility among Dialects of Natural Languages.' Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 95:322-9.

Wilson, John Leighton. 1838a. A BRIEF GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GREBO LANGUAGE. Cape Palmas.

_____. 1838b. DICTIONARY OF THE GREBO LANGUAGE. Fair Hope, Cape Palmas: Press of the ABCF Mission.

Wolff, Hans. 1959. 'Intelligibility and Inter-Ethnic Attitudes.'
Anthropological Linguistics 1(3):34-41.

CONSIDERATIONS IN SPELLING LIBERIAN NAMES

John Duitsman
The Institute for Liberian Languages

Problems resulting from present spelling practices

Demographers, educators, officials, and citizens have experienced frustration in the face of spelling problems for many years. We are all familiar with maps and documents which contain different spellings for the same place or person, Gbarnga, Gkanka, Gbarnka, Jede, Jadae, Jedei, Jidi, Nifu, Niffo, Nifo, Nefu, etc. There are other examples where the spellings are consistent yet they bear only a vague resemblance to actual pronunciation. For example, a town in N.W. Liberia, is consistently written Mavodo but pronounced maufoḍo. The Pahwou and the Roessler families of Eastern Liberia actually pronounce their names pau & wloṣlɛ.

Liberians who have adopted Kwi names have received criticism for denying their heritage. That criticism may be justified in some cases. However, some individuals find that adopting a Kwi name is the only available alternative to frequent mispronunciations of one's traditional name. Those who move from the country to Liberia's commercial centers often tire of correcting others who are unable to interpret their spellings and change their names as a practical way out of the dilemma.

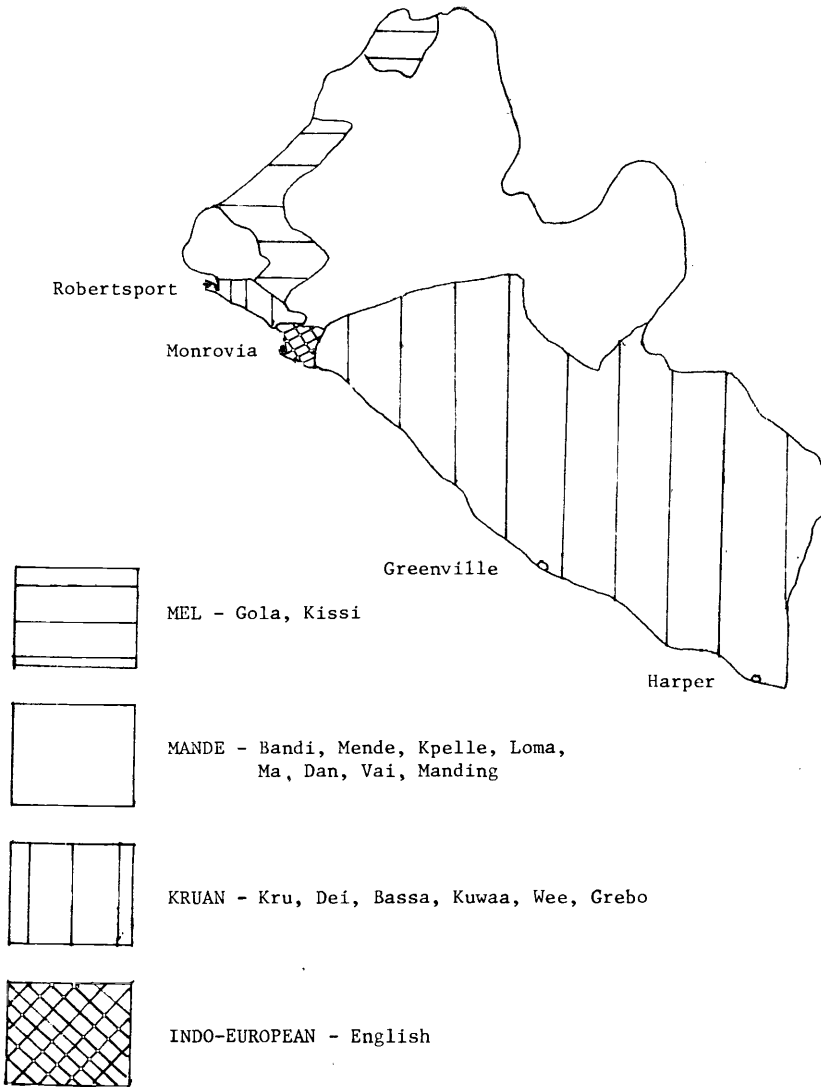
Differences in naming systems compound spelling difficulties

