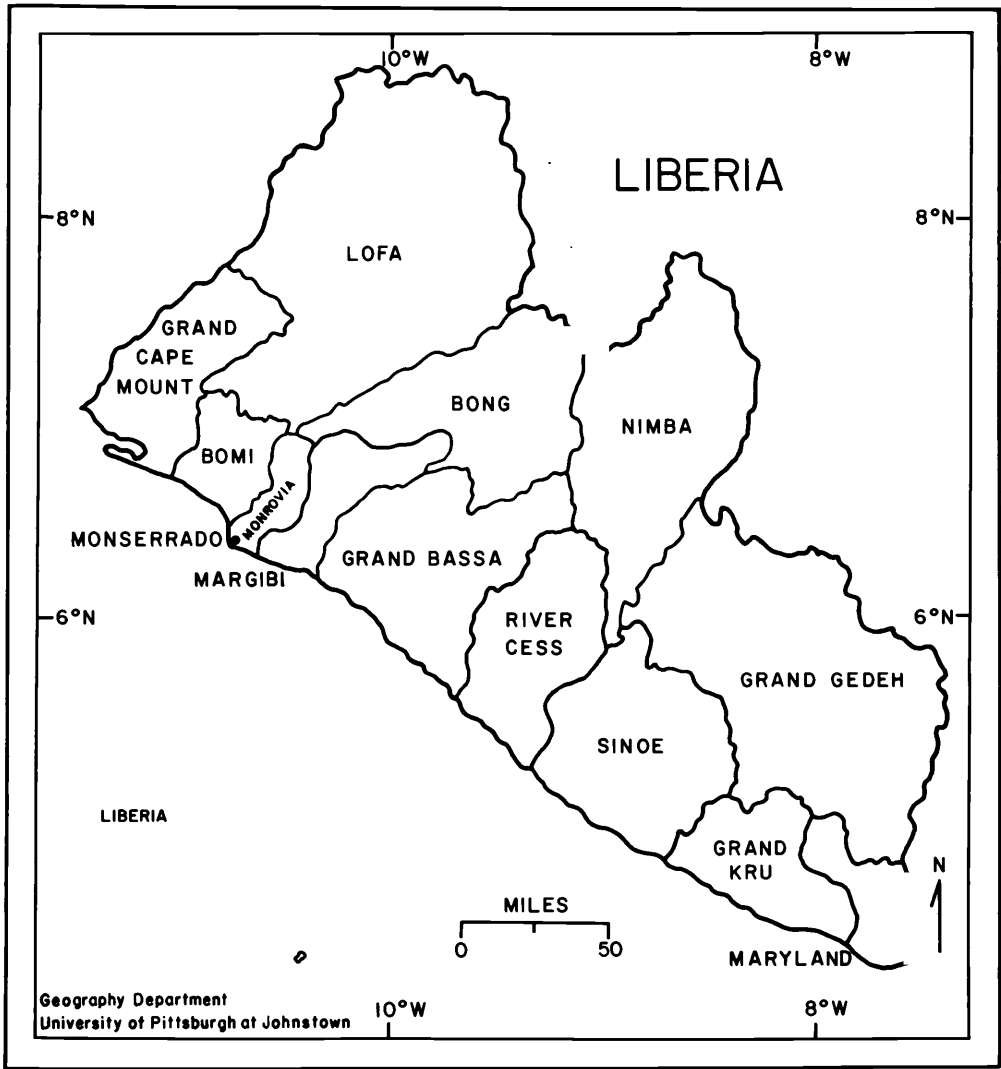


LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL



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Formation of the Liberian Boundaries

Part II: The Demarcation Process

Yekutieli Gershoni

Between 1885 and 1907, Liberia had signed three separate agreements concerning its borders. Only one of them, the 1885 border convention between Liberia and Britain, was translated into a border line. The existence of an agreed line which represented the border contributed a large measure of confidence to the Liberian leaders that Britain would not violate its boundaries. The sole violation was in Kanre Lahun in 1904. The concept that a demarcated border provided insurance against territorial encroachment was the basis for the Liberian demand in 1902 that the border with the French territories be demarcated, according to the border agreement of 1892. However, that step had to wait until 1907, when the last border agreement was signed between France and Liberia.

1. The Richaud-Naber Commission

Liberia regarded France as an inflexible neighbor who succeeded in forcing its territorial demands on the black republic by ignoring the border agreement of 1892. Therefore, when after prolonged and difficult negotiations a new border treaty was agreed upon in 1907, Liberia's President Arthur Barclay was determined to prevent any change in the agreed border line. The demarcation process was the cornerstone in the implementation of the border treaty of September 18, 1907, and President Barclay was eager to begin work at once. For that purpose, two Dutch naval officers, H. Naber and J.J. Moret, were hired.¹ The crucial problem of financing the operation was solved on November 18, 1907 by a loan of 31,732 pounds sterling from the Liberian Development Company, a British enterprise headed by Harry Johnston, which received exclusive mineral export rights from Liberia.²

Together with the demarcation process, Liberia took steps to strengthen its administration and its military capabilities for the purpose of extending its rule over the hinterland. The 1907 understanding between Britain and Liberia (see Part 1) provided for British officials to implement reforms to Liberia's economic and military structure. Lamont, formerly assistant head of Customs in Freetown, was appointed Customs Receiver to the Liberian government. Early in 1908, a British officer, Major Robert Mackay Cadell, was appointed to establish and command the first Liberian standing army, the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF).³

The main principle for demarcating the border agreed upon in 1907 was that it correspond to the geographical outline and should not separate ethnic groups.

This principle was taken by the Liberian government at face value and its representatives, the Dutch naval officers Naber and Moret, were instructed to observe it. The French representative, Leon Richaud, was prepared for his mission in a different manner. The French Minister for the Colonies, Doumergue, instructed Richaud in the exploiting of these principles. Richaud was ordered to persuade the ethnic groups along the border to accept French protection and to threaten any who rejected it with the use of force. In addition, Richaud was to treat the Dutch officers representing Liberia respectfully, in order to win their trust and thus gain an advantage to be used in case of future disagreement.⁴

The inferiority of Liberia, a small state with meager resources, can be seen by comparing its delegation to the French one. The Liberian delegation consisted of the two Dutch officers, while the French one numbered 120 and included administrators, military personnel and a physician. The French superiority was expressed not only in size, but also in the amount of information and experience which the delegation represented. It possessed two geographical reports, one dating from 1907 which contained a map of the Liberia-Guinea border zone, and a more current one on the upper Cavalla area which was sent to the delegation during the work.⁵ While the Dutch officers were new to the Franco-Liberian border dispute, Richaud had participated in the French delegation negotiating with President Barclay in Paris in 1907. His experience and greater knowledge enabled him to use the principles of the 1907 agreement to his country's advantage.

During the almost eight months of the Franco-Liberian commission's operations, Richaud implemented Doumergue's instructions. Naber and Moret grew to trust him to the point of accepting almost anything Richaud suggested. Thus, Naber accepted Richaud's claim that the area of N'Zapa was under French control without bothering to check it, although a Liberian garrison was stationed in that area, in the town of Zinta.⁶ The total dependence of Naber and Moret on the French delegation in all matters, including food, security and other needs, made Richaud's task easier, and he exploited the situation fully. Since the Liberian delegation had no interpreters, it was forced to rely on those in the French delegation. This enabled the French representatives to convey their own wishes to the indigenous population. A Liberian investigation six years later discovered why the ethnic groups of Kikwelli, Kpwesse and Wulokwelli, which had accepted Liberian authority in 1904, transferred their allegiance to France in 1908. According to a statement by Chief Yawnokpala, the Franco-Liberian commission, accompanied by French troops, entered his village and the interpreter told him the Liberian and French representatives had agreed that he should accept French protection and threatened to send him to Dakar in chains should he resist.⁷

By recruiting more ethnic groups to accept French authority and using the principle of maintaining the integrity of the indigenous groups, Richaud

managed to attract more territory away from the Liberians to the French, territories which he described as rich in ivory, rubber and cola nuts.⁸ The border line established by the proces-verbal delimitation summing up the commission's work pushed the border in some places up to 80 km. into Liberian territory.

While the French colonial authorities were satisfied with the results of the demarcation, the Liberian government was deeply disappointed. It did not accept the demarcation line and decided to act immediately to impose its rule on territories which the Richaud-Naber commission had transferred to French control. Two units of the newly established LFF were sent, one to the upper Cavalla region and the other to the Guinea border. At the end of 1909, one of the Liberian military units crossed the Makona river and established itself in French territory. Lieutenant Freeman, who headed the unit, argued that the territory belonged to one of the chiefs who accepted Liberian authority and thus his unit had a right to be stationed there.⁹ In the Gilie region, Capitaine Hequet of the Guinea troops opened fire on the Liberian military post established by Special Commissioner Samuel Smith. Hequet claimed that according to the last demarcation Gilie belonged to French Guinea. In the ensuing clash, three Liberian soldiers were killed and two were captured by French troops.¹⁰ Early in 1910, another action was taken when Commissioner Bernard was sent to the border zone in order to establish Liberian authority over the Pesse ethnic group.

These military and administrative actions were bolstered by a diplomatic campaign. In messages delivered to French and American officials, Liberia claimed that the line proposed by Richaud-Naber was wrong as the demarcation commission had misinterpreted the 1907 agreement. Secretary of Foreign Affairs F.E.R. Johnson stated that Liberia expected the demarcation process to start from the beginning.¹¹ France rejected Liberia's claims and Foreign Minister Pichon claimed that France, and not Liberia, was being deprived of its rightful territories. However, as a gesture of friendship, France was ready to accept the proposed line.¹² The two parties remained entrenched in their positions and nothing was done for several months. A compromise was reached only following the intervention of a third party.

2. The Compromise of 1911

The disagreement between Liberia and France was overshadowed by a serious crisis between the black republic and Britain. That crisis resulted from the abuse of power by British officials responsible for implementing the economic and military reforms agreed upon in 1907. The reform process was supervised by Braithwaite Wallis, British consul in Monrovia. Wallis, a former district commissioner in Sierra Leone, adopted an uncompromising approach toward Liberia. He was ordered not to pressure the government to implement the reforms but decided to pursue his own private policy. Without reporting to his superiors, he demanded that the Liberian government complete the reforms

in six months, threatening that Britain would reconsider its policy toward the republic in order to protect its interests in Sierra Leone in case of noncompliance. Under Wallis's threat, Liberia appointed four British customs controllers, rather than the one mandated by the 1907 arrangement, and increased the authority delegated to Lamont who had been appointed as financial advisor to the government, to the point where he effectively controlled the Liberian Treasury.¹³

An uncompromising policy was pursued by Britain's Major Cadell, LFF commander. He recruited British subjects from Sierra Leone and appointed Britons, rather than Liberians, as officers. He ignored the Liberian government's decisions and President Barclay's orders regarding deployment of LFF units.¹⁴ Liberian government officials, already annoyed by the increasing influence of Wallis and the British advisors, began to suspect that Cadell was trying to raise a private army. On December 17, 1908, President Barclay ordered Cadell's dismissal. Cadell ignored the order on the grounds that no official accusations had been brought against him.¹⁵ The tension reached a peak on February 11, 1909 when Cadell presented a letter to President Barclay including threats of rebellion if the president did not cooperate with him.¹⁶ Only the intervention of Wallis and the Liberian militia prevented an open rebellion against the Liberian government. Liberia demanded that Cadell leave the country and asked the Foreign Office to replace Wallis.¹⁷ The reforms implemented to strengthen the black republic brought it to the verge of collapse.

The black republic found itself struggling on two fronts, to reverse the disastrous consequences of the Richaud-Naber delimitation while removing the direct British threat to its sovereignty. Desperate, Liberia turned to the only country which was able to help it, the United States. A delegation headed by former President Gibson and Vice-President Dossen was sent.¹⁸ The delegation expressed the republic's needs for diplomatic, economic and military support, convincing the Americans of the severity of the situation. Secretary of State Elihu Root decided to send a commission of inquiry to conduct a thorough investigation of Liberia's needs. On April 25, 1909 the American inquiry commission departed for Monrovia.¹⁹ The arrival of the Americans was perceived by Liberia as a unique opportunity to extricate itself from the pressure of the neighboring colonial powers and to place its economy and administration on a sound footing.²⁰ Old and new grievances against Britain and France, together with the demand for active help from the U.S., were brought before the commission members during their month-long stay in the country. In addition to the current complaints against Richaud, the British officials and officers, Liberia reiterated its longstanding complaint regarding the occupation by Sierra Leone troops of the Kanre Lahun region in the Liberian hinterland (see Part 1).²¹

The inquiry commission, in a thorough report submitted to the U.S. State Department on October 6, 1909, recommended giving comprehensive support

to the black republic. The commission's recommendations were adopted in June 1910.²² The State Department presented an economic aid program based on a two million dollar loan from American, British, German and French bankers, the establishment of a new receivership apparatus and the appointment of an American financial advisor to the Liberian government in place of the British one.²³ In the military sphere, American officers were sent to replace British ones in commanding and training the LFF, and an American military attache, Colonel Charles Young, was stationed in Monrovia.²⁴

The U.S. got involved in the political sphere as well. Through its mediation, the longstanding British-Liberian dispute over Kanre Lahun was finally resolved. The negotiations between Liberia and France were more complicated, but the Americans succeeded in arranging a compromise on January 13, 1911. The terms did not favor the interests of the black republic, since it had to accept the Richaud-Naber proposed line as a temporary border until further geographical surveys could be conducted.²⁵ Despite the drawbacks, the Liberians accepted the compromise, mainly because of the last paragraph in which France promised not to annex any more Liberian territory. The two governments agreed to set up a joint commission for the purpose of border line demarcation.

Liberia and France interpreted the 1911 agreement differently. This was expressed in their choice of commission members. France appointed a junior officer, Captain Schwartz, as head of its delegation, since it considered the commission's task as purely technical, namely to demarcate the line established by Richaud-Naber. Liberia interpreted the agreement as a replacement for the Richaud-Naber commission, namely, an entirely new demarcation of the border line, and thus appointed LFF commander Colonel William D. Lomax to head its delegation.²⁶

Liberia was determined not to repeat the mistakes of 1908. Lomax was accompanied by Commissioner Bernard on the way to the designated meeting place with the French delegation. The two Liberian officials and their party made a show of Liberian control along the border zone, preparing the ground for the delegation's work as they understood it. They convinced several ethnic groups to accept Liberian authority and incited them against the Guinean colonial government. Consequently, from July 1911 to February 1912, disturbances spread throughout an area of about three thousand square miles adjacent to the Liberia-Guinea-Ivory Coast border. The Guinean government sent more than a thousand regular and irregular troops to pacify the region.²⁷ French colonial officials accused Lomax and Bernard of incitement and demanded compensation and French control over the Mano ethnic group beyond the line demarcated by Richaud-Naber.²³

The initial intention of the Schwartz-Lomax delegation was overshadowed by these developments. The French refused to demarcate the border line until

the matter of compensation and French control over additional territories was settled. William A. Ponty, Governor-General of French West Africa, was appointed to deliver the French demands to the Liberian government.²⁹ These consisted of 784,005 French francs in damages and territorial demands drawn on a detailed map.³⁰ Liberia rejected the financial demands and reminded the French of their promise not to annex any additional territory.³¹ The situation was at a standstill.

1911 marked a shift in Liberia's policy from a close relationship with Britain to cooperation with the U.S., which replaced Britain as the main source of political, economic and military support. U.S. mediation in 1911 ended the dispute over Kanre Lahun and secured a French commitment not to annex Liberian territory. In 1912 an American, Reed Page Clark, replaced Lamont as Customs Receiver and Financial Advisor to the Liberian government and in the same year American officers headed by Colonel Young, the military attache, replaced Cadell and his officers in commanding and training the LFF. This increased dependence on the U.S. influenced the development of the border dispute with France. The next stages of the dispute would involve American citizens and American aid to Liberia.

3. Lee-Villatte Commission

During 1912, Liberia and France kept to their positions. The Liberian government had apparently reached the conclusion that any serious discussion of the French demands in general, and the border demarcation in particular, depended on its ability to develop its own reliable sources of information on the border zone. The Richaud-Naber demarcation and the French territorial demands were submitted on French maps. Liberia did not have its own geographical maps. In light of this, in 1912 a Black American engineer, G.B. James Lee, was hired to conduct a geographical survey of the border zone. When the survey was almost completed, the Liberian government was ready to renew negotiations with France. In May 1913, Liberia made two suggestions: that the discussion of financial compensation include an investigation not only of French claims, but also of Liberian ones, and that a joint committee be authorized to examine the compensation matter and the border demarcation.³²

When France accepted the suggestion, Liberia prepared its delegation thoroughly so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past. The lessons of the Richaud-Naber delegation were studied and conclusions drawn. James Lee, who had valuable knowledge of the region as a result of his surveying work, was appointed head of the delegation and commissioner to the border zone. The delegation was well prepared and equipped. It included two interpreters and a unit of soldiers. Liberian officials and heads of ethnic groups and villages along the border were ordered to assist the delegation, and to prevent any French influence, Lee was instructed to camp only on Liberian territory.³³

The delegation was provided with a "secret weapon" intended to upset the foundation on which the Richaud-Naber line was drawn. That "weapon" was an investigation among the ethnic groups which Lee had carried out along with the geographical survey. The aim of the investigation was to collect evidence from the heads of the ethnic groups in support of Liberia's claim that the proposed Richaud-Naber line had been placed arbitrarily and contradicted the agreement of 1907.³⁴ The evidence found by Lee encouraged the Liberian authorities. The Minister of the Interior, James J. Morris, wrote to Lee: "I hope however that any errors you may find out and can correct, to do so in the best interest of the state, as I can assure you will receive the prompt and very ready support and applause of the government."³⁵

Equipped with the findings of his investigation, Lee met his French counterpart, Lieutenant Villatte, on March 10, 1914, and together they began the demarcation along the Makona River. That river was accepted by Liberia as the starting point for the border with the French territory. As long as the committee marked the border along the Makona, no differences arose. However, six days later, when it moved into an area which the 1907 agreement placed within Liberian borders and the Richaud-Naber proposed line included in French territory, Lee decided to deploy his secret weapon. He invited Villatte to a talk with some heads of ethnic groups and villages from the adjacent area. About a hundred African leaders were present. Lee presented to Villatte evidence based on the testimony of chiefs and headmen that the Richaud-Naber Commission had used force and intimidated them into accepting French protection. Lee and the headmen demanded that the border be pushed back into Guinean territory.³⁶ Lee stated that according to his findings, the Richaud-Naber line could not be accepted as a basis for demarcation and demanded demarcation according to the 1907 agreement. He threatened to withdraw from the commission. Villatte rejected his demands, claiming that he was authorized only to demarcate the line proposed by Richaud and Naber, not to make changes in that line.³⁷ As a result of the disagreement, the delegations parted ways on April 12, 1914 and the work stopped.

