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A SEGMENTARY SOCIETY BETWEEN COLONIAL FRONTIERS
THE KISSI OF LIBERIA, SIERRA LEONE AND GUINEA 1892-1913

Andreas W. Massing

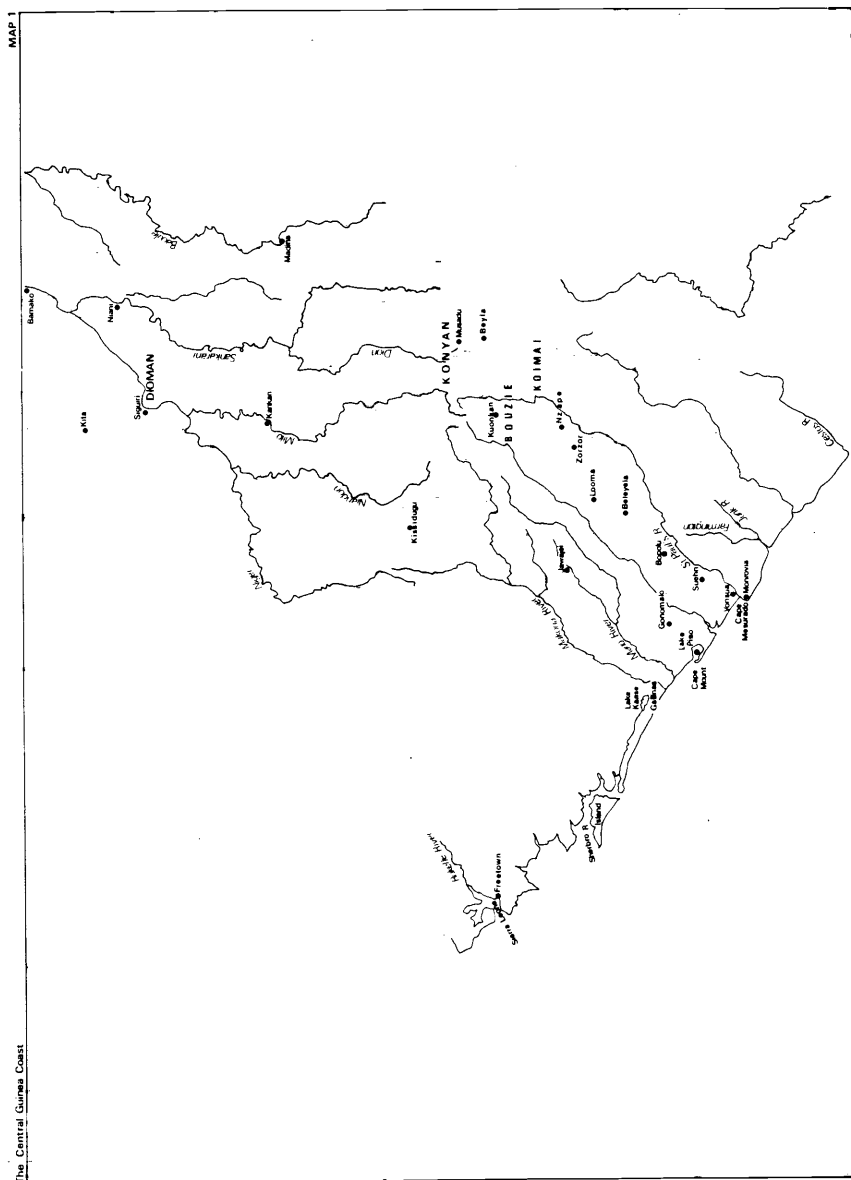
The Kissi have remained a truly segmentary society despite a recent history which exposed them to more organized and centralized political units such as chiefdoms and large territorial states. The Kissi habitat, the undulating terrain of the forest edge which is dotted by numerous forested hillocks and watered by many small streams and rivulets, favors the dispersion of population units and social fragmentation. Apparently, the light forest cover has favored a population expansion which has resulted in densities exceeding those of the neighboring peoples in the more forested south. Today population pressure in wide areas is such that the Kissi shifting cultivators can no longer maintain fallow periods sufficiently long to keep the system in equilibrium. Denudation of the soil, erosion and probably declining yields are the consequence of the extension of farmland into the forest.

Kissi traditions speak of the gradual movement south of lineage segments in quest for farmland. In that movement, the Makona river was crossed in relatively recent times.¹ The search for new farmland made for great spatial dispersion of the Kissi clans (kaalan) over the entire area today inhabited by Kissi speakers. The colonization movements of individual clans followed narrow bands stretching in a general north-south direction which can be traced along the line of villages inhabited by members of these clans. For example, when the kamaa (kamara) clan crossed the Makona, its members first settled at Kpandu from where their descendants built Kpasinbedu, Wuledu, Solape, Sielo and Bandilo.²

Except for very large villages, the village is the locus of a clan or a major lineage. There are about 17 clans dispersed over the entire Kissi area.³ Members of a clan share the same food taboo and marry exogamously. Within a settlement, members of the same clan also share land which is held under communal tenure.

The historical origins of the clans are largely unknown at present even though most Kissi clans have historical and genealogical relations to Malinke clans and their clan names have an equivalent among the Malinke patronyms (dyamu). For example, the Malinke traditions assert that during the Sosso invasion under Sumanguru Kante one of the brothers of Sundiata Keita escaped and fled south to the area of Kissidugu where his descendants are still known under the name of Leno.⁴ According to folk etymology the survivors exclaimed at their arrival "an bara kisi," i.e. "we are saved."⁵ The Keita, royal lineage of Mali, are also known among the Kissi as Farmaya Keita and inhabit the canton Farmaya in the north of Kissidugu.⁶

The north of Kissi country is characterized by a high degree of assimilation between the Kissi and the larger Malinke society and only in the south Kissi language and traditional religion still survive in their original forms. In that respect the Kissi colonies on Liberian territory seem to represent the



most authentic form of traditional Kissi society even though a fair degree of assimilation between them and the Bande has already taken place.

Perhaps it was the greater organization and centralization of the surrounding societies which enhanced their prestige in the eyes of the Kissi so that many Kissi individuals chose the ethnic affiliation of these societies rather than their own, and attempted to imitate the political organization of their neighbors. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century the dispersed Kissi hamlets and villages were incorporated into the larger territorial organization of often short-lived military chiefdoms at the periphery of Samori's empire.

One of these chiefdoms was that of Kai Lundu. It was created single-handedly by a warrior chief who, like many of his time, gained legitimacy by helping a traditional chiefly lineage against outside invaders. Kai Lundu further rose through a series of victories over several of his equals whose territories he consolidated into a series of dependent fiefdoms. His parents came from Mende country, his father from Bombali and his mother from Luawa chiefdom, but resided among the Kissi, in Wonde, when their son was born.⁷ Kai Lundu therefore could claim Kissi affiliation and is regarded by many Kissi as one of their kin. He chose to cross the Makona and live among the Mende after his father's death. There he intervened on the side of the chief of Luawa, Bondo, against another warrior chief, Dawa, and defeated him in the so-called Kpove war of 1880.⁸ Bondo then presented him with the title over Luawa chiefdom and Kai Lundu was henceforth recognized as Mende chief. He first consolidated his rule in Luawa and upper Bombali chiefdoms, but later also claimed authority over the Kissi sections of Tengi, Tongi and Kamaa in the north and east of Luawa,⁹ as well as Tengi to the east of Tongi. Prior to 1890 he invaded the Kissi sections north of the Makona river Wonde, Kamaa and Mafessa¹⁰ as well as the Kono country and attached them loosely to his chiefdom. On his return he learnt that one of Dawa's former lieutenants, Mbawulume, whom he had settled in Guma after 1880 had risen in revolt against him, raided Luawa and killed its chief Bondo. Having assured himself of the loyalty of the chiefs of Dia, Mando, Malema and upper Bombali Kai Lundu went in pursuit of Mbawulume and chased him out of Guma.

Mbawulume's story has been told elsewhere in more detail¹¹ but it is necessary to mention the aspects which concern the Kissi in Liberia. Kai Lundu's campaign against Mbawulume led him eastward and brought him in contact with the Bande and Kissi south of the Makona. There, the Kissi of Tengi who apparently paid allegiance to Kai Lundu were involved in a dispute with a Bande chief who, in a similar way as Kai Lundu attempted to enlarge his territorial domain through a combined strategy of alliances and outright conquest. Chief Fobe of Yawiazu (Jenne), who was apparently allied with the Bande chiefs of Kolahun and the Kissi of Luankoli, not only gave asylum to Mbawulume but also attacked chief Makala of Tengi. The latter called on Kai Lundu for assistance who sent his warriors to devastate Luankoli, Vassa and Yawiazu.¹² They captured Fobe, carried him northwards across the Kaiha, killed him and sent his head to Kai Lundu before they returned with a long train of slaves, cattle and other moveable property. In Vassa, Kai Lundu installed a new chief, Fabanna Fara, who remained his loyal ally in the following years.¹³ The Kissi of Luankoli, however, sent to Sole, chief of the Wam section, and asked for powerful war fetishes. These they apparently obtained since after seven years of occupation the Mende were finally driven from Luankoli with the help of Toma and sofa warriors who captured Foya and killed Kai Lundu's head warrior.¹⁴

The attempt to date these events still remains tentative but the available evidence suggests 1889 or 1890 as the year of Kai Lundu's raid into Kono country¹⁵

and 1890 or 1891 as the beginning of hostilities between Bande and Kissi. Kissi oral sources which state that the war lasted for over three years agree with the contemporary written documents.¹⁶ Eighteen hundred and ninety four was the year in which the Kissi succeeded in driving the Mende from Luankoli which had been under Kai Lundu's influence since 1887.¹⁷ Therefore, I suggest to revise the date of Kai Lundu's campaign into Liberia to 1890 or 1891.¹⁸

During the war of 1894, the Bande chief Bumbo who had concluded a treaty with the British in 1891 was apparently killed by another Bande chief Momo Bahomi.¹⁹ The latter apparently had called Mbawulume and hired sofas from Pandemai who occupied Kolahun and turned it into a war town until 1898.

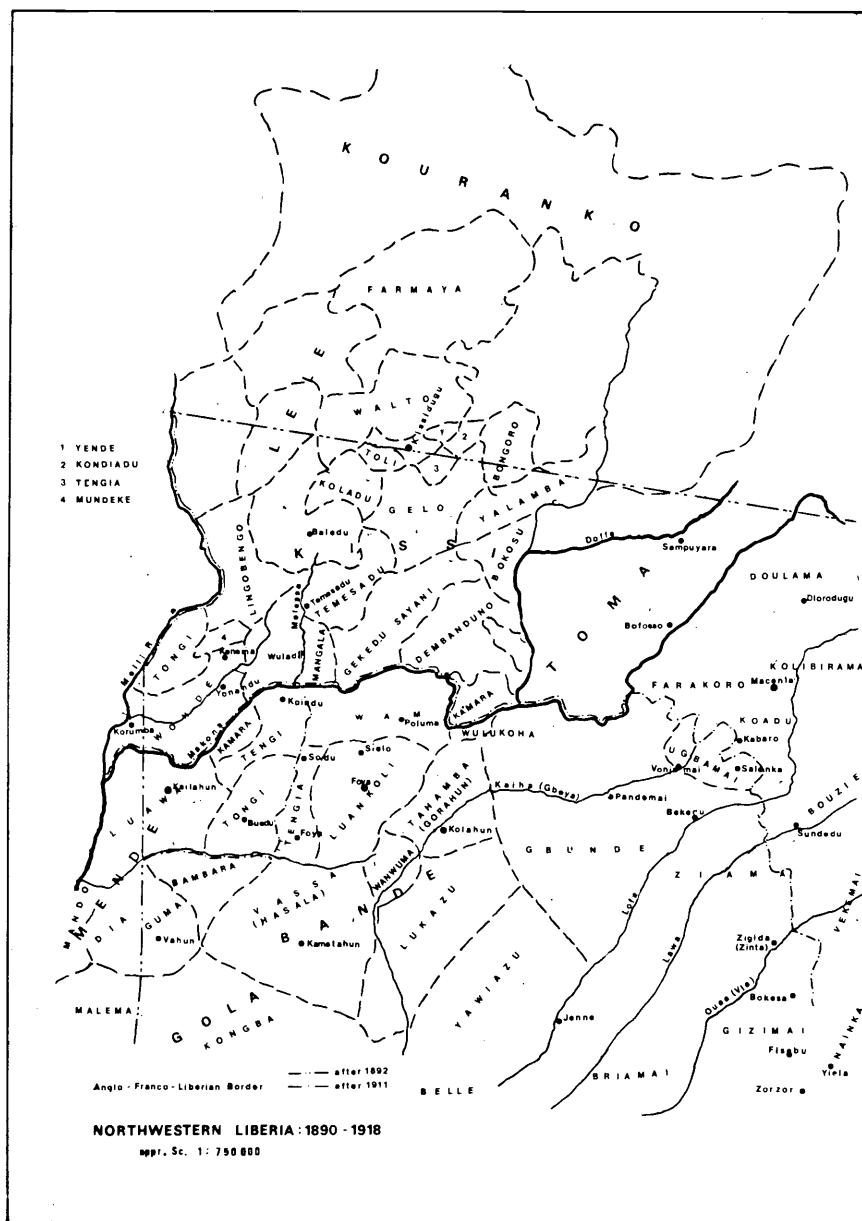
When Kai Lundu died in April 1895 his speaker and one of his Kissi sub-chiefs from Wonde assisted at the funeral and, under the supervision of the Sierra Leone Governor Cardew, the speaker Fabunde was recognized in 1896 as Kai Lundu's legitimate successor by all the chiefs of Luawa.²⁰ However, international negotiations about the Anglo Liberian border resulted in the new border dividing Kai Lundu's former chiefdom and leaving the capital Kailahun on the Liberian side. On the other hand, the fact that Liberia had not until then effectively occupied its hinterland nor had the capacity to patrol its border led to the arrangement that the British would remain in Kailahun until Liberia could take over and police its hinterland. However, the British vacated the land to the east of the new border.²¹

This brought back Mbawulume who pretended to have been called by the Guma chiefs and went to punish some of the Mende villages which had recognized Fabunde. A first assault was made in March or April, and a second in July until the Sierra Leone Government sent a detachment of Frontier Police across the border -- after having obtained the permission of the Liberian government -- to destroy Mbawulume's camp in September 1897.²²

At the same time the Kissi sub-chief Kafura, who had already formerly revolted against Kai Lundu, began to contest the leadership of Fabunde and made plans to separate the Kissi sections of the former chiefdom -- some of the Kissi villages which had paid allegiance to Kai Lundu had been detached by the Sierra Leone government -- and reunite them under his leadership. He apparently contacted the French at Kissidugu and convinced them that he had legitimate claims to the successorship in Kai Lundu's territories and occasionally obtained the help of Senegalese tirailleurs who penetrated south of the Franco-Liberian border of 1892.²³ He allied himself with chief Katewa of Kundo and raided the Kissi Tongi section but was driven away in May 1897. In November a peace council was held at which Fabunde and Kafura agreed to keep peace in the future.²⁴

In the meantime, however, Mbawulume had rallied his warriors and prepared to march on Kailahun through the Tengia section whose chief Towe had continued the traditional allegiance to Luawa chiefdom.²⁵ With the help of hired warriors of Bande, Belle, and Toma origin and sofa warriors from the Konian and Pandemai -- who probably streamed into Liberia after Samori had been defeated by the French -- he devastated the Tengia section. The Sierra Leone Frontier Police undertook another expedition into Liberia and destroyed Mbawulume's headquarters at Kolahun thus shattering his hopes to reoccupy his native Guma chiefdom.²⁶

During the same year, the Mende chiefs of Sierra Leone rose in revolt against the Sierra Leone government in protest against the imposition of hut tax. After the defeat of the revolt many Mende chiefs escaped into Liberia where they were supported by the Kissi. In particular the sons and chiefs of the former Paramount Chief Nyagwa of Panguma chiefdom, who had been found to be one of the leaders in the revolt and was sent into exile, took refuge with Kafura. From Wonde they raided across the Anglo-Liberian border, then the Meli river, into



British territory.²⁷ At the end of January 1899, the British Frontier Police marched with two companies and a detachment of artillery against Kenema, the headquarters of Kafura and his allies,²⁸ and destroyed it without encountering much resistance. Fabunde's warriors continued operations alone against the fleeing Kissi bands.²⁹

However, the hopes of the British to obtain the submission of Kafura and thereby peace were premature since his Mende hosts continued to raid several of Fabunde's villages. In late March of 1899 another expedition of Frontier Police was necessary against Koraro in the neighborhood of Kenema. Following the destruction of Koraro the local Kissi chiefs sent peace messengers but only in July did the rebellious Mende chiefs surrender.³⁰ Kafura, however, was not among them.

