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The Liberian Economy on April 12, 1980: Some Reflections

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Introduction

At the start of the 1980 decade, Liberia faced a Dickensian world: It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. The country was riding the crest of a wave of international interest and credibility. The high cost hosting of the Summit of the Organization of African Unity was a thing of the past. Discussions and negotiations were underway with potential investors in several sectors. An economic stabilization program was ready for implementation with support of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Export diversification by means of further promotion of the tree crops and integrated rural development programs was a key element of the program. The country had no payment arrears and required no use of IMF resources to support the stabilization program. National capacity for economic management was at an all time high.

The difficulties which the country faced were equally pervasive. The world market prices for its main exports, iron ore and rubber, continued to face uncertainties. Determination of the use of resources generated by these exports remained in the hands of expatriates.

The massive outflow of capital which followed the April 14, 1979 "rice riots" implied additional pressures on domestic and external accounts already strained by an overextended parastatal sector and a large external debt overhang.

This generally difficult financial situation was made potentially worse by the political fermentation and dissent which were spreading throughout the country.

On April 12, 1980, the Liberian military pre-empted the results of what could have represented the most challenging decade for the Liberian economy. By its putsch, the military ended one hundred forth-three years of settler-dominated civilian rule. The takeover brought great expectations. Many believed that indigenous rule would result in better allocation and distribution of resources and that this in turn would lead to improved welfare of the majority of the population.

This optimism was not shared by all. In some circles, there was the view that the post coup political dynamics would prevent both the actions and the time required to transform an economy characterized for too long by dependency,

fiscal irresponsibility and abdication of the responsibility for internal economic management. Moreover, as was the experience in several other countries, they believed that the coup-makers would prove to be no more than tyrants, bent only on enriching themselves and their cronies.

What was the historical background to the situation of April 12, 1980? How did those historical events impact the performance of the economy during the Tubman (1944–1971) and Tolbert (1971–1980) years? What were the challenges for economic growth and development prospects on April 12, 1980?

This paper will attempt to address these issues, using data and information from studies and reports by various individual scholars and institutions and by international organizations, particularly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Background

Liberia is a small country, richly endowed with natural resources including plentiful rainfall and a sparse population. Though never colonized, and for decades one of Africa's two independent states,¹ Liberia has remained economically underdeveloped.

Pre-1950

A Northwestern University team which conducted a survey of the Liberian economy in 1961/62 described early Liberian economic structure and performance thus:²

From the founding of the Republic in 1847 until the end of World War I the Government lacked sufficient resources or foreign loans to provide even the most basic services; little could be done to exploit the economic potential of the country. Without roads, communication facilities, or political security, the Liberian economy consisted of little more than a collection of poor and isolated farming and trading communities situated along the Atlantic coastline at Robertsport, Monrovia, Buchanan, Greenville, River Cess and Harper.

Liberia began to experience the first tremors of economic change following the establishment of the Firestone Rubber Plantation at Harbel in 1926. Tribal workers were recruited in large numbers to serve as wage laborers, roads into the interior began to be of economic as well as political significance, commercial activity expanded and government revenues grew slightly larger and less uncertain. These tremors were nearly stilled by the 1929 depression and the ensuing collapse of rubber prices. Not until the beginning of World War II did

Liberia pick up the threads of development started some twenty years earlier. Not until 1951 with the opening of Liberia's first iron ore mine and a substantial upward revision in government's share of Firestone profits, did the growth process gather impetus.

At the time of Firestone's establishment in 1926, the Liberian economy was stagnant, poor and bankrupt. This was not due to happenstance. Rather, such conditions could be traced to two distinct factors: (1) the failure of a minority settler dominating class to unite with or assimilate into the indigenous population in forging a sense of national identity and (2) the global conflicts within which the country found itself as it tried to navigate among competing international interests present in the country during the years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War II. The failure to unite set the stage for the prolonged social schism that would impede economic expansion and lead to displacement of the minority ruling class while competing global interests ensured that Liberia was never in control of its own affairs, financially or politically. Firestone's entry into the country, which included a financial receivership arrangement as a condition for the retirement of a loan to British interests, served mainly to reinforce the imposed dependency.

Throughout the 1930s on account of worldwide economic turbulence, little happened to Liberia in terms of growth despite the presence of Firestone. It was not until the mid-1940s that Firestone began to make a difference, mainly in terms of increased contributions to Government revenues which were used largely to support Government recurrent operations. Other activities, mainly infrastructure development, some of questionable economic justification, were financed through U.S. Government loans. They included construction of a road from Monrovia to Totota (the location of President Tubman's farm), expansion of Firestone's private airfield into a national airport (Robertsfield) and construction of a deep water port at Monrovia. The latter two investments provided the United States with access to facilities important for potential intervention in conflicts in Northern Africa and the Middle East.

19 19

The 1950 to 1960 decade which represented the core period of Tubman's rule witnessed major expansion in rubber production. In addition, iron ore was established as a major determinant of growth. Liberia's open door policy, announced by the Tubman government in 1945 to give further encouragement to foreign investment, began to show results. No fewer than twelve foreign concessions in iron ore, rubber and timber were granted. These included the Lamco joint venture, Delimco (Bong Mining Co.), the National Iron Ore Co. (NIOC), B. F. Goodrich and the Liberia Company. Aggregate investment by these companies totalled over \$500 million. There was a negative side to what

might otherwise have been a positive development for the country. With the presence of such a large number of expatriate firms, the government, with limited technical and administrative capacity, was essentially forced to abdicate its responsibility for internal economic management to these foreign investors who effectively substituted themselves for the government and operated their concessions as enclaves, totally distinct from and unlinked to the economy at large. Moreover, because the iron ore companies were allowed very high debt equity ratios, their contribution to government revenues were not as high as they might have been. For example, in the case of the Lanco joint venture, equity capital at \$15 million represented little more than 5 percent of total investment of \$275 million. This implied outflows from the local economy to meet external debt servicing requirements.

The influence of the concession sector was pervasive, nonetheless. In the rubber industry, the level of employment increased from approximately 8,200 in 1927 to over 15,000 by 1960. Export earnings likewise increased from around \$4 million in 1940 to \$42 million in 1960. The impact on government revenue was also dramatic with rubber related payments rising from less than 1 percent in the 1930s to a peak 46 percent by the mid-1950s.

Contribution of the iron ore sector was equally impressive. Export earnings from mining activities increased from around \$6 million, representing 15 percent of total in 1953, to \$35 million or 50 percent in 1960. In terms of revenues, iron ore contributed 20 percent in 1960 compared with the less than 1 percent in the early years of the Liberia Mining Company.

The service sector was also affected by this growth. In the period 1950 to 1960 contributions from services to gross domestic income almost doubled from \$2.6 million to \$5 million.

Activities of the concessions also served to catalyze other economic activities. Liberians operating in the private sector undertook and expanded activity in rubber farming, transport and real estate development. The government, equally energized, embarked upon a program of major expansion in the civil service and in public works. The streets of Monrovia were paved, highways were built to link the interior of the country, several public buildings including the Executive Mansion, the Capitol, the Temple of Justice and units at the University of Liberia were constructed.

Reflecting in part of a policy of unification of the settler and indigenous groups, for the first time basic social services were extended to the interior of the country. Although fiscal allocations do not support this assertion, education was said to be a particular focus of this policy. Total enrollment and the number of teachers in government schools tripled as the public sector began to assume a responsibility previously taken on by foreign religious missions. A government scholarship program also commenced during this period. Hundreds of students

were granted government support to study abroad and to attend the two local universities, Cuttington College near Gbarnga and the University of Liberia in Monrovia. Technical schools were established by the government and by the mining concessions (Lamco and Bong) with the encouragement of government.

The Liberian maritime program which involved the registration of U.S. companies seeking a tax haven and the registration of ships under a "flag of convenience" was also started during this period. The program, run from the Washington, D.C. office of the Liberia Service, a U.S. firm connected to the First Washington Bank, became an important source of revenues for the government.

Starting from a small base, the result of this vastly increased economic activity meant that Liberia registered over the 1954–60 period growth in production and income averaging around 15 percent a year in nominal terms and 10 percent in real terms. Japan is the only country to have registered a higher growth rate during the same period. However, the structural deficiencies associated with this expansion went largely unnoticed and unaddressed. For instance, little mention was made of the fact that growth was concentrated in a small number of export-oriented, foreign-dominated firms whose profit were largely repatriated. Also, except for education, which aimed specifically at a 50 percent literacy and a doubling of primary and secondary enrollment by 1971, public sector activities were unplanned and unstructured with little attention given to expanding the productive capacity of the economy. A significant proportion of these activities was financed by foreign borrowings which totalled around \$90 million between 1950–61. According to rough estimates by the World Bank at that time, only 3 percent of total national income was available in the form of savings.

In this period (1950–1960), known as Liberia's decade of growth and prosperity, little effort was made by government to use the resources available to diversify the economy thereby effecting the structural change necessary for sustainable growth. This led the Northwestern team to characterize this period in the life of the economy as one of "growth without development."³

1960–1980

Reflecting enclave characteristics whose structural deficiencies were allowed to remain too long unaddressed, for the two decades 1960 through 1980, the Liberian economy experienced swings between growth and recession in accordance with the level of output and the world market prices for its two primary export products, iron ore and rubber.

At the start of the 1960 decade, activities in both the private and public sectors had been growing rapidly on account of increased production and exports of iron ore and rubber. This led to GDP growth estimated at about 10 percent in real terms. As a result of these activities, hopes were raised for a

reversal in the conditions of the past decade which had left Liberia developmentally at least thirty years behind the majority of her neighbors who were then poised for political independence. By the mid-1960s, growth was already showing a declining trend as a result of decline in prices of both rubber and iron ore. Although the downward trend in prices continued throughout the remainder of the decade, growth remained fairly stable at the reduced rate due to increase in exports of both commodities. In addition, following depletion of hardwoods in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire, logs were introduced as an important source of exports.

As in the previous decade, the average annual 6.3 percent growth which was registered at the start of the 1970-1980 decade could not be sustained. Between 1970 and 1974, growth had declined to an average annual 4.2 percent. More disappointingly, in 1975 and for the first time since 1964, real growth registered negative, at -1.1 percent. The decline, which could not be offset by the significant increases in the value and price of iron ore exports, was attributed largely to stagnation in production and exports of rubber and logs and to a sharp decrease in the price of rubber.

Yet, by the end of 1979, the situation had once again reversed itself. Growth registered a positive 4.4 percent in real terms as a result of a general expansion in economic activities associated with the hosting of the OAU summit. In addition, rubber prices more than doubled, thereby offsetting the decline in export volume. Tables 1 and 2 below set forth these trends.

Table 1: GDP Growth by Economic Sectors at 1971 Prices (in percent)

	<u>1950- 1960</u>	<u>1964- 1967</u>	<u>1970- 1970</u>	<u>1970- 1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
(F.C.)	10.5	6.4	6.3	4.2	-1.1	4.4	-4.7
<u>Agriculture</u>							
Rubber	NA	4.4	4.1	3.1	-7.0	-7.8	4.0
Forestry		4.0	65.0	16.7	-	9.9	-1.3
Other		9.5	15.5	2.4	-13.0	14.9	-1.6
<u>Mining</u>							
Iron Ore	NA	8.4	6.7	2.9	-11.0	6.7	12.5
Other		38.0	10.2	5.5	-35.8	-2.0	2.0
<u>Manufacturing</u>		6.4	16.3	6.5	-1.0	7.5	-21.2
Construction	NA	8.0	-6.8	-	33.3	-9.1	-25.0
<u>Governmental</u>							
Services		6.5	6.7	1.8	7.4	7.3	-
<u>Other Services</u>		3.4	5.7	6.2	6.4	3.6	-14.1

SOURCE: World Bank Country Report, February, 1978; IMF Report, 1985

Table 2: Trends in Export, 1960–1979

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Volume:									
Rubber (m lbs)	107	96	116	184	183	178		165	169
Iron Ore (m tons)	3	12	15	23	23	18	21	20	17
<u>Value (\$ Million)</u>									
Rubber	42	30	29	36	29	46	48	88	102
Iron Ore	35	81	96	151	183	294	329	290	310
Unit Prices									
Rubber (Cents/lb)	26	31	25	20	16	39	32	53	61
Iron Ore (\$/ton)	16	7	6	6	8	12	16	15	18

SOURCE: World Bank Country Economic Report, 1969 and 1978; Liberian Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Survey 1980.

The balance of payments are also instructive on the unchanging characteristics of the Liberian economy. Data are unavailable for periods prior to the mid-1960s and are, for any period, difficult to estimate due to the extreme openness of the economy and the use of the U.S. dollar as the medium of exchange. To add to these difficulties, government statistics have always shown inadequacies in the accounting for service and capital transactions.

However, records that are available, shown in Table 3 below, indicate that the economy registered a positive balance of trade throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. By the end of 1975, there was a sharp decline and in 1977 the economy registered for the first time a negative trade balance of around \$16 million. In 1978, the balance was positive but by the end of 1979 it was once again negative at \$33 million. The reversal was due to the fact that growth in exports did not keep pace with growth in imports which more than doubled between 1977 and 1979. In part, the increase in imports was due to increased world market price for oil and in part to imports related to the hosting of the OAU conference.

The current account was similarly affected. Although traditionally in deficit on account of large factor payments abroad, in 1975 the deficit had increased more than sixfold, climbing from \$18 million to \$121 million in the five-year period 1970–1975. By the end of 1977 the current account had more than doubled to around \$149 million, then the highest ever in the country's history. Between 1978 and 1979 the deficit on both trade and current account recovered somewhat as a result of the slowdown in imports and a slight increase in earnings from exports. Nevertheless, pressures on the external accounts remained unchanged as a feature of economic performance.

Table 3: Selected Balance of Payments Indicators (In \$ Million)

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Exports	87	144	240	404	554	613
Imports	73	115	159	372	587	614
Trade Balance	14	29	81	32	-33	-1
Factor Payments	44	71	-90	151	136	-140
Current Mc Balance	-38	-37	-18	-121	-115	-155
Capital Account	NA	16	NA	76	130	
-of which direct investment		6	28	45	-15	NA
-loans less repayment		10			124	
Surplus/Deficit	NA	-21	NA	-1	15	NA

SOURCE: World Bank Reports, 1978/1979; Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs Survey, 1980

The same can be said for Liberia's public finances which have been strained since the country's independence in 1847. In the decades prior to 1960, these strains did not result in serious pressures because the public sector remained relatively passive, allowing the private sector and the foreign concessions to dictate economic activity. At that time, government operations were financed largely through Firestone contributions to revenue. Between 1940 and 1950, the government undertook a selected number of public investment activities which were financed through U.S. bilateral credits. Of a total of \$23 million obtained for such purposes, \$18 million was spent on construction of the Port of Monrovia.

In the 1950-1960 decade, fiscal activity increased. Revenues derived from concession payments and indirect taxes grew rapidly, from less than a million dollars in 1940 to approximately \$4 million in 1950 and more than \$32 million in 1960. Expenditures increased likewise, largely in respect of wages, salaries and perks for a growing civil service. Nonetheless, the budgetary account remained in recurrent surplus throughout the decade. This surplus shielded the fact that the government was embarking upon a new program of infrastructure development which were financed through loans from the United States and West Germany and through suppliers credit and turn key arrangements. Little attempt was made to plan or coordinate development activities or to introduce into the budgetary process effective budgeting and accounting procedures for those activities financed through non-budgeted resources.

As a result of this uncontrolled spending, early in the 1960-70 decade, the economy faced its first serious shock when the prices of rubber and iron ore

declined in 1962. The government was compelled to proclaim a period of austerity and to reduce the economic and social services which it provided. The government was also forced to enter negotiations with creditors for the suspension of principal debt repayments for the period 1963–1968. During this period, Liberia joined the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (March 1962). A stabilization program was adopted with the Fund which provided the government with \$2 million in Fund resources. A Fund representative was posted in the then Treasury Department to assist with the implementation of the program.

To the government's credit, Liberia lived up to its obligations under the agreement with creditors and the Fund, thereby avoiding more acute fiscal difficulties. Nevertheless, the country was forced to remain in austerity with little possibility for the resumption of growth until well past the mid-1960s.

After the introduction of austerity measures in 1962, revenue growth slowed to around 6 percent a year as compared with 21 percent in the 1950–1960 decade. However, this did not deter the government from continuing a wide range of investment activities throughout the country. For example, between 1961 and 1969 the government contracted loans for a total of \$123 million to finance investments in road construction, water and sewage system, electric power expansion, public buildings, schools and hospitals. As a result of these activities and in the face of a declining revenue trend, in 1968 the government was forced to negotiate a further debt rescheduling for principal obligations falling due in 1967–1971. Nonetheless, some progress was made by the government in this period to set its fiscal house in order. Measures were taken to reform the tax system and to effect better tax administration. Recurrent expenditures were tightly controlled and attempts were made to install effective accounting and auditing systems. All of these measures began to show results by the end of 1969.

The 1970 to 1980 decade represented yet another period of rapid expansion in fiscal activities. Revenues doubled between 1970 and 1975 and continued to increase at a rate approaching an average annual 30 percent. Expenditures which had been kept at a pace somewhat similar through 1975 more than doubled between 1975 and 1979 on account of the uncontrolled expenses incurred as a result of the OAU hosting. Most of the expenditures were financed by external borrowing. These fiscal trends which account only in part for the investment and operational activities of the twenty public sector enterprises which existed at the time are shown in Table 4.

The Liberian monetary system, which was adopted from systems which prevailed in the Philippines and in Panama at the time of U.S. occupation, is unique in that a foreign currency (the U.S. dollar) is the official medium of exchange. This arrangement which implies immediate reduction in internal

liquidity during periods of balance of payments decline, has continued throughout the country's history and has left the government unable to effect appropriate policy responses to changing external conditions. It was only in 1974 that a Central Bank (the National Bank of Liberia) was established. Until that time, the Bank of Monrovia (a subsidiary of the First National City Bank of New York) managed public sector accounts on behalf of the government.

Table 4: Central Government Budget

(\$ million)

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Revenues	32	40	43	67	78	125	167	203	
Expenditures	21	34	37	48	53	78	109	180	
Current Surplus	11	6	6	19	25	47	58	23	
Development Expenditure	11	9	21	7	8	24	30	134	
Budget Surplus/ Deficit	0	3	16	12	17	23	28	-111	
Extra Budget Expenditure	0	6	5	17	20	28	17	-	
Overall Surplus/ Deficit	0	9	-21	-5	-3	-5	-43	-111	
Deficit Financing									
-Loans		7	21	6	8	18	57	66	
-Grants		2	3	11	11	11	16	23	

Memo

Revenue % GDP

Expenditures as %
of GDP

SOURCE: World Bank/IMF Country Report, 1971, 1978, 1979 and 1985; Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Economic Survey, Various

On its establishment, the National Bank assumed most central banking functions with the exception of the power to issue national currency. A Liberian dollar which circulates alongside and is at par with the U.S. dollar was, until the introduction of \$5 notes in 1989, limited only to coins of one dollar or less.

In review of monetary and credit development of the economy in 1978, the World Bank noted:

The actual monetary performance of the Liberian economy is only partially known. The recorded money supply excludes U.S. currency in circulation nor do other monetary data reflect the change in the domestic resources deposited abroad and financial transactions of the concessionaries which are mostly held by banks abroad. (World Bank Country Economic Report, 1978).

Table 5 is nonetheless instructive regarding money and credit development resulting from operational activities of the National Bank of Liberia and the five commercial banks which comprised the banking system at the time. The banks, all except LBDI, subsidiaries of external financial institutions, were Citibank, Chase Manhattan, the International Trust Company (a subsidiary of the First Washington Bank which ran the Liberian Maritime Program); Tradevco (an Italian Bank), and the Liberian Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI).

Table 5: Commercial Banks Consolidated Balance Sheets
1974–1978 (in US\$ million)

	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>
FOREIGN ASSETS (NET)	-3.76	-7.87	20.78	4.93	-4.41
Foreign Assets	23.48	17.16	36.43	25.24	25.17
Cash on Hand	(3.55)	(3.82)	(3.90)	(5.96)	(5.74)
Claims on Banks Abroad	(19.70)	(12.89)	(32.36)	(18.89)	(19.12)
Credits to Non-Residents	-	-	-	-	-
Other	(0.23)	(0.45)	(0.17)	(0.39)	(0.31)
Foreign Liabilities	-27.24	-25.03	-15.65	-20.31	-29.58
Liabilities to Banks Abroad	(-25.99)	(-21.05)	(-12.63)	(-17.34)	(-26.18)
Non-Resident Deposits	(-1.25)	(-3.98)	(-3.02)	(-2.97)	(-3.40)
DOMESTIC ASSETS	101.90	113.78	124.48	162.57	204.25
Reserves	3.49	4.65	6.18	9.06	19.08
Cash in Hand: Coins	(0.32)	(0.44)	(0.54)	(0.63)	(0.49)
Balances with Bank of Monrovia	-	-	-	-	-
Balances with National Bank	(3.17)	(4.21)	(5.64)	(8.43)	(18.59)

	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>
Claims on					
Government (NET)	1.10	-1.95	0.03	4.72	9.41
Scheduled Debt	(2.42)	(1.41)	(0.88)	(4.67)	(9.41)
Other Claims	(1.37)	(0.71)	-	-	-
Securities	(0.17)	(0.13)	(-10.15)	(0.13)	-
Deposits	(-2.86)	(-4.20)	(-1.0)	(-0.8)	-
Claims on Private Sector	72.67	76.76	83.12	109.23	132.17
Loans and Overdrafts	(70.93)	(74.96)	(81.12)	(106.98)	(129.93)
Investment in Shares & Debentures	(1.74)	(1.80)	(2.0)	(2.25)	(2.23)
Claims on Public					
Corporations	0.84	1.79	0.68	1.14	11.33
Loans and Overdrafts	(0.84)	(1.79)	(0.68)	(1.14)	(11.33)
Interbank Assets ^{1/}	1.83	2.70	5.91	11.62	6.85
Other Assets	21.97	29.83	28.56	26.80	25.41
DOMESTIC LIABILITIES	98.14	105.91	145.78	167.64	199.85
Deposits of the Private Sector	62.40	57.91	83.82	88.01	117.23
Demand Deposits	(37.22)	(29.54)	(47.32)	(42.40)	(54.91)
Time and Savings Deposits	(25.18)	(27.65)	(36.50)	(45.61)	(62.32)
Deposits of Public Corporation	6.54	8.66	12.98	15.15	16.17
Interbank Deposits ^{1/}	4.52	7.90	15.30	26.38	15.86
Capital Accounts	8.89	5.76	8.80	14.48	17.16
Other Liabilities	15.79	26.40	24.88	23.62	33.43

1/ Includes financial institutions.

SOURCE: World Bank Country Report 1979.

Liberians approached the end of 1979 with a high level of anxiety. Political discontent was spreading rapidly notwithstanding some positive signs of economic recovery. Two events during the year would prove to have lasting effect on the country.

The first event took place on April 14, 1979. On that day, one hundred and thirty-two years of political stability in Liberia were shattered when thousands of youths were repulsed by the security forces as they tried to stage a demonstration ostensibly to protest a proposed increase in the price of rice. The security forces moved brutally against the demonstrators who were joined by hundreds of citizens in a rioting and looting melée that left millions of dollars in property destroyed. Dozens of the demonstrators were killed and hundreds wounded.

The Ministry of Agriculture justified the proposed increase of \$5 (from \$22 to \$27) in the price of a one-hundred pound bag of rice on the basis that this would provide needed incentives to producers, thereby ensuring self-sufficiency in rice production in the future.

Critics of the Ministry's proposal argued that the Ministry's position was flawed on three counts. First, that the increasing trend in rice production did not support the view that the existing price served as a disincentive. Second, that the low supply elasticity for rice meant little producer response to price increase. Third, that because the number of commercial producers was small (10 percent), the benefits from a price increase would mostly benefit the few large producers rather than the subsistence farmers on whose behalf the Ministry justified its position. Moreover, it was pointed out that any price increase would have adverse effects on low income urban consumers.

Since at the time of the riot no decision had been taken by the government on the Ministry's proposal, there are many who attribute the riot, not to the price of rice, but to a century of unaddressed socio-economic and political issues. Nevertheless, by the government's failure to encourage open debate on the pros and cons of an issue so vital to the welfare of the population, political activists were able to exploit the situation which led to the tumultuous event of April 14, 1979.

The second event was the hosting of the summit of the Organization of African Unity in July 1979, at a time when the country was facing severe financial difficulties. The rationale for this decision taken in 1975 was said to be twofold. One, that Liberia, increasingly marginalized with the coming into independence of more viable African states, needed to re-establish its leadership role in the OAU as had been achieved by President Tubman during the formative years of the Organization, and two, that domestic economic activities associated with the OAU hosting would provide impetus for the resurgence of economic growth. Critics dismissed the government's rationale on both counts as not only dubious but unfounded.

The cost of the conference proved high, albeit much less than the amounts rumored. The final estimates established through ex-post audit by a major public accounting firm showed total expenditures of \$101.4 million as detailed in Table 6.

Table 6: OAU Expenditures*

(\$ millions)

Conference Center	33.2
Foreign Affairs Building	8.2
VIP Residences	12.0
RIA Terminal	6.5
Village and Hotel Africa	24.0
Other (road, floating hotel)	<u>9.5</u>
	91.4
Operating expenses	<u>10.0</u>
Total	\$101.4

*Does not include indirect costs such as interest on loans, etc.

SOURCE: Ministry of Finance, Bureau of General Accounting, Expenditure Reports.

The Economy on April 12, 1980

Liberia started the 1980 decade amidst great uncertainties. Economic recovery appeared to be within reach. Output which had registered a modest average annual 0.8 percent during the 1973–1978 period had increased to 4.4 percent in 1979. Pressures on the external accounts were showing signs of ease with a slowdown in the outflow of funds which had followed the April 14, 1979 rice riots. The fiscal accounts were also less strained as extraordinary expenses associated with the hosting of the OAU summit had largely come to an end.

The difficulties were equally daunting. First, the country had continued for too long in the past to rely on two primary export products. This left the economy vulnerable to the vagaries of the international market and overall economic growth dependent upon the levels of output and the prices of these two products. Although attempts had been made, particularly in the 1970s, to diversify into other cash crops, these efforts had not been given the financial support necessary to achieve the desired results. For example, budgetary allocation to the agriculture sector had remained less than 4 percent of total budgeted expenditures from the 1950s through the mid-1970s. By the end of the 1970s, allocation to agriculture had doubled (to \$29 million) when compared with 1950, but this still represented less than 10% of total budgetary expenses.

In comparison, allocation to general services of government (administration, defense, foreign affairs) remained well in excess of 40 percent of total budgetary

expenses through the period 1950–1980. These are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Functional Classification of Budgetary and Extra
Budgetary Expenditures (In US \$ million)

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1976/ 77	1977/ 78	1978/ 79
TOTAL	85.2	90.7	95.4	108.7	125.1	148.1	192.8	226.2	275.0	340.3
General Services	24.3	24.5	26.5	33.0	35.6	39.2	58.3	73.4	71.5	101.5
Administration	11.4	11.5	15.1	20.8	22.9	25.0	40.3	52.2	46.3	32.4
Foreign Affairs	3.9	4.2	3.6	3.8	3.9	4.4	4.7	5.4	6.3	7.1
Public Order and Safety	3.6	4.1	3.7	4.0	4.6	4.9	6.0	7.5	9.4	11.2
Defense	3.7	4.3	3.8	3.7	3.7	4.5	7.2	8.3	9.5	9.1
Other	1.7	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.5	0.4	–	–	–	41.5 ²
Social & Community Services	22.6	26.1	22.1	26.5	29.3	33.2	43.5	53.5	72.6	118.8
Education	10.6	11.8	12.4	14.9	15.8	17.6	23.4	27.1	39.7	47.5
Public Health	4.8	8.0	7.5	7.7	8.3	10.0	12.9	14.4	19.1	24.5
Other	7.2	6.3	2.2	3.9	5.2	5.6	7.2	11.8	13.8	45.8
Economic Services	15.3	17.0	22.1	22.9	28.2	47.6	63.0	60.7	99.5	78.4
Agriculture	2.5	3.4	5.5	6.5	8.6	12.8	10.4	22.1	26.7	29.4
Transport and Communications	7.7	8.3	7.4	2.8	4.9		40.0	29.6	50.8	40.9
Industry ¹	0.3	2.0	1.2	8.6	3.7	34.8	5.4	2.0	5.5	2.4
Other	4.8	3.2	8.0	5.0	11.0		7.2	7.0	16.5	5.6
Debt Services	20.6	20.6	20.7	21.8	22.9	21.7	22.1	24.5	30.7	41.0
Public Corporations	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	40.5
Unallocated	2.4	2.5	4.0	4.5	9.1	6.4	6.0	14.3	0.7	1.0

SOURCE: World Bank Country Report, 1979

¹Mining, manufacturing, construction and electric power.

²General Government expenditure mainly on OAU Conference related activities.

Second, the economy continued to experience a wide gap between GDP and GNP due to the high level of repatriated capital in the form of profits, dividends, interest on loans and expatriate workers' remittances. Throughout the early years of the country's existence, there was lack of specific policies to address this loss of resource to the local economy. It was only in the mid-1960s that some

action was taken by the government, by means of a review of concession agreements, to correct this long-standing structural deficiency of the economy.

A third difficulty which was a persistent feature of the economy, was the steady increase in real consumption. Even during periods of declining GNP, there were no attempts on the part of the government to reduce the level of consumption and thereby mobilize the domestic savings recovery to maintain an acceptable level of economic activity. The lack of resources and savings did not, however, deter the government from expanding public sector investment. This is particularly true for the 1970s which witnessed a sharp decline in the domestic savings ratio (from 50 percent in 1969 to 10 percent in 1975) at a time when both consumption and investment were increasing. These trends in resource use are shown in Table 8.

Lacking the internal resources to do so, the government resorted to foreign borrowing to finance public sector investment. This trend, established in the early years of the country's history, became a permanent feature of economic performance and represented in 1980 the fourth and most intractable difficulty with which the government was trying to grapple. A review of this experience provides insights on the status of Liberia's relationship with its sponsoring nations, the United States and Great Britain in the early years of independence and on the century of fiscal indiscipline which this relationship inspired.

In its 1966 report, the Northwestern team noted:

There are two early themes in Liberian history, both of which are carried into the present scheme of things. The one we have emphasized is the Americo-Liberian community's defense of its autonomy in the face of tribal and European hostility. A second theme is fiscal irresponsibility. European loans in 1871 and 1906 were defaulted, as was an American loan of 1912. A \$5 million loan to the government of Liberia made by Firestone in 1927 as part of its plantation concession agreement was finally paid back in 1952 but left a history of bitterness and recrimination toward Firestone.⁴

The first external debt of \$500,000 was incurred in 1871 from London financial brokers and was intended to be used to finance administrative expenditures of the government. The loan which carried an interest rate of 7 percent and was given at a discount of 30 percent, resulted in the country receiving only \$350,000 for the purpose intended. Of this amount, only \$100,000 was fully accounted for by the government, a misuse which led to the overthrow of President Edward J. Roye in 1871.

A second loan for \$500,000 was contracted in 1906 with a British firm (Liberia Development Company) interested in the development of a rubber industry in Liberia. The loan, which was partly taken to retire local government debt, was subsequently assumed by another group (Erlanger Companies)

because then-President Arthur Barclay found it repugnant that the loan terms provided for British control over Liberia's customs and border control services.

Table 8: Resources and Uses

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1979
GDP (m.p.)	223	291	408	726	1068
Factor Payments Abroad	44	71	90	152	136
GNP (m.p.)	179	220	318	574	932
Net Import of Goods & Services	20	42	59	120	169
<u>TOTAL RESOURCES</u>	<u>209</u>	<u>262</u>	<u>327</u>	<u>694</u>	<u>1101</u>
<u>Gross Domestic Investments</u>					
–Public	<u>62</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>247</u>	<u>321</u>
–Private					
<u>Consumption</u>	<u>147</u>	<u>212</u>	<u>237</u>	<u>447</u>	<u>780</u>
–Public	17	36	45	73	157
–Private	130	171	192	374	623
<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</u>	<u>209</u>	<u>262</u>	<u>327</u>	<u>694</u>	<u>1101</u>

SOURCE: World Bank Country Report, 1979; World Bank World Tables.

The 1906 loan became a continuing source of conflict between Liberia and Britain, a problem which was not resolved until U.S. intervention in 1912. At that time the U.S. responded to Liberia's call for help because of the bad experience with the British in matters relating to the previous two loans. This time it was arranged to provide Liberia with a \$1.7 million loan by a consortium of American and European institutions.

However, noting the British complaint about Liberia's inefficient management of its financial affairs, the U.S. imposed as a condition of assistance the adoption of fiscal reform measures under an international receivership comprising American, French, German and British representatives. In communicating this condition, the U.S. Secretary of State sent the following note to the American minister in Liberia:

The Department of State has in the past made known to the Government of Liberia through your office its disappointment in the administration of Liberian affairs, and the time has now arrived when this Government as best friend of Liberia must insist upon a radical change of policy. The Government of the United States can no longer be subjected to criticism from other foreign powers as regards the operation of loan agreements and can no longer tolerate failure on the part of the Liberian

government to institute and carry out necessary administrative reforms.

Unless the Liberian Government proceeds without delay to act upon the advice and suggestions herewith expressed, this Government will be forced, regretfully, to withdraw the friendly support that historic and other considerations have hitherto prompted it to extend.⁵

Repayment of the 1906 loan of \$500,000 and the 1871 loan which by then had increased from the original \$500,000 to \$800,000 was made possible by the \$1.7 million loan of 1912. According to reports, as was the experience in the past, less than \$500,000 of this amount was properly accounted for. Despite the promise of reform, Liberia's finances remained chaotic, a situation not helped by the civil conflicts and the turmoil of World War I. Another loan was required to retire the loan of 1912—this time a loan of \$5 million obtained from a silent Firestone subsidiary (American Finance Corporation) as part of the arrangement for granting Firestone a one-million-acre concession for the establishment of a rubber industry. In addition to the loan, Firestone undertook to construct and maintain a harbor in Monrovia, a promise which was broken without reaction by either the Liberian government or the U.S. government which has pressured Liberia into accepting the Firestone arrangement. Subsequently, the U.S. remedied the default by providing a loan of \$18.9 million in 1943 for the construction of the Port of Monrovia. Loans between 1940 and 1950 in addition to the port loan were minimal at approximately \$6 million.

Between 1950 and 1960, the debt stock rose considerably—by \$90 million—in response to the major expansion in infrastructure development which was undertaken by the government. In 1962, with debt repayment commitments amounting annually to \$33.6 million, or around 90 percent of government revenues, the government undertook its first debt rescheduling. In 1968, there was a need to negotiate a second rescheduling. In spite of these reschedulings, debt servicing at 30 percent of government revenues and 20 percent of export earnings represented a heavy burden on public finances.

Debt expansion in the 1970's was not unlike the 1960s, except that the magnitudes were significantly larger. During the period (1970s) over \$650 million in new commitment was added to the debt stock. The structure of the debt was also adversely altered during the period. The share of private commercial credits in total external debt rose from 5 percent to around 28 percent by 1980. Correspondingly, average annual interest rate doubled—from 4 percent to 8 percent while average maturities declined from 30 to 18 years. Loans which stood out during the period are shown in Table 9 with a more detailed listing of debt outstanding at the end of 1978 provided in Table 10.

Table 9: Selected Borrowings, 1970-80

(\$ millions)		
<u>Source</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Eurodollar Bank Consortium	60	Development projects
Chemical Bank	15	LPRC asset improvement
Citibank	10	Matadi housing
Japan/OECIF	20	Road equipment
Taiyo Kobe Bank	30	Development projects; loan retirement
Citibank	7	Agrimeco
Chase Manhattan	30	Public corporations
Eximbank	1	Presidential jet

SOURCE: World Bank Country Report 1978

Table 10: Liberia's External Debt, December 30, 1978

(\$ thousands)			
	<u>Disbursed</u>	<u>Undisbursed</u>	<u>Total</u>
Bilateral			
China, Rep. of	9,272	528	9,800
China, People's Rep. of	--	23,000	23,000
Germany	48,399	28,136	76,535
Italy	7,951	--	7,951
Japan	9,919	5,326	15,245
Kuwait	--	7,500	7,500
Saudi Arabia	--	20,000	20,000
United Kingdom	437	7,128	7,565
United States	92,699	25,349	118,048
Total Bilateral	168,677	116,967	285,644
Multilateral			
African Dev. Bank	6,929	19,339	26,268
European Dev. Bank	--	6,000	6,000
European Inv. Bank	--	10,189	10,189
Gulf Bank	--	7,126	7,126
World Bank	43,766	55,876	99,642
IDA	13,138	22,862	36,000
IMF Trust Fund	14,709	--	14,709

OPEC Spec. Fund	--	3,000	3,000
Sp. Arab Fund	3,600	--	3,600
Total Multilateral	82,142	124,386	206,528
<u>Financial Institutions</u>			
United Kingdom	5,611	8,094	13,705
United States	43,088	3,275	46,363
Others	30,000	60,000	90,000
Total FI's	78,699	71,369	150,068
<u>Supplier Credits</u>			
Norway	10,277	--	10,277
United Kingdom	1,700	2,400	4,100
Total Sup. Credits	11,977	2,400	14,377
OVERALL TOTAL	341,495	315,122	656,617

SOURCE: World Bank, Country Report, December 1979

The fifth challenge which the government faced in 1980 was to design a monetary system which allowed more flexibility in the use of monetary policy as an effective instrument for growth. Currency issue was considered but rejected because the adverse effects which this implied for prices and incomes under conditions of fiscal indiscipline. As an alternative, discussions were underway with the authorities of the West African Monetary Union to explore the possibility of Liberia joining the CFA currency zone.

It was felt that this move would not only overcome a domestic administrative weakness but would provide impetus to the restoration of confidence by the several private companies and groups which were considering investment in several activities. Investment considered of prime importance at that time included the opening of a new iron ore mine at Wologisie, the processing of sand from several riverbeds, the establishment of a palm oil refinery, and the modernization of the petroleum oil refinery plant. The Wologisie mine was particularly important because this carried with it not only Japanese direct private investment but significant Japanese official assistance in support of several road construction and other public sector projects.

The Yen credit provided to Liberia in 1979, in part to prepay a high interest loan from Citibank and the expansion of the maternity wing of the JFK hospital represented the first benefits from this Japanese opening.

The Arabs represented another important financing and investment source. On Liberia's implementation of the 1972 OAU decision to suspend diplomatic

relations with Israel, several overtures were made with the Arabs in this regard. This led to loans from Arab sources, shown in Table 10, and to the establishment of the Liberia-Libyan Holding Company in 1974. In 1978, the Libya connection was made more operational by an arrangement which led to Libya financing of the start-up of construction of the currently named Pan Africa Plaza building.

Liberia's courtship of the Arabs was not without cost as this led to increasing friction with the United States. The strain in relationship led in turn to a reduction in the level of official financial assistance which the U.S. provided to the country and in concerted pressure by U.S. companies operating in Liberia to repatriate an even higher amount of resources earned from their activities in the country.

On April 12, 1980 the Liberian economy was poised for recovery, having already survived the aggravation of economic distortions of past decades, the fiscal imbalances of the past three years and the massive loss of capital in the previous year.

The government was current in its payments on both domestic and external accounts and had sufficient balances and credit lines abroad to meet future obligations. An economic recovery program had been adopted whose strategy focused on the agriculture sector with linkages to the industrial sector. It was known that the program would entail considerable sacrifices and that full economic recovery would take time.

Conclusion

Since its founding in 1822, the Liberian state has never had the resources, financial or human, to develop into a viable and modern nation. As a result, in the early years of its history, the government developed an economic culture characterized by dependency and indiscipline. Dependency led the country to rely on large expatriate firms and on foreign borrowings as the propellers of growth. This was done at the expense of educating the public regarding the financial operations of the government, a fact which marginalized the citizens' role in economic growth and development. As a result, tax consciousness and tax compliance have remained at low levels throughout the country's history. In the last years of the Tubman administration, and several times during the Tolbert administration, attempts were made to reform the tax system and to shape fiscal policy as an effective instrument of economic development. These efforts were handicapped by the lack of continuity in management of the government's financial and economic affairs in the years subsequent to 1964.

Other characteristics of the economy represented major constraints to sustainable growth. Real consumption, which increased sharply during the 1950s when the country enjoyed a significant increase in national income, continued to grow to support the expansion of an extremely capitalistic and

elitist class whose lifestyle and consumption pattern required a large share of the nation's resources for their sustenance.

Many in this class were government officials and functionaries who had to resort to the use of public office for private gain to support their consumption habits. The corruption which these practices implied became a major deterrent to encouraging foreign investment and to proper allocation of and accounting for the nation's resources.

Finally, successive governments either fell short in forging genuine national unity or proved inept in the management of public dissent. The latter was particularly true of the Tolbert administration, which lost control of the country to competing special business and political interest groups by its ill-conceived oscillation between political liberalization and repression. Thus, by the early 1980s, efforts aimed at obtaining the consensus and the participation necessary for effective implementation of planned development programs were stymied by the political fermentation which gripped the country.

When on April 12, 1980 the military putsch was effected, Liberia was already at the crossroads—teetering between economic recovery and economic collapse. Through its rule of fiat since that date, and by a systematic destruction of economic and social institutions already lacking in capacity, the coup and its makers ensured that economic recovery remain elusive.

Endnotes

⁶ Ethiopia being the other.

⁷ Glover, G. Dalton, M. Harwitz, A. A. Walters, *Growth Without Development*, Northwestern University Press, 1966, see p. 25.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, footnote on p. 7.

¹⁰ *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, December 1933.

Cognitive Aspects of Agriculture Among the Kpelle: Kpelle Farming Through Kpelle Eyes

John H. Gay

It would be more modest to say "Kpelle farming through my eyes". And obviously I have to begin with what I have seen and what I know, but I think the data allow me to move beyond my understanding of Kpelle farming to the way a community comprising 131 households in a central village and 23 satellite hamlets in central Liberia understands farming.

I claim it is legitimate to see a community as more than just the individuals which compose it, and specifically as an entity which has a corporate understanding, which is, of course, composed of the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of the individual members. When a community is coherent, when it "works", then it is in a real sense an organism which, among other activities, does farming intelligently as a way to maintain itself. When the community is incoherent, then breakdown occurs, something dies, and something new and unexpected is born.

When I lived in Gbansu-solon-ma in 1974, on the edge of the rain forest, I belonged to a community still coherent enough to maintain itself. Gbansu was an organism in much the same way as Aunt Hillary in Douglas Hofstadler's book *Godel, Escher, Bach* (Vintage Books, 1980, pp. 311-336). The image which Hofstadler used was that of an ant hill which had a life of its own, but which is made up of the individual ants, just as the brain (or a computer) has a mind which is more than the neurons or individual transistors which compose it.

Gbansu was more than the individuals and households which made it up, and in fact the individuals and households complemented each other in such a way as to promote the well-being of the organism. It had a corporate spirit like that described by Walter Wink in his book *Unmasking the Powers* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1986): "The corporate spirits of IBM and Gulf+Western are palpably real and strikingly different, as are the national spirits of the United States and Canada." (pp. 4-5). The Gaia hypothesis, as described in Edward Goldsmith's article "Gaia: Some Implications for Theoretical Ecology" in *The Ecologist* (Vol. 18, Nos. 2/3, 1988, pp. 64-74), urges us to consider communities as systems, and warns us against falling into the trap of reductionist science.

In Hofstadler's book, Aunt Hillary was the greatest of friends with Anteater despite the doubtless negative feelings of the ants themselves. Anteater said of himself, "Far from being an enemy of the colony, I am Aunt Hillary's favorite

companion...I grant you, I'm quite feared by all the individual ants in the colony—but that's another matter entirely." (p. 319) It depends on the level of thought. Reductionist science insists on looking at the bottom level only, and sees the upper level as merely a conglomerate. I disagree.

Mistaken Views of Farming

In my view, there are in fact two mistaken ways in which to look at farming in Gbansu. One would be to think only of the individual farmers, as in reductionism, in which case confusion results. The other is to fall into the trap of holism, which Hofstadler shows to be the other side of the coin from reductionism (p. 310). In this second form of error one has to invent an abstraction called The Kpelle Farmer. He (she?—the problem is, of course, that an abstract farmer can have no gender) is just as much a misconception as The Peasant or The Capitalist, because nowhere do these Beings exist.