The French decided to act forcefully, drawing on the 1911 compromise according to which the two parties agreed to accept the Richaud-Naber line as a basis for demarcation. On July 16, 1914, The French Minister of Colonies, Raynaud, ordered M.F.J. Clozel, the General Governor of French West Africa, to occupy all territories which were French according to the Richaud-Naber proposed line. French contingents established four new stations along the Guinea border.³⁸ The French move met with opposition from the Liberian troops along the Guinea border, and there were exchanges of fire with Guinean soldiers. A Liberian unit encroached into Guinea territory across the Lina River and in the Tamassoudou region. France reacted forcefully. The French Vice-Consul, Baret, accused Liberia of obstructing the commission's work and

blamed it for the clashes. He mentioned France's engagement in the war in Europe, a war in which Liberia, until then, had maintained neutrality. However, the continuation of skirmishes along the Guinea-Liberia border cast doubt on Liberia's claim to neutrality.³⁹

France's ill-concealed threat to include Liberia among its enemies in the war in Europe was effective. Lee, the commissioner, was ordered by the government to avoid further clashes with French troops. In March 1915, Liberia announced its willingness to resume the work of the delimitation commission and to accept the Richaud-Naber proposed line as the basis for demarcation.⁴⁰ On April 29, 1915 Lee and Villatte resumed work. This time they concentrated on delimitation and put aside the Guinean and Liberian claims for compensation. The work proceeded without further incident, except for a dispute over the location of the Liberian military post in Zinta. The demarcation, based on the location of latitude 11° 50', showed the Liberian post as located in Guinean territory. Lee refused to demarcate the line in that area, claiming that he was not authorized to cede any part of Liberian territory. On June 5, 1915, the two parties left after accomplishing most of their task, but left open the question of the border line in Zinta.⁴¹

Again Liberia found itself the loser in the demarcation process. The ineffectiveness of its representatives, Naber and Moret, led it in 1909 into a state of continual disagreement with its colonial neighbor, France over the question of the border line. As the Richaud-Naber line could not be challenged on legal grounds, France's position was relatively secure; whenever Liberia raised objections to the 1909 demarcation, France could brush them aside by producing the *procès verbal* summing up the Richaud-Naber commission's work. The Liberians had to use circuitous ways to challenge France. In 1911 they asked for U.S. diplomatic support. In 1912 they tried to undermine the French position along the border, and in 1913 they tried another thorough investigation to collect evidence of the illegality of the way in which the Richaud-Naber line was drawn. However, the Liberian efforts were in vain. Somehow, the republic always found itself lagging behind France. The 1911 compromise implied a recognition of the Richaud-Naber line. The attempts to send military units and commissioners to establish a Liberian presence in the disputed territories met with strong French reaction. The attempts to force Lee's findings on the Joint Commission failed although they were based on a thorough geographical survey and intensive investigations among the different ethnic groups along the border. Liberia's withdrawal from the demarcation commission led to French occupation of all the disputed territories. Liberia was obliged to recognize the Richaud-Naber line and finally, when the border was demarcated, it showed that even Liberia's oldest military post, in Zinta, was located in Guinean territory.

Despite its desperate position, Liberia did not give up the notion of gaining sovereignty over the territories now under French control. So far, its thorough preparations and use of professionals had not brought the desired results. The feeling was that only an all-out effort, planned and executed efficiently, would bring Liberia to its goal.

4. Morris-Lhuerre Commission

The main part of this all-out operation was a comprehensive geographical survey of the border zone, including a detailed map of the area. No map reflected the findings of the geographical survey carried out by James Lee in 1913, and the entire surveying operation was cut short by his sudden death the following year. The most current maps in Liberian possession were thus the outdated and incomplete ones drawn up by the Richaud-Naber Commission. Therefore, President C.D.B. King decided, upon his inauguration in 1920, to carry out a complete survey and to draw a map of the border zone. Liberia hired the services of an American engineer, L.C. Daves, and the best modern equipment was obtained from the Americans.⁴²

Daves was requested to map the border area and to draw the border line according to the agreement of 1907 and the Richaud-Naber line. He was asked to determine exactly how the latter line contradicted the former one.⁴³ Between December 1920 and August 1923 Daves and his team conducted several surveys of the border zone. Its conclusion, already known in Monrovia, was that the Richaud-Naber line did not follow the 1907 line and that Liberia had lost great stretches of territory to Guinea.⁴⁴ Another fact discovered by Daves challenged the findings of the Lee-Villatte survey concerning Zinta. Using a different method of calculation, Daves was able to prove that Zinta was located in Liberian territory.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the Liberian authorities decided not to leave everything to chance. The survey findings were sent to two separate institutions, the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, and the United States-Canada International Boundary Commission for inspection and finally were drawn on a map.⁴⁶

Equipped with current geographical data and accurate maps, Liberia was ready to continue her struggle with the French over the demarcation of its border. Liberia's strategy was to undermine the findings of the Lee-Villatte demarcation placing Zinta in French territory. Proving that the Lee-Villatte demarcation was incorrect would allow the republic to claim that the whole question of the border line should be opened up and to demand a new demarcation according to the 1907 agreement. Liberia had at its disposal the geographical data, the administrative structure and the professional manpower to deal with the two principles of the 1907 border agreement, that the line should follow geographical features and should not divide ethnic groups.

Continuing clashes along the ill-defined border line between French Guinea and Liberia came to a head in April 1925, when ten LFF troops were taken prisoner by the French.⁴⁷ In an effort to end the clashes, a meeting was arranged in Dakar between Liberia's Interior Minister, James J. Morris, and J.G.H. Carde, Governor-General of French West Africa, from September 13-21, 1925. During the talks, Morris raised the Liberian demand of redemarcating the border line in the Zinta area. The two parties reached a temporary agreement according to which the village of Baragara near Zinta would be administrated by Liberia, the status quo along the border line would be preserved, and the border line in the Zinta area would be demarcated by a new joint commission.⁴⁸ On March 9, 1926, a Liberian delegation headed by Morris and a French one headed by Lhuerre, met in Zinta to execute a new demarcation. After several months of delays, the survey began, and found that the Liberian post in Zinta and the neighboring village Baragara were located in French territory. The Liberian assumption was found to be groundless. In order not to lose the military post in Zinta, Liberia was obliged to refer to the rejected Richaud-Naber agreement which stated that in any case, the border line would follow the military posts of the French and the Liberians. When Morris asked that the territory adjacent to the post also be placed under Liberian authority, Lhuerre agreed to give up the territory in Zinta if similar territory in the St. John river area would be given to France.⁴⁹

The findings in Zinta ended Liberia's hopes of regaining the territories lost to the French. The demarcation of the border according to the Richaud-Naber findings was completed in December 1928, ending a 36-year process that had begun with the signing of the border agreement of 1892. However, Liberia's feelings of dispossession did not vanish and its hopes to regain the lost territories was not extinguished. When the opportunity arose, Liberia was ready to resume its struggle.

5. The 1958 Commission

The decolonization process provided a new opportunity for Liberia to try and regain its lost territories. The colonial powers withdrew from Africa and the emergence of the new African states marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the continent. The Liberian republic decided to take advantage of the historic changes and to reach an agreement with the retreating colonial force over a new border line between Liberia and Guinea. Early in 1957, the Liberian government sent a boundary expedition to the border with Guinea and the Ivory Coast, instructing it to gather information on the way in which the border line had been demarcated. Tribal elders and chiefs were interviewed, documents, agreements and maps were collected, and the material was sent to a renowned expert, a Swedish Director-General of the Royal Land Survey named Borje Lundgren, for an opinion.⁵⁰ Lundgren ruled that according to the testi-

mony and evidence, the Richaud-Naber agreement was not a separate legal document but rather an interpretation of the 1907 border agreement. There was ample evidence to prove that the line drawn by Richaud-Naber contradicted the 1907 agreement and a border along this line was not practical. His conclusion was that Liberia and France should renew negotiations on the exact meaning of the 1907 agreement. Finally, he proposed a new border demarcation, according to which the upper Cavalla region and the entire Nimba region would be in the territory of Liberia.⁵¹ Lundgren's proposal suited not only Liberian political wishes, but its economic desires as well. The Nimba mountains straddling the Liberia-Guinea border line proved to be rich in iron ore; Lamco, a Liberian-Swedish-American corporation, began mining there in 1953.⁵² Liberia hoped to impose sovereignty on the entire mountain area.

Stimulated by the prospect of economic gain, and armed with Lundgren's report, the Liberian government brought the border question before France. The French authorities were ready to hear the Liberian claims and Rudolph Grimes, a senior Liberian official, was sent as the head of a delegation to Paris. On January 21, 1958, the talks began. Grimes presented the French Foreign Office with the findings of the Liberian Boundary Expedition and Lundgren's report, and tried to convince the French officials to agree to a new demarcation of the border between the French territories and Liberia.⁵³ The Liberian delegation had reason to believe that this time France would accept their recommendations for changing the border line, based on the strained relations between Guinea and France. Guinea challenged France's proposal for a Franco-African confederation, preferring independence. In retaliation, French President Charles de Gaulle decided in 1958 to break off diplomatic relations with Guinea and to withdraw all French support.⁵⁴ The talks continued sporadically for six months, and despite Liberian hopes of gaining from the tension between Guinea and France, the French Foreign Office turned down the Liberian request.⁵⁵

Liberia found itself at a crossroads. The decolonization process had begun and a new political order was taking shape throughout the continent. Continuation of the struggle over the lost territories meant a dispute with an independent African state, the neighboring state of Guinea. This might undermine Liberia's efforts to integrate into the new political order and thwart President William Tubman's initiative to establish Liberia as a leading force among the emerging independent African states. Tubman was already engaged in a dispute with the President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, over the implementation of pan-Africanism. Nkrumah advocated ad hoc political unity of all African states, namely political pan-Africanism. A first step in this direction was the Ghana-Guinea union of 1958. Tubman, on the other hand, believed in functional pan-Africanism, a gradual process which would start with strengthening economic and cultural ties between the African states and lead eventually to political union.

Tubman was engaged in building an opposition bloc among the African countries to Nkrumah's doctrine. Initiating a dispute with Guinea would not have served the Liberian cause. Therefore, Liberia was ready to sacrifice the long-cherished hopes of regaining the "lost territories" as well as economic gain in order not to antagonize the newly independent Guinea. In November 1958, in a joint communique issued after a state visit by Guinea President Sekou Toure, the two presidents declared that: "There is no frontier nor territorial dispute between Guinea and Liberia."⁵⁶

In the first phase of the formation of the Black Republic borders, dealt with in Part I, Liberia fought a losing battle with the principle of effective occupation agreed upon at the Berlin Conference. In the second phase, Liberia accepted the principle of effective occupation as proof of possession of territory, as stated by President Arthur Barclay in reference to the Liberian border zone: "...that several Liberian expeditions have been sent to that section of the country, that the Liberian flag has been raised, that Liberian patrols have been stationed there and that the territory is now occupied in the same manner that interior territory is occupied by European Powers."⁵⁷

However, to some extent Liberia fought a losing battle at the second stage as well. Accepting the principle of effective occupation per se did not guarantee its borders. Liberia was unable to set up a military and administrative apparatus throughout the hinterland, an apparatus which could have supported its claims in the territories and prevented its independence, particularly in the crucial phase of the Richaud-Naber commission, from French resources and information.

Endnotes

¹Le Vice-Consul de la France au Gouverneur Général d'AOF, 24 Octobre 1907, no.34, 7F 71, Délimitation du Liberia, 1907-1911, A.N.F.

²David Michael Foley, "British Policy towards Liberia, 1862-1912", Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1965, pp. 180, 181.

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⁴Doumerge à Richard, 23 April 1908, no. 117, Application de la Convention du 18 Septembre 1908, Instructions, 7F 72, Délimitation du Liberia, 1908, ANP.

⁵Le Ministre des Colonies au Gouverneur General p. i., 29 Novembre 1907, 7F 71, Délimitation du Liberia, 1907-1911, ANP. Joulia au Gouverneur de la Côte d'Ivoire, 14 Juillet 1908, Rapport de Mission, 7F 72, Délimitation du Liberia 1908, ANP.

⁶Note pour M. le Chef de Service de l'Administration Général et Affaires indigènes, 21 Octobre 1908.

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⁷Franco-Liberian Boundary Investigation, May 26-28, 1914, Accompanying Report, Enclosure no. 3, L.N.A.

⁸Richaud au Gouverneur Général, 31 Janvier 1909, no. 22, 7F72, Délimitation du Liberia, 1908, ANP.

⁹Lamont to Acting Consul Parks, September 14 1909, Enclosure no. 1, F.O. 267, 139 X/M 06247.

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¹⁰Samuel Smith to French Commissioner....Gilie Section, Décembre 7 1909 7F 38, Frontière Franco-Liberienne (Guinée) 1908, ANP. Hequet to Smith, 11 Décembre 1909, (Translation), no. 675 s. 7F 38, Frontière Franco-Liberienne (Guinée) 1908, ANP.

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¹³Lyons to Secretary of State, January 25, 1908, File no. 3531, U.S. National Archives.

¹⁴Foley, "British Policy..." pp. 274-275.

Cadell to Wallis, February 27, 1908, F.O. 458/23, 06352, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵Foley, "British Policy...", Ph.D., pp. 267,268.

¹⁶Cadell to Barclay, February 11, 1909, Headquarters, Liberian Frontier Force, Monrovia. West Africa, file 12083/190, no. 271, Diplomatic, U.S. National Archives.

¹⁷Johnson to Grey, Object: Protest against Actions of Captain Wallis, H.E.M. Consul General, February 6 1909, Series no. 092025, file 12083/150, no. 272, Diplomatic, U.S. National Archives

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¹⁹U.S. Secretary of State to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Liberia, April 23 1909, file 12083/25-206, no. 803, Diplomatic, U.S. National Archives.

²⁰Baldwin, Report on the situation in Liberia in May 1909, May 8, 1909, c.o. 879/101.

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²⁷Clozel au Ministre des Colonies, 3 Février 1917, Dépêche, 7F 79, Delimitation de Liberia 1912, ANP.

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³¹Memorandum of the Liberian government on the note submitted to the Liberian Charge d'Affaires in Paris by the Governor General of French West Africa on the rectification of the boundary between Liberia and French Guinea, June 18 1912, Liberia, Politique Etrangère, Relations avec la France, IV, 1912, Ministère des A.E., Archives Diplomatiques.

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³⁷Le Ministère des Colonies au Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, 7 Avril 1926, no. 196, Afrique 1918-1940, Liberia, 12 Juin 1918-29 Février 1920, Affaires Politiques Dossier Général, Ministère des A.E., Archives Diplomatiques.

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³⁹Baret to King, November 9, 1914, 189, L.N.A.

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⁴³Daves to E. Barclay, April 20, 1923, Memorandum, L.N.A.

⁴⁴Daves to Mitchell, January 2, 1921, Daves to Mitchell, January 8, 1921; Daves to E. Barclay, April 20, 1923; Memorandum, Daves to E. Barclay, August 11, 1923; Memorandum on frontier near Zinta, Dept. of State File 705/L,–Franco-Liberian Boundary Documents 1920–1923 L.N.A.

⁴⁵Ministère des Colonies au Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 11 Août 1926, no. 424, Afrique 1918–1940, Liberia, 12 Juin 1918–29 Février 1920, Affaires Politiques, Dossier Général, Ministère des A.E. Archives Diplomatiques.

⁴⁶Report of the Chief Engineer of the Liberian Boundary Survey, showing progress of the work from November, 1920 to Décembre 31, 1922, L.N.A.

⁴⁷Gouverneur Général to Colonial Office, February 11, 1925, no. 3375 (Translation into English), L.N.A.

E. Herriot à Lehmann, 8 Janvier 1925, Afrique 1918–1940, Liberia, 11 Juin 1918–29 Février 1920, Affaires Politiques, Dossier Général, Ministère des A.E., Archives Diplomatiques.

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⁴⁸Propositions d'Arrangement Afrique 1918–1940, Liberia, 12 Juin 1918–29 Février 1920, Affaires Politiques, Dossier Général, Ministère des A.E., Archives Diplomatiques.

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⁵¹The Franco-Liberian State Boundary, An Analysis of the Historical Development and the Present Situation, Stockholm, September 30, 1958, L.N.A.

⁵²Liberia, Open Door to Travel and Investment, Dept. of Information and Cultural Affairs, Monrovia, 1967, p. 51.

⁵³Minutes of the First Session of the Franco-Liberian Boundary Discussions, Paris, Quai d'Orsay, January 21, 1958.

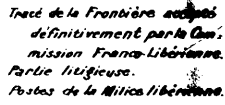
Rudolph Grimes to Secretary of State, Monrovia, April 11, 1958, Confidential Correspondence, Liberian Boundary Commission, Paris 1958, L.N.A.

⁵⁴Herbert J. Spiro, *Politics in Africa, Prospects South of the Sahara*, Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962, p. 26.