During the following years, the entire Kissi country south of the Makona for some 30 km was in a state of continuous war due to Kafura's raids across the river.³¹ In March 1905 the British launched another attack on Kenema and destroyed it for a second time. Thereupon Kafura withdrew across the Mafessa river where the chief of Sampuyara, Sapouyo, gave him asylum and lent him warriors, horses and rifles.³² Apparently arms surpluses came to the Kissi and Toma overland from the Liberian ports as well as from Samori's disbanded and unemployed warriors. In order to stop the influx of arms and curb Kafura's warfare the Sierra Leone Frontier Police remained in the area north of the Makona. The village of Wulade, some 5 km north of the Makona on the Mafessa river, was fortified and made into the headquarters for two companies which remained of the Kissi Field Force during the coming rainy season. In an attempt to reorganize the leadership of the area, elections were planned in order to find a successor for Kafura. On July 6, 1905 a meeting of thirty chiefs of the area was held at Wulade during which two chiefs who had been ousted by Kafura were elected to be the principal chiefs of Wonde: Bawa for eastern and Kimbo for Western Wonde. As sub-chiefs for the individual clans were elected Furawoi for Kamara, Beri for Toli and Yigbo for Lengobengu, while affairs in Tongi and Yumbo remained unsettled for the time being.³³

While Kafura stayed at Sampuyara reorganizing his forces the French -- who claimed that Liberia had granted them the right to patrol the border since 1885 -- had advanced southward and arrived at Wam in Tengia in August 1906.³⁴ In September they reached the Mafessa river bringing with them Kafura who spread rumours that the French would reinstate him in Wonde.³⁵ This created excitement among the chiefs on the east bank of the river who began to raid into Wonde. One of them, Bona from Temessadu, led a series of attacks between October and December 1906 on villages of the elected chiefs and had the audacity to attack the British garrison at Wulade whose thirty men had to retreat.³⁶ However, the French army had already made Sampuyara center of a military district and from now on controlled the right bank of the Mafessa. They apparently even punished Bona for his December raids across the Mafessa.³⁷

In the meantime, the Liberian government's frontier force under Lieutenant W. Lomax had arrived at Kailahun with 200 men for the purpose of patrolling the frontier and preventing further French encroachments on Liberian territory. He also received orders to proceed to Beledu from the Liberian Secretary of State who had received news that the French were collecting taxes. However, Lomax never seems to have crossed the Makona even though he had plans to open a road from Kailahun to Yalamba, the Kissi trade center.³⁸ While he spent his time opening customs stations along the Anglo-Liberian border and attempted to create the semblance of an administration, the Sierra Leone Frontier Force continued operations on the Mafessa leading punitive raids on the villages which had assisted in Bona's raids. Eventually, some of the chiefs promised to obey the elected chiefs. Kafura, who had been invited to a peace council at Wulade, only

managed to send his brother. Apparently he was already in French custody at Kissidugu where he offered his submission along with a claim to the left bank of the Mafessa.³⁹

Between January and August 1907 Lomax and his force created general unrest among the Bande and Kissi in Fabunde's chiefdom so that in May the Sierra Leone government requested from Liberia the withdrawal of their troops from the border. It also gave in to Fabunde's pleas to grant him its protection and suggested a readjustment of the border: the exchange of that part of Kai Lundu's chiefdom which had fallen to Liberia for the triangle between Mano and Morro rivers and the present border, in addition to £3,000 in cash. It took several years of negotiations before the Liberian government accepted and a new Anglo-Liberian boundary convention was signed in January 1911.⁴⁰

France had already concluded a new treaty in September 1907 which fixed the new Franco-Liberian border along the Makona river thus revising the border of 1892 -- which ran between Kissidougou and Beyla -- and suggested to Britain a readjustment of their mutual borders along the Meli river. This resulted in the area between Mafessa and Meli rivers, which was still patrolled by the Sierra Leone Frontier Police, becoming French. The new territory was finally handed over to France on Nov. 11, 1911. Before, most of the Kissi chiefs of that area had agreed to accept French rule under the provision that Kafura was not allowed to return, a condition which the French officers apparently fulfilled.⁴¹ Even though the land east of the Meli had already been considered French by the people for some years, opposition to the establishment of the French still continued at least until 1911.⁴²

The years prior to the readjustment of the border, from 1907 until 1911, were filled with warfare between the Kissi and the Liberian Frontier Force. Lomax had originally stirred the opposition of the Kissi when he inquired into the mutual debts of Kissi chiefs -- who most likely tried to use him as an instrument against their debtors -- and began to collect these by force. At Koindu he had been attacked in April 1907 and had to retreat whereupon he had burned at least two Kissi villages.⁴³ Therefore the Sierra Leone government requested his removal from the frontier beyond the twenty-five mile radius which made him retreat to Kamatahun (Vassa) via Buedu and Kangama.⁴⁴ There he had a garrison built from which his soldiers raided the surrounding country, since they received neither pay nor rations and lived on the country.⁴⁵ In September 1907 he held a large council at Kamatahun at which he confirmed Fabanna Fa, former sub-chief of Kai Lundu, as Paramount Chief of Vassa. It is not clear whether any troops remained at Kamatahun when Lomax continued through Toma country and returned to Monrovia in December of the same year. Two Liberian officials, however, remained there until January 1909 when they were attacked and chased away by a combined force of Bande and Kissi.⁴⁶ Apparently it was after this event that the chiefs of Vassa, Cuma, Bande (Lukazu and Tahamba), and Luankoli went to see Fabunde assuring him of their friendship and asking him to be allowed to 'sit down' with him under British protection. The Sierra Leone government, however, told Fabunde to discourage the Liberian chiefs.⁴⁷

Apparently, Kamatahun was reoccupied by the Frontier Force during the following months as looting of border villages by Liberian soldiers was reported in July. Several months later J. Cooper, a former clerk of Lomax, began his term of office as District Commissioner. From this time on, the situation in the border district deteriorated rapidly. In November the Frontier Force raided the village of Bandewuru and carried off its chief Korritungi. In December, Liberian soldiers and Bande and Luankoli warriors under a chief Mambulu fought against a party of Tengia warriors sent by chiefs Kongo and Bengbanama. Bandewuru was destroyed and 60 of its inhabitants were killed. The background of this fighting is explained in an oral account by one of the Kissi Clan Chiefs.⁴⁸ When the Liberian troops stayed at Kamatahun, the town chief of Kamatahun asked Mambulu

of Yomatahun to help him in procuring food for the troops. Mambulu sent out to the surrounding villages for rice. Chief Bona Bengbanama from Koniando, however, refused to give any rice whereupon the Liberian officials sent soldiers to summon him to Kamatahun. When the soldiers arrived he led them to his compound but on the way shot at them and escaped. When the hunters in the forest heard the sound of guns they arrived and chased the soldiers away. The latter fled to Kamatahun. From there Cooper and Lomax sent a punitive force which burnt the village. Chief Bona escaped to Sierra Leone.⁴⁹

Throughout 1910 Cooper and his men frequently raided across the border. The British considered this as proof of the Liberian inability to control the interior and to discharge its obligations resulting from the border agreement. Even when the new Anglo-Liberian Boundary Convention had been signed in January 1911 and the British flag hoisted at Kailahun in March, peace in the border districts was not at hand. In fact, events which had occurred in December 1910 greatly stirred people in the entire Liberian interior.

Lomax and Cooper had invited many Bande, and probably also Kissi chiefs, for a peace council to Kolahun in order to end the hostilities which had opposed these chiefs to Mambulu and the Liberian authorities during the past years. As these chiefs arrived with food and presents at Kolahun they were disarmed and imprisoned by the Liberian troops and many of their people were left to starve or were given as slaves to Mambulu (Nine of these chiefs were deliberately murdered by or with the consent of Liberian officials several months later).⁵⁰

While the repercussions this had in the Bande sector have been described elsewhere,⁵¹ the Kissi of Tengia rose in open revolt against the Liberian interior administration. The fact that their chiefdom fell within the new borders of Liberia and was cleared by British troops in spring 1911 left the Tengia little hope for improvement of the situation under Liberian rule, considering past experiences with Liberian officials. The chiefs Bona Bengbanama from Koniando and Kangaranya from Kpangbaini, a young war chief, were the leading spirits of the revolt. Until the end of 1911, all villages in Tengia north of Garenga, in total some 53 villages, had been destroyed by Liberian troops. Nevertheless, the Liberians were forced to retreat to Foya and concentrate there.⁵²

Fighting continued in 1912 when the boundary commission for the delineation of the new border, which had at last gotten under way during this year, passed through the area. The British government, however, suspended the commission whose work was constantly hindered by District Commissioner Cooper in his quality as Assistant Boundary Commissioner, who attempted unilaterally to include certain border villages within Liberia and had cairns destroyed. The British demanded the removal of Cooper and Lomax from the frontier after the events of Kolahun and only let the commission resume its work in 1913 when the two men had been tried in Monrovia.⁵³

In the meantime, the legitimate chief of Tengia, Dawa, had taken refuge in Sierra Leone as the border agreement allowed all inhabitants of Tengia for six months after its ratification to choose their country of residence. However, Kangaranya had called on the entire Kissi to fight the 'Americans' and continued military operations. In September 1913 he attacked the Liberian customs station at Lengedu leaving the customs collector dead. The district commissioner saved his life through flight. A Liberian regiment of 170 soldiers under Captain Hawkins arrived from Kolahun to continue the war. Apparently, most of the Kissi chiefs had assembled at Sodu where they decided to surrender. When the peace messenger arrived in the Liberian camp he was greeted by the soldiers with gun salutes. These were interpreted at Sodu as a sign of new fighting so that Kangaranya and some other chiefs escaped to Sierra Leone.⁵⁴

Since the archival records which were accessible to me end in 1913, the end of the Tengi war cannot be determined with certainty. It is possible that isolated resistance to Liberian rule continued among the Kissi until 1917.⁵⁵ The documentation of the more recent history of the Kissi must wait until the French archival resources have been exploited and until more recent archival materials become free for public use. The oral traditions can be of great help in clarifying the background of certain events which were often only incompletely recorded or understood by the European observers.

In concluding this article a tentative list of the Kissi chiefs shall be presented as they were confirmed or appointed by Liberian officials following the establishment of interior rule. Students of Liberian history are invited to complete or correct this list wherever necessary. It should be kept in mind, however, that a segmentary society like the Kissi does not have veritable chiefs so that the persons named here rather had the role of arbitrators and negotiators. Even the Paramount Chiefs which were appointed by the Liberian government for the Kissi Chiefdom only enjoy a limited authority among their own people where lineage elders still remain the dominant authority in customary matters.

Until 1930 the Kissi area was divided into three chiefdoms which later became the clans of a single Kissi Chiefdom. Therefore, until 1930 the different chiefs for each chiefdom are listed and only thereafter the Paramount Chiefs: (dates are tentative)

<u>Luankoli</u>	<u>Tengia</u>	<u>Wam</u>
Tielekpo (Foya Kama)	Towe (Foya Tengia)	Mosu (Porluma)
Mandekpe 1916-1924 deposed 1924	Dawa (Foya Tengia) 1906-1913 Kalia (Foya Tengia)	Kova Langama (Porluma) 1917-1930
	Bumbe Kulukele (Foya T.)	

Paramount Chiefs

Kandakai (1930-1937)
Pasia
Tengbe Koi Morlu
Tamba Taylor

FOOTNOTES

1. Perhaps only in the 1850's.
2. A. Massing, Kissi Fieldnotes, T. Taylor, Sielo, April 1969.
3. According to A. Massing, Kissi Fieldnotes, and D. Paulme, Les Gens du Riz (Paris, 1954) the following clans can be found: kamaa, telianda, konianda, tolla, mamadua, komaa, simbianda, sandua, lelai, milimua, lea, dufangadu, sinang-golla, songboa, manlaw, wonde, gotola.
4. E. Leynaud and Y. Cisse, Paysans Malinke du Haut Niger (Bamako, 1978), 29.
5. D.T. Niane, Soundjata, ou l'Épopée Mandingue (Paris, 1960), Third Ed., 81.

6. E. Leynaud and Y. Cisse, Paysans Malinke, 29.
7. Great Britain, Colonial Office Confidential Print (hereafter cited as COCP), 879/49 533 no. 15, March 10, 1896.
8. W.R.E. Clarke, "The Foundation of Luawa Chiefdom," Sierra Leone Studies N.S. (1957), 245-55.
9. The present Sierra Leone Chiefdoms of Kama, Teng and Tong.
10. Wunde, Kaamo, Mofessor in K. Wylie, "Notes on Kai Lundu's Campaign into Liberia," Liberian Studies Journal, III, 2 (1970-71), 169.
11. A. Massing, "Kai Lundu, Mbawulume and the Establishment of Interior Rule in Western Liberia," Liberian Studies Journal, VII, 2.
12. K. Wylie, "Notes," 171; reference to the conflict between Kai Lundu, Makala and Fobe was made in oral traditions of the Kissi: A. Massing, Kissi Fieldnotes, Ahma Jawajei, Dec. 1968; Ngolo Ndama, April 1969.
13. K. Wylie, "Notes," 72; Fabanna Fara was confirmed as chief of Vassa in 1907 by the Liberian government agent Lomax.
14. A. Massing, Kissi Fieldnotes, Ahma Jawajei and Ngolo Ndama; also COCP 879/41 no. 98, Oct. 10, 1894 statement of one of Kai Lundu's Toma war captives that he fought, along with other Toma and sofa warriors under chiefs Gainda Fureh (Kandafila) and Mambor (Mamu) of upper Gizzi against Kai Lundu. The first of these is probably identical with chief Kafura, one of Kai Lundu's sub-chiefs from Kenema in Wonde who had revolted against him in 1891 and formed an alliance with Pandemai and Mbawulume.
15. COCP 879/42 no.98 Encl. Mar.1, 1895. Here Kai Lundu's raids into Kono country are mentioned as having taken place '5 years ago'. Wylie's informants suggested 1889, K. Wylie, "Notes," 167 n.1.
16. "War has been existing between the Gizzi and Bande for over three years," COCP 879/41 no. 98; "warfare that has for four or more years been going on between Kailundu and the Kissi, Bandemeh and Bandeh chiefs" COCP 879/42 no. 123, May 13, 1895; "Kailundu has for the last three years been in a chronic state of war not only with a rebellious sub-chief named Kafara but with the Sofas from Bandemeh" COCP 879/49 533 no. 4, June 9, 1894; The above mentioned informants A. Jawajei and N. Ndama stated that the war between the Kissi and Kai Lundu lasted for three years, A. Massing, Kissi Fieldnotes, 1968-69.
17. COCP 879/39 no. 167 Encl. 3, May 6, 1894 contains a report that Kai Lundu's territory was invaded by sofas from Pandemai and that the head chief of Bande and three of Kai Lundu's sub-chiefs had been killed. My Kissi informants stated that Luankoli and Foya Kama were occupied by Kai Lundu for seven years, A. Massing, Kissi Fieldnotes 1968-69.
18. My own view expressed in "History of the Belle" Liberian Studies Journal III, 2 (1970-71), 190 which indicated 1896 as the year of Mbawulume's reception by Fobe should be corrected. When Mbawulume was driven again from Guma in 1896, this time by the West African Frontier Force, both Kai Lundu and Fobe were already dead. Thus, Kai Lundu's campaign to Liberia and Mbawulume's escape probably occurred at the beginning of the war against Kissi and Bande, i.e. in 1890 or 1891.