Differences between Liberian naming systems and the English patrilineal naming system have also caused Liberians to change their names. In some of the Kruan languages (see map on following page) a child is given a name such as sagba. When further identification is required, the mother's given name plus a possessive suffix precedes the given name: tidi a sagba 'Tidi's Sagba'. When a Wee (Krahn) man uses a name like Tidi's Sagba in Monrovia, however, he finds that most people interpret the name after the English pattern and the fellow ends up with a woman's name for a first name and his own given name for a surname. One solution that has developed involves a modification of the English patrilineal naming system and retaining one's original given name. In these instances, the father's given name is used as the surname. A young man with the given name of Sagba and a father with the given name Toe would be called Sagba Toe if this system were applied. This has the advantage of helping to preserve identity yet it does nothing towards the spelling and pronunciation problem.

Sounds which are generally written consistently and pronounced accurately

It should be pointed out that many with names like Doe, Fleh, or Borbor have no problem. These individuals are fortunate in having names consisting of sounds which have equivalents in the Liberian dialect of English and are fairly accurately represented by English orthographic conventions.

Language Families of Liberia



Consonant sounds that Liberian English has in common with other Liberian languages are listed below:

| <u>Phonetic symbol</u> | <u>Common Liberian English Representation</u> | |
|------------------------|---|-------------------|
| b | b | Boe |
| c | ch | Chedepo |
| d | d | Ducor |
| f | f | Fahnley |
| g | g | Gola |
| gb | gb | Gboo Clan |
| h | h | Hawa |
| j | j | Jedepo |
| k | k | Kakata |
| kp | kp | Kpelle |
| l | l | Lorma |
| m | m | Mano |
| n | n | Nifu |
| r | ny, ni | Manya, Niua Point |
| ŋ | ng | Karnga |
| p | p | Po River |
| r | r | Kru |
| s | s | Sapo |
| ʃ | sh | Shaw |
| t | t | Tolo |
| v | v | Vai |
| w | w | Wehteh |
| j, y | y | Yancy |
| z | z | Tu Zohn |

gb and kp are unit sounds pronounced in the same length of time as are other single consonants. Foreigners have been misled by the fact that these are represented by digraphs and they will sometimes pronounce them as if they were sequences of two consonants. Since there are no g plus b nor k plus p sequences in English or in European languages, they usually go one step further and insert a vowel; Kpelle and Gboe usually end up sounding like *kəpɛlɛ* and *gabou'*.

The following are combinations of consonant sounds which occur in Liberian English and other Liberian languages:

| <u>Phonetic Symbols</u> | <u>Common Liberian English Representation</u> | |
|-------------------------|---|---------------|
| bl | bl | Bluebarra |
| fl | fl | Flah |
| gl | gl, gr | Gl原因, Gray |
| kl | cl | Clay |
| pl | pl | Plahn |
| sl | sl | Sla |
| dr | dr | Drepo |
| kr | cr, kr | Cracra, Krahn |
| tr | tr | Tror |
| kw | qu | Sanequelle |
| sw | sw | Swah |
| tw | tw | Twabo |
| zw | zw | Zwedru |