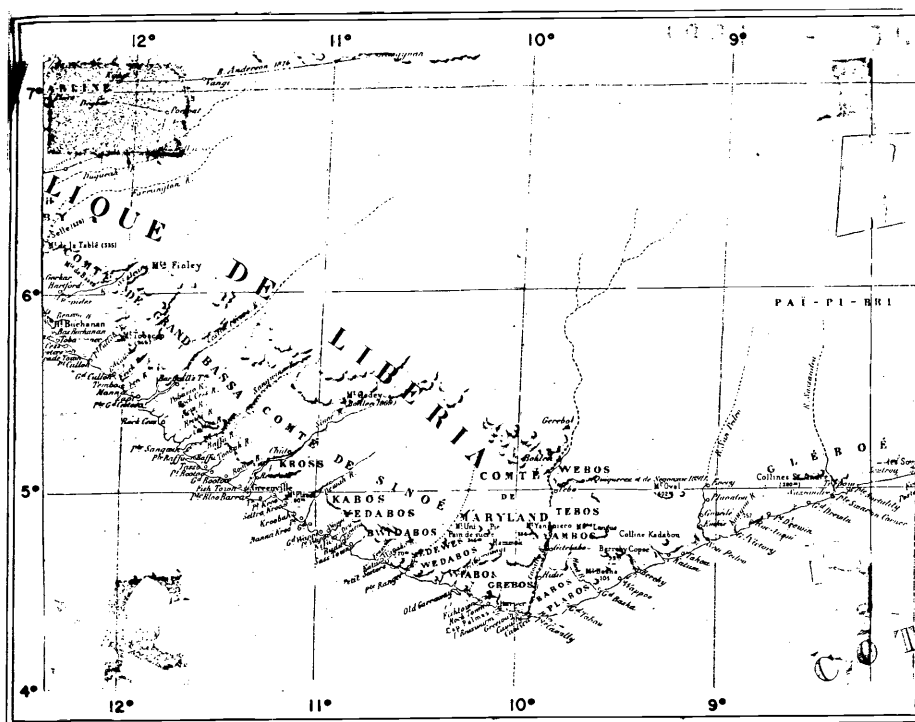
⁵⁵Personal interview with Momulu Ducaly, a Special Advisor of the President on Foreign Affairs, March 17, 1978, Monrovia.

⁵⁶Joint communique issued at end of state visit, *Liberian Age*, November 21, 1958, pp. 1-2.

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Legend: The Richaud-Naber Line
Existing Borderline between Sierra-Leone and Liberia.

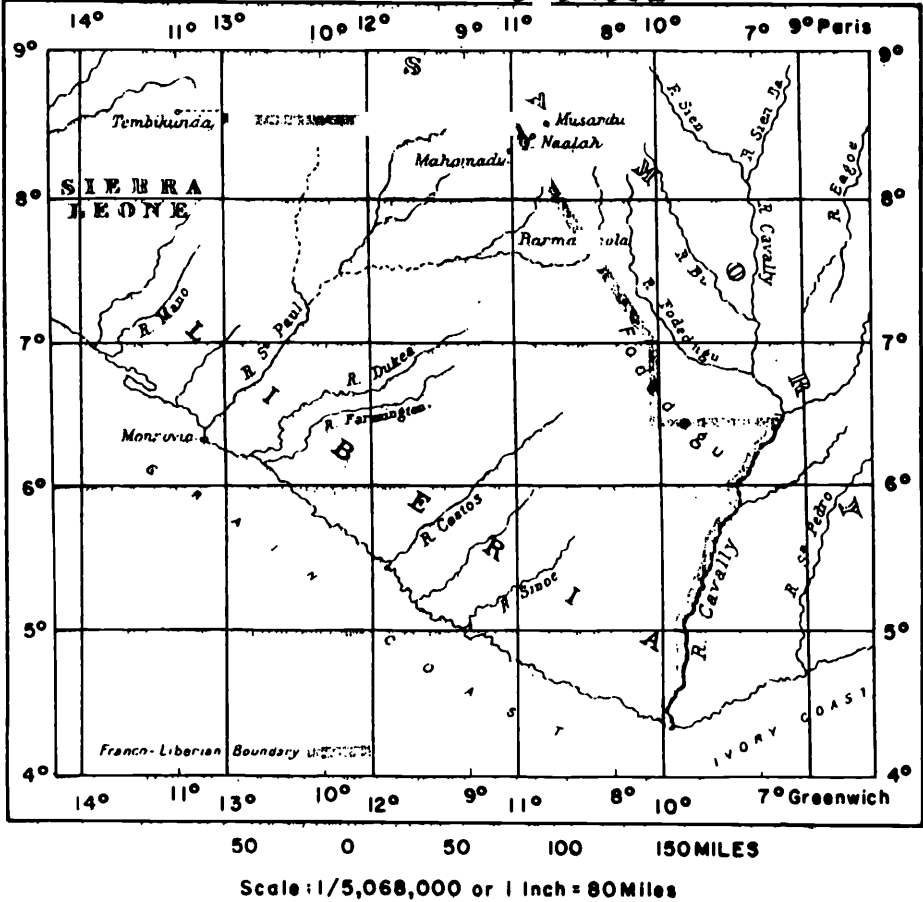


The coastline claimed by Liberia from the Cavalla River to the San Pedro River.

Révisé et Complété en 1891.

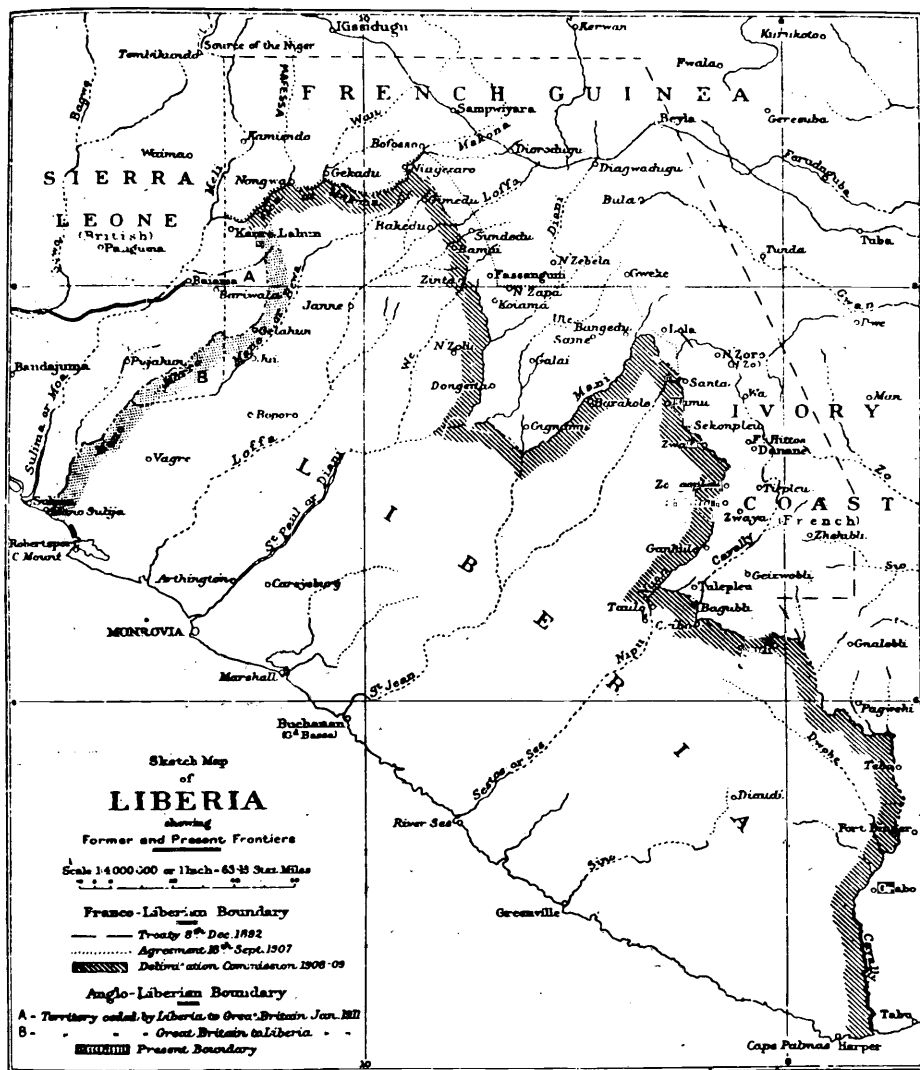
Publie Par le Service Géographique de L'Armée (Publie) Juin 1892.

Map to illustrate the arrangement between
FRANCE and LIBERIA 8TH D^C 1892

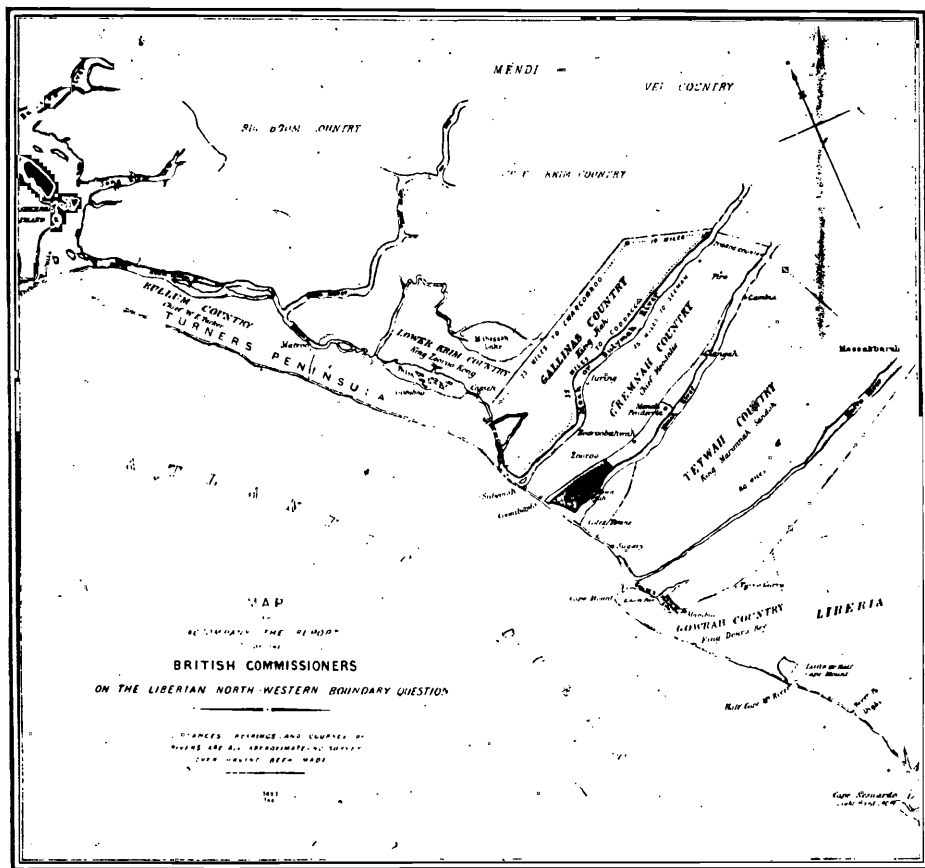


Map to illustrate the arrangement between France and Liberia 8th Dec. 1812.

Source: Hertslet E., Sir, The Map of Africa by Treaty III part II (Frank Cass & Co. 1967) p. 1134.

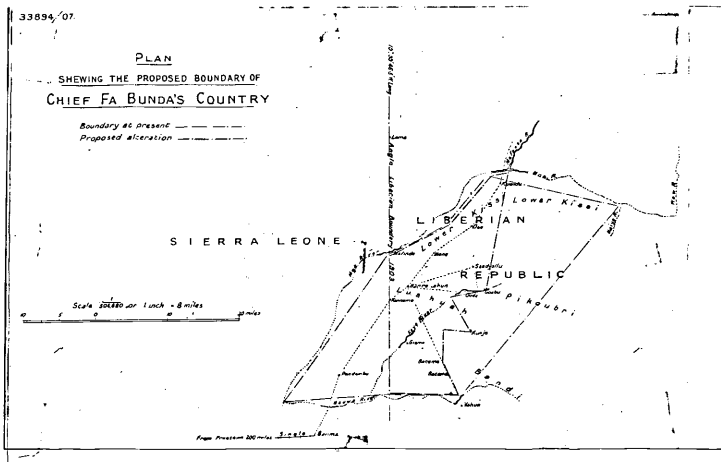


Sketch Map of Liberia showing former and present frontiers.



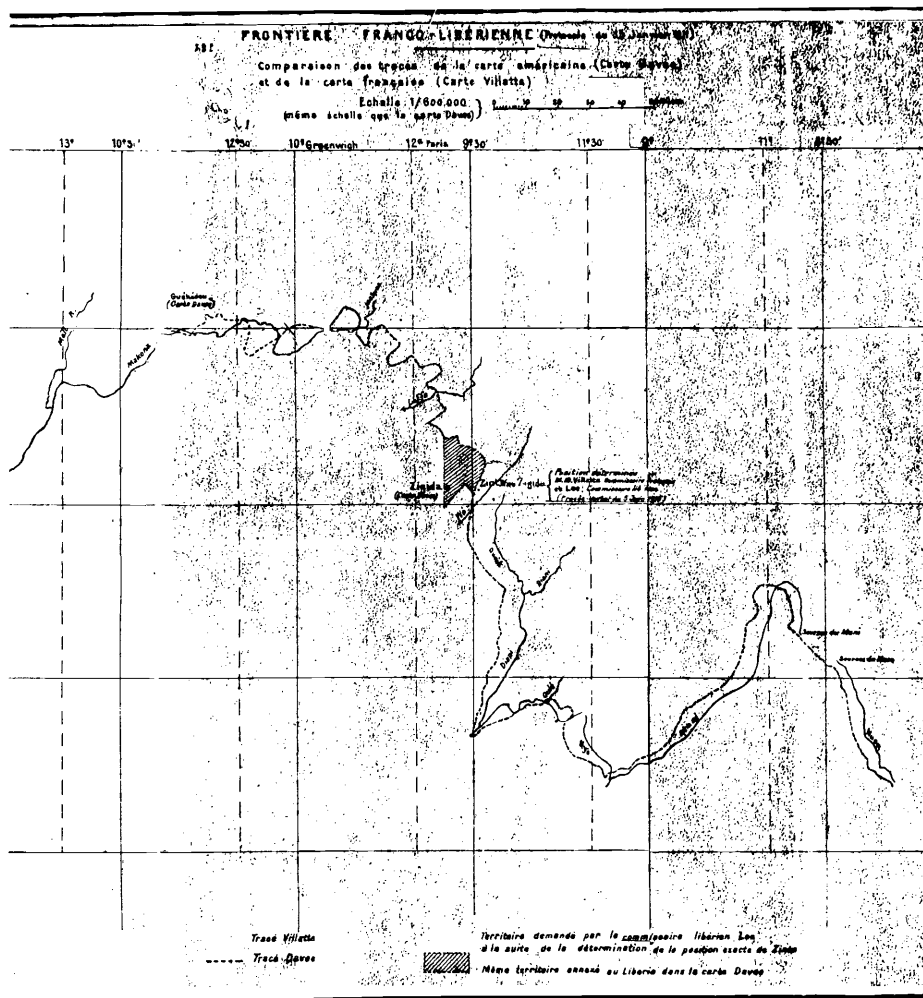
Map to accompany the Report of the British Commissioners on the North-Western Boundary Question.

Lith. at the Intelligence Branch Qr. Mt. Gen. Department 1879.



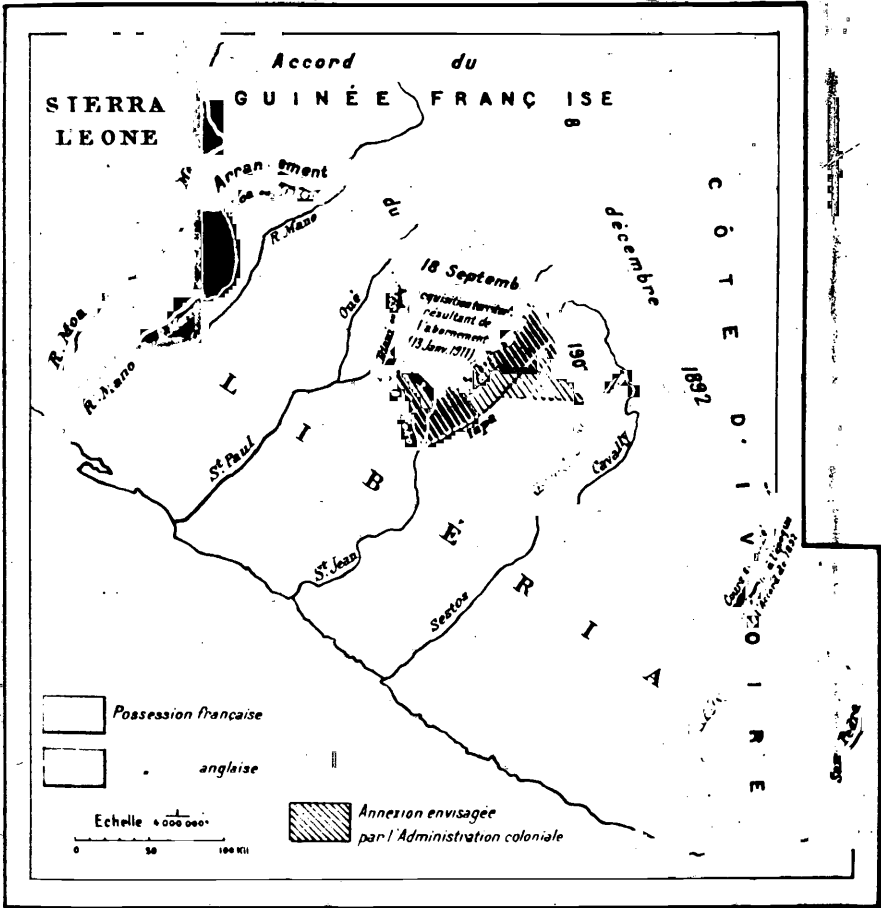
Plan showing the proposed boundary of Chief Fa Bunda's Country.
Kanre Lahun.