19. T.J. Alldridge, The Sherbro and its Hinterland (London, 1901) calls this chief Bongoi. The killing of the Bande head chief is mentioned in COCP 879/39 no. 167 May 6, 1894. According to Cardew's report Momo Bahomi was first on Kai Lundu's side but had Bumbo killed as a traitor whereupon Kai Lundu turned against him. COCP 879/42 481 no. 95A, Mar. 1, 1895.
20. COCP 879/48 no. 261 Encl. 1, Dec. 20, 1897; no. 268 Encl. 1, Jan. 31, 1898.
21. COCP 879/49 533 no. 15, Mar. 10, 1896. In this area where the Kissi villages of Koindo, Foya Tengia and Kangama.
22. COCP 879/48 522 no. 152 Enclosures.
23. COCP 879/48 no. 167 Encl. 1, Nov. 23, 1896. The border of 1892 ran roughly in an east-westerly direction between Kissidugu and Beyla. Senegalese tirailleurs were sighted near Koindo and Mendekama.
24. COCP 879/48 no. 259 Encl. 1, Jan. 1898.
25. Ibid.; Towe is mentioned in the oral traditions as the father of chief Kalia and grandfather of Mandekpe.
26. COCP 879/48 no. 268 Encl. 1, Jan. 31, 1898.
27. COCP 879/59 589 no. 41, Dec. 24, 1898; no. 42, Jan. 16, 1899; no. 50, Jan. 21, 1899.
28. COCP 879/59 589 no. 54 Encl., Feb. 12, 1899; these allies were Kissi chief Bona from Temessadu, and the Mende chiefs of Woroma and Mando in Bombali (Bambara) chiefdom.
29. Ibid.
30. The leading figures among these were Mogbi, ex-Paramount Chief Nyagwa's son and Vonnie Fungba, Nyagwa's war chief. COCP 879/59 589 no. 63 Mar. 27, 1899; no. 72 Encl. 1, Apr. 14, 1899; no. 79 Encl. 1-3, July-Aug. 1899.
31. See COCP 879/59 no. 79 Enclosures; no. 115, June 24, 1900; no. 177 Encl. 1, July 7, 1900; 879/80 no. 75 July 10, 1903; no. 78, July 10, 1903; 879/88 no. 1, Nov. 27, 1904; no. 6, Dec. 29, 1904; no. 20, Jan. 25, 1905.
32. COCP 879/88 no. 61 Encl. 1, May 23, 1905.
33. COCP 879/88 no. 76, July 6, 1905; section Yumbo could not be identified.
34. COCP 879/88 no. 113, July 15, 1906; no. 125, Aug. 23, 1906; 879/96 no. 46 Encl. 2, Mar. 23, 1907.
35. COCP 879/88 no. 131 Encl. 1, Sept. 29, 1906.
36. COCP 79/88 no. 134, Oct. 23, 1906; 879/96 no. 17 Encl. 1, Dec. 27, 1906; Encl. 2, Dec. 30, 1906; no. 1, Jan. 1907.
37. COCP 879/96 no. 7, Dec. 4, 1906; no. 33 Encl. 10, Feb. 1, 1907.

38. COCP 879/96 no. 21, Encl. 1, Jan. 7, 1907; no. 34, Mar. 3, 1907. In his own account of his tour through the hinterland, Lomax never mentioned any movements across the Makona river. Apparently he remained near Kailahun until July and then passed through the Bande and Toma regions before returning to Monrovia, see COCP 879/ñ0ñ 22039 Encl. 1.
39. COCP 879/96 no. 42 Encl. 2, Mar. 13, 1907; no. 46 Encl. 1, Mar. 23, 1907.
40. COCP 879/96 no. 101, Sept. 3, 1907; no. 102, Sept. 25, 1907; 879/107 no. 4, Jan. 20, 1911
41. COCP 879/96 no. 109; 879/101 no. 57, Nov. 19, 1909; 879/107 no. 87, Nov. 10, 1911
42. COCP 879/80 no. 79 Encl. 1, 1903; 879 107 no. 72, Sept. 26, 1911.
43. COCP 879/96 no. 67, April 1907; no. 77 July 30, 1907.
44. COCP 879/96 no. 81, Aug. 7, 1907; 879/101 no. 28 Encl. 1 Report by Major Lomax.
45. COCP 879/101 no. 30 Encl., July 16, 1909.
46. COCP 879/101 no. 28 Encl. 1; 879/101 6931 Feb. 12, 1909.
47. COCP 879/101 6931 Encl. 2.
48. COCP 879/101 no. 48 Encl. 1, Nov. 11, 1909; no. 56 Encl. 27, Dec. 6, 1909.
49. A Massing, Kissi Fieldnotes, Kpombu, April 1969.
50. COCP 879/1 no. 124 Encl., May 14, 1913.
51. A. Massing, "Kai Lundu."
52. COCP 879/1 no. 124, May 14, 1913.
53. COCP 879/110 no. 2 Encl. 1, Nov. 23, 1911; no. 3 Encl. 2, Jan. 6, 1912; no. 13 Encl. 1, Jan. 31, 1912; no. 14 Encl. 2, Feb. 24, 1912; no. 37 May 13, 1912; no. 124 Encl. 1 May 14, 1913.
54. COCP 879/110 no. 124 Encl. 1, May 14, 1913; no. 156 Encl. 1, Sept. 22, 1913.
55. Documents in the archives of the Order of the Holy Cross indicate that fighting in the area around Bolahun continued until 1917, and occasional outbreaks of warfare occurred until 1924. This is likely in view of the general situation in Liberia's interior where the interior officials continued with their abuse of power as the Report by the International Commission of 1930 amply documents.

A THREE SCRIPT LITERACY AMONG THE VAI
ARABIC, ENGLISH AND VAI

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This paper is one of the series of papers which I have prepared in connection with my participation in a research project (from 1975-1978) to study the literacy activities among the Vais in Liberia, West Africa. It describes a three script literacy -- Arabic, English and Vai script -- a case study among the Vais.*

The Vais, a small group of people in northwestern Liberia, have invented a remarkable phonetic writing system which has remained in active use for about a century and a half in coexistence with two universally powerful scripts -- the Arabic and Roman alphabets. These scripts have been widely used within the social context of traditional life of the Vais. This paper is concerned with the question of what people do with these scripts.

The paper focuses on several related questions. First, what are the uses of literacy in a society lacking other components of a complex technology? Secondly, what brings people to undertake the effort of learning how to read and write when literacy provides them no obvious occupational consequences? And finally, what implications does history have for literacy programs?

In addition to trying to investigate the meaning of literacy among the farming and working people, this paper discusses living conditions of the Vai people and their aspirations as well as how their writing system has influenced other groups to create their own form of writing.

My sources for this paper are limited, in the sense that material on the subject is not widely available. Nonetheless, the story I am about to tell was collected from various discussions and conversations with people about the subject of literacy. This was done during the course of my participation in a literacy research project, co-directed by Drs. Michael Cole and Sylvia Scribner, of Rockefeller University, under a fellowship from the Ford Foundation since 1976. Some of the information also came from various research study reports.

The Vai people have attained a special place in history as one of the few cultures to have "independently" invented a phonetic writing system, which has been in active use since its invention. It is not known when the script was invented, but it is thought to have been in use even before the official birth of Liberia in 1847. It was the first indigenous writing system in West Africa to be "discovered" by Europeans. Members of the Royal Geographical Society of England heard of the existence of the script in a lecture in 1849 given by a British Naval Officer, just returned from anti-slavery patrol duty in Cape Mount County, Liberia.¹

The development of the Vai script provided encouragement for the creation of other forms of writing in West Africa. For example, the Manding and

Fula scripts were invented in the 1940's and 1950's in Guinea by S. Konte and O. Dembele, respectively.²

On his travels to various parts of West Africa, Dembele made collections of many indigenous graphic symbols which allowed him to create his own forms of writing. His plan was to invent a script which could be used to transcribe many African languages. His attendance at the 1966 Bamako conference on the Unification of National Alphabets (supported by UNESCO) assisted him in the phonetic perfection of his script. Dembele (b. 1939) attended Koranic school in Mali. He also taught himself to speak and write French with some fluency. He travelled widely in West Africa.

The Manding script became visible in the 1940's. S. Konte, like Dembele, travelled widely in West Africa as a trader. In addition to his desire for an independent form of writing, Konte's invention appears to have been linked with his desire to establish a unified written language for various Mandingo dialects. Konte too is a literate in both French and Arabic.³ There is no good evidence whether the Manding or Fula scripts had been used by anyone besides the inventors. They were probably short-lived because of their limited uses.

Besides the Vai, three other scripts have also been created in Liberia -- Loma, Kpelle and Bassa scripts -- which use the Roman Alphabet. All appear to have been created apparently sometime after the World War II. Unlike the Fula and Manding scripts, these scripts have been preserved (in the sense that people still use them) and are taught in the language of their origin.

In order to understand how a three-part literacy has flourished among the Vais, some background on the Vai is necessary. The Vai people live in a small coastal area in the northwestern part of Liberia. Their land is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the west, the Gola tribe to the north and east, and the Dei speaking people on the south. Politically, Vai territory is divided into four officially recognized chiefdoms (in Liberia) -- Tombe, Tewor, Ghawula, and Vai Konee.

Most of the people make their living from rice farming and raising domestic animals. Since the sixteenth century, trading also has been important to their economy especially after the rainy season when many farmers turn to the trading of such articles as cotton and silk goods, salt, tobacco, jewelry, and farm produce.⁴

The penetration of two universal religions, Islam and Christianity, into West Africa has played a great part in the Vai beliefs. As early as the first half of the nineteenth century, Muslim scholars -- Arabs and Mandingoes, from North and West Africa -- came to Vai country to spread the Islamic faith. The impact of this new faith was great; in the towns and villages where Islam was accepted, teaching and book-learning had taken an honorable place in the society. With the establishment of the first "Quranic school" system in the early 1900's, the religion continued to spread. For example, while the Quranic teaching was spreading among the Vais, it was also having an impact in Sierra Leone (in a section of Vai country outside Liberia). Alhaj Tunis, an authorized scholar in Tijaniya faith (advanced Islamic principles) exercised a considerable influence on the population as he spread the faith. In the mid-1930's he crossed the borders into Liberia where he taught the faith of Tijaniya to the Vais. One of his students became Alhaj Ibrahim Nyei.⁵

In 1937, according to Nyei, word reached him that his teacher and spiritual leader, Alhaj Tunis, had died on his return to Sierra Leone. At the same time, Nyei was told that Tunis had left instructions that he become the leader (muquandam) of the Tijaniya in Liberia. Nyei, too, exercised a

considerable influence in teaching Islamic laws and principles as well as classical modern Arabic. In 1949, he was awarded an authorized certificate from the Liberian government to open and operate an Arabic School in Grand Cape Mount County.

The Vai were not exposed to Christianity until the establishment of the St. John mission at Robertsport, in 1877 by the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. With Christianity came the English Language. Before 1877 very few people in the Vai territory spoke or wrote English. Today not only are thousands of Vai men and women fluent in English, but most of the business letters, petitions and other diplomatic documents from Vai Chiefs and merchants are written in English.

Judging from the results of both Islamic and Christian teaching, which have only been in operation less than a century, the indications provide us evidence that the people are eager to learn.

Another impact on Vai literacy was the creation of their own form of writing, Vai script, by Dualu Bukele. We know very little about the invention of the script, as well as the life of its inventor. It is said that Bukele left home at an early age for the coast where he was employed by some European merchants. Bukele is thought to have been struck by the use of writing among Europeans and wished that his countrymen had such a convenient means of communication. He believed that writing should be a national property; every tribe should know how to convey its thoughts in writing. Bukele withdrew from society to work on creating a script for his people. Some accounts maintain that Bukele prayed to God for his knowledge. It is believed that in 1819 (possibly this date was based upon Bukele's return from the coast) he had a dream in which he saw a white man handing him a chart of characters for him and his people. The next morning, Bukele related this dream to his friends.

Shortly after the invention of the script, a regular school was set up to teach the script in Bandakolo. Young men from adjacent towns came to learn the script. After this school had been in existence for some years, the literature began to circulate in most of the towns near the coast. Another school was built in Mana in the Tombe section. We have no evidence as to how long these schools operated, but oral stories maintain that the schools were destroyed by tribal wars. Since then there has been no other school established for teaching the script.

Apart from Bukele and his associates, who formulated the characters, several others have also contributed to the preservation of the script. In the 1920's, Momolu Massaquoi, a Vai serving as a superintendent at St. John School, introduced the literature to the students of the school.⁶ Although the study of the subject terminated at the end of Massaquoi's services, in 1929, a Vai man, Jangaba Johnson, reintroduced the teaching of the script to the school. In 1963, a record of the 202 characters of the script was preserved at the University of Liberia.⁷

Any visitor to Vai country today can easily see that the script is flourishing and in constant use, primarily for correspondence. Although written communication is the primary function of the script, for one who is not literate in Arabic or in English, there are other functions as well.

We have reasons to believe that Vai literates have different skills that are put to use in their literacy activities. There are various kinds of written materials in Vai script. Farmers and craftsmen use the script in their business ledgers and technical plans. Those who are fluent in the script write family and clan histories and record maxims and traditional tales in copy books. For instance, we know of the existence of an historical account of the migration

of the Vai people to Vai country. Some of these stories maintain that the group is descendent of Mandingo immigrants from "Timbuktu", one of the historical cities of West Africa's past. We don't know full details of the Vai migration from the origin to their present-day location. Another evidence of the script's function is the "Book of Ndole" written in Vai script. It is currently in the Harvard University Library and contains lengthy parables in addition to accounts of the invention of the script and the events which took place early in Ndole's life. In one other case, we find a Muslim association which was governed by a constitution and by-laws written in Vai script.⁸

In a real sense, the heart of our initial inquiry was to discover the uses to which Vai literate skills were put. Thus far, this possibility was explored as part of our major survey.⁹ Vai script uses are overwhelmingly secular. It serves several functions, but letter-writing and record-keeping are the dominant.