What *does* exist, in my opinion, is a system, an organism, a whole which functions because of the parts and which provides the parts a reality within which to function. The individual farmers very much exist (and very much have gender), each individual with his or her own understanding of farming, an understanding which leads to action. In a community which is a system, an organism, these individual choices complement each other within the whole that they compose. Even what may seem to some members of the community as foolish or incomprehensible behavior may be necessary to complete the whole pattern. I don't want to go so far as de Mandeville, who said in his 18th century *Fable of the Bees* that public benefit is made up out of private vice; nor do I altogether accept Adam Smith's idea of the invisible hand which guides the economy of a complex system. The system may in fact fail, things fall apart, and the whole become less than the sum of the parts.

The mistake that development "experts" make, a mistake which neither Aunt Hillary nor the organism that is Gbansu would make, is to generalize from economic and social averages to The Kpelle Farmer. The experts then assume that each individual farmer is The Kpelle Farmer (assumed to be a male), and invent strategies to help this person. I have seen this strategy fail in Liberia, Lesotho, Botswana, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia. It has to fail, because it deals with a mythical beast, and because it manages, quite remarkably, to commit simultaneously the errors of reductionism and holism.

I think there is a viable alternative, namely, to deal with the community as an organism, realizing that both the community and the individuals that compose it are real, living, and mutually dependent. It is in this sense that I say that community understands farming. If the system "works", as it did when I was living in Gbansu in 1974, then the whole is distinctly greater than the sum of its parts, because the parts contribute to the whole in ways that no individual could by himself or herself imagine or predict.

The Community as an Organism

This is so far rather abstract. What is needed is to find out how the whole, in a specific situation, is both made up of, and gives reality to, the parts. It is easy to see how Aunt Hillary is more than the ants which make her up. It is even easy to see why Anteater is a friend to Aunt Hillary, even though not to the ants. With careful analysis of thoughtfully collected data it is also not difficult to recognize and understand Gbansu as an organism, and then determine how the organism comprehends its task of self-maintenance.

I first explain my method for finding how the community understands farming. I will then outline key points in Gbansu's view of farming, a view which is held by no single individual, but equally a view which is participated in by each individual. Clearly, such a communal understanding must have tensions within itself, disagreements which are reconciled within a larger agreement. Clearly only a schizophrenic individual could personally accept all that is implied by the system. Yet the complexities and inconsistencies must be held in creative tension by community leaders, who can see the system whole and thus benefit personally from it and hopefully lead the community into further growth.

My method starts by collecting information from as many individuals and households as possible. From these data I generalize—but not just to central tendencies and statistical measures of fluctuation. The mean and standard deviation are only starting points for digging out how the community understands itself. What is needed is a way to see the distribution as a whole, where the deviant ideas are as *n* to the entire system as those which cluster about some kind of average.

Village and Hamlet

Let me give a *s* *portant* example, an example which will play a key role in the rest of *is*. Gbansu has one central village, a metropolis of 50 households, a *se* living and endless fascination to the occupants of the 23 satellite ha *larly* the residents of the central place look on their country cousins as hicks, naive souls who go to sleep when it is dark and don't know how to behave when they dare to enter the "nightclub" in the central village. The world-wide urban-rural contrast is repeated on a tiny scale in the 400 square kilometres and 1106 individuals that compose Gbansu.

Diverse and contradictory as they are, the village and the hamlets need each other. Between them they compose a system that works very well. Neither village sophisticate nor hamlet rustic is The Kpelle Farmer. Between and among them, Kpelle farming takes place.

Of course, there is also no such thing as The City Slicker or The Country Hick in Gbansu. It would be quite inappropriate to generalize to stereotypes for village and hamlet. There is great diversity in each place, with individuals composing a functional system even at the family level. The diversity is needed to make the entire system, the entire organism, work.

A profile of the way Gbansu understands agriculture has to include all of the diversity that is Gbansu. To make this profile, therefore, I had to question a wide range of people, and to find a way to represent the resulting wide range of answers.

Cluster Analysis and Multi-Dimensional Scaling

Two statistical techniques are useful here: cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling. Both techniques depend on obtaining answers to a range of questions within a framework that allows the answers to be presented in a two or more dimensional form, where spatial relationships correspond to cognitive or attitudinal connections. In contrast, normal statistical analysis only reports discrete facts or discrete relations between specific sets of facts.

I used several types of questions in order to obtain maps of knowledge and belief in the community. One approach was to use sentence completions. In this case I set up 20 sentence introducers, e.g., "I know that...", "I am sorry that...", "I have heard that...", "In the future...", and "I wish that...". The people we interviewed were chosen from carefully selected population groups, so that we could get as nearly representative a sample as possible. We interviewed 8-11 year-old children, 18-21 year-old young adults, and 40-50 year-old mature adults. We balanced male and female respondents, persons who have been to school and those who have not, and in most cases also respondents from the central village and the outlying hamlets. Within each category, the respondents were chosen as nearly at random as possible, although true randomness was not possible.

The statements with which people completed these sentences were categorized and coded, so that statements which differed only slightly were lumped together as if they were the same. It was never necessary to use more than 65 different response categories in a particular set of interviews, and often the numbers of categories were less than 50. A cross-tabulation matrix was then set up indicating the number of times each response category was given to each sentence introducer.

This matrix was the basis for rather complex mathematical manipulations, performed by computer. A measure of similarity between each pair of responses was calculated, depending on how closely corresponding are the distribution of the two responses across the 20 sentence introducers. Responses which appeared in the most nearly similar ways across the sentence introducers were classified

together, so that the farther apart were two responses in the diagram, the less similar they were.

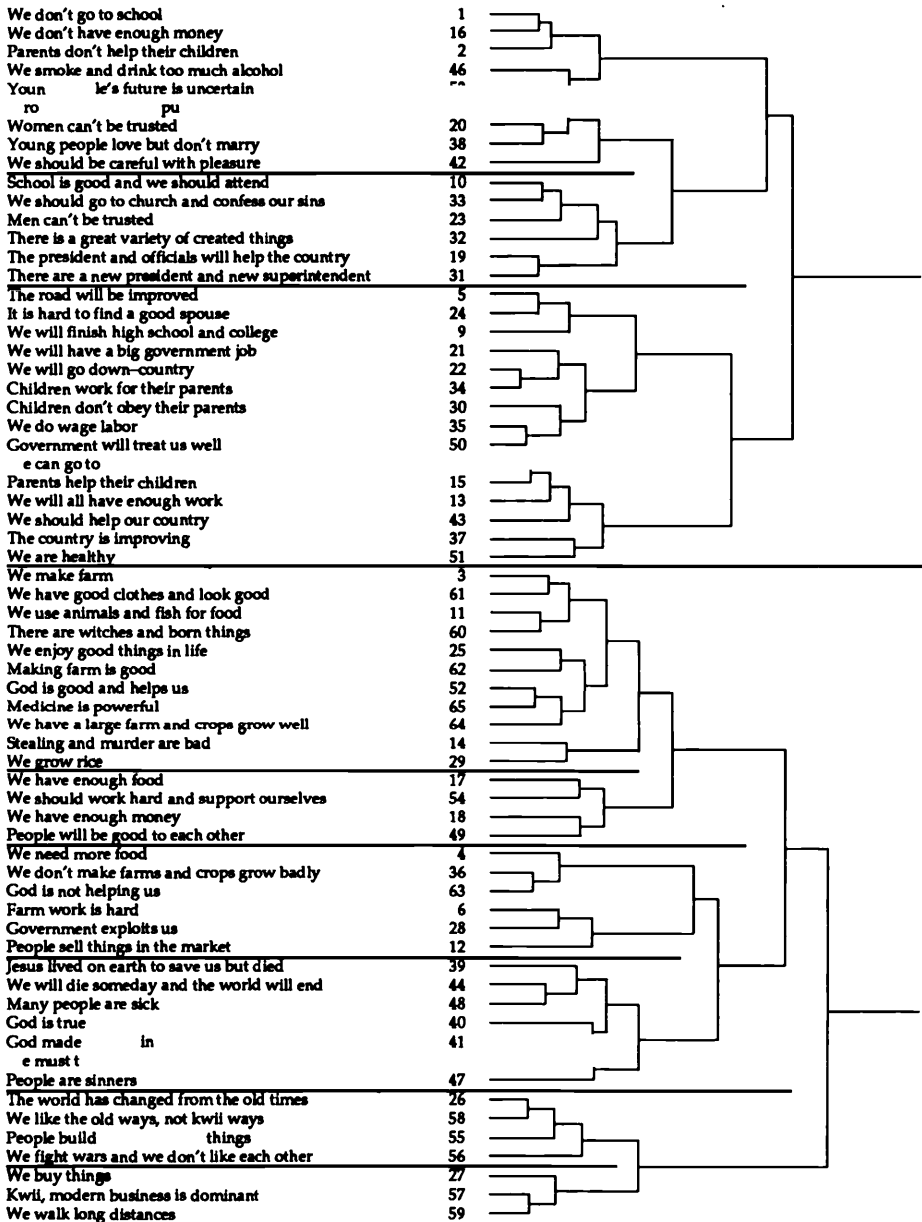
This is exactly the same mathematical technique which is used in making computer-based taxonomies of biological species and varieties within species. In that case, the traits are matched with the species, the computer analysis is performed, and a taxonomy generated in which similar species find their place close to each other.

The advantage of this technique for understanding the "mind" of a community is that it allows all the statements of all the respondents concerning a particular topic to be organized into a cognitive system. No one individual would, or even could make all these statements, but all the statements are included in the community's collective understanding. By interviewing as wide a spectrum of community members as possible, the entire universe of statements is elicited and organized into an overall framework which displays the intellectual system underlying the village and its activities.

Unprompted Sentence Completions

We began by asking respondents to complete the sentences on any topic they wished. The responses covered the whole range of experience in Gbansu. The most common response concerned making farm, given in 7.6% of the cases. Next in the list were responses concerning school attendance (4.5%), God's goodness and helpfulness (3.5%), the changes in today's world (3.2%), having enough food to eat (3.1%), not being able to go to school (2.9%), needing more food (2.7%), supporting oneself by hard work (2.7%), being dominated by the modern world (2.7%), and depending on animals and fish for food (2.7%). There were another 60 less frequent responses. Even the most common answers show the diversity of the community. Some members rejoice in their education, while others worry about the lack of it. Some think about the modern world, while others look to the forest, with its farms, animals and fish to sustain life.

What is striking is how cluster analysis reveals a pattern wherein the universe of thought within the Gbansu community is rendered graphically. There is a sharp and dramatic split within the taxonomy between responses suggesting the modern urban world of money, government and school, and those based in the older rural world of rice farm, forest and spirits. Both sets of attitudes and values and ideas are present in the community, and they make a system that confirms the idea of rapid social change in Liberia. In this way Gbansu is a microcosm of the nation, and its collective consciousness reflects this split. The complete cluster analysis is given in the accompanying diagram.



CLUSTER ANALYSIS OF UNPROMPTED SENTENCE COMPLETIONS
FIGURE 1

Within each response category—modern and traditional—there is a further division between good and bad, favorable and unfavorable. The split between good and bad forms the basis for decision-making on actions to be taken, often very different actions by different individuals, depending on how the individuals and their actions fit into the entire organism that is Gbansu.

It is important to note that farming finds its place close to medicine and witchcraft in the taxonomy. Farming is not just a technical, scientific activity, as developers would have it, but is knit into the world of spirits, ancestors and supernatural powers.

Multi-dimensional scaling is another way of analyzing sentence completions. The similarity function used for cluster analysis can be understood as a distance in multi-dimensional space. If there are as many dimensions as there are responses, then a perfect representation of the distance is possible. The test comes when dimensions are reduced to two, so that the responses can be placed in a flat plane. When there is a clear and consistent pattern, there is little distortion caused by reducing 65 dimensions to two. This was true with the sentence completions where no topic was specified. In this case the same two dimensions of modern-traditional and good-bad were clearly displayed, as shown in the accompanying diagram.



TWO-DIMENSIONAL REPRESENTATION OF UNPROMPTED SENTENCE COMPLETIONS
FIGURE 2

Clearly farming is the major issue of people's lives. Almost a quarter of all the sentence completions concerned farming, positively or negatively. However, it is not everyone who emphasizes farming. Women, children and unschooled respondents uniformly had a higher level of interest in farming than men, adults and schooled people. Unfortunately, it is precisely the latter group that the development "experts" want to think of as The Kpelle Farmer, even though members of this group turn their attention to government, modern life, education, morality, religion and money. Such non-farm issues are, of course, important to the well-being of Gbansu, and must form part of the collective mind. But, if the task is to improve farming, one should not preach to people for whom non-farm issues are paramount.

We applied the sentence completion technique to specific aspects of the farm cycle, to determine how the Gbansu community perceives and understands each of them. Topics for the sentence completions were forest, bush and swamp; rice, plants and trees; village, hamlet and *kwii* (the term used throughout Liberia to refer roughly to the educated, modern, white-collar person within the money economy); work, cooperative work group and market; and power and wealth. In each case the computer generated a representation of the Gbansu mind through cluster analysis and multi-dimensional scaling.

Obviously, I cannot, in this short paper, summarize each of these areas. What I will do instead is to give highlights which suggest the complexity and good sense with which these agricultural topics are viewed, and which confirm my hypothesis that Gbansu is indeed a coherent community which can be said to have a collective understanding of farming.

Forest, Bush and Swamp

I considered the types of land on which farming is done. The central village and hamlets of Gbansu are surrounded by secondary bush at various stages of regeneration. The fallow cycle ranges from 7 to 15 years, allowing enough time in almost all cases for the bush to mature before a new farm is established. And within an hour's walk from Gbansu in most directions, but particularly to the north across the St. Paul River, there is uncut tropical rain forest. Scattered throughout the bush and the forest are numerous swamps, small and large. The ways in which the people of Gbansu understand and deal with the forest, bush and swamp are illustrated in the taxonomies of responses to these terms.

The primary statements concerning forest are that it can grow rice (14.7%), that people work in the forest (12.2%), that forest is good (7.8%) and that people make farm in the forest (7.8%). Further responses are that there are animals in the forest (3.8%) which people hunt (3.8%). More than half the responses are contained in these categories. Clearly, the forest is a great resource to the people of Gbansu, a resource which in the mid-70's they were managing quite well.

The taxonomy of responses, according to cluster analysis, has two clear subgroups. In one, careful management of the forest is contrasted with destructive exploitation of the forest. In the other, the power of the forest, as a source of medicine and place of sacrifice, is contrasted with the dangers, natural and supernatural, to be found in the forest.

Responses concerning the bush are somewhat similar, but with the main difference that people make their homes in the bush. The forest is sharply contrasted with human space, but the bush is a human place.

There were only two families who lived in the high forest across the St. Paul River when I was in Gbansu, and both families were considered to be strange. One was headed by a man who had been condemned to prison for murder, but who had been redeemed by the clan chief of the area and sent to live in the forest to produce rice for the chief. I visited his farm, and found it to be the most productive I had seen anywhere in Liberia. The other was a man who did not like the company of others. He had built his farm across the St. Paul River, and kept his canoe on the far bank. Visitors had to call across the river, and if he did not want to entertain them, he would refuse to send his canoe for them.

A further difference between forest and bush is that crops other than rice can be planted in the bush. High forest is cut down only to make rice farms. The act of cutting the forest reduces it to bush, which in the following years can be planted to peanuts, or maize or bananas, or perhaps to the cash crops of coffee and cocoa.

By the act of cutting it down, forest is changed into bush and is thereby removed from the realm of the sacred and powerful. Multi-dimensional scaling, as applied to forest, reveals two major dimensions in the thought world of Gbansu people. One is from the secular to the sacred, and the other is from observation to participation. In contrast, the dimensions in responses concerning the bush differ from those concerning the forest, namely, from traditional to modern and from nature to cultivation.

Gbansu people give more thought to understanding the bush than the forest. There is much more diversity in secondary bush than in the forest, even though there are, of course, many different species of trees in the high forest. But the high forest, having reached climax, has suppressed much of the undergrowth that makes the low and medium bush such a varied realm. I spent several days with an astute farmer in Gbansu surveying the types of primary and secondary forest. He identified 20 types of bush and forest for me, plus an additional 6 types of swamp land and 6 types of soil. He showed me how the different types of bush were suitable for different crops, from rice to bananas, to sugar cane, to garden crops such as cassava and peanuts.

We asked people from the same population groups which provided sentence completions to tell us the first things they thought of when we named the different types of forest, bush, swamp and soil. The most common responses concerned rice farming, as might be expected, but there were also specific types of plants or specific activities related to particular types of bush and soil. There were also soil and bush types not at all suitable for cultivation.

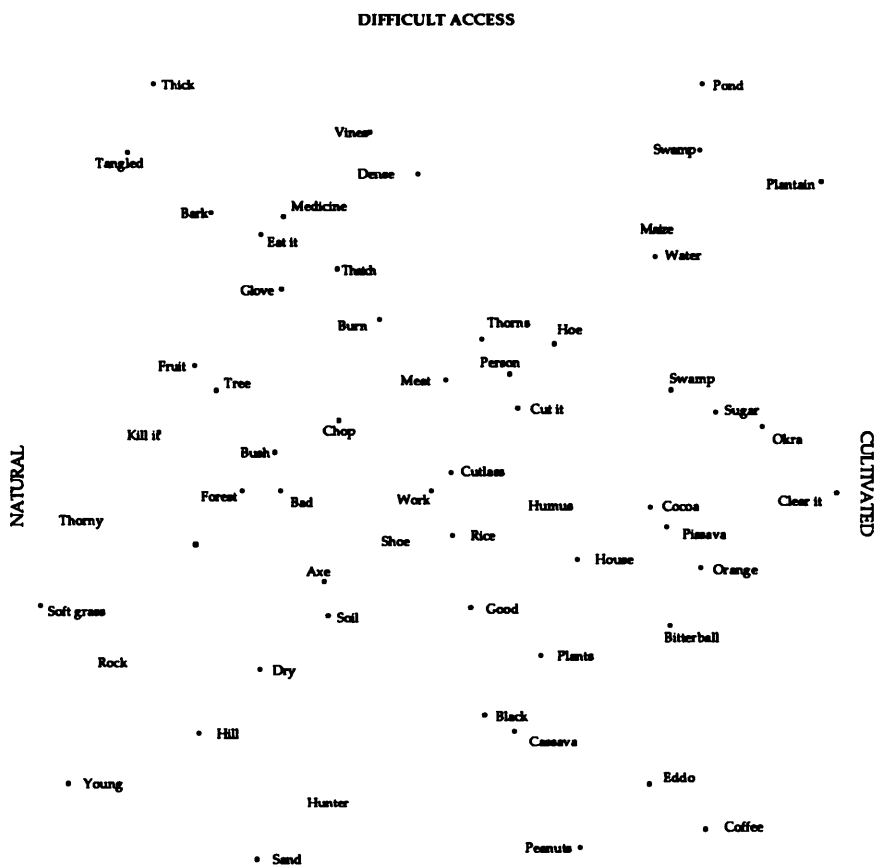
In particular, Gbansu people considered the swamps in their area to be unsuitable for cultivation. More than half the farm households had some swamp on their family land, but most did not use it, even though they said they might use it in the future. Swamp is considered to be the last refuge of women who have no one to clear their land or of families whose upland farms have failed to burn properly in preparation for planting. Swamp farming is difficult and lonely, unpleasant and likely to cause disease. Modern swamp rice techniques have been tried by a few, but have been found wanting. Year-round work, out of phase with the social cycle of the community, is required, and the results are uncertain. Almost half the responses concerning swamp stated or implied that the respondents would not work in such a place.

Vegetation and Land

A further exploration asked people to give free responses to the various types of vegetation and land. Cluster analysis of these responses revealed a basic split between observed features of the physical environment and the uses to which they can be put. The environmental features included parts of trees such as bark, leaves and fruit, and aspects of the landscape, such as type of vegetation or soil. The crops which can be planted on the different land types were traditional crops, including rice and the common garden and village crops, and modern cash crops, such as sugar cane, cocoa, coffee and citrus.

Of particular interest is the diagram which results from applying the multidimensional scaling computer program to the responses to land types. It shows two salient dimensions, one from natural to cultivated, and the second from difficult to easy access. The pattern is shown in the accompanying diagram. It is striking that the modern commercial crops, including swamp rice, are farther to the right on the cultivated dimension than the more traditional crops of upland rice and cassava.

On the vertical dimension, thick, tangled, secondary bush and swamps are far in the direction of difficult access; bush and forest are in the center, and black soil (reputedly the best they have), young bush and sand are at the other extreme. At the very center of the diagram, central on both dimensions, are rice, cutlass and work, which are in fact the center of Kpelle life.



A similar pattern is found if multi-dimensional scaling is applied to the types of forest, bush, soil and swamp themselves. Along one dimension, there is a contrast from the twisted mat of vines in thick bush to the open forest floor covered with dry leaves. Along the second is the contrast from the old farm site to the high uncut forest.

Attitudes toward forest and bush differ markedly among the population subgroups which we interviewed. As before, there is a real difference between men, young adults, schooled people and village residents, and their opposite numbers. Men look at the forest as a way to get rich, while women see it as a source of medicine. The schooled people see the forest as a place to exploit, and the bush as a home for animals, while the unschooled see both forest and bush as productive places in which to live and work. Young adults emphasize that work in the forest is difficult, and suggest that they prefer not to work there. Village residents speak of forest as a place that helps them by growing good crops, while the hamlet residents speak of owning the forest and working in it. The target group for development efforts clearly should not be those who hold themselves aloof from the forest and the bush, but should rather be the women, the children and the middle-aged, the unschooled and the hamlet residents.

The young, educated, male, village population is intent on dominating their environment to produce wealth. In contrast, the older, unschooled, female and hamlet residents have a symbiotic, respectful relation with their environment. The male villagers in particular should be understood as managers, who take advantage of the hamlet people, regarding them simultaneously as ignorant country folk and as the source of the food and other forest and bush products that sustain the complex social life of the village. In the small compass of 131 households, the worldwide story of the exploitation of the periphery by the center is told once again.

Rice

I applied cluster analysis and multi-dimensional scaling next to the all important crop, rice, and then to other plants. The Kpelle term for plant in practice implies cultivated crops other than upland rice (but including swamp rice) and tree crops.

Rice is the core of Kpelle agriculture and Kpelle society. There is the constant worry that there will not be enough rice, which is the most common answer to the sentence completions.

And yet it is not everyone who works hard to produce rice. In the responses, the hamlet residents, females, children and unschooled persons stress the hard work that must be done to bring in a good rice harvest, while the village residents, men, young adults, and schooled persons emphasize buying, eating and having rice. There is a strong contrast between the producers and the

consumers, a contrast which supports and reinforces the contrast mentioned above between laborers and managers.

When cluster analysis is applied to responses concerning rice, there are two significant sub-clusters. One sub-cluster brings together all the responses concerning the rice-growing cycle, from planting to harvest, and associates that cycle with the family and the cooperative work group. The other sub-cluster refers to the problems and difficulties which arise in growing rice. Particularly striking is the following group of responses: "We don't make rice farm", "We work alone on the rice farm", "Schoolchildren don't make rice farm", "Some children make rice farm", "We buy rice", and "We eat other foods besides rice". When the traditional system breaks down, and the farm workers no longer produce enough rice for themselves and the managers, then people either work alone or are forced to buy their rice or eat other foods.

Multi-dimensional scaling of the responses to rice displays two major dimensions. The principal dimension is from shortage of rice to surplus, and the secondary dimension is from traditional subsistence cooperative rice farming to modern individualism. This offers further support to the contrasts noted in the cluster analysis.

There is a high degree of knowledge of rice and its varieties in Gbansu, but only among the producers, who are the people who care about rice farming. As might be expected from what has been said above, modernized, schooled, village males know almost nothing about rice varieties, as we found out by doing a simple test.

We had identified more than 100 different varieties by asking people to bring us as many different types of rice as they could. Our original intent had been to respond to a United Nations request to create a genetic bank of traditional varieties, so that in these modern days of monoculture the genetic diversity of traditional rice would not be lost.

Once having collected these varieties, I designed a test to see how much ordinary people knew about the different types of rice. We found that females could name 50% of the varieties, while males could name only 10%. Older persons were better at naming varieties than young adults.

We then administered a second test in which two persons sat back to back on a mat. We put stalks of the same 25 varieties of rice in front of each person, and asked the first person to describe the varieties in such a way that the second person could make a correct choice. We then took an additional 25 varieties and reversed the direction of the test. We found that when the test was done by people whom villagers acknowledged to be experts in rice, they were correct in communicating the varieties in more than 70% of the cases. However, when we asked people, almost always men, who admitted not knowing rice, the success rate in communication was essentially nil.

People who were successful at communicating rice varieties did so primarily by visible features, rather than by name. The most common feature was the husk color, followed by the length of the hair at the tip of the grain. In third position after these two features came the name of the variety, followed by the hair color, the seed color, the seed length, the hair location, and the seed size. One reason the name was less important is that names varied significantly from hamlet to hamlet, and even from family to family. Certain varieties were easier to communicate than others, because people shared familiar descriptions, while other varieties were more difficult to describe because idiosyncratic descriptions dominated.

We asked people also to sort the 50 varieties of rice into groups which made sense to them, in other words, to create a taxonomy of the rice varieties. I subjected the results of this sorting exercise to cluster analysis but found that the principal division among rice varieties was by color of the husk, with a secondary split depending on the length or color of the hair at the tip of the grain. A similar pattern emerged from multi-dimensional scaling, with color being the primary dimension and hair length second.

Specific rice varieties were named for specific types of soil or bush. People, particularly older women who managed the family's rice store, were able to tell us which variety was good for which area. The best seeds were saved from the previous harvest, and used for planting in a similar area the next season. The men generally did not know which varieties should be planted where, because that is women's work. Women are producers, and men consumers!

In summary, expertise in rice is primarily the domain of women, and secondarily of unschooled older men who live in the hamlets rather than in the central village. And yet development experts prefer to deal with educated young men who live as close as possible to the main road and the modern world. A bigger mistake in development strategy can hardly be imagined!

Other Crops

Rice is the principal crop, but not the only crop. As I said before, garden crops are planted, usually in the second year on an old rice farm, but also in the clearing around the family's farm shed where the rice is stored.

We interviewed people about the crops that are grown. I then did a cluster analysis of the types of crops named. They fell into two main categories: staple crops and the garden crops which make the sauce to put on rice. Staple crops were divided into subsistence crops and cash crops. Subsistence crops were subdivided into farm crops, including principally rice, maize and cassava, and garden crops, including plantain, eddo and yam. Cash crops included cocoa, coffee, rubber, kola nut, peanuts, beans, oranges and pumpkins. The small

garden crops which go into the sauce include okra, bitterballs, pepper, eggplant and greens.

Knowledge of crops was tested in much the same way as with rice varieties. We asked people to identify crops to each other without actually naming the crops. This task proved very easy for almost everyone. There was no uniform method of identifying the plants, with each plant having its own set of characteristics. Some plants were described by taste, others by the way they grow, others by their origin, others by their use. Two descriptions that I found interesting are as follows:

There is something that we work for. We work for it very hard. We suffer for it. After you make the farm, you start scattering it. Can you tell me that thing, do you know it? That thing, after we have made the farm, the women start scattering it, as though we don't like it. They scatter it and start scratching it.

The answer is clearly rice. It is described in such a way as to emphasize how necessary it is for survival, and how intense is the struggle to make it grow.

The other crop is described as follows:

There is something. It came from the hands of the *kwii* people. They brought it here. It is what has broken our land. The leaves can get very long, and the tree can get very tall and very big. We have some around this village. They give us a knife to tap it. Do you know it?

This is clearly rubber. The significant element in the description is that it has "broken our land". By this the speaker refers to the fact that much good Kpelle forest land has been removed from cultivation and turned into rubber plantations. There is a poignancy in the comment, "They give us a knife to tap it". The remote coastal elite referred to as "they" have profited from Kpelle land and labor, through planting rubber.

The people of Gbansu are well aware that tree crops are a source of livelihood for them. Very few grow rubber, largely because of the difficulty in hiring tappers in such a remote area, and also because rubber is difficult to carry to market. Other tree crops fall into two categories. The first category consists of those which provide a traditional resource, such as kola nuts, plantain, banana, or piassava palm. One tree that is notably absent from this list is oil palm, because it is a gift of nature, not planted by people. The second category consists of cocoa, sugar cane, oranges, coffee and rubber, which are grown for sale to outsiders.

Leaders and Workers

The next step in understanding the Gbansu view of agriculture is to analyze their approach to the allocation of labor. I have already pointed out the radical differences in attitude between men and women, village and hamlet residents, schooled and unschooled persons, and young adults as opposed to the older adults and children. I have also mentioned the fundamental split between central village and hamlets. These divisions are carried through and reach their logical culmination in the leadership and decision-making structures of the village. People who can avoid the hard and tedious work of making rice farms will do so, and there is a very clear recognition on the part of village people as to who belongs to the privileged elite.

An example of this was my friend and host, the village elder. He had long since given up doing any cultivation of his own. He had clients and wives and relatives to do his work for him. The village chief was in a similar position, although not quite so able to escape the hard work of the rice farm. He still had to show his solidarity with the community by occasionally working with his people on the farm.

We asked a set of 25 questions concerning village leadership which gave real insight into the way in which people assigned community tasks. The respondents were asked to name people who excelled in such qualities as farm work, intelligence, hunting, medicine, strength, trustworthiness, wealth, friendship, modernization, politics, and law. It is striking that more than 20% of the total population of Gbansu, including both the central village and the hamlets, were named at least once. However, if I eliminated those named only once, I was able to reduce the list to 63 persons. It is important to realize that of these 63 persons only 10 were women. Gbansu is a male-dominated society.

The village elder was named in 13.5% of the responses and the chief in 8.5%. Other important figures were the leading Muslim (6.2%), the leading blacksmith (4.8%), an influential farmer (4.7%), a young wealthy farmer (4.5%), a young storekeeper (4.1%), and a young seller of medicine (4.0%).

What was more significant than merely the list of important people was the way in which cluster analysis of the answers reveals the social structure of Gbansu. The accompanying figure shows the social system more clearly than I could have ever done during my eight months of observation.

I. Traditional leaders

A. Middle-aged adults

1. Village-centered leaders

a. Non-entrepreneurs

(1) Village leaders

(a) Political leaders

- i. Core leaders
 - (i) Chief and elder
 - (ii) Muslim leaders
 - ii. Quarter chiefs
 - (b) Family heads
 - i. Minor office holders
 - ii. Wealthy family heads
 - (2) Forest leaders
 - (a) Secret society leaders
 - (b) Good hunters
 - b. Entrepreneurs
 - (1) Muslim storekeepers
 - (2) Unscrupulous young men
- 2. Farm-centered leaders
 - a. Farm leaders
 - (1) Cooperative work group leaders
 - (2) Hamlet heads
 - b. Energetic farmers
 - (1) Women
 - (2) Marginal men
- B. Elders
 - 1. Leading elders
 - a. Senior elders
 - b. Junior elders
 - 2. Traditional doctors
- II. Modern leaders
 - A. Leading young adults
 - 1. More modernized young adults
 - a. Active in the village
 - b. Residing outside the village
 - 2. Less modernized young adults
 - a. Young farmers
 - (1) Evangelist
 - (2) Teacher
 - (3) Clan chief
 - B. Modern healers
 - 1. Resident in the village
 - 2. Resident in Monrovia

TAXONOMY OF LEADING GBANSU CITIZENS

FIGURE 4

The central political leadership is the set of 21 persons I have called nonentrepreneurs, made up of 16 village leaders and 5 forest leaders. The village leaders include the central core of important office holders and a peripheral group of family heads and minor office holders. The contrast between village and forest leaders is quite sharp. The entrepreneurs are those who remain part of the traditional culture, but whose role is to make their living in exchange of goods, for example, the Muslim storekeepers who buy kola nuts to send to savannah areas in Ivory Coast, Guinea and Mali, and who then sell goods which come from those regions.

Those whose primary way of life is farming are not part of the main leadership group, as might be expected from the previous analyses. They are acknowledged for their skill and energy, but are not central. The other traditional group which is outside the main stream of day-to-day leadership consists of the elders. They have enjoyed power in the past, but have now moved to the status of elder, where they give advice and dispense traditional medicines. However, the elders are not expected to perform farm labor.

The modern group divides young modern adults from modern healers. The first subgroup contrasts those who are purely part of the modern world, and would never dirty their hands with farm work, with those who fill roles in both worlds, particularly the evangelist, the school teacher and the clan chief. The second subgroup parallels the elder category in the traditional sector, and consists of healers. There was no medical practitioner qualified according to western standards in the village, so these healers performed the role, selling injections of something which may have been penicillin and may have been condensed milk!

I then subjected the questions themselves to cluster analysis, according to the similarity of distribution of persons across questions. In this case, as with the taxonomy of village leaders, there are two main categories: traditional and modern. Each category in turn is subdivided in the cluster analysis into subcategories reflecting power and knowledge. The same dimensions appear in the two-dimensional diagram produced by multi-dimensional scaling.

Traditional power is measured by physical strength, status in local politics, a large family, good crops and farm skills. Knowledge in the traditional sense involves medicine, the forest, secret matters, and the ability to give good advice in the affairs of the village. Modern power, on the other hand, extends to money, government affairs, education and the ability to decide court cases. Modern knowledge includes modern medicine, modern work and the ability to change old matters.

It is particularly important to note that almost every one of the leading figures in power and influence lives in the central village, as must be anticipated on the basis of the previous analysis. The hamlet residents receive some

grudging respect in terms of their knowledge of the forest, their ability to farm and the quality of their crops. But even in this case, the good farmers in the hamlets depend on their patrons in the central village. The person who wields power visits the hamlet from time to time to check on farming activities there, and may even have a hamlet that belongs to his immediate family, where he keeps his clients and their wives, but his main activities lie in the central village.

The relations between the central village and the farms are reflected in the layout of the central village itself and the trails to the farm areas. There are four main quarters in the central village, each with its quarter chief. The village chief and village elder belong to the principal quarter, while the other three quarters are more recent and are subordinate to the village chief's quarter. The central quarter was founded by the great-grandfather of the present village elder. This chief dominated the entire set of villages along the St. Paul River, and Gbansu was his central place. He contracted a series of marriages which define the relations between the central quarter and the peripheral quarters. In particular, the Muslim community married into his family, and thus secured for itself a place in local society.

But wealth and political power are not strictly a matter of inheritance. The present leading figures acquired their influence and possessions through their own efforts, and especially through making advantageous marriages. In Gbansu, marriage is a mechanism for social mobility, and often wives are transferred within leading families, or assigned to poor clients in order to build up one's own extended family. Through such a series of marriages and wife exchanges, the village chief and the village elder are able to claim as relatives essentially everyone in the community.

Each of the hamlets is in some way related to one of the leading residents of the central village, because these leading residents have located their clients and junior wives on farm sites which eventually became hamlets. Because of these linkages the spatial distribution of hamlets mirrors directly the spatial distribution of households within the central village.

I found it possible to reproduce a reasonable facsimile of the map of trails and farm areas and hamlets with respect to the central village by performing a multi-dimensional scaling and cluster analysis of the relation of each of 120 adults in Gbansu to the four quarters, to the hamlets, to the farming areas, and to the political leaders. The result is that the distribution of trails, farming areas and hamlets exactly matches the distribution of relations between households in the central village, expanded along radial lines which have their origin at the house of the village elder. Once again cluster analysis and multi-dimensional scaling demonstrate the integrity of the total community as an organism, albeit an organism with its own class structure and mechanism of exploitation of the periphery by the center.

Development Based on Understanding

I return to the question: how does this organism which is Gbansu understand farming? In answer to this question, I summarize what I have said thus far. Rice cultivation is necessary to the maintenance of life, and provides the framework for all other activities. In order to grow rice, the community depends on a complex attitude to and knowledge of the land and its resources within the circumscribed territory at its disposal. It knows what varieties of rice, as well as what other crops, to plant on the different types of forest, bush and soil. And it organizes the people of the community in a complex social system that allows its leaders to create and maintain the social structure that is supported by the producers of rice.

If aid experts wish to help the people of Gbansu and all the many villages like it across Africa, they should begin by recognizing the community for what it is. Gbansu is not a collection of replicas of The Kpelle Farmer. It is not merely a conglomerate of individuals, with their own separate and differing identities. It is a living organism that has achieved over the centuries an understanding of its environment and thus knows how to sustain itself.

The only way to aid such a community is to help it—as a whole—to adapt to new and changing conditions. Were there world enough and time, Gbansu would make its own adjustment and would either continue to sustain itself, or would give birth to a new community. There is unfortunately little time and less world, as population grows and western society pushes into every corner of the globe. Thus a solution to the aid and development question must be found which makes the inevitable and ongoing intervention of the outside world into the affairs of Gbansu both humane and potentially successful.

In designing such a strategy, it is important to realize that rural Liberia has an unexpected advantage as a result of the incompetence and corruption of the present national government. Little has been done for or against the people of Gbansu in the period since I left it, except for the building of a motor road which is only open during dry weather.

There is therefore still the possibility that development aid to Gbansu can avoid destroying the organism that I have tried to describe in this paper. It seems clear that insensitive aid merely leads to destruction of the old without the aid agent being a thoughtful midwife to the new. What is needed instead is a development effort that grows naturally from within Gbansu itself, respecting the time-honored lines of authority and the time-proven technology of living in balance with the rain forest.

Listening to what Gbansu knows is the right way to begin. And that means seeing the forest, the bush and the swamps through the eyes of the different strata in Gbansu society. It means knowing what rice means and how it works,

and thus not insensitively imposing swamp rice technology on a community which has good reasons for not accepting it. It means working at each level of development with those individuals, families and social groups that already operate at these levels. It means understanding how the village and the hamlets stand in the relation of producer and consumer, laborer and manager. It means seeing the central village as a microcosm of the 400 square kilometers of forest, bush, swamp, river, trail, farm, hamlet and village, and seeing the totality of the land as the central village writ large.

But above all it means seeing that all of these work together to form a living system. It is not possible to tinker with one part of the system without affecting the remainder. Thus the outsider intervenes with fear and trembling, unless he or she is intent on destruction. Far better is to approach Gbansu quietly and patiently, waiting until it shows where it is going and where it wants to go.

The Kpelle have a proverb: "Sitting quietly reveals crocodile's tricks." The people of Gbansu are very good at applying that proverb to outsiders. Unfortunately, the crocodile that is the outsider world is too strong for the people of Gbansu to do more than simply adopt delaying tactics, which so far have worked reasonably well. If the outsiders wish to be more than the destructive crocodile, it is time for them to adopt the same strategy in reverse. Let them too watch and wait, and between all concerned a development strategy may emerge which respects the organism that is Gbansu.

**"Pacification" Under Pressure:
The Political Economy of Liberian Intervention in Nimba
1912–1918¹**

Martin Ford

We should afford France no excuse to continue her policy of nibbling at our territories. Pacification and tranquility of the native populations along our borders must be obtained at all costs.

Secretary of State King, 1916²

First the *kwii* came to buy the country rubber. Later, we heard they were coming again, this time bringing war.

A Dan elder referring to the settler government³

Introduction⁴

Since the 1960s, research on Liberia's indigenous peoples has grown remarkably, but the resulting ethnographic literature has been uneven in focus and theoretical orientation. Regarding focus, some cultures—most notably, the Kpelle—have received a great deal of attention, while others have largely been ignored. Regarding theoretical orientation, with few exceptions, ethnographies have been synchronic treatments of "tribes" as hypothetical isolates, that is, as integrated and bounded units, divorced from their temporal and spatial contexts.

One consequence of this duality is that we know little about many hinterland ethnic groups during the period when the Liberian government began to exercise control beyond the forty mile "constitutional zone." Thus, whereas Harley and Schwab conceded that the indigenous cultures had already been greatly changed in the late 1920s, they said little about how change had taken place.⁵ Both addressed themselves to the traditional past, as well as to the present, but ignored the transition in between. In detailing the practice of indirect rule, the League of Nations Commission of Inquiry revealed how the Liberian administration imposed change upon the indigenous people. Yet, the commission was silent about how the government had gained control of the interior. In Nimba, "pacification" and indirect rule have been unchronicled.⁶ My purpose here is to help fill this gap. In doing so for the Dan (and, to a lesser extent, for the Mano), I also hope to shed light on indigenous resistance in other parts of Liberia, for there is ample evidence that government forces and local peoples clashed in similar ways throughout the country.

The discussion is based on several sources of information, including interviews with Dan, Mano and Mandingo informants, Liberian and French military reports, and American diplomatic correspondence. My approach veers from the traditional ethnographic focus on a single society towards an "interactional" perspective. Rather than view "pacification" in Nimba as simply a domestic affair—a confrontation between the Liberian government and a supposedly refractory people I pay particular attention to the context of events, the larger system of relations in which the military campaign occurred.

Hence, I will argue that the Liberian conquest of Nimba was a poorly planned and hastily executed retort to French pressure along the border; that the Dan reaction was conditioned by Mandingo commercial penetration, which was, itself, influenced by French economic activity in neighboring Guinea and Ivory Coast. In short, this treatment reveals complex regional interaction among indigenous peoples via political alliance, communication and long-distance trade. It contradicts the model of scattered, self-sufficient communities implicit to the "cultures-as-isolates" approach characteristic of much African ethnography.

The Scramble for the Interior

As late as 1915, the Liberian government exercised only tenuous control over most of the interior it claimed (see map).⁷ A decade earlier, the legislature had divided the country into two jurisdictions.⁸ The first, the "civilized" or county jurisdiction, extended from the coastal settlements forty miles into the interior where the hinterland or "aboriginal districts" began. Where that hinterland ended, the legislators could not say. It sufficed to state that it extended "interiorward."⁹ While regulations governing the interior had been formulated during Arthur Barclay's administration (1904–1912), these were for most of the country merely *de jure* in nature. Benjamin Anderson's complaint that "our influence has been confined to the very seacoast" remained basically true.¹⁰ Even along the coast, Kru and Grebo peoples contested Liberian authority. Disaffected members of these so-called "civilized tribes" tried to win outside support in their struggles against the Liberians and sought to have their homelands placed under British rule.¹¹ The Liberian government rightly feared encroachment, having periodically lost territory to both British and French neighbors since establishing boundaries in 1876. Hoping to stop the predations, Liberia signed treaties with these powers in 1907 and 1911 and pledged to exercise "effective occupation" over an interior about which it knew little. On the verge of bankruptcy, the government in Monrovia was hardly able to sustain a military campaign in the hinterland. Yet, it risked losing much of that interior if it did not, at least, launch one. Both the British and French showed a lightly veiled contempt for Monrovia's rule and coveted Liberian territory.

For their part, Liberians had long viewed the hinterland with a pecuniary eye. Patrons of the American Colonization Society had hoped that the initial land purchases would establish an economic foothold on the coast from which the settlers would carry agrarian ways into the interior. With independence in 1847, Liberia's first president, J.J. Roberts, spoke of a "Manifest Destiny."¹² What little exploration the Liberians had done was at root economic in motivation, intended to gauge the prospects of trade, survey markets, and sign cooperative pacts with local chiefs.¹³ Mandingo caravans to Monrovia had stirred the settlers' curiosity about the markets of the Guinea Highlands, a region thought to hold particularly great wealth. Anderson returned from his first trip to Musadu with a favorable report, yet a lack of funds prevented the government from maintaining the ties he had initiated.

Since the Berlin Conference of 1885, relations with the European powers had deteriorated. French and British opposition had gone beyond the criticism, petty extortion, economic boycott, and diplomatic bullying that had hitherto characterized it. Their designs on the Liberian interior became ever more apparent. Liberia's sovereignty was endangered, particularly if the government could not pay off its creditors. Control of the hinterland promised revenues from customs duties and taxes, which could then be used to meet the mounting debt.¹⁴ A bold initiative might help overcome the nation's fiscal and territorial crises, ensuring both sovereignty and solvency.

As secretary of state, Garretson W. Gibson (1879–1883) attempted to coax the French into helping Liberia annex and control its hinterland, but once colonial ambitions became patent, the Liberians realized they would have to launch their own campaign of conquest.¹⁵ Thus, interior expansion had preemptive motives similar to those that fueled European conquest, but unlike a colonial power racing for territorial advantage over a foe, the Liberian government merely tried to preserve land it had claimed for over a decade. Although Liberia's indigenous peoples would never be colonized by a European power, many of them would nevertheless become victims of the colonial scramble, subjected to a campaign of subjugation and rule over which Monrovia could exercise little control.