The sounds and combinations of sounds listed above present only a few difficulties to readers of English. Occasionally, we find variations on spellings of the (kr) and (kw) sounds. The (kr) sequence is sometimes written as kr, as in the name Kru. The (kw) sound is sometimes represented with kw, as in the word Kwi. Neither of these two variations, however, cause pronunciation difficulties. In certain sections of Eastern Liberia there is a spelling problem involving consonant plus l sequences. In languages of that area a very short vowel occurs between the consonant and the l in slow and exaggerated speech. Most writers simply ignore it and write consonant plus l in these situations but some have included this element. Thus we have Mr. Glay and his brother Mr. Galay spelling the same name different ways. Unless familiar with this problem, one is likely to pronounce the first vowel in Galay as if it were a full vowel. Since the transitional vowel does not appear in ordinary speech, it seems that spelling the cluster without it is the best of the two solutions. For our purpose, the primary difference between the Kissi and Bandi nd and ngs and the English n plus d and n plus g combinations is in their positions in words. Bandi and Kissi nd and ngs occur at the beginnings of words; English nds and ngs do not. Yet most Liberians who read English have no difficulty pronouncing these sequences in Bandi and Kissi names. A few, however, add a vowel before initial nd and ng clusters to make them more like English sequences. Thus in these situations words like Ndala and Ngala are pronounced as endala and engala.

Vowel sounds occurring in Liberian English and other Liberian languages are listed as follows:

| <u>Phonetic Symbol</u> | <u>Common English Representations with Examples</u> | |
|------------------------|---|-------------|
| i | ee | feel |
| | y | carry |
| | ie | carries |
| | ea | tea |
| | i | kwi |
| e | e | Mende |
| | a | take |
| | ay | play |
| ɛ | e | vex |
| | eh | Grand Gedeh |
| a | a | Bassa |
| | ah | Kannah Clan |
| | ar | Gbarnga |
| u | u | Kru |
| | ue | blue |
| | oo | boot |
| | ough | through |
| o | o | rogue |
| | oe | toe |
| | oa | road |
| | ow | show |
| | oh | oh |
| | ew | ew |
| ɔ | o | Loma |
| | or | Zorzor |
| | ough | ought |

The problems with representing these vowel sounds in the left hand column result from the inconsistencies in the English spelling system. In fact, it is in the area of representing vowel sounds that the English spelling system is most inconsistent (Venezky 1969:59-62). We should not be surprised, then, that a spelling system which is inconsistent in representing the vowels of its own language is even more inconsistent in representing the vowels of other languages. The most common method for writing vowel sounds in Liberian languages has been to select from the variety of symbols used for their closest English equivalents and hope for the best. There are, however, some exceptions to that common procedure and a standardized way of representing some of the above vowel sounds has been developing. *ɔ* and *ɛ* are commonly written *or* and *eh* and Liberian readers consistently pronounce those symbols correctly.³ The person, or persons, responsible for the development of those conventions should be commended. What an improvement over writing *ɔ* with *ough* as in *ought*! Besides being awkward to write, *ough* is sometimes also used to represent the [u] sound in words like *through*.

Liberia's Board of Geographic Names can receive at least part of the credit for the trend toward using I.P.A. symbols for some vowels in names of towns and geographic features. Readers do well with this system and as more and more people are becoming literate in Liberia's indigenous languages, the number of people who will benefit from this approach will increase. (Most of the writing systems for Liberia's languages use symbols drawn from the I.P.A. set as per the Liberian Languages Task Force recommendations, Ministry of Education, 1973, page 15.) With these considerations in mind, the following list of ways to symbolize vowel sounds in Liberian names was drawn. (A later section deals with vowel sounds of languages which are not found in Liberian English.)

| <u>Phonetic Symbol</u> <u>I.P.A.</u> | <u>Recommended</u> <u>Symbol</u> |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| i | i as in Kwi |
| e | e Mende |
| | eh Grand Gedeh |
| a | a Bassa |
| u | u Kru |
| o | o Po River |
| | or Zorzor |