In the course of our work among the Vais, we collected somewhat over 1000 letters, some of which were translated into English. Our attempt was to look for specific intellectual consequences involved. We made systematic content analyses of the letters' contents. The overwhelming concern of these letters can best be described as personal business: news and requests involving deaths, plan for visits, and financial matters are the main topics discussed. The following are representative examples:

#1

This letter belongs to my in-law, Moley. My greeting to you. This is your information. My grandmother is dead. This is a waa for you. (Note: traditionally, waa is an enclosed enveloped that is sent to an in-law asking him for a special contribution toward the ceremony for the deceased individual involved.) The feast has been scheduled to be held on the 19 of the lunar month. So that is your information. My greeting to you.

#2

This letter belongs to my brother, M.S., at Senje. My greeting to you.

I told you some time ago that I was going to send your money very shortly, but it happens that I became sick; so I beg you to bear patient. Secondly, I am still thinking about what I told you, I will come to discuss it with you on Friday. Please try to think over it for me and tell me which one is better.

Tell your wife, A., that I have bought for her dresses and will bring them along. Extend my greeting to her.

#3

Pa Lamii,

My greeting to you. This is your information. I have arrived here at Bendu. So, if the sheep has been bought please send the money tomorrow morning. I am waiting to receive it. Tomorrow I shall be going up to Clay.

These letters, and volumes of others like them, share some common characteristics: they all presume that the recipient knows the writer and even something about his affairs. To be precise, there are references which we cannot know the content of ("I am still thinking about what I told you," in letter #2) and which are clearly intended to remind the recipient of something that the writer does not want to discuss. But the main message is almost always understandable, even though we do not know the actors involved. The letters are also short,

and intended to convey a specific message. It is in this later characteristic that we classify the letters by their businesslike nature over and above any general news that they might carry.

We also found examples that are exceptions to this general characterization. These are rare, but are important to our general theoretical analysis, because they appear to place a rather stronger demand on both writer and recipient. An example of one such letter is the following, in which a rather complex death business is transacted by someone who is acting on behalf of the person whose traditional role is to see to the distribution of the deceased's possessions:

#4

This letter belongs to Uncle Bokai. My greeting to you. This is your information. your niece, H.M., died. Everything she left has been put on record. Here is a copy of the record.

When I went to Salalah I demanded that everything should be shown to me to have a look at them, Momolu made them available to me. Your nephews, Momolu and Ambulai asked me to divide them. But brother Seku asked me to tell him who must be present before we can divide them up, and I told him that you and the aunts have to be present. He then asked me to appoint someone to take care of the property until I wrote you to come. This is the reason why this letter is written. Please come and divide the property.

However, if you yourself are unable to come please do send someone to represent you. If you are to send a representative please do send one whom you trust; someone like you yourself, to come and divide out this property for us.

You should find out among yourselves how to handle this matter and whatever conclusion you might arrive at, please do inform me in writing. Please do not delay or ignore this message.

Since you are the head of the family, we have waited until we hear from you. If there is any information which I do not offer in this letter, brother Saku will tell you himself.

I am looking forward to hearing from you as early as possible.

I send my greeting to everybody.

Record-keeping is the next category of the application of Vai literate skills that requires further elaboration. This aspect of the script use helps to regulate social, economic and cultural activities. The more expert Vai literates keep public records when asked to do so. This includes discussions at important meetings, death feast contributions, house tax payments for the current year, work contributions to an ongoing public project such as road or bridge building and the like. Among what we would consider personal records, family business and finances are the leading entries. In most cases, these two activities overlap. Sometimes family records include marriages, birth-dates and deaths of family members, as well as family genealogies, historical accounts of the founding of a clan or a town. Some also include local and even national events that had personal impact. But in other instances we found men who keep detailed records of yield and income from farming or records of marketing such as customer orders and payment received.

We even found people using the Vai script in their occupational activities, but the nature of the script usage in this phase varied considerably and was concentrated mostly among craftsmen: weavers noted the number of black and white color patches that would be needed to complete a patch-work country cloth design; tailors used Vai to record money spent on cloth, arm length, waist and other relevant measurements; masons recorded the number of bricks needed for houses; carpenters recorded the dimensions of a structure they were working on.

In a third domain, we sought to find out whether people wrote textual materials, fiction or non-fiction, intended primarily to be read by someone else. Again, we discovered the existence of such written materials -- a circular historical account of the migration of Vai people to Vai country. From G. Ellis's ethnography of the Vai we had an example, in Vai script, of a traditional Vai story.¹⁰ In addition, we collected a number of oral stories written in Vai. Example of one such story is the following:

A MORAL PARABLE

This is a story about a chief and his two children. One day during the dry season, the chief told his elder son to go to the farm and bring home some firewood. The boy got up, took his cutlass, and went to find the firewood for his father.

As the boy was preparing to leave, his younger brother got up to follow him. But the old chief said, "Don't take that boy with you; if you do, I will beat you when you return."

"OK, pa," the boy said to the chief. -But when the older boy was walking along the path, the younger son began to follow him. The older son did not send the younger son home, but allowed him to follow along.

The boy and his younger brother walked a long distance from the town to an old farmsite. They began collecting firewood. While the older boy was gathering the wood into a bundle to tie it, a snake came out of the bark of an old log and bit the little boy, who died. The older boy let the wood drop and fell to the ground, crying. He cried and cried and cried: "My father told me today not to let this boy come with me to collect wood." At this thought he became very frightened, not only because his brother had died, but at the thought of what his father would do when he returned home.

The snake had not moved. He was not dead, but lay still on the ground. At last the boy turned to look at the snake. He said to it, "Look snake, my father told me today not to bring this boy with me. He said he will beat me if I do. And now you, snake, have bitten him and killed him on account of me."

The snake just lay quietly beside the log while the boy talked to it.

"You snake," the boy said, "Please, I beg you, bring this little boy back to life so that I may take him back to town with me."

The snake still lay motionless, but he was not dead.

"You may come with us to town and you can bite him there in the presence of my father, the chief. That way he will not beat me," the boy suggested.

The snake agreed to bring back the younger boy's life. He brought some medicine and wrapped the little boy in it. The little boy came back to life and the two boys started for home. The older boy carried the wood and the snake followed along behind, because it was part of their agreement. As soon as they arrived in the town, the older boy put down the wood and the snake bit the younger boy, killing him once again. Everybody in the town was shocked by this terrible deed and they all began to mourn.

While the people were mourning, one old man came. "Stop crying," he told the people. "Let's find out if anything strange happened while these two boys were at the farm collecting wood." All the people stopped to listen, and the older boy reported all that had happened at the farm.

When the boy was through reporting, the old man said to the snake, "You, snake, take a look at me and then look at this young

child (referring to the older brother). See how young he is." The old man thought for a while, and then he said to the snake, "This little boy asked you a favor and you complied and you make a bargain with him; all the more reason you should do so with me. As old as I am, with my head white, let us make a bargain. Do what I am going to ask of you. You listened to a small child, you should therefore listen to me too. Please, I beg you, heal this little child for me and bring him back to life as you did before."

The old man made no bargain, but the snake once again stretched itself out and brought forth medicine to put in the dead little boy. The little boy woke up and sneezed -- he had come back to life.

* * *

And so, anybody who listens to a child should also be expected to listen to the elders. You should respect what the elders say and not let them be ashamed.¹¹

These indications provide evidence that the Vai script does function well. All these activities fulfill social, economic, and cultural functions. What impresses us most about these uses of Vai script is the very limited range of topics they cover and the concise messages they carry. I will certainly agree with Gail Stewart who said "literacy in one's own script (and in one's own language) generates a pride that no phonetic alphabet can give."¹² This point is borne out by the habit of Vai writers of preserving all their correspondence, from massive epistles to the smallest notes.

The script has also been used to transcribe or translate other languages -- Arabic for example. The whole Quran has not, of course, been translated into the Vai language, but Arabic passages are often found written out in Vai script characters, a fact utilized by Muslims in their teaching. Perhaps another indication of the script's vitality is the YMCA newspaper published in Robertsport; every issue contains a newsletter written in the Vai script.

Vai script is considered outstanding because of the systematic way in which it represents the language. The spoken Vai has been described by linguists as basically a consonant vowel language; the script represents consonant vowel structure (see attached chart). Construction of such a system requires analyzing the stream of speech and identifying recurrent units in its continual flow, and specifying the features of these units and developing categories to express relationships among them. This means that Vai script does not use an alphabet in which letters are used to represent words. The primary units of the script are syllables. It uses a phonetic method in which the sounds of single characters or combination of sounds of several characters are emphasized to indicate appropriate meaning of words in a context.

The Vai script has taken its own place among the advanced writing systems of the world, namely Arabic and English, both of which are alphabetic.

Reading and writing in Vai script requires more complex operations than might be assumed. Learning the script characters alone does not provide an individual with the adequate skills required for the above-mentioned operations. There are other important factors as well. For example, the tone and unsegmented nature of the writing are common characteristics of the script. This means that any character or set of characters in the script can represent any one word or parts of words depending upon tone and word segmentation. Therefore, one needs a good pronunciation skill in order to produce a sound required for every word in a sentence.

To summarize, the Vai script has been proven to be valuable and usable. The usage of the scripts as described in this paper certainly developed through the inspiration of the Vai alone. In our effort to specify exactly what it is about reading and writing in a society that has no occupational consequences, the indications which the paper points out lead us away from a vague generalization. We find ourselves seeking more concrete answers about how Vai people acquire literacy, what these literacy activities are, and what they do for them.

In a gross way, we can now characterize the major divisions among the scripts in Vai literacy life as follows. Each of the three scripts we have described, English, Arabic and Vai, are transmitted differently. English script has little influence except in urban areas. It is learned exclusively in western type government and mission schools, and is the official script of the political and economic institutions operating on a national scale. Arabic learning, on the other hand, is an integral part of village life. In the case of Islam, the seats of learning are widely scattered in the countryside as opposed to being concentrated in the cities. Almost every town of any size has a quranic school conducted by a learned Muslim scholar. One begins with the village teacher of Quran, and then moves on to a famous teacher, who may be able to teach to a high level. That is to say, teaching other subjects in addition to Quran -- including language, Islam literature and history, religion, Islamic laws and philosophy. The script is used for religious practices and learning.

The Vai script learning, by contrast, is transmitted outside of any institutional setting without the formation of a professional teaching group, and serves personal and public needs in the preservation of village information and in communication between individuals living in different localities.

Unlike English and Quranic education, where pupils are sent by their parents or relatives, whether they like it or not, no one is forced to learn Vai script. The learning takes place only by an individual's own free will, with anyone who knows the script and is willing to teach it. Furthermore, most of the Vai literates appear to spend much of their time in their home areas, whereas the Arabic (Quranic) and English literates are travellers by virtue of their learning.

At this point, it seems significant to support this conclusion with a statement by Alhaj Kemokai, a Vai native, "in African we need Arabic to help us go to heaven and we need English to improve our standard of living, and we need Vai."¹³ Alhaj Kemokai might have added, because Vai is our mother tongue and we can use it for pragmatic and cultural activities.

The Muslim association which the paper mentioned earlier, for example, provides us a good evidence as far as the uses of these scripts are concerned. The association certainly adopted a division of labor among its members, in the uses of Vai and Arabic. The Imam, Ibrahim Nyei, was responsible for the proper religious observations, which were conducted in Arabic. The president, Ansumana Sonii, was responsible for keeping the financial records, distributing assistance to those in need and possibly for adjudicating those disputes among members within the organization. All of these latter activities were conducted in Vai and the records associated with them kept in the Vai script.

Throughout the paper we have tried to analyze the function and uses of three script literacy revolving around the social life of Vai people. Each of the indicators discussed above plays its own special role within the social context of Vai society. The fact that literacy is acquired in this society without formal schooling and that literates and non-literates share common material and social conditions, allows for more social-cultural interactions between participants than is possible in many literate societies.

From this view, we have reason to believe that the Vai people have indeed developed diversified uses for writing in which personal values, pride of culture, and intellectual factors sustain literacy in this society.

It seems logical therefore to believe that people can learn to manipulate other communicative symbol systems more easily by beginning with the one in a language that they already know, because they have confidence in themselves with their own experience and with their own culture.

One major aspect of national development in which I am especially interested is literacy and rural education. My work among the Vais has made me aware of the great potential resources existing among the Liberian rural people that go untapped in current development programs. I have realized how usefully the pre-existing communication system would be applied to problems of rural development that would help promoting functional literacy for general development programs.

FOOTNOTES

* The original manuscript of this paper was presented at the Liberian Studies Conference held at Howard University, Washington, D.C., in April 1979. The research reported here and the preparation of this paper were made possible by support from The Ford Foundation.

1. P.E.H. Hair, "Notes on the Discovery of the Vai Script, with a Bibliography," Sierra Leone Language Review, II (1963), 36-49.

2. D. Dalby, "The Indigenous Scripts of West Africa and Surinam: Their Inspiration and Design," African Language Studies, IX (1968), 156-197.

3. Ibid.

4. See Svend E. Holsoe, "The Cassava-leaf People: An Ethnohistorical Study of the Vai People with a particular emphasis on the Tewo Chiefdom," Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1967.

5. These accounts were given to us by Alhaj Ibrahim Nyei himself when we (M. Cole, J. Goody and myself) visited him at Fass, a private residence of Nyei, near Bomi Hills, in June 1975. Nyei died in June 1978 at the age of 75.

6. Our information about the late Momolu Massaquoi came from a number of sources, during our Vai literacy research work in Liberia, 1975-76: 1) from old man Jangaba Johnson, Director of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism, and whose name is also mentioned in the paper; 2) Mr. E. Boima Gray, professor of Vai study, University of Liberia; and 3) Mr. T. Bai Sherman, Director for Adult Education, Ministry of Education, Liberia.

7. The University of Liberia. The Standard Vai Script. African Studies Program, August, 1962.

8. J. Goody, M. Cole and S. Scribner, "Writing and Formal Operations: A Case Study among the Vai," Africa, XLVIII, 3 (1977), 289-304.

9. This research project (co-directed by Michael Cole and Sylvia Scribner) was undertaken to study intellectual skills involved in Vai script learning among the Vais in Liberia. I was a member from 1975-78.

10. G. Ellis, Negro Culture in West Africa (New York, 1914, reprint, 1970).
11. This story was found in the copy-book of Mambu Paasewe at Vaama, Cape Mount County. Mambu told us that he wrote the story but did not tell exactly when he wrote it. Mambu is one of the few experts in Vai script we met during our survey.
12. Gail Stewart, "Notes on the Present-day Usage of the Vai Script in Liberia," African Language Review, VI (1967), 71-74.
13. J. Goody, M. Cole, and S. Scribner, "Writing and Formal Operations," 289-304.

EVE'S RIB

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG KRU WOMEN

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INTRODUCTION

In the following paper I intend to provide a 'thick description' of the economic and psychological force of membership in women's voluntary associations in a West African community. In Grand Cess, Liberia, the character of women's associations is conditioned on one hand by economic concerns, but in a more important sense, dictated by the psychological force of belonging to value institutions that provide the organization for and rationale behind the ascription of high self-esteem. These sodalities are characterized by the interplay between religious and political action, and ceremonial artifacts and behaviors that are symbolic of shared beliefs, desires and intentions.