The Frontier Force

The Liberian government sought to establish its presence in the interior through the Frontier Force, which was organized in 1908 in response to demands made by the British and French the previous year.¹⁶ Initially, most of its recruits were Mende and Loma from the Sierra Leone border region, but the force soon incorporated men from the various peoples that it subdued.¹⁷ During the years of its heaviest engagement (1910–1920), the LFF battled many of the indigenous groups simultaneously. Conquest was seldom a definitive matter. This was true not only for the Kru, Grebo, and Gola, but in Nimba as well, where

"... when the land seemed pacified, revolt would flare up and rapidly spread through the whole country."¹⁸

Such flare ups were due in part to the nature of the invading force. Because of the army's chronic need to place troops in the field, recruits were rarely well-trained. Moreover, they were poorly equipped and seldom paid.¹⁹ Monrovia's failures in supporting its soldiers encouraged them to live off the land. During the initial stages of conquest, raids on hostile villages may have sufficed to meet the army's needs. Once local populations were substantially subdued, however, requisition from "loyal subjects" supplied the troops. As early as 1908, the inhabitants of Lofa complained that the soldiers "plundered and terrorized the people and outraged their women."²⁰ Eighteen years later, an American observer would attribute African recalcitrance to mistreatment at military hands.²¹ Throughout this period, Monrovia was vociferous in condemning abuses, but unable to stop them. In his correspondence, Secretary of State King bemoaned the force's "reckless soldiers and irresponsible officers," but realized that unless the men were regularly paid and supplied, reform would be impossible.²²

"Following Lines of Least Resistance" The Route of Conquest²³

Among the first areas the Frontier Force tried to secure were the borders. By showing a strong hand at the frontier, the Liberians hoped to deflect criticism of their capacity to rule. In its 1911 treaty with France, the government agreed to establish eight frontier posts. By 1916, it had built eleven, but the two countries still were unable to concur on the exact location of their borders.²⁴ The Nimba area, wedged between the French possessions of Guinea and the Ivory Coast, generated particular contentiousness. Franco-Liberian diplomatic correspondence chronicles recurrent border incidents. The French complain of "anarchy" and the Liberians despair at "chaotic conditions and disorder," each blaming the other for the recalcitrance of the local peoples.²⁵

The Liberians especially feared French incitements. A major source of controversy was the refusal of the "French dioulas," Mandingo traders from Guinea, to recognize Liberian border restrictions. Monrovia believed that these itinerants, who served as middlemen for French trading firms, provoked the local people against Liberian authority and then sold them guns. In turn, the French accused the Liberians of supplying the Africans with weapons and encouraging them to attack and pillage the traders. Whatever the source of provocation, by 1911 tumult was widespread along the Mani River (St. John). Soldiers from both sides conducted punitive missions across the borders. Villages were destroyed, chiefs killed, farming ceased and famine ensued. Before long, entire sections were depopulated as inhabitants fled or were abducted across the borders. Although not yet directly involved, the Dan

learned from the Mano about the invaders and the war that would soon engulf them.

The Campaign Among the Dan (1912–1918)

While vying with the French at the frontier, the Liberians extended their military campaign inward from the banks of the Mani River and up along the Nuan River (Cestos). The Mano of Dowin and Bosno were among the first to capitulate.²⁶ Dan who regularly carried kola to sell to Mandingo in the markets of Gbapa and Gblei heard of the government's approach and carried home the news.²⁷

The first recorded instance of conflict between the Frontier Force and the Dan dates from 1912, when a small Liberian contingent was besieged at what is now Tappeta in lower Nimba.²⁸ The area was home to Dan who called themselves *Domehn*. The Liberians, however, claimed their attackers were "Sa people," whom they believed had been armed and incited by Mandingo traders.²⁹ In reality, the San warriors, men from the Zo region, two days' journey from Tappeta, were merely part of a confederation of Dan.³⁰ To understand what brought them into this conflict so far from their home area and what the nature of Mandingo involvement was, we must examine events preceding the confrontation.

Two years earlier, a British firm, the Liberia Rubber Corporation, was granted a monopoly to purchase latex in the area. It located factories in Zekepa and Tappeta.³¹ Tappe, a local chief, was amenable to the trade, but unable or unwilling to prevent Mandingos (mostly dyula from the Musadugu region of Guinea) from undermining LRC agents (see map).³² Unlike the company traders, whose sole interest was latex, the Mandingo purchased kola and a variety of foodstuffs in addition to wild rubber. As latex buyers, the Mandingo were middlemen for French concerns in the neighboring colonies. As intermediaries in the kola trade, they sometimes spent harvest seasons among the Dan, subsisting on the rice, oil, palm kernels, fish and other foods that their hosts supplied them in exchange for trade goods. Consequently, even those Dan who did not gather rubber might benefit directly from the Mandingo presence.

Reacting to complaints about the Mandingo from the LRC, the Liberian government made several attempts to control their flow across its borders. It tried to enforce a licensing fee of six pounds sterling, but the traders routinely skirted collection points. In June 1911, Liberian troops began to harass Mandingo traders who crossed the frontier with Guinea, arresting them, seizing their goods, and occasionally killing them.³³ Francis Bernard, a Liberian district commissioner whose jurisdiction included the Nimba area, began closing markets along the Kpelle–Mano frontier with French Guinea and arresting the Mandingo who served them. These marketplaces were important entrepôts for

the trade in rubber and kola. The San-speaking Dan carried their kola to Gblei on the route to Lola and the center of the Dowin Mano.

The following month, soldiers under Bernard's command engaged in a "scrimmage" with Mandingo traders at Boila, killing at least one.³⁴ During the following weeks, Bernard's men continued to harass the traders and confiscate their goods. The Mandingo found themselves in a dilemma. If they carried on their affairs, they risked imprisonment, loss of goods, even death. If they stopped, they endangered their livelihood. Many sought the intercession of the French at Beyla and waited anxiously for free passage. Despite French diplomatic protests, the troubles spread, engulfing Kpelle and Mano regions on both sides of the border. During the first days of August 1911, the Mano revolted against Liberian occupation. Trade was disrupted. Commerce estimated at "several million francs" for the 1909-10 period ground to a halt.³⁵ Mandingo claims for reparations amounted to 161,500 francs.³⁶ The Konyan market centers, which had lately been flourishing, languished.

Revolt among the Mano on the Guinea side of the Mani River was suppressed by mid-1912, but the Liberian Mano would periodically rebel for another five years. Troops were ordered to relieve the garrison at Dowin. Under the command of Captain Arthur A. Browne, one of the American officers sent to reorganize the Frontier Force as part of the 1911 loan agreement, they departed Monrovia in August 1912. As they marched into Dan country from Rebbo in Bassa, Browne's men subdued the area, imposing fines on chiefs.³⁷ The local Dan, perhaps already predisposed against the government for its interference in their dealings with Mandingo traders, seem to have been hardened in their resistance by Browne's exactions. They sent envoys asking help from surrounding Dan peoples.

The San were merely part of the alliance that formed in response to this appeal.³⁸ Why the Liberians thought the entire force was San is a matter for speculation. San warriors could have been singled out by the Liberians' interpreters because of their reputation for ferocity, a reputation that may have derived from their being particularly well-armed. Muskets and powder were important items of exchange in the kola trade, which was better established among the San than among other Dan sub-groups, particularly those of lower Nimba. In any case, the San are the only enemy mentioned by the Liberians. Whatever the identity of the Dan warriors, they were so heavily armed, and their resistance so fierce, that Browne was convinced they were being supplied by the Mandingo. Fearing that his men would run out of ammunition before reaching Dowin, he decided to await relief in Tappeta.

In late November, more than two months after Browne's troops had left the capital, President Howard sent another American officer, Major Charles Young, to relieve Browne.³⁹ Young had first to secure reinforcements in Zorzor, then

marched through Lama and Kpelle regions before reaching Nimba. His troops reached Mano country without incident. In Dingama, a town outside of Gampa (Ganta), he claimed, "The Manos hailed our coming as an angel's visit."⁴⁰ In Sanniquellie, he met with Mano chiefs who declared loyalty to the government and disdain for the French. Soon afterwards, he crossed into Dan country, stopping at Zogowi. The local Dan pledged their friendship, but Young and his men encountered hostilities as they headed down along the Yah River.

At the edge of San country, they were no longer able to recruit carriers. Approaching "Taymou" (Telo), Young's interpreters told him that Mandingos had advised the chief to resist, but when his force arrived, he found a frightened chief and seventy-five Mandingo traders. The Mandingo were loaded down with kola, latex and trade goods. Young's description of them is valuable both as a record of his impression and as an insight into dyula political behavior: They were all in a line dressed in their best, bowing and smiling as only those Black Jews of Africa can. They announced how glad they were to see the Liberian troops. They said that they had always been with the Liberian government, while at the same time they had hoisted over their heads, at the entrance of the town, a French flag.⁴¹

After seizing the Mandingos' goods, he sent the women and children back to Guinea, but conscripted the men as porters for the trip to Tappeta. Throughout the intervening Dan country—much of it San—resistance was fierce. After a march of eight days, Young reached Tappeta and relieved Browne's troops, giving them permission to drive the enemy from the surrounding district.⁴² With two hundred men, Browne took only three days to rout the local Dan and their allies.

My oldest San informants, some of whom had fought the Liberians at *Duolo*, seemed to vividly remember this first encounter. They recall their shock at the losses they sustained from the Liberians' repeating rifles, and their bewilderment with a strange, new enemy. While these *kwii* raided farms, slaughtered livestock, and razed villages—all practices common in traditional warfare—they carried their houses (tents) with them and said they would not leave after they had conquered the region. These lasting impressions would play a crucial part in the San decision to surrender before neighboring Dan groups.

The Campaign Among the San (1917)

After fighting the Liberians near Tappeta, the San returned to their homes and hoped that the conflict would pass them by. In fact, their own area was spared government intrusion for four years. There were several reasons for this. To the north of Zo, government troops maintained control, occasionally issuing from barracks in Dowin and Sanniquellie to put down revolts. Because the military presence along the borders was considered a priority, the LFF

concentrated on subduing the Mano. It also had to quell uprisings among the Kru, Gola, and Grebo on the coast.

With the onset of war in Europe, the Liberian government sought to maintain neutrality, but, in doing so, was accused of Germanophile tendencies. Germany had been Liberia's most important trading partner since the late 19th century. During the war, however, Liverpool replaced Hamburg in stocking Liberia. Yet British ships called on Liberian ports only irregularly because of wartime restrictions, and depression conditions prevailed on the coast.⁴³ Thus, during the 1912–1916 period, control over the Dan hinterland was not a policy priority. In fact, the military campaign through much of the interior was deemphasized.

The appointment in late 1916 of an American military commissioner, Captain Thomas C. Mitchell, gave new life to the hinterland campaign. Soon after his arrival, Mitchell travelled to Nimba, where he initiated punitive missions among the still refractory Mano around Ganta.⁴⁴ Yet, because his troops had nearly exhausted their ammunition, he was forced to go to Monrovia for supplies and could not press the campaign against the Dan until February of the following year when he resumed operations along the Nuan River. Again ammunition ran low. While waiting for new supplies, Mitchell concluded that the best way to subdue the Dan would be to cut them off from the outside world, an objective he believed could be achieved by severing their contacts with the Mandingo.⁴⁵

By this time, April–May 1917, the markets that had functioned along the borders six years earlier seem to have been disrupted, yet the Mandingo were still travelling deep into the Dan forest, particularly to Telo, which was the major collection point for kola coming from much of Dan Nimba and the terminus for trade routes leading into the Nimban forest from Guinea. The French, relying on information supplied by their dyulas, called Telo "le gros marche des cola."⁴⁶

To prevent the Mandingo from travelling to Telo, Mitchell instructed his men to arrest them crossing the border and to set an ambush at Napa ford, a major crossing point on the Mani River. If the traders attempted to flee or offered resistance, they were to be shot.⁴⁷ As usual, Liberian and French reports of the incidents that followed were contradictory.⁴⁸ The Liberians spoke of conflicts with armed and dangerous traders, the French of the pillage of defenseless caravans. Within eight days, several dyula had been shot at Napa and an estimated 200–250 sought refuge in Telo.⁴⁹ Under Bernard, the 1912 disruptions in trade had helped to mobilize the San against the Liberians. Now, hearing that the soldiers were coming, the San simply waited.

In late May, Mitchell ordered a detachment from Sanniquellie to take Telo, which he called "the stronghold of the Gios." Although Telo and several surrounding towns were destroyed in the ensuing battle, Mitchell reports

tersely that the expedition "did not succeed."⁵⁰ Dan informants are less reticent. They tell of how government troops put several towns to the torch before San warriors from surrounding areas joined together and routed them. In retreat, however, those soldiers who escaped called back to the Dan, threatening them. Having seen that rice was being planted, they promised to return in time to harvest it.

Whether this threat was, in fact, made or simply represents embroidering of the past by Dan is not important. The soldiers did return in the last week of August. Their commander, Lieutenant Alexander Harper, had been given orders "to establish an outpost (at Telo) at all costs."⁵¹ This time the San were defeated. Harper's men established a barracks in Gehplo (*Gbo* Dan) and set about confiscating the rice harvest from surrounding farms. Shortly before this, the Dan say, the Mandingo fled.

One striking aspect of the military reports from the Nimba campaign is the Liberian fear of potential coalition among the various segments of Dan and Mano. Despite the fractious character of indigenous political organization, manifest in a variety of groups divided by petty feuds and poor communications, the threat of potential alliance among them was always real. Dan society was segmentary by nature. Though its usual state was disunity, the component lineages and clans could be pushed toward coalition by external threat. The Liberians had evidence of attempts at unification. Before Young met the San in Tappeta, he learned that they had sent emissaries to "their brother Mano" in Dingama and Kpowi, asking them to join in the siege.⁵²

Consequently, Liberian officers wanted to make the sort of impression that would forestall unions, alternately trying to win over or crush potential opposition. In Sanniquellie, Young outlined the governments benign intentions to submissive chiefs, presenting gifts to at least one. On the march to Tappeta, his scout's ignorance of Nimba prevented him from taking a direct route. Young's concern about this delay was balanced by his belief that, in following a circuitous path, he was "winning thousands of hearts for the government," preventing them from joining the San in their siege.⁵³ Similarly, Chetwynd Pigott, a Liberian Rubber Corporation forester headquartered near Tappeta during Browne's difficulties, wrote President Howard that "The whole of Ma (Mano) country, though now friendly is watching to see which way the cat jumps..." implying that if reinforcements were not forthcoming, wholesale revolt could follow.⁵⁴

The San Surrender

Despite the pressure on the Liberian government to occupy the territory it claimed, it lacked the personnel and resources to do so. Records show a continual shifting of troops, with units called to subdue one hostile region after another. In the field, soldiers marched from village to village usually guided by

scouts from neighboring areas. If the local inhabitants were hostile, they would desert their villages, obstruct paths with felled trees, and set ambushes. A lack of such open hostility was considered the first sign of peaceful intentions, but peaceful intentions alone were not enough to satisfy the troops. Friendly villages were expected to surrender their weapons and supply food and porters.

When a particular area was willing to surrender, its leaders sent word to the troops that they were ready to *to zuo* ("throw chicken"), a gesture of submission in which leaders, wearing raffia fronds around their necks and proffering a white chicken and ten kola, begged for peace and offered additional tribute. Sometimes the Liberians stipulated their demands beforehand. These could be so onerous that the inhabitants of some villages would refuse to join their neighbors in surrender, choosing instead to burn down their dwellings, slaughter their animals and flee into the bush. As a consequence, refuge hamlets hidden off the main paths existed throughout the campaign. Hostile settlements that had not been destroyed by their own occupants were razed, their animals and crops confiscated.

Etta Donner notes that hunger vanquished the Dan.⁵⁵ The Dan, themselves, refer to the period following Harper's victory over them as *vitehn din* ("lieutenant's famine"). The actual fighting devastated villages, drew warriors from their farms and forced others into hiding, disrupting food production. The exactions that ensued further weakened the local peoples. Young's reports indicate results of the early military campaign. The Dowin area, north of Sanniquellie, was entirely abandoned, its inhabitants having fled to French Guinea. Conditions in the region between Tappita and the coast, called *Gibi*, were the same, but here inhabitants took refuge in the forest. In 1912, Young described the area as "devastated by war." Of some 100 town sites he counted on the route from Tappeta to Grand Bassa, he found only three inhabited.⁵⁶ Similarly, Mitchell reports razing forty-six villages along the western bank of the Nuan River (bordering the Ivory Coast), and driving the population six miles inland.⁵⁷

Just as the Dan had opposed the Liberians in confederations, so would they concede defeat. Their method of surrender provides insight into their political organization. Though the *Zo* people had aided the *Gbo* in defeating the Liberians when Telo was destroyed in May 1917, their own villages were spared attack. After Harper's victorious return three months later, his soldiers encamped at the *Gbo* village of Geplo. With their homes destroyed and their rice crop rotting, the people of *Gbo* wanted to surrender, but feared that in capitulating and turning in their weapons, they would be killed by their former allies, the *Zo* people of Bahn (see map).

Zo Grogro from Zuoplo, one of the most prominent men in the *Gbo* area, decided to act as emissary to the people of *Zo*, asking that they join his people in surrendering. Five years earlier, *Zo* had been instrumental in organizing the

San force that fought the Liberians in Tappeta.⁵⁸ The *Gbea* and *Duo* (Zo Grogro's mother's people), whom the San had aided in that engagement, had already surrendered. The *Duo*, in fact, were now insisting to him that resistance was futile. Rather than going directly to the people of Bahn, Zo Grogro went to Meaplo Yizlo, the *Zo* village closest to his home and almost equidistant between Bahn and Zuoplo. There he was hosted by the local chief who sent emissaries to Bahn, summoning the people to a meeting the following day.

Initially angered by Zo Grogro's entreaties, the *Zo* people refused to sue for peace, insisting instead that they avenge all those killed by the *kwii*. This refusal may have stemmed from the belief that surrender meant they were not simply conceding the superior strength of the Liberians, but also joining forces with them. Informants stated that in capitulating, they believed they would become one with the invaders. This attitude probably reflected the usual outcome of traditional warfare, in which hostilities typically occurred between related communities.⁵⁹ In effect, war marked the temporary denial of relationship; peace marked their recognition. Embittered by their losses, the people of *Zo* argued against joining those who had killed them.

Yet, in the end, two arguments prevailed. The first was obvious to all: they were facing an enemy that did not play by the traditional rules. The Liberians had stated their intent to rule them, and had thus far been relentless in attaining their objective. When initially defeated by the Dan at Telo, they had returned stronger than before. *Zo* had been spared, but only temporarily. In the face of such determination, resistance was futile. The Dan, with their muskets, could not hope to match the Liberian troops and their fearful repeating rifles.

The second argument sounded a variation on this theme of the futility of resistance. Its proponents would also seek peace, but only until they had regained their strength and could renew hostilities with some expectation of success. The Dan called the gesture *bolo win*, which means to give and snatch back. The same attitude had sustained the numerous revolts of the Mano.⁶⁰ Consider, for example, Young's 1912 "angel's welcome" to Sanniquellie, where chiefs proclaimed fealty to him and professed hatred of the French, only to turn against the Liberians several times during the next five years.⁶¹

Similarly, the Dan concealed defiance. Even in submission, the San could barely conceal their contempt for the invaders. The tribute they offered at their formal surrender was so paltry that the commanding officer, Lieutenant Wobayama Kawi, threatened to resume the war. At this moment, a relatively young man, son of a San warrior from Bahn, asked to speak. Given permission, he expressed regret for the offering of his elders, but promised to give the soldiers their proper respect if they accompanied him to his uncle's village. Good as his word, Tuazama escorted the soldiers to Gyetiplo outside of Bahn, where a feast awaited.⁶² During the next few weeks Tuazama travelled to

surrounding villages carrying gifts to local leaders, trying to persuade them not to resist Liberian rule. In this way, by transcending the traditional structure of authority among his people, he guaranteed his future position as government spokesman among them.

Conquest Achieved

In November 1917, Mitchell declared that all Mano country and thirty-seven Dan settlements "in the vicinity of *Taanis* (Telo)" had surrendered.⁶³ With capitulation, Dan and Mano were required to give up their muskets. These were immediately melted down and fashioned into tools with which the new Liberian subjects were put to work building roads. Within three months of their surrender, the Dan and Mano had constructed seventy-five miles of road.⁶⁴ The following year, fifteen government farms were under cultivation in the newly conquered territory, and Mitchell would boast that the Mano were now "more than willing" to provide food for his troops.⁶⁵

That the Mano were eager to provide the Liberians with food is doubtful, but with the cessation of hostilities, they were at least able to concentrate on the farming they had been forced to neglect. The Dan of *Zo* were not. Because they had capitulated to the *kwii*, they were considered traitors by the neighboring *Gbamehn*, who attacked and destroyed two of the recently disarmed *Zo* villages. These attacks gave the Liberians a rationale with which to explain their demand that the traditionally scattered villages consolidate into "towns," thereby laying the groundwork for an administrative system that would extract tax and labor from the indigenous people along the same lines as in neighboring colonies.

Conclusion

Traditionally, anthropologists restricted their studies to single societies. More recently, they have called for a new focus on "chains of societies" or "the interconnections between societies" within the framework of historically oriented political economy.⁶⁶ Nimba's conquest presents a rare opportunity for such a perspective for several reasons.

First, the quality of any historical reconstruction ultimately depends on the nature of its sources. "Pacification" in Nimba, by virtue of its intercultural character, provides a variety of perspectives from which one can draw in putting together a well-rounded history that takes into account the political pressures prompting Monrovia expansion as well as the dynamics of indigenous resistance.

Second, the nature of the conquest encounter offers insights into the societies involved. In stateless societies, anthropologists have long understood that political institutions—leadership, for example—are intermittent, appearing during times of conflict, and then, disappearing.⁶⁷ In this sense, Nimba's

conquest can be viewed as a "revelatory crisis," exposing characteristics of Dan and Mano societies that would otherwise remain obscured.⁶⁶ In closing, I will refer to two characteristics that I have tried to illuminate in the above account: (1) the subtlety of ethnic distinctions and (2) the nature of traditional leadership.

Regarding ethnic identity, we are apt to speak of discrete ethnic groups in today's Liberia. The country is said to have sixteen "tribes," of which the Dan (Gio) are one. Yet, the narrative suggests that group identities were more localized traditionally. Relatively autonomous village clusters calling themselves "Gba people," "Duo people," "Zo people" merged to oppose the Liberians. Although these alliances crossed today's "tribal" lines, as Mano joined Dan, no union achieved the range of today's "tribe." Indeed, as the military campaign wore on, Mano turned against Mano, and Dan against Dan. The vast "combinations" that the Liberians so dreaded never appeared.

As for leadership, Commissioner Bernard referred to indigenous "kings," a usage that dates to Liberia's founding. Yet, even in the midst of crisis, these "kings" remained weak leaders. For example, when Major Young stopped in Sanniquellie on his way to relieve Captain Browne's force, Togbayayu, the leader from Gblei, offered to intercede among the San on the government's behalf. Despite his vaunted reputation as perhaps the most prominent leader in Nimba, he was unable to enlist the cooperation of intervening groups. His messengers were turned back "with insults to the chief who had sent them."⁶⁹

Similarly, when Zo Grogon, the *Gbao* Dan elder, decided to sue for peace, he sought the support of neighboring Zo people, apparently convinced that they would kill him if he capitulated without their consent. Other Dan leaders who recommended submission to the Liberians also had to fear reprisals, not only from recalcitrant neighbors, but from followers who refused to concede defeat. In contrast to the paramount chiefs who succeeded them, these leaders seem to have been creatures of consensus. They were not organized in hierarchical fashion, as would later be the case with government chiefs. Moreover, their authority seldom exceeded a few lineages.

Despite these obvious contrasts between pre- and post- Liberian society, some scholars have asserted that Liberian rule did little to change traditional institutions. McCall, for example, saw indigenous political organization as "regularized" and "preserved" by Liberian administration.⁷⁰ Others have projected the government hierarchy of paramount-, clan-, and town-chief into the remote past.⁷¹ I maintain that, at least among the Dan and Mano, ethnic identity and leadership were, to a great extent, shaped by government intervention. This, in itself, is no major revelation. d'Azevedo cogently made the same point nearly twenty years ago.⁷² And yet, the processes according to which change occurred, particularly during what might be termed the "closed door" period of Liberian history (ca. 1900-1935), have since received little scholarly

attention. In this paper, I have tried to outline the pressures that motivated Monrovia expansion into Nimba, as well as to shed light on the immediate impacts of intervention on the local Dan and Mano societies.

Endnotes

¹A slightly expanded version of this paper forms a chapter of my dissertation-in-progress, "From Kola and Complementarity to Cash Crops and Competition: Ethnic Relations in Upper Nimba (ca. 1900-1986)." Fieldwork and archival research in Liberia were supported by grants from Fulbright-Hays and Sigma-Xi, the Society for Scientific Research. Research at the Archives Nationales in the Republic of Guinea was funded by a Lounsbury Grant from the American Museum of Natural History. I am grateful to these sources. I would also like to express my appreciation to Faliku Sano for his invaluable assistance in the field and to Reverend and Mrs. Tom Jackson for their help with Dan etymology. My thanks also to Monday Abassiatai, Eberhard Fischer, Yekutiell Gershoni, Kjell Zetterstrom and Michael King, who read a draft of this paper and provided valuable comment. Errors that have survived their scrutiny are mine.

²Secretary of State C.D.B. King to Captain Thomas C. Mitchell, Commissioner General of the Liberia Boundary Commission, Zinta, 16 December 1916 (Liberian National Archives, Monrovia [hereafter LNA]).

³Interview with Old Man Gontunakeyi, March 23, 1986.

⁴The final consonants of all Dan words are nasalized. Thus, the *n* in *Dan*, *San* or *-mehn* ("people") is not pronounced. The final *o* in place names such as *Telo* or *Gehplo* sounds like the French *eu* in *pleu*.

⁵George W. Harley, *Notes on the Poro in Liberia* (Cambridge: Peabody Museum, 1941; reprint, NY: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1968), 5; George Schwab, *Tribes of the Liberian Hinterland* (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum, 1947; reprint, NY: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1968), 148n.

⁶Andreas Massing's "Toward an Ethnohistory of Nimba County, Liberia: The Early Colonization of the Dan from Archival and Oral Records" (distributed at the Liberian Studies Association Meetings, Akron, Ohio, March 17-20, 1988) is the exception.

⁷A "hinterland" extending around 250 miles in from the coast was based, in part, on treaties that Benjamin Anderson signed with chiefs on his trip to Musadu in 1868.

⁸See Republic of Liberia, "Acts of the Legislature of Liberia," (Monrovia, 1904-1905), 26, section 5.

⁹This vagueness may have been intentional, for, as Gershoni indicates, the settlers had grandiose ambitions to civilize the entire continent and therefore omitted reference to political boundaries in their early constitutions ("The Drawing of Liberian Boundaries in the Nineteenth Century: Treaties with African Chiefs Versus Effective Occupation," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 20[1987]:293-294.). In September 1879, Secretary of State Gibson spoke of Liberia "now actively engaged in annexing large tracts of inland territory with the view of reaching as soon as possible the waters of the Niger..." Gibson to Carrance, 2 September 1879, Chicago Historical Society, *Objects Illustrating the History and Condition of the Republic of Liberia* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1914), 16.

¹⁰Benjamin J.K. Anderson, *Narrative of a Journey to Musardu* (New York: S.W. Green, 1870), 67.

¹¹Kru, Grebo and Gola appealed to the British for protection. The Kru went so far as to contribute financially to the British war effort in 1915. See Major Charles Young to War Department, 7 October 1915; R.C. Bundy to Secretary of State, 21 October 1915 (Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Liberia 1910-1929 [hereafter RDSL], National Archives, Washington, D.C.), 882.00/514.

¹²J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 17.

¹³Notable efforts were those of Seymour and Ash (1859) and Anderson's two expeditions (1868 and 1874).

¹⁴In 1918, Secretary of State King requested arms from the British, French and American governments with assurances that guns would ease tax collection, which, in turn, would ensure more timely payment of the 1911 loan (King to Mitchell, 24 April 1918, LNA).

¹⁵Secretary of State G.W. Gibson to M. Leopold Carrance, Liberian Consul in France, 2 September 1879 and 3 September 1883, *Catalogue of Objects Illustrating the History and Condition of the Republic of Liberia* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1914), 16.

¹⁶Raymond L. Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa* (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1928), II, 787. Gershoni points out that Britain and France wished to avoid conflict between their advancing troops in Sierra Leone and Guinea. Consequently, they agreed to guarantee Liberia's existence as a "buffer state." Both sought to aid the establishment of the Frontier Force, but France withdrew from the agreement in 1908, leaving organization of the LFF in British hands (Yekutieli Gershoni, letter, 18 January 1988).

¹⁷Estimates of the force's strength are variable and contradictory, ranging from 400 in 1912 to 1400 in 1918. In 1916, all six of the LFF's detachments were stationed along Liberia's borders (*Laws Relating to the Liberian Frontier Force*, comp. Edwin Barclay (Monrovia: College of West Africa, 1916), RDSL, 882.20/68.

¹⁸Etta Becker Donner, *Hinterland Liberia* (London: Blackie, 1939), 44.

¹⁹Some went without pay for nearly three years (Major Charles Young to Bundy, 9 October 1912), RDSL, 882.20/14.

²⁰Braithwaite Wallis, "A Tour of the Liberian Hinterland," *Geographical Journal* 35 (1910): 292.

²¹Major Moody Stanten, Commander LFF, *Report of Inspection*, 27 October 1926. RDSL, 882.20/232. Stanten was one of several U.S. military personnel, including Captains Browne, Young and Mitchell, employed by the Liberian government to help reorganize the LFF as part of the 1911 loan agreement. The first contingent arrived in May 1912.

²²King to Mitchell, 18 December 1916; 5 April 1916. LNA.

²³According to Captain Mitchell, the American commander of the LFF from 1916 to 1920, the campaign of conquest "followed lines of least resistance with tribes in the center of the Republic, who have shown some resistance...neglected." He considered the Dan the best fighters he had seen ("Report on Work in the Interior During 1916-17 and 18," 5 May 1918, p. 3, RDSL, 882.00/591).

²⁴Secretary of State King to French Consul E. Baret, 6 December 1916. LNA.

²⁵J.J. Jusserand, French Ambassador to Liberia, to P.C. Knox, U.S. Secretary of State, 20 October 1911, 4 November 1911, RDSL, 882.00/437; 438.

²⁶Now part of Guinea, Dowin (north of Yekepa) was one of ten related villages (Kjell Zetterstrom, letter 2 December 1987). The Liberians called it Longwa or Barakola. Its people would later be called the Yahmein Mano. Bosno was located south of Sanniquellie.

²⁷Gblei, called *Belemu* by the Liberians' Kpelle interpreters, should not be confused with the Belemu near Nama in Kpelle territory. The Dan did not just hear of the Liberian's approach. Bernard closed down Gblei and Lugbei (Lubaimu) in June-August 1911, actions that interfered with their kola trade.

²⁸Major Charles Young, U.S. Military Attache, "Report on Browne Relief Mission," 24 November 1912. RDSL, 882.00/463

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰San, along with Nikwia and Yao, designates a dialect cluster, one of the ways in which various Dan sub-groups identified themselves. San people (Sanmehn) comprise Zo, Gbo and Gba clans. Other clans might sometimes call themselves *San*. Such labels were extremely fluid.

³¹Tappeta is the Kpelle rendering of Tappeplo, "Tappe's town."

³²I use the term *dyula* in its generic sense, that is, as "trader." LRC agents seem to have been Britons and Americo-Liberians. The Dan did not distinguish between them. Both were *kwii*, a term perhaps borrowed from the Kpelle, connoting Westernization. LRC agents paid local chiefs who cooperated with them (Sir Harry Johnston, *Liberia* [London: Hutchinson and Co., 1906], 424.

³³*Le Commerce De Francais sur la Frontiere Terrestre Franco-Liberienne Avant le Soulevement Manon-Guerze 1911-1912*, 4 September 1913, Conakry. Archives Nationales de Guinee, Cercle de Beyla Correspondence (ANG); William D. Crum, American Minister Resident, to U.S. Department of State, 9 December 1911, *RDSL*, 882.00/442.

³⁴Francis Bernard, District Commissioner to President Edwin W. Barclay, 11 August 1911, *RDSL*, 882.00/442 (Both Barclay and Bernard were immigrants from the Caribbean). Boila was located on the Mani River, west of Sanniquellie.

³⁵"Le Commerce Francais sur la Frontiere," ANG.

³⁶The French received 64 claims for reimbursement from *dyula* traders and demanded that Liberia pay for damages and interest totalling 161,583.50 francs ("Report to the Governor," 12 March 1912, ANG).

³⁷Such exactions were routine. For example, Browne's troops went without rations for four months, depending on villagers for their sustenance (Major Young, "Report upon Duties as Military Attache and Adviser in Matters Relating to LFF," 30 December 1912, *RDSL*, 882.20/14).

³⁸According to informants, one of whom took part in the seige, the mother of one of their leaders, Zo, was from *Duolo*, which facilitated the union between *Duo* and *Gbo* peoples. Other leaders who were instrumental in effecting the *San* alliance included Zeigbo *Tawuo* of Wolo (now Wokpanla or Zeiplo) and Gbiengbeng of Bahn. *Tawuo* was a chief of *Gbalu*. Gbiengbeng was a *Zomehn*, but his mother was from *Gba*. He spent part of his boyhood in the *Gba* town of Sienglo (now abandoned, between Bwanplo and Saclapea), very near *Tawuo's* home. After being contacted by the *Gbea* and *Do* people, these men mobilized the *Zo* and *Gbo*.

³⁹Major Charles Young, "Report of Browne Relief Expedition," 25 January 1913, *RDSL*, 882.00/450;463.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Richard C. Bundy, U.S. Charge d'Affaires, to Department of State, 13 October 1915, 882.00/507; Bundy to State, *Quarterly Report*, p. 5, 15 July 1918, RDSL, 882.00/586. After the Liberians joined the allies and expelled German subjects in August 1917, a German submarine shelled the capital (April 10, 1918).

⁴⁴Captain Thomas C. Mitchell, "Report of Work in the Interior during 1916-17 and 18," p. 2, RDSL, 882.00/591.

⁴⁵Ibid., 3.

⁴⁶Captain Almaric, Commander of the Region Militaire at Dyecke to the Commander of the Sector Guerze, 27 April 1917, ARG.

⁴⁷Mitchell, "Report of Work," 3.

⁴⁸eg., King to French Charge d'Affaires, 10 September, 1917 (LNA); Almaric to Lieutenant-Governor, 6 May, 1917 (ANG).

⁴⁹Almaric to Lieutenant-Governor, "Frontier Incident of 30 April, 1917," 12 May, 1917., (ANG).

⁵⁰Mitchell, "Report of Work," 4.

⁵¹Ibid. Lieutenant Harper was the same officer who had unsuccessfully engaged the San in May. Mitchell sent him back with fresh troops, supplies and ammunition on August 24th. The San were thwarted in their hit-and-run tactics by the high waters of a creek in which many were killed in retreating from Liberians. Mitchell recommended Harper for a medal. He soon became general and served as district commissioner and "native affairs specialist" in all three provinces through the 1920s.

⁵²Young, "Report of Relief Expedition."

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Chetwyn Piggott to Taylor, 16 November 1912, RDSL, 882.00/463.

⁵⁵Etta Donner, *Hinterland Liberia* (London: Blackie, 1939), 44.

⁵⁶Young, "Report of Relief Expedition."

⁵⁷Mitchell, "Report of Work," 3.

⁵⁸One of his sons, *Kago*, was killed there by the Liberians, as were Tawuo's son, *Giya*, and his chief ally, *Gbiengbeng*.

⁵⁹The attitude might also have been based on observations of the LFF, which recruited from the peoples it defeated.

⁶⁰According to Reverend and Mrs. Tom Jackson, authorities on the Dan and Mano languages, *bolo win* is a Mano phrase, but I learned it from a San-speaking elder. It is possible that the San adopted it from the Mano. They certainly shared the same attitude toward the conquerors.

⁶¹Young, "Report of Relief Expedition." Mano chiefs made gestures of undying allegiance to the French as well, playing them off against the Liberians.

⁶²The site of Gyehtiplo, like those of many pre-conquest settlements, is now abandoned.

⁶³Mitchell, "Report of Work," 4.

⁶⁴Ibid., 5. Mitchell claimed that by April 1918, the authorities in Sanniquellie had collected between 1,800 to 2,200 muskets.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Jean-Loup Amselle, *Les Négociants de la Savane* (Paris: Anthropos, 1977), 275; Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 4-23.

⁶⁷cf., Meyer Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, eds. *African Political Systems* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940).

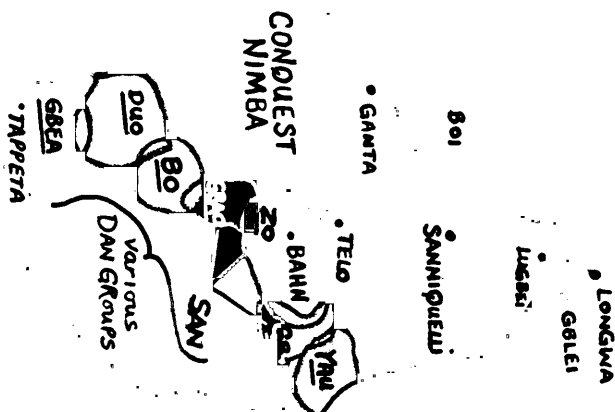
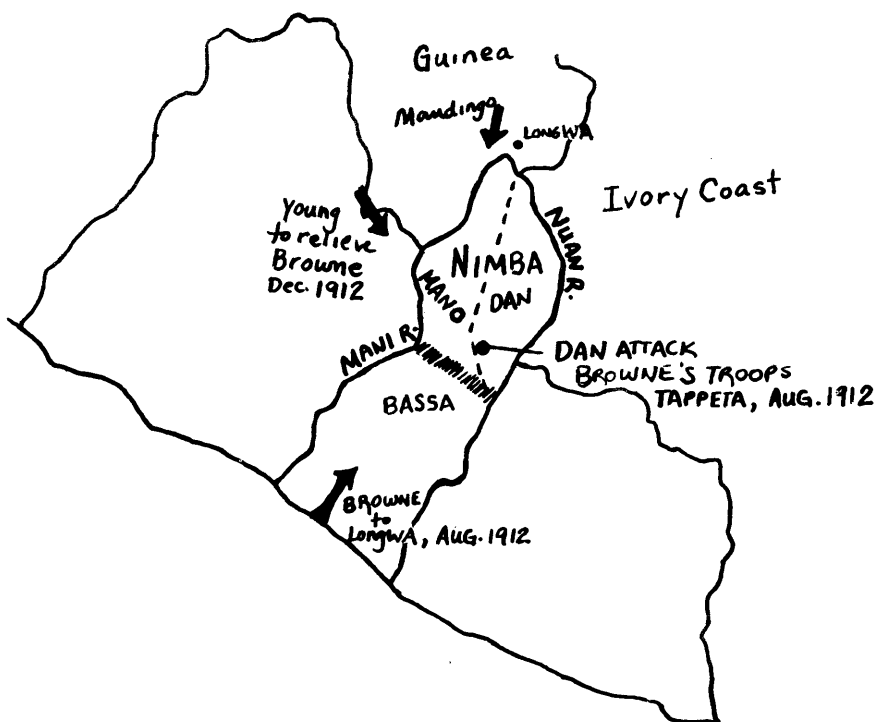
⁶⁸For the use of social crisis in this manner (*crise revelatrice*), see Georges Balandier, "The Colonial Situation: A Theoretical Approach." In *Social Change: The Colonial Situation*, ed. Immanuel Wallerstein (NY: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 55-57.

⁶⁹Young, "Report of Relief Expedition."

⁷⁰Daniel F. McCall, "Liberia: An Appraisal," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 306 (July 1956): 94.

⁷¹This tendency is so common that I need not cite individual authors.

⁷²Warren L. d'Azevedo, "Tribe and Chiefdom on the Windward Coast," *Rural Africana* 15 (1971): 10-29.



Black Christian Republicans: Delegates to the 1847 Liberian Constitutional Convention

Carl Patrick Burrowes

Drafted in 1847, the first Liberian Constitution would remain in force until 1980 when it was discarded following a military *coup d'état*. The Constitution and the convention that produced it have received very little scholarly attention, partly because of a scarcity of documentary sources. The original source materials from the Constitutional Convention were never published, including the official minutes and two private diaries, and the originals have not been found (Huberich: 821–2).

Also contributing to this neglect was the assumption that the Constitution was written by Simon Greenleaf, a Harvard constitutional law expert and a supporter of the Liberian colony. This thesis, first advanced in 1847 by a critic of the Convention and codified in modern scholarship by Huberich, has been recently examined by Brown and found in conflict with the available evidence (1980–81).

This paper provides biographical sketches of delegates to the 1847 Constitutional Convention, with attention given to both their actions and ideas. It shows that the Liberian delegates, as suggested by Brown (1980–81), possessed the education and other wherewithal for writing such a document. The paper also contributes to the current debate surrounding the Second Constitution (Sawyer, 1987), by providing a basis for comparison.

The 12 delegates constituted a diverse group when measured by standard demographic features (Appendix I). However, they evidenced considerable uniformity on certain critical cultural values: Eight of the 12 held high church offices, all were literate, and several were fulltime educators. They were committed—with the possible exception of two delegates from Bassa county—to the creation of a *black* republic in which land ownership would be reserved only to people of African descent. In short, they were Christian republicans with a nationalism rooted in race consciousness, collectively embodying the world view of colonial Liberians.¹

The Socio–Cultural Context

During the era under consideration, a common justification for the enslavement of Africans was that they were “uncivilized”, meaning they lacked both formal Western education and the saving balm of Christianity. Yet, in the U.S. at least, black access to secular education was thoroughly discouraged, and

conversion to Christianity did not ensure emancipation. Many repatriates, reacting to the duplicitousness of America, sought to make Liberia a proving ground for African humanity; here the standard of "civilization" would be unquestioningly promoted while restrictions to its fulfillment would be minimized.

A few repatriates from Northern cities had received formal schooling. Private, segregated institutions for blacks, called African free schools, had operated in northern cities since 1785. By 1849, it is estimated that 45 percent of freed black children in the fifteen largest U.S. cities were attending school. One graduate of these schools was John B. Russwurm (1799–1851), founder of the *Liberia Herald* newspaper. Russwurm, an 1827 graduate of Bowdoin College, helped edit America's first black newspaper before leaving for Liberia in 1829 (Andrews; United States Education Bureau: Curry: 169; Woodson, 1919: 265; and Dunn/Holsoe: 151–2).

Most literate settlers, especially southern slaves, probably learned what they did from individual tutors in informal settings. Some went on by their own exertions to acquire a liberal education of surprising depth while in the States. Such persons included Lott Carey, founder of the local Baptist church, and Harrison Ellis, who had learned theology, Greek, Latin and Hebrew while a slave in Alabama (Woodson: 206–19). Others, including Gov. Joseph Jenkins Roberts, would begin their real education only after their arrival in Liberia² (MCJ VIII, Nov., 1855: 84).

When independence was declared, Liberia was an extremely fragile polity. One year before, the government reported expenses of \$7,536 and income of \$8,525, for a surplus of \$989. Imports averaged \$78,915 annually while exports, mainly of camwood, palm oil and ivory, brought in \$61,845 (Liberia; and Huberich: 803–4, quoting Gov. Robert's 1846 report to the Colonial Council).

In 1847 there were about 3,300 people living in the various colonial settlements, including 500 indigenes who, having adopted settler ways, were eligible to vote. This population was distributed unevenly between three counties, Montserrado (2,000), Bassa (1,000) and Sinoe (300). By 1848 there were said to be 23 churches with 1,500 communicants, a third of whom were indigenes. Liberia's 16 schools counted 200 non–repatriates among their 560 students³ (Liberia: 16). Despite their limited resources, Liberians invested heavily in education, both secular and sacred (MCJ VII, Oct., 1854: 263–4; MCJ, IV, June 1848: 193–95).

The Cosmology Within the Constitution

In all, the Convention produced about 7,497 words (110.25 inches of text at 68 words per inch). This included a 1,955–word Declaration of Independence which was entirely of local origin. Another 34 percent (1,894 words) of the

Constitution has not been traced to any existing documents and was probably of local origin (Burrowes).

But the documents, taken together, were original in a more fundamental sense. Even the sections borrowed from elsewhere had been appropriated and combined in keeping with an emergent worldview. This cosmology was rooted in the three intellectual traditions of christianity, republicanism and black nationalism, all of which were evident in the Liberian national papers.