The Governor of Sierra-Leone to Secretary of State. 10 September 1907.
Confidential No. 101, 33894. C.O. 879.96, x/m 06487.



The location of Zinta: French version versus the Liberian version.

Le Chargé d'Affaires de France au Liberia a Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères. Monrovia, 30 Mars 1923. No. 7A.E. Afrique 1918-1940, Liberia, Vol. 2, Ministère des Affaires.



The different borderlines agreed between Liberia and France.

The borderline agreed in 1892. The borderline agreed in 1907

Territories annexed to French Guinea as a result of the 1911 agreement.

Territories claimed by France in 1912.

Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres. Note pour le Ministre. 13 Fevrier, 1912, Liberia. Politique Etrangere Relations avec la France, IX, 1912. p. 99 Ministère des affaires Etrangeres. Archives Diplomatiques.

"To Be Kwii¹ is Good": A Personal Account of Research in A Kpelle Village

M. Soniia David

Introduction

From March 1989 to March 1990 I conducted fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation (David, 1991) in a rural Kpelle community in Upper Bong County, north-central Liberia. My original plan was to conduct a comparative investigation of economic relations between Kpelle husbands and wives in a peasant community and in a wage sector economy. After completing fieldwork in the village of Gbaomu, I had intended to begin research at Firestone's Rubber Plantation in Harbel, the second site of my study. Due to the outbreak of a civil war in December 1989, which led to the Harbel Plantation being captured by the forces of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) in May 1990, I was forced to abort my plans. I fled the country in June 1990 on board an air cargo plane, eighteen days before the rebels entered Monrovia, Liberia's capital city.

This paper reflects on my fieldwork experiences in a rural Kpelle community as a female Liberian researcher with no previous rural experience and background. The discussion is intended to contribute to two separate discussions in social science research: the growing interest among anthropologists in the experience of the "native" researcher (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984) and the effects of the researcher's gender on fieldwork experiences (Golde, 1970; Cesara, 1982; Whitehead and Conaway, 1986). Unlike the typical "native" researcher however, I was not studying my own ethnic group or a community with which I was familiar. Nevertheless, as a Liberian, I found myself treated somewhat differently from a foreign researcher. While the topic of the "native" researcher studying his/her own culture has received some attention in the scholarly literature, the experience of the "native" researcher studying a local culture other than his/her own has scarcely been documented, although this has become an increasingly common occurrence. Other issues that I address include the choice of methodologies, the experiences of adapting to a new culture and conducting research during times of war. A third objective of this discussion is to share the very personal aspects of research, a dimension which is rarely presented in formal scholarly writings. My experience is somewhat unique in that relatively few Liberian scholars have conducted ethnographic research in the rural areas of the country, whether among their own ethnic group or among another group. It is hoped that the present discussion will stimulate a greater interest among Liberian scholars in doing ethnographic research at home.

Sociologist or Anthropologist?

Although the definition of the anthropologist as one who studies alien cultures is no longer applicable today, ethnography, the work of describing a culture from the "native's" or insider's point of view (rather than the researcher's or outsider's stance), is still to a great degree associated with anthropologists. The choice of methodologies for my study of household economics among the Kpelle was influenced less by my formal training in sociology than by exposure to anthropological works and the dictates of the agency which funded my research: the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). Thus, the methodologies I adopted in the field differed considerably from those detailed in my original research proposal. In line with the training I received from the highly quantitative sociology department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I had planned to use a survey as my primary data collection approach, to be supplemented by in-depth non-structured and semi-structured interviewing. My plan was to spend a short time living in the study sites and to hire interviewers to do most of the survey work. My bias toward survey research was also determined by my previous experience in conducting surveys in Liberia during the early 1980s.

My methodological approach was turned on its head by my SSRC advisory committee which strongly suggested that I adopt more ethnographic methods and spend all of the time living at the research sites. I therefore began a crash reading course on ethnography only two months before going into the field (at the time I was also taking a full course load and studying for my oral preliminary exam) since no such course was being offered at the University of Wisconsin-Madison at the time. My relative lack of preparation to do ethnographic research did not worry me too much as the convention in anthropology is a "sink or swim" approach to ethnography. It is only in more recent times that major American universities have begun to offer methods courses in anthropology.

I resolved the problem of meeting the demands of SSRC and my department by combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies and trying to maintain a balance between the two approaches. I spent much of my time in the field observing people perform various agricultural activities, conducting informal interviews, participating in cultural ceremonies (e.g. the "bring out" of newborns, condolence gatherings), and attending functions (e.g. court cases). Upon first moving to Gbaomu, I was a little uncomfortable with the relatively unstructured approach of ethnography. I was used to arriving at a fieldsite with my questionnaire or interview schedule, ready to begin the survey and therefore found it somewhat disconcerting to have to "play it by ear", that is, relax and let the research take its natural course. The wisdom of starting off with observation and informal interviews rather than with a survey is that one is able to get a clearer idea of the subject being studied and can therefore develop appropriate questions (as well as the best approach to asking them) for a formal

survey. Starting off with a survey would have also been culturally inappropriate since people in Gbaomu were initially suspicious of me² and would have reacted negatively had I started off by asking them about how spouses managed money. Their suspicions had to do with a lack of understanding of my motives for being in the village coupled with the belief that I might have been interested in uncovering the secrets of the Poro and Sande Societies.³ I therefore initially asked questions about farming, an innocuous subject. As I gained people's trust, I began to ask questions about economic management among couples, and after ten months of fieldwork, I conducted a formal survey. Quantitative data were also collected through a time allocation study and a budget study.

The Researcher as a Person; The Person of a Researcher

Given the nature of ethnographic work, a strong case can be made for describing the researcher's personality, gender, ethnicity, class, assumptions and position vis-a-vis the society being studied. A description of the researcher is important since he or she is part of the research situation being studied.

I can best be described as a hybridized Liberian. Ethnically, I am of Americo-Liberian Vai⁴ ancestry (my maternal and paternal grandmothers were both Vai) but regard myself culturally as an Americo-Liberian since I have no claims to Vai culture (I do not even speak Vai). Born into the family of an elite Americo-Liberian career diplomat, I spent only four years of my childhood (from the age of three to seven) in Liberia and grew up in various European countries where I attended American schools. This accounts for my non-Liberian (described by some as American) accent and mannerisms. I returned to live in Liberia after completing undergraduate and graduate work in 1978 and 1981 respectively. At the time of my doctoral research I had therefore only lived in Liberia for a total of ten years, the longest time at a stretch being five years. Because of my family and ethnic background (and to a lesser extent because I had not grown up in the country), prior to my fieldwork, I had no ties or experience with rural Liberia. However, I had always felt strong ties to Liberia, having been brought up in a Liberian home environment, although my total life experiences and views are not typically Liberian.

Having been separated at an early age from my home country, I developed from a young age a strong interest in learning about Liberia. As a result I have always probably been more knowledgeable intellectually about the country than the average person of my age and background. My intellectual curiosity centered particularly around issues of ethnicity, politics and rural life. The chance to do field work for my dissertation offered me the opportunity to explore my third interest. But the choice of rural Liberia as my research site caused me some difficulties at the personal level with regard to my family. My own family and most of my friends and relatives expressed horror and amazement that I had decided to go 'up country' to conduct research, reflecting very

typical urban Americo-Liberian suspicions, fears and ignorance of rural people and their way of life.⁵ Before I left for the field, people could not imagine how I would cope with problems of mosquitoes, heat, the lack of water, electricity and other standard urban facilities. As I was quick to point out, once I had settled in my study village, Monrovia was much hotter and more infested with mosquitoes than 'up country' due to the higher altitude of Bong County, the greater distance away from the coast and the generally cleaner environment of the typical village. Since I have always been viewed as somewhat of a radical or deviant, I was constantly teased about my work, or in some cases, admired or pitied (for the conditions under which I lived). I had to cope with a very worried mother every time I left Monrovia to return to the village. Her fears included the general village environment, my safety there, the highway and the hazards of public transportation. This problem was exacerbated after the civil war broke out in December 1989. Relatives and friends begged me not to return to the village, although early on the fighting was centered in Nimba County, some distance from where I was located. This led me to delay my return to the village after Christmas. The problems of coping with worried family members only added to the stress of fieldwork but is often one of the unavoidable difficulties of doing research in one's home country.

Research for a degree provided me with a rare opportunity to live with rural people in a way that my class position and status would not have ordinarily allowed me to do. Clearly, I was not able to replicate (nor did I attempt to do so) the living experiences of the typical villager. For example, I lived in a house with concrete walls (one of four in the entire village), owned a car, hired a girl to do domestic work, drank filtered water, brought some of my food from Monrovia and spent all of my time doing research (i.e., asking questions, writing and reading), which in the eyes of the local people did not constitute "real" work. People frequently stopped to admire me writing my fieldnotes, exclaiming enviously "to be kwii (Westernized) is good, oh!". However, by living in one community for a period of one year⁶ as a student researcher rather than a government official or development worker, I grew to be accepted by the people, at least as much as I could be given the wide bridges between myself and them in terms of culture, language and class.

"What Did You Bring Me?": Adapting to Kpelle Culture

Before moving to Gbaomu, all I knew about the Kpelle was based on what I had read. Of course, I knew Kpelle people who lived in Monrovia but my experiences with them told me little about what to expect from Kpelle villagers. I was officially welcomed to Gbaomu on my first night in the village. A meeting was called and the village elders presented me with kola nuts and balls of wild cotton⁷. After prayers, people began to ask me questions, starting with the village elders. They were concerned with the purpose of my visit and wanted

to know whether I would be bringing any concrete developments to the village. Explaining how the village would benefit from my study was to prove a difficult task throughout my stay. I explained that I was in Gbaomu to learn about farmers' problems so that I could write a "book". My findings would not only earn me a degree, but also give the Liberian government insight into some of the problems of rural people so that their views could be considered in the designing of development projects and programs. I am sure people were not impressed by this, but it was important not to make promises I would not be able to keep.

The major behavior I found difficulty in accepting was being requested for gifts or money. Often before or after an interview I was asked for "cold water" (a dash or gift). When I returned from a visit to Monrovia, people usually demanded "le Bei i pa la mi? (what did you bring me)". Once when I brought American friends to visit Gbaomu, the chief, upon being introduced to them, requested new sheets of corrugated iron ("zinc") for the roof of his house. Although Kpelle tradition dictates that villagers bring offerings (rice, food etc.) to a "stranger", I received relatively few gifts. Even though I understood and accepted that my high status meant that I was expected to help people, I found it annoying to constantly be begged. Even my Kpelle assistant found the constant demands on me excessive. He commented that the people of Gbaomu were exceptionally stingy (he came from another part of Upper Bong County). When I did help people out or gave gifts, I found myself in a no-win situation. Once when I gave a woman money to take her son to hospital, another woman demanded to know why I had helped the first woman and not herself. When I decided to give gifts to informants that I worked closely with⁸, others who I had interviewed once wanted to know why they were not given gifts. These incidents involving the exchange of cash or goods taught me something important about Kpelle culture: the emphasis on exchange and instrumentality in relationships, whether marriage or friendship. It also shows the extent to which the cash economy has permeated social relations, an important observation for my study. So great was the expectation of remuneration, that I decided to give each survey respondent a small sum of cash as a token of my appreciation for their cooperation. Another way in which I showed my appreciation to the village as a whole for putting up with me was by hosting a party at Christmas time. I bought a 100 pound bag of rice, lots of fish and meat, cane juice⁹ and soft drinks. I hired the local cultural troupe to perform and provided music on a portable cassette recorder. My key informants were treated as special guests. The party was a smashing success, judging from the fact that it went on from about two in the afternoon until one the following morning. After this, I had less demands for gifts.

I was given a Kpelle name (Gormah) my first day in Gbaomu. I found it interesting that "kwii" (Westernized or educated) villagers avoided using this

name and referred to me as "Miss David", thereby exhibiting their Western knowledge about the correct way to address me. Gormah is, of course, a name given to an initiate (i.e., a woman who belongs to the Sande Society), and since I am not a member of Sande, strictly speaking, it is improper for me to use this name. Curiously, this issue was only raised on one occasion by a drunken man.

I adapted to life in Gbaomu with relative ease. Living without indoor plumbing or electricity was easier than I expected, although I often longed for a cold drink on very hot days. My major problems initially were getting used to the lack of privacy and not getting enough rest. Since the concept of privacy is foreign to most "traditional" African cultures, I found it nearly impossible to be alone to think, read or write. When I would retire to my room in an attempt to be alone, Kwitaa, the girl who lived with me, would follow me to keep my company. Not getting enough sleep due to the noise outside my house at night and early in the morning and my initial fright of unfamiliar nighttime sounds soon left me exhausted. With time, I gradually got used to the noise levels but the desire for privacy never disappeared.

Although a distance always existed between myself and the villagers, there were times when I actually felt accepted by them. The first time I left Gbaomu for a weekend in Monrovia, my neighbors told me that they would miss me. Upon my return people seemed surprised as though they had not expected me to return. They actually seemed pleased to welcome me back. Such experiences made me forget the difficulties and hardships that I was experiencing. The first time someone asked me a personal question was also memorable. During my first few months in Gbaomu I asked people a lot of questions and rarely had discussions with my informants, which violates the concept of ethnographic research. I was vastly relieved when people began to ask me personal questions. Prior to this time, and in fact throughout my stay in Gbaomu, I was the subject of gossip. Some said I had six children (I have none), it was speculated that I was a spy and that I would use the information I was gathering to make money. Because of such views, some people refused to be interviewed. Sometimes I was able to explain the purpose of my study so that people had some understanding of the nature of my work, but other times I was not, much to my disappointment.

A Woman Is . . .

As a feminist, my research had a strong female bias which was intended to balance out previous researchers' emphasis on Kpelle men. As much as possible, I sought the views and perceptions of women, although I did not totally ignore men's. I went to live in Gbaomu with the expectation that Kpelle women would be fairly economically independent, strong and assertive, like women in some other parts of West Africa (e.g. Ghana, Nigeria). Much to my disappointment, I discovered Kpelle women to be subservient to men, largely economically dependent on men, although they do most of the agricultural work, and

seem acceptant of the ideology of male superiority. Women's acceptance of male domination made me angry but there was little I could do. On the other hand, I found Kpelle men contemptuous of women, seeing them as weak, devious, stupid and backward. Men told me parables and stories showing women's wicked ways, but to my frustration, I could not find any depicting men's faults. With time, however, I came to understand women's strategies to bypass male domination, especially with regard to control over income.

The status of women in Kpelle society had significant implications for how I was perceived, accepted and treated by the people of Gbaomu. However, how my gender impacted on people's perception of me was most often mitigated by other aspects of my status, such as my urban background, my upper class position and my high level of education. For example, I was viewed as somewhat weak, unable to undertake the slightest exertion. People constantly expressed surprise at my activeness (I was constantly busy) and at my ability to walk long distances through the bush to farms. This perception was no doubt based on a combination of factors: my urban origins, my class position (i.e., someone unused to manual labor and physical exertion) and my gender. People found it hard to believe that a "lady" such as myself drank cane juice or palm wine, although many local women indulged in these alcoholic beverages.

Although Bledsoe (1980) felt that being a young childless woman gave her a low status in the Kpelle community where she conducted fieldwork, I believe that my age and gender gave me an advantage that an older person or a male researcher would not have enjoyed. As a thirty-something year old, I was young enough not to intimidate most young people, especially young men, who comprised an important and influential sector of the village population. On the other hand, my youth made it appropriate to ask questions of older people and for them to perceive me as non-threatening. Although asking questions is not encouraged in Kpelle society (Gay and Cole, 1967; Erckak, 1977), on many occasions, older informants observed that they liked the kinds of questions I asked. Due to my age it was also important to always be highly respectful of my elders (e.g. by addressing them by the respect form of their names). One particular incident alerted me to the importance of the researcher's age. In discussing issues of sexuality and birth control with my "daughter" (the teenaged girl who lived with me), I found out that she considered it improper to discuss such intimate matters with me because I was her senior. Fortunately, household economics is not an age sensitive topic among the Kpelle.

My view that young women researchers often have an advantage over their male counterpart concurs with observations made by a number of other female fieldworkers (Oboler, 1985, see articles in Whitehead and Conaway, 1986). The advantage of female researchers derives from their higher status relative to the average woman in a "traditional" community due to their class position, their educational level and foreign or urban origins which enables them to establish

an androgynous gender identity, thus allowing them to gain equal access to both sexes. For example, I was invited to sit with a group of men outside the blacksmith 'shop', although I got the impression that this area is off limits for women. By the same token, I had access to female areas such as the 'kitchen' (separate structure for cooking) and was invited to numerous ceremonies celebrating the birth of children which only women attend.

But the separation of the sexes in Kpelle society and women's low status made it useful to have a male research assistant.¹⁰ For example, on several occasions my assistant, Henry, (who also had a high status in the community as an educated, "kwii" Kpelle man) was able to speak on my behalf to the elders. Once when the Poro "devil"¹¹ entered town just as I was about to leave for Monrovia, my assistant, himself a Poro Society member, intervened to seek permission for me to leave. Myself and all the village women had meanwhile barricaded ourselves indoors with all windows and doors tightly shut.

My high status as "kwii" did not spare me encounters with sexism, although none of the incidents I encountered were particularly unpleasant. I recall a village elder asking me whether the reason I had decided to continue so far with my education was to be able to compete with men. Although there were advantages to having a male assistant, this situation also exposed me to sexist attitudes. For example, the view that Henry and I were "loving" (having a sexual/romantic liaison) was so widespread that he decided to send for his wife to spend some time in Gbaomu to prove the contrary. At first people thought he was the researcher and wondered why a Kpelle man asked such obvious questions about farming and Kpelle culture. When I gave people lifts in my car (I drove), they always thanked Henry and not me even when they spoke English. Similarly, requests for favors were always channelled to me through Henry. On the light side, a young man once jokingly approached Henry for my hand in marriage. I pretended to be insulted when he offered a "dowry" (bride price) of only two tins of cane juice (worth about US \$15).