Past research among the Kru (Banton 1957; Fraenkel 1964; Buelow 1969) suggests that there is a complex causal chain in the development of voluntary associations and that neither the simple viability of ascriptive groups nor people's commitments to them can be considered either necessary or sufficient conditions for that development; moreover, my research, completed in 1971, provides evidence that Kru women's societies have arisen to counteract the successes of traditional kin structure, not its failures.

Among the Kru, male and female sodalities bring power to bear on different goals in different ways because kin-based organizations (clans) are directed by males to the perceived detriment of women's political, domestic and emotional equality. Our attention will be focused not simply on the activities of voluntary association membership, but on what Kru women mean by such action in the context of leading independent lives within a patrilineal, patriarchal community.

SETTING

Even devoutly Christian women among the Kru have reservations about Christian mythology, and question particularly the Biblical account of the Creation. To Kru women, the notion of women's descent through Adam's rib is sexually repugnant; they hold, rather, that fertility is a feminine aspect and that so far as descent is concerned, Eve's body would be a proper starting point for the races of Man. There is a deep resentment that underlies women's feelings about the preceding Biblical account which they feel is symptomatic of their being under-valued in the community of male interests. They question, often in a belicose manner, the notion that men are innately superior, that men's laws necessarily apply to women, and that women must obey their husbands' legal and moral codes.

The majority of Kru men assert that they are superior to women because men are responsible for women as brothers, husbands, and fathers. Male rationale stems from traditional dominance in village political matters and common law in which women must be represented in court cases by male speakers. Men also cite the division of labor based on physical strength as conclusive evidence for the 'natural' distinction that places them in the responsible role.

Moreover, today, men cite specific passages from Biblical texts to reinforce their belief in superiority, and many Sunday sermons revolve around women's roles in the world of men and the world of God. Women, then, and particularly those who are mistresses of independent households, are bombarded with an ideology that they do not accept, and are faced with developing means to overcome what they feel is an inferior regard.

Siklipo, or the three towns composing Grand Cess -- Big Town, the Municipality, and New Cess -- is situated on the Grand Cess River about fifty miles North of Cape Palmas. Big Town, a traditional village with a population of about four hundred, developed an offshoot in the 1920's which gained township status and later became the administrative center for the Kru Coast Territory. New Cess, a village of about two hundred, is located one mile South of the Municipality, and was formed as a defensive settlement about 1900.

The Municipality, population fourteen hundred, was surveyed into lots, and although there are no motor vehicles, streets are divided into city blocks. The town construction gives a feeling of openness, with wide tree lined avenues leading down to the ocean. Women household heads are distributed evenly throughout the Municipality, living in houses that have been vacated by relatives, husbands, or on land that they have bought for a small sum from the Government. Most of the lots in the Municipality are occupied and it is difficult now to find living space without going some distance from the center of town. There are four year-round wells, two stores run by Lebanese merchants who are tied into the forest products and retail trade with relatives in Cape Palmas, both a Government and Catholic High School, and four Christian Churches. Even though the usual house type is wattle and daub or thatch construction, there are a large number of concrete block structures, some of which are used by the Lebanese for retail trade and storage, the Government for its administrative purposes and 31 that are nuclear and extended family dwellings. Concrete dwellings are almost exclusively owned by workers in the Territorial Government, or retired Government officials.

WOMEN HOUSEHOLD HEADS

Of 296 households in the Municipality, 87 are headed by women. As household heads they are responsible, as are men, for hut tax, repair, and the regulation of daily activities within them. The mean number of residents is 3.6 -- about half that of male households -- and the primary composition is an older woman together with grandchildren or adolescent children of more distant relatives. Independent women do not live in Big Town, and those who become independent move to the Municipality; it is clear that they are economically disadvantaged in Big Town, finding it difficult to establish and maintain a viable market in fish or manufactured goods.

The mean age of independent women is 58, and less than 10% consider themselves married. This married group refer to themselves as co-wives living at a distance from their husbands, but it appears that they are seldom visited by their husbands who have little to do with the running or composition of the home.

Few women household heads have had any formal education, and fewer speak English, the national language, than do men. This is not to say however, that they are uneducated; it is within this community of women that genealogies are kept, stories collected, and the history of the tribe engrained in the young who are in their care. They make their homes and their means available to their kinsmen, offer their houses for gatherings of recreational and religious societies, and, because they are intimately related to other towns through the sale of fish into the interior, are uniquely situated to serve as sources of information and guidance. Trades-women frequently house kinsmen's children so that they can attend the free Government school in the Municipality, and in some cases pay school fees for them to attend the Catholic school. More than 60% of women household heads have lived in towns other than Grand Cess, and, though usually for short periods of time with friends or relatives, are well acquainted with changes that are taking place in the country as a whole, and especially in the daily affairs of the Kru Coast Territory.

Subsistence among independent women varies with age and access to the economic resources necessary to form a market. Those who are young enough for farm work make a dry rice farm each year among their clan relatives or their past husbands' clan where they can rely on help with the heavy ground clearing; but, even though they receive aid, the majority of the work rests on their own shoulders. Eleven per cent (11%) are involved exclusively in the sale of fish into the interior and throughout the town, earning an average of \$10.00 per week. They are responsible for curing the fish and its distribution. Profits are shared with their supplier on a 50/50 arrangement. Thirty per cent (30%) of independent women have a small local market -- usually tobacco, canned goods, fish, rice, peppers and coffee -- but do not have a direct supplier for their goods and do little long-distance trade; their average income is \$5.00 per week.

The market women are supplied sporadically from Cape Palmas where they buy their merchandise at retail prices. Passengers and freight sail into Grand Cess once each month on the supply boat owned by the local Lebanese. During good weather, local fishermen sail their canoes down to Cape Palmas to pick up kinsmen, visit relatives, or transport the ill or injured to the hospital there, and always return with commissioned items for the women to sell.

Fifteen per cent (15%) of women household heads collect a small rent supplement from lodgers for whom they usually prepare an evening meal -- usually \$5.00 per month -- and 14% collect piassava, a forest product from which the bristles for industrial brooms are made. They make less than \$5.00 per week in the piassava trade, a time-consuming process for little profit. It takes a half day's labor to make "one hand" that sells to the Lebanese for 35¢ and which is wholesaled in Cape Palmas for \$1.35.

Even though Kru men rarely form reciprocal farm work groups, independent women do. High status in recreational societies also makes it possible for women to call upon the membership to help them with the heavy farm labor. Of those who had farms in 1968 -- 60% -- 15% worked with a regular cooperative work group, usually made up of independent women like themselves, and 8% were able to pay men to do the heavy work preparatory to planting. Only the eldest women are dependent on their clan or their previous husband's clan for rice, and less than 15% received more than token amounts as gifts. Thus, they are clearly self-supporting.

Fifty four per cent (54%) of the women interviewed had been raised by their own mothers, and only 43% were raised by their biological fathers. This reflects not only the high death rate among mothers during child birth, the traditional movement of children into homes where labor is scarce, where

interest is high, and where money is available for school fees; but, also, the spatial mobility of fathers. While it is not possible to provide a precise measure of the Grand Cess expatriate community, almost every resident of the town can point to a close male relative who is doing wage labor in some part of West Africa, and who plans to come back to Grand Cess to retire. Many migrant men have children, past wives who are living with other men, or as 25% of the trades-women suggest, have picked women whom they will wed when they return. Thus, children circulate where time, temperament, and funds are at a maximum.

Eleven per cent (11%) of women household heads are not members of the Siklío Dako, or village group, having come from neighboring towns as wives that grew old in the service of their children or affines, and have remained upon the death, divorce, or abandonment of their husbands. They are usually members of clans that have affiliates in Grand Cess, sharing the same name, and a generalized history. If, for example, a clan in Grand Cess was unable to find a bride among its members through which to keep intact the marriage reciprocity with another clan, it might attempt to find a wife for the suitor among their kin in a nearby village. While few clans are spread widely throughout the Kru Coast Territory, many have affiliates with towns nearby.

Traditional marriages among the Kru were not, and are not now marked by elaborate ceremonies. It consisted formerly in the payment between betrothal and consummation of a bride-price of from two to twenty pounds sterling. If a suitor did not find wage labor, it was not uncommon for him to do bride service for his fiancée's clan, to live with them while at the farm, and to have a great deal of access to her. One is left with the impression that girls were not married against their will or that their inclinations were not important.

Infant mortality is high among the Kru. One woman outside the sample had 18 live births, only one of whom lived to maturity. The mean number of births is 6, and the number living at 5 years of age is 3, giving a mortality rate of 50%. Diseases that account for the high mortality rate are, in order of descending importance, malaria, dysentery, worms and bronchial infections complicated by decreased resistance brought about by the first three.

WOMEN'S VALUES

In defiance of male-oriented proscriptions against marriage within clans, 21% of women household heads felt that young people who did so should not be punished at all, and the majority felt that even though some sanction should be applied, it should not be severe. They cited several instances of incest as evidence that nothing dire has resulted. This attitude indicates a lack of conformity with male values; males responded unanimously that such behavior should be severely sanctioned, and cite evidence that it has been. Clearly differences in values may lead to differences in behavior and women champ against male sexual constraints by deflecting attention away from lovers sharing the same clan name.

Kru women claim that sexual enjoyment is a lure through which children assure that they are brought into the world. Thus, it is the unborn who control the sexual behavior of the adult population. How else, they ask, would children ever be born? If women had the choice, fewer children would be born, not only because birth is a dangerous experience, but because they have families that are large enough to become a burden in the absence of men to help support them. Not only independent women, but married women as well, attempt as best they can to limit the size of their families by refraining from sex during their period of highest fertility.

Typical responses among men on desired family size was, 'as many as God gives', and among women, 'as many as one can afford to raise'. Even though men still gain high status from large numbers of children, women resist pregnancy not only because it places them under heavy daily constraint, but in the typical divorce today, even though children were traditionally controlled by the husband's clan, women must find the means to support them.

Most permanently settled men, those who have broken loose from the labor migration cycle, have several wives. Relations between co-wives vary both with the personality of wives and husbands, and the physical aspects of the homestead. The imposition of a hut tax by the national government has limited the number of independent domiciles that a man can afford, and, today, wives are usually housed under one roof. Frictions arise from continual daily contact in cramped quarters, hostility of younger wives to domination by older co-wives, and sexual favoritism. The notion of marital bliss as a distinguishing feature of this tribal society is contradicted both by early 20th century and modern divorce rates among the Kru.

High divorce and remarriage rates among older women early in their marital careers is indicative of the independence of, and the high value placed on women as domestic resources by men. Today it also indicates the encroachment of national tax policy into village social structure, and shifts in economic roles of both men and women. Most men claim that the best homestead is one shared by two wives who are helpful and compassionate.

Kru women claim that the very word, *Ninya*, or woman, implies sexual performance, physical strength, fertility and independence. A woman should be aggressive, tireless, and able to live her life according to her own values. Girls should be in the process of developing these traits, and older women mock girls who are shy or retiring. Men, on the other hand, state attitudes of humbleness, respect, quietness and docility as most valued characteristics in a wife. These differences in attitudes lead to many domestic conflicts. Women consider men as a group to be flighty, lacking in sexual stamina, and 'stiff-necked' or proud. Males who do not have these negative characteristics usually have several wives and numerous liaisons. These men are highly valued and greatly respected by women, and they usually hold high rank in the numerous women's voluntary societies as male counterparts to the society president. They thus are able to settle disputes between the group and male organizations.

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

Women's organizations in Grand Cess must be understood in the light of material scarcity and the notion of 'woman-ness' providing as they do both symbolic and material avenues for exerting political, economic and domestic power in a patrifocal community. It is through voluntary associations that women's aspirations are brought in a unified way to the attention of males.

The majority of younger women belong to a church, church society, recreational society, a *tumbwa* or informal women's gathering composed of women from the same part of town, a farm work group, often of a permanent revolving nature, and female counterpart societies to the men's groups. Moreover, many women hold officer's roles in predominately men's associations as liaisons with women's groups. Thus, it is common for a woman to belong to four voluntary associations, each of which meets once a week. Members are responsible for attendance at meetings and official functions, monthly dues and special levies for functions, food and drink -- usually alcoholic. Associations are important not only in life, but in death as well, giving financial aid to members when children are born, during sickness or trouble, offering entertainment to the

depressed, absorbing expenses for funerals, and putting on performances extolling the virtues of the deceased to the community.

CULTS

Of recent origin in Grand Cess are sodalities whose primary aim is the physical and psychological life of women -- the messianic cults of Sister Blamo and Sister Kladi. These cults differ from other Grand Cess societies in several respects: first, there are no officers or special regalia; second, men are excluded from functions; and third, membership is limited to the physically or psychologically disturbed.

Psychological problems among Kru women are usually responses to loneliness, physical illness and feelings of abandonment, especially in old age, and particularly among women living alone. Among younger married women, emotional problems often follow the death of infants, and many women have lost a majority of their young children.

While other sodalities provide the support group necessary to overcome more ordinary social concerns, messianic cults are directed specifically at women with significant handicaps. Whereas kin groups often function to support men who are experiencing emotional difficulty, they function poorly where women are concerned. Because women do not speak during kin group meetings, but are represented by men as interpreters, women are effectively prevented from discussing their problems during gatherings of their husband's clan, the domain in which they live their political lives.

Messianic cults have developed in Grand Cess during a period that has seen a shift to Christianity, a dramatic increase in the number of independent women households, increased movement of men to the expatriate rubber plantations and mineral fields, and the imposition of the hut tax. These cults or churches, both of which have around seventy members and meet several times each week, hold it as appropriate that women have visions, hear the voices of their loved ones who are dead, and do not behave in ways that men have deemed acceptable -- that is, wear clothes that cover the breasts, remain silent during village meetings, and show restraint at funerals and ceremonial occasions.

In 1965 Sister Blamo had a vision in which she saw Jesus nailed to the cross. During that time, he convinced her to establish a church that, through her laying on of hands and offering communion, would heal physical and emotional illnesses. Since that time, Sister Blamo has organized a church in which many members have had the same vision, have learned to view their various symptoms as 'blessed' and have worked to bring women who are having problems into their group. Men have not been invited into the group.

Discussions with Sister Blamo indicate that she sees her church's function as one of religious conversion, but she is well aware of the psychological problems that face her parishioners. The two most significant problems for women are physical illness and a loss of social function in the community. Her church mediates these problems by exposing the illness to the group, physically if possible, and bringing together the households of women whose families have died out or removed. Many Kru women are subject to disfiguring tropical illnesses including leprosy, tropical funguses, skin cancer and others that I do not know. Elephantiasis is also common in this area and leads to massive changes in the lower body. Sister Blamo acts during meetings not only to clean and bandage severely infected areas, but exposes those areas to view. Members sing and extoll the virtues of the member during these times and the process is clearly cathartic. Many women testify to being cured by Sister

Blamo and do not tend to separate physical cures from psychological ones as we do in the West. Changes in body image among women in Sister Blamo's church are taken with much more grace than one would expect given the severity of the illnesses involved. The church structure seems secure, even in the face of a great deal of pressure from the traditional churches in the community, and particularly the Catholic Mission, that have demanded that communion be reserved for priests or ordained ministers.