Consonants Frequently Mispronounced and Spelled Inconsistently

Consonant sounds which do not occur in Liberian English are listed below with some of the languages they occur in. These sounds usually involve pairs which are distinct from each other and from their closest English equivalents. Wee (Krahn), Tchien dialect, for example, has a lightly voiced *b* and a heavily voiced *b* which is pronounced in a breathy manner. Neither of these two sounds are quite like the English *b* yet names containing them are written with the ordinary English *b* symbol. Those who prefer to keep the two Krahn consonants separate might try writing the breathy consonants as a diglot followed by *h*, eg. *bh*, and leaving the lightly voiced *b* as an ordinary *b*. Loma writers might try *h* to distinguish between the two *v* sounds in that language. Suggested spellings for these and other consonant sounds with no Liberian English equivalents are included in the list below.

| <u>Phonetic symbol</u> | | <u>Suggested spellings</u> |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Bassa | b ^h | bh |
| | | b |
| | d ^h | dh |
| | ɖ | d |
| | x ^w | xw |
| | ɣ ^w | hw |
| Grebo | hm | hm |
| | hn | hn |
| | ŋ ^m | ngm or gm |
| | hw | hw |
| | ŋ ^w | ngw |
| Wee (Krahn) | | |
| | b ^h | bh |
| | ɓ | b |
| | d ^h | dh |
| | ɖ | d |
| | j ^h | jh |
| | j | j |
| Kru | ŋ ^m | ngm or gm |
| Kuwaa (Belle) | | x |
| Dei | b ^h | bh |
| | | b |
| | d ^h | dh |
| | | d |
| Bandi | ɣ | x |
| | nd | nd |
| Ma (Mano) | b | bh |
| | ɓ | b |
| | ɣ | x |

| | | |
|-----------|----------------|----|
| Dan (Gio) | b | bh |
| | ḃ | b |
| | | |
| Kpelle | b | bh |
| | ḃ | b |
| | ɣ | x |
| Loma | b | bh |
| | ḃ | b |
| | gw | gw |
| | ɣ | x |
| | v | v |
| | | vh |
| Vai | b | bh |
| | ḃ | b |
| | d ^h | dh |
| | ɖ | d |
| Gola | b ^h | bh |
| | ḃ | b |
| | d ^h | dh |
| | ɖ | d |
| | hm | hm |
| Kissi | mb | mb |
| | nj | nj |
| | nd | nd |

The diversity of the sound systems in this country presents us with a problem. The above symbols do not always represent the same sounds. For example the bh of Bassa is more heavily voiced than the bh of Wee(Krahn). Not only are there variations on matters of pronunciation between languages, but there are dialectal variations within languages - the Wee (Krahn) spoken by the Ploe clan has no bh-ḃ distinction at all! We must not expect that by using the recommendations listed above, or from any other such scheme, that anyone will be able to pronounce every Liberian name as a native speaker. He will, however, do much better than he would by trial and error or, by doing as some do, simply anglicizing everything. And, when coming upon a consonant cluster that does not occur in standard English, like bh, he will at least be aware that something that is not ordinary English is present. The present method of writing such pairs as bh and ḃ alike as b does not tell us that. On the contrary it tends to indicate that they are alike.

Vowel Problems

Vowel sounds not occurring in Liberian English are found in Dan (Gio), Wee (Krahn) (Western dialects), Kru, and most dialects of Grebo. These groups have systems consisting of seven vowel sounds, i, e, ɛ, a, u, o, ɔ plus additional vowels. Gio has three central vowels in addition to those; Wee (Krahn), Kru, and Grebo each have two additional vowel sounds which involve constricting muscles in the pharynx. Three alternative ways of writing these vowels come to mind. They are listed in order of preference.

1. Choosing the closest English symbol and modifying it. In seaside Grebo, for example, the constricted e and o sounds are written with dots over them, ê, ô. Since the extra Dan (Gio) vowels are produced in a different manner, a different mark, such as an underline, could be used.
2. A sort of compromise solution would be to mark the symbol for the closest English equivalent in a uniform way without regard to the language. This would tell a reader that the vowel is not ordinary English and, if the reader was acquainted with the language he could also pronounce the vowel correctly.
3. Continue with the present system of selecting from what seems to be the closest English symbols.