At the core of Liberian political thinking was a belief in small privately-owned property as a source both of wealth and virtue. This conviction was the result of a double articulation: exposure to republicanism in America and readings in classical European political theories.

In coming to Africa the colonists, especially free blacks, were motivated in part by the desire to own private property. As Samuel Benedict, judge and president of the Constitutional Convention, boasted in explaining to U.S. blacks the liberties enjoyed in Liberia “We are proprietors of the soil we live on, and possess the rights of freeholders” (Liberia: 10). In this context, property held practical and symbolic value. It became a measure of the worth which they had been denied in the United States as well as a measure of good citizenship.

Teage, in promoting independence, had called for “a nation of colored people on the soil of Africa, adorned and dignified with the attributes of a civilized and Christian community” (ACS, Jan. 19, 1847: 21). These three themes were repeated by Benedict who wrote, in presenting the finished documents to the citizenry:

It is our earnest desire that the affairs of this government may be so conducted as to merit the approbation of all Christendom, and restore to Africa her long lost glory, and that Liberia under the guidance of Heaven may continue a happy asylum for our long oppressed race (Huberich: 839).

It is those three traditions that give the Liberian convention and declaration of independence their special cast, distinct from other constitutions of the day.

Characteristics of the Delegates

The delegates elected to the Convention embodied the colony’s highest values. All were literate and involved in promoting education, whether through the schools or, less formally, through the lyceums. Rev. Beverly R. Wilson had already founded a trade school at White Plains while John Day, founder of the Hope School in Monrovia, was operating another in Bassa. Eight of the 12 held high church offices for most of their adult lives. In deed, four—Elijah Johnson, John N. Lewis, Richard E. Murray and Ephraim Titler—had set out for Liberia as missionaries.

The delegates roughly mirrored the colonists in term of their places of origin in the United States. Eighty-four percent of the delegates were from slave-holding states, compared to 88 percent of the colonists. Virginians, 36 percent of the settlers, contributed 42 percent of the delegates (Shick, 1971).

The delegates showed considerable diversity by other measures. Although three-fourth of the delegates were freeborn, they selected Samuel Benedict, a former slave, as president. The average age of delegates was 48 years. Johnson, at 60, was the oldest. At the other end was 27-year-old Anthony W. Gardner.

Of the eight delegates whose political preferences are known, Wilson, John B. Gripon and Amos Herring were once identified with the Seys opposition party. On the other side were Johnson, Gen. John N. Lewis and Hilary Teage, consistent supporters of the colonial government. Benedict, a pillar of the colonial establishment, challenged Joseph Jenkins Roberts for the presidency in 1847 and again in 1852. Similarly, Gardner was aligned throughout his early political life with the Republican Party but switched in 1877 to the True Whig Party, whose presidential candidate he was.

Delegates differed widely in wealth. Teage, the richest, in 1843 owned one vessel, five warehouses and was worth \$57,000 in 1843, but was proclaimed an insolvent debtor three years later (Syfert: 281). Benedict, Gardner and Wilson were worth an average of \$4,833 in 1843. At the other extreme was Johnson and Murray, both of whom left their families in poverty upon their deaths (Syfert: 109-128; MCJ, VIII, Feb., 1856: 335; AR, August, 1849: 248).

Samuel Benedict (1792-1854)

Benedict, a Superior court judge in the colonial government, was elected president of the Convention. he had served in the colonial legislature that drafted the Civil Constitution of 1839 (AR, Nov. 1, 1841: 323).

Born a slave near the turn of the last century,⁴ he lived a relatively privileged life on the plantation of his owner and may have lived as a freedman for sometime before his emigration from Savannah, Georgia. He told a friend in Liberia that he had been "well treated" in the U.S.⁵ (Alexander: 537-8; Huberich: 847; AR, March 1, 1840: 787).

Benedict apparently saved a considerable sum of money for it is said that, prior to emigrating, he purchased the freedom of his wife. He probably also paid for five year old James Benedict who accompanied him to Liberia in 1835 (Shick; 1971: 7; Ullman: 101).

Benedict arrived in Liberia with a sizeable collection of books on law, divinity and medicine, the three major branches of knowledge during his day. His library included Blackstone's *Commentaries*, Matthew Henry's *The Comprehensive Commentary on the Holy Bible*, Johann Mosheim's *An Ecclesiatic*

History "in which the rise, progress and variations of church power are considered in their connection with the state of learning and philosophy," and Charles Rollin's six volume *Ancient History* which included an account of the Egyptians (Alexander, 537–8), one of the few favorable accounts on Africa's past then available. Given the breadth of his education, he might have attended one of Savannah's black schools.⁶

It is said that he was engaged in a polygamous union while in Georgia. Neither his wife nor his alleged mistress seems to have accompanied him to Liberia for by 1844 he had taken Eliza McDonough as a common-law wife (Martin Delany cited in Ullman: 101; Mary Jackson's letter to John McDonogh, Feb. 20, 1844, in Wiley: 130). His flaunting of monogamy suggests that he was more influenced by secular, perhaps African, cultural values than many of his contemporaries.

Benedict rose rapidly in Liberia. By 1839, he was a member of the Colonial Council. One year later the legislature, allegedly without this knowledge, appointed him judge of the Montserado Superior Court. He was also a leading member of the Liberia Lyceum, a group that organized important political discussions and debates. By 1841 he was already predicting independence and with it "a purer form of government than any now to be found, even in the United States" (AR, March 1, 1840: 78; AR, Nov. 1, 1841: 323–325).

In a letter written and published during a short visit to the U.S., Benedict pledged "never, never, to think of returning to live." He said "you would insult almost any Liberian in good standing in the community if you only mention to them that they ought to return." (AR, Nov. 1, 1841: 323–325)

Benedict's commitment to remaining in Liberia might have stemmed in part from his relatively successful trading business. In 1843 he held \$3,000 in stock and four warehouses worth \$1,000 each. Unlike many of his contemporaries in politics, he took to farming early and on a sustained basis. By 1840, he was running two farms. One consisted of several acres planted in coffee, sugar cane and other provisions. As a result of a partnership arranged by Gov. Buchanan, he also planted four acres of coffee with support from a Philadelphia man. By 1851, he had about 7,000 coffee trees, was planting more and was planning on exporting beans (AR, March 1, 1840: 78; Syfert: 124; E.W. Blyden's letter to J.B. Pinney, cited in Holden: 27–28).

Benedict seems to have taken quite seriously his role as Liberia's foremost jurist. In 1847 he wrote a friend in the U.S. asking for Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Law*, Benjamin Poore's *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters and Other Organic Laws of the United States*, Henry Wheaton's *A Digest of Decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States (1789–1820)*, Thomas Starkie's *Treatise on the Law of Slander*, a two-volume work called *The Trials of Colonel Aaron Burr for Treason* and any of the works of Sir Matthew Hale' (Liberia: 13).

This letter, written apparently to an officer of the ACS since it was published in the society's journal, is noteworthy also for the absence of the submissiveness typical of the newly manumitted slaves who made up the majority of Liberian colonists. He wrote, "If you see such (works) and buy them low for me, I will remit the money as soon as possible. ... Our true friend Professor Greenleaf has made me presents of a few valuable works, but I find much deficiency at times" (Liberia: 13).

Benedict was a candidate for the presidency in the September 1847 elections but lost to Gov. Roberts in part because, as defense lawyer, he had won the acquittal one month earlier of an accused murderer who was very unpopular. He was defeated by Roberts again in the presidential elections of May 1852. Despite their political rivalry, however, Roberts appointed Benedict the country's first chief justice in 1847, a position which he held until his death in February 1854 (Huberich: 848; J.W. Lugenbeel to Rev. William McLain, Oct. 16, 1847, cited in Huberich: 846).

John Day (1797–1861)

Apparently born free, Day was a cabinet-maker in North Carolina where he also studied theology under the Rev. Mr. Clopton, an eminent Baptist. It is said that the founding of Liberia led him to speed-up his religious studies. Ordained and appointed a missionary for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, he sailed for Liberia in December 1830 with his wife (a seamstress) and four children. Shortly after their arrival, however, his entire family died from fever. (Shick, 1971: 27; Cassell: 223–4.)

By 1835, he was a member of the colonial legislature . When Thomas Buchanan, Liberia 's last white governor died in 1841, Day was a member of the four-man committee that officially conferred power to Lt. Gov. Joseph Jenkins Roberts . Day served as chief justice from 1859 to 1861. (Miller, 1978: 132; Richardson: 46; Dunn/Holsoe: 40; Holden: 796–7; Wiley: 195, 222, 330.)

As superintendent of the Baptist mission in Liberia, he founded the Hope High School in Monrovia. The school was coeducational and contained both primary and classical departments as well as a seminary. By 1843 he had moved from Monrovia to Bexley, Bassa County, where he operated a school for 20 pupils and a press that published at least two primers in the Bassa language (AR, July 1843: 215).

In an open letter to freed blacks in the U.S., Day explained the profound self-transformation carried out by the colonists, a theme developed by several of his peers:

In America, we had nothing to incite us to proper application of mind, nothing to aspire to. We read superficially, we knew

superficially many things known to our white neighbors... But in Liberia we found ourselves an embryo nation, but incapable of filling many of the various important stations requiring real knowledge. Superficiality would not do. We applied ourselves to study closely and intensely and acquired in many instances, profound knowledge, that sort which gives power. Many who have thus made themselves are superior men.

He went on to ask, drawing perhaps on some of his newly acquired knowledge:

Did not Africa once blaze in the light of civilization and the arts? In what state was Europe then? As deeply sunken in heathenism as Ethiopia is now. And since Africa gave letters, and Canaan gave religion to Europe, has no dark cloud overbrooded it?... May not a reversion take place, and Africa again be the garden of the earth? (*MCJ* VII, Jan. 1854: 123–4).

Anthony William Gardner (1820–1885)

At age 27, he was the youngest delegate at the Convention. Gardner moved with his freeborn parents in 1831 from Southhampton County, Virginia to Bassa County, Liberia. By 1843 he was co-owner with Samuel Herring of a \$3,500 trading business which held \$1,000 in trade goods (*Syfert*: 125; *Shick*, 1971: 37).

He later served as a member of the the House of Representatives from Bassa (1855–61), as speaker of the House (1859–61), vice president (1872–76), superintendent of Bassa (1876–77) and president of the Republic (1878–83) (*Dunn/Holsoe*: 78; *Richardson*: 85–6).

Gardner was aligned throughout his early political life with the Republican Party. He switched in 1877 to the True Whig Party which won the presidential election that year in part by promising the repatriated Africans or “Congoes” a seat in the House. As president, he relied on pan-Africanist ideologue Edward Wilmot Blyden, who served as his Secretary of the Interior, and William Davis who, like Blyden, advocated the rapid integration of settler and indigenous Liberian societies⁸ (*Holden*: 492; *Cassell*: 284, 292, 314).

John B. Gripon (1809–1847)

Born free, Gripon had already acquired literacy and carpentry skills when he left South Carolina in 1833. He was elected to the colonial legislature in December 1840 on the ticket of the opposition Seys party. In 1847, he was an associate judge of Montserrado County and head of the Liberia Conference Seminary. He died at age 38, two months after being elected senator from Montserrado (*AR*, April 1848: 99; *Huberich*: 722).

Amos Herring (1794–1873)

A missionary and cabinet-maker, he emigrated from Virginia in 1833 with his wife, two daughters and three sons (Shick, 1971: 44). He apparently took up residence immediately in Bassa County where he would remain for the rest of his life.

A one-time employee of Rev. John Seys, Herring aligned himself with the movement, based in Bassa and led by Seys, which in 1840 opposed the ACS's involvement in local commerce as well as the colonial government's decision to tax trade goods brought in by churches (Huberich: 670–72).

At the convention, Herring and Ephraim Titler, fellow Bassa County delegate, endorsed the new constitution and declaration of independence. But upon their return to Bassa, they organized a movement against independence which closed the polls in their district and led to fistfights with their opponents. Their reversal on this crucial issue seems to have cost the two dearly for, compared to other convention delegates, their roles in national politics were quite limited after 1847.

Herring was, along with Charles B. Dunbar, Jr. and Gen. Reginald A. Sherman, a member of the executive committee that ruled Liberia from the overthrow of Pres. Edward J. Roye in 1871 until the elections of 1872. His presence helped to clothe the junta with constitutional legitimacy while also providing representation from Bassa, a politically pivotal county. (Lynch, 1978: 27; Huberich: 1134; Cassell: 279; and Dunn/Holsoe: 149–150).

He headed the Presbyterian Church in Lower Buchanan, Grand Bassa until his death in June 1873 (AR, Nov. 1873: 336).

Elijah Johnson (c. 1787–1849)

A freeborn black, Johnson was literate and went to Africa to serve as a missionary. His birthplace is variously given as New Jersey (Simmons: 1040), Maryland (Dunn/Holsoe, 94) and New York (Dunn/Holsoe: 94; Miller, 1975: 72). While many scholars have credited Johnson with possessing a "good education," an acquaintance of 29 years said he was "almost wholly destitute of education" (AR, August 1849: 245–48).

Johnson sailed from New York in 1820 with his wife, a daughter and two sons on the *Elizabeth*, the first ship of emigrants sent out by the ACS. The 86 *Elizabeth* colonists first settled on Sherbro Island, Sierra Leone where they encountered many problems with tropical diseases, inadequate supplies and hostility from local groups. Asked to abandon the colony and return to America, Johnson is said to have replied, "No, I have been two years searching for a home in Africa and I have found it; and I shall stay here." (Dunn/Holsoe: 5–6; Richardson: 47).

After the white ACS agents returned to the U.S. to procure supplies, Johnson together with Daniel Corker led the remaining colonists from Sherbro Island to Furah Bay (Richardson: 47).

In 1822, the colonists were moved to Dazoa Island (renamed Providence), along the Mesurado River in what is now known as Liberia. The white ACS agents returned to the U.S. shortly thereafter, leaving Johnson as acting agent for six weeks (Huberich: 220). Seeking a safer and healthier position, Johnson and Fred James led the settlers to the higher ground of what is now Monrovia.

When hostilities broke out with neighboring peoples, the commander of a British gun-boat offered help if the settlers would accept British control. Johnson refused, saying "We want no flagstaff put up here, that will cost more to get it down again than it will to whip the natives." Having served in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812, he is said to have retained a strong dislike of the British (Richardson: 47).

Jehudi Ashmun, a new ACS agent arrived in 1822 and declared martial law. Johnson was appointed commissary of stores and drill master for the 36 settlers then able to bear arms, thus launching his African military career. He is credited with having played a key role in repelling attacks in November 1822. He also led the colony's militia in battles at Bromley (1828 and 1832), Bassa Cove (1835) and Ringstown, 35 miles from Edina (1839). By 1835, if not before, he was appointed a general in the Liberian militia (Cassell: 71, 100, 107; Richardson: 35, 47; Wiley: 322).

Of Johnson, Hilary Teage later said: "There has never been one of whom the natives stood in more awe. They regarded him with superstitious dread. In peace, his word was law—In war, his name was a tower of strength" (AR, August 1849: 247).

Johnson again governed the colony when Gov. Ashmun, faced with an insurrection by the settlers, abandoned his post from April to August 1824 (Gurley: 194–6, 211; and Miller, 1975: 72–73). Teage would note, as Johnson's "grand peculiarity", that he was "always on the side of government. Not that he was blind to errors, or to peccancies in men or measures; but he deemed that the government had never been so distinctly marked by either, as to demand that he should put himself in hostile array against it" (AR, August 1849: 247).

Teage called Johnson "the father of Methodism in Liberia" because his "time, his talent, his money, his bodily strength were all freely given to the church" (AR, August 1849: 248). After independence was declared, he apparently abandoned government service for religious work, his original reason for immigrating. Several of his children continued in his tradition of public service. His eldest son, Lewis, taught at a Baptist School for six months, beginning in September 1836. Throughout the 1830s Mrs. Lewis Johnson, sponsored by a

women's auxiliary society in Philadelphia, ran an infant school in Monrovia. Under Baptist sponsorship, Lewis and his wife were also affiliated with a six-day school, a sabbath school, a women's academy and an evening school (Miller, 1978: 88, n. 2). In 1884, another of Johnson's son, Hilary Richard Wright, became the first locally-born president of Liberia (Richardson: 47).

When Johnson died March 23, 1849 at a Methodist Episcopal Mission in White Plains, he left his wife in relative poverty with eight children, including five minors (AR, August 1849: 248).

John Naustedlau Lewis (1791 – 1876)

Of all the delegates, Lewis probably had the most varied and tumultuous tenure of public service. His wife, Susanna, chaired the committee of women appointed to sew the nation's new flag.

A freeborn Virginian, he arrived in 1824 with a family of six. Lewis and at least two of his sons were literate (Shick, 1971: 58).

His career advances were probably made easier by his being the brother-in-law of Joseph Jenkins Roberts, the colony's last governor and the republic's first president (Wiley: 322). However, there is no denying that Lewis brought considerable energy and enthusiasm to his various jobs.

Lewis was elected to the colonial council in 1834. In 1840, Gov. Buchanan appointed him colonial secretary, a post that paid \$500 per year. One year later, Lewis published the first digest of local statutes. Also in 1841, he announced plans to plant ten acres in indigo, then a profitable crop (ACS 1841: 36; ACS 1840: 29; Huberich: 463, 730, 1365).

As a general in the militia, Lewis led three expeditions around Bassa during the colonial era, another around New Cess in March 1849 and another across the Manna River in 1872 (Wiley: 104–6; Cassell: 281–2).

By 1844 he was running the ACS warehouse, his brother-in-law having ascended from that post to become governor two years earlier. He also supervised the government's farm which was worked by the colony's poor (AR, May 1844: 145).

Lewis was elected to the senate from Montserrado County in 1847. In 1867, he along with 14 others founded the Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons in Liberia, a group that emerged later as a nexus of political power (Cassell: 251; Richardson: 82, 108; Dunn/Holsoe: 166).

Even after independence, Lewis continued serving the ACS as agent in Montserrado County, responsible for distributing supplies to new immigrants. This posed a considerable conflict of interest given his private trading business (Syfert: 126; Wiley: 332, n.2). Sion Harris,⁹ a fellow soldier and elected official,

wrote of the “monopolist” trade and Lewis’s involvement in it:

I am appose to It & It makes hard for the poor man. He can’t get a pound of tobacco without getting a (hachet) and get a musket with his getting a box. It is only good for the merchant. I have been Elected by the people for Representative since I come home. If I live I will do all I can to brake It up (Wiley: 227).

In his letters to the ACS, Lewis repeatedly requested support for the acquisition of new territory. His use of “we” and “our” when discussing plans for expansion suggests that his views had the support of the government or a segment of the country’s leadership. However, his enthusiasm for expansion was tempered by an intimate knowledge of political conditions in neighboring societies. Writing about Cape Mount in 1849 he said:

Previous to the outbreak of ... war, all parties were anxious to have us make settlements there, but they objected to selling any part of the country. Should we ever succeed in making a purchase of that country, it will be at a very dear rate... Their state of living is very expensive, and I am quite certain that they would charge five thousand dollars at least for it (AR, August 1849: 227).

Lewis served as secretary of state with four presidents: Joseph Jenkins Roberts (1843–1854), Stephen Allen Benson (1858–1860, 1862–1863), James Spriggs Payne (1868–1869) and Edward James Roye (1870–1871). Following the overthrow of the Roye administration, Lewis along with five other officials were convicted of treason and condemned to be hanged in 1872 for their part in arranging the fateful British loan of 1871. Their death penalties were commuted to life imprisonment by President Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Lewis’s brother-in-law and former comrade-in-arms, who argued that “hanging persons for political offenses would not do for civilized nations” (U.S. State Department Despatches, May 25, 1872, cited in Sawyer (1988): 281, 318). Lewis died four years later.

Richard E. Murray (1798–1856)

He emigrated from Charleston, South Carolina with his wife and 14 year old daughter in 1843 (Brown, 1980: 46). Having survived a ship-wreck in St. Jago, they landed at Monrovia in September 1843. Eight months later he became resident ACS agent and governor of Mississippi in Africa, now known as Sinoe County. Established by the Mississippi Colonization Society in 1838, this colony was autonomous until a plan of union with Liberia was approved in 1841. The Sinoe settlers lived in perpetual poverty throughout the colonial period. As the ACS agent, Murray coordinated the settlement of emigrants and distribution of the *African Repository* newspaper. He was Sinoe’s only representative at the

Convention (AR, Nov. 1851: 336; Sullivan; Staudenraus: 236; *MCJ*, 1858: 335; Wiley: 282).

Murray was in a unique position to influence policy, given his vantage point between the Society and the settlers. He encouraged agriculture among the settlers, especially export crops, while also urging the ACS to reduce food supplies so as to discourage "intemperance in eating" (AR, August 1849: 229; AR, Nov. 1845: 336).

Murray's relationship with indigenous Liberians seems to have been laced with ambivalence. He took special pride in his conversion and education of youngsters from neighboring Kru communities, one of whom lived in his home. Nonetheless, he urged the clearing of Kru fishermen from a bay near the colony to make way for a trading town which, "if well laid off and properly built up ... will be the handsomest and best sea port town in Liberia" (AR, Sept 1848: 266).

Murray thought that Greenville, given its central location along the coast, would eventually replace Monrovia as Liberia's capital. He predicted a day when "our ... rich iron ore would place our country in an enviable position" (AR, Sept 1852: 274). By 1852, his development efforts were beginning to bear fruits, such as the opening of a steam saw mill to be paid for with lumber (AR, Sept 1852: 274; AR, Nov. 1845: 336-7; AR, Nov. 1854: 336).

In a surprisingly candid letter published in the U.S. in 1854, he noted:

I know by experience the depressing influence of the white man. Such was its effect on me, that I failed to improve my mind as I might have done, if the slightest hope of future usefulness could have been indulged. But every high and noble aspiration appeared to me, in that country, consummate folly, and I was thus induced to be satisfied in ignorance, there being no prospect of rising in the scale of being (AR, Nov. 1851: 336).

Murray died a pauper in 1856, after four years as governor and 13 years' as ACS agent. John Day, a fellow Baptist missionary and Convention delegate, wrote after his death:

He lived in a little hut, with scarcely room to give lodging to a friend, and died with \$28 in hand, and left almost on charity's cold hand a helpless family, made so, not by extravagance in dress or food, but by large benevolence to his fellowman (*MCJ*, 1856: 335).

Jacob W. Prout (1804- ?)

Prout, elected secretary of the Convention, was one of six Liberians with recognized medical experience during the country's first 25 years (Shick, 1980:

158, n. 24 and Huberich: 824, quoting Lugenbeel).

A literate freeborn black from Maryland, he arrived in 1826 and was followed two years later by Richard, 45, Susan, 12 and William, 8, all freeborn members of the Prout family (Shick, 1971: 78).

Having secured a post as register of wills in the colonial government, Prout returned in triumph to his native Baltimore in 1832. A local editor called him:

a happy instance of the effect of freedom on a sound mind. While he fully sustained the character belonging to him as a citizen of a free State, he was unassuming in his intercourse with the white, and attentive and courteous to the colored people, with whom he freely associated, and thus, by a demeanour unpretending and modest, he conciliated the good will, and has carried with him the good wishes of both. I view him as affording a demonstration of the fact ... that freedom confers elevation of character without reference to colour (Cited in Alexander: 399–400).

Prout agreed to lead an expedition from Baltimore and, partly because of his favorable accounts of life in Liberia, 146 blacks agreed to emigrate. During the voyage home, however, he was accused by the ship's white crew of assuming airs, pampering his appetite and committing the trip's only sexual "indecentcy" (Campbell: 48).

He was employed as ACS physician earning \$500 per year until 1840 when his post was abolished by Gov. Buchanan. Claiming that the governor had acted vindictively, Prout appealed for reinstatement. However, ACS officials in Washington, D.C. sustained the governor's decision which they informed Prout was part of a broader effort to cut the Colony's operating cost (ACS 1840: 15).

Dr. Lugenbeel, the ACS's white resident physician, denegated Prout's contribution to the Convention in general and his secretarial skills in particular. Recent scholars have tended to accept Lugenbeel's account uncritically, since his diary is one of the few surviving records of that event. However, those detractions are difficult to reconcile with Prout's previous service to the colonial government as well as evidence of his penmanship (Appendix II).

Prout's son, William, went on to serve as governor of the neighboring colony of Maryland in Liberia from 1854 to 1856 when, in a "revolution of moral suasion," he was removed for repeated public drunkenness (Campbell: 227).

Hilary Teage (1802–1853)

He is said to have made the single greatest personal contribution to the "framing and establishment" of Liberia (AR, 1853: 71). For years prior to 1847,

he wrestled—in his writings and actions—with the issue of self-government and its implications for the colony. After the Convention, he used the *Liberia Herald* newspaper, which he edited, to explain the constitution and win its acceptance by the public.

Teage emigrated from his native Virginia to Africa in 1821 in the company of his parents and a 15 year old sister. They were among the second group of 32 colonists settled at Sierra Leone by the ACS. The entire family was literate. Hilary's father, Colin, was a skilled saddle and harness maker (Dunn/Holsoe: 5–6, 166; Shick, 1971; Miller, 1975: 68; MCJ, 1846: 220–221).

The Teages and fellow emigre Lott Carey had attended the First Baptist Church in Richmond, a congregation that was integrated but predominantly black. Committed to evangelizing in Africa, Colin Teage and Carey set out with support from the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions as well as the Richmond African Baptist Society, a group Carey had helped to establish (Miller, 1975: 68).

Given their independent aims and means, the two friends were able to maintain a relative autonomy from the ACS, on whose colonial infrastructure they depended. Once in Africa, they renounced any control by the Society's white agent, who they accused of hoarding provisions. They led the American African Union Society, intended to represent the settlers in their dealings with the ACS. However, this early manifestation of black autonomy died immediately when the agent refused to negotiate with the group. Their challenges to the colony's autocratic white leadership continued even after 1825 when they joined those settlers who three years earlier had moved to what is now known as Liberia (Miller, 1975: 69–71; Wiley: 318, Letter 48, n. 1; Huberich: 220; Dunn/Holsoe: 5–6).

When the ACS in 1838 sought input from the colonists on issues of administration and jurisdiction, the resulting elected convention was presided over by Colin, with the younger Teage serving as secretary.¹⁰ Colin's son also became a Baptist minister, despite a life-long bout with alcoholism (MCJ, 1853: 47). His father's assertiveness apparently taught Hilary that black self-government was possible and necessary.

Hilary Teage first devoted his attention to commerce. He began in 1829 as a consignment agent for John Dean Lake and other traders based in Sierra Leone, his home from 1821 to 1825. By 1841, he was agent for Captain Jackson, a British trader, and one year later was representing Hatton and Cookson of Liverpool. He also had at least one vessel trading along the West African coast between 1829 and 1844. With several other investors, he began a soap manufactory which he hoped would produce soap at a lower price, reduce the foreign currency drain and make a profit. In 1843, the apparent peak of his trading career, he earned an annual commission of \$7,000 and owned five warehouses worth \$30,000 with an additional \$20,000 in trade stock (Syfert: 114–16, 126–27; July:

96). His commercial fortunes seem to have dwindled as his public service increased and by 1845 he was down to owning one warehouse.

Teage's government career began in 1835 when he succeeded John B. Russwurm as both colonial secretary and editor of the government's *Liberia Herald* newspaper. He resigned five years later as secretary, an appointed position, to stand as a candidate for the council. In 1841, he delivered the eulogy at the funeral of Gov. Buchanan. After independence was declared, he served as senator from Montserrado (1847–50), attorney general (1850–51) and secretary of state from 1852 until his death in May 1853 (Syfert: 118; ACS 1840: 29; Dunn/Holsoe: 166; AR, Jan. 15, 1812: 17–21).

Teage, Liberia's leading intellectual during his day, is said to have been influenced by Republican ideas, especially on the economic importance of agriculture. He is credited with introducing in 1838 the idea of a commonwealth government to encompass the then-autonomous colonies of Montserrado, Bassa and Mississippi in Africa. In 1843 he published the constitution and statutes of the commonwealth in two volumes. One year later, he published a historical sketch of the Liberian colony in which he criticized European control over Sierra Leone and called, in contrast, for black self-government in Liberia. During the 1847 Convention, he chaired the committee on the Declaration of Independence. The declaration's combined nationalist tone and humanistic appeal suggest his authorship (MCJ, 1853: 47, 71; AR, 1844: 257–61; AR, 1845: 13–17; Cassell: 112–3, 166; Miller, *LSJ*: 100, n. 16; Dunn/Holsoe: 166).

His editorials in the *Herald*, written with considerable literary flair, showed an intimate knowledge of local conditions and deep reflection on political questions of the day. Teage was fiercely defensive of the *Herald's* freedom, even from control by the ACS which owned the presses. When the Society's president complained in 1841 about an "offensive" article, Teage replied: "I will not regard your letter as dictatorial, but merely advisory." He went on:

In common with colored men, I have certain sentiments ... I should be altogether unworthy of your confidence and respect, if I should at any time forget for a moment that this is my indefeasible right, or so base and mean-spirited as not to claim to exercise it whenever circumstances should demand it (AR, March 18, 1841: 95).

Those "certain sentiments" surfaced more regularly and pointedly in his later writings, as when he noted in 1847:

Better, far better will it be for us that a century find us still a weak and 'feeble folk' than to bend an ignoble neck to the Anglo-Saxon yoke—of whose unclenching tenacity, when once it has grappled, the whole history of the modern world affords most melancholy examples (ACS, Jan. 19, 1847: 21). –

In promoting independence, Teage called for "a nation of colored people on the soil of Africa, adorned and dignified with the attributes of a civilized and Christian community." (ACS, Jan. 19, 1847: 21). However, the attempted reconciliation of Christianity, Western secularism and black nationalist ideas posed immense challenges to Liberian intellectuals, as Teage soon discovered.

As a senator in 1849 he proposed the replacement of Latin in the judicial system by terms understandable to commoners, both indigenous and settlers:

What idea is there in *nisi prius*, or *Habeas Corpus*, or *non coram judice*, or *mandamus* that cannot be adequately expressed in English? ... Suppose we should name our justice court 'palaver.' In that case our chief justice would be 'Grand Devil,' and the subordinate officers of that court 'devil's mates'." (AR, August 1849: 236-7).

That year, Teage ended his association with the Herald in order to concentrate on public affairs (July: 93). He told a friend just prior to his death that he was writing a history of Liberia, but the manuscript was never found (MCJ, 1853: 72).

Teage would continue to exercise a formidable intellectual influence through, Edward Wilmot Blyden, his more famous progeny who is widely regarded as the father of "pan-Africanism".¹¹ In 1851 Blyden, then only 19 years old, served as Teage's clerk at the state department (Holden: 492). The roots of Blyden's nationalism can be traced in part to his association with Teage, as Teage's was probably influenced by his association with John B. Russwurm at the *Liberia Herald*.

Teage's nationalism was infused with a race consciousness, as is evident in a letter written months before his death to the Rev. J.B. Pinney, a white former ACS agent to Liberia:

There is not a man in the United States who wishes more ardently the elevation of the colored people there than I do; nor is there one who feels more keenly the injustice of the laws and the sentiment that depress them, than myself; and if talking and writing would avail to correct the injustice, I would not be wanting in the use of these instruments, but on taking a retrospective, what have they availed. ... Let those who think best stay in America and talk, and we, who are otherwise minded, stay out here and act, and at the close of the nineteenth century it will be seen who have operated to the greater advantage in putting down prejudice (ACS, Jan. 1853: 17).

Teage's prediction would be borne out by the end of the century with the emergence of a West African nationalism inspired in part by the survival of the independent black republic as well as the embracing of Liberia by former critics

in the U.S., including militant abolitionist leaders Martin Delany and Henry Highland Garnet. Garnet eventually emigrated to Liberia where he died in 1881 (Azikiwe; July: 85–110, 458–481; Ullman: 228–232; and Rigby: 160–162).

Ephraim Titler (1800 – ?)

Titler and his wife, Nancy, emigrated from New York in 1834. Both were freeborn and literate (Shick, 1971: 98). One year later, he was volunteering to teach in indigenous villages outside the colony (Huberich: 467, citing a letter from Pinney to the ACS).

During a visit to the U.S. in 1836, he won support from the Philadelphia Presbytery for missionary work among the Bassa (AR, August 1837: 239–40).

After approving the Constitution at the 1847 convention, Titler returned to Bassa where he campaigned against independence, to the point of engaging in several fist-fights (Huberich: 845–7).

Three concerns seem to have fueled the Bassa-based opposition to independence. First, Titler and others were unwilling to accept ACS ownership of public lands in the new republic, an issue that was then being negotiated by representatives of the Society and of Liberia.¹² Secondly, there was anxiety that independence would bring enormous taxes. Finally, many in Bassa feared domination by Montserrado County which had both more colonists and wealth. As suspicions deepened and emotions flared, Bassa's secession from the commonwealth seemed eminent¹³ (AR, January 1848: 28–9). This incident appears to have marked the end of Titler's public service. Moreover, no records have been found concerning his death or private life beyond this point.

The Rev. Beverly R. Wilson (1799–1865)

In 1834 Wilson and his two sons, all freeborn, emigrated from Norfolk, Virginia where he had been "comfortably situated" (Shick, 1971: 108; AR, May 1865: 146).

Of unmixed African descent, he reportedly asserted at the Convention that Liberia belonged to its citizens as "an inheritance from their forefathers," a remark that greatly irked the Society's resident agent (Huberich: 825; AR, May 1865: 146).

Wilson said he enjoyed "almost uninterrupted pleasure" from his arrival in Liberia until December 1839, when his son was killed while on a peace mission to a hostile leader near the colony. Despite this loss, he continued to hold that "There is no place under the sun that promises so many advantages to the colored man as Africa" (AR, Sept. 1, 1840: 264–5).

Wilson's reliance on his 10 year old son, James, to copy at least one letter suggests that his writing skills were rudimentary (AR, September 1840: 264). However, that did not hinder his public involvements.

In 1840, he was elected to the colonial council on the ticket of the opposition Seys Party (Huberich: 722). He also served as a judge of the criminal court for Montserrado County (AR, May 1865: 146). Along with three others, he founded the Union Mechanics Society. The group, dedicated to promoting the dignity of tradesmen, lasted at least 15 years (AR, November 1872: 335-7).

Wilson engaged in trade for a while; in 1843 he owed \$1,000 in trade stock and two warehouses worth \$1,000 each (Syfert: 127). However, his primary commitment was to the Methodist Episcopal church, especially evangelizing in indigenous communities. In 1840 he wrote the Rev. R.R. Gurley:

Our first object was to extend our labors as far as possible into the interior, even beyond the general influence of the colony, but we soon found that our labor was lost; then we changed our labor to the natives under the influence of the colony, and we find that everything goes well (AR, September 1840: 265).

He presided over the church's annual conference on several occasions, headed the mission at Cape Palmas for a while and, under the church's auspices, founded a trade school at White Plains (AR, February 1865: 63; Wiley: 61, n.2). Concerning the school, he wrote in 1840:

Our native boys and girls make rapid improvements; they read and write ... many of them already embrace the religion of Jesus Christ. We have a considerable farm under cultivation and we intend to connect a sugar plantation and saw mill to this institution. Our workshops are doing well; we are making wheels, bedsteads, tables, and other articles, such as are useful in the colony. The native boys are remarkably ingenious (AR, September 1840: 264-5).

Until his death in 1865, he was supervising the church's work among indigenous Liberians at Cape Palmas, Sinoe and Bassa, and was planning other missions at Marshall and Queah (AR, May 1865: 147).

Summary

It was once widely accepted in American academic circles that, in the realm of ideas and values, the white, wealthy and politically powerful ACS leadership had exercised a totalizing, unidirectional hegemony in its relationship with the Liberians, most of whom were illiterate ex-slaves. Research on the repatriates had focused on their physical actions (vis à vis indigenous societies) and their reactions to European and Euro-American political forces, overlooking the

contours of their ideas and values. Liberians often emerged as unidimensional or, at best, as conduits for a neo-Victorian worldview they did not fully embrace or understand.

The sketches presented in this paper underscore the mixed motivations of the Liberian colonial leadership as well as the complexity of its relationship with the ACS. Their will to independence evolved, not only in reaction to European encroachment, but also from a self-confidence born of limited self-government. For some, the process of self-transformation was profound and dramatic, as suggested by the letters of Day and Murray.

The early Liberians, furthermore, were neither carbon copies of the ACS's leadership nor of the southern plantocracy that had once owned many of their bodies. Their worldview, as articulated in their letters, their Constitution and their actions, reflected their previous specific experience as African-Americans.

This cosmology, wittingly or otherwise, incorporated reactions to racism and segregation as well as African retentions. They were not merely Christian republicans who happened to be black. Neither were they blacks pretending at Christianity and republicanism (presumed to be real and pure only when practiced or articulated by Europeans). Theirs was an integrated worldview, each spoke of which was indispensable to the wheel of their destiny, as they defined it.

Of the 12 delegates, only Benedict and Teage seem to have grappled with the fundamental contradictions posed by some of their values and motivations. Avid readers, both seem to have absorbed the cultural relativism, secularism and rationalism of the emerging modern world and sought to resolve certain contradictory cultural impulses in that direction, Teage with his call for dropping Latin from the court system and Benedict with his judicial consistency, even where—as in his defense of a “known” murderer—religiously unpopular and politically costly.

Taken together, these sketches shed some light on the larger Liberian colony which selected these men as convention delegates. For example, voters ignored the formal criteria of leadership which had operated in the U.S. Many of the standard bars to leadership—poverty, dark-skin and slave-birth—were transcended in this context. This was epitomized by the election of a former slave, Benedict, as Convention president.

On the other hand, voters were apparently influenced by home-state loyalties in their selection of candidates. This was reinforced by the distribution of repatriates in Liberia according to their points of origin (i.e. Maryland in Africa and Mississippi in Africa). Thus, 84 percent of the delegates were from slave-holding states, compared to 88 percent of the colonists. Similarly,

Virginians—36 percent of the repatriates— contributed 42 percent of the delegates.

The delegates evidenced considerable uniformity on certain cultural values. This suggests a high degree of support among early Liberians for a set of core values that included property ownership, Christianity and a nationalism rooted in race consciousness.

Endnotes

¹"Liberians", used narrowly here, applies only to those persons (especially enfranchised adults) then living in the coastal towns effectively controlled by the Liberian state. This avoids the teleology implied by broader uses as well as gratuitous distinctions between settlers and indigenes, often imposed upon the data by various analysts.

²These figures, which do not include the neighboring colony of Maryland in Africa, may have been somewhat inflated since they were given by Samuel Benedict, constitution convention president, in a publication intended to win friends for Liberia among people of color in the United States. Also Huberich: 638, 649-50, 819.

³For the importance of the lyceums in mass education, see Lugenbeel in ACS, Jan. 20, 1846: 21.

⁴Benedict's year of birth is given as 1808 in Huberich (p. 847) and as 1792 by Shick (p. 7) who cites the Colonial Census. The latter is probably correct since, by 1840, Benedict is said to have grandchildren: see AR, March 1, 1840: 787

⁵AR gives Benedict's owner's name as Mr. Habersham but Huberich said it was William Savage.

⁶Julien Fromotin, a freed black from Santo Domingo, operated one such school for blacks from 1818 until driven underground in 1828 where it remained until the mid-1840s. See Smith: 196.

⁷Montesquieu, as one of the earliest European philosophers to elaborate a scholarly attack on slavery, must have held a special appeal to Benedict and other Liberians. It is also worth noting that the framers of the U.S. federal constitution drew heavily on the works of Montesquieu and Hale (Greene: 43). Members of the 1847 Convention seem to have had access to Poore's work (or a similar compendium) since they drew widely on various U.S. state constitutions in preparing Liberia's.

⁸For a glimpse of Davis's view see Martin: 39-42; (for Blyden's see Holden and the works of Lynch).

⁹Harris too had tried his hand at trading and, in 1843, had \$1,000 in goods and property worth \$2,500; (see Syfert: 125.)

¹⁰This convention produced the "Monrovia Draft" constitution which reportedly arrived too late to affect plans then being drafted by the ACS. (Huberich, "Monrovia Draft": 638-9, 641, 646, 677, n. 1).

¹¹Blyden's biographer, Hollis Lynch, fails to take his subject's Liberian intellectual influences fully into account. However, Blyden himself repeatedly paid homage to Teage; see: NYCJ, IV, Aug. 1854; Holden: 141; Lynch, 1978: 270, 492.

¹²See the delicately worded Art. 5, Sec. 12 of the Constitution, the writer of which tried to address this concern without antagonizing the Society; see Huberich: 670-672.

¹³This account appears to have been written by Hilary Teage who by this time had adopted an altogether adversarial posture, calling for the Bassa leaders to "receive that punishment which the laws of their country inflict upon such atrocious offenders."

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APPENDIX I
OF THE DELEGATES TO THE LIBERIAN CONSTITUTION CONVENTION

Name	Birth	Status	State	CH Occupation in U.S.	Arrival	Political Offices	Party Affiliation	Church Office	School Ad- ministration	Business Interests	Net Worth	Death
Samuel Benedict	1792	Slave	GA	X	1835	Legislator (1839) Judge (1840-54) Trustee of Liberia College (1852)	Pro-Administra- tion (1839-47) Anti-Administra- tion (1847-52)	X	X	3 Warehouses (1843) 2 Farms (1840- 54)	\$7,000 (1843)	1854
John Day	1797	Free	NC	Cabinet-maker	1830	Legislator (1835) Judge (1859-61)	X	Yes	Hope High, Monrovia Bexley School, Bassa	X	X	1861
Anthony W. Gardner	1820	Free	VA	X	1831	Legislator (1855-61) Vice pres. (1872-76) Bassa super. (1876-77) President (1878-83) Legislator (1840) Judge (1847) Senator (1847)	Republican (1855-77) True Whig (1877-83)	X	X	1 Warehouse (1843) (with S. Herring)	\$4,500 (1843)	1885
John B. Gripen	1809	Free	SC	Carpenter	1833	Legislator (1840) Judge (1847) Senator (1847)	Seys (1840)	Yes	X	X	X	1847
Amos Herring	1794	Slave	VA	Cabinet-maker	1833	President (1871-72) (with Dunbar/Sherman)	Seys (1840)	Yes	X	X	X	1873
Elijah Johnson	1787	Free	NE?	Missionary	1822	Acting gov. (1822) Commissary (1822) Drill master (1822) Acting gov. (1824) Militia gen. (1835) Legislator (1834) Sec. of state (1840) Assist. Editor, <i>Liberia Herald</i> (1845) Militia gen. (1847-76) Senator (1847) Sec. of treasury (1852) Sec. of state (1853) ACS agent (1844-49)	Pro-Administra- tion (1822-49)	Yes	White Plains mission	X	Poor (1849)	1849
John N. Lewis	1791	Free	VA	X	1824	Legislator (1834) Sec. of state (1840) Assist. Editor, <i>Liberia Herald</i> (1845) Militia gen. (1847-76) Senator (1847) Sec. of treasury (1852) Sec. of state (1853) ACS agent (1844-49)	Pro-Administra- tion (1834-53)	X	X	Member of Roberts and Lewis (1837) Owned these ships: R.R. Gorley (1835) Susannah (1849) Hannah (1850) Plunket (1852) Echo (1853)	X	1876
Richard E. Murray	1798	Slave	SC	Missionary	1843	Since gov. (1844-48) ACS agent (1844-1856)	X	Yes	X	X	\$28 (1856)	1856
Jacob W. Prout	1804	Free	MD	Doctor	1826	ACS agent (1844-1856) Registrar (1832) ACS doctor (1840)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hilary Teague	1802	Free	VA	X	1825	Sec. of state (1835-39) Herald editor (1835-49) Constitution sec. (1838) Senator (1847-50) Attorney gen. (1850-51) Sec. of state (1852-53)	Pro-Administra- tion (1835-47)	Yes	X	1 Vessel (1829-44) 5 Warehouses (1843) 1 Warehouse (1845) Owned eight vessels	\$57,000 (1843)	1853
Ephraim Titler	1800	Free	NY	Missionary	1834	X	X	Yes	X	X	X	X
Beverly R. Wilson	1799	Free	VA	X	1834	Legislator (1840) Judge	Seys (1840)	Yes	White Plains mission	2 Warehouses (1843)	\$3,000 (1843)	1865

APPENDIX II

LETTER FROM JACOB W. PROUT, SECRETARY TO THE 1847 CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Memoria 11th May '33

Respected Friends

I am happy to have an opportunity of communicating a few lines, to let you know something about us. We had had a few deaths since you left, and the Colony, has been quite unheathly for a short time, but it has gradually recovered; & yet continue to give the sick all the aid in my power in obedience, to your instructions, We have had one more Political excitement since you left, but it ended as it has, an a Government men were 20, or 30 to one Joseph H. Davis continues unfriendly & an avowed enemy to the Col. & the Col. Society. I hope that you will strive to get some a permanent situation with the Boards as long that is as we, harbour with merit it; I shall be happy when I shall learn that you have arrived safe and in good health, and that you found your family in good health and spirits. I most heartily congratulate you on your Appointment to Agent of Am. Col. Society, the title conferred on you goes well with the exercise, but from what I am told our friend Jacob Davis does not see it as well you know him to make allowance for him. I am your friend.