CHURCH AND CHURCH SOCIETY

Even though women in Grand Cess have reservations about Christian doctrine, churches provide many women with an easily identifiable institutional support for their activities. Most women in Grand Cess are either nominally Catholic or Protestant. Protestants adhere to the Methodist or Pentacostal Church, or to the Church of God. The Methodist Church is the largest and most influential, finding much support from the Liberian government.

Slightly more than 50% of Grand Cess church adherents consider themselves Catholic. The Catholic Church has long been active in Grand Cess and provides educational advantages for those who can afford school fees, not only because of the quality of education, but ease of transition for students to the Catholic High Schools and Colleges in Monrovia and Cape Palmas.

Membership in church or 'burial' societies is contingent on participation in church activities, especially singing in the choir, regular church attendance, and support of village improvements sponsored by the church.

Because their congregations are small, the Pentacostals and members of the Church of God are not divided into societies. They view their church much as Methodists and Catholics view their church society, meeting as a whole during crises of members, at town meetings, or on holidays.

Catholic women are divided into six or more active burial sodalities named after saints; Methodists are divided into four or more sodalities whose names are taken both from the list of prophets and from traditional folklore. There are older societies (six Methodist and Catholic) that have few members. These evolved from prior traditional societies connected with social service activities and the supplication of gods important to fertility, healing, plant and animal productivity, and personal safety.

Church societies, like recreational societies, are remarkable in the number of named officers regularly filled by members, by the resolution of conflict between members and, certainly, by the force they have in instigating village improvements. Sponsored projects include payment of school fees for poorer members, food redistribution, and clearing out of wells that are held in common by the public.

Church sodalities serve as the staging ground for discussions about the meaning and value of a wide range of Biblical beliefs that are antagonistic to women. Through their society, Christian women bring pressure to bear on male clergy to modify their sermons and the masculine values they emphasize.

Today voluntary associations, sometimes unconsciously, often consciously, undertake to raise self-esteem for members in both material and symbolic ways. Material ways have been discussed and include social service functions, medical healing and participatory activities. Symbolic activities are those that reify or give special meaning to beliefs; such beliefs include the notion that women

are equal to men and are especially manifest in competitive singing and plays which help the decedent's spirit reach equality or high standing in the after-life, and uniform clothing that shows the common humanity of women in the group.

While many of the ritual artifacts connected with tribal gods, or powers, are still valued -- especially the brass rings associated with the god Cra Sikli, the guardian spirit of the Siklipo -- Kru women believe in the healing efficacy of Christian objects: the cross, Bible, rosary and medallions of the Saints. These objects hold a place of special reverence during church society meetings and are viewed as possessing curative or harmful power that can be directed by the owners.

RECREATIONAL SOCIETIES

Recreational societies grew out of the expatriate communities of Kru men (and, later, women) in Ghana and Nigeria in the 1800s. These early 'companies,' as they are referred to by the Kru, served many functions, not the least of which was buying protection from the harbor masters of ports up and down the coast, putting on 'plays' or death rituals for those who died overseas with too few clan members to put on a proper ceremony. Banton (1957), Fraenkel (1964) and Little (1965) provide excellent descriptions of these expatriate Kru communities and the societies that they formed.

Boto (Boat) company, formed around 1900 by men from Grand Cess, is one of the first clearly recreational societies of Grand Cess and was composed of members of Convention and Nigeria burial societies. Boto did not have a burial function, cross cut village life, and was later composed of men both from Big Town and the Municipality.

Boto company was dedicated to putting on humorous plays, making costumes for dances learned in other towns of West Africa, and competitive singing and political discussions.

When ships came into the Grand Cess harbor, members of Boto company dressed in imitation of the ship's crew. The leader of the company was the Captain and he chose a complete complement of officers. The men made costumes in keeping with their rank and met the ship as a delegation. In fact, they often took over the ship itself while it was in the harbor and used it as a platform for their 'plays' which poked fun at the manners of foreign seamen.

Wives of the members of Boto company formed a company of their own and, as more recreational societies were formed in Grand Cess by men, women formed complementary societies which in the 1920s began meeting independently for competitive singing, joke telling and dancing.

Today, women's recreational societies form a strongly united block against many of what they view as moral excesses by the Catholic and Protestant churches, especially pressure that they have brought to bear against the churches of Sister Kladi and Sister Blamo, and Christian, one man, one wife philosophy. Most recreational societies in Grand Cess formed women's volleyball teams by 1970 and competed regularly, even though older men in Grand Cess thought them risqué.

The women of Bewodo and Sosemy (both of which have more than 100 female members) put on large plays in 1970 that made fun of the Christian hierarchy of the town. The competitive singing that took place led to some animosity between members of the groups, because a large number of 'family skeletons' were resurrected in the process. The butt of the competitive sing centered on the size of

men's genitals and before the plays were completed, most of the men went home angry at having been compared in public.

So far, the Christian churches have had little success in trying to control the behavior of women during their society meetings and, in fact, their control has diminished with the growing spatial mobility and economic power that women enjoy.

Self-esteem among Kru women, traditionally supported through the husband's clan, has been eroded by the modern forces of migration labor that has taken a large number of males away from the family, lack of independent houses for co-wives and the problem of child support in which husbands participate less in the rearing of children. Recreational societies have attempted to combat these negative aspects of women's culture not only by providing social services for women -- especially the elderly and divorced -- but by bringing power to bear on local officials who hear divorce cases and who are responsible for the redistribution of at least a small part of locally collected taxes. Both local and outside administrators who cooperate with or join recreational societies are respected; those who do not are publicly ridiculed and sexually scorned.

In the past, Kru social life did not provide the structure for cooperation and friendly competition among women. Recreational societies have provided both, even in the face of strong male proscriptions to the contrary. Moreover, women's recreational societies have taken over many symbolic roles previously only held by males within the clan, the age grades and the tribal councils; among them are: wearing special clothes dedicated to guardian spirits; resolution of temporal or spiritual problems; and, most importantly, the reinforcement of self-esteem through belonging and participating.

CONCLUSION

To justify a claim that male or female sodalities have arisen to serve primarily economic functions, it would be necessary to show how participation leads to real or imagined economic advantage. Quite the contrary, male associations in Grand Cess do not lend money or save it for members, give only token amounts to members during periods of hardship, are not the basis for establishing farm work groups, and do not serve to redistribute any scarce physical resource. Even though participation in them is not contingent upon occupation or income, high ranking officers are usually chosen from among those who are effective in ascriptive groups. Men who participate most effectively in one are most effective in the other. Moreover, male association structure mirrors the structure of modern tribal organization with a president, or chief, a speaker for the president, and a large number of officers who hold named positions with the same society status as that occupied in ascriptive groups. Male associations, then, are isomorphic with current tribal organization, cross-cutting clan interests and buttressing the authority of traditional organization. They are often the source of male tribal legislation.

Women's sodalities, however, do show a developed economic focus. They lend money at times even though they have fewer funds to distribute than do males, goods are redistributed during times of sickness or hardship; members do form revolving farm work groups and help out with work centered around the raising of children in independent households. However, even though participation does give some economic advantage for women, the psychological force of membership must be understood in terms of symbolic roles; that is, the part that sodalities play as value institutions, institutions that maintain high ascription of value to individuals, and through which values that conflict with those held by males can be focused on community goals.

Viewed from the outside, women's voluntary associations comprise a hierarchy in both function and structure. The largest societies are recreational in nature and commitment to them is least. The smallest societies are life crisis oriented and commitment to them is highest. Larger, village-wide societies provide the foundation and structure for esteem attribution, while burial and healing societies provide the direct emotional conversion experience necessary to bear life crises.

Voluntary associations are integral in an understanding of the mental health of the Grand Cess community. Through them, what Kru would reasonably view as deviant values are incorporated into a social framework. Rebels like Sister Blamo develop associations that reflect divergent values and provide both a forum for expression and a peer group of social support. Thus, individuals with emotional or physical problems rarely turn their anger either against themselves or others, and this fact seems demonstrated by the total absence of suicide among the Kru -- who in fact have no name for the act of self-destruction -- and the extreme rarity of violent acts between adults.

Often, one-half of women association members serve as officers. These named roles serve to produce a value hierarchy on non-traditional grounds where, formerly, women's community status was dependent on domestic performance within the husband's clan, divorced from independent social concerns. Group activities, holding office, wearing special clothing, the use of special proverbs and language, and the adherence to by-laws that are often in conflict with male prescriptions for behavior (public recreation, for example) both reify and give meaning to female values in a non-domestic setting without which those values could not be acted on in an effective way.

If women's societies were primarily directed at economic goals, one would expect independent women traders to be most involved in them, or to have formed societies themselves. They are, however, less involved in them than other women, and the explanation lies in the fact that successful trading provides high status while at the same time makes heavy demands upon time available for participation. While women's societies support the values necessary for women to engage successfully in independent economic pursuits, they are not organized to provide the level of financial resources necessary to become independent. Even though on casual inspection men's and women's voluntary associations appear the same, sharing joint names and meetings at times, what is not apparent is that men and women develop, join and participate in them for different reasons, with divergent psychological consequences. Men's societies reinforce male beliefs in superiority -- women's societies serve to debunk the myth.

The importance of voluntary associations among Kru women is not restricted to the Kru coast because most church societies have counterpart societies in the major cities of Liberia. The larger recreational societies, particularly Soseemy, are very popular in both Monrovia and Cape Palmas where they work to locate housing and jobs for members who move to the city, and provide activities to initiate the 'country wife' to rapidly changing ways of life.

Because Kru women view themselves as equal to men and reinforce that belief through social action, it is likely that there will be greater participation by women in the political and social developments brought about by the present government of Liberia which is composed, to a greater extent than ever before, of Kru, Kran, Bassa and Grebo tribal members.

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THE IMPACT OF MEETING SITINGS
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

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INTRODUCTION

Since its founding in 1963, in an effort to curb ideological tensions among independent African states, the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) has arranged to meet at different African capitals for its annual meetings. The headquarters office, all along, has been permanently located at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in an impressive and elegant Secretariat building donated to the Organization by the late Emperor, Haile Selassie. During the past six years, however, many of the members have expressed the desire of transferring the Secretariat to another African city. Such a view has, in part, been a reaction to the constraints which the successor Marxist regime of Colonel Mengistu Mariam has imposed upon the movements and living conditions of diplomats.

There is no requirement in the O.A.U. charter that the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, or the Council of Ministers meet only at the Permanent Headquarters. In fact, most summit meetings have taken place in Addis Ababa.¹ The practice of rotational siting of meetings could, therefore, only have developed out of the prestige value to an incumbent President of the Organization hosting his counterparts on his own turf.² Other reasons for site shifting may be due to the African emphasis upon reciprocity of hospitality, which enhances a feeling of genuine brotherhood and mutual respect; an acknowledgement of the relative paucity of permanent meeting facilities in any one African country, including transport, communications and other related items; a need among new sovereign states to attest to their equal status, one to the other; and the opportunity provided the hosting country to secure support -- internal and external -- and funds necessary for preparing and conducting the annual conference.

Apart from the prestige and international recognition gained from hosting the O.A.U. annual conference, huge amounts of limited revenue, ranging from 20 to 40 per cent of a country's annual budget, often have to be spent. When the expenditure of such a large proportion of revenue is questioned, the usual response given is that to do so would be a sensible boost to the pace and quality of the hosting country's development. After all, the reasoning goes, such capitals as Khartoum, Kampala, Lagos, and Accra would not today possess impressive hotel and other conference facilities were it not for the stimulus provided by the challenge of hosting an important conference like that of the Organization of African Unity.

The reality, nonetheless, of hosting an O.A.U. conference, is that citizens are called upon to make sacrifices which are not adequately rewarded. The increased volume of business and commercial activities normally engendered by the conference, in preparing for it and carrying it out, incurs more of a loss than a gain to the mass citizenry. This is because the majority of those who become involved, other than the non-productive sector of politicians and

civil servants, are non-indigenous entrepreneurs -- bankers, contracting engineers, and businessmen. Whereas the mass citizenry is asked to make voluntary contributions, however minimal, it is the non-indigenous entrepreneurs and the politicians who gain the monetary benefits. There is serious doubt that the national prestige which is expected to be felt by the contributing mass of citizens lasts for more than the fleeting moment of enforced euphoria. Furthermore, the relatively elegant conference halls, meeting rooms, and hotels, which hosting the O.A.U. brings into being, very often remain off-limits to the sacrificing rank and file -- as do the means of transportation and communication (expensive automobiles, telephones, refurbished roads, ports, airfields and lodgings). The practice, furthermore, of developing special chalets to form an O.A.U. village, as well as "VVIP" (very, very important persons) lounges, whereby attending dignitaries are isolated or kept at a distance from the hosting commoners, minimizes any sense of an extended belonging among ordinary citizens encouraged to support the great event. It is as if the oftentimes expressed pursuit of egalitarian socialism by African politicians and power-wielders must come about only after citizens have been made to endure a continuing process of a segmented social ranking.

It would seem that there are more disadvantages than advantages to the hosting of an O.A.U. conference, and that such a discrepancy would suffice to discourage the tendency to become excited by the prospect. That no leader has seen fit, other than President Sekou Toure of Guinea, to refuse the offer, calls attention to the autocratic rule characterizing African states that makes reasonable assessment impossible. For the most part, communications media are controlled and allow little or no opportunity for expressing dissent against the predispositions and decisions of the few in power. If a Bokassa or an Amin could get away with grandiose expenditures, at the expense of the masses, what is there to prevent a Stevens or Numeiri or Tolbert from undertaking a prestigious affair like an O.A.U. conference, especially after such an august body had seen fit to elect him President of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government? And so, in the absence of effective opposition in the decision-making process in the majority of African countries, O.A.U. members take turns enduring the strain and relative deprivation of hosting the annual conference. Egypt, Ghana, Sudan and Uganda can attest to the drain on revenue and foreign exchange currency, not to discount the political upheavals and power conflicts that often follow in the wake of O.A.U. conferences. One must ask whether the cost of hosting the O.A.U. is justifiable. The irony, however, is that prestige attainment has come to be perceived by the wielders of power as a definite advantage to their personal image, if not to that of the ordinary citizens of their dominions. This takes place even in the face of resulting handicaps placed upon their alleged commitment to resolving such national problems as disease, housing, hunger, illiteracy, and the comprehensive debilitations of neocolonialism. Nkrumah's reasoning of 1965 possibly continues to be influential against hosting critics:

We have almost completed on the grounds of the State House a magnificent complex of buildings and other facilities required for the OAU conference -- it is there for all to see. The residential part of this complex consists of a twelve-storey building of sixty self-contained suites, carefully arranged to give maximum comfort. There are also an up-to-date conference hall which can contain 1,000 people, and a banquet hall capable of seating nearly 2,000 guests near this residence, both of which are linked by a series of covered ways to the residential edifice. This complex of buildings are all centrally air-conditioned. On the same grounds, provision has been made for garages which will accommodate up to forty cars for the Heads of State, and a parking area for over 750 cars. Two large fountains operated by seventy-two jets with multi-coloured interplay of lights, and rising to

a height of sixty feet when fully turned on, have been installed. The scale and nature of these buildings show the great importance which the Government of Ghana attaches to the conference of the OAU.³

OBJECTIVES OF THE O.A.U.