"You Are Our Mother ": Advantages and Disadvantages of the Native Researcher

The typical native researcher usually has the advantage of knowing the local language and culture and having influence or authority in the community he or she studies. I had none of these advantages in Gbaomu, but other factors that stemmed from my being a Liberian worked in my favor. Having done research a few years earlier in Bong County, I had contacts at the county hospital and during the initial stages of fieldwork was able to hire a vehicle from the hospital as well as make arrangements for locating an assistant through contacts at the hospital. Consequently, I moved to Gbaomu barely a month after my return to Liberia. The only disadvantage of this situation is that, unlike a foreign

counterpart who would have taken longer to work out the administrative details of research, I did not have enough time to study Kpelle before moving to the village.

Being a Liberian positively influenced my rapport with the people of Gbaomu. For one thing, being visited by relatives and friends convinced people of my normality in the sense that I, like everyone else, had a family. I also took my "daughter" with me on a visit to Monrovia (her first) where she met the other members of my family. Since people knew that it was inevitable that I would return to Liberia someday, some reasoned that by cooperating with me in my research, I would be indebted to repay the favor when I got a senior job in the Government. As a member of the Monrovia elite, I was approached by villagers on many occasions to foster their children. I explained that as a student living in the United States, I could not help in this way. I did manage to arrange for two children to be fostered by my relatives in Monrovia. This arrangement has created a strong and lasting bond between myself and Gbaomu.

A series of events which grew out of my guilt for not contributing concretely to the development of the village illustrate well some of the advantages of the native researcher. From the early days of my arrival in Gbaomu, I pondered over how I could show my appreciation to the people of Gbaomu for putting up with my presence and strange ways. Once on a visit to the nearby national agricultural research station, I met the local director of an American child sponsoring non-governmental organization (NGO) which had recently been set up in the county capital. As it turned out, the cousin of this woman, a Liberian, was a close friend of mine. Upon my request, she visited Gbaomu and agreed to initiate development projects in the village. Shortly after the child sponsoring agency began work in Gbaomu, a team from an agricultural project visited the village and requested permission to base its work there. This second development was related to the presence of the first NGO, my on-going research on agriculture and my contacts with the staff of the agricultural project. At the initial meeting between the villagers and the child sponsoring NGO, the elders spared me no praises and proclaimed me "mother" of the village. I subsequently advised the villagers to create a development association of those who were interested in working with the proposed projects. These developments allowed me, up to the time of my departure, to get a unique insider's view of how rural people react to externally introduced ideas. I attended meetings of the local development association which was created, observed their efforts to develop an appropriate response to an agency which operated in ways foreign to them and listened to people's fears and complaints about each other (accusations of corruption, jealousy) and about the NGO they were working with. Two projects were started by the NGO (a rice storage project and repairing of the bridge) but were aborted due to the war.

Research in the Shadow of War

The Liberian civil war began at the end of December 1989, three months before I planned to complete my research in Gbaomu. The war began in Nimba County, which borders on Bong County, during the Christmas season when I had gone to Monrovia for a brief vacation. When news of the war reached Monrovia, I was thrown into a panic over whether or not I would be able to complete my research. Since the Government claimed to be in control of the situation while BBC carried stories to the contrary, it was difficult to assess the actual situation in the countryside. From day to day I wavered about whether to return to Gbaomu after hearing stories about private cars being commandeered by soldiers in Bong County. Finally, toward the end of January I decided to make a short trip to Gbaomu in a car belonging to a Government official who had connections with the village. To my surprise, the trip was uneventful; there were only a few more checkpoints than usual, but the soldiers seemed at ease. In Gbaomu, life went on as usual; it was nearly time to begin land preparation for the next farming season. Although there were no signs of war, I returned to Gbaomu ill at ease. Daily, a group of neighbors and myself would listen to BBC reports on the war and interviews with Charles Taylor, leader of the insurgents. In February, we began to hear the sound of heavy artillery from Nimba County. I worried about our proximity to Camp Naama, a major garrison located about an hour's walk from Gbaomu. Fearing the arrival of soldiers in the village, I hid my car in the bushes surrounding the village.

To hasten my departure, I reduced the number of couples I interviewed and worked furiously every night to complete the survey. The tense atmosphere was intensified by rumors which circulated in the village. One morning I woke up to find the village virtually deserted, most people having moved into the forest with their belongings! It was rumored that the rebels were to shortly arrive in the county capital. Another rumor was that President Doe planned to hide out in Gbaomu secretly. He was apparently due to live in my house! By March 6, almost a year after my arrival in Gbaomu, my work was completed and I left for Monrovia.

I stayed in Monrovia for three months trying to decide what to do next. After the Firestone Plantation was captured by the rebels in May, it became obvious that I would have to abandon my plans of doing research there. My sponsors asked me to stay a while and see how the situation would develop. In May when the U.S. stationed Marines off the Liberian coast, SSRC gave me the go-ahead to leave the country. However by this time the international airport had been captured by the NPFL. The only way out was by charter flights leaving from a small airfield in Monrovia. I left Liberia in mid-June 1990 and returned to Wisconsin to write my dissertation.

Since leaving Liberia, I have tried to get news of Gbaomu. I learned that soldiers went to the village in April 1990, shortly after I had left. As one of the larger villages in the area, Gbaomu attracted many refugees during the war which put a strain on the food supply. I also learned that at the height of the war the entire village moved into the nearby forest. People returned to the village in April 1991.

With the war, Gbaomu residents, like other rural Liberians, have been forced to return to practices that they had abandoned with the spread of the cash economy. For example, people began making salt and soap, items which they previously bought. A more serious problem caused by the war has been the unavailability of Western medicine and marketed food.¹² Moreover, farming was disrupted for about two years (1990 and 1991). This situation has been compounded by the shortage of cash due to the disruption of trade during the war. Given the proximity of Gbaomu to Gbarnga, headquarters of Charles Taylor's government,¹³ it is highly likely that the village has been subject to raids by NPFL fighters for recruits, agricultural produce and livestock. I constantly think of my friends in Gbaomu and wonder which ones did not survive the war and how those who did are faring. I look forward to the day when I can return to Gbaomu and share with the people my achievements, their experiences during the war and our hopes for the future of our country.

Endnotes

¹The term "kwii" is widely used throughout Liberia to refer to the ways of Westernized or educated people.

²I was suspected of being a spy or somehow connected with tax collectors or the Liberian Government, the latter probably because I had a letter of introduction from the county superintendent. It was also believed that I intended to make money from the information that I was collecting. Due to the latter belief, a few people refused to be interviewed.

³The Poro and Sande Societies are gender-based initiation schools that are indigenous to most ethnic groups of Western and Central Liberia. These societies are universal in the sense that virtually all members of rural communities join them. Discussion of issues related to Poro and Sande is forbidden for non-members.

⁴The term Americo-Liberian refers to the descendants of the settlers who founded the modern Liberian state in the 19th century. The settlers, who were mostly former slaves, largely originated from the U.S and the West Indies. The Vais are one of Liberia's seventeen indigenous ethnic groups.

⁵These biases apply mainly to Americo-Liberians with no or severed rural ties.

⁶Largely due to the dictates of my research grant, I was away from Gbaomu several times during the course of the year. Because my grant included a technical training component, I spent two months undergoing training in agriculture at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria and at the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI) in Suakoko, Bong County.

⁷Presenting someone with a white object indicates a “white heart” or goodness of intention.

⁸Although giving money or gifts to informants violates research ethics in the eyes of some researchers, I felt that this gesture was unavoidable in my situation, especially since exchange is so endemic to Kpelle culture. I felt that people who I needed to interview several times would not have cooperated had I not given them some token of appreciation. I either gave people a small gift or small amounts of cash.

⁹Cane juice is a crude rum made from sugar cane. It is the primary income earner for Gbaomu residents.

¹⁰Originally I had planned to hire a female assistant. I hired a man instead because it was difficult to find a woman who met the criteria I was seeking. On some occasions I employed two local women to conduct interviews where I felt it was important to have a female interpreter.

¹¹The Poro ‘devil’ refers to the disguised representative of the Poro Society. When the ‘devil’ enters town, women and uninitiated males must hide themselves indoors until he leaves.

¹²Most rural households in Liberia are not self-sufficient in rice, the staple food.

¹³Toward the end of 1990, the NPFL rebels were pushed out of Monrovia and set up a government in Gbarnga. At the time of writing, the country remains divided into two: Monrovia, which is run by an interim government backed by the peace-keeping force of the Economic Community of West African States (known as ECOMOG), and the rest of the country which is under the control of Charles Taylor’s Government.

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The author of the article that follows passed away in Palo Alto, California on November 11, 1992. We produce below a letter to the editor forwarding the manuscript for the article. The *Liberian Studies Journal* will publish an Obituary in the next issue.

The Editor

July 15, 1992

Dear Elwood:

The process of trying to get together the raw material for Part III is making it evident that I do not have here all the files for the complete and accurate story I have been intending to tell. Nor am I physically able to chase after those who might be in possession of files or memories to help out. Thus, if only for my own satisfaction, I am going to put together several shorter articles which might be sheltered under the rubric of "Doing Business in Liberia in the 50's and 60's". The first is enclosed herewith. I am starting to work on one in which I shall try to portray the important but neglected matter of competition for sales of iron ore between the several Liberian iron ore companies, each with different ownership and different agenda. Later I shall try to touch on the roles of fixers and lawyers and the like as they impinged on the businesses with which I was familiar.

I do not know if this tangent will be of interest to you, although I hope it will not be completely unwelcome. Please let me have your reaction.

Sorry about not staying the full course. I still have strength enough to work at the word processor, but not enough to plough through boxes, correspond with folks who have lost interest in Liberia, etc., etc. I hope your clientele will be indulgent with still more from this quarter.

Anyway, how are you?

Sincerely,
(signed) Garland

Liberian Enterprises, Ltd.
"... Something That Will Help the People of Liberia"

Garland R. Farmer

On September 20, 1958, when Liberian President William V. S. Tubman spoke to chiefs and government officials assembled in an Executive Council of the Central Province at Gbarnga about an opportunity to invest in a new iron ore mine, he explained the meaning, and the process, of investment in a company's stock with a clarity and simplicity foreign alike to the halls of Harvard School of Business and the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*:

He wanted to "... tell you something new, something that will help the people of Liberia. No government of any country can be rich unless the citizens have some money, too. This that I have to tell you is a way the people can get some money.

"Every man must take care of his own people. When you die, if your wives and children do not have education or some way to take care of themselves, they will have hard time. I have told you chiefs before, you must plant coffee, rubber, cocoa. Some of you have money. You put it in the bank or you bury it in the ground. When you die, your children may be foolish and one year after you die, all your money may be gone. But if you have rubber or coffee or cocoa, even a foolish person can't waste that all one time.

"God has blessed us with good soil where we can plant many things and they grow well. The next way God blesses us is with gold, diamonds, iron in the ground . . . More iron has been found in Cape Mount County.

"The Bomi Hills people are the ones who have found this iron. Mr. Christie, the head man for Bomi Hills, has offered to help the people of Liberia so, you can benefit from this new mine. Mr. Christie is the most reasonable, just and fair man I know .

..

"This is good news. but it is hard to understand . . . You know that the President does not lie. His word is true. So that even though this matter is hard and does not sound possible, you must believe that the thing he is tell you is true . . .

An Introduction to Capitalism from Professor Tubman

"You know how it is when you trade. You buy some small-small things. Then you sell those things one-one and you make small profit on the things you

sell. Then you buy more again and sell more, and sometimes you can make good money by trading. Or you buy a cup of peanuts and plant them. And when the peanuts are full you get 4 cups of peanuts or maybe more from that one cup . . . And so you make profit. The same is true of rubber or cocoa or coffee. When you plant rubber, however, you do not see any money coming in from the money you have spent for maybe 5 years. Then after 5 years time, you can see profit. In this iron matter, it is like this: It takes plenty of money to start this thing. They must buy machines to build roads, to make houses for the workers to live in, to dig the iron itself. All this takes money. Someone must have faith to believe that when all this is done and the iron is dug out, the iron itself will make money to pay for all these machines. Those people are called a company. No one person has enough money to pay for all this. It must be many people who pay for it. And it is good that many people can help because then the profit comes to many people and not just to one person. But just like with rubber and coffee, the money you put in for machines and roads and houses does not come back to you in the same year. It will not begin to come back to you for 3 or 4 years. You will have to forget that you ever had that money for a few years time.

"Do you have any money that you have buried or that someone is holding for you? . . . If you have \$25 now and can get \$25 again by December 1, and you can get \$50 by May 1, 1959, then you can buy 5 shares in this new company . . . That is all the money you need. The thing you are buying, is just a piece of paper. You will pay \$100 for that piece of paper but it is worth \$500. Mr. Christie through the company will trust you the \$400. You will pay the other \$400 but you will pay for it out of the profit that the money itself makes for you. It will be like this: maybe the 2nd year the company will send you \$25. That will not all be for you. Half of that must be paid on the \$400 you owe. Maybe the next year, you will receive \$50. You will keep half and give half to the company . . . When the time comes that you have finished the \$400 then all the money that comes to you is yours . . . When you die the money will not stop . . . The only time the money will stop is when the iron is finished in the ground. God knows when that will be but no man can tell you that now."

The President was talking about Liberian Enterprises, Ltd. (LEL), an experiment that would, sadly, fall short of the high hopes he expressed but would still leave a positive mark on the course of foreign investment in Liberia for decades ahead. LEL owned 35% of National Iron Ore Company, Ltd. (NIOC) which a few months earlier had gotten a concession to the Mano River iron ore deposit.

Both companies were thought up and put together by Lansdell K. Christie, whose pioneering enterprise, Liberia Mining Company (LMC), had created the Liberian iron ore industry. In the course of financing LMC, Christie had been forced to cede control of it to Republic Steel Corporation, and when they became locked in a battle over improving terms for Liberia, Liberia's representatives on

the company's board had intervened to protect Christie's position as company president. Christie pledged to President Tubman that he would repay Liberia's support when the chance presented itself. (*Liberian Studies Journal*, XVI, 1.(1991))

Christie Puts His Mark on Liberian Capitalism

The chance came after a survey conducted in 1956 by LMC revealed a large occurrence of iron ore within the area reserved for LMC by its concession. When told that the "exploitation lots" remaining under the concession were insufficient to cover the whole new area, the Chairman of LMC's board proposed to block development by anyone else by selecting the exploitation lots in the middle of it. Christie postponed any move while additional surface exploration and limited drilling by an LMC geological team added to the promise of the earlier aerial survey. Then, in early 1957, he acted to take advantage of the resentment engendered by this heavy-handedness. He proposed the formation of a new company which would be owned 50% by the Liberian Government, 15% by LMC (as compensation for its residual claim to the area) and 35% by LEL, a holding company which split this bloc, 20% for Liberians and 15% for Christie and associates. In this way, Liberian ownership of NIOC would total 70%, and in addition, the Government would receive a gradually increasing share of the income from LMC's 15% (a point later unsuccessfully contested by LMC).

The distinctive element in this new investment formula was the sale of LEL stock to Liberians on the credit terms described by Tubman in his speech to the Executive Council and made possible by Christie, who advanced 80% of the \$100 cost of each share purchased by them. No debt was created by this advance, nor was there any obligation to pay interest; the only undertaking by Liberians was to assign to Christie one-half of their dividends until the 80% advance was repaid.

There was another unorthodox facet of this venture which broke new ground and gave rise to criticism which persists still today: the Liberian Government invested \$5 million in NIOC. Without arguing whether or not this was the correct thing to do, it is pertinent to note that without this investment Christie would have had to invest directly in NIOC the funds he used to finance Liberian shareholders.

Eager to get on with the project but constrained to caution by the several, sometimes conflicting, roles he was playing, Christie treaded water, following closely reports from the geologists, until August, 1957 when he took a first formal, concrete action. On August 12, he, his friend, attorney and LMC Secretary, Vernon Lynn, went to Monrovia with Republic Steel's appointee as Treasurer of LMC to sign a "Statement of Understanding" with the Liberian Government under which LMC waived any claim on the Mano River deposit in exchange for a 15% interest in the new company. *

Urged on by an impatient Christie, Lynn worked with all deliberate speed—and in harness with Richard A. Henries, prominent attorney/politician/lobbyist, and Speaker of the House—to put together and jolly the Liberian government apparatus into approving the paperwork for both NIOC and LEL: Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, Concession Agreement, etc. They finished the job in an unusually short time. NIOC was incorporated on March 5, 1958. The concession agreement was signed on March 13 and approved by the Legislature on March 20, 1958.

He then went after his chosen Liberia expert in earnest, engaging a grand spectrum of sentiments. He expected enthusiasm and commitment from those who worked with him, and he cajoled, cosseted and threatened to arouse and maintain both. But, ever the realist, he knew that, even among the most devoted, enthusiasm can wane and commitment can loosen its grip. To provide for that eventuality, he deployed a safety net of self-interest, sometimes even of downright greed. (He was himself often motivated by an admixture of high-mindedness and self-interest. A main goal of the Mano project was to set a different course for the Liberian economy, one which would benefit Liberians previously left to one side of the nation's development. It was not until months after I joined him that I came to know that he harbored another, less enlightened, hope for this new venture: to satisfy his desire—almost his mania—to prove to Republic Steel that he could open up and operate a mine without them.)

He accepted as a fact of human nature that those in authority in Liberia would take this opportunity to feather their nests; that was reality. But he was also persuaded that a larger slice of Liberian life would benefit from his act because Tubman and his colleagues also accepted and welcomed the chance to do something on this order for a larger number of citizens than had previously been affected by Tubman's economic policies; that was the generous impulse that he intended to husband.