Yours truly
Jacob W. Prout

REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE SIMON GRATZ COLLECTION.
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Tribe and Chiefdom on the Windward Coast¹

Warren L. d'Azevedo

It has been one hundred and fifty years since the occupation of the Liberian coast by American colonists, and there were at least three centuries of prior contact with Europeans. Yet knowledge of the indigenous peoples of the area has remained exceedingly sparse despite the expansion of the Liberian nation since the late nineteenth century, and extensive intercourse with the country on the part of Europeans and Americans. By the 1940's there were scarcely a dozen studies of sufficient detail to provide some access to the cultures of this complex area.² During the past two decades the pace of ethnographic research has quickened in Liberia, though the meager roster of published studies represents work pursued on various levels of orientation and emphasis, and contain few comprehensive descriptions of the social organization of any one of the numerous subgroups.³ There are large sections of the country about which nothing is known, and there are important unanswered questions about peoples already studied.

This situation is in marked contrast to that of surrounding areas in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and the Ivory Coast where linguistic, historical, and ethnographic investigation has produced a relatively rich body of materials which, in a few instances, deal with peoples whose distribution extends beyond the national boundaries of Liberia.⁴ Moreover, there has been a recent development of competent historiographic and ethnohistorical research which, though mainly focusing on the reconstruction and analysis of events external to Liberia itself, is of prime importance for the understanding of the cultural setting of the entire region.⁵ The most significant aspect of these accumulating investigations is that they are beginning to reveal the regional historical processes which have conditioned the emergence of local groups as they exist today. At the same time, the necessity is clearly indicated for reassessing a number of conventions of scholarship which have become standard in the literature.

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Designations for Social Units

There are two concepts which have permeated the writings about Liberian peoples and which are seldom defined by those who use them. These are the concepts of "tribe" and "chiefdom". Both are functions of a heritage of Euroamerican systems of classification, and their ready application to a wide range of disparate social phenomena by modern investigators has tended to oversimplify and distort ethnographic observation. They have been used uncritically as heuristic devices to denote some vague cultural entity (a tribe), on the one hand, or some ostensibly autonomous and viable sociopolitical unit (a chiefdom) on the other. Villages, "clans," chiefdoms, tribes, and nations are reified into the "culture" or "society" of the Mano (Ma), the Kpelle, the Vai, the Kissi, the Mende, or the Liberians, and considerable ambiguity is tolerated with regard to the definition of these terms or the actual social arrangements and interrelations to which they refer. The confusion is compounded by the fact that Africans, too, have adopted these terms, accommodating them not only to traditional native concepts but also to the alien policy of a national government whose dominant class has imposed its own peculiar interpretation of Western notions of cultural and political reality during the arduous process effecting administrative control.

The difficulties which are presented by such a situation are not unique to the Liberian instance, but have appeared as part of the intellectual baggage transported by members of western civilization to the remotest corners of the world. Wherever Europeans went during the first two or three centuries of expansion and exploration, they were primarily concerned with the discovery of resources, the identification of familiar political entities such as "Kingdoms" or "Nations," and the establishment of the kind of relations with existing or contrived centers of power which would ensure effective exploitation. The model of European nationalism and historical development was the guide to interpretation of all events and social forms encountered in the outer world. With the emergence of scientific ethnology in the late nineteenth century, the legacy of the past was maintained in the bias toward the study of "tribal cultures," each with distinct territorial boundaries, a homogeneous population, and a national character. The dynamics of historical process, mobility, and local cultural pluralism were given minimal attention as ethnologists and administrators pressed to fill the landscape with contiguous and bounded "tribes" or "nations," conceived as discrete sociopolitical groupings for purposes of study and diplomacy. These also became "cultures" and "societies" whose customs and social organization were described in the static terms of a reconstructed traditional past devoid of internal change, variation, or external relations.

Modern social scientists have been increasingly critical of this earlier approach and have extensively refined the problem of identifying units of social

observation. This new orientation was suggested by Nadel when he wrote in 1951:

Paradoxically, though every anthropologist (or sociologist or historian) starts with a more or less definite idea about the society or societies he proposes to study, it is extremely difficult to state precisely, in general terms, what constitutes a society. For all practical purposes this difficulty may seem negligible, if it exists at all. Thus in the case of small island communities or peoples in some other fashion physically separated from their neighbors the extent of their societies will hardly be in doubt. In other situations we could at least set out with some rough and ready criterion, say, common language or political allegiance, planning to refine it as we go along. Or we might perhaps follow some existing convention of calling a certain population, known by a certain name, a 'people' or a 'tribe,' and equate these terms expediently with 'society'. Yet when we attempt to analyze our terms and to give them a validity not depending on chance conditions or expediency, the obviousness of societies soon disappears.⁶

This statement is particularly pertinent for the situation in Liberia where most research has been conducted without critical examination of concepts and where so-called tribes have been assigned distinctive cultural features or identified with a type of society through data collected from a restricted area of investigation. Together with the concretization of these constructs by the inexorable process of national administrative subjugation, the resulting ethnographic picture of Liberia is one of essentially spurious groupings based upon misinformation and expediency. It might have been expected that the work of the past twenty years would yield some reassessment of the problem, but this has not been the case. Most of us who have worked in the region failed to free ourselves of certain conventions of earlier scholarship which militate against the recognition of its intricate history and social complexity.

Before dealing with the relevance of the concept of "tribe" in the Liberian context, it may be useful to review briefly some of the definitional elements with which it has become associated. First, there is the criterion of a common language which, in some instances, has been relied upon solely for the determination of an "ethnic" or "tribal" group. This involves the determination of the predominance of a given language and its dialectic variation within a given area, or the extent of mutual intelligibility of speech claimed by the people themselves. A second criterion is that of the occupation of a recognized territory associated with a people who refer to themselves by the same name. It is usually presumed that the territory is defended against unsanctioned intrusion from alien peoples with a different name, different language and customs.

This brings us to a third criterion involving a distinctive culture and some sort of "sense of belonging." The non-member may be marked by differences in physical appearance, dress, or any number of beliefs and practices deemed foreign by the in-group. A fourth, and closely related criterion is the existence of some form of political or social coherence either on the level of a "pan-tribal" sphere of authority or on the level of clusters of independent units which nevertheless share a closer coordination of activities with one another than with alien groups. The cohesion between such subgroups may be produced by a myth of common origin, the extension of kin ties through intermarriage, and traditionalized pacts of alliance. There may be the recognition of a common "citizenship" by virtue of membership in one or another of the linked units, or through associations that transcend the local group.

When Europeans set about identifying and classifying the native peoples they encountered in the vast new world of exploration, the coasts of continents were soon landscaped like patchwork quilts with the fixed boundaries of tribes defined by these or sometimes purely arbitrary criteria. Superimposed upon the whole—and quite independent of tribal distributions—there began to appear the continually changing and obviously more crucial boundaries of colonial or emerging national enclaves. In Liberia, for example, there is not one "tribe" on the borders of the country whose ascribed boundaries are not intersected by those of Sierra Leone, Guinea, or Ivory Coast. Yet territorial claims or complaints of social vivisection, until recently, have not been raised at all by "tribes," but rather by the aspiring and competing colonial or national entities that contain them. The defensive behavior of the latter appears to be organic, while that of the former seems somewhat disorganized or even non-existent. Nevertheless, tribes continue to enjoy a vigorous reality in the reports of scientific observers and in the normative parlance of laymen. Belated as it may be, we have reached the point in Liberian research where inquiry about the relevance and empirical validity of this concept is urgently required. We can begin with the four criteria listed above as they may apply to the Liberian setting.

The Criterion of "Common Language"

Since earliest European contact with the Windward Coast, observers have noted the remarkable complexity of language distribution and the multilingualism of the people. Not only do regular speakers of many different languages live interspersed in the same area, but individuals are able to communicate adequately in the languages of peoples in adjacent areas. Moreover, various lingua franca have been in use for centuries along the coast and in the interior. Despite the general use of English or French, the situation is much the same today. There is scarcely a group in modern western Liberia which is not at least bilingual quite apart from the use of European languages. The Belle (Kuwa) people use Loma as their major language of commerce, and only a few

continue to speak Belle among themselves. In the Bopolu section, Mandingo (Malinke), Bandi, Kpelle, and Gola are spoken as alternative languages by many individuals and, in earlier periods, Dei and Vai had functioned as trade languages. One hundred years ago, when Bopolu was a thriving center of trade and political power, Edward Wilmot Blyden reported that King Momolu spoke not only English, but could "converse fluently in all of the languages of the tribes which he holds under his jurisdiction—nearly one dozen different and distinct languages."⁷

The Gola and Kpelle of the Fauma, Deng, and Todi sections have shared their languages fully for more than a century and, in the latter section, Bassa has been a shared language as well. Most Dei speak Gola fluently and many also speak Vai. Throughout the Gola sections near the coast, Vai, Dei, and Kpelle are employed with varying degrees of proficiency. Further to the west in the Vai and Gola Kone sections and, in Gawulu and Pokpa, languages such as Gola, Vai, and Mende are widely shared. In the Kongba Gola region to the northwest, Mende is spoken fluently by most Gola, and the two languages are considered intermingled in Guma and in the Mende sections of Sierra Leone along the upper Mano River. A similar situation obtains among the Gola and Bandi of adjacent sections in the northeast. It should be noted that this multilingualism involves not merely the sharing of dialects of similar languages, but of mutually unintelligible languages representing as many as three distinct language families.

The examples given above are all from western and northern Liberia where I have had some first-hand experience. There is little information of this kind for the southeastern areas where speakers of Kwa languages predominate (Bassa, Kru, Kran, Grebo, etc.). There is indication, however, that most of these languages and their numerous dialects are mutually intelligible over wide areas. Other features which seem to distinguish the region south of the St. Paul River from the north are low population density, smaller and relatively more homogeneous political units, less intensive agriculture, absence of the Poro and Sande secret associations, little development of markets, trade routes or confederacies, and an apparently distinct historical setting insulated from the heterogeneous and populous northwest.¹ Further work in the area, however, may reveal that similar historical processes were operative here as well as in the north.

The Criterion of "Recognized Territory"

Though misinformation and administrative expediency have affected the notions of tribal distribution that persists in Liberia, Africans and foreign observers alike seem to share the belief that tribal boundaries denote significant linguistic and socially coherent populations. In fact, it is an overriding assumption that the boundaries are based on some real, if not recorded, knowledge and that one would actually find a clear-cut difference in language, culture, and self-identification of people as one crossed from one side of such a boundary to

the other. Any alert observer who has travelled through the country knows this is just not so. Certainly every ethnographer is bound to discover that it is not so; yet the failure of the literature to note this fact and to report the actual situation attests to the tenacity of the intellectual tradition that compels us to define social space in terms of definite and contiguous territories.

The recent efforts of participants in the Ethnographic Survey of Liberia have brought many of these problems to the fore. Tribal and linguistic maps produced by various investigators in the past are so divergent as to be little more than sources of confusion. With the aim of correcting this situation, the Survey solicited the aid of those who had undertaken field research in various sections of Liberia and, in some instances, initiated new investigation in areas where previous work had not been done. The first tentative results have been presented for northwestern and central Liberia.² The maps for the western sections are a considerable advance over previous versions in that they minimize "tribal" extensions and give emphasis to the boundaries of named administrative units and subdivisions about which there has been little previous systematically compiled information or graphic representation. When similar work is completed for the central and southeastern sections, the material will have been made available for more precise identification of Liberian peoples in terms of the specific modern sociopolitical entities of which they are a part on various levels of national organization. Though these maps should not be construed as indicating cultural-historical or linguistic distributions in the simplistic sense that the term "tribe" has been employed, undoubtedly many will interpret them in this manner.

Unfortunately, the brief discussions which have accompanied the presentation of the first of these maps do not make explicit what they actually represent. As one of the compilers, I can attest to the fact that we had many doubts about these matters but were not prepared to summarize or evaluate what had been learned in the process of mapping. It is to be hoped that before any final versions are prepared, those who participated in the project will have an opportunity to cooperate in the writing of critical commentaries. Some of the points which might be discussed bear directly upon the argument of this paper. The attempts to construct meaningful maps have highlighted facts which ethnographers must surely have recognized in the past, but which are rarely suggested in their work. In no instance, for example, can it be demonstrated that the present "clan", chieftdom, county or other administrative divisions of Liberia reflect sociopolitical arrangements of any historical depth prior to the subjugation of the interior by the national government, though Liberian officials and others have generally accepted this view. However, these divisions have historical importance insofar as they are the results of intensive inter-group conflict precipitated by an increasingly aggressive and effective government policy after the turn of the nineteenth century, and of negotiations and

compromises among contending parties.³ They represent sociopolitical conditions which existed at the time when the government was in the process of imposing its model of indirect rule developed and interpreted primarily by the administrations of Arthur and Edwin Barclay. But these stabilized conditions were not "traditional" in the static sense of having existed unchanged through a timeless pristine antiquity. Ethnohistorical evidence reveals that the region has undergone vast demographic and ecological transition in past centuries and that there is no section that has not experienced continual flux of populations and profound shifts in cultural orientation and social forms.⁴

This may help to explain why efforts to reconstruct the ostensibly original distribution of languages, tribal groups or even political communities have yielded to this date such ambiguous and often contradictory results. Local persons appear to be very confused informants when pressed for definitive data that will satisfy the investigator's predilection for bounded aboriginal distributions. Moreover, the data is frequently vastly divergent from informant to informant. The fact of the matter is that it is the observer who has confused the issue by failing to meet the requirements of patient and arduous ethnohistorical work. Local persons represent numerous subgroups whose particular traditions may be quite different in legends of origin, internal development, genealogical structure, status, and relation to epochal events. Knowledge which is a property of one group may be disclaimed or unknown to others. Villages and chiefdoms have come into existence and withered away. Whole areas have altered in predominant language and come under the domination of new groups. Unless considerable time is given to the collection and analysis of these intricate local traditions, the investigator is often inclined to attribute the apparent discontinuities and contradictions to a breakdown of cultural integrity due to the trauma of European contact, conquest, and westernization.

The Criterion of "Distinctive Culture"

Much that has passed for ethnohistorical work with regard to this region has given peculiar emphasis to the idea of massive migrations of peoples into the coastal area over past centuries. These movements are purported to account for the appearance of the progenitors of modern "tribes," bringing with them the languages, the cultural configurations, and the group names characteristic of their present-day descendants. Views of this kind are often derived from a misinterpretation of local oral tradition by which the legends of origin of particular subgroups are reified to represent the history of an entire people. P.E.H. Hair has pointed out that most of the named ethnolinguistic units along the Guinea Coast can be identified in Portuguese and other European records before the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁵ Though the geographic space attributed to them seems to have expanded and contracted over time, they show

a remarkable conformity to the placement of named groups on the coast today.⁶ Hair suggests that the ethnohistorian's questions should be less concerned with the earlier preoccupation with "Where did the people here come from?" than with the more profitable concern for "When and how did the people living in this place come to be the people they are today?"

The modern ethnographer cannot but concur in this view. The emphasis on tracing routes of migration and preparing chronicles of conquests of and by rival groups based on narrowly focused studies of oral tradition has tended to divert attention from a fundamental problem of discerning the developmental processes that have given rise to the various groupings that are known today. On the other hand, we know that this region has been the arena of a continuous influx of heterogeneous peoples over the past four or five centuries, of competition with regard to trade and the control of strategic territory, of shifting centers of economic and political power. Though, as Hair has shown, the names and a few items of vocabulary collected from early peoples along the coast seem to indicate continuity for ethnolinguistic entities that exist there today, we must keep in mind that we know almost nothing about the actual size or composition of these earlier units, their sociopolitical structure, or their relations with one another. The phenomena of merging, fissioning, expansion and decline of heterogeneous groups that are so richly detailed in the oral traditions pertaining to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be considered to have been absent in the seventeenth or sixteenth centuries. The existence of a name and a language such as Vai on the coast in the sixteenth century does not tell us that we are dealing with the same "ethnolinguistic" entity that we know by that name today any more than the name and culture of present day Athens may be said to constitute a continuity for the situation which obtained in that place five or twenty-five centuries ago. Societies and cultures, or even "ethnic groups," cannot be deduced from names or isolated lexical items.

Furthermore, it should also be kept in mind that the coastal littoral seems to have had a denser population than did the large forest area intervening between the coast and the far interior plateaus of Guinea. Groups who held the coast defended their control of the salt pans and European trade tenaciously. Oral traditions of western Liberia abundantly confirm that migrant groups moved westward into the coastal forests because it represented a frontier of opportunity for those that could establish themselves as intermediaries in the commerce between the coast and interior markets. Moreover, these traditions underscore the fact that peoples such as the Vai and Dei actively prevented interior groups from gaining direct access to the sea. Their chiefdoms figure as powerful custodial centers of trade from the earliest period of contact with Europeans, while to the interior numerous groups slowly drifted into the forest sections forming new villages and chiefdoms from the constant flow of migrants and competing for advantage in trade. Thus the coast itself was not a frontier area,

while the immediate interior was a vast provincial reserve available for exploitation.

The continuities which Hair has derived from research of early documents are placed in dynamic perspective by the materials of local oral history. However, the stability he suggests for the ethnolinguistic units along the coast needs to be qualified for the western Liberian section at least. The people known as Vai, for example, were probably not in their present position on the coast before the early sixteenth century, and this view is confirmed in European accounts as well as in the traditions of all surrounding peoples. In their own traditions, as well as those of the Gola, they originated from small bands of "Mandingo" migrants who sojourned for generations in the area now occupied by people known as the Kono, and among the interior Gola of the upper Mano River. The Vai are not considered Mandingo, but a new people resulting from intermarriage and cultural assimilation with their hosts. It is said that in those days most Gola could speak and understand the Vai language, but that the Vai people found the Gola language too difficult.⁷ The Vai who moved onto the coast were the founders of the chiefdoms and population known by that name, while those who remained in the interior became known as Kono. Many others were absorbed among the Gola. The coastal Vai mingled with peoples who had inhabited the coast before them—the Dei and the Krim. The Dei, who are not mentioned by that name in European reports prior to the eighteenth century, nevertheless figure in Vai and Gola tradition as peoples who had occupied most of the coastline from the St. Paul to the Mano rivers in ancient times, and who controlled the forest areas and trade as far inland as the town known as Bopolu today. They are said to be closely related in language and certain customs to the peoples now known as Bassa, but that they have become so intermingled with the Vai and Gola as to be almost one people with them. The people known as Gola have experienced enormous westward expansion within recent centuries. They once occupied areas in Sierra Leone and northern Liberia that later became inhabited by people called the Mende and Bandi. The histories of the spread of their new chiefdoms into the forests southeast of the Lofa River and over the St. Paul River show that this extension began in the eighteenth century and was only interrupted by Liberian government intervention in the early twentieth century. In the process of southward expansion they mingled with and absorbed Dei, Kpelle, and Bassa peoples into units which often asserted a predominant Gola identity in language and traditions. For at least two centuries the area about Bopolu was a polyglot complex of Vai, Dei, Mandingo, Kpelle, Bandi, and other peoples periodically organized into aggressive confederacies and constituting a supreme example of the kind of cultural pluralism which is characteristic of the entire region.

The above résumé almost unavoidably lapses into the convention of speaking of movements and intermingling of "peoples" as though the names groups had

a real existence as "tribes" or "ethnolinguistic units" acting out historical events. But it must be emphasized that these occurrences did not involve confrontations between massive and unitary entities. It involved, rather, interrelations among small independent human groups spreading out and merging with other groups to form new units in which any one of a number of "ethnic" traditions might predominate, depending upon historical circumstances. In such a context the term "tribe" in its standard definition can scarcely comprehend the realities of cultural pluralism, multilingualism and multiple local traditions of origin and "ethnicity" which obtain within situations that are only superficially—and frequently only temporarily—characterized by a predominant "tribal" orientation.⁸ Throughout northern and western Liberia, institutional structures and most cultural features are so generally distributed that it is no exaggeration to suggest that tribal identification is as much a matter of individual choice as of the ascribed status of birth, language or distinctive customs.

In view of these facts, the conventional classification of the Liberian population into bounded tribal areas and the uncritical use of tribal categorizations by ethnographers are matters of considerable import. The lack of systematic ethnohistorical investigation or of detailed study of the composition of local groups and their external relations has retarded recognition of some of the most significant aspects of the region. Native concepts of grouping present a quite different picture than that imposed by Euroamerican conventions, though in recent times government administrative policies have modified traditional concepts by creating conditions in which an emergent "tribalism" is inadvertently reinforced. In this sense, the tribes of Liberia as they are designated today are more the consequence of acculturative processes set in motion by progressive nationalization than they are of any historical continuities of culture, extending into the remote past. A similar point has been raised by Morton Fried in the context of political evolutionary theory. He writes that:

...most tribes seems to be secondary phenomena in a very specific sense: They may well be the product of processes stimulated by the appearance of relatively highly organized societies amidst other societies which are organized much more simply. If this can be demonstrated, tribalism can be viewed as a reaction to the formation of complex political structure rather than a necessary preliminary stage in its evolution ... These are the "tribes," so-called, that spring up in colonial situation...⁹

Considerations of this kind do not suggest that tribes and tribalism are not empirical phenomena. But they do suggest that these phenomena may have appeared fairly recently and that they may have played a peculiarly misleading role in ethnographic interpretations.

The problem is compounded by the fact that indigenous Liberian peoples, like most people anywhere, do in fact see themselves as connected with particular cultural traditions which have provided them with ways of rationalizing their group affiliation and distinguishing themselves from others. Language is perhaps the most usual identifying feature in this respect—one's own language of special competence, or that of one's parents and kinship group. Less generally, specific customs presumed to be associated with people speaking the same language are appealed to. For example, one learns that it is common knowledge among the Gola that "we do not eat dog as the Loma do," or that "the Mandingo do not have Poro," or that "the Kissi file their teeth," and "the Belle eat people". The inventory of distinctions of this sort is very long and may include reference to mutilations, dress, character traits, marriage practices, family organization, special associations, diet, agriculture, and technology. But these items of ethnocentric world view are highly generalized and do not seem to be fundamental to actual social relations and on-going group solidarity. What is really fundamental is proximity, the existence of traceable kinship ties, and a shared body of historical traditions. The sense of identity is shaped by commitment to the local community rather than by ethnic affiliations and is frequently determined independently of the language or group localities of early socialization. Individuals are presented with a wide range of alternatives for group attachment, and membership may be validated by marriage, service, wealth, and various effective expressions of solidarity. Allegiance may be transferred from one group to another as a function of competitive recruitment and mutual advantage.

"Ethnicity" is a decisively limiting factor in these arrangements only where persons considered to be truly alien or "foreign" are involved. These are persons from distant places whose languages are unfamiliar, whose customs are thought to be reprehensible, and with whose people there has been no mutually recognized tradition of sociopolitical interaction. For peoples in western Liberia this sense of mutuality extends outward with diminishing intensity to include northern peoples such as the Mende and Kissi, and numerous eastern peoples such as the Bandi, Loma, and Malinke ("Mandingo"). Beyond this general perimeter, people are increasingly foreign, but not necessarily feared or despised. To the southeast, however, with the exception of Kpelle and Bassa, the people are held to be notoriously alien, particularly the Kru and Grebo groups along the coast. This regional separation is most obviously referable to the distribution of the Poro type of secret associations which have their major concentration in western Liberia and southern Sierra Leone, though other factors are also to be accounted.¹⁰

The tolerance of ethnic pluralism, as well as of ethnic ambiguity among peoples of this area, is not incompatible with the fact that particular traditions of ethnicity may predominate in local groups over long periods of their history,

or may shift or alternate. Circumstances which may affect the dominance of one tradition or another are the ethnic identities claimed by the descent groups representing the lineage of the founders of towns and chiefdoms, by some legendary or contemporary heroic leader, or by the fortuitous conditions attending the involvement of any unit in a larger sphere of political alliance. But in recent times this flexible cohesive function of ethnic lore has been restructured within the artificial dimensions of a new tribalism. Much of the confusion over the delineation of "clans," "chiefdoms" and, later, "Paramount Chieftaincies" during the early twentieth century arose from contradictions between government models of immutable tribal territories or cultures and indigenous principles of organization involving undulating space and mobile populations within sections controlled by successions of loosely allied core groups. The suppression of warfare, restrictions on trade and mobility, and the usurpation of prerogatives in the selection of chiefs created the conditions under which national policies of hinterland reorganization could be imposed.

The Criterion of "Sociopolitical Coherence"

In the 1930's and 1940's, following effective government subjugation of the old Western Province, a series of territorial claims were pressed by interior leaders in terms virtually unprecedented in the history of the area. They were clearly opportunistic responses to the new territorially and ethnically defined administrative units established by government which had curtailed the free play of instrumental options characteristic of the traditional system. The endemic political astuteness of native leaders soon seized on the potentialities of these new principles for the extension and legitimization of spheres of "Tribal Authority" in terms that were at least superficially accommodated to official policy. One obvious means of exploiting the situation was to activate latent and residual concepts of ethnicity. During the period of intensive territorial dispute referred to above, factionalism based on a required public commitment to "tribal" identity became so extreme that alliances among ancient lineages and their mixed descent groups were torn asunder, often resulting in the physical separation of members of ostensibly ethnic segments of long-established corporate groups. The internal disruption and fragmentation of local units nevertheless produced "tribes" and "tribal territories" of a new kind, though for many elements of the population the change was merely a matter of switching ethnic identification to that of the local dominant group by simple affirmation.

Traditional of local group cohesion avoided confrontations of this sort in the interests of an overriding concern for community viability. The formation and maintenance of effective social units depended upon the integration of attached groups through intermarriage and the involvement of their elders in political councils. Ethnic identities were not actively suppressed

towards ends of homogeneity, but were kept in store as potential instruments of diplomacy or opportunistic shifts in allegiance.

These p were operative on the level of individual action as well as on the level of domestic and kinship groups, or larger social units. Where feasible, individuals and groups stressed heterogeneity as a core value, putting forward one or another ethnic identification for purposes of expediency and symbolic unity. The genealogies of the ruling patrilineages in many sections known as Vai, Dei Gola, or Kpelle today reveal successive phases of shifting orientation of the lineages, as well as of the peoples they control, to "tribal" affiliation. Investigation invariably discloses that these changes were responses to current political and economic circumstances. They were seldom precipitous, but were brought about by subtle and carefully balanced understandings among representatives of major segments in pursuit of collective interests. However, the emergent "tribalism" of the past forty or more years has drastically altered the balance of these traditional relations and has imposed upon them a commitment to the inflexible and arbitrary entities of hinterland administration, each stamped with the seal of a contrived ethnic unity. The disrupted processes of indigenous development and striving for federation have been reoriented to operate within relatively exclusive "tribal" sectors over which is imposed the monolithic structure of national power. Thus "tribalism," the avowed enemy of national unity, has been a product of Liberian nationalization itself, and the readiness with which native institutions and aspiring leaders adapted themselves to the new concept has implications for the course of development of the Liberian nation which have not yet been appreciated by students of the country.

Ethnologists have been slow to assess the impact which the conventional construct of bounded tribal cultures and the empirical reality of modern tribalism has had on their own work or on the resource literature of earlier scholars to which they frequently defer. The consequences are not inconsiderable, for they may have obscured our understanding not only of native institutions but those of the developing nation which has been partially shaped by the indigenous social system. In particular, they have biased our analysis of unit societies and political systems. In the course of my own initial work among the Gola I was continually impressed by the cultural complexity and structural variation within local societies. I recognized that this was in part referable to adaptive processes among diverse peoples who had been involved in intensive relations with one another for centuries, but the tendency was for this awareness to be overshadowed by a conventional treatment of the materials which gives the impression that they are distinctively "Gola" and function in a homogeneous tribal space.¹¹ Later field work and reappraisal of previous data strengthened the view that not only were there a number of types of political units coexisting among peoples known as Gola at any point in their history, but also that these types had a general distribution among all peoples of the western interior. The

predominance of one type in a subregion could not be attributed to "ethnic" patterns, but rather to historical circumstances. Furthermore, the local histories of these units reveal that they had developed on the basis of intricate ethnic and structural compromises among participating groups.

There were in the nineteenth century at least four types of political organization in the western Liberian hinterland represented by numerous contemporaneous and interacting units. One of these was the migrant band composed of a leader accompanied by a group of his kinsmen together with any number of unrelated followers and slaves. Bands of this kind varied in size from less than a score of persons to hundreds.¹² They were landless groups moving from place to place, forming temporary attachments with permanently established units, then continuing on in search of advantageous situations.¹³ This process might take a generation or more involving constant fissioning into subgroups, each recruiting new members and seeking their separate fortunes.

A second type of organization was the conservative village chiefdom in which land ownership and authority was vested in the patrilineage of the founder. The legends of origin of all such chiefdoms invariably describe the founders as part of a group of migrants who settled in the area and built the first town. The leader of the group and his agnates become the founding ancestors of the core lineage which in theory owns the land and whose members have exclusive rights to major secular and sacred offices. But there are also citizens of the chiefdom who are members of lineages whose ancestors were either secondary members of the contingent of the founder or persons who had attached themselves at some point in the history of the chiefdom. Through processes of intermarriage, ambipatrilineal descent and genealogical fiction, such persons are frequently integrated into the core lineage. Nevertheless, the tradition of "follower" lineages connected to the founders through affinal relations is maintained for large sections of the population for whom privileges of citizenship are theoretically alienable. Chiefdoms of this kind may be deemed conservative insofar as they are relatively small, insular, and guided primarily by organizational principles based upon kinship and descent.

A third type of organization may be termed the exploitive expanding chiefdom. These were larger more heterogeneous units which had incorporated numerous attached subgroups in the interest of increased population and effective exploitation of the natural and social environment. Though the lore of a founding patrilineage might persist in ritual and be appealed to in certain matters involving titles and other rights, the actual situation was one of a number of competing lineages ameliorating their differences through representation on councils of elders and in the Poro association under the cohesive pressure of a strong leader. Rulers of chiefdoms of this type were frequently men of great personal wealth or prowess in war. Clientship and mercenary armies tended to diminish the overriding influence of kinship and

provided the ruler with a high degree of control of traditional institutions through the selection of officials responsive to his patronage. As a result, institutions such as Poro became an instrument of centralized integration for more complex units than was the case for the conservative segmentary chiefdoms.

A fourth type of organization was the confederation of these different kinds of units into even larger entities under the domination of a powerful chiefdom or despotic warrior ruler. The emergence of Sau Bosu as a ruler of what was known as the Kondo Confederacy at Bopolu in the early nineteenth century is almost the single reference to such an arrangement in the literature on Liberia. But confederacies of various scale and composition have appeared and disappeared continually throughout the history of the region. They seldom persisted beyond the lifetime of the ruler whose aspirations and skill had created them. Though principles of kinship might continue to provide the model for political organization within participating units and strengthen cohesion among them by the diplomacy of intermarriage, the tenuous political authority in these confederacies was wielded by what was essentially an aristocracy of powerful leaders representing diverse and unrelated groups held together by opportunistic fealty to a supreme ruler. The concentration of power by such a ruler involved the acquisition of great wealth by which he could surround himself with loyal supporters recruited from outside or within his constituency and assert his domination over subgroups and traditional institutions.

A critical feature of these units of any type is that they were rarely if ever ethnically homogeneous. Though particular traditions of ethnicity might predominate among high status lineage-segments for periods of time, every political unit also contained peoples who were holders to rival traditions and whose descent groups were often distinguished through residence in prescribed quarters of villages or by usufruct rights to the use of certain lands. Multilingualism was weighted in favor of the temporarily dominant language, but other languages were functional in external relations and sometimes rose to predominance as the demographic and political fortunes of the unit altered. This heterogeneity was most pronounced in rapidly expanding and aggressive chiefdoms or confederacies, yet local histories reveal that it also was present in the most minimal mobile units as well as in the conservative chiefdoms mentioned above.

Units of these variant types coexisted throughout the history of the region. They also identify phases of development in the emergence of the more complex chiefdoms and sub-regional traditions of alliance that can be ascertained today. Government subjugation of the interior during the early twentieth century stabilized and restricted these vigorous processes of adaptive change. Social units were "frozen" into the forms of internal relations and boundaries that reflect the situation that had obtained at the time of government intervention.

Thus, most "clans" of Liberian administrative designation today are fossilized artifacts of indigenous organization representing the minimal political subdivisions with which the Liberian government had established relations. The greater part of these were units of the second and third types described above. To a similar extent, most Paramount Chiefdoms are a mere residue of highly flexible coalitions that existed among traditional units at the time of imposition of government policy. The consequences of termination of warfare and mobility among these groups are expressed in the intensive factionalism and jurisdictional disputes over territory that have characterized these sections since the turn of the century.

Polity and Ethnicity

Perhaps because he has devoted considerable attention to ethnohistorical data, Kenneth Little has been able to present Mende political structure in multidimensional and diachronic context. Implicit in his earlier work is the theme of vigorous power politics and the susceptibility of the social system to traditional as well as new forms of manipulation.¹⁴ But the exposition of these features is more clearly focused and elaborated in his later analysis which shows that the Mende political system was not one of static and egalitarian checks and balances between leaders, councils, and associations, but one in which a leader often succeeded in centralizing considerable control in his office through military exploits and the commandeering of support from lesser leaders and the powerful secret associations.¹⁵ He makes the cogent observation that the status of rulers and political units was frequently misrepresented and misunderstood by Europeans and that interpretations were further distorted by confusing the situation that existed in pre-colonial times with a fundamentally different situation. Colonial administration sub-divided spheres of political hegemony into minimal units and exercised jurisdiction in the recognition of cooperative individuals as chiefs. The more extensive political relations of the past, involving incorporation of smaller groups by larger groups and the use of Poro as a means of enforcing and legitimizing power, were forgotten and the new arrangements were construed to represent the aboriginal system. Little writes:

Needless to say, quite apart from the question of Poro, the indigenous system was much more complex than this. True, a number of individual chiefdoms existed, each relatively independent and under the control of its own chief, sub-chiefs, and headmen. But, according both to tradition and the earliest written accounts of conditions in the Guinea Coast, the underlying situation involved an intricate network of political ties and affiliations corresponding, in some ways, to quite large hegemonies or confederacies.¹⁶

Though Little does not include the phenomenon of ethnic diversity as a factor influencing the development of indigenous Mende social organization,¹⁷ he does describe the historical setting and political structure by which such diversity could be tolerated. His material is far richer in this regard than what has been produced in the way of ethnographic studies among peoples in Liberia to the south of the Mende.

Ubiquitous Petty Monarchies

The major ethnography of any specific people in the Liberian area has been Westermann's detailed work on the Kpelle.¹⁸ Valuable as this work is in the context of the sparse repository of Liberian social research, it must be pointed out that Westermann managed to write a lengthy book about ostensibly Kpelle culture from materials collected almost exclusively from chiefdoms along the St. Paul River, where the Gola language and a Gola ethnic identity had predominated for more than a century. This fact is vaguely indicated in passing, but it does not enter into his description of what is purported to be distinctive Kpelle social organization. He was apparently convinced—as ethnographers sometimes are—that if one is working with a Kpelle speaker, for example, one is eliciting a Kpelle culture, though the informant's relatives, next-door neighbors or chiefs may be in many instances speakers of Gola.

The kind of political units Westermann describes are essentially those of the "clans" and paramount chieftaincies of early twentieth century Liberia given a static timelessness by an ahistorical approach to ethnographic reconstruction. The outlines of their structure could be applied to any of the societies of the conservative village chiefdom type described above and in almost any section of western Liberia regardless of "tribe". Nevertheless, the picture presented is one of numerous petty autonomous monarchies, each a replica of the other, with contiguous and stable territories filling the bounded space of "Kpelleland".

The single type of political organization which Westermann describes for the Kpelle seems strangely abstracted from the dynamic historical setting of the western Liberian region. The small monarchic units seem to have persisted throughout time in a social vacuum unaffected by the processes which produced adaptive variations in organizational structure among other peoples, stimulating the mobility, expansion, amalgamation, and fissioning of groups. Intergroup alliances validated by marriages and the secret diplomacy of Poro are alluded to but are not seen as crucial functions of the system. Yet these features, as well as a high degree of ethnic diversity, are indicated by Westermann in such brief comments as the following:

These groups have been loosened and enlarged by intratribal migration as well as by penetration of other tribes such as Gbande, Gbunde, Vai, Mende, Bassa, De and Kru. Members of

foreign tribes are subject to the authority of the king in whose kingdom they live. The exception is found in certain Mandingo colonies which have their own head and thus form a community within a community. Usually, however, they pay a tax to the Kpelle king.¹⁹

Nowhere, however, in the classic simplicity of Westermann's construction of self-perpetuating insular kingdoms does there seem to be the means for structural accommodation of these phenomena.

Tribes and Autonomous Chiefdoms

Despite the fact that the Kpelle have received more attention by modern ethnographers than other peoples in Liberia, the model of small homogeneous tribal chiefdoms continues to guide interpretations. The cultural summary provided by Gibbs explicitly uses the modern paramount chiefdom as the basic (and, ostensibly, "traditional") political unit of Kpelle social organization. It is referred to as the "polycephalous associational state".²⁰ Pointing out that "there is no single king or chief who serves as the head of state for all of the Kpelle or even the Liberian Kpelle," he suggests that there is, instead

...a series of paramount chiefs, all of equal authority. Serving under them are district chiefs, town chiefs, and quarter officials, whose political control is reinforced by the activities of an associational group, the Poro Society.²¹

Thus the political units comprised by the Kpelle "tribe" are seen not only as entities of equivalent status and form, but it is implied by the lack of specification of the "ethnographic present" that these modern paramount chieftaincies represent continuities of indigenous arrangements. Units of this kind, however, are products of the leveling effect of government decree and custodianship of power over the past fifty or more years and are based on quite different principles of organization that are the remnants of traditional groupings within them or those that preceded them.

In his study of Kpelle political organization, Fulton has made a most valuable contribution by presenting the first systematic treatment of social change among these people in the context of a detailed resumé of their recent history and an analysis of their system of authority in terms of comparative political theory.²² There are, however, certain contradictions and ambiguities in his exposition which have bearing on the present discussion. Because he is one of the few investigators of the area to deal directly with the problem of defining the units of his observation, it is possible to examine his premises at the outset. Fulton dismisses recent criticism of the concept of "tribe" on the basis that there is no other way to account for all of the "social, cultural, linguistic divisions that are recognized by native and scholar alike as separate from one another," for

"while the conceptual and practical boundaries are imprecise, the core seems to be present..."²³ Having affirmed this concept, he goes on to make the familiar assertion that there is a distinctively Kpelle "tribal system" within which the numerous sovereign political units of Kpelle society function as subsystems. Moreover, these subsystems, to which he ascribes the term "village mini-states," have always constituted autonomous political entities and had no higher authority than their own rulers. Though alliances among Kpelle "mini-states" frequently occurred as a function of the "tribal system," he is quick to state that political systems seldom crossed tribal lines:

Usually the only way for a Kpelle, for example, to become part of the Gola political system (and *vice versa*) would be to become so as a slave—if indeed we can call this being part of the system. There have been tales of incidents in which fringe villages have changed political allegiances across tribal boundaries because of poor treatment on the part of the leadership, but these must have been rare, indeed.²⁴

Elsewhere, Fulton slightly modifies these observations by suggesting that there may have been recognized alliance systems between Kpelle sections and units outside the tribe. "Although we may never know the exact component parts of this system of interactions, we may assume from the evidence that there was at least the skeleton of a recognized cross-kingdom interrelationship pattern."²⁵ He further modifies his initial position by pointing out that "we found several instances of alliances between Kpelle units and Gola and Loma units, for example," though only a few people seemed to know about them. The situation seems also to have allowed for a more complex supra mini-state organization to develop under certain conditions. A brief but intriguing reference is made to a phenomenon that we have already shown to have been common throughout the western interior of Liberia and which Kenneth Little has described among the Mende.

Various opportunities were open to a particularly strong-willed intelligent Ko-Kalon [war chief]. Some evidently were so famous and effective that they became war chiefs for whole alliance systems of village ministates. In this situation there might be just one war chief for two or three mini-states that were closely aligned. He would become a sort of super-general responsible for the defense of relatively vast areas. According to the power and control of the Loi-Kalon [chief of the land] involved, and the character of the Ko-Kalon, the latter might seize the opportunity to take broader control of these areas...he might blatantly set up a personal empire over which he would be the warlord leader.²⁶

At the same time, Fulton states that he could find no evidence that Poro organization ever transcended "village mini-state" boundaries as an instrument of cohesion in larger units either tribal or inter-tribal. He is inclined to the view that any such role for Poro was a consequence of pacification by the government policy.²⁷

The inconsistencies and questions which these various comments raise are, I think, referable to basic premises which influence both theory and methodology. Fulton's commitment to the notion of relatively insular political units displaying a "high degree of homogeneity of life patterns" and representing subsystems of an exclusive tribal culture has prevented him from full realization of the materials he has at hand and may have biased the collection of data itself. It is simply not true, for example, that the only way for a Kpelle to become part of a Gola political system would be to become a slave. Not only was it possible for Kpelle, Dei, Vai, or persons of other ethnic identification to become members of Gola groups, it was also common for them to change their identities to Gola. It was even possible for them, under certain conditions, to become leaders of ostensibly Gola units. These were not rare occurrences, but constitute elements of fundamental social processes that operated with varying degrees of intensity among all Gola units as well as among those of surrounding peoples with which I am familiar—including a number of chiefdoms in the Fuama and Deng sections along the St. Paul River which are today considered to be Kpelle.

It is difficult to accept the idea that supra-chiefdom alliances and federation involving relations beyond "tribal" lines should have been absent among the Kpelle when they are so richly indicated throughout this region in the reports of early European observers and in ethnohistorical materials from sections directly to the north and west. A similar and related query is also raised by the apparent absence of evidence for inter-chiefdom and "inter-tribal" Poro activities. All alliances among people for whom this association is a crucial institution were and are inevitably affected by the extension of a network of Poro ties beyond the local group. This is a process anticipated in the structure of Poro itself which is adapted to the task of maintaining cohesion among disparate segments of a community and representing their mutual interests in any wider sphere of relations. The disparate elements of a community are not merely the various lineages and sublineages of the predominant population or the hierarchy of status groups, but they often include diverse ethnic segments of the population as well. Fulton offers no indication of the ethnic composition of the social units he defines and thus leaves the impression that there are no "quarters" of non-Kpelle peoples in the villages, no intermarriages, and none of the dynamics of inter-ethnic accommodation so characteristic of nearby areas.

Reflections on Method

These critical comments are not intended to imply that Fulton has not made a considerable contribution to our knowledge of Kpelle history and political organization. But they do suggest that his collection and interpretation of data has been to some extent biased by an orientation that has been shared by most investigators of the cultures of this region. The first work among the Gola impressed upon me the apparent empirical validity of the unitary chiefdom-state level of organization within a homogeneous "tribal" context, a view for which I had been well prepared by intensive exposure to the existing literature concerning the region. My elder informants did indeed present to me a picture of pristine territorial entities, dominated by founding core lineages and a delicately balanced system of dual authority based on secret associations and hereditary secular chiefs. This picture was reinforced by a "tribal" lore concerning the connections of the founders of chiefdoms to mythical lineages of an ancient Gola homeland, and by an apparently viable though largely latent system of ethnocentric values concerning non-Gola peoples. Most of the factors that did not fit into the model of reconstructed indigenous culture could be attributed to recent acculturation and nationalization in Liberia.