In the case of the constricted vowels, we do not have the option of drawing on the stock of I.P.A. symbols as there are none for those vowel sounds.

Vowel length

Vowel length is written as a sequence of two vowels when it occurs in those indigenous languages with alphabets. There are many examples of word pairs which point to the necessity of distinguishing between short and long vowels. In Kpelle, for example, we have these pairs: téé 'Chicken' and té 'go up' (Welmers, 1962:81).

In those names where vowel length needs to be written, readers should have little difficulty in pronouncing double vowels correctly, provided everything else is written accurately. In the case of long ɔ and ɛ they could be written as oor and eeh rather than oror and eeh. These recommendations, as well as the others in this discussion, should be systematically tested to see what the readers' reactions actually are before they are put into practice.

Tone

Tone, as most of us already know, is an important part of the alphabets of Liberia's indigenous languages. Tone is marked in the older Bassa-Vah and Kpelle scripts as well as in the more recently devised alphabets using the familiar I.P.A. symbols. Only the Vai script seems to have omitted tonal considerations from their writing system and that is very likely due to the fact that tone does not play as important a role in distinguishing words as it does in some of the other languages.

The most common way of writing tone in Liberia is by the use of diacritics over the vowel; ´ indicates that the pitch of the voice is relatively high, ˘ indicate that the pitch is relatively low, - indicates that the voice level is between the higher and lower levels of pitch, ^ indicates that the pitch level falls from high to low pitch level and ˆ represents low to high. Other variations

involving mid tone in combination with other tones are common. The Chedepo alphabet marks high tone with a vertical mark or an apostrophe to eliminate the confusion that new readers of other languages have when distinguishing 'from'.

Since a considerable number of Liberians can read these tone marks already, and, since they are important, they should be written. Those who do not know how to read tone marks could either ignore the marks or learn what they mean.

Nasalization

Nasalization is another feature found in Liberian languages. Fortunately, the problem of writing it has already been solved; nasalized vowels are written as vowel plus hn as in Krahn. This convention has the same unimpeachable advantages going for it as writing or and eh do: it works and it is already in use. Liberian readers of English have no difficulty in reproducing nasalized vowels written in that manner.

Conclusion

The act of writing is one of those supremely important achievements that our civilization is based upon. It is so valuable and so frequently used and so much a part of every educated person's life, that, like the air we breathe, we seldom take much notice of it. Our use of it, since our first years at school has become very nearly automatic. Over the years, nothing has been more firmly established in our minds than the habits of reading and writing. The very thought of changing a habit provokes a reaction. W. Haas puts it this way in his book on spelling reform: "We do not relish the thought of becoming spelling toddlers once more ... and ... we are loath to expend thought on ... a mechanical skill. We are glad ... to be able to think of what we read or write, without being distracted by problems of how to do it. No wonder then, that we are instinctively protective about our mechanical skills ..." (Haas, 1969:2)

The hard fact is that any changes, however small, in the direction of writing more consistently and more accurately must require a certain amount of effort. My hope is that as Liberians become more aware of the rich and unique heritage that is theirs, value will be placed on the skills of reading and writing accurately and that the effort will be made. It is further hoped that this article will be of some assistance toward that effort.

FOOTNOTES

1. The suggestions and insights of Bishop A. B. Marwieh of the Christian National's Evangelism Commission form a valuable part of this paper. Other sources of information were the students of the Vacation Institute for Training in Applied Linguistics at the University of Liberia. Discussions with students attending the 1975 session were particularly helpful. Jana Bertkau's compilation of the phonemes of Liberian languages (1975:1-4) and Warren d'Azevedo's dictionary of Liberian English (1967:65-70) were useful in drawing up the lists of sounds and letters.

2. This map was made up from information gathered on surveys made in 1972, 1973, and 1974. I am using the Kru survey report map as a reference because I obtained the basic outline and the Kru-Tajusohn information from it (Duitsman, Bertkau, and Laesch, 1975:78).