He was not wrong. The President's talk to the chiefs was clearly intended to open up, to promote the investment opportunity, not confine it. Moreover, the talk was translated and transcribed into Kpelle and a mimeographed version of the translation was widely circulated. (He also urged tribal councils to buy shares so that funds would be available for projects which would otherwise have to be paid for by new taxes. Four Chiefdom council treasuries in the Central Province followed this advice.)

Wide publicity was given to the stock offering in newspapers and on both Monrovia radio stations. A lengthy front-page story setting forth the full details of the financing arrangement appeared in the September 14, 1958 edition of *The Listener Daily*, which concluded: "It is hoped that all Liberian citizens will take advantage of this excellent opportunity which has been made available to them through the business statesmanship of President Tubman."

Some worldly-wise critics, then and later, did not disguise their skepticism, going so far as to label the idea a nationwide quick-buck operation, aimed at fleecing the inexperienced Liberian public. Comment of this tone was more frequent in the hey-day of the six-month foreign economic advisers imported to put things right in various nooks and crannies of the Liberian body economic. I know of no one who actually studied the details of what had been done to protect Liberian shareholders from any such exploitation. In point of fact, each applicant for shares received a four-page letter setting out the details of the offering (another evidence of Wall Street legal minds at work!). Included was this statement:

"So as to protect you, no stocks purchased can be sold to anyone else for a period of six years as it is estimated that by this time, the Company will be earning money and you will have the better knowledge of the direct value of the stock.

"If you desire to sell the stock within the six year period, the Company, Liberian Enterprises, Ltd. will refund you your money . . ."

There is no indication that any shareholder actually asked the company to repurchase shares during this six year period. Some did later, usually the families of deceased shareholders. However, that turned out to be a paperwork nightmare; the reader is left to imagine the complications inherent in trying to reconcile American corporate practices with Liberian traditions, given the large number of shareholders who died intestate. (The statute of limitations having expired, it may be safe now to reveal that for several years either I or one of his former bosses forged the signature of a deceased LMC laborer to his dividend checks so his widow could get the money to pay school expenses for his son. There was no other way to get around the absence of proof of his marriage or of his son's birth, let alone a will.)

10,000 for Us

Parceling out the 20,000 shares reserved for Liberians and setting the rules for their sale was the job of an *ad hoc* committee set up by Tubman, which consisted of Secretary of Treasury Charles D. Sherman, Attorney General Joseph Garber and E. Reginald Townsend, head of the State Department's Bureau of Information. The committee reserved 10,000 shares for about 150 individuals holding positions in Government and the True Whig Party. Holdings ranged in size from 5000 shares for President Tubman to 5 shares for members of the Executive Mansion guard, with gradations in between reflecting the positions occupied: next largest after Tubman's were blocs of 250 shares each for Sherman and Vice President William R. Tolbert, president and treasurer, respectively, of NIOC; then, 150 shares for the Speaker of the House; 100 shares for the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the President Pro Tem of

the Senate; 60 shares for Cabinet officers and members of the Legislature; 40 shares for Assistant Department Secretaries, and so on.

One hint of the complexity of the relationships which prevailed during those years was given by the transfers made from the large bloc allocated to the President, to relatives, attendants, disciples and hangers-on to whose well-being even a quasi-omnipotent Tubman had to be attentive if he was to survive and prosper. An incident involving Tolbert illustrates the kind of demands made on him. The Vice President complained to Tubman that his sister had been unable to buy shares before the deadline; he wanted some found for her and he believed that Sherman, his putative rival to the Presidency-after-Tubman, had a secret reserve upon which he could draw if only he would. After catechizing me to convince himself that there was no stash of hidden shares, Tubman transferred a rather generous number of his shares to the Vice President's sister.

(The mixture of generous commitment and blatant self-interest that Tubman, like Christie, used to good effect can be seen in the fact that the three members of the *ad hoc* committee, plus Tolbert and Henries, served without compensation as officers of NIOC and/or LEL for several years. For some time there was not even a fee paid for Board attendance, although a fee of \$100 per meeting was later instituted, then increased to \$200. Similar fees for Liberian directors of LMC, LAMCO, etc. were \$1000, sometimes more, plus expenses for travel to meetings in Europe and the U.S. Henries served as lawyer for both new companies, waiving any compensation during 5 or 6 lean years and declining in later, more prosperous times to submit a bill for lost income, telling Christie this was the best way for him to acknowledge what Christie was doing for Liberia. It is not unfair to suspect that the retainer paid to him by LMC may also have played some role.)

10,000 for the Rest; How It Was Done

Self-interest and political reality prevailed in setting aside one-half of the 20,000 Liberian shares for officialdom and in devising the basis on which they were parceled out, which was done by the committee after one or two meetings with Tubman. (LEL's sparse surviving records contain an envelope on which the cautious Sherman preserved the numbers agreed to with Tubman.) In contrast to the cupidity which marked the terms under which the first 10,000 shares were dealt out among a limited group, there was an undeniable effort to assure a wide and equitable distribution of the other 10,000 shares, as can be seen in the simple, straightforward rules formulated by the same committee: in essence, blocs of stock were allocated to the various counties, provinces and territories roughly according to their populations, and limits on shareholdings were set in the areas where demand exceeded supply, generally, a maximum of 20 shares per family.

Because LEL was authorized to sell only enough shares to pay for its investment in NIOC, it had no funds to cover the cost of distributing its shares. Christie had to advance personal funds to cover some start-up costs, including the cost of sending me to Liberia in early October, 1958 to work with the committee on the sale of shares. (This job, while unique in itself, offered a close look at a broad part of Liberian life under Tubman, business and other, which was fairly rare for a foreigner and I have tried to blend into this account of LEL enough about how things were done in those days to justify the telling.)

To keep expenses to a minimum, widespread use was made of Government facilities and personnel, an idea which understandably shocks today's sensibilities but seemed at the time the ideal way to maximize benefits to the soon-to-be shareholders. An approximation of corporate headquarters was set up in the Bureau of Information, a small, overcrowded house on Ashmun street, diagonally across from the old State Department and near the College of West Africa. Townsend, two of his "cadets" and his secretary (who later worked for the decimated NIOC at Mano) were conscripted into the service of LEL; so were County Superintendents and District Commissioners, or members of their staffs.

The offering inspired great excitement, much confusion and the usual elbowing for advantage, especially in Montserrado County, whose allotment was quickly oversubscribed. Policing the limit per family turned out to be a time-consuming and, often, disagreeable job. A major complication arose from the committee's decision that a family would not be excluded from the general distribution simply because some member had gotten shares from the official bloc, a loosening of restrictions mainly meant to accommodate wives. Hours were spent with the people who brought in applications from outlying areas asking: "Who is this person?" "That's one baby." "Whose baby?" "A baby for one big shot from Monrovia." One flagrant effort to beat the rules was made by a middle-rank bureaucrat who was the source of much breast-beating against foreign exploitation and who applied for the maximum number of shares in each of the counties and most of the provinces and territories, both in his own name and in the names of others. Despite all efforts, it later proved that he had sneaked two or three unqualified applications through the screening process.

As these shares were reserved for Liberian citizens, time had to be spent sorting out applicants who might be fronting for other nationalities. However, the problem was not a simple one. Even though more than a few women applicants were brought to apply and were seen being handed the money by Lebanese, if the stock was held in the women's names, the "no foreigners" restriction obviously didn't apply. (It was annoying when dividends were paid in later years to see some checks immediately handed over to the same foreign escorts, but . . . what to do?) A similar dilemma arose concerning children, usually of Liberian mothers and foreign fathers. Many Ghanaian, Sierra Leonian

and Nigerian citizens resident in Liberia joined the rush to LEL. Here again, it was hard to establish eligibility; documentation was illusive; word-of-mouth unreliable and marital relationships uncertain. Some ineligibles slipped through the net and instructions came later to send dividend checks to foreign addresses, mainly to Nigeria. It was a source of pride for the small team which did the winnowing that so few interlopers were found.

In recognition of the prevailing unease about cash paid to government offices, payment for shares could be made only by certified check, or bank cashier's check. That sounded easy enough when the rules were laid out in New York, but in Tchien or Kolahun things were different. Most banking business in Liberia then was done with the Bank of Monrovia, and it had only one full-fledged branch, at Firestone. It did have limited agency arrangements with merchants in various areas which permitted them to conduct a few transactions, principally the sale of cashier's checks. However, supplies of these forms were limited, and in many cases insufficient for the number of share applicants. So, despite efforts to avoid it, some of the government offices taking applications had to add to the confusion by accepting cash, then pooling several applications so as to match payments to the number of cashier's checks on hand.

The work of sorting out ingenious bookkeeping, sifting family relationships to eliminate cheaters, and getting receipts made out properly, etc. was demanding and kept three or four people working from 7 or 8 in the morning until, often, after midnight. The three from Townsend's team were paid nothing extra until months later when LEL finally had some funds of its own. The people from other government offices who helped with this first distribution were never paid for this work. A few spoke of compensation but accepted with good grace the, correct, explanation that LEL had no funds for such expenses.

Many of the government officials handling applications and payments were physically hard pressed to get the jobs done as instructed and on time. One from Tchien, caught between swollen streams during heavy rains, slept in his car two nights, taking four days to get to Monrovia only to find that his applications had been incorrectly executed, so he had to do it all over.

Working closely with these minor officials for several weeks, one had to be impressed by their manifest desire to have as many of "their people" as possible participate. Aside from the fact that several seemed to have felt obliged to go along with a certain amount of big-shot "doubledipping", of the type mentioned earlier, virtually no complaints were heard about the way they handled the job. One complaint was made directly to President Tubman about one District Commissioner, but it turned out that the complaint really was that Townsend and I had rejected an application made to DC's office by an official from Monrovia who already had his allotted number of shares. Most of the outlying officials seemed to think that doing a fair, efficient job would bring

them favorable notice in the eyes of their people. After they had had to repeat the job for three installment payments, their enthusiasm did wane a bit.

The confusion that accompanied much of the payment in October was not repeated in December, when a second 5% was due. In the first place, applicants were indulged when, recognizing the widespread unfamiliarity with what was being done, a blind eye was turned toward failure to make timely payment, or even any payment at all; there was, after all, plenty of opportunity to cancel or modify the sale before the final payment was to be made on May 1, 1959. However, indulgence made matters more difficult because the amount due as a final payment had to be calculated and notice given individually well before the deadline date. Those involved for LEL were then importuned to allow more time, to lend money, and so on. Because most of those in arrears had simply applied for more shares than their means permitted, it was decided that, rather than cancel such sales, the fairest action would be to reduce them to the lowest multiple of 5 shares that payments made would cover. Generally, this meant reducing the holding from 10 to 5 shares or from 20 to 10. In this way the number of people whose purchases had to be voided entirely was limited to less than a dozen.

Spreading the Wealth. How Far? How Much?

Even if the author pretended to be able to define how Christie and other foreign investors could or should have behaved differently to generate and accelerate the changes in Liberia which might have helped avert the tragedy which has blighted the country, this is not the place for an endeavor which has challenged so many scholars. However, statements made here about Christie's intention that the sale of LEL stock should stir change by spreading the wealth more widely may have more meaning if, before looking at the detailed results, they are joined to some reference to the conditions which he met and which weighed on his decisions:

Primarily and unavoidably, he had to do business with the Liberia which he found in place, the Liberia of a relatively small settler elite functioning amidst a large indigenous population, which existed outside of or barely adjacent to the money society. He did not propose, would not have been accepted had he wished, and, had he tried, could not have achieved a restructuring of this fundament of the nation where the iron ore he was to develop happened to be found.

However, much change short of a revolution could be wished and, by the time he proposed LEL, had already occurred as a result of the employment, education and other leaps toward modernization and individual freedom that came with the Tubman rule, including the venture at Bomi Hills. (See *Liberian Studies Journal*, XVI, 1, (1991))

In addition, he had worked closely enough with Tubman to believe that the type of desirable economic change in which he could play a role was a goal of the government which was then enjoying great popularity and no little success. Christie believed, and was persuaded that Tubman also believed, that a rising tide would lift all boats. The question that dogged Liberia was whether the tide affected the large ocean of the nation or only the smaller lagoon of the governing elite, or both in different degrees, but it was not given to foreigners such as Christie directly to affect the tidal flow.

While maintaining a respectful distance from the levers of basic change, he expected that increased prosperity would strengthen President Tubman, and his experience had persuaded him that Tubman was good for Liberia, even though there were aspects of the Tubman rule with which he privately differed.

How It Came Out

Taken in this context, an examination of the details of the distribution of LEL shares provides a new and slightly different view of Liberia in the 1950s and reveals something of what the distribution was aimed at achieving. (The figures which follow do not add up precisely, partially, at least, because there was some overlapping between categories and some duplication by a few schemers who slipped past the screening process. However, the discrepancies are small and even with them the numbers give a sufficiently accurate picture of what was accomplished.)

By the time the May, 1959 payment had been sorted out, LEL had 1356 shareholders in Liberia who owned the \$2,000,000 of shares originally allotted to Liberians plus a few thousand dollars more from those allocated to Christie which ended up in Liberian hands. (For example, some of those sold to me by Christie were later sold, on the same terms as the original sale to Liberians, to individuals who had been out of the country at the time of the first offering. The last time I saw Minister David Neal, who was one of these, he joked that for some years he had expected that I would ask him for a return favor and he was working on how he would say "No".)

Approximately 1140 other shareholders held the 10,000 shares not reserved for officialdom. These were distributed according to their places of residence, although, as was typical in those days, many claimed to reside both in Montserrado County, where they were employed by Government and in the county of their birth, such as Sinoe or Grand Bassa. Much effort was devoted to trying to eliminate duplicate applications of various sorts, but, as has already been said, some slipped through. Ignoring such shortcomings, the following summary gives a reasonably accurate impression of the distribution that eventually resulted from what was for the most part a "first-come, first-served" sales program handled by the offices of the County Superintendents, District

Commissioners and the like outside Monrovia and by three or four people on Townsend's staff at the Bureau of Information in Monrovia:

County or Province	Number of Shareholders	Shares Held
Montserrado	242	2525
Grand Bassa	163	1315
Maryland	141	1230
Central Province	125	1250
Sinoe	128	1040
Western Province	139	985
Grand Cape Mount	120	845
Tchien	49	320
Eastern Province	34	300
River Cess	2	10
	<hr/> 1143	<hr/> 9820

(This information comes from a handwritten duplicate of registry of Liberian shareholders kept by author to allow working on LEL matters during frequent travels.)

Of the overall total of 1356 shareholders, 697—about 51%.—held 5 shares, the minimum holding allowed. They owned a total of 3485 shares, or about 23% of the total, less Tubman's 5000. Only about 35 of those with 5 shares were on the Government list, mainly Executive Mansion staff. Most were from the Central and Western Provinces. With the exception of a few Paramount Chiefs, all those who signed "X-His Mark" bought the minimum number of shares.

Although the allotment to government officials was most liberal and distribution of the remainder of the shares was in the hands of officialdom, the effort to spread the ownership of the non-government bloc widely was sincere and pursued with honest intent by those with whom I worked. Most who tried to cheat on the system were identified and frustrated, so far as I know. Cheaters were discussed with disdain and disapproval. There was an air of excitement, a feeling that for once something was being done for people of all walks of life and from all parts of the country, and those who could wanted to help it succeed. (Of course, generous impulses reflected in some measure the availability of enough shares to go around, at least at a level which was recognizably reasonable.)

In Liberia as in almost every other nation foreigners wishing to invest and to offer investment opportunities had to deal with a governing elite. In Liberia this also included the bulk of those who knew something of business matters (although not always very much) and could lay hands on some cash (although, again, not always all that much). Recent commentaries on the Liberia of 40 years

ago show the need for this reminder as well as another one: not all who belonged to Liberia's elite were perforce affluent; there were many of quite modest means who would not, could not, have participated in this investment without some kind of financial help. Shares held outside the big coastal centers and in lots of 5 shares are evidence that Christie's desire to extend this opportunity beyond the traditional privileged class was both justified and fulfilled.

So intense was Christie's interest in the results of the stock sale that when I returned to the U.S. at the end of October, 1958 he was waiting at Idylwild Airport, late at night, and stayed until the last plane to Washington was announced, pumping me for ever more details about how the sale had gone and who had been involved. He even wanted to see some of the applications I had with me, to get an impression of those who had bought stock and was delighted at the number he did not recognize, or could not pronounce. "Ndambu Ndorbor!" "Kollie Kpankamai"! And on through other similarly mellifluous discoveries.

On January 15, 1959 the Liberian shareholders hosted a splendid "outing" in honor of Christie at Secretary Charles Sherman's Oldest Congotown home. Several hundred people attended and showered Christie with praise and appreciation. Although never exactly comfortable in the spotlight, Christie was as visibly pleased that day as I ever saw him. He believed he had done the right thing and could see that the people he wanted to help recognized that something good had begun.

As Always: One Last Hitch

Despite all the efforts to make this sale of stock work smoothly, one last, delicate hitch developed in the autumn of 1959 regarding LEL's capital contribution to NIOC: President Tubman, alone among the Liberian shareholders, had not paid in the final amount due on his allocation of LEL stock. One or two gentle—or so I thought!—reminders by mail from me went unacknowledged. Vernon Lynn's efforts to get some bank at least tentatively involved with the embryonic Mano project needed verification that all NIOC's capital had been paid in, so he fashioned some increasingly insistent paragraphs on the subject for inclusion in my letters to Tubman on other matters, one being sent prior to a trip aimed at speeding payment of the Government's \$5 million capital contribution to NIOC. Before I left New York, Christie asked me to tell Tubman that, if necessary, he would make a loan to Tubman of the \$50,000 involved; he wanted complete confidentiality because Lynn had repeatedly opposed any such offer. In Monrovia, Tubman received me coldly, then launched into a diatribe about the inference in my last letter that he needed to be hounded to pay, like someone owing money to a Water Street merchant. So vile was his mood that it seemed imprudent even to mention Christie's name, let alone pass on the offer of a loan. He ranted on for the better part of an hour with only a few meek interjections from the target of his displeasure about how such an

inference had neither been wished nor justified, and was due to maladroitness alone. Fortunately, it was not uncommon for his ugly moods to calm after he had vented his anger fully, and this was one such occasion. He sent me on to see Sherman with the promise that I would have his check before I left Liberia, and I did, without ever having had to broach Christie's offer.