It was only after repeated and rescheduled fieldwork among the same and other groups that the real implication of much of my genealogical and ethnohistorical data began to come to the fore. I realized that the kind of information one received varied considerably depending on the location and statuses of the persons one interviewed. Individuals from small, relatively isolated village chiefdoms might be excellent sources of information concerning the social and cultural patterns of the way of life of people who had existed in a provincial setting for generations. There is an ethnographic bias which often leads us to the erroneous assumption that such material represents a purer and older aboriginal culture. On the other hand, a quite different perspective might be obtained from persons who are part of large and complex descent groups in central towns which have had a long history of involvement in trade and political relations with other groups. This is certainly true of the leaders of ruling lineages of chiefdoms that were, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of the expanding and confederacy type discussed above. Historical narrative and genealogy is interlaced with themes of political intrigue, epochal events, the exploits of regionally famous figures, and the economic, political, and kinship relations of units over wide areas. The inclination of many ethnographers is to give more weight to the former kinds of material in the interests of constructing a formal description of a standard tribal culture, whereas the latter may be neglected as tacitly aberrant or emergent phenomena. Yet it is from the latter that one may gain an understanding of the actual dynamics and creative vigor of the society.

A final word in this regard has to do with the inclination of ethnographers to ignore the ethnic heterogeneity of local groups and its importance in comprehending social structure and regionwide historical processes. Aside from the function of a bias which has already been discussed, this is also a matter of methodology. I discovered during my fieldwork that elder informants seldom volunteered specific identification of local persons or subgroups in ethnic terms. In fact, such information only appeared in general discourse or historical narrative when it was deemed pertinent to the explanation of a specific event or the special characteristics of persons. This especially was the case when relatively distant or unfamiliar peoples were being discussed. But with reference to people in the local community, I found that informants were frequently annoyed by questions about ethnic identification, reacting as though my query was an irrelevant interruption and, in other instances, advising me that information of this kind was a private matter. Most of my data about the ethnic complexity of villages and descent groups came as casual and almost inadvertent revelations in the course of eliciting genealogies. It was not considered important or appropriate in discussions of political organization or internal community relations. Moreover, I found that elder Gola persons, even today, seldom make reference to a concept of the fullest extension of the linguistic and cultural population we might call the "Gola tribe". When they do, it is usually in the context of a vague lore of common origin associated with the myths of formation of local units. The far-flung distribution of people speaking Gola is an abstraction overshadowed by interest in the interaction of proximate subregional groups regardless of ethnic identity.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that the purpose of this discussion has been to examine the relevance of the concepts "tribe" and "chiefdom" as they have been utilized in ethnographic investigation of Liberian peoples. The accumulating evidence suggests that these concepts have been applied in such a way as to seriously restrict our recognition of crucial social and historical realities that have characterized the actual situation in the region for centuries. It is to the end of encouraging a reappraisal of previous and current ethnographic work in this regard that these comments have been presented.

Endnotes

¹This paper was presented at the Second Annual Conference on Social Science Research in Liberia, Indiana University, May 2, 1970. The materials are derived in part from field research sponsored by the Social Science Research Council and the Council of Learned Societies in 1966, and by the Cross-Cultural Study of Ethnocentrism project of Northwestern University in 1967.

²Among the few early works which may be considered as major contributions to Liberian ethnography are: J. Buttikofer, *Reisebilder aus Liberia* (2 vols.), Leiden, 1890; W. Volz, "Reisedurch das Hinterland von Liberia," *Jahresbericht der Geographischen Gesellschaft von Bern*, 1908-1910, 22:113-280; G.W. Ellis, *Negro Culture in West Africa*, New York, Hunt and Eaton, 1914; D. Westermann, *Die Kpelle, ein Negerstamm in Liberia*, Göttingen und Leipzig, 1921; P. Germann, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden von Liberia*, Leipzig, 1933; E. Donner, *Kunst und Handwerk in Nordost-Liberia*, Berlin, Baessler-Archiv (XXIII), 1939; G.W. Harley, *Notes on Poro in Liberia*, Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 19(2), 1941; and G. Schwab, *Tribes of the Liberian Hinterland*, Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 31, 1947.

³Since 1950, four of the most intensive ethnographic studies of particular groups have appeared as unpublished doctoral dissertations, though each of the authors has published articles on his material. The dissertations are: J.L. Gibbs Jr., "The Judicial Implications of Marital Instability among the Kpelle," Harvard University, 1960; W.L. d'Azevedo, "Continuity and Integration in Gola Society," Northwestern University, 1962 (University Microfilms Order No. 63-1281); S.E. Holsoe, "The Cassava-Leaf People: An Ethnohistorical Study of the Vai People with a Particular Emphasis on the Tewo Chiefdom," Boston University, 1967 (University Microfilms Order No. 67-13,321); and R.M. Fulton, "The Kpelle of Liberia: A Study of Political Change in the Liberian Interior," University of Connecticut, 1968. A few very valuable ethnographies have been produced by pioneering Liberian scholars under government sponsorship: *Traditional History, Customary Laws, Mores, Folkways and Legends of the Vai Tribe*, Bureau of Folkways, Department of Interior, Monrovia, 1954; *Tribes of the Western Province and the Denwoin People*, Bureau of Folkways, Department of Interior, Monrovia, 1955;

Traditional History and Folklore of the Glebo Tribe, Bureau of Folkways Research Series, Monrovia, 1957; *Traditional History and Folklore of the Gola Tribe in Liberia*, (2 vols.), Bureau of Folklore Series, Department of Interior, Monrovia, 1961. Two other useful works are more general surveys published as memoirs of l'Institut Francais de l'Afrique Noir: B. Holas, *Mission dans l'est Libérien: Resultats Demographiques, Ethnographique et Anthropometriques*, Memoir No. 14, Dakar, 1952; and J. Genevray, *Eléments d'une Monographie d'une Division Administrative Libérienne*, Memoir No. 21, 1952. The Ethnographic Survey to Liberia has recently published two monographs dealing with the little known southeastern area of the country: K. Zetterstrom, *Preliminary Report on the Kru*, Tubman Center of African Culture, Robertsport, 1969; and W. Siegmann, *Réport on the Bassa*, Tubman Center of African Culture, Robertsport, 1969. M. Fraenkel has written the only comprehensive study to urban life and tribal acculturation in Liberia (*Tribe and Class in Monrovia*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964). In addition to these works, numerous articles have appeared which focus on specialized problems to ethnology among various groups in Liberia and, in the past ten years, there have been more professional ethnographers engaged in field research than has been the case during its entire history.

⁴For example, R. Viard, *Les Guérés: Peuple de la Forêt*, Société d'Editions, Paris, 1934; K. Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone: A West African People in Transition*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951; D. Paulme, *Les Gens du Riz: Kisse de Haute-Guinee Française*, Paris: Librairie Plon, 1954; Hans and Ulrike Himmelheber, *Die Dan, Bauernvolk im Westafrikanischen Urwald*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958.

⁵Some of the more significant contributions of this kind have been made by Yves Person, P.E.H. Hair, and Walter Rodney, among others.

⁶S.F. Nadel, *The Foundations of Social Anthropology*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1951:183-184.

⁷E.W. Blyden, "The Boporu Country," *African Repository*, September 1871:260.

⁸In addition to the recent reports of the Ethnographic Survey of Liberia by Zetterstrom and Siegmann (see Note 3), Guenter Schroeder, and Andreas Massing have conducted extensive field research in this area which gives promise of excellent new data and a belated reassessment of its apparently distinctive ethnographic features.

⁹*Liberian Studies Journal*, University of Delaware, 1(2):23-39, 1969.

¹⁰For a discussion of these events as they affected the development of Gola sections in recent history, see W.L. d'Azevedo, "A Tribal Reaction to Nationalism," *Liberian Studies Journal* (Part 2) 2(1):43-63, 1969, and (Part 3) 2(2):99-115, 1970.

¹¹Cf. W.L. d'Azevedo, "Some Historical Problems in the Delineation of a Central West Atlantic Region," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 96(2):512-528, 1962.

¹²P.E.H. Hair, "Ethnolinguistic Continuities on the Guinea Coast," *Journal of African History*, B(2):247-268, 1967.

¹³Hair mentions the Mende as an exception in that they are known to have reached the coast after 1700. The Dei who played an important role on the Mesurado section of the coast are not referred to at all in the aforementioned paper. He has, however, demonstrated that the names of most groups have maintained a tenure to at least four centuries. It should be noted that the continuities indicated by his research pertain only to the coastline itself, and that the situation to the immediate interior seems to have been almost entirely unknown to early Europeans.

¹⁴The notion is commonly expressed among the Gola that the Vai language is a dialect resulting from a blending of Mandingo and Gola. Vai is considered an "easy" language to understand and to speak, whereas the Gola insist that their own language is extremely difficult and must be learned from infancy. This view is frequently expressed by other peoples in the area as well. The phenomena of multilingualism and a large number of borrowed words utilized by all of these speakers undoubtedly reinforces the idea that not only Vai and Gola, but Mende, Dei Kpelle, Bandi, and other proximus languages are closely related. Linguistically, of course, they represent distinct languages of three major divisions of Niger Congo—Mande, Mel (a southern section of the former "West Atlantic"), and Kwa.

¹⁵Cf. W.L. d'Azevedo, "A Tribal Reaction to Nationalism," (Part 4), *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1970-1971, pp. 1-18.

¹⁶M.H. Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society*, New York: Random House, 1967.

¹⁷Some of the cultural discontinuities between the northern and western Liberian peoples and those south of the St. Paul River have been noted above. But it is a matter of special interest, here, that the attitudes expressed by peoples in the former area seem to confirm indications that the latter area represents a relatively distinct subregional situation ethnographically.

¹⁸Cf. "Continuity and Integration in Gola Society," pp. 30-43 (full reference cited above). Also see W.L. d'Azevedo, "Common Principles of Variant Kinship Structures Among the Gola of Western Liberia," *American Anthropologist*, 64(3):504-520, 1962; and "The Setting of Gola Society and Culture: Some Theoretical Implications of Variations in Time and Space," *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers*, 21:43-125, 1959 (e.g., pp. 51-53, 62-64, 93-97, 106).

¹⁹A European traveler's account of a journey into the interior in the late eighteenth century reports that "some tribes frequently change their habitations and wander about in bodies of 400 or 500 each." (Quoted in P.E.H. Hair, "An Account of the Liberian Hinterland c 1780," *Sierra Leone Studies*, 16:225, 1962).

²⁰As late as 1921 Westermann noted that "in Kpelleland today there is a type of king without land. He has gathered certain amounts of people together but has not increased his wealth or his land" (*op. cit.*, p. 130). This undoubtedly is a reference to the common phenomenon of the landless "big man" in modern chiefdoms who presides over an attached client group which enjoys usufruct privileges granted by the local landowning lineage. In former times such a man and his group may have chosen to remain and integrate with the host chiefdom, or move on. Today such mobility is curtailed by the stabilizing effect of government policy, and integration might be restricted by limited resources and factionalism.

²¹K. Little, *op. cit.*, (see, for example, pp. 175-177).

²²K. Little, "The Political Functions of the Poro," (Part 11), *Africa*, 36(1):62-70, 1966.

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

²⁴There is a brief discussion in his earlier work (*The Mende of Sierra Leone*, pp. 62-63) which indicates the ethnic complexity of Mende chiefdoms. He appears, however, to attribute this to modern urban developments, and cites census data to show that an overwhelming proportion of the inhabitants of certain towns were classified as "Mende". Without genealogical sampling, this kind of predominance might show up in any town or chiefdom where an ethnic identity has been associated with a well established and high status sector of the population.

²⁵D. Westermann, *op. cit.* This large work was only a partial result of Westermann's brief field investigation in 1915 while engaged in missionary tasks. Despite numerous errors and misinterpretations it stands as a monument to the indefatigable energy and skill of an early ethnographer. (Except when quoting others, I will employ the simplified spelling of the designation "Kpelle").

²⁶D. Westermann, *op. cit.*, p. 89 (my translation).

²⁷J.L. Gibbs, Jr., "The Kpelle of Liberian," in *Peoples of Africa* (edited by the same author), New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965 (p. 216).

²⁸Though an analysis of the political system is not the subject of this paper, it should be noted here that the Kpelle as described by Westermann have figured in discussions of state formation in the role of a classic type representing a dual system of authority through Poro associations, on the one hand, and the formal administrative apparatus controlled by secular chiefs, on the other. R.H.

Lowie included them—along with the Plains Indians—as examples of societies in which powerful association competed with and balanced the powers of chiefs (*The Origin of the State*, New York, 1927). L. Krader utilized Westermann's material and Lowie's interpretation of it to argue that state formation was inhibited among the Kpelle and similar groups by dual sources of power, each preventing the other from achieving the necessary centralization of political control (*Formation of the State*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968). In these discussions, the interchiefdom functions of Poro and the wide variation in the power relations between Poro and rulers, from one chiefdom to another, was only minimally recognized.

²⁹R.M. Fulton, *op. cit.*

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 20.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

³²R.M. Fulton, "The Kpelle Traditional Political System," *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1(1):1–19, 1968. (This article is a slightly revised condensation of a section of the dissertation cited above.)

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 13–15.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 18.

An Analysis of Israeli Repenetration of Liberia

George Klay Kieh, Jr.

Introduction

The re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Liberia and Israel is an integral part of the latter's foreign policy strategy of repenetrating the African continent. That is, after almost a decade of "diplomatic isolation," the State of Israel is exerting every effort to regain a foothold in the African region; and this development has triggered a debate within diplomatic circles; the centerpiece of the discussion revolves around two major issues: 1) the collective impact of this "policy of re-opening" on African states; and 2) the implications for African-Arab relations. Although these issues are significant, nonetheless, greater attention needs to be accorded to the critical issue of the benefits that each African state will derive from this "new relationship."

Against this background, the purpose of this paper is to probe the impact of the relationship on Liberia's national interest. In other words, how would the interests of the Liberian people be affected?

Conceptualizing Liberia's National Interest

The conventional wisdom in the international relations literature is that the promotion of the "national interest" is the *terra firma* of a state's foreign policy (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 1981; Morgenthau, 1985; Viotti and Kauppi, 1987; Holsti, 1989). However, there is considerable disagreement over the issue of the constituents of a state's "national interest." Rourke (1989) provides an excellent summation of the problem:

The national interest is one of those terms that bedevils political scientists. There are three things about the idea that aggravate scholars. First, many analysts claim that the objective national interest is impossible to discern... Second, some scholars argue that a country's national interest is too complex to define analytically... Third, there is a school of thought that contends that concern with national interest is destructive.¹

Despite the conceptual chaos, the standard *regle de jeu* in the global system is that a state's national interest encompasses a broad spectrum ranging from political to military-security objectives. Moreover, these national interest objectives are formulated by the political elites. Implicit in this postulate are two

major caveats: 1) the foreign policy elites are concerned about the well-being of their states and citizens; and 2) the corollary is that the pursuance of the national interest is ostensibly designed to benefit the population.

Importantly, we do not consider acceptable this framework because it is primarily focused on the foreign policy elites' perception of the national interests of their respective states, rather than that of the citizens. There exists a repository of evidence to demonstrate that elite and mass interests do diverge on myriad foreign policy issues.²

Table 1
Liberian-Israeli Major Foreign Policy Acts, 1947-1973

Date	Initiator	Event
November 1947	Liberia	Liberia supported the United Nations' General Assembly Resolution that established the State of Israel.
April 1959	Joint	A Treaty of Friendship was signed.
June 1962	Liberia	President Tubman paid state visit to Israel.
August 1962	Israel	President Ben Zvi paid state visit to Liberia.
October 1967	Liberia	Liberia moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
1973	Liberia	Liberia severed diplomatic relations with Israel.

Our conceptualization then, of Liberia's national interest is premised on the perspective of the masses, not the foreign policy elites. The central elements are: 1) politically, the Liberian people want a democratic environment in which fundamental human rights are respected; 2) economically, as a Third World country that is ravaged by the vagaries of abject poverty, Liberians believe that it is in their interests for the state to search for resources in the global environment that would help facilitate national development; and 3) in the military-security realm, they want their country to be protected from external aggression.

The Dynamics of the Relationship during the Pre-Coup Epoch

The conduct of the relationship between the two states can be divided into

two major periods: the era of friendship, 1947–1973 and the severance of diplomatic relations, 1973–1983.

The Era of Friendship

The foundation for the evolution of friendly and cordial relations between the two states was laid in 1947: Liberia played a decisive role in the passage of the United Nations' General Assembly Resolution that established the State of Israel. The rationale for Liberia's support was two-fold. First, the Liberian ruling class espoused the unbridled myth that it was a custodian of the Christian religion; hence, since the Israelis are "God's chosen people," it was therefore imperative that their claim to their "biblical homeland" be firmly supported. Accordingly, the legitimate claim of the Palestinian People to their homeland that had been wrestled away from them and given to the Israelis, was ignored and ridiculed by the Liberian ruling class. In fact, Liberians were socialized to believe that the Palestinians were the aggressors in that they had occupied the biblical "homeland of the Israelis." President Tubman, the chief architect of this "messianic fable," asserted during a visit to Israel in 1962 that,

When we arrived in your capital today, a sense of history permeated our entire being; we thought of the great Kings, Prophets and Priests, of law-givers, the renowned states-men...who have played such prominent roles in the history of the world... For like the pious Moslem who is obliged to make a pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime, we feel that this visit is a fulfillment of our religious hope.³

The second reason was the American factor. As a neo-colony of the United States, Liberia religiously supported the American foreign policy agenda both in the United Nations and other international fora. Thus, since the United States was the principal proponent of the idea to create the State of Israel, Liberia, as usual followed suit.

On other politico-diplomatic issues, the two countries demonstrated the mutuality of interests and cordiality. For example, there were frequent interactions that were designed to regularly consult on global issues, and to chart common positions (see Table 1). For example, Liberia played a pivotal role in undermining the attempt by the Accra Conference of Independent African States to express solidarity with Egypt by condemning Israeli aggression during the "Sinai Showdown" in 1956.

In the economic area, Israel played a major role in two sections: 1) Israeli investors established AGRIMECO; it was designed to help Liberia boost its agricultural productivity; however, after several years of operation, the Liberian agricultural sector still remained dependent on external sources for the supply of food; and 2) Israel gave Liberia \$7 million in aid to construct a Youth facility

in Harrisburg; the emphasis of the center was on agricultural training. Again, this venture did not produce fruitful results as evidence by the continual scarcity of trained Liberians in the agricultural sector. This development can be attributed to two major factors: 1) the aid package was misdirected: it accorded less attention to the more substantive needs of the facility—equipment and other instructional materials. The result was the construction of a pretty physical structure with meagre facilities; thus, the students did not receive adequate training; and 2) the Liberian Government did not have a well defined blueprint of the center's role in the broader context of national development; and this was reflected, for example, in the multiplicity of "agricultural training programs." That is, every agricultural-related agency of the Liberian Government had its own "crash training program;" thus, the intended purpose of the Harrisburg facility was undermined by the competition for students and scarce resources—both material and financial. Currently, the center is under the direction of the Industrial Education Bureau of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. It continues to experience serious problems in terms of the availability of financial and material resources.

In the construction area, Israeli firms were the principal foreign contractors for Liberian government projects. For example, they constructed the \$20 million Executive Mansion, the Capitol Building, the Temple of Justice, the Ducor International Hotel and the Ministry of Public Works.

In the security area, Israeli played a major role in training Liberian security personnel, and assisted in the formulation of the modalities for Liberia's complex and myriad security organizations. Significantly, the competence of security personnel was predominantly measured by whether they received their training from Israel or elsewhere; the perception both in Liberian officialdom and among ordinary Liberians was that Israel had the best security network in the international system.

The Severance of Diplomatic Relations

The ascendancy of William R. Tolbert, Jr. to the Liberian Presidency in 1971, witnessed a shift in Liberia's foreign policy strategy; one of the areas that was affected was the Middle East: Liberia shifted from its traditional unbridled support for Israel to a posture of quasi-objectivity in its assessment of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The major test of this "new orientation" came after the 1973 war between Israel and the Arab states. After examining the issues, the Tolbert Government supported the decision of the Organization of African Unity for all African states to break diplomatic relations with Israel. In his Second Annual Message to the National Legislature, President Tolbert explained the rationale for Liberia's decision:

We were recently faced with one such rare and unusual situation affecting our relations with the State of Israel. This resulted from that country's stubborn and persistent refusal to comply with the provisions of Security Council Resolution 242 and several resolutions of the OAU, calling upon her to withdraw from illegal occupied Arab territories, particularly the territory of our sister African state, the Arab Republic of Egypt. As this open defiance of Israel was considered to be detrimental to the interest of Liberia..., in the spirit of African Unity and solidarity, we severed diplomatic relations with Israel.⁴

But the "solidarity *raison d'être*" was hardly the primary reason for Liberia severing diplomatic relations with Israel. Rather, there were two major factors that underpinned the decision. First, having served as Liberia's Vice President for 19 years, Tolbert probably realized that Israel lacked both the capital and the technology that were critical to Liberia's development. In other words, he saw the relationship with Israel as a symbolic liability. Accordingly, the OAU's decision provided an appropriate pretext for officially suspending the relationship, and forging new ties with the oil rich Arab states that both capital and a major resource. For example, in 1974, President Tolbert paid official visits to Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Libya in search of Arab investments and oil. In Saudi Arabia, he received "...assurance from King Feisal that Liberia will receive its full supply of oil on favorable purchasing terms and will benefit from the Arab Development Bank."⁵ Also, in Libya, an agreement was reached to establish various economic joint ventures. Against this background, the modalities were formulated to establish a Liberian-Libyan Holding Company.⁶

Second, Tolbert wanted to give the impression that Liberia was reclaiming its non-aligned status that had been lost during the tenure of his predecessor. That is, amidst the avalanche of criticisms for its uncritical pro-Israeli and pro-American foreign policy orientation, the Tolbert regime wanted to carve up a new reformist image for Liberia: the pillar was that Liberia would "objectively" analyze international issues, and make decisions based on the evidence. A major case was the dismissal of the Liberian Roving Ambassador to the United Nations, T. O. Dosumu Johnson, "for disregarding Liberian Government policy by voting at the United Nations against a resolution calling for the Israeli authorities to grant protection under the Geneva Convention on Human Rights to Palestinians and others living in Israeli occupied territory."⁷

Significantly, the "reformist and non-aligned" orientation of Liberia's foreign policy that the Tolbert Administration endeavored to portray, was basically a facade; two major reasons accounted for this: 1) Liberia still remained a client state of the United States; however, the Tolbert regime's strategy was to mask this reality by pursuing an "independent course of action" on global issues that were not ideologically-laden. That is on issues such as apartheid in South

Africa and self-determination for the Palestinian people, Liberia did not support the policy positions of its mentor, the United States; this is because these issues were viewed as being underpinned by moral rather ideological considerations. Furthermore, Liberia did not want to be perceived as a traitor to the cause of national liberation in the Third World; and 2) despite the severance of official ties with Israel, a realpolitik calculation, nevertheless, Liberia remained supportive of Israel in other areas: a) it voted against a United Nations General Assembly Resolution that called for the expulsion of Israel from the organization; the reason was anchored on Israel's belligerent attitude towards its Arab neighbors and its violation of the human rights of the Palestinians; and b) it recurrently opposed attempts both domestically and globally to expose the racist undercurrent of Israel's Zionist ideology. That is, although Zionism espouses the establishment of an exclusive Jewish state, nonetheless, the Tolbert regime remained adamant in its claim that the ideology was not coterminous with racism. For example, in 1974, President Tolbert held a meeting with a delegation from the Liberian National Students Union (LINSU) on the eve of the conference of the All African Students Union (AASU), which convened in Tripoli, Libya. The crux of the meeting revolved around a discussion of the Zionism-racism nexus, a major issue on the conference's agenda; President Tolbert tried unsuccessfully to convince the students that the two issues were distinct and separate. The AASU Conference unanimously agreed that the two ideologies were synonymous.

The Post-Coup Era

The Restoration of Relations

One of the major developments of the post-coup era was the review of Liberia's foreign policy towards the Middle East, particularly, the Arab-Israeli conflict: the Doe regime decided that it was in the country's "best interest" to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Head of State Samuel K. Doe summarized the rationale for the policy shift thus:

Our action was based on our conviction that the continued isolation of Israel is no longer useful nor desirable and will not contribute towards the peaceful resolution of the Middle East problem.⁴

Table 2

Liberian-Israeli Major Foreign Policy Acts, 1983-1987

Date	Initiator	Event
August 1983	Liberia	Restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel.
August 1983	Liberia	Head of State Doe paid visit to Israel.
January 1984	Israel	President Herzog paid visit to Liberia.
August 1984	Israel	Israeli Foreign Ministry Director-General paid visit to Liberia.
September 1984	Joint	The establishment of a bilateral Rice Development Commission.
August 1985	Israel	American Jewish investors paid visit to Liberia.
December 1985	Israel	Israeli Army General paid visit to Liberia.
January 1986	Israel	Israeli Military Delegation paid visit to Liberia.
June 1986	Liberia	Foreign Minister paid visit to Israel.
February 1987	Liberia	Defense Minister paid visit to Israel.
April 1987	Liberia	The President Pro-Tempore of the Senate paid visit to Israel.

SOURCES: Compiled from the Israeli Foreign Affairs Report, 1983-1987 and the Liberian Daily Observer Newspaper, 1983-1987.

Importantly, the Doe regime ambiguous rationale was a facade. That is, the decision to restore diplomatic relations with Israel was propelled by several factors. First, politically, the Israeli Government offered to serve as a "middleman" between the Doe regime and the United States Congress, as a quid pro quo for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. In other words Israel promised to employ its much vaunted Washington-based lobby in the service of the Doe regime: the lobby would convince the United States Congress to keep the

"foreign aid pipeline" open despite the widespread human rights abuses of the Doe junta.

Second, on the economic front, Israel promised to provide direct assistance and to encourage Jewish American investors to funnel capital to Liberia. The Doe regime accepted these offers because it had plunged Liberia into an economic abyss, and hence was very desperate for relief.

Third, in the military-security arena, as an illegitimate regime that preponderantly relies on the use of coercion as the basis of its rule, the Doe regime was convinced that the provision of Israeli expertise would buttress its armor of protection. In other words, Israel promised to train the Liberian military and security personnel and to provide Israeli military and security advisors to be stationed in Liberia.

Fourth, the American factor was another major propellant. As a client of the Reagan Administration, the Doe regime was instructed to restore diplomatic relations with Israel. The decision was made in the broader context of the United States' African strategy, particularly, in light of Israel's increased role as a proxy. In other words, since the United States is constrained from certain overt acts in African affairs, Israel is in a good position to manipulate the petty treacheries of small-time tyrants to American ends.⁹

The "Fruits" of the Relationship

The assessment of the "benefits" that Liberia has derived from the relationship with Israel can be done at several levels (see Table 2). First, in the political arena, the "magical wand" of the Israeli lobby in Washington has failed to facilitate an increase in the United States foreign aid to Liberia. In fact the amount of aid has decreased substantially; for example, between 1985-1988, the amount dropped by almost 50%, from \$92.0 million to \$46.6 million. In addition, the United States Congress blocked \$25 million and \$73.5 million in economic assistance in 1985 and 1986 respectively. The actions were taken in response to pressures from various Liberian groups based in the United States and friends of Liberia, concerning the Doe regime's record of human rights abuses. Despite this, Israel has used Liberia for its foreign policy purposes. For example, Doe has attempted to convince other African states, particularly Nigeria, Togo and Sierra Leone, to re-establish relations with Israel. Two major cases are noteworthy: 1) in 1983, he visited Nigeria, Togo, and Sierra Leone in the interest of Israel; and 2) during the same year, he, in concert with Field Marshal Mobutu of Zaire, launched a diplomatic offensive on behalf of Israel at the Franco-African Summit.

Second, in the economic field, the results have been the same: Liberia has not reaped the much celebrated "fruits of development." For example, in the area of foreign aid, Israel has failed to provide the promised assistance. This issue is salient because the decision of the Doe regime to restore relations with Israel

precipitated the withdrawal of Arab economic assistance: 1) the Gulf Co-operation Council severed its aid program; 2) Saudi Arabia and Kuwait folded their respective bilateral economic assistance programs; 3) the arrangement to purchase oil on favorable terms that was made with some OPEC Arab States was cancelled; and 4) the aid from the Arab Development Bank and other Arab financial institutions has dried up; the total foreign aid allotments from these sources for the period 1978–1982, totalled \$52.2 million. Importantly, even the Doe Administration has expressed its frustration with Israel's inability to provide direct economic assistance. In this vein, it has sent several high level delegations to Israel over the last two years. The message was that "[Liberia] expects more economic assistance from [Israel] following the resumption of diplomatic relations."¹⁰ Israeli Prime Minister Shamir sums up his country's response:

Our own struggle to stabilize our economy while safeguarding the security of our people impedes our ability to help our friends...¹¹

The fact of the matter is that Israel is incapable of providing Liberia with grants for development. This is because like Liberia, it is also a dependent state: 1) it relies on the United States for its economic survival: it receives about \$3 billion a year in American aid; 2) it is also a prisoner of the debt trap: its external debt stands at \$16 billion; about 67% of this amount is owed to American sources; 3) its domestic economy is experiencing serious problems: the rate of inflation is about 20%, and the economic growth rate stood at a meager 1% in 1988; and 4) it is desperate for economic resources to feed its "war machine" against the Palestinian People. In short, a dependent state cannot provide economic assistance to another dependent state.

In the area of bilateral trade, the volume is negligible (see Table 3). That is, Liberia is not reaping much in terms of foreign exchange earnings.

Also, the assurance of the flow of Israeli private investment has not been translated into concrete action. Currently, the only types of investment are by small firms with little capital, technology and limited capacity to provide jobs for any segment of Liberia's "army of unemployed." For example, the Heftziba Company signed a \$30 million deal for the forestry sector. Under the terms of this generous agreement, the company has the right to "cut, process and export timber from a 1 1/2 million tract...the wood itself is worth \$1 billion and...there are enough trees to supply the world's need for p wood for the next 37 years."¹² In a similar vein, Yona International is involved in Liberia's construction industry. For example, it has been awarded contracts to construct the new Defense Ministry, a medical center and military barracks.

However, despite the fact that the Liberian people have not reaped economic benefits from the relationship, nevertheless, Doe and his inner circle of advisors

have made some personal gains. For example, Doe has received two Israeli Boeing 707 aircrafts for his various excursions; in addition, he is reported to have received bribes from both the Heftziba and Yona International Companies as compensation for investment agreements; also, four members of Doe’s cabinet have stocks in Heftziba Company.¹³

Table 3
The Direction of Liberia’s Trade with Israel, 1983–1986
(\$ million)

Year	Exports	Imports	Total Trade
1983	0.7	—	0.7
1984	0.1	—	0.1
1985	3.9	2.2	6.1
1986	6.8	3.9	10.7

SOURCE: Compiled from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, International Trade Statistics, 1987.

Third, in the military–security area, Israel has provided assistance; however, it has been ostensibly designed not to benefit the Liberian people but the Doe regime. For example, Israel has given the Doe junta the technology of repression—guns, ammunitions, etc.—that it uses to suppress the Liberian people. Also, Israel has trained the Special anti–terrorist unit (SATU); the primary role of this elite unit is to murder the former Master Sergeant’s “political opponents.” According to various interviews, SATU played a pivotal role in the “November 12, 1985 Massacre”: Conservative estimates put the death toll to around 4,000; in short, SATU is the Doe regime’s version of the notorious Latin American death squads. In addition, Israel has also provided training for Doe’s police, security and military forces. Significantly, Israeli military and intelligence advisors are stationed in Liberia; they control Sergeant Doe’s military–security apparatus. The most notable case of Israel’s support for Doe’s tyrannical rule was its involvement in foiling the Quiwonkpa–led, November 12, 1985 coup. Joe Wylie, one of the leaders of the abortive coup, gave this account:

We forgot to cut off communications and this allowed Doe—who was hiding—to communicate with the Israeli Embassy and the First Battalion. [Then] Israeli agents wearing Liberian army uniforms led the First Battalion...to retake the radio station...Our forces did not shoot at the Israeli agents because they mistook them for members of the US military mission who were impartially assessing the situation.¹⁴

Importantly, this account is corroborated by a video cassette that contains the happenings of the November 12, 1985 episode.

Discussion and Conclusion

The re-establishment of relations with Israel has not served the national interest of Liberia. First, Liberia has lost a considerable amount of economic assistance from various Arab states and Arab financial and economic institutions; and Israel had been incapable of filling the gap. In short, Israel has not assisted Liberia in its development efforts: the current Israel technical assistance program is miniscule and largely symbolic.

Second, Israel has and continues to play a pivotal role in the violation of the human rights of the Liberian people: it has and continues to supply the Doe regime with the technology of terror that it uses to facilitate its tyrannical rule. In other words, Israeli security assistance to Liberia is not designed to help protect the Liberian people from external aggression, but to subjugate them.

However, the Doe junta has accrued some personal benefits from the relationship. First, Doe has received personal gifts—aircrafts, etc. Second, the Doe regime is the beneficiary of military—security protection; this is in the form of the training of military and security units and the supply of weapons. Third, Doe and some of his advisors have received bribes from Israeli companies with investments in Liberia.

On the other hand, even the Doe junta is displeased with the overall results of the restoration of ties with Israel. For example, the “Israeli lobby” has failed to attract the United States Congress to its “charm;” and this is evidenced by the reduction in United States aid allocations to Liberia. Also, the lack of direct economic grants from Israel is a major source of frustration for the Doe regime. Accordingly, it has dispatched various delegations to Israel to make the case. In short, besides the security sector, Israel has been unable to fulfill its many promises that were made to the Doe regime when the restoration of relations was negotiated.

Endnotes

¹John Rourke, *International Politics on the World Stage*, 2nd edition, (Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin Publishing Co., 1989), 188.

²Some of the major cases in the international system which have reflected elite—mass divergence on foreign policy issues are: a) The various public opinion polls which show that the majority of Americans are opposed to their country's policies towards South Africa and Central America; and 2) various public opinion polls in Western European States that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, indicate that the majority of their citizens were opposed to the installation of American Pershing II missiles on their soil.

³ Quoted in Yekutieli Gershoni, "Liberia and Israel: The Evolution of a Relationship," *Liberian Studies Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, 1989, 35.

⁴ Press Division, Executive Mansion, Liberia, *Presidential Papers*, (St. Alban, Britain: Flarapath Printers, 1975), 478.

⁵ Cited in Gershoni, op. cit., 41.

⁶ The establishment of the Liberian-Libyan Holding Company came to fruition in 1980; currently, the entity is operating a glass factory in Liberia.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Lagos Daily News, 7 September 1983.

⁹ See "Israel's Return to Africa," *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, Vol. I, No. 3, 1985, 6.

¹⁰ "Liberia Seeks More Aid," *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, Vol. II, No. 8, 1986, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Liberian Lumber Deal," *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1985, 3.

¹³ Interviews with some former and current officials of the Liberian Government who were involved in the effort to restore relations with Israel.

¹⁴ "Update: Liberia," *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1986, 3.

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The Editor

"African Bible College in Yekepa, Nimba County: Friend or Foe?"

Romeo E. Phillips

African Bible College is located in Nimba County in the same community, Yekepa, which houses LAMCO. Although it is located immediately across the road from LASS High School in Yekepa, not too many educators are aware of its goals and objectives; this includes employees in the Ministry of Education as well as administrators at the University of Liberia and Cuttington University College. It is an independent institution owned and operated by white Americans and was founded by the Reverend John W. Chinchin and his wife, Nell.

In her Master of Education in Religion thesis, Nell Robertson Chinchin wrote:

The vision for this college began in the heart of Rev. John W. Chinchin. He and his wife, Nell, had spent seven years as missionaries in the interior of Liberia training pastors and assisting in the operation of the Elizabeth Native Interior Mission School in Sinoe County. It was during this time that both Rev. and Mrs. Chinchin realized the need for a college to meet the educational and spiritual needs of high school graduates. Thus, a four-year course of collegiate grades was designed that would hold high academic standards and meet the qualifications to offer a Bachelor of Arts degree.

In July of 1975, Rev. and Mrs. Chinchin were granted thirty acres of land in the midst of the beautiful Yekepa community by the Liberian American Mining Corporation. The Minister of Education along with the President of Liberia were consulted and their approval given for the establishment of a four-year college in Yekepa. A Charter was drawn up and approved by the House of Representatives and Senate conferring upon African Bible Colleges, Inc. (Liberia) all the privileges which a mission organization enjoys in Liberia.

Plans for the College were taken to Missionary Tech Team in Longview, Texas, U.S.A. and an up-to-date campus was laid out with some twenty modern and efficient buildings. The mission organization, African Bible Colleges, Inc. was chartered in the State of Mississippi and granted tax-exempt status by the United States government. A Board of Directors of Advisors were selected and financial support for the college and financing of the buildings was completely underwritten before the breaking of ground for the college in 1977—All to the Praise

and Glory of God! (Nell Robertson Chinchin, "The History of Education in Liberia", Master of Education in Religion thesis, Luther Rice Seminary, July, 1984, p. 23.)

The University of Liberia and Cuttington University College are accredited by the Ministry of Education to offer the B.A. and B.Sc. degrees in a variety of areas, including the liberal arts. In a brochure published for potential students by African Bible College is found this statement:

African Bible College is fully accredited by Liberia's Ministry of Education as a University college—thus enabling African Bible College's four-year program to grant a Bachelor of Arts Degree parallel to that given by any liberal arts college.

The words, "...parallel to that given by any liberal arts college," appear to be the selling points for those potential students who wish to attend an institution with a Bible base which would permit them to graduate with credits which would qualify them for graduate school.

In the catalogue of African Bible College is found this statement:

Bible College education is education of college level whose distinctive function is to prepare students for Christian ministries or church vocation through a program of Biblical, general, and professional studies.

However, a Bible College may offer liberal arts majors provided these are in addition to and do not displace the required Bible major or alter the objectives of Bible College education. (African Bible College Catalog, 1988, p. 8).

Based on the statement found in their brochure and catalogue, one would assume that African Bible College's curricular offerings are such to permit potential students to take courses "...parallel to that given by any liberal arts college" as an addendum to "...the required Bible major." An examination of the course offerings causes one to question the validity of those statements.

Liberal arts colleges by their very nature seek to offer a well-rounded, varied curriculum designed to make graduates from such institutions academically flexible. An examination of the required course in these institutions will reveal courses in the sciences, social sciences, mathematics, philosophy, English, music, art, foreign languages, and a variety of electives. An examination of the core curriculum of the African Bible College is void of any courses usually found in liberal arts colleges, the exception being two English courses in the freshman year, two Educational Psychology courses in the junior year, a Political Science course in the junior year, and an African Culture Anthropology course in the senior year. What one does find is a very heavy schedule of Bible and Bible-related courses.

Listed below are the required courses for four years at A.B.C.:

First Year

First Semester

The Book of Genesis
The Book of Acts
English I
Christian Ethics
World History I
Typing I
Physical Education

Second Semester

The Book of John
The Book of Exodus
Business Ethics
English II
World History II
Typing II
Physical Education

Second Year

Joshua/Judges
Speech Communication I
Hermeneutics I
Church History I
Scripture Memory
Physical Education
Elective

I & II Corinthians
Hermeneutics II
Speech Communication II
Leadership Training
African Church History
Physical Education
Elective

Third Year

Romans
Systematic Theology I
Educational Psychology I
Literature
Physical Education
Sermon Preparation
Elective
Elective

Political Science
Systematic Theology II
Educational Psychology II
Creative Writing
Physical Education
Sermon Preparation
Elective
Elective

Fourth Year

Hist./Phil. Chr. Ed.
Homiletics I
Missions
Personal Evangelism
Elective
Elective

Revelations & Daniel
Homiletics II
African Cult. Anthro.
Open Air Evangelism
Elective
Elective

(African Bible College Catalog, 1988, p. 15.)

African Bible College's catalog acknowledges the purpose of the liberal arts college as "a foundation of ge humanities and sciences to prepare students by liberal arts and vocations." It continues by stating that the "Bible col ...to prepare students for Christian ministries and church nues by citing one of its aims and objectives to" ...supply C 'can schools and colleges." (A.B.C. Catalog, pp. 8-10.) ling, because African Bible College's curriculum does not for teacher certification as mandated by the Ministry of it equip its students to meet the requirements for entrance into gradua school. A graduate of this institution who wishes to teach at any level is compelled to seek admission in a non-Bible college and matriculate at the freshman level.

Nell Robertson Chinchin wrote about the influence of a non-African curriculum and the move by Africans away from what they perceived as moves to destroy their culture. She wrote:

One of the ways this 'quick service' education is being accomplished is by what the church calls 'syncretism.' In all cultures, there is a strong pull toward accommodating Christianity with prevailing cultural norms and practices. As Robert Webber puts it:

...we interpret our faith through the glasses of the culture in which we find ourselves. We tend to impose those cultural categories of thought on the faith, articulate our faith through these categories, and create an expression of Christianity peculiar to those cultural forms. Consequently the faith becomes inextricable interwoven with a particular view of life, of method.

Christ, however, does not allow the option of living with a foot in both Kingdoms. Spokesmen from all ranks of evangelicism, ranging from President Emeritus Hudson Armerding of Wheaton College to Richard Querebeadux, have deplored the trend toward syncretism. Christian education in Africa today must not yield to the pressure to accommodate its principles to the prevailing winds of a changing society.

However, as more and more of the tribal people received their education, the drive for identification as an independent nation grew and, thus, the move to 'Africanize' education became almost an obsession. (Chinchin, op. cit., pp. 29-30.)

Nell Robertson Chinchin and the faculty of African Bible College do not support what they call the Africanization of Christianity. She quotes one Byang Kato from a booklet published by him on this matter. He wrote:

The affiliated body of the world council of churches in Africa, the All-Africa Conference of Churches (A.A.C.C.), does have some

outstanding evangelicals within its leadership. Unfortunately, these evangelicals have not been able to restrain the liberal voices within the movement. In the light of past developments in the worldwide ecumenical movement, it is not likely that the picture will improve in the future.

In its push for secularization, there has been an urgent call for the Africanization of Christianity. What seems to be the meaning behind this is that African culture should take precedence over the Bible. There has been a call to change the content of Christian theology, if necessary, to suit the African context. (Byang Kato, "African Cultural Revolution and the Christian Faith," Nigeria Challenge Publishers, 1975, p. 45.)

Kato was reflecting on the 1984 meeting of the All-Africa Conference of Churches (A.A.C.C.) which concluded that "...in Africa, both Black theology and the theology of Liberation should be changed to suit the African situation." Kato, according to Nell Robertson Chinchin, equates the "Africanization" of Christianity with "Secularization." To support her theses, she quotes his disapproval of a traditional African cultural dance ensemble which performed at the 1984 meeting. Specifically, he objected to what he felt was the lack of clothing on the dancers and the dances performed by the dancers—dances he felt were sexually suggestive!

This concern is reflected in the rules and regulations of African Bible College. The catalog reads:

Cleanliness is next to Godliness' is the hallmark of African Bible College...of mind, body and clothing. Clothes should be conservative in appearance and properly worn at all times. Personal grooming should be such as to manifest Christ and not ones self.

Worldly pursuits such as smoking, drinking, dancing, card playing, and sexual promiscuity is prohibited. Upon registration, the student will be issued a handbook which will make plain the dormitory and school regulations. (A.B.C. Catalog, p. 21).

The men and women who attend African Bible College are confined to the campus, with it being hazardous for them to leave the campus at night. It is reported that there are chimpanzees and dogs trained to attack individuals who "are not faculty members" who would enter the grounds of the campus after dark. The chimpanzees and dogs are enclosed in a camouflaged area of the campus during the daylight hours, with their being released to patrol the grounds at night. Students are required to dress in Western clothes (shirts and ties for men and dresses/skirts and blouses for women—no African clothes are permitted) and live on campus. There are no coed dormitories. Married students and African support staff live off campus. There is faculty housing, but the two

male African faculty members from Sierra Leone, like the African support staff, live off campus.

With approximately seven out of ten citizens of Liberia reportedly being illiterate, it is inexplicable to many why an institution like African Bible College, with its non-transferable curriculum, is permitted to exist. A graduate from this institution who may wish to do post B.A. studies does not meet the qualifications for teacher certification in Liberia, will not be admitted to the law or medical schools in the University of Liberia, and cannot be considered for graduate studies in a foreign country. This is a concern expressed by several A.B.C. graduates interviewed. It appears that the statement, "...thus enabling African Bible College's four-year program to grant a Bachelor of Arts Degree parallel to that given by any liberal arts college," is not accurate.

On the occasion of his induction as the eighth president of the University of Liberia on March 18, 1988, at the Fendall campus, Stephen M. Yekeson said:

...whatever we do in life there is often a room for improvement and the urge to achieve excellence in our activities must continue to be paramount in our minds.

Study for exclusive knowledge with no application of this knowledge to the practical problems of our times is not only a luxury for Liberia but an expensive activity which benefits only a few...while the majority of our population continue to remain in a state of poverty and degradation.