A brief review of the purpose and objectives of the Organization of African Unity might contribute to a realistic assessment of the impact of siting the annual conference. One must not forget, of course, that glaring ideological conflicts between the "Casablanca" and "Monrovia" blocs (led by Presidents Nkrumah and Nasser, and President Tubman and Prime Minister Balewa, respectively) had provided an opportunity for Emperor Haile Selassie to seek a leadership role in the new Africa of the sixties. There was more to be gained from concerted action by the many emergent "sovereigns" on the continent, than by ignoring the charismatic threat of an Nkrumah who intended to subsume all of them to a "United States of Africa" of which Nkrumah perceived himself as the logical "Prime Sovereign". Selassie's call for unity that was selective rather than total, therefore, proved much more appealing. Centralists and regionalists alike, representing 32 African states, became signatories of the charter on May 25, 1963. It was as if these leaders had come to acknowledge L. Gray Cowan's description of their situation:

For all the newly independent African states, the creation of a foreign-policy position to go with their sovereign status has meant embarking on a voyage in rough and uncharted seas. The new governments were faced with so many pressing internal problems stemming from the political and social upheaval accompanying independence that, initially, foreign-policy making of necessity occupied the attention of the leaders of government to a substantially lesser degree than did questions of domestic policy.⁴

Enunciated in Article II of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity was an indication of support for the Casablanca notion of centralism: "to promote the unity and solidarity of African States . . . and to eradicate all forms of colonialism (including neocolonialism and Soviet incursion?) from Africa". Yet, the same Article II expressed support for the apparently contradictory notion espoused by the Monrovia bloc: "to coordinate and intensify . . . cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa" and "to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence". The stated purposes, therefore, proved a victory for the majority opposition to complete African unity, and a defeat for the few who favored the idea of Kwame Nkrumah. Reflection would lead one to conclude that the organization that came into being in Addis Ababa was not one of UNITY -- as the name suggests -- but one of COOPERATION. This is clear from the charge to members contained in section 2 of Article II stipulating the fields in which members shall coordinate and harmonise their general policies":

- a. political and diplomatic cooperation
- b. economic cooperation, including transport and communications
- c. educational and cultural cooperation
- d. health, sanitation and nutritional cooperation
- e. scientific and technical cooperation; and
- f. cooperation for defense and security

It might be that unwarranted criticism has been levelled against the O.A.U. by

those who have been misled by its title of Unity, rather than by its espousal of Cooperation. As has been noted by Zdenek Cervenka,

Criticism of the OAU has become fashionable and, unfortunately, facile, largely because the OAU really lacked both the power and the means to play the roles assigned to it by the African leaders at Addis Ababa. The model for the OAU was, after all, the Lagos Charter of the Inter-African and Malagasy Organisation. Article 3 of this Charter, stating the principles, emphasises 'the sovereign equality of the African and Malagasy states, whatever may be the size of their territory, and density of their population or the value of their possessions'. This amply illustrates the fear of the weak, newly-independent states of being dominated by their organisation based upon volunteer cooperation, with emphasis on unanimous decisions, the implementation of which was of course deliberately left entirely to the discretion of each individual member. Hence the opposition of the majority of African states towards Kwame Nkrumah's striving for continental government.⁵

The policy of shifting the location of meeting sites, rather than convening annually at a fixed headquarters as is the practice of most international organizations -- the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the International Labor Organization, for example -- is, perhaps, in keeping with the notion of cooperation. Such a notion entails partial, rather than total, commitment, while at the same time emphasizing to individual members their freedom and right to measure and change the intensity and level of their essentially voluntary participation. The chairmanship of the Organization which determines, it would seem, the site of the meeting ends up being more symbolic than substantive -- an opportunity for some obnoxious peacocks to mingle with their alleged equals and brothers in a momentary cleansing milieu that calls for "due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." But if the "civilized" nations who framed these lofty guidelines for social and political relationships -- the United States, the Soviet Union, France, and Great Britain -- seldom find it convenient to adhere to them, should there be consternation over "uncivilized" Africa's failure to heed them? Sitting, thus, is an unimportant issue as far as contributing to the realization of objectives. Except, of course, the objectives of the chairman and hosting country to advance -- although only for a period of very short duration -- a need for recognition and presumed esteem. It does not take long for the hosting chairman to recognize that his quest for personal esteem and international respect will be at the expense of the many citizens who continue to await the long-promised better life.⁶

THE SITING EXPERIENCES OF LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

It seemed appropriate for Liberia to be chosen to host the O.A.U. conference in 1979. Like Ethiopia, Liberia has the stature of being one of the few African territories which escaped imperial incursion, and was, indeed, one of the prime movers of the O.A.U. concept. Given the political stability and economic development which Liberia had enjoyed during the long period of President Tubman's leadership, and which seemed to have been maintained by his successor, President Tolbert, the hosting choice was a prudent one. No one doubted Liberia's ability to manage the costs of developing additional infrastructures befitting the dignity and importance of the occasion: highways were subsequently improved or developed, as were hotel and communication facilities; and even a luxury liner was hired to augment the pressure on lodgings. Those who attended the summit conference in Monrovia were impressed with the adequacy of preparations, and with the attention received from the international community. There

is no doubt but that President Tolbert, as O.A.U. chairman, became more recognized as the representative leader of African governments, resulting in his being accorded a careful hearing by other world leaders -- in Europe, the United States, and even in the Second World. Closer to home, Tolbert became an articulator and mediator of African concerns, including international trade disparities and energy resource availability. That the patterns of neighboring conflicts and sectional strifes did not abate significantly during 1979 and 1980, could not be for lack of endeavors by the O.A.U. machinery: Uganda remained problematic, as did Chad and Western Sahara. Foreign exchange shortfalls for the majority of African countries, especially the many without internally-generated supplies of petroleum and other attractive international trade commodities, continued.

Much more significant than these many unsolved issues was the internal pressures exacerbated by the O.A.U. siting in Monrovia. Despite a period of national independence spanning over 100 years, Liberia had never escaped the exploiting thirst of Western imperialism. That such exploitation remained covert, in relationship to the overt experience of African colonies, did not inure significant benefits to Liberia. The facade of independence helped to create a small elite who perceived themselves as wealthy, and were in fact so perceived by the many poor; such a glaring maldistribution of crumbs in a population of low density, rudimentary technology, and education left Liberia in a constant state of undevelopment and infrastructural paucity.⁷ Hosting the O.A.U., therefore, posed a grave challenge which, to be met, carried the threat of further hardship upon an already deprived society. It was the poor mass that had to delay further their expectation of betterment, inasmuch as the small corps of power-wielders now felt compelled to expend the limited resources of the nation toward realizing the restricted prestige which O.A.U. conference hosting conferred upon the ruling oligarchy -- and the material gains that were certain to accrue to the few. On the other side of the ledger, the sudden evidence of accelerated development -- highways, hotels, chalets, and luxury automobiles -- heightened the consciousness of the expecting mass who, with the help and enlightenment of an emerging cadre of caring social critics, wondered about the justice of the misdirection of energies and resources by their leaders.⁸

It does seem reasonable to suggest that hosting the O.A.U. has accelerated the appearance of a popular opposition party, the People's Progressive Party, and has given more encouragement to the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) to become more vocal and condemning of human rights violations in Liberia. But for the O.A.U. hosting, and the enlightenment it has evoked, the Tolbert theme of "Rally Time" would have remained unchallenged and humanistically unattractive: "It is Rally Time in the human family for a personal outreach from the ghetto flats and the bedrooms of suburban areas to higher planes of living standards. It is Rally Time for a personal outreach of palatial residences in urban areas. It is Rally Time for an outreach of the human spirit from the outposts of human degradation, oppression and social injustice to the strongholds of human freedom and dignity."⁹ Did Tolbert lose his vision of betterment, or were these words of 1974 mere verbiage not intended for the ears of deprived Liberians whose record of patient acquiescence to undevelopment is well-known? Would the MOJA spokesman, Dew Mayson, have had the courage and opportunity to be overtly critical of a long-entrenched and seemingly-secure True Whig Party were it not for the O.A.U. proximity? In Dew Mayson's view,

The Liberian reality of underdevelopment . . . relates to the domination of our economy and other aspects of our national life by large, foreign enterprises in close alliance with the Liberian state apparatus. If we stop to examine the characteristics of this domination, we shall find that, first of all, the principal means of production in our country are owned and controlled by large international corporations based in the advanced capitalist countries.

Indeed, Liberia holds the dubious distinction of having the largest number of foreign-owned business enterprises in Africa. . . . Five out of every seven business enterprises are foreign-owned. . . . The characteristics of the large foreign corporations in our country are well-known. First, these corporations limit their activities to the exploitation of our raw materials (iron ore, rubber, forestry products). Little or no processing is done in the country since the extraction of raw materials is done to cover the raw materials needs of corresponding industries in the advanced capitalist countries. . . . Second, these corporations have formed economic islands which are not integrated one with one another. . . . Lacking any permanent mutual relations among them, the corporations have therefore failed to have any developing effect on the Liberian economy as a whole. . . . Finally, the huge profits made by the foreign corporations are not reinvested in the enterprises and, even less, in founding new and different industries.

The other aspect of our underdevelopment which we want to highlight is our poverty -- or more precisely, the poverty of the masses of our people. . . . the great majority (over 70 per cent of our people) who live in the rural areas are drowning in poverty, barely making it on an income of no more than \$70 per year. Illiteracy is widespread (80 per cent). Unemployment is rampant, particularly for young people in the cities.¹⁰

The highlight of the O.A.U. pageantry for the Liberian people occurred during 1979, even though reaction to this event had been made manifest long before then. The riots over rice shortages in April, 1979, just before the arrival of African dignitaries for the summit conference, was simply one strong sign that the facade of tranquillity and acquiescence to maldistribution of privileges would no longer be sustained. Thus it is that three months before passing the glamor of O.A.U. sitting to Sierra Leone, an ordinarily confident government found it necessary to use arbitrary arrests and suspension of habeas corpus to curb increasing agitation by radical elements determined to bring down the Liberian government:

Some 40 members of the Progressive People's Party have been arrested on charges of treason and sedition. Warrants were issued after a meeting at which the speakers called for the resignation of President Tolbert, and the Vice-President, because of what the speakers described as inadequate development activities in Liberia and also called for a general strike to bring down the government. . . . Since the rice riots at Easter last year, when a demonstration called by the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (the forerunner and founder of the PPP), got out of hand and at least 49 people. . . were killed when police opened fire, the President has had power to detain for 30 days without trial anybody accused of treason (which carries the death penalty), sedition (up to 10 years in prison), or any other act considered dangerous to the safety of the country.¹¹

The euphoria with which the Liberian leadership accepted the hosting challenge, as did the leadership of Ghana in 1965, is now being felt in Sierra Leone. Another poor country with inadequate infrastructures and pressing developmental problems, Sierra Leone considers the hosting opportunity a blessing in disguise. In his Christmas message in 1979, President Siaka Stevens

called on all Sierra Leoneans to look forward with optimism to the year ahead. . . . an eventful one for Sierra Leoneans in view of the role they will play within the African political scene. He appealed to all to lend support to the government in its efforts

to host the OAU Summit, the success of which, he said, will not only be a credit to the Government but to the entire nation.¹²

This responsibility was being enthusiastically assumed at the same time that the International Development Association was being prevailed upon, successfully, to provide a \$2.5 million credit "to strengthen the Government's capability in development training, preparation of development projects, training of local staff and monitoring and evaluation of public investment programmes."¹³

Should Sierra Leone have, perhaps, delayed its O.A.U. hosting until after such training benefits? Not according to the decision makers! The Minister of Finance, even as he was presenting the harsh realities of the 1979/80 budget and the need for increased taxes and continuing deficit spending, pointed out that:

Part of the escalation in expenditure was consequent upon factors over which we can exercise no control. . . . deficit financing per se is not a bad practice as long as the funds so generated are spent on projects which would improve productivity and strengthen the capacity of the economy for future growth. . . . Of the 1979-80 projection (of which the deficit will, by the end of 1979 be Le 113.6m), Le 45m. is being allowed for projects connected . . . with the OAU summit meeting -- this is much less than Liberia spent for this year's OAU conference -- though in many cases spending on the OAU meeting is expected to yield continuing benefits long after 'the captains and kings' have departed and, in places, will be merely an acceleration of development projects already planned for the future.¹⁴

Such reasoning could not have been generated by the Monrovia summit experience which had emphasized, in the Monrovia Declaration of Commitment, that

present methods of development linked to the needs of the developed world will not be enough to keep pace with the increase in population: at this rate Africa in the year 2,000 will be worse off than it is now. What is needed is a new theory based mainly on increased self-reliance and closer links between African countries.¹⁵

Had not the Liberian concluding reflection of its own experience provided a hint worthy of Sierra Leone's consideration in its own planning for 1980?

The Liberian authorities heaved a large sigh of relief when the last Head of State flew from Robertsfield Airport, after military bands had played, President Tolbert had called on the blessing of almighty God, the merciful Allah, and crowds of dragooned schoolchildren had cheered and waved. . . . The huge expenditure has left Liberia facing some severe problems, but she can look back with a degree of pride on OAU'79.¹⁶

The desperate economic and political situation in Sierra Leone did nothing to wane the excitement of President Stevens and his cabinet. Developmental priorities would simply have to be modified or accelerated: IMF devaluation imposition notwithstanding, staple food shortages notwithstanding, deficit spending notwithstanding, the passing of non-aligned begging bowls notwithstanding, and the OAU emphasis on self-reliance notwithstanding. Even though Sierra Leone "had considered trying to arrange an exchange of dates with another country, so as to postpone their turn to host the summit," the powers-that-be felt firmly committed to the conference to the tune of expending roughly 25% of the nation's meager revenue of about Le200m. According to President Stevens:

Sierra Leone was not at all deterred by its economic difficulties from being host next year to the OAU summit conference. He explained again that much of the expenditure was on development projects that would be of permanent benefit to the country. It was not simply a matter of prestige, he said, though it was a great honour to be host to the OAU.¹⁷

It might be useful to review the items considered by President Stevens as development projects, the cost for which has been placed at a maximum of Le 100m. According to West Africa,¹⁸ the main points of expenditure are:

1. The village of 60 luxuriously-equipped bungalows at Hill Station to accommodate the heads of state. These are similar in design to those built at Monrovia and will provide a most desirable housing estate after the conference. I wandered round the site and saw some almost completed houses and work far advanced everywhere. There is no reason to doubt that the whole thing will be finished in time, with landscaping and streetlights.

2. The conference centre at the Bintumani Hotel. This was almost complete but is now being extended, so that the main hall can hold 1,000 instead of 600. I tramped around this too, and it is a handsome hall, with what looks like better catering arrangements than there were at Monrovia. I can foresee dreadful traffic jams in the narrow roads leading up to it, however.

3. Extensions to the Bintumani Hotel and the Brookfields Hotel, and the building of a new hotel near the conference centre, to be called the Mama Yoko. Consideration is being given to the hiring of a cruise liner, as was done in Monrovia, but no decision has yet been taken. Some student residences at Fourah Bay College may be used for visitors.

4. Improvements at Lungi Airport, including the building of a presidential lounge and the installation of a new instrument landing system. A planned apron on which six presidential planes could be parked has already proved inadequate: at one stage there were 15 presidential planes parked at Robertsfield, Monrovia.