In February, 1960, *TIME* magazine carried a glowing story about LEL and Mano which enhanced the already favorable Liberian opinion of the project, especially with this quotation from Christie:

"We can't despoil underdeveloped countries of their wealth. We must allow them to participate. It is unthinkable for a developer to try to hog a project all for himself."

The next LEL milestone was passed in October, 1960 when stock certificates were distributed to the shareholders. Much discussion preceded the decision to issue a document which was expected to have considerable value once the debt to Christie had been paid. So few shareholders had had any experience with such an asset that the potential for theft, fraud or simple loss through neglect was high. Those charged with handing out certificates were coached to lecture the owners sternly about the importance of protecting the documents from fire, insects, thieves and forgetfulness, which set off much comparison among some shareholders of ideas of what was the best thing to do; one good soul who signed a receipt with his mark came back to tell me he was going to have the paper framed and hang it on the wall of his hut, "... where rogue won't look for it, bug-a-bug can't reach it, and I can grab it and run if fire come."

Good News and Bad; Dividend and Tumor

As will be told in greater detail elsewhere, Mano was harder, slower and costlier to develop than the perennially optimistic Christie had foreseen, so he never saw a dividend paid. However, things had finally come around well enough that on his last trip to Liberia in May, 1965 he had been able to tell President Tubman who announced at a dinner given in the latter's honor by National Iron Ore Company that a first dividend would be paid before the end of the year.

It was not long after his return from this trip that he underwent a series of tests which led to the diagnosis of an inoperable brain tumor, for which he endured the dread course of debilitating treatment. There was a brief and welcome period of remission when he returned to his home on Long Island. He kept in touch with Mano by telephone whenever there was energy for such exertions. The last time I talked with him by phone was shortly before I was to leave for Liberia in November. We spoke of the preparations which were underway for paying a dividend and he wanted to be sure that Tubman knew that, belatedly and tentatively but surely, Mano was starting to justify the

support the two of them had lavished on it for the previous seven years. His death occurred only a few days after I had been able to deliver his message to Tubman.

The first dividend was paid on February 4, 1966. It was a paltry sum, considering the high expectations that had been held and the longer-than-anticipated waiting period. NIOC paid LEL a 3% semi-annual dividend, which LEL passed on entirely to its shareholders who, however, got a check for half and paid half toward their indebtedness to Christie. Thus, a holder of 5 shares received a check for \$7.50 and reduced debt by another \$7.50. Except for the handful of critics who had never accepted foreign participation in the development of Liberia's natural resources (and there were some all along) any disappointment at the amount paid went unexpressed amidst the good feeling generated by distribution of the checks. The newspapers ran banner headlines and the *Listener* of February 5 had a prominent photo of the crowd in line at the Department of Information reception desk where Montserrado County checks were given out. What needs to be remembered now is what almost everyone felt at the time: A turning point had been reached; Liberia was somehow becoming a different place.

During the next year, 1966, NIOC paid two dividends of 3% each to LEL, but LEL waited until January, 1967 to pay a 6% dividend to its shareholders, cutting down on the inconvenience to them as well as on its expenses. Moreover, though still not munificent, a check for \$15 seemed less likely to be frittered away than two for \$7.50. In any event, the 1967 dividend was again greeted with newspaper headlines and a statement by the *Listener* on January 20 that Liberians "... are happy over the flow of dividends from their investment and many have expressed satisfaction in this particular company as compared with what they are receiving from other such undertakings."

A dividend of 6% was paid by LEL each year from 1967 until July, 1973, when it was reduced to 3%. In 1977, a final dividend of 1.4% was paid from a small reserve fund which had been built up for such an eventuality. The efforts to correct numerous technical problems plaguing Mano operations will be the subject of a later article; suffice it to say here that even though it had become clear that Mano would never be the bonanza which Christie had meant for it to be, hope remained that dividends at some lower rate would ultimately be resumed.

All Lost Money, Except the Liberians

It was a far cry from Christie's heady vision and a money loser for him and others—but not for the Liberians whom he had financed. They had the following meager but positive results from their unprecedented investment:

YEAR	DIVIDENDS		
	Total per share	Paid in cash	Paid to Christie
1966	\$3.00	\$1.50	\$1.50
1967	6.00	3.00	3.00
1968	6.00	3.00	3.00
1969	6.00	3.00	3.00
1970	6.00	3.00	3.00
1971	6.00	3.00	3.00
1972	6.00	3.00	3.00
1973	6.00	3.00	3.00
1974	1.40	.70	.70
	<u>43.40</u>	<u>21.70</u>	<u>21.70</u>

Thus, the Liberian shareholder, who had paid \$20 of the \$100 per share price of LEL stock, received dividends totaling \$21.70 in cash and—small consolation to him, perhaps—paid a like amount on the payment made by Christie on behalf of Liberian shareholders, which was reduced by \$434,000 ($\$21.70 \times 200,000$ shares) from \$1,600,000 to \$1,166,000.

Other Doors Opened

More significant than the number of shares sold or the amount of dividends paid was the mere fact that a major offering to Liberians had been made and had produced results, albeit later and less than expected. Few significant new foreign investments were made after 1958 without some obeisance—however perfunctory in some cases—being made toward the principle of participation by individual Liberians. One notable case was that of West African Explosives and Chemicals ("EXCHEM") which even tied itself directly to the Mano formula in its 1962 agreement with Government by agreeing:

"To offer twenty-five (25%) per cent of its shares to Liberians on the same terms and conditions on which Liberians were sold shares by National Iron Ore, i.e. payment in convenient installments of 20% of the value of the shares with an understanding that the balance 80% would be paid when the plant comes into production, from 50% of each dividend payment."

Over the years following the LEL offering, numerous others were advertised in the local newspapers. Especially illustrative of the change set in motion in the 1950's were offerings made some 20 years later by European trading companies long active in West Africa: East Asiatic Company offered 25% of the shares in P.P.P. Timber Industries, valued at \$1 million, in March, 1974. Three years later, the venerable French trading house, CFAO, offered 50,000 shares to Liberians, at a dinner honoring President William R. Tolbert, Jr. There were smaller, local ventures, as in 1973 when there was an offering of 25% of National Milling Corporation, a flour mill; a year earlier, 25% of the Liberia Matches Company had been sold through the Bank of Liberia. It bears repeating that

these offerings were public and open to all Liberians with money to invest, in contrast to an earlier practice of slipping a few shares to a few influential individuals to curry their favor for the enterprise concerned.

LAMCO: Bigger, First to Pay, Paid More—but Better?

Always jealous of his role as the first to initiate many changes which bade well to refashion Liberia, Christie was deprived of seeing LEL become the first to pay a dividend to the Liberian public when Liberian Iron Ore Limited (LIO), a Canadian company set up to hold 37.5% in the gargantuan developer of Liberia's Nimba Mountains iron ore deposit, Liberian American-Swedish Minerals Corporation (LAMCO), paid its first dividend in August of 1965 and declared a second one payable only 10 days after Mano's first was paid in February, 1966. LAMCO had already overshadowed earlier Christie projects at Bomi and Mano in size, cost of investment, number of Liberians employed and tons of ore shipped annually; at the time, LAMCO was, purely and simply, the largest iron ore project in the world.

Yet his footprints could be seen nowhere more unmistakably than in the inclusion of individual Liberians among LAMCO's shareholders. In July, 1962, almost four years after its formation, LIO announced that it would offer 298,696 of its shares to Liberian citizens at \$12 (plus costs and documentary stamp totaling another \$1.30), or about 80% of the \$15 market value of the stock. Full payment was guaranteed by the Government of Liberia through the Liberian Development Corporation (LDC). A down payment of \$5.10 was due with the application to purchase, with three installments of \$2.40 each due in December, 1963, 1964 and 1965. Minimum holding was 10 shares.

Advertisements of the offering ran in Liberian newspapers in October and December, 1962, setting the deadline for applications at January 31, 1963. By January 29, according to the *Liberian Age* of February 8, 1963, fewer than one-third of the shares offered had been subscribed. On January 30, President Tubman made an urgent radio plea for Liberians to act quickly to take advantage of this opportunity, letting loose a floodtide of applications which resulted in half as many shares being sold on the last day as had been sold in all the preceding months. Even so, it was reported that only 100,585 shares had been bought by individuals and that 198,111 would have to be purchased by LDC. Reminders of the due dates of subsequent installments appeared in the newspapers in December of 1963 and 1964. Despite these efforts, when the first dividend was announced two and a half years later and before the final installment was due in December, 1965, great confusion accompanied the announcement that dividends would be paid only on fully-paid shares, with a pointed reminder than many had not paid the installments due at the end of 1963 and 1964. Apparently, their experience with LEL had not convinced Liberians that ownership of iron ore shares was an avenue to quick riches.

It is interesting to compare the net effect of the two stock offerings. LEL stock sold for \$100 per share; LIO, for \$13.30 (all costs included). LEL set a minimum holding of 5 shares, or \$500, of which the Liberian shareholder paid \$100 in three installments over 8 months. Christie advanced \$400 at his sole risk. LIO set a minimum of 10 shares, or \$133.00 in four installments over three and a half years, with payment guaranteed by the Government of Liberia. Once dividends started, LEL paid once a year, \$3 per share to the shareholder, \$3 on his debt to Christie. LIO paid four times a year, \$1 per share per annum in the beginning, later \$1.25, so the minimum shareholder received \$4, then \$6 per year.

Individual Liberians held over \$2 million of LEL stock, or 20% of National Iron Ore Company. Some \$3,555,000 of LIO stock (at \$12 per share), or 8.57% of LAMCO's stock, was held in Liberia, but of that amount, at least in the beginning, LDC had had to purchase roughly two-thirds, i.e. 198,111 or about \$2,777,000, making the amount actually held by individual Liberians somewhere around \$778,000.

In the years when LEL paid dividends of \$6 per share, the cash paid to Liberian shareholders added some \$60,000 to the national economy. In the years when LIO paid \$6 per share on its stock, it added some \$1,792,000 to the national economy. Assuming there had been no transfer by Liberian Development Corporation of the shares it originally acquired, that would have meant that roughly \$603,000 went to individual shareholders and \$1,189,000 to LDC. So Liberians received much greater returns from their investments in LAMCO than from LEL.

The question which remains is whether there would have been any individual shareholders in LAMCO if LEL had not gone before.

Endnotes

*Note: How the author knows whereof he tells.

Because I have much to say hereafter about the thinking and the purposes of Christie and others, it seems best to explain now how I came into the picture at all:

We first met in 1946 when I was assistant Liberia desk officer in the U.S. Department of State, then worked together again after I returned to Washington from Paris to be Liberian desk officer in 1951. In that position I had little exposure to his iron ore activities but worked regularly with him in his position as head of the Monrovia Port Management Company, an entity formed years earlier at State Department behest to insure profitable operation of the Free Port of Monrovia and, thus, repayment of the Lend-Lease debt incurred by its construction. After I left government service in 1952, we remained in sporadic contact but nothing ever suggested the offer he made on September 5, 1957 for

me to join a new company in which he would need someone familiar with Liberia. Despite a continued interest in Liberia, I had no desire to leave my job at Stanford University, let alone exchange the lovely San Francisco Bay Area for New York, so I declined his offer. Though not intended to be, that was the best negotiating ploy possible; the ardor of his pursuit increased immediately. Little by little, with the verve and imagination that were his trademark, he imparted a sense of excitement about this rare chance to set a new direction for the Liberian economy which became increasingly hard to ignore. After two heady lunches with him in March, our home in California was put on sale; almost without recognizing the process, we had been caught up in Christie's new adventure. And, he made the prospect of being part of change of a high order more irresistible by adding, almost as an afterthought, an unvarnished appeal to crass self-interest: "Anyway, Garland, I'd like to make a rich man out of you."

Amos J. Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1991, 224pp.

Professor Beyan's book, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State* details the history of the American Colonization Society (ACS) and its impact on the political, economic, religious and social facets of the Liberian society. The book also attempts to establish a link between the activities of the ACS and the pattern of history in Liberia.

The book follows some of the themes inherent in recent historical works in black and Liberian studies, namely the conflict between abolitionists and colonialists over the issue of repatriation of free blacks and former slaves. Lamont D. Thomas (*Paul Cuffe: Black Entrepreneur and Pan Africanist*, University of Illinois Press, 1988) and Jeremiah Moses (*Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) eloquently emphasized this theme in their respective works. Like these authors, Beyan also details the perception of some blacks, who saw the ACS as a racist organization bent on removing black free people from the United States. Tom Shick (*Behold the Promised Land*, 1980) linked this theme to ancient Roman times, when slave owners found it difficult to appreciate coexistence with their former slaves.

Although Beyan has attempted to stratify the levels of analysis at the organizational (ACS and its relationship with free blacks) and the individual (settlers and natives) levels, his approach is diametrically dissimilar to the ones taken by Shick, Thomas and Moses. Beyan seems to limit his analysis to the organizational level, so that Liberia's problems are occasioned by the activities of the ACS, the organization which succeeded in founding land in West Africa for new world blacks. On the other hand, standard historical documentation by the other authors have analyzed relationships at the individual level. At this level, the socio-economic and political problems of Liberia are seen by the reader as a misapplication of democratic ideals and principles by the black settlers, as well as a perpetration of plantation mentality which some of them borrowed from their former slave masters. Reading Moses, Shick or Thomas, the reader mostly follows documentation of self-interested settlers, where mulattos exert their superiority over darker skinned settlers or where the settlers as a group profess their domination and civilization over the primitive attributes of the African natives.

In Beyan's book, one sees the ACS as an albatross that is responsible for the Liberian problems. The author gives the impression that the ACS grip on Liberia is congenital and that Liberians lack the ability to surge ahead and think for themselves. It is such indictment of the organization that precludes any

significant exploration by the author of commonalities between black abolitionists and colonialists, a theme reflected in Thomas' book. Both the ACS and American's blacks, for example, were cognizant of the mutual benefits of establishing trade links with West Africa. To the ACS, it would be a means through which the slave trade could be preempted. It would also help the ACS to diffuse future problems related to free slave/slave master co-existence. To blacks, the trade links would teach their native brothers alternative economic means of livelihood. Paul Cuffee, for example, acknowledged this advantage when he began his expedition to Sierra Leone even before the establishment of the ACS. In fact, according to Thomas, the ACS consulted with Cuffee about its efforts to repatriate blacks to Africa. Beyan, on the other hand, saw these trade links as a modification of the traditional African society and a basis for the ACS to create an environment under which its commercial activities would flourish.

While Beyan exerts efforts to link major aspects of Liberian history to the ACS, some authors, including Moses, have explained how the settlers declared early independence in 1847 in part to limit control by the ACS over the activities of the settler community. Again, from this perspective, beyond 1847, one would see the basis of the historical development of Liberia's social, economic and political activities mostly from an individual and not an organizational (ACS) level of abstraction.

Beyan also indicts the ACS for the socio-religious society left behind by the "pious" organization. This "legacy of paternalism," however, in other standard historical documentation, is mostly attributed to efforts of settlers like Crummell and other missionaries originating from the days before the formation of the ACS. Moses, for example, documents the efforts of Crummell who left England after his studies to evangelize his native African brothers in Liberia. To Crummell, evangelization was an avenue of education and civilization of the natives and a means through which they would be absorbed in the national Liberian mainstream.

Although Beyan has written five insightful chapters on another dimension of ACS formation and relationships, he seems to have fallen victim to a malady observed in many attempts by scholars to publish the findings of their dissertation research. This is where authors purport a reluctance to go beyond the requirements of their dissertation committees and satisfy the informational thirst of a broader audience. The book would have been more stimulating if Beyan had either updated his findings to include the documentation of authors like Thomas or Moses. Or introducing contrasts to his assertions relative to standard documentation and themes in black and Liberian history would have refreshingly sufficed for those familiar with black history.

A strong point in the book, however, is the unique coverage of the traditional African society and environment before the advent of the settler popula-

tion. This tradition was modified by the slave trade and the relationships later established by the settlers. Perhaps the book could have been retitled *The Paternalism of the ACS in Liberia* since that seems to be the dominant theme which came to be a lingering legacy that appears contagious to everything Liberia.

On the whole, the book gives another interesting dimension about the origins and character of the ACS. I will recommend it for anyone looking at the specificity of ACS relationship with Liberia, in spite of sentiments that may come across as controversial.

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Willard R. Johnson and Vivian R. Johnson. 1990. *West African Governments and Volunteer Development Organizations: Priorities for Partnership*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 124 pp. ISBN 0-8191-7746-6.

As Liberia undergoes the imperative processes of social reconciliation, rehabilitation, national reunification and reconstruction, many lessons need to be learned from other societies sharing similar socio-economic problems and prospects, and from the work in those societies of the international donor community, which will be called upon to provide long term development financing and funding. Although this interesting book does not cover Liberia, its comprehensive cataloguing of development projects undertaken via a complex partnership involving indigenous and external voluntary efforts and host governments in sub-Saharan Africa should serve as a useful reference material for similar efforts there.

Willard and Vivian Johnson have analyzed the work of external and local voluntary Development Organizations (VDOs) in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Ghana with respect to the five basic questions:

- 1) Who/what are the relevant actors and what do they do?
- 2) Do the VDO's and host institutions have common terms of referee for their activity?
- 3) What are the communication problems between the actors?
- 4) Is there a basic shift occurring in patterns of external development-finance assistance? and
- 5) What are the future imperatives that derive from the facts and trends regarding VDO activity in Africa.