The University of Liberia will therefore be obligated to play a key role by transferring its knowledge...to p that will benefit the common man... ("The Role of the University of Liberia in the Second Republic", Stephen M. Yekeson, Ph.D., March 18, 1988, pp. 4-5.)

One must wonder if four years of study at African Bible College will prepare graduates to help solve the "practical problems" of "the majority of the population" of West Africa in general and Liberia in particular—or their unique needs for a life good to live. One must also wonder what contribution an A.B.C. graduate can make to reducing the rate of illiteracy, since the curricular offerings do not meet the requirements for Liberian teacher certification or entrance into a graduate school. Regardless of one of A.B.C.'s aims and objectives as stated in its catalog being to supply Christian teachers for African schools and colleges (p. 10), this cannot be if the curricular offerings do not meet the basic requirements for teacher certification or graduate school.

The basic goals and objectives of African Bible College are rooted in the goals and objectives of Bible colleges in the United States. In his book, *The Bible College Story: Education with Dimension*, S. A. Witmer in his chapter, "Bible School Curricula for the World Mission of the Church," wrote the following:

...the many foreign fields for ministries in the broad field of Christian education call for properly trained personnel. Specialized preparation is needed for many of them. The Christian Education departments of Bible institutes and colleges are seeking to prepare young people for many of these varied needs. ...The dictum that it is better to do a few things well than many things poorly is relevant to this field. (S. A. Witmer, *The Bible College Story: Education with Dimension*, [Manhasset, New York: Channel Press, Inc., 1962], pp. 109–110.)

This clearly points out the basic philosophy of the Bible college movement in the United States, and that basic philosophy is demonstrated in the mandated core curriculum of African Bible College. However, unlike American Bible college students, African Bible College students do not enter with marketable skills nor do they have the opportunity to acquire any on-the-job skills while studying. African Bible College students are confined to the A.B.C. campus and, after graduation, must seek opportunities to develop marketable skills while applying that obtained over the four-year period at A.B.C.

Nell Robertson Chinchin wrote:

The greatest threat facing Liberia today is the loss of Biblio-centric philosophy in Christian higher education. Much of the transformation of higher education from the colonial period to the twentieth century revolves, ultimately around the demise of the role and authority of the Scriptures. To remain true to its purpose and mission, as well as its heritage, the Bible college must continue to keep a Bible-centered approach to life and education.

African Bible College is committed to that philosophy. Offering a high standard, quality, Christian education on the continent of Africa, it hopes to avoid the loss of 'the cream of the crop' from 'further training' taking place overseas. Missions and churches have for years suffered the loss of their most promising leaders by sending them abroad for higher education.

Education in Africa is part of the answer. Education in Africa that meets the need of the whole man—a Bible-centered education—is the answer! (Chinchin, *op. cit.*, p. 26.)

The Simmons University Bible College in Louisville, Kentucky, was founded in 1879, and the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, was founded in 1886. Most of the other Bible colleges were founded during World War II or immediately after. Moody Bible Institute is best known, and countless numbers of Bible students have trained there. By my being from the City of Chicago, I am most cognizant of the basic philosophy of this institution and its goals and objectives. These goals and objectives are reflected in the basic philosophy of African Bible

College. Whereas Bible Colleges in the United States, according to Witmer, "have made their most significant contribution to evangelicalism in the preparation of Protestant missionaries," with the greatest numbers having been trained at the Moody Bible Institute, it appears that African Bible College desires to train African missionaries in Africa.

Nell Robertson Chinchin appears to recognize the fact that African Bible College does not prepare its students for any post-A.B.C. transition. She wrote that the purpose of African Bible College is "...to enhance that relationship (to God) while its students are preparing for their life's vocation." However, although she and her husband appear to recognize this fact, the literature of A.B.C. does not alert potential students of the need for them to have a marketable skill prior to their matriculating at A.B.C. The opposite appears to be the case: students, after four years at A.B.C., must gain admittance to a vocational school like Booker Washington Institute, a teacher training institution like KRTTI/ZRTTI, or the University of Liberia or Cuttington University College in order to prepare "for their life's work!"

The statement in all of African Bible College's literature, "...thus enabling African Bible College's four-year program to grant a Bachelor of Arts Degree parallel to that given by any liberal arts college," appears not to be accurate. There are no science courses, there are no math courses, and there are no foreign language courses, the exception being an elective one-semester course in Greek that had no instructor in August, 1988. The social science courses are not legitimate, and the same is true for fine and performing arts, athletics, and physical education.

The catalog lists nine full-time faculty. Of the nine, four also serve as administrators. Seven of the nine have earned undergraduate degrees from accredited colleges in the United States, one has a degree in nursing from an accredited college in Canada, and one is a Bible college graduate. Four of the nine have either the B.D. or M.Div. degree from accredited seminaries in the United States. None has a terminal degree. All have served in Third World nations, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Most are associated with the Presbyterian Church in the states of Texas and Mississippi.

Nell and John Chinchin have seven adult children. The children, and their spouses, are supportive of their parents' goals and objectives for African Bible College. The Chinchin children and their spouses in 1988, under the parents' leadership, commenced the process of developing an African Bible College in Malawi patterned after African Bible College in Liberia.

Conclusion

Yekepa is in the northern tip of Nimba County bordering the Republic of Guinea. A large number of students attending African Bible College are students known to the Chinchens from Sinoe County. These young men and women travel a great distance to attend this college, feeling that a bachelor's degree from that institution will permit them to compete with graduates at Cuttington University College and the University of Liberia for employment or graduate school. It is inexplicable why the office of the Ministry of Education permits this institution to exist in the manner in which it exists. However, one could speculate that because African Bible College does not receive any funds from the government of Liberia and the fact that it is approximately two hundred miles from Monrovia, that, coupled with the problems of education in Liberia, A.B.C. is permitted to exist unmolested. Unlike Bible colleges in the United States, it is impossible for African Bible College students to develop marketable skills while they are studying.

A parallel with the intentions of African Bible College may be drawn with the motives of those individuals who established schools in the south for African Americans at the conclusion of the Civil War and the ushering in of the Emancipation Proclamation. One can speculate as to why the Chinchens do not recognize the need for their students to develop marketable skills while studying the curricula offerings at African Bible College. Might it be that they believe that the ends justify the means?

The physical facilities of African Bible College are very good. A visit to the dormitory rooms will find that they are clean, spacious, adequately lighted with a maximum of four students in each room with each student having a study space for himself/herself. The dining hall serves three balanced meals seven days a week. The classrooms are adequately furnished, with the acoustics being such that the instructors have no difficulty projecting their voices. There is a gymnasium for recreation.

African Bible College seeks to "spread the word" throughout the Continent of Africa. There is a radio station with very sophisticated equipment, which permits its signal to cover the whole of West Africa and as far east as Ethiopia. They broadcast regularly to those individuals who wish to study via the correspondence route, and they are very successful in this venture. It is fair to say that some students are trained in the use of this equipment (there is one young man from Sinoe County who has been able to secure employment garnered from the experiences acquired as a broadcaster on the A.B.C. radio.) There are cassette tapes with lessons geared to those students who wish to study as correspondence students and, additionally, there are facilities for printing examinations to test those who do study via the correspondence route.

Being a mission institution, African Bible College is well financed through donations. A sizeable number of scholarships are offered to students who appear to be academically talented, but financially poor. This accounts, in part, one could speculate, why many tolerate the restrictions placed on them once they arrive on the campus from their homes throughout Liberia and the nearby English-speaking West African countries. Nevertheless, upon returning to their regions to "spread the Word," they must seek admission to some institution to develop a marketable skill in order to support themselves.

When queried as to what the students do after commencement, the Dean of Academic Affairs informed me that several go to Wheaton College for advanced study, but all go to "spread the Word." Wheaton College is a Liberal Arts undergraduate institution in the State of Illinois. Individuals who attend there who have not had the adequate academic background must enroll as a freshman. Those wishing to be ordained as ministers must meet the basic requirements for admission to a seminary—a bachelor of arts degree from an accredited undergraduate institution. This means that the men and women who commence school at a late age (it is not unusual to find eleven, twelve and thirteen-year-olds in the first, second and third grades in Liberian schools) who are fortunate enough to graduate from high school and who matriculate at African Bible College for four years, will discover that the four years spent at African Bible College did not prepare them for the next level. Therefore, it is appropriate to ask this question: Is African Bible College in Yekepa, Nimba County, a friend or foe?

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The American Colonization Society and the Origin of Undemocratic Institutions in Liberia in Historical Perspective

Amos J. Beyan

This study surveys the institutional legacies introduced by the American Colonization Society (ACS) in Liberia.¹ The movement which led to the founding of the ACS in 1816 was a response to the sensitive issue of slavery in America. During the American Revolutionary War, the revolutionary leaders were quick to charge that the British were responsible for the continuation of slavery in America. But this emphasis was to give way to a new one at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787. At the Convention, the following compromises over the issue of slavery were made. It was agreed that slaves were both property and human beings; a slave was to be counted as three fifths of a freeman, and that the slave trade was to continue until 1808. These compromises were designed to neutralize the tension that was developing between the slave and non-slaveholding states. But as a result of continued opposition to the compromises by both southerners and northerners, and because of the unsuccessful slave revolt in Virginia in 1800,² it became evident that the compromises could not possibly solve the issue of slavery in America.

Accordingly, alternative solutions to the issue of slavery were being suggested. One solution increasingly emphasized by prominent American politicians such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Calhoun, Henry Clay, and many others was the colonization of blacks in Africa. It was against this background that the American Colonization Society was established. Although it became a national movement, the society was mainly sponsored by southerners. The reason for this is obvious; they were the ones most affected by the issue of slavery.

There is considerable literature on the ACS. In fact, the first serious scholarly work on the ACS appeared in 1895 followed by a second one in 1919. These were followed by many others. Unfortunately, the themes of these works emphasized the American aspect of the ACS.³ This study is, therefore, an attempt to provide a Liberian perspective of the ACS. It specifically addresses the ways in which the ACS affected Liberia's political, economic, and social institutions.

But one cannot fully understand the impact of the ACS on Liberia without tracing the social background of that movement. The discussion will, therefore, begin with the social background of the prominent members of the ACS. Among the first leading members of the ACS was Bushrod Washington, a nephew of

President George Washington. He served as first president of the ACS. Other leaders included William Crawford, Henry Clay, John Howard, Samuel Smith, John Smith, John Taylor, John Mason, and William Phillips. With the exception of the last individual named, they were all southerners. In fact, an examination of the membership list in the annual reports of the ACS clearly shows that most of the leading positions of the ACS were held by southerners.⁴ This could be especially said about the Board of Managers whose main tasks were the formulation and implementation of the policies of the ACS. All but one of the initial twelve members of the Board were southerners.⁵

It can, therefore, be said that the ACS was mainly an initiative of the ruling class of the South. With no doubt, southern society was stratified into several social groups. Those who owned plantations and a large number of slaves were the members of the top layer of that social stratification. The members of this group were extremely influential in the South. Their predominance was economically, politically, and socially manifested. Bushrod Washington, Clay, Crawford, Taylor, Calhoun, and Monroe did not only dominate the economy of the South, they also were eminent members of the ACS.⁶

As mentioned before, one cannot comprehend the impact of the ACS on Liberia without fully understanding the social, political, economic, and religious views and values of the leaders of the ACS. The reason for this is obvious: their institutional values were consciously or unconsciously transferred to the ACS which, in turn, introduced these values in what became Liberia. Take, for example, the social, political, economic, and religious culture of paternalism which characterized the various social relationships between the ruling class and the lower classes of the slaveholding states. This was transferred to the ACS by the founders of the movement. It was later introduced in Liberia by the ACS.⁷

Paternalism was crucial to the social survival of the leaders of the South, since it tended to neutralize the social tension that existed between them and the lower classes. This was so because paternalism emphasized that a slaveholding class would protect and be kind to the slaves and poor whites in exchange for their social subordination and control. In fact, paternalism became the ideological core of the South because it met almost all the social requirements of its ruling class. With this concept, the members of the ruling class tended to view themselves as benevolent aristocrats, the slaves as children, and poor whites as the lower class.⁸

As most of the prominent founders of the ACS were southerners, their social values were deeply influenced by paternalism. Paternalism was a result of the class structure of the South. As suggested by Eugene Genovese it was developed as a result of a need "to discipline and manage a system of exploitation."⁹ Paternalism was justified by proslavery arguments such as George Fitzhugh, C. G. Memminger and many others.¹⁰

Paternalism was not only held as ideology in the South; it was put into practice in that region. Many slaveholders, especially those with large holdings, referred to their slaves as their "black families."¹¹ Some slaveholders went as far as recording the "births and deaths of their slaves in their family Bibles."¹² This practice as an aspect of paternalism was designed to ensure the submissiveness of slaves and secure and reinforce the patriarchal domination of the masters. Those slaves who closely identified with the interests of their masters were materially rewarded or appointed as leaders of their people. They were ones who usually became the so-called "privileged slaves."¹³

Mulattoes could be grouped in this social category, though for different reasons. Because they were descendants of the slave and master classes, the latter tended to be more receptive to them than to the dark-skinned blacks. Of course, this was part of the social legacy of the South which maintained that anything close to the master class both in spirit and appearance would be more preferred than the one that was not.¹⁴ This legacy was later introduced in Liberia by the ACS.¹⁵ Despite the moral justification of slavery put forward by the master class, slavery had characteristics that were extremely oppressive and dehumanizing. The vast documentary evidence showing the severe beating of slaves, which in some cases left permanent marks on their bodies, attests to this.¹⁶ The branding, castrations, and the practice of "salt washing" of the wounds of slaves caused by the lashes of the masters were among the worst brutalities inflicted by American slavery.¹⁷

The "charitable" and tyrannical aspects of slavery which were indeed contradictory components of paternalism provided a convenient defense for the aristocratic and exploitative social arrangements of the South. This was more so since paternalism had Biblical sanction and certain "universal moral" attributes. These, coupled with the fact that social oppression had been supported by some of the best world thinkers,¹⁸ created a social concept which later generations accepted as a natural order. It is not, therefore, surprising that the American slaveholding class, from which most of the early eminent members of the ACS emerged views slavery, paternalism, and the Liberian colonization initiative as God's designed plans.¹⁹

Paternalism was not only a concept, it was also a social and economic system employed by the members of the ruling class of the South to preserve their class status. Through paternalistic treatment of their slaves and poor whites southern aristocrats were, for example, able to preserve their social distinction and hegemony. No doubt, this was done at the expense of the majority of the people who lived in the South. The existence side-by-side of a small aristocratic class and a large economically and socially oppressed class in the South bears testimony to the foregoing argument. It is, therefore, not surprising that nearly all the significant social powers in the South were monopolized by the ruling

One can, therefore, say that they were illegitimate leaders since they were not elected or appointed by the people who they claimed they represented. Besides, the social status and wealth of the new coastal elites were achieved at the expense of the millions of Africans they sold to Europeans. In this sense, it can be argued that while the Atlantic slave trade produced wealth for the few coastal elites, at the same time, it brought suffering or impoverishment to a large number of the West African people. This contradiction became the dominant characteristic of the economic relationship that developed between Africa and the western world.⁴¹

But the new social system introduced in coastal West Africa by the world economy from the 1400s to the 1800s was not different from the one later introduced by the American Colonization Society in what became Liberia. It must be mentioned, however, that the world economy represented by the commercial activities of European merchants in pre-colonial, colonial, and independent Liberia was to have a lasting impact on Liberia's economic, political, and social developments. The paternalistic relationship that existed between the American Colonization Society and Liberia was, for example, increasingly modified by the world economy to meet its requirements.⁴² In the process, the economic interests of Liberian merchants, who were also the political and social leaders of their country, were subordinated to the economic interest of the European merchants who traded in Liberia. The European merchants were able to subordinate the interests of their Liberian counterparts because they could influence the financial institutions in the western world that dictated the functions of the world economy. In any case, the merchants of Liberia increasingly became dependent on their European counterparts. Before the end of the 1800s, the Liberian merchants who had once dominated the commerce of their country, were, in fact, reduced to petty traders, serving the interests of European commercial companies in Liberia.⁴³

Despite the fact that the world economy demoted the Liberian merchants to a lower economic rank, this did not mean that it destroyed them. On the contrary, it continued to enhance their social domination in Liberia. This was made possible because the minimal material gain they received from their ancillary involvement with the world economy was invested in a way to safeguard their class domination. Besides, Liberia's paternalistic social stratification and its dependent relationship with the American Colonization Society were very similar to the unequal economic relationship that existed between the Liberian elites and the European merchants. In other words, the world economy and the social values introduced by the American Colonization Society in Liberia had many things in common. This explained why they tended to accommodate each other, though the process was not always harmonious. Besides, the accommodation process was done at the expense of the masses of the Liberian people. The fact that Liberia's paternalistic social system and its

His house which cost about \$7,000 was the best building in colonial Liberia. It has been maintained that Ashmun had the most expensive coat suits in Liberia at that time.³³ Second to the governor in social standing were those who closely identified with the governor. This, of course, meant the ones who assisted the governor in his implementation of the policies of the American Colonization Society in Liberia. This group included the mulattoes and a few of the dark-skinned black American immigrants, especially those whose skills were crucial to the survival of the colony.³⁴

Below the elites were the ordinary Afro-American immigrants and Congoes or recaptives. The recaptives were African slaves recaptured from slave ships by the British or American navy and placed in Liberia. They had not yet experienced plantation slavery. Below these social groups were the indigenous people who were exploited and almost treated like slaves by the immigrant Liberians.³⁵

The social stratification described above was indeed a manifestation of the economic system that characterized Liberia's institutional developments. The historical background of that system can be traced to 1415 when the Portuguese captured Ceuta from the Arabs just on the coast of present day Morocco. Following this event, the Portuguese and later other Europeans began to move along the coastal area of West Africa, establishing commercial outposts.³⁶ As Walter Rodney has clearly demonstrated, European commercial presence on the West African coast was well evident in the 1400s. Their commercial advance was further reinforced in the 1600s as the transatlantic slave trade increasingly became important internationally.³⁷

The commercial system introduced on the West African coast by the Europeans, which was indeed an aspect of the world economic system was to reinforce the social system introduced by the ACS in Liberia in 1822. To understand this, it is necessary to shed some light on ways that system functions. As has been well argued by professors Ernest Mandel, Samir Amin, Gunder Frank, and many others, the global economic system is not capable of producing an egalitarian society. It tends to produce both poverty and wealth simultaneously.³⁸ These aspects of the world economy were clearly evident as that system increasingly influenced the social, political, and economic formations of precolonial Liberia. For example, coastal West Africans such as the Papasos, Tombas, the Rogers, the Cleavelands, and the Tucker trading families who collaborated with European merchants in the 1700s and the 1800s became the new West African coastal merchant elites. They were the ones who served as intermediaries between their people and the European merchants or slave traders. They usually sent caboceers or slave capturers in the interior to capture slaves for their European allies who waited on the coast.³⁹ The power of these new West African coastal elites resided in the Atlantic slave trade, and not in those West African traditional social institutions such as the Poro or the Sande.⁴⁰

The new Liberian elite viewed civilization as the leading southerners defined it. This explains why they were inclined to imitate the social values and norms of the members of the aristocratic class of the South during the colonial and independence periods.²⁶

The Liberian elite did not only dress, worship, and build their homes like the members of the ruling class of the South; they also practiced the political and economic systems of that class. The practice of power centralization introduced by the ACS in Liberia was not done away with when the Liberian elite inherited power from their white counterparts in 1841. Although there was a Colonial Council or legislative body during the colonial period, the authority of the governor remained absolute.²⁷

Hence, political development in independent Liberia was not a radical break from the past as some Liberian historians would have us believe.²⁸ While the founding fathers of Liberia agreed that a check and balance system would govern the activities of the new government, the executive branch of the system became more powerful than both legislative and judiciary branches. There were several factors that reinforced this trend. First, the paternalistic system introduced in Liberia by the ACS instilled in the settlers that a strong leader, which also meant the centralization of power, was crucial to their survival. The settlers consciously or unconsciously were forced to accept this view. This was more so, since the ACS had means at its disposal to punish settlers who did not accept the institutional values it was trying to promote in Liberia.²⁹ Besides, Liberia's educational and religious institutions emphasized some of the very ideas that were being encouraged by Liberia's paternalistic system. Students in Liberian schools during both the colonial and independence periods were taught to glorify their leaders even when the performances of such leaders were poor. No wonder Liberian students failed to be critical of their leaders until the 1960s.³⁰ The unequal relationship between God and man was occasionally emphasized by Liberian leaders in such a way that implied that similar relationship existed between them and the people they led.³¹

This view continues to influence Liberia's political process to the present. It was clearly evident during the presidency of William V. S. Tubman. When Ambassador Henry Fahnbulleh was accused of trying to overthrow the Tubman government in 1968, he was said to have committed a crime against the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost being Tubman.³²

The practice of centralization of political power in Liberia could also be said to be a manifestation of paternalism. As already mentioned, the governor who was the chief representative of the American Colonization Society in the Liberian colony, was extremely powerful. His power was also reflected by his social status. Liberia's second governor Jehudi Ashmun, who actually led the institutional developments of Liberia, was the highest paid person in the colony.

class of that region. Their class uniqueness was reflected by their dressing style, ownership of a large number of slaves, and plantations.²⁰

This social legacy was introduced in Liberia by the American Colonization Society. In fact, one aspect of the southern social system was clearly put into practice as the first group of people was being sent to the West African coast by the American Colonization Society in December 1821. The group, which was composed of some 88 men, women, and children, was headed by three whites.²¹ The three leaders were appointed by both the American government and the ACS. In a way, this was a part of the legacy of the South which maintained that blacks were incapable of ruling themselves, and that somebody from the master class would have to rule them.²² This political tradition continued in Liberia from 1821 to 1841. During that period, only whites were appointed by the ACS as full-time governor of the Liberian colony, despite the fact that there were competent blacks for such positions.²³

The governor who was the chief representative of the ACS was the most powerful man in that colony. He had absolute power in the colony. This included administrative, military, financial, religious, educational, and legal matters. This explained why he was greatly feared and respected by most of the Liberian settlers. His power was ensured by the fact that all the material goods sent to the Liberian colony by the ACS were first put in his care. Such items included food, building materials, clothing, educational and agricultural facilities. These materials were paternalistically distributed by the governor among the settlers. This was designed to safeguard the authority of the governor. Those who closely identified with the social, political, economic, and religious values which the American Colonization Society wished to promote in Liberia were the ones usually given political positions and material goods. Those who did not collaborate were not only disliked, but were occasionally punished. Taking into consideration the realities of the Liberian settlement, the immigrants had few alternatives but to collaborate with the governor.²⁴

This legacy of paternalism was not done away with when blacks inherited power from whites in 1841. For example, almost all the blacks appointed to inherit the white leadership were strong supporters of the institutional values the ACS was trying to promote in Liberia. They were very religious, and in fact, like those they succeeded, they tended to use religion to justify their newly inherited power. Joseph J. Roberts, who became Liberia's first president was to emphasize that the Liberian political, economic, and social systems were predetermined by God. The social values and views of the new Liberian leaders were not much different from those of the prominent members of the American Colonization Society. They emphasized that they went to West Africa to civilize the indigenous people of that area.²⁵

peripheral relationship with the world economy have not brought meaningful economic development or social stability in that country bears testimony to my argument here.

The social arrangements described so far have not been without opposition. From its establishment up to the present, Liberia has always been vulnerable to social violence. The first major violent incidence took place in 1823 when Governor Ashmun was expelled from the Liberian colony. Others were to follow, among them the 1871 overthrow of President E. J. Roye and his subsequent elimination, and the 1980 assassination of President William R. Tolbert, Jr. and the overthrow of his government. These violent social disruptions were fundamentally caused by the failure of Liberia's social system to accommodate economically and politically a large number of the Liberian people. It may, therefore, be concluded that unless Liberia radically modifies the legacies it inherited from the American Colonization Society, together with its ancillary relationship with the global economy, it will remain a victim of underdevelopment, and of course, the political instability that is usually generated by underdevelopment.

Endnotes

¹This is a revision of a paper I presented at the Liberian Studies Association Conference held at the University of Akron in March, 1988.

²Matthew T. Mellon, *Early American Views on Negro Slavery* (New York, 1969), pp. 68–69 and Henry N. Sherwood, "Early Negro Deportation Projects," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, II (1916), pp. 484–485.

³Frederic Bancroft, "The Colonization of American Negroes, 1816–1865," in Jacob E. Cook, ed., *Frederic Bancroft, Historian* (Norman, 1957), pp. 147–191; Charles I. Foster, "The Colonization of Free Negroes in Liberia, 1816–1835," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXVIII (1953); Early Fox, *The American Colonization Society, 1817–1840* (Baltimore, 1919); Henry N. Sherwood, "The Formation of the American Colonization Society," *Journal of Negro History*, II (1917); and Philip Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816–1865* (New York, 1961).

⁴*The First Annual Report of the ACS* (1818), p. 11. See also note 2, and Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 20–30.

⁵William Jay, *An Inquiry into the Character and Tendency of the American Colonization and Anti-Slavery Societies* (New York, 1835) p. 11, Bancroft, "The Colonization of American Negroes, 1816–1865." p. 157.

⁶The social backgrounds of the prominent founders of the ACS have been treated in detail in the following works: Fox, *The American Colonization Society*; Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement*; Bancroft, *The Colonization*; Forster, "The Colonization of Free Negroes," Sherwood, "The Formation"; Kent

P. Opper, "The Minds of White Participants in the African Colonization Movement, 1816–1840," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1972); and Archibald Alexander, *A History of Colonization on the Coast of West Africa* (Philadelphia, 1846).

⁷See my "American Colonization Society and the Formation of Political, Economic, and Religious Institutions in Liberia, 1816–1900," (Ph.D. West Virginia University, 1985), especially Chapters I, III, IV, and VI, and my review of Katherine Harris' *African and American Values: Liberia and West Africa* in the *Liberian Studies Journal*, Vol. XII, (1987) for this argument. The argument is also discussed in detail in the late Professor Tom Shick's *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settler Society in Nineteenth Century Liberia* (Baltimore, 1980).

⁸Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1976), pp. 5–7.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰William Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1935), p. 210, Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (Baton Rouge, 1918); John S. Haller, *Outcast from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859–1900* (New York, 1975); Juan Comas, *Racial Myths* (Paris, 1951); and George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South: or the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond, 1854).

¹¹Eugene Genovese, *The World the Slaveholder Made* (New York, 1969), p. 196.

¹²Caryle Sitterman, *Sugar Country: the Sugar Industry in the South, 1753–1950*, (Lexington, 1955), p. 96. See these works also: Withrop Jordan *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward Negro, 1550–1812* (Baltimore, 1968); Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in Antebellum South* (New York, 1956).

¹³For this argument, see these works: Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*; Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution*; Jordan, *White Over Black*; Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made*; Michael Johnson and James Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York, 1984); and James Oaks, *The Ruling Race: History of American Slaveholders* (New York, 1983).

¹⁴Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, p. 97; Oaks, *the Ruling Race*, pp. 48–49; Jordan, *White Over Blacks*, pp. 167–69; Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution*, pp. 339–340; and Mary F. Berry and John W. Blassingame, *Long Memory: The Black Experience in America* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 36–37, 40, 118–120, 126, 128.

¹⁵In the Liberian colony the mulattoes or light-skinned settler Liberians were given preferential consideration over the dark-skinned settler Liberians by the ACS. They were second to the white ruling class in social status in the

colony. In 1841 they peacefully inherited the leadership of the colony from their white counterparts, when Joseph J. Roberts, a very light skinned settler, was appointed governor of the colony. Indeed, their predominance continued until the 1860s when the dark-skinned settler Liberians captured political power. The latter continued to dominate the Liberian status quo until they were overthrown by a military coup led by indigenous Liberians in 1980. See J. Gus Liebenow's *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy* (Bloomington, 1987), for a detailed treatment of the foregoing argument.

¹⁶Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, p. 174.

¹⁷James Coleman, *Slavery Time in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill, 1940), pp. 248–49.

¹⁸David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, 1975), pp. 261–263. See also his *Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, 1969).

¹⁹Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made*, pp. 3–7; Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, pp. 97–122; Bancroft, "Colonization of American Negroes, 1816–1865"; Comas, *Racial Myths*; Haller, *Outcast from Evolution*; John D. Smith, *An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography 1865–1918*, (Westport, 1985); Louis Ruchames, ed., *Racial Thought in America: From the Puritans to Abraham Lincoln* (Amherst, 1969).

²⁰See Genovese's *The World the Slaveholders Made* for this argument. And also Edward Magdal and John L. Wakelyn, eds., *The Southern Common People: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Social History* (Westport, 1980).

²¹Richard West, *Back to Africa: A History of Sierra Leone and Liberia* (New York, 1970), pp. 107–109; Shick, *Behold the Promised Land*, pp. 20–24; and Ralph Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun* (Washington, 1835).

²²See Ulrich B. Phillips' *American Negro Slavery* for this argument. See also note 19.

²³See West's *Back to Africa*; and Wiley's ed. *Slaves No More* for this argument.

²⁴This is discussed in Brancroft's *Colonization of American Negroes*. See also my "American Colonization Society" for this argument.

²⁵See West's *Back to Africa*; my "American Colonization Society"; Wiley's *Slaves No More*; Alexander, *A History of Colonization*; and Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*.

²⁶This should not be surprising because among the main objectives of the ACS in Liberia was to promote the institutional values and norms of the leaders of that movement. This explained why the blacks selected for the African

colonization scheme were mostly those who accepted or had the potential of internalizing the religious, economic, political, and social values of the eminent members of the ACS. Indeed, the settlers who closely identified with and articulated the policies or values of the ACS were the ones usually given important positions in the Liberian colony. For the details of this argument see my "American Colonization Society and the Socio-Religious Characterization of Liberia: An Historical Survey, 1822-1900" in the *Liberian Studies Journal*, Vol. 2 (1985). See also Gurley's *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*.

²⁷For the details of this argument see the following works: my "American Colonization Society," especially Chapter IV; Bancroft, "The Colonization of American Negroes"; Foster, "The Colonization of Free Negroes in Liberia"; Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*; Edmund Ruffin, *The African Colonization Unveiled* (n.d.); G. B. Stebbins, *Facts and Opinions Touching the Real Origin, Character, and the Influence of the American Colonization Society: ...* (Boston, 1853).

²⁸See the following works for this distorted historical view: Dorris Henries, *The Liberian Nation: A Short History* (New York, 1954); George W. Ellis, *Negro Culture in West Africa* (New York, 1915); and Joseph J. Roberts, *The Republic of Liberia* (Washington, 1869).

²⁹See my "American Colonization Society," especially pp. 71-83; and Bancroft's "Colonization of American Negroes" for a detailed treatment of this argument.

³⁰The details of students' protest movements in Liberia are examined in Liebenow's *Liberia*, pp. 171-172, 174-178; and Stephen S. Hlophe, *Class, Ethnicity and Politics in Liberia:* (Washington, 1979), pp. Chapters 6 and 7.

³¹This is evident in some of the letters written by the Liberian settlers to their friends or relatives in the United States. See Bell I. Wiley's ed. *Slaves No More*.

³²This was stated by a representative from Maryland County at a political gathering held in Monrovia in 1968 to show support for President Tubman.

³³Obviously the house also represented a symbol of supreme authority of the governor who was then the chief executive of Liberia. This tradition continues to influence Liberia's political system up to the present. For example, a Liberian president is likely to have the best of everything. This includes the best homes and the most beautiful mistresses. He is supposed to be the most powerful and richest man in the country. The history of the foregoing explanation can be traced to the Old South where the first group of prominent members of the ACS came from. There, the members of the aristocratic class, especially those of the top layer of that region's social stratifications, were supremely powerful. See notes 6 and 7 for the details of the above argument.

³⁴See A. Karnga's *A History of Liberia* (Liverpool, 1926) and George W. Brown's *The Economic History of Liberia* (Washington, 1941) for this argument.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of British Empire, 1480–1630* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 101–115; C. R. Boxer, *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion 1415–1825*, (Los Angeles, 1969), pp. 1–29; C. E. Carrington, *The British Overseas: Exploits of a Nation of Shopkeepers* (Cambridge, 1968); Carlo M. Cipolla, *Guns, Sails, and Empires: Technological Innovation and Early Phases of European Expansion 1400–1700* (Minerva, 1965), and J. H. Parry, *The Establishment of the European Hegemony* (New York, 1965).

³⁷See Walter Rodney's *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545–1800* (Oxford, 1971) for this argument.

³⁸For the details of this argument, see the following works: Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London, 1980), especially Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4; Samir Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development* (New York, 1977); *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa* (New York, 1973); Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Dynamics of Global Crisis* (New York, 1982); Fernando H. Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Los Angeles, 1979), pp. vii–xxv; L. S. Stavrianos, *Global Rift: The Third World comes of Age* (New York, 1981); Bade Onimode, *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria: The Dialectics of Mass Poverty* (London, 1982); Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World Economy: The States, the Movements, and the Civilizations* (New York, 1984); Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (New York, 1973); and Michael Beaud, *A History of Capitalism 1500–1980* (New York, 1983).

³⁹Rodney, *A History of*, pp. 95–122, 172–200; Christopher Fyfe, "West African Trade 1000–1800" in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Ian Esple, eds., *A Thousand Years of West African History* (Ibadan, 1965); and Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade: Precolonial History 1450–1850* (New York, 1961).

⁴⁰See Rodney's *A History of* for the details for this argument.

⁴¹See note 36, and also my "American Colonization Society," especially Chapter V.

⁴²This is examined in detail in Brown's *Economic History*.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 160.

Svend E. Holsoe, Max Belcher, Bernard L. Herman, and Rodger Kingston, *A Land and Life Remembered: Americo-Liberian Folk Architecture* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988, 176 pp. with illustrations.)

A Land and Life Remembered: Americo-Liberian Folk Architecture is basically a photographic essay. It is a collaborative effort of photographer Max Belcher, anthropologist Svend Holsoe, folklorist Bernard Herman, and research associate Rodger Kingston.

The text focuses on the town of Arthington, Liberia. It is 20 miles from Monrovia near the St. Paul River. The book's authors state accurately that in 1869, Robert Arthington, a Leeds, England industrialist provided one thousand pounds sterling for "sending persons to Liberia in whom it is unmistakably evident that they have the highest welfare of Africa at heart." (p. 6) The American Colonization Society, however, handled the money and arrangements for voyages.

Some 300 persons, mostly former African-American bondsmen, women, and children, settled in Arthington from 1869 to 1878. They came from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. In addition to the trauma of enslavement and the dislocation of life after the Civil War, some of these travelers had been attacked brutally by Ku Klux Klan mobs.

It is their shared experience in Liberia though which the authors seek to portray in the photographs and text. The writers say that central to their study are such concepts as cultural diffusion, exchange of ideas and goods, acculturation, and social organization (p. x). They abandon full exploration of these concepts. Instead, they impose their view of 'settler domination'—rich over poor, and both over 'indigenous' Liberians in a society based on hierarchical stratification. They argue that the domination was expressed through architecture and building. (p. xi).

A Land's authors admit the interplay of African and European cultures which shaped southern plantation life and society in the United States. In textiles, food habits, and agriculture, they note the impact of both cultures while they insist that in matters of housing, white cultural attitudes prevailed. (p. xi)

Evidence shows that African cultural influences extended, however, to architecture in the United States. Africans built the mansions of Mount Vernon and Monticello. African craftsmen assisted also in the building of the Touro Synagogue in colonial Newport, Rhode Island lending their skill and artistic inspiration. But Mechal Sobel proves the African contribution to architecture

and building in *The World They made Together: Black and White Values in 18th-Century Virginia*. (Princeton University Press, 1988)

Holsoe and Herman accent the American background of the Arthington community. They maintain that a cultural gulf separated Afro-Americans and other Africans in Liberia (p. 17) writing that "the settlers of Liberia were not blacks going *back* to Africa; they were Americans settling themselves in new circumstances. (p. ix) The book contains passages which offer a contrasting view. The African-Americans who became Liberians remembered Africa as their ancestral home saying:

The Colored man never is free, and never will be until he plants
his foot on the land of his forefathers. (p. xi)

In other writings, they identified themselves simply as former inhabitants of the United States who were made a separate class because of their color. (p. 1)

Questions emerge when the 'settler domination' theory is compared to the real discovery of Liberian art and architecture which persists in 1989. A conclusive architectural history of Liberia is yet to be written. Yet there exists records of sequential migrations of Africans to the Grain Coast—modern Liberia—from other parts of Africa. For example, legends and folklore cite ancestral homes of Mali for the Vai and Loma or Guinea for the Kpelle and Mano.

Add to this cultural mixture the Dan, Bassa, Kru Grebo, and Krahn, to cite a few examples plus the Bankongo, Dahomeans, and Iboes, so-called 'Congoes' or Africans the U.S. navy took from slave ships to Liberia. Each group brought a particular building style. Some preferred compound multiple family dwellings while others chose single family thatched or mud houses. (p. 130) Some Liberians decorated their dwellings with intricate patterns and symbols while others did not. Members of the Arthington community added their architectural style. It was shaped by their U.S. experience and their African environment.

Belcher's photographs are captivating as they recall parts of Liberia's past. Ranging in size from 9 1/2 x 7 1/8 to 35/8 x 5 1/2, they are black and white with four color photos (pp. 91–94) of Liberian churches. Belcher does identify the persons and buildings in the photos. Dates of construction are missing, however, for virtually all the Liberian structures. Some photos are not ordered in sequence making cross-reference very difficult although Belcher provides an index of photographs. (For example, p. 102 with photos #93, 36, 53 or p. 103 with photos #65, 94.)

The authors caution that one should not expect to find the rote duplication of American buildings in African settings. (p. xi) But if the similarities in architecture exist, they fail to point these out explicitly. Yet close comparison of the U.S. and Liberian building reveal a certain variation in style. On the Liberian

buildings, the viewer notices the symbols, intricate lace carpentry work, and designs on the portals of door ways, staircases, and even headstones in Liberia. (see examples on pp. 15, 21, 23, 53, 70, 78, 115, 118, 120) It should be pointed out too that some of the photographs are of houses owned by Liberians from the Carribean who could not have been influenced by U.S. plantation architecture. (p. 78, 79, 118, 120). Such examples can not help the authors prove their theory of U.S. 'settler domination' through architecture.

A Land should be enriched with input from an anthropologist and folklorist. Yet neither individual advances the discussion beyond the tendency to impose on Liberia the matrix of racial conflict and nativist or xenophobic expressions which are a part of America's social and cultural history.

The writers struggle with labels for those 19th-century Liberians who made it despite the odds. But again the labels come from the American experience of 'settlers' and 'immigrants' which suggest foreigners coming to a distant land. Even 'Americo-Liberian' is an invention of colonizationists. The writers do use interchangeably 'emigrant' or home comer and 'immigrant' or foreigner. But the terms convey very different messages.

A Land concludes, nevertheless, with a sweeping statement that 'Americo-Liberian' domination through architecture and cultural superiority lasted until the 1980 coup d'état. (pp. 18, 26) A separate study is needed to fully examine causes of the coup which destroyed one of Africa's oldest governments. Any analysis of causes must transcend the thesis of monolithic 'Americo-Liberian' domination to explore the centrifugal elements pulling the society apart and centripetal forces providing bases of cohesion. *A Land* signals the need for a study of Liberian architecture which explores its richness and diversity.

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Carl Patrick Burrowes, *The Americo-Liberian Ruling Class and Other Myths: A Critique of Political Science in the Liberian Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University, Institute of African and African-American Affairs, Occasional Paper No. 3, 1989, pp. 77)

Carl Patrick Burrowes, who teaches journalism and mass media law at Glassboro State College, Glassboro, New Jersey, originally wrote this essay for a graduate history class at Temple University. The work is, notwithstanding the subtitle, a critical review of three important works on Liberia—J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege*; Steven S. Hlophe, *Class, Ethnicity and Politics in Liberia*; and H. Boima Fahnbulleh, Jr., *The Diplomacy of Prejudice: Liberia in International Politics, 1945-70*. Liebenow is an American, Hlophe a South African, and Fahnbulleh a Liberian.

The first few pages of the essay convey the essence of Burrowes' work. The author contends that the three men who wrote the works mentioned above

share many epistemological assumptions and methodological approaches. These are evident in their treatment of ethnicity, classes, the nation, the state and other key political science concepts. These terms are defined, if at all, in overly general ways, without being operationalized. Furthermore, there is often considerable variance between the definition of each concept, where given, and the way it is used. The uses of these concepts tend to be essentialist and ahistorical. (pages 1-2)

Burrowes maintains that "central to all three works is the thesis that the Americo-Liberian constituted a ruling class that oppressed indigenous people." Burrowes continues:

The Americo-Liberians are presented as shrewd while the oppressed are victims, lacking in intelligence or moral virtue. Westerners are the only bloc of persons presented as fully human, with actions determined by a wide range of motivations and social relations. This tri-partite (sic) apportionment of morality and intelligence is linked to a larger system of Eurocentrism which privileges Western audiences, promotes "modernization" with an attendant set of economic relations, and uncritically assumes Whites to be neutral and credible sources. (page 2)

Although Burrowes is virtually uniformly critical throughout his essay of these three authors—their ideas and their analyses—he reserves his most florid invective for Liebenow, probably because the latter's book was the first published (in 1969, however, not in 1964 as stated in Burrowes' bibliography) and therefore adversely influenced both Hlophe and Fahnbulleh, according to Burrowes. Liebenow's *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege*, a pioneering work from which untold numbers of Liberians and Liberianists have greatly profited, is denounced by Burrowes as a "hybrid" greatly influenced by "political journalism, much of it polemical and sensational" (no examples given). Liebenow is also not sound in scholarly organization, and furthermore, for good measure, "carries forward the moralistic tone and certain polemic techniques of an earlier tradition." (page 3)

More specifically, Burrowes disagrees with the three writers that the repatriated North Americans of African ancestry (which Burrowes still refers to as "Americo-Liberians") constituted a ruling class, or at best, this analysis is a "half-truth." As he points out, the Liberian elite by the 1940s contained members of indigenous African groups as well as foreigners. The author also castigates the way which Liebenow, Hlophe, and Fahnbulleh treat the relations between the Settlers and the members of the various African ethnic groups in the interior. He accuses the three authors of being imprecise and inconsistent in their definitions of such words as "ethnicity," "class," and a number of other terms. When precise negatives fail him when referring to the ideas and concepts of the three authors, Burrowes asserts that all three are "ahistorical and essentialist," catchall terms which to Burrowes seem to characterize much of the material contained in the three works under consideration.

Toward the end of his essay Burrowes goes to considerable length to show that the Liberian economy is dominated by foreign financial interests. Because of this condition, he then contends that the Liberian business elites could not have exploited ordinary Liberians and chides all three authors for maintaining that they did. Why Burrowes believes that Liberian business elites and foreigners could not have worked hand-in-glove for their mutual self-interest escapes me. Is this not a common feature of most economies in Third World countries?

Now that Burrowes has expended so much energy in his graduate history course writing an essay which attempts to demolish these works of Liebenow, Hlophe, and Fahnbulleh, perhaps he will undertake an essay in which he describes and analyzes his own views on such topics as the nature of the Settlers and their state, relations between the Settlers and indigenous Africans, uses of Western ethnocentrism and corresponding negation of the value of African cultures, and other subjects which he discusses in his review of these three works. I would be eager to read such an essay as I think that Burrowes would provide stimulating, thought provoking ideas. I do believe, however, that the works of the three authors which Burrowes so remorselessly criticizes, will

remain secure in their significant niches in Liberian studies to which their ideas, insights, and assessments entitle them.

At one point in his work Burrowes considers Hlophe's discussion of class in Liberia, stoutly asserting that the latter does not offer "a shred of evidence in support of this, his major thesis." (page 22) Finally Burrowes, with magnificent disdain, dismisses Hlophe's arguments with the phrase, "So what?" It is unlikely that two words could more appropriately characterize Carl Patrick Burrowes' *The Americo-Liberian Ruling Class and Other Myths*.

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Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *Workers Rights Violations, Liberia: GSP Petition Before the U.S. Trade Representative*, May 1989. 45p., \$5.00 AF-10.

This review is undertaken from a legal analysis perspective. It considers how the presentations made in the Brief stand as evidence. No judgment is made by the reviewer concerning the truth or falsehood of the facts presented or claims made in it. Accordingly, in reviewing the document, its major charges in respect to the accusation that the Liberian government denies the right of association, union organizing and collective bargaining are the keys, and any evidence which is not relevant to the claims in a manner as to be supportive of it has very little evidentiary magnitude. The evidence must be material, possessing the tendency to establish the thrust of the allegations or the case being made must fail.