3. Vowel glides or diphthongs are, according to d'Azevedo (1967:67), "...relatively uncommon in the languages of Liberia. For example, Liberians are more likely to pronounce the word wait as wet, or maybe as mebi. This is very much like the contrast Americans recognize between their own pronunciations and those of a French or Spanish speaker." Vowel glides do appear in all three of Liberia's language families but how a glide should be written depends upon the structure and patterning of the individual language it occurs in. In most cases, the alphabets of these languages accurately reflect their structures and should be used as guides.

4. Liberians read or as [ɔ] or [ɔ:] depending upon where it occurs in a word.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

d'Azevedo, Warren L., 1967. Some Terms From Liberian Speech, Monrovia. United States Peace Corps.

Bertkau, Jana S., 1975. An Outline of the Sound Systems of Some Liberians Languages. Unpublished Manuscript.

Duitsman, John E., Jana Bertkau, and James Laesch. 1975. "A Survey of Kru Dialects, Studies in African Linguistics, 6:77-103.

Frankel, Merran, 1964, Tribe and Class in Monrovia. London: Oxford University Press.

Haas, W., 1969, On 'Spelling' and 'Spelling Reform; Alphabets for English. Great Britain: The Pitman Press.

Republic of Liberia. Ministry of Education. 1973. National Languages Task Force Report. Monrovia, Liberia: Ministry of Education Publications Department.

Venezky, Richard L., 1970. The Structure of English Orthography. The Hague: Netherlands: Mouton & Co.

Welmers, William, 1962, "Phonology of Kpelle", Journal of African Linguistics, 1:69-93.

- "Bandi Oral Narratives," by Patricia A. O'Connell, 87.
- Breitborde, L. B., "Some Linguistic Evidence in the Study of Kru Ethnolinguistic Affiliation," 109.
- "Clan and Chiefdom Maps of Grand Bassa County and Marshall & River Cess Territories," by William C. Siegmann, 59.
- "Considerations in Spelling Liberian Names," by John Duitsman, 133.
- Duitsman, John, "Considerations in Spelling Liberian Names," 133.
- Duitsman, John & Frances Ingemann, "A Survey of Grebo Dialects in Liberia," 121.
- Erchak, Gerald M., "Who is the Zo? A Study of Kpelle Identical Twins," 23.
- "The German Factor in Liberia's Foreign Relations," by Wolfe W. Schmokel, 27.
- Handwerker, W. Penn, "Liberian Market Places in 1970," 43.
- Hayden, Thomas E., "Kru Religious Concepts - Ku and Nyeswa," 13.
- Holsoe, Svend E., "The Manding in Western Liberia: An Overview," 1.
- Ingemann, Frances, & John Duitsman, "A Survey of Grebo Dialects in Liberia," 121.
- "Kru Religious Concepts - Ku and Nyeswa," by Thomas E. Hayden, 13.
- "Language in Liberia in the Nineteenth Century: The Settlers' Perspective," by John V. Singler, 73.
- "Liberian Market Places in 1970," W. Penn Handwerker, 43.
- "The Manding in Western Liberia: An Overview," by Svend E. Holsoe, 1.
- McEvoy, Frederick D., "Social and Historical Factors Bearing on Dialect Boundaries in Southeastern Liberia," 99.
- O'Connell, Patricia A., "Bandi Oral Narratives," 87.
- Schmokel, Wolfe W., "The German Factor in Liberia's Foreign Relations," 27.
- Siegmann, William C., "Clan and Chiefdom Maps of Grand Bassa County and Marshall & River Cess Territories," 59.
- Singler, John V., "Language in Liberia in the Nineteenth Century: The Settlers' Perspective," 73.
- "Social and Historical Factors Bearing on Dialect Boundaries in Southeastern Liberia," by Frederick D. McEvoy, 99.
- "Some Linguistic Evidence in the Study of Kru Ethnolinguistic Affiliation," by L. B. Breitborde, 109.
- "A Survey of Grebo Dialects in Liberia," by Frances Ingemann & John Duitsman, 121.
- "Who is the Zo? A Study of Kpelle Identical Twins," by Gerald M. Erchak, 23.