Apart from these pertinent questions, the book raises other issues pertaining to the socio-economic and spatial complexity and diversity of VDO activity, the proliferation of VDOs as a new factor of economic development and empowerment in Africa, and the roles of VDOs as "nexus" between African and Western actors in the transmission of productive skills and values.

The book is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 adumbrates the problems and issues explicated in later chapters with respect to the characteristics of VDOs and their historical record. Chapter 2 unravels the historical basis of African VDOs by analyzing landmark meetings held in Africa and abroad. The third chapter presents indepth case studies on the four selected African Countries. Chapter 4 examines special issues concerning the interrelationship between women in development and VDO activity. The summary of the main findings of the book and an outline of future "imperatives" are discussed in Chapter 5.

In my view, the detailed coverage by the book of useful development topics compels any review of it, seeking to draw cross-cultural lessons, to be as compendious as well in pointing out the pertinent issues. This is the approach I have used.

According to the authors, African Voluntary Development associations (VDOs) are grassroots volunteer organizations, comprising citizen groups, which undertake small-scale economic and social projects through host government monitoring and external financing, for the benefit and well-being of their societies. Their work is usually interrelated with the programs of the regime in power, thus raising questions about their continuity in a region known for sudden changes in governments. Whether or not they are pure volunteer organizations, participating freely in economic development without endogenous or exogenous compulsion, is another key question.

However, African VDOs have managed to define their self-identity¹ as partners in the international VDO community at several meetings, starting with a strategy workshop in Geneva in November, 1985, to the 1987 meeting in Dakar, Senegal, which led to the formation of the Federation of African Volunteer Development Organizations (FAVDO). During this period, the topics of concern have included drought and famine, north-south relations, information and communication (which are considered very important and stressed in all areas), women in development, dialogues with host governments (also a key issue), water development, soil conservation, health, networking, and the resettlement of drought stricken population.

The four country case studies reveal the problems, actors, and prospects of VDO-host government interaction. VDO activity in Niger is to a large extent state sponsored, part of a wider vision of the late President Kountchie of Niger to promote development from below. Operation is considered very demanding by external VDOs, because of the existence of complex registration requirements and monitoring procedures. Nevertheless, cooperation between indigenous and outside VDOs resulted into 143 projects by 1986, worth over \$13 million by 1987. The Johnsons report that there might be only two real voluntary, largely Christian VDOs with tremendous outside inputs in Niger: the Croix Rouge and the Eglise Evangeliques, operating under the umbrella of a group known as the Groupement des Aides Privées (GAP), which is essentially an organization of expatriate VDOs. This structure has often involved thorny political problems, although the Government of Niger have been mainly concerned about long term planning and program development by the expatriates, involving the employment of local university graduates, whose potential in VDO work have not been exploited. A similar situation now obtains in Liberia, where about 6,000 students have been registered at the University of Liberia. At this crucial post-war juncture in the Liberia's history, it will pay off if these students were involved in

relevant VDO activities pertaining to critical areas of the redevelopment process, including agriculture and social work (to name a few).

In Burkina Faso, VDO activity has been intensely combined with the programs of the revolutionary government of the late Captain Thomas Sankara, so that after the October 1987 coup that overthrew and killed Sankara, hopes for the retainment of an unusually effective model were very slim. Because of their enormous successes, before 1987, in citizen mobilization and attraction of many important external VDOS, the Johnsons note that the Burkina experience "is the likely model on which other Sahelian States will eventually converge" (p.41). The Burkina approach challenged the assistential model, concentrating instead on well developed, albeit tightly bureaucratic, structures to guide and monitor VDO activity with respect to problem areas concerning the effects of drought (e.g., the resettlement of displaced drought victims). The basic approach here, which may be useful for the Liberian resettlement program, is an emphasis on reintegrating drought victims (war victims in Liberia) in their own or other villages, rather than concentrating them in camps. By one estimate, Burkina Faso was successful in attracting about \$65 million in 1986 alone.

A major Burkina VDO is the *Secrétariat des Organisations non-Gouvernementales* (SPONG) while key external actors range from Oxfam-UK to the Partnership for Productivity (PFP), a former US VDO recorded for the unfortunate practice of misallocating money intended for its Burkina field office, which operated a highly efficient small credit program. This example is noteworthy because PFP/Liberia, run by Liberian professionals until the December 1989 military incursion in that country, was noted, in development circles, for the same kind of efficiency which was almost jeopardized by the poor performance of its headquarters in Washington.

Mali shares similar problems and geography with Burkina Faso and has also given attention to the effects of drought on her population. The Malian approach has evolved into a more centrally focused approach on "initiative de base," whereby project integration flows from the villages to the central ministries. Emergency food relief has been a key feature of VDO activity, generating \$50 million by 1985-86 although the VDO handling cereal distribution was granted only partial autonomy by government. The principal external food distributors are the Baptist Mission, World Vision and CAPE. One Malian problem of relevance to Liberia is the resettlement of people from drought areas (mainly neighboring countries in Liberia's case). The authors cite an Oxfam-America program, where families were resettled in the village of Dogon (Southern Mali) by involving them in the construction of their own village while small loans were provided for the acquisition of cows, donkeys, carts and ploughs for farming. Liberian planners need to watch out for the effects of continued expansion of such programs, due to the in-migration of additional family members to project villages, as occurred in Mali.

Ghana, the last case study country, has a long and impressive history of volunteerism interwoven in its village life. According to the authors, food aid provides a balance of payment support for Ghana's Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and helps to overcome economic hardships caused by SAP. The Ghana Association of Private Volunteer Organizations in Development (GAPVOD) is the central VDO. GAPVOD categorizes Ghanaian VDOs into four types: those involved in real development work, religious and social organizations doing some development and relief work, mutual aid and self-help social welfare organizations (reminiscent of Liberia's Susus) and village improvement and development associations. GAPVOD leaders informed the authors of a particular problem that Liberian VDOs should watch out for: "the lack of management and clarification of clear objectives and training for the organizations to design and use proper accounting and accountability systems which could enhance their ability to get loans and/or attracting funding" (pp. 86-87). One surprising aspect of the VDO enterprise in Ghana is that although their activities are more relatively spatially spread, collaborative efforts are provided less by the Government of Ghana than by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Turning to the special issues section of the book, regarding women in development, the authors argue that despite a heightened awareness of women's efforts in development, both indigenous and external VDOs have done very little to employ professional women. Special programs for women have been stressed but this should not undermine the important need to involve women in mainstream development. This view has also been articulated by a 1982 Liberian National Project on the Profile of Liberian Women in Development, which recommended the setting up of a National Women's Bureau that would ensure that women become full development partners (Carter, 1982; Kaba, 1982).

The authors conclude by pointing out some missing concerns and future "imperatives" about VDO activity in Africa. They found less concern for five main important issues: i) the potential contribution of VDOs in citizen mobilization and representation; ii) the systematic constraining of independent VDO leadership that could otherwise give development innovative and fresh impetus; iii) the lack of concern for some negative environmental effects of VDO activity, which have been documented in water and biomass studies; iv) the virtual non-existence of evaluative studies from which sufficient lessons on project failures and successes can be learned and v) the lack of African institutions devoted to collecting humanitarian funds from abroad and at home that could serve as major sources of funding, despite the widespread practice of fund raising in African countries.

The future imperatives are targeted at major finance sources, including donor VDOs and development finance lenders, and African governments. The

first two are advised to provide long term financing commitments and help mobilize resources without necessarily basing this on a debt building basis. On the other hand, African governments are cautioned by the authors to provide greater freedom and infrastructural support for VDOs as part of the decentralization and privatization processes.

This book neither discusses any existing framework pertaining to organizations (e.g. *an*, 1970; Gangolf, 1988; Mitchell, 1984) nor provides new models with which to analyze African VDOs. This, understandably, is not the purpose of the book, although, I believe, it would have enhanced the development implications. The authors refer to interviews and site visits, but no research instruments or methodology are discussed to let readers independently judge the validity of their main findings in Africa.

I am aware of at least two landmark VDO related meetings not discussed in the book. The international Foundation for Education and Self-Help (previously in Philadelphia now located in Phoenix, Arizona) and the Nigerian Integrated Rural Accelerated Development Organization (NIRADO) jointly sponsored a leadership training conference in Lagos, in 1988, at which many of the development issues covered in chapter two were discussed. INTERACTION, the well known American PVO, held an international conference for major Northern and Southern NGOs in Philadelphia, also in 1988. FAVDO took part in this meeting, where issues of VDO self identity and north-south relations prominently featured.

The provision of cartographic details for the countries reviewed, regarding project location and hydrology would have enhanced the presentation, especially since the locational aspects of projects are important in a region (except Ghana) haunted by desertification.

Nevertheless, the book is relevant to the work of VDOs in Liberia, which must first attack the issue of development from below by overcoming the challenges of a political culture characterized by patrimonial authority, where the prerogatives of governance have persistently been centralized and concentrated in the hands of successive presidents (Sawyer, 1992). My search for a VDO-related development model led me to a recent interesting paper by Sherman (1992: 1), who cogently suggests:

a conceptualization of development which makes people and their well-being central to development and holds that people in all strata of a society are important-not just a small segment of the population. It is the alternative to the conventional model of development which emphasizes the economic growth of nations measured in quantitative terms and the capacity of individuals to participate in the modern world. It recognizes the importance of the culture and the socio-cultural context in

learning and development as a process through which people are helped to reach their potential and their societies are propelled towards self-reliance.

The book's strength lies in the straightforward and non-technical explication, by the authors, of a highly complex enterprise concerning African development. It is therefore recommended to all interested in economic development on the micro scale in sub-Saharan Africa.

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Endnotes

¹The authors make note of the fact that the term VDO was decided at the June 1987 meeting of African organizations in Dakar, Senegal. However, the nomenclatures NGO and PVO are still in widespread use. For example in Liberia, the NGO enterprise was recently reintroduced to international donors at a round table conference held in Monrovia, from April 26-30, 1992 under the auspices of the Interim Government of National Unity and the New African Research and Development Agency, "a consortium of over forty non-governmental organizations engaged in social, humanitarian and community development programs . . ." (NARDA, 1992:1).

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Harry Fumba Moniba, *Liberian Politics Today: Some Personal Observations*, Monrovia: Sabanoh Printing Press, 1992, 79 pp.

Harry F. Moniba served in various capacities in the Liberian Government. He was Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Vice President of the Interim National Assembly (1984–1986) and Vice President of Liberia (1986–1990), among others. Certainly, these high level positions provided him with insights into the inner workings of the Liberian Government; thus, one would hope that he would bring this wealth of information to bear on his analyses of Liberian Politics. Unfortunately, as will be discussed later, overall, the book is a great disappointment: it is anchored on generalities; it addresses the Liberian political problematique in a perfunctory and evasive fashion; and it is more of a defense of the Doe regime than a rigorous scholarly enterprise.

The book is divided into ten chapters; Chapter 1 provides a general philosophical discussion about the nature of politics. Chapter 2 examines politics in life. Chapter 3 focuses on politics as a profession. Chapter 4 revolves around politics and power. Chapter 5 probes the phases of democracy. Chapter 6 delineates the various characteristics of good leadership. Chapter 7 looks at voters and jobs. Chapter 8 examines indigenous business. Chapter 9 discusses press freedom. Chapter 10 deciphers the importance of nationalism: Putting Liberia First.

In terms of evaluation, the greatest strength of the book is chapter ten: Putting Liberia First. The author does an excellent job in arguing the important role nationalism can play as a catalyst for development. Specifically, he stresses the centrality of commitment, honesty and integrity as some of the principal ingredients for rescuing Liberia from the abyss of destruction that the civil war has constructed.

On the other hand, the book has several problems: first, the author makes sketchy and vague references to the Liberian case throughout the book. In other words, although Liberia is the focus of the study, nevertheless, the discussion centers around a review of the literature with very little application to the Liberian experience.

Second, the size of the book (79 pages) obviates against a thorough and comprehensive analyses of the various complex issues. The resultant is, inter alia, the incomplete treatment of the issues.

Third, in those case wherein the author attempted to discuss the Liberian problem, he failed to provide in—depth and rigorous analyses, particularly in light of the availability of a repository of rich empirical data. For example, in Chapter 3–9, the author uses a short time frame (1986–1989) as the basis for discussing issues whose genesis are rooted in the evolution of the Liberian state

since 1818. Consequently, the reader does not have the benefit of understanding the long historical trends that undergird these issues.

Fourth, the analyses are disappointingly evasive. That is, the horrendous record of the Doe regime is ignored completely. For example, how about the violation of human rights, the rigged 1985 national elections, corruption, the mismanagement of the economy, nepotism and the decay of social institutions, among others? Interestingly, the author depicts Samuel K. Doe as a democrat, and primarily blames the opposition for Liberia's problems, particularly the current mayhem. He argues:

In 1986, most of the opposition politicians made a sad mistake, for which the whole country is now paying a heavy price, of refusing to join the NDPL Government . . . To the President (Doe), any further attempt to ingratiate himself with the opposition was now peripheral, if not completely out of the question (p. 26).

Fifth, the author fails to mention the role he played as Doe's number two for more than six years. For example, did he try to use his influence as Vice President in preventing the passage of repressive laws both in the Interim National Assembly and the National Legislature? Did he try to convince Doe that there was no need for a death squad in a "democratic society?" Did he attempt to prevent the August 22, 1984, invasion of the University of Liberia? How about the brutal politically motivated death of Robert Phillips, R. Vanjah Richards, the kids from Nimba and the martyrs of the St. Peter's Lutheran Church massacre? The bottom line is how can the author claim that he and Doe were promoters of democracy, when all of these atrocities were committed during their tenure of office?

Finally, *Liberian Politics Today: Some Personal Observations*, is a big, big disappointment! Vice President Moniba should have employed an insider's perspective in discussing the myriad problems that confront Liberia. The fact that his analyses are evasive and defensive of the indefensible record of the Doe regime does not do justice to his fellow Liberians and the Friends of Liberia, who could have benefitted from his first hand experience.

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The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy and Challenge, by Amos Sawyer. A publication of the Center for Self-Governance. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies (ICS) Press, 1992. [DT631.5.S29 1992. ISBN: 1-55815-191-5 (paperback)]

Amos Sawyer has long been a major actor in Liberian political and academic life. His current interests focus on pragmatic matters of governing and survival, since he is the interim President of Liberia, thanks to the action of a conference of Liberian leaders sponsored in the midst of civil war by the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) in 1990. Sawyer, who holds a PhD in Political Science from Northwestern University, left the security of an American campus (Indiana University) just before the final arrangements for the publication of the book under review to become President of the Interim Government of National Unity of his country in 1990, in the middle of a violent civil war.

While Sawyer is still struggling to heal his divided country, his book remains as an impressive guide to understanding just how Liberia, with its historical links to the United States and its unique settler elite, ended up with a crisis of government similar in many ways to ones currently faced by other African states. Most of the book is a tightly-written and well-documented analysis of the historical evolution of authority in Liberia. Sawyer integrates his historical analysis into a comparative theoretical framework developed in the first chapter, based on the concept of patrimonialism. Chapters on the (flawed) "idea of Liberia" and indigenous social orders in West Africa precede ones that examine the settlers and their impact during the colonial (1822-1839), commonwealth (1839-1846) and independent republic (1847-) eras. Sawyer uses a thematic method of organizing his chapters, as opposed to a strict chronological approach, and does it very well. (The chapter on assimilation and incorporation ideas and policies ranges from 1818 to 1980, for example.)

Sawyer does an excellent job in showing how a presidential autocracy emerged during a period of over a century and a half of Liberia. The explanatory footnotes (57 pages long) are well-written and useful, as is the bibliography. While the book covers some events up to the start of the civil war in 1989, Sawyer devotes relatively little space to the 1970's and the grim 1980's (and his own significant role). His argument that those tragic years were in fact the logical result of over 150 years of emergent autocracy is convincing. Sawyer concludes with an eloquent plea for a future Liberian (and African) political order based on self-governance, with genuine citizen participation and government accountability. As he puts it, the current challenge "... is to devise ways to make domination extremely costly and unprofitable for those exercising autocratic authority." (p. 312)

This book is distinguished by its scope, insights, and overall excellence. It will stand as one of the classic works on Liberia, and belongs in every major library.

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Amos Sawyer. *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy and Challenge*. San Francisco: ICS Press, 1992. xii; 418 pages; bibliography, indexes and maps. \$29.50 hardback; \$15, paper.

Political power will be personalized when attitude and disposition are accommodated by a compliant socio-political culture. It is possible in societies in which "political institutions established by the constitution . . . [are] superseded by . . . informal authority relations". In such societies, the institution of reforms (that is, institutionalizing authority relations) run

. . . counter to the traditions of personal patronage and favoritism focused upon and emanating from the small elite group that dominated society . . . Liberians tended to resist the discipline of budgets and functionally structured institutions . . . Highly personalized, spontaneous, and freewinging management style . . . characterized the . . . conduct of official government business (PAS, 1987).

In such societies, the pattern of authority relationships suffer many handicaps, including "an overwhelming presidency". Accountability structures are necessarily weakened, for the autocrat has absolute control over public resources; he can expend them for whatever purposes, whenever he wills or commands. The pattern conforms to an elite group's sole objective of creating a patron. The phenomenon demonstrates source and sustenance of Liberia's patron/client political culture.

The leadership and authority patterns are often not adjusted in accordance with changing circumstances. Problems are not solved as they appear, because it is felt that problems will in time "self-construct". Proposed solutions to lingering problems often are simplistic.

Autocracy precedes from a faulty decision-making process that assumes the patron all knowing and "infallible"; under autocracy, the decision rules and political culture permits manipulations of decisions. It also accepts delays in evolving substantive decisions, preferring to emphasize "strategy" over the contents of decisions; autocracy does