The stated aim of the Brief is in "support of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights' petition to have Liberia's preferences (under the United States government's Generalized Status of Preferences) revoked." (P. 4 of Brief) In support of this objective, the Brief seeks to present evidence that the Government of Liberia "has not taken, and is not taking steps to afford internationally recognized workers' rights to *its* workers." (My emphasis. It should be indicated here that the initial reference to the Liberian government and *its* workers are ambiguous, leaving the reader in doubt as to whether this is in reference to only government workers or to all workers in the country. It is only later in the document that the point is made clear that the reference covers all workers in the country. (See P. 4 of Brief). It advances the proposition that the "broad policies and specific actions of the government...are part of a coordinated attempt to deny workers the right of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively." (P. 4 of Brief)

It must be borne in mind that the Brief is an advocacy document—it seeks to present and substantiate a certain viewpoint through the collation and correlation of information of evidentiary value—to convince the reader that the conclusions it has drawn are valid, and supported by the evidence. There is generally no claim of objectivity in advocacy documents, nor is there a need for them to be objective. They unabashedly support certain viewpoints.

Notwithstanding the absence of a requirement of objectivity, an advocacy document must be able to withstand analytical scrutiny of how it proceeds to demonstrate the essential assertions it makes, by the evidence laid out in it.

Under both Liberian and United States federal civil procedure rules, the standard of proof in civil matters (It is reasonably assumed that the forum before which the document will be presented is a civil and not criminal one. Under the criminal law, the proof is "beyond a reasonable or rational doubt".) is "by the preponderance of evidence". The nature of this test is not as to the quantity or volume of the evidence, but it goes to the characteristic and quality of the evidence. The level of the evidences established its evidentiary weight or value.

The Brief presents fourteen cases (PP. 11–13. Detail explanations of selected cases are provided in Appendix A of the Brief.) of alleged "Labor Rights Violations" in Liberia between 1981 and 1988. All of the cases are painstakingly referenced and sourced. The sources include the government's own *New Liberian* newspaper, and the United States State Department Country reports, both of which may be said to lend credibility to the evidential quality of the reported incidents.

Close examination of the background explanations of the cited "violations" reveals that eight of them relate to strike action or protests by workers, (Liberia Agricultural Company (LAC), Bong Mines (2), National Port Authority (NPA), Teachers and hospital workers, LAMCO, and LIBINC.) five concern the government's actions directly related to unions or union organizing activities (National Union of Liberian Teachers, Press Union of Liberia, LIBINC, National Seamen, Ports and General Workers Union (NSPGWU) and Firestone Plantations Company workers.), one refers to dismissal "without cause" (Roberts International Airport workers.), and one is in regard to the failure of a liquidated company to pay its workers. (National Iron Ore Company, NIOC).

Of the eight strike actions, two (LAC and LIBINC) are in connection with matters of union or unionizing activities *per se*. The other six concern strikes over pay, layoffs and related matters. It is noted that strike actions, or even the prohibition of strike action in and of themselves, are insufficient to establish the proof required to substantiate the primary allegations, and since cogent connections between the strike actions and the denial of the right of association, the right to organize unions and to bargain collectively are not clearly demonstrated in the Brief, the presentation of the facts of the strikes are of limited evidentiary weight in support of the major allegations.

Of course it can be reasonably argued that denying the right to strike is a denial of the right of association to the extent that a strike is "association". Or that the denial negatively affects prospective collective bargaining strength in that this is the most effective manner in which workers assert their bargaining power. On the other hand, it can similarly be reasonably argued that the prohibition of strike, regardless of what national or international laws it may violate, is not normally contemplated when one refers to the denial of the rights

of association, organization of unions or collectively bargaining, unless the strike is specifically in protest or response to the prior denial of one of these rights.

The two strikes related to union organization which can be said to relate directly to the assertions of the Brief are the LAC strike, where it is stated that workers were "arrested and detained for instigating strike action after management refused to recognize union elections; and, the LIBINC strike which alleges that [m]anagement fires workers elected to union office. Government fails to respond to workers protest." The LAC strike is of direct evidentiary value in support of the charges against the government, while the LIBINC workers reference is circumstantial, which standing alone is of restricted value.

Of the evidence presented in the Brief, the five cases of the Teachers union, the Press Union, LIBINC, the Seamen's union and Firestone workers are directly related to government action bearing on the existence of unions, and union activities. The matter of LIBINC has already been commented on in the previous paragraph.

In the matter of the Seaman's union, the footnote makes reference to documents which are "on file with the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights" (P. 12-13 of Brief.). Non-access to those documents make it impossible to judge the quality of the evidence, and hence it may not be taken into account.

As to Firestone, it is stated: "President Doe acts unilaterally in recognizing one of two competing unions at Firestone Plantation." (P. 12 of Brief) The footnote reference similarly as occur in the case of the Seaman's union does not provide any evidence upon which one can make a reasonable conclusion. It too must suffer the same fate as the Seaman's reference. The two pieces of evidence as presented (Firestone and Seaman's union) supposes the existence of better evidence, and therefore are not the best evidence which the case admits of.

The matter of the teachers' union is compelling and persuasive in support of the allegations since it goes directly to the accusations of the denial of freedom of association, the right to unionize and collectively bargain. This is of the highest evidentiary value. Even this evidence is however, affected by the subsequent incorporation and functioning of a "teachers' association," with fundamentally the same officers as those of the previous union, thus detracting significantly from the weight of the evidence.

Likewise, the reported banning of the Press Union of Liberia would present highly credible evidence, except that at the time of this review, the Press Union is active and functioning openly. (The Press Union elected Mr. Lamini Waritay as its President after the lifting of the ban. He has since been succeeded by journalist Isaac Bantu.) This makes the point moot, and of little evidentiary value except to the extent that it proves that the Union was once banned.

Overall the five reported incidences which correlate directly with the allegations in respect to the primary allegations of the brief may be said to be of significant qualitative value as evidence to establish the case sought to be made by the Brief.

Further into the Brief, it is alleged that the "entire Supreme Court bench was forced to resign by President Doe in an act of intimidation in response to a series of decisions adverse to the executive's interest." (P. 16 of Brief.) This statement is not supported by any citations of specific decisions of the court which were "adverse to the executive's interest". In support of this point, the Brief refers to an earlier testimony of Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The referral to Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf's testimony does not meet the test for supporting an allegation, since it has the tendency to be self-serving and non-independent, Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf being one of those giving testimony in support of the Brief. This evidence carries minimal weight.

The total evidence as presented by the Brief in support of its main proposition viewed from a legal analysis perspective does not meet the tests of evidentiary value as to prove by a preponderance of evidence that "[t]he broad policies and specific actions of the government, under the direction of President Doe, are part of a coordinated attempt to deny workers the right of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively." (My emphasis.)

The brief proves conclusively only that strikes are illegal in Liberia. But then Decree 12 is unequivocal in pronouncing that.

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Amos Sawyer, *Effective Immediately: Dictatorship in Liberia, 1980–1986: A Personal Perspective*. The Netherlands: Africa Centre, 1988. 41 pages. No cover price. ISBN (First printing) 3926771046.

“...I found Mr. Sawyer’s pamphlet full of lamentations, lampoonery and outright blasphemy of people and organizations other than *himself*! He is sometimes too repetitive and tends to overstate the point. Conspicuously absent in his pamphlet is any mention or acceptance of personal blame, given the prominent role he played in the post-coup government of Mr. Doe. That, by itself, is intellectually dishonest.”

“(Sawyer’s) memoir of the years since 1980 makes compulsive reading. Inevitably polemical, it is nonetheless never dishonest and rarely unfair, and filled with revealing comments on the Liberian political scene. What I found most disappointing is that Sawyer has given little attention to his own unique position as participant and observer through six critical years, concentrating instead on a general analysis of the nature of the regime; there are flashes of personal reminiscence, but he must have much more to tell.”

These comments represent two extreme views of Amos Sawyer’s monograph first published in 1987 and again in 1988. The first comment is from a personal letter I received from a colleague who admitted that he had just browsed through the material. The second is taken from a brief review of the monograph by Christopher Clapham in *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, April, 1988.

Somewhere between these two opinions, the fulcrum of objective reality has to judge Sawyer’s work. This is no easy task, given the elusiveness of the concept of objectivity itself.

Sawyer chooses to present his account of events in Liberia as a monograph, “so as to, without the benefit of hindsight, contribute to the debate about the Liberian tragedy.”

The monograph consists of fourteen (14) sections, a preface, conclusions and a selected bibliography.

Sawyer starts out with a brief account of the events of the 1970s which precipitated the military takeover in Liberia on April 12, 1980. He insists that the

event signalled the end of an era. "The era had begun in the 1870s with the rise of the True Whig Party as a response to the political aspirations of lower class elements in the settler population." He then moves on to discuss the character of the military regime. Sawyer does not mince words here, as he proceeds to describe his assessment of the social-psychological makeup of the 17 enlisted men led by then Master Sergeant Samuel Doe who toppled the Tolbert government in the bloody coup d'état on April 12, 1980.

The bulk of the monograph after this, is dedicated to analyses of the relationship of the "military dictatorship" to: the economy; the press; the intelligentsia; workers; rural society; religious bodies; MOJA and PPP; and the incipient democratic process. Under this last section, Sawyers deals in some detail with the role of the National Constitution Commission of which he served as chairman. He treats also the roles of The Constitutional Advisory Assembly and the Special Elections Commission (SECOM) in the process of returning Liberia to civilian democratic government in 1985-86.

The last third of the book is dedicated to sections which Sawyer labels: the November 12 (1985) attempted coup; and the military dictatorship and the international community. After these sections, Sawyer ends the monograph with a conclusion which includes sections on what he terms the militarization of the Liberian society; and extrapolations from the Liberian experience. A selected bibliography of eighty-one (81) sources averages about two references for each page of the 41 page monograph.

For some, Amos Sawyer is one of the most prominent and respected Liberian citizens and scholars in contemporary times. For others, he is one of the ideologists of the changes which occurred in 1980 who failed to contain the "monster" they created. For still others, he is a disgruntle intellectual who has abandoned his flock of faithful at home while he seeks greener pastures abroad; inflating his own ego while he attacks the government from his safe haven. The manner one employs to classify Sawyer, will depend on one's assessment of the man. It is to be expected also that many opinions of him are based on prejudice and a lack of information about the man. Whatever the case, this reviewer intends to stick with the facts. In a brief autobiographical note at the beginning of the monograph, Sawyer is identified as: "a former Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities and Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Liberia, was Chairman of the National Constitutional Commission of Liberia, 1981-1983, and Chairman of the Liberian People's Party. Both the party and Sawyer were banned from participation in political activities by the military government of Liberia in 1985."

Reading through the monograph, one is very clear as to which side of the tracks Sawyer is riding on. He is clearly disappointed at the trend of things in Liberia since the coup. His disappointment stems from his view that what exists

in Liberia today is a "tragedy" which in turn poses a challenge for Liberia's sons and daughters. The only solution he sees to this tragedy is "that Liberians who are interested in salvaging their country from the throes of dictatorship begin to perceive a commonality of interest. It is important that they initiate wide ranging discussion and vigorous debates with a view of forging a national democratic coalition against dictatorship in all of its disguises."

Sawyer has very few kind words for the military and its functionaries in the monograph:

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE MILITARY REGIME...

...the coup makers lacked discipline and direction and (possessed) excessive materialistic greed...

ON THE MILITARY AND THE ECONOMY...

The Liberian case cannot be considered for anything other than what it really is: six years of rape and plunder by armed marauders whose ideology is to search for cash and whose ambition is to retain power to accumulate and protect wealth.

ON THE MILITARY AND THE PRESS...

Every independent newspaper has been closed down at least twice, and every independent newspaper editor has been imprisoned at least once.

He does add though, that:

Liberian journalists deserve high commendation for their integrity and commitment as exemplified in their work under the brutal conditions of military rule.

ON THE MILITARY AND WORKERS...

The plundering character of the (military) leadership led to the sacrificing of worker's rights for favors from management...

ON THE MILITARY AND RURAL SOCIETY

The behavior of the military dictatorship in the rural area has resulted in increased ethnic strife, high levels of repression, and greater impoverishment.

ON THE CONSTITUTION ADVISORY ASSEMBLY

In the three months that it worked, the Assembly consumed about a quarter million dollars to complete its work. It disparaged the (Constitutional) Commission's work, and during

moments of coziness with Doe, its Chairman, Edward Kesselly of Lofa referred to the draft constitution prepared by the Commission as "bloody surgery."

ON EMMETT HARMON, SECOM CHAIRMAN...

He (Doe) selected as chairman a 72 year old former Ambassador-at-large of the Tubman years whose entire public service career had been spent creating illusions of grandeur and chasing the spotlight. Nobody who knew him had ever found anything more than a superficiality in him—a passion for pomp and pageantry and an obsession with his own sense of importance.

Such critical comments are to be found throughout the monograph. In some instances, the language Sawyer uses to describe some of his detractors is very provocative and alludes to imagery too graphic to be mentioned here.

Did Sawyer do justice to himself, the military, and the other actors, and audiences in his account of the Liberian scenario? This is the key question which a review of this nature should answer. However, I make no pretenses at having a ready answer. For a scholarly writing, Sawyer's language is sometimes too strong and reeks of personal vendetta. But then, Sawyer claims that he was indeed a victim. One who was imprisoned on trumped up charges and denied participation in the political process which he helped create, thus some of the bitterness is justifiable. He describes himself in the monograph as a participant-observer. As to whether he was more a participant than an observer, or vice versa, has to be left to historians. Sawyer clearly states that he was not a member of the government, and technically, he was not. However, given the fact that he and some of his cronies have been identified as those who cultivated the idea of social change in the minds of the Liberian public prior to the coup, it is difficult for him to vindicate himself completely. People will continue to question him as to why as a former high school teacher of Doe he did not assert himself more during the early days of the coup and provide ideological and practical guidance. Sawyer's answer: Doe was not listening, and the involved intelligentsia was split and fighting among itself.

The best way to judge the quality of Sawyer's critiques and writing is to look at what is happening in Liberian society today. The military government came to power on a promise to wipe out corruption, curb abuse of public office, eliminate the dominance of the political process by one political party, and improve the quality of life of the Liberian people, who, according to them, had been suppressed by the settler group for over 100 years. Today, the government admits to an ailing economy. The leadership has accused top level functionaries of corruption in high places. A brain drain is evident in the society as many

qualified Liberians leave the country because of personal, professional and political reasons. The legislature has passed bills in favor of unlimited presidential terms. They have also indicated intentions to abolish the multi party system. Both of these last suggestions are contrary to the constitution and must be approved in a referendum before they can become final. These trends would suggest that Liberia is far from creating the type of democratic and free enterprise system which is outlined in its constitution. As to whether the reasons for these less than desirable conditions precipitated from the factors Sawyer mentions in his monograph is debatable.

Because of the key roles Sawyer played or did not play in the whole politico-social process in Liberia during the period under review, anything he writes has to be considered a piece of the puzzle which seeks to explain the larger picture of the Liberian situation. The monograph is clearly a view from inside looking in. The chronology of events is one of the most accurate this reviewer has seen of the happenings in Liberia since the April 1980 coup. As result of this *Effective Immediately*, despite its sometimes scurrilous language, will always have a place in the archives of Liberian political history.

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Ruth M. Stone, *Dried Millet Breaking: Time, Words, and Song in the WOI Epic of the Kpelle* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, xvii, 150, \$???.00).

This book is about the exploits of WOI, a mythical culture hero in the epic traditions among the Kpelle. WOI is typical of the legendary, folkloric figures common in West African epic traditions. He epitomizes what ordinary people dream of becoming. His many exploits involve the utmost cleverness and he is always one step ahead of his foes. In this volume Ruth Stone continues her research on the Kpelle performance event and cultural interaction, using the WOI epic as the main focus. In her discussion of this tradition, Professor Stone addresses some of the basic issues in ethnomusicology, including the roles of musicians and their relationships with tutelary spirits, the analysis of the epic as a performance event, the process of composition, performance practice, and the interrelationship between music and other artistic traditions. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, Professor Stone presents several convincing arguments on the social and musical interaction among participants in the performance of WOI.

In Chapter 1, the reader is introduced to the epic as a traditional narrative form with a full explanation of its plot, a synopsis of its various episodes, the setting and characters, and the musical and dramatic elements therein. Moreover, through Professor Stone's meticulous analysis, we can comprehend the intricate details of the epic as it unfolds. We are given, for example, explanations of Kpelle gestural and onomatopoeic expressions, and hidden meanings. The full narrative upon which the text is based is presented in Chapter 2. The remaining chapters examine the roles of participants, performance structure (noting how song, gesture, and humor contribute to the overall dramatic effect), how the epic traditions are integrated into community life, and an explanation of how the concepts about time fit into the Kpelle world view.

From the foregoing, one can surmise that this book moves beyond the typical genre of studies on African music. The reader is instead introduced to broader questions of music's relationship to areas of culture which often go untouched. While some ethnomusicologists may want to see more emphasis on the music, Professor Stone's intelligent and provocative discussions of time, language, history and African literary traditions will prove beneficial to future studies examining the role of music in African oral narratives. The time has come for humanists and social scientists alike to obtain a greater awareness of the multi-dimensional temporal elements that govern music performance. As interpreters of culture, we must begin to comprehend what Professor Stone has

termed "inner time" and "outer time" and their relationship to music and other forms of expressive behavior. After reading this book, one has a better understanding of time and space, and how these concepts are manipulated in an African context. For comparative purposes, the book provides well-documented accounts of similar practices in other African societies. Dr. Stone's research on the Kpelle serves as a guiding light to a more holistic view of expressive culture in Africa. As she rightly states: "In my research, I have found that those concepts suggested by the Kpelle data are quickly corroborated with examples from other African peoples" and "Isolated statements in the literature assume new and added importance as parallels appear." The book also consolidates information that readers would ordinarily have to consult several sources in order to obtain. This is an important attribute, since materials germane to the study of African music are quite diverse.

Those of us in Liberian studies know Ruth Stone as a leading scholar in the field of African music. Her past writings in the field are impeccable, and this work does not deviate from the norm. With her superb language skills and breadth of knowledge in other related areas, she has advanced a major contribution to the study of African music and literature. Overall, this book represents one of the most comprehensive studies of music's role in oral epic yet accomplished.

Lester P. Monts
University of California, Santa Barbara

Liberian Under Military Rule—Decrees of the People's Redemption Council and Interim National Assembly Governments: 1980–1986. Compiled and edited by James Teah Tarpeh. (Monrovia: Liberian Educational and Professional Services, 1988. Pp. 320, paper.)

James T. Tarpeh, a former Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Political Science at the University of Liberia (1978–84) has compiled a signal contribution to the Liberian legal community and to students of the events of the 1980's in Liberia. This is the first "complete" and organized set of decrees issued by Liberia's two military governments. Tarpeh's Introduction, which details the origins of the work and the many problems which were encountered in the effort to locate copies of the decrees, suggests the gap which this work will fill. The fact that this book, despite years of effort, does not include five of the 89 decrees of the People's Redemption Council (they could not be found anywhere, but will be included—if they are located—in a second printing of the book, Tarpeh promises) is less a cause for concern than one of congratulation that the editor somehow located the other 117 decrees, several of which had never been printed or published anywhere before, despite being the law of the land. (Many are still the "law of the land," pending legal challenge or legislative action.)

The decrees are reproduced in their entirety in approximate chronological order, starting with the PRC's first Decree, defining high treason ("rampant corruption", etc.), and ending with the INA's 25th Decree, which dissolved the PRC's military courts system. Editor Tarpeh then adds four appendices, listing the members of the first PRC Government (following the April 12, 1980 coup), the first PRC Cabinet, the Special Election Laws designed to govern the November 1985 General Election, and the complete details of the National Social Security and Welfare Corporation (originally Appendix 14–1 to PRC Decree No. 14, issued on July 31, 1980).

The book is technically well–done and edited; all libraries concerned with Liberia would do well to obtain a copy.

Charles W. Hartwig
Arkansas State University

Recent Publications and Theses

- Dreyden, Julia Iman. "The Effects of Urbanization, Socioeconomic Status, and School Funding on the Dropout Rates of Elementary School Students of Liberia." Ed.D. Morgan State Univ. 1988, 178pp. DA49A:2611. 8816283
- Dunn, D. Elwood, "The Episcopal Church in Liberia Under Experimental Leadership, 1884-1916", *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. LVIII, No. 1, March 1989.
- Guannu, Joseph S., THE PERENNIAL PROBLEMS OF LIBERIAN HISTORY, An Occasional Paper, Volume II, No. 1, Published by the *Liberian Observer Corporation*, Printed by Yandia Printing Press, Newport Street, Monrovia, Liberia, 19pp.
- Kajue, Sorie Kondowa, "Transformation of Liberian Peasantry Under Peripheral Capitalism," Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Manchester (U.K.), 1987, 304pp. DA40A:3445
- Kollehlon, Konia T., "Occupational Status Attainment in Liberia: The Roles of Achievement and Ascription," *Social Science Research*, 18, pp. 151-173 (1989).
- _____, "Ethnicity and Fertility in Liberia: A Test of the Minority Group Status Hypothesis," *Social Biology*, Vol. 36, No. 1-2, pp. 67-81.
- Lyon, Judson M., "The Education of Sir Harry Johnston in Liberia, 1900-1910," *The Historian*, Vol. 51, No. 4, August 1989, pp. 627-643.
- Roland, Isaac Bartua, "Relationship between the Liberian social studies curriculum and both the National Unification and African Unity Movements, 1953-1980," Ed.D., Temple U., 1988, 221pp. DA49A:1688. 8818850
- Steiner, Christopher B. and Jane I. Guyer (editors) TO DANCE THE SPIRIT: MASKS OF LIBERIA, Peabody Museum, Harvard University, 1986, a 45-page illustrated catalog of an exhibition held at Harvard in 1986. "The text includes interpretive commentary from nearly a dozen scholars, explaining function and meaning of the objects in the Liberian cultural context."
- Tokpa, Henrique F., "Education and other determinants of income among heads of households in rural Liberia," Ph.D., Florida State U., 1988, 232pp. DA49A"2173. 8822474
- Uhomoibhi, M. I., "Imperial and League Intervention in Sierra Leone and Liberia: boundaries, finance and labour, 1890-1936." D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1983.

**Arthur J. Knoll Replies to F.P.M. van der Kraaij's
Letter to the Editor About Firestone's Liberian
Investment**

Dr. F.P.M. van der Kraaij's letter commenting upon my article entitled "Harvey S. Firestone's Liberian Investment, 1922-32" appeared simultaneously with that article in the *Liberian Studies Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, 1989. Thus Firestone's activity in Liberia, manifest in the Firestone Plantations Company (Firestone), continues to receive the scrutiny and evaluation which it certainly merits.

In his letter van der Kraaij maintains that Firestone relied exclusively upon labor forcibly recruited by the Liberian government. In his book entitled *The Open Door Policy of Liberia* the author cites the complicity of government and company in the forcible recruitment of labor from 1928 until 1962 (I, 444-445). The experts do not support van der Kraaij's contentions. According to the International Commission of Inquiry Firestone secured only about 10 percent of its workers through government recruitment (which is not tantamount to saying that this 10 percent was forcibly recruited although it may have been.) In the words of Charles S. Johnson, the American representative on the International Commission,:

Inquiry and investigation has been made for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not the Firestone Plantations Company has engaged in securing involuntary or forced labor for its development work, and the information obtained indicates that it has not. (Charles S. Johnson Papers, Fisk University, Box 89)

Only one voice in the Charles S. Johnson Papers accuses Firestone of consciously resorting to the use of forced labor. That testimony came from a recently released former British employee of Firestone whose veracity Johnson doubts. Furthermore, Wayne Chatfield Taylor states in his *The Firestone Operations in Liberia*: "From the beginning the Firestone Company was resolved that it would not obtain its labor through any form of compulsion, direct or indirect. . ." (p. 66). Even Raymond Leslie Buell, certainly no friend of Firestone, stated in *The Native Problem in Africa*: "The Firestone managers are much alive to the necessity of treating labor well (p. 831)." Further, according to Buell, "Many of these natives are now flocking to the Firestone Plantations to escape the system of unpaid servitude under which some of them have been held."

As more archives become available (see below) we may find proof that Firestone knowingly availed itself of forced labor. Van der Kraaij probably feels that he has already produced such evidence when he cites that in 1928 some 8500 workers did not appear for work at Firestone voluntarily (I,444). This statement is in contradiction to much of the evidence compiled from other sources for this same year.

Van der Kraaij deplores that I did not investigate Firestone's use of labor in my article. If I had exploited this area too, the original focus of my article would have been lost. But I hope to satisfy my critic by saying that I am currently completing an article entitled "Firestone's Labor Policy, 1926-1939" which I hope to have ready soon. This article will hopefully inspire continued fruitful debate about Firestone's role in the development or exploitation of modern Liberia. So far my investigation indicates that Firestone paid its workers little, but that the company may not be charged with a knowing participation in forcible recruitment of labor.

Van der Kraaij is dissatisfied with my rendering of Agreement No. 3 signed on September 16, 1925 by Firestone and the Liberian government. He labeled as incorrect my statement that the Liberian government "earmarked" \$300,000 for the construction of Monrovia harbor. Indeed, the sentence should have read "was to have earmarked" instead of simply "earmarked" as I recorded. Van der Kraaij continues that Agreement No. 3 is unclear as to whether the harbor construction costs should not exceed \$300,000 or that the Liberian government need only contribute an amount not greater than \$300,000 to this end. Careful reading of Clause (a), Article II of Agreement No. 3 indicates that the intention of the signers was that Monrovia need contribute no more than \$300,000 (*USFR, II, 461-62*). I think that one need not assume that Edwin Barclay and Harvey S. Firestone Sr. were so naive as to assume that one might construct a major port for \$300,000. As it was, the United States contributed some \$12,500,000 for this enterprise by the summer of 1945 (*Dept. of State, RG 59, 882.00/7-445*).

Van der Kraaij, after some disappointing days spent in the Liberian archives of the Concessions Secretariat (*Open Door Policy of Liberia, II, 476*), notes in his letter that most archival material relating to Firestone is (indeed) in the United States. The currently available archival material, compiled by William Harvey from the Firestone Archive, is in possession of Professor Svend Holsoe of the University of Delaware. If the Firestone lawyers are able to agree what material from the Firestone repository may be made public, the University of Akron, which currently possesses the entire Firestone archive, should become the mecca for Firestone research. Before charging Firestone with the imperialistic exploitation of its labor, it might be wise to see what these archives reveal.

Van der Kraaij deplores that I did not push my investigation of Harvey S. Firestone's Liberian investment into the year 1933. It would have been tempting

but unnecessary to do so since the events of this year have already been well documented by Wolfe Schmokel in his *"The United States and the Crisis of Liberian Independence, 1929-1934," Boston University Papers on Africa, Vol. II* (pp. 305-337) and by I.K. Sundiata in his *Black Scandal*.

The main source of van der Kraaij's discontent with my article is my unwillingness to charge Firestone with, what the author terms, the "financial strangulation" of Liberia. My answer to this complaint is, first of all, that all of the evidence is not yet in. Given the fragmentary nature of the Monrovia archive, which van der Kraaij deplores, we have only the archives of Professor Holsoe and the University of Akron left. Until a scholar does an in-depth study on Firestone in Liberia, based upon archival research and also upon an extensive use of oral testimony from former Liberian employees of Firestone, we will not know for sure who constricted whom fiscally. Second, the term "financial strangulation" in the context of Liberian history has to be seen from at least two sides: on the one hand some Liberian officials asserted that the activities of financial advisers like Sidney De la Rue amounted to invasions of Liberian sovereignty; on the other hand Harvey S Firestone, Sr. argued that, given the size of his loan to Liberia (initially \$2,250,000), the lender would need some control in the host country in order to insure timely repayment.

Thirdly, it is very tempting to place Firestone in the ranks of the imperialist exploiters (as Ali Mazrui does in his *Africans* series) and then proceed to accuse the corporate heads of sponsoring a concerted plan of fiscal duress in Liberia. Basically this approach is unhistorical; it judges the entrepreneurs of the 1920s with the standards and norms of the 1980s. To be impartial one needs to judge Firestone, and other historical figures, by the standards of their time rather than by the wishful thinking of our own period. Naturally the latter course of prejudgment is the popular one. It is the indulgence of what Professor Howard Zinn calls the "politics of history" rather than the recording of history. It means that we have strayed from the observance of Leopold von Ranke's dictum of recovering the fact "wie ist eigentlich gewesen ist" for "wie man es haben möchte." It would be convenient if all past events could be marshalled for confirmation of our current viewpoints. Regrettably the pursuit of this end will not produce works characterized by either their balance or their impartiality. Such works will better reflect the climate of opinion of their decade than the events which preceded them.

Fourthly, and as I pointed out in the article *"Harvey S. Firestone's Liberian Investment"*, the elite escaped Firestone's would-be fiscal supervision by some artful dodging. One has only to read the U.S. Department of State's confidential release of November 19, 1933 in the William R. Castle Papers to realize that neither State nor Firestone could rein in the Liberian government. Nevertheless, the author maintains that an American-Firestone protectorate over Liberia existed. As I said in my article, this statement is an exaggeration. First, the U.S.

Department of State would not play the interventionist role ascribed to it by Firestone. Henry L Stimson told Firestone quite clearly that the U.S. could not and would not govern Liberians. And, as the diplomat J. Pierrepont Moffat noted in his journal, no warship would be sent to Liberia since that country had committed no overt act which might endanger Americans. Firestone would probably have been happy with an American protectorate over Liberia and, indeed, he did want an American gunboat outside Monrovia. But to confuse the wish with the fulfillment is to impute too great a significance to the events of 1932-33. Basically the settler elite continued to manage their government for their own benefit rather than for Firestone's and there was precious little that the Akron magnate could do about it.

In the same breath that van der Kraaij deplores that I did not investigate Firestone's use of labor, the author launches into a criticism of my statement that nothing comparable to Firestone's rubber plantation acreage existed in either British or French West Africa. What the significance of the juxtaposition of the amount of Firestone's acreage with the labor situation is remains unclear to me. What is apparent, however, is that the author has not really bothered to read my sentences very clearly. Neither England nor France had a *continuous rubber plantation* as large as Firestone's - anywhere. For comparative purposes the author refers the reader to the Gezira Cotton Plantation in the Sudan - which van der Kraaij notes produces cotton not rubber on some two million acres. In actuality, the irrigated Gezira area encompasses some 500,000 acres according to P.M. Holt in *A Modern History of the Sudan*.

In closing it is gratifying to have one's writing scrutinized so completely. It makes the writer feel that indeed there is an audience which is both interested and keen.

NEWS AND NOTES

Editorial Comment on the *International Journal of Sierra Leone Studies*, Volume I, 1988

The Editors of the *Liberian Studies Journal* welcome the publication of the *International Journal of Sierra Leone Studies*. Sierra Leone and Liberia, geographical neighbors, have a number of cultural and historical commonalities. There is, therefore, much for scholarly collaboration. We see the existence of the two journals as providing one important avenue. We hope others will emerge.

This new edition of the Sierra Leone journal—which came to us as a review copy with compliments of the Sierra Leone Academy (SLA)—contains six major articles on various subjects including ethnology/ethnography, Islamic influences, female circumcision, and economics. A few of the articles include graphs, tables and excellent documentation. Outstanding among the articles are Professor J.U.J. Asiegbu's study of the Sierra Leonean Creoles and Andrew Millington's analysis of environmental and agricultural policies in Sierra Leone (1895–1984).

The journal also contains an important appendix on the Sierra Leone Academy which is also directed by journal editor William Okrafo Smart. Freetown-based (29 Kissy Road), its purpose is described as engaging “in the protection and promotion of research in the humanities and natural sciences at the highest scholarly level, thereby making significant contributions to the development of Sierra Leone and the rest of the African Continent.”

The editors of the *Liberian Studies Journal* congratulate the editors of this new Sierra Leone scholarly publication. They look forward to a relationship of mutually beneficial collaboration.

All queries about the *International Journal of Sierra Leone Studies* should be addressed to its editor, William Okrafo Smart, 27 Pattison Road, Hampstead, London, NW2 2HL, The United Kingdom of Great Britain. The journal is published quarterly—in January, April, July, and October of each year. Subscription for a year is \$120 (presumably for institutions) and reduced rates of \$60 for individuals. Single copies are \$20.00 each.

**Twenty Second Annual Conference
of the Liberian Studies Association**

With the theme **LIBERIA: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT**, the 22nd Conference will convene March 29–31, 1990 at Brattleboro, Vermont. It will be hosted by the World Studies Program of Marlboro College and the School for International Training. Proposals for panels and papers from all disciplines are invited. The deadline for submission of proposals is December 15, 1989, and for final papers and panels January 31, 1990. Address all correspondence to: Gordon C. Thomasson, World Studies Program, School for International Training, Kipling Road—Box 676, Brattleboro, VT 05302, Phone (802) 257-7751, Etc. 301.

DOCUMENTS

Treaty of Mutual Defense Between The Government of the Republic of Liberia and the Government of the *Peoples Revolutionary Republic of Guinea*

The Government of the Republic of Liberia and the Government of the Peoples Revolutionary Republic of Guinea, hereinafter referred to as the High Contracting Parties;

Recalling the non-Aggression Treaty concluded between their two countries;

Mindful of the need to further cement the cooperation and strong friendly ties existing between their two countries;

Recalling the strenuous efforts being made by all the Countries of the West African Sub-region through the Economic Commission of the West African States and other such groupings to bring true and meaningful, political and economic independence to the States of the Sub-region;

Conscious of the need to provide within the West African Sub-region the necessary climate of security which would enhance and promote economic development of the region;

Have decided to conclude the present Treaty for Mutual Defense and for this purpose have appointed their respective plenipotentiaries who having exhibited their full powers which are found to be in good order, have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE I

Upon request by either Party each of the High Contracting Parties undertakes and agrees to sincerely and loyally come to the defense of and render all aid and assistance to the other High Contracting Party who is the victim of an armed attack and armed aggression by a third party.

ARTICLE II

The provisions of the present Treaty shall apply to unprovoked armed attacks and or armed aggression carried out by forces external to the High Contracting Party which is the victim of the attack or aggression.

ARTICLE III

This Treaty shall be ratified by the High Contracting Parties in accordance with their respective Constitutional Processes.

It shall come into force and effect thirty days after the instruments of ratification have been exchanged.

ARTICLE IV

The present Treaty is to have perpetual existence but it shall terminate six months after written notice is received by either of the High Contracting Parties from the other of its election to terminate the Treaty.

Done in Conakry, Peoples Revolutionary Republic of Guinea this 23rd day of January, A.D. 1979, in two originals in the English and French languages, each original being equally authentic.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA:

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
PEOPLES REVOLUTIONARY
REPUBLIC OF GUINEA

C. Cecil Dennis, Jr.
MINISTER OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS.

El Hadj Abdoulaye Toure
MINISTER OF THE DOMAIN OF
EXCHANGE.

***Legislative Act of 1978 Establishing Liberian-Libyan Holding Company
and Approving Its Articles of Incorporation***

WHEREAS, pursuant to an Agreement signed by the contracting States of the Republic of Liberia and the Socialist People of Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (formerly Libyan Arab Republic) in Tripoli, Libya, on April 1, 1974, for the promotion of technical and economic cooperation, the contracting states are desirous of establishing a Liberian-Libyan Holding Company to develop and execute financial, commercial, industrial and agricultural projects, and related activities within the framework of the aforesaid agreement, and

WHEREAS, the duly authorized representatives of the contracting states did meet in Monrovia, Liberia, from June 3-6, 1974, and consider the form of structure of such a Holding Company,

NOW, THEREFORE, for and in consideration of the mutual understanding, promises, benefits, terms, conditions and stipulations herein embodied.

It is enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Liberia, in Legislature Assembled:

SECTION 1.

That from and immediately after the passage of this Act, the Articles of incorporation of the Liberian-Libyan holding company pursuant to Section Two of the Liberian Corporation Law of 1976, as herein below recited to wit, word for word, be and the same is hereby approved:

ARTICLE I

There is hereby created a corporation to be known as the Liberian-Libyan Holding Company hereafter referred to as the Corporation.

ARTICLE II

The domicile of the Corporation and its Head Office shall be within the City of Monrovia, Liberia.

The Corporation through its Board of Directors may establish branches, agencies or offices for the Corporation in and outside of Liberia.

ARTICLE III

The objects and purposes of this Corporation shall be:

- (a) to establish a Liberian/Libyan Holding Company to develop and execute financial, commercial, industrial, maritime transportation, agricultural projects and related activities;
- (b) to conduct possible studies and services for the general improvement of the activities of the Corporation;
- (c) to acquire, hold, use, sell, assign, lease and grant licenses or sub-licenses, privilege, improvements, process copy-right, trade marks and trade names relating to or useful to and in connection with any business of the Corporation;
- (d) to acquire all and any part of the goodwill, right, property and business of any person heretofore or hereafter engaged in any business similar to any business which the Corporation has power to carry or conduct; to pay for the same in cash or in securities of the Corporation; to hold, utilize and in any manner dispose of the whole or any part of the rights and properties so acquired;
- (e) to act financially and economically for purposes for which this Corporation might be authorized under the laws of the Republic of Liberia;
- (f) to enter into, make and perform contracts and lawful purposes with any person, firm, sovereignty, association or otherwise without limit as to amount;
- (g) to carry on all and any of its business, objects or purposes alone or in connection with other firms, Corporation or other associations or other associations or individuals;
- (h) to subscribe, purchase or otherwise acquire, underwrite, hold, pledge, turn to account in any manner, sell, distribute or otherwise dispose of and generally deal in bonds, debentures, shares of stock, warranty, etc. or any instruments or interest in the nature of securities issued by any person, partnership, etc., and to do any and all acts for the preservation, protection, improvement and enhancement in value of any such securities;
- (i) to have one or more offices; to carry on all or any of its corporations, and business without restrictions or limit to the amount; to purchase, sell, import, export all types of personal property and to purchase, sell, rent, mortgage real property of any class and description in any part of the Republic of Liberia and in any foreign country subject to

the laws of such country.

- (j) to have the power from time to time to execute such general and special powers of attorney to such person as the Board of Directors of this Corporation may approve, granting to such persons all powers, either in the Republic of Liberia or the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya or elsewhere which the Board of Directors of the Corporation may deem proper and to revoke such powers of attorney as and when the said Board of Directors may desire;
- (k) to have the capacity to act as a natural person, to have authority to perform only such acts as are necessary, convenient or expedient to accomplish the purposes for which it is formed and such as are not repugnant to the laws of Liberia;
- (l) subject to any limitation or restriction imposed by law, or by these Articles of Incorporation to have and exercise all special and general rights, privileges and powers specific in Article of this Certificate;

The objects and purposes specified above shall not, unless otherwise specified in these Articles of Incorporation, be in any way limited or restricted by reference to or inference from the terms of any other clause(s) of this or any other Article in these Articles of Incorporation but the objects and purposes specified as independent objects and purposes and shall be considered as both purposes and powers. Whenever consistent with the purposes stated herein and not otherwise provided for herein or in the By-laws of the Corporation, the provisions of the laws of general application of the Republic of Liberia with respect to corporations shall apply.

ARTICLE IV

The Corporation shall have perpetual existence, unless mutually dissolved by the shareholders in the same manner as created.

ARTICLE V

The capital of the Corporation is (\$40,000,000) FORTY MILLION DOLLARS divided into (\$400,000) FOUR HUNDRED THOUSANDS ordinary individual shares each valued (\$100.00) ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS and subscribed as follows:

- (a) 200,000 (TWO HUNDRED THOUSANDS) shares valued (\$20,000,000.00) TWENTY MILLION DOLLARS by the REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
- (b) 200,000 (TWO HUNDRED THOUSANDS) shares value \$20,000,000.00) TWENTY MILLION DOLLARS by the SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRYA

The Corporation shall have initial paid in capital of (\$40,000) FORTY THOUSANDS shares, 50% of which shall be paid by each of the two shareholders. The remaining capital shall be paid as determined by Board of Directors according to the Corporation's requirements. Amounts paid shall be deposited in the National Bank of Liberia as designated by the Shareholders. The unpaid capital shall be called upon as required.

The Shareholders shall have the right to assign or transfer the ownership of all or part of other shares to wholly Government owned entities who hold the same nationality as that of the original holder.

ARTICLE VI

In the event of capital increase through the issuance of new shares, the shares thus issued shall be on a 50/50 basis between the two (2) shareholders.

ARTICLE VII

The Corporation shall not grant loans to shareholders, for the purpose of subscribing to the shares of the Corporation. It shall not also accept or acquire its shares.

ARTICLE VIII

The Corporation shall, by resolution of the Shareholders at a General Meeting and based upon the proposal of the Board of Directors, issued bonds of any kind to be offered in local and international financial markets. The value of bonds shall not exceed the paid-in capital and reserves as shown in the latest approved Balance Sheet.

ARTICLE IX

The Corporation shall, if necessary, and as the Board of Directors may determine, seek direct loans from Governments, Firms, individuals or international financial markets in any way deemed appropriate.

ARTICLE X

The Corporation shall ensure an adequate standard of liquidity in the utilization of appropriate resources in its various activities hereunder in order to meet its current liabilities as may be determined by the Board of Directors.

The Corporation shall conduct its activities in accordance with the normal commercial rules and principles and shall participate in various projects and finance them in any way determined hereinafter ensuring the soundness of the project, possibility of repayment and such other matters that ensure due

repayment of the Corporation funds and obtaining a lucrative and reasonable proceed in accordance with commercial principles.

ARTICLE XI

The formulation of policy and direction of management of the Corporation shall be vested in the Board of Directors consisting of six (6) members, three (3) of whom shall be appointed by the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the other three (3) by the Government of the Republic of Liberia.

ARTICLE XII

In the event of a vacancy occurring on the Board of Directors of the Corporation due to death, resignation or a policy decision of the shareholders, replacement for said vacancy shall be made by a letter addressed to the Board from the Governments concerned. However, should a vacancy occur for any other reason besides those expressed above, said vacancy shall be filled according to the domestic policy of the Governments concerned.

ARTICLE XIII

The Board of Directors shall hold its meetings quarterly at the head Office of the Corporation on a date to be decided upon by the members of the Board. The Board Meeting may be held elsewhere provided adequate notice is given to the members.

An invitation together with an agenda shall be sent to each Board member at least two weeks prior to the date of any meeting.

Board members shall receive a stipend amount to be decided upon by shareholders, for all meeting attended and the expenses incurred in attending duties of the Corporation.

ARTICLE XIV

The simple majority of members present at any meeting shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE XV

The Board of Directors of the Corporation shall have the authority within the framework of the Corporation's policy and procedure for managing the arrangement of all guarantees, in order to ensure the proper development and expansion of the Corporation. The funds and disbursement of the Corporation shall be treated by the Government of Liberia in the same manner as those of other corporations, public or private, local or foreign. The Company, its funds, investments and profits shall be exempted from all forms

of taxes for a period of five (5) years from its date of Incorporation.

ARTICLE XVI

The Corporation shall have the following offices: A Chairman General Manager and Deputy General Manager.

ARTICLE XVII

The Chairman of the Board of Directors shall be elected from the members of the Board upon the nomination of One Government of his contracting state. He shall preside over the meetings of the Board and shall serve for a period of three (3) years. The General Manager of the Company shall be elected upon the nomination of the Government of his contracting state. He shall be responsible to the Board of Directors and shall serve for a period of three (3) years. The positions of Chairman and General Manager shall alternate between the two contracting states, that is to say when the Chairman is a Liberian, the General Manager shall be a Libyan and vice versa. The Corporation shall also have a Deputy General Manager who shall be appointed by the Board and shall serve for a period of three (3) years. He shall assist the General Manager, in the operation of the holding company. Whenever the General Manager is a Liberian, the Deputy General Manager shall be a Libyan and vice versa.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, we have made, subscribed and acknowledge this instrument on this ____ day of ____ A.D. 1977.

FOR THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA:

FOR THE SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S
LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRYA

James T. Phillips, Jr.
MINISTER OF FINANCE
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA.

Mohamed Zarrug Rajab
SECRETARY OF FINANCE
SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S LIBYAN
ARAB JAMAHIRYA

SECTION 2.

This Act shall take effect immediately upon publication in hand-bills.

ANY law to the contrary notwithstanding.

APPROVED: Feb. 1, 1978

William R. Tolbert, Jr. (sgd.)
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