5. The restoration of the jetty at Government Wharf, which is near the middle of the city. The ferry carrying heads of state and delegates from the airport will land there instead of at Kissy. This could be a permanent arrangement and help the tourist trade. Three new ferries are on order from the Japanese but they do not figure in the budget estimates of expenditure as they will be paid for by a special long-term "soft" loan by the Japanese.

6. A fifth power unit at Kingtom for the additional generation of electricity, and an improvement in the distribution system. This is to avoid blackouts at the time of the conference. The French government is providing help to introduce an improved "digital" telephone system, and French engineers are already at work. (This is a consequence of the President's visit to Paris.) More telex systems will have to be provided.

7. Improved street lighting and surfacing will be introduced on selected roads after the rainy season. In addition, arrangements are being initiated to lease a fleet of cars to carry delegates about -- in Liberia they were American cars, but in Sierra Leone

they are more likely to be German or French. There seems no truth in the rumour that the same cares will be used again.

The scale of expenditure for the O.A.U. conference can be seen by looking further at overall allocations for 1979/80:¹⁹

1. Toward Tourism, Le65.3m. (49.9%)
 - (a) Mammy Yoko Hotel, Le22.51m.
 - (b) OAU Village and Conference Center, Le4.139m.
 - (c) Extensions to Bintumani, Brookfields, and Lungi Airport Hotels, Le9.449m.
 - (d) Paramount Hotel extension, Le2.0m.
 - (e) Cultural Village, Le0.1m.
 - (f) Cape Sierra Hotel, Le0.888m.
2. Toward Public Administration and Services, Le20.663m. (15.8%)
3. Toward Agriculture, Le20.553m. (15.7%)
4. Toward Transport and Communication, Le10.246m. (7.8%)
5. Toward Electricity and Water, Le9.923m. (7.6%)
6. Toward Manufacturing, Le3.878m. (2.9%)
7. Toward Mining; Le0.42m. (0.3%)

The pattern of allocation, above, indicates a willingness to make extreme sacrifice, given the prevailing needs of the society as a whole. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the government succeeded in winning widespread support for its decision to host the O.A.U. conference. Many in the private sector -- although over-whelmingly representing expatriate commercial and engineering establishments -- made generous contributions, ranging from \$20,000 to a few dollars, in response to appeals for donations. Even the indigenous population was asked to put on their best manners and urged to be extra courteous and helpful to the expected guests. Perhaps, therefore, Mr. Victor Kanu's opinion is a reflection of the view held by many Sierra Leoneans; or is it?

It is wrong. . . to claim that the 1980 OAU summit in Freetown is to the detriment of Sierra Leoneans. For the first time in the history of Sierra Leone, the biggest and most important international conference is to be held in our beloved country. The importance of this conference, to my mind, lies in the fact that African leaders are to assemble in Freetown to discuss the past, present and future of the great African continent, and we are to be the host. . . . The OAU is about all these things of supreme importance, and no price is too high to be paid for a conference that tries to raise the dignity of the African continent, because the harder other forces work to break it up through intrigue, private pacts and superficial friendships, all divisive methods to keep us apart -- and weak! It is fit and proper that our President should have the opportunity in his lifetime, to be host to one of the great and memorable OAU conferences. Give honour to whom honour is due. Our President is due honour because he deserves it.²⁰

Yet, at the time that honor was being given in terms of acceding to the wishes of an Executive President, conditions in Sierra Leone continue to worsen. The hopes which O.A.U. hosting aroused have been dampened, as commoners search in vain for their share of promised or anticipated benefits. Construction and commercial activities accrued financial gains to foreign participants and the few with high-level connections. In short, O.A.U. preparations and activities did not ameliorate the economic, political and social conditions of the masses, nor is there the expectation that the developments which O.A.U. hosting has generated will benefit other than the few -- a repeat of the Ghana, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, and Zaire experiences. Despite recent condemnation by Amnesty International, the

incarceration of dissenters, without proper trial, goes on unabated. But much more significant is the overtly blatant behavior of security forces toward citizens, including children. Schoolchildren are now, in fact, referring to the Sierra Leone Special Security Division (formerly the Internal Security Unit) as "Siaka Stevens' Dogs," following their brutal conduct toward pupils of Collegiate, Kissi, and Saint Edward's schools who protested against excessive and sudden transport fare increases.

CONCLUSION

In its 17 years of existence, the O.A.U. has not been able to serve as a consistent exemplar of cooperation, goodwill, and betterment. In concrete terms, the organization has not lived up to its lofty ideals, perhaps because none of the succession of chairmen has truly taken the ideals seriously. It has not been unusual for a hosting country to be in open violation of the basic principles of the O.A.U. As Richard Hull has observed,

The OAU has suffered from a multitude of problems, including shortages of funds, an unwillingness of some member-states to participate in vital OAU organs, and an extreme reluctance to become involved in the internal affairs of member-states. In the area of human rights, the OAU has been preoccupied with the issue of white racism in southern Africa. It has expressed moral outrage over human rights violations only when it is perceived to be politically advantageous and has remained silent when speaking out might trigger dissension within the organization or cause general embarrassment.²¹

In sum, the O.A.U. has been weak because it has failed to translate its intentions into actions; it has failed because, in providing an arena for ideological confrontation and conflicts, it has been unable to use such an arena as a springboard for effective accommodation and compromise; and it has failed, most visibly, in being unable to curb wanton human rights violations perpetrated by African politicians and demagogues, including those recently designated as hosts of summit conferences.

While it is necessary to point out the failures of the O.A.U., there is a record of some achievement that must not be ignored. Although it is the annual summit conference that receives the most, yet fleeting, acknowledgement, the special agencies and commissions of the General-Secretariat are constantly at work with a modest annual budget of about \$16 million. The Economic and Social Commission; the Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Health Commission; and the Defense Commission make it their business to seek the enhancement of African interests.²² By participating forcefully in international debates, involving the Arab League, the European Economic Community, the United Nations, and the World Health Organization (to name only a few), they have been able to encourage a serious examination of, if not the finding of satisfactory solutions to, African concerns -- economic, political, and socio-cultural. The Commission of Mediation, Conciliation, and Arbitration, for example, can be given credit for curbing irredentism throughout Africa (Ethiopia/Somalia; Ghana/Togo; Kenya/Somalia; Nigeria/Biafra; Guinea/Liberia; Ethiopia/Eritrea; and Morocco/Western Sahara). The Liberation Committee deserves credit for accelerating self-determination in Mozambique, Angola, and Zimbabwe, and may yet succeed in Namibia and South Africa. Finally, the glaring improvement in health and nutrition (despite the continuing refugee problem in Africa), must be credited, in part, to the other commissions.

The time is now ripe, it seems, to fulfill the union dream of Kwame Nkrumah, and institute a UNITED STATES OF AFRICA.²³ The O.A.U., which so far has

condoned the existence of egomaniacs and demagoguery in Africa, must be the instrument to make this possible -- and thus live up to its 1963 pledge "to promote unity and solidarity . . . and to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa."

FOOTNOTES

1. Meetings were held at Accra (1965), Kinshasa (1967), Algiers (1968), Rabat (1972), Mogadishu (1974), Kampala (1975), Port Louis (1976), Libreville (1977), and Khartoum (1978).
2. Cf. Imanuel Geiss, The Pan-African Movement (New York, 1974), 438.
3. T. Peter Omari, Kwame Nkrumah (Accra, 1970), 127.
4. Vernon McKay (ed.), African Diplomacy (New York, 1966), 119.
5. Zdenek Cervenka, The Organisation of African Unity (New York, 1969), 225.
6. Cf. Kwame Nkrumah, Dark Days in Ghana (London, 1968), 132-146.
7. See J. Gus Liebenow, Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege (Ithaca, 1969), 171-188.
8. Cf. Rene Dumont, False Start in Africa (New York, 1969), 195-210.
9. West Africa, Feb. 4, 1980, 192.
10. Ibid., 192-193. Cf. also Carl Widstrand (ed.), Multi-National Firms in Africa (New York, 1975), 26-27.
11. West Africa, March 17, 1980, 500.
12. Ibid., January 14, 1980, 88.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., July 23, 1979, 1311-1312.
15. Ibid., July 30, 1979, 1357.
16. Ibid., Cf. Colin Leys (ed.), Politics and Change in Developing Countries (Cambridge, 1969), 191-206.
17. Ibid., November 5, 1979, 2023.
18. Ibid., August 6, 1979, 1403-1404.
19. West Africa, March 3, 1980, 392-393.
20. Sierra Leone We Yone, February 10, 1980, 7.
21. Modern Africa: Continuity and Change (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1980), 180.

22. See E.A. Boateng, A Political Geography of Africa (Cambridge, 1978), 248-260.

23. See George O. Roberts, Afro-Arab Fraternity (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1980), 195-216.

Caroline H. Bledsoe, *WOMEN AND MARRIAGE IN KPELLE SOCIETY*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1980. 217 pp. \$16.50.

This book is the result of predoctoral field research among the Kpelle of Fuama Chiefdom in Liberia in 1973 and 1974. The author, Caroline Bledsoe, currently Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico, presents an analysis of Kpelle marital patterns in order to determine the power seeking and power maintenance strategies of men and women. Her overall approach may be identified as functional rather than strictly normative. Throughout the book she makes good her intention to go beyond institutionalized rules governing Kpelle marriage to examine the actual contingencies influencing individual behavior, which may often vary from formal role expectations.

The author begins by presenting her theoretical perspective and a brief description of her samples and data collection procedures. She proposes that the roles of Kpelle men and women are dynamically linked to the opportunity structures in traditional and transitional contexts of the society. Her primary objective is to identify the means by which men and women, through their conjugal and domestic relations, manipulate valued resources to their personal advantage. This objective is fulfilled through the use of self-report measures, administered largely by informants, and personal observations of daily routine activities, rituals, and court cases.

A picture of the historical and current politics and economics of Liberia in general and Fuama Chiefdom in particular is provided in Chapter Two. This discussion includes information on the development of ties of dependency between the Kpelle leadership and the central government. Basic physical features and related economic activities of the four towns included in this field study are also described.

The major results of the author's analysis of Kpelle marital patterns are presented in Chapters Three, Four and Five -- the key chapters of the text. She identifies the underlying social network of the traditional Kpelle agrarian economy as a "wealth-in-people" system, in which men and old persons (of either sex) have legal rights in women and the young. These rights in people are manipulated in order to gain productive labor and obligatory ties with young men in exchange for patronage or protection. Filiation, wardship, past slavery, pawnship, and the operation of secret societies are examined as strategies for exercising control over rights in people. The author focuses on marriage as probably the most influential institution maintaining the Kpelle wealth-in-people system. Here, she describes the legal bases of different types of conjugal relationships and the use of marriage (by men and women) for economic stability and upward mobility as well as political advancement.

The book culminates in a discussion of two economic trends which are viewed as factors which threaten the traditional wealth-in-people system: (1) the growing sale of land previously available for slash and burn agriculture; and (2) increasing opportunities to earn cash through wage labor, marketing, and cash cropping. The author attempts to show that although most men and women are still functioning within a wealth-in-people framework, the transition to a cash economy is enabling them to escape obligatory controls. Statistics on differential marriage and divorce rates in traditional and transitional communities of Fuama Chiefdom are presented as evidence that many women (rather than men) postpone and avoid marriage when options for support and autonomy are available.

As a Liberian social scientist, this reviewer is impressed by the exceptional accuracy of Caroline Bledsoe's account of Kpelle marital patterns. The ethical use of fictive rather than actual names of persons is a significant safeguard for Liberian readers who might have some kinship ties to the characters.

The book is highly readable and its appeal is enhanced by the inclusion of pictorial and anecdotal illustrations. It should be informative to professionals and students of anthropology and other social/behavioral sciences.

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Tom W. Shick, *BEHOLD THE PROMISED LAND: A HISTORY OF AFRO-AMERICAN SETTLER SOCIETY IN NINETEENTH CENTURY LIBERIA*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press (Studies in Atlantic History and Culture), 1980, maps, tables, appendices, xv, 208pp. \$16.00

Readers of this journal are familiar with the broad details of the history of the foundation of Liberia. In the past twenty years, a number of important studies have been completed which have done much to correct the often hagiographic view of Liberian history. Some of these have concentrated on specific aspects of the relations between the Americo-Liberians and the local African population, while others have concentrated on the more traditional approaches of the relations between the Americo-Liberians and various European powers.

Tom Shick is one of that small group of younger scholars who have chosen to examine the Americo-Liberian elite in light of the new interests in both Afro-American and cultural history. The essential questions now being asked are: Who were these emigrants from American shores? What skills, what possibilities did they carry with them to Africa? What unique constructions did they create in the new land?

While in graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, Schick discovered the 1843 census report from Liberia which provided a good deal of basic data on the Americo-Liberian population. Later research in Liberia provided further information on the historical and cultural context within which they functioned, and resulted in both a dissertation and ultimately this volume.

The essential theme here is that the Americo-Liberian elite created a distinctive settler society with a "settler standard". This society was as much a part of Afro-America as it was of African history. Shick traces the events of the founding of the colony by the all-white American Colonization Society, and then discusses the nature of the institutions that evolved within Liberia in the nineteenth century. He traces the growth of the mercantile Monrovia elite and its churches, its social organizations, its marriage patterns, and its relations with the other population groups in Liberia. In these chapters important pieces of historical data are retrieved from a wide range of sources. Genealogical details on the Roberts, Johnson, Richards and Skipwith families show the interlocking network of relations that preserved the dominance of the small elite population over the larger society through time. Numerous settler organizations are rescued from oblivion including benevolent, literary, fraternal and temperance societies. This section of the book goes a long way to carrying out the important task of answering essential questions about the nature of the settler society.

The tables which provide much of this material do, however, contain a number of errors, i.e., the Roberts Family Genealogy in table seven and the Johnson Family Genealogy in table eight have John W. Roberts instead of John J.; table twelve shows the date of the foundation of the Liberian Lyceum as 1847 when the Liberian Herald reported its meetings years earlier. For clarity's sake the genealogical tables need descriptive notes.

Yet, with this important start, significant questions remain. Shick declares that "upriver settlers adopted a cultural perspective that blended their American past with their African present" (p. 139) and then proceeds to ignore showing how it was done or in what ways it was different from that of Monrovia. In fact there is little evidence of any African impact on the settler standard at all. It is true that the "standard" of Monrovia was largely that of freeborn mulattoes from urban Virginia, but these were only a small part of the Americo-Liberian community and, as Shick and others have shown, a part often in conflict with the rest of the settler community as well as the Congos and the Africans.

How much of it was brought fully developed from antebellum Virginia is never clearly explained.

The second problem with this volume is that it is episodic. For such a small book too much space is devoted to what is, in effect, extraneous material. There is a rehash of the reasons for the foundation of Liberia, a fairly extensive deviation into Liberian foreign policy in the late nineteenth century and an out-of-place chapter on Abraham Lincoln's emigration schemes in the Caribbean and Latin America. The main body of the book repeats the attempt to include sections on everything, *i.e.*, Roye's presidency, Blyden, suppression of the slave trade, economic conflict with Sierra Leoneans and the Gola wars of the late nineteenth century. The problem seems to be in trying to write a complete history of Liberia that encompasses all modern concerns in 142 pages of text. It worked better as a dissertation than as a finished book concentrating on an important central theme. The author has begun an important task and quite rightly has pointed out the necessity of understanding the Afro-American context of the Liberian elite. Much more now needs doing to complete the task.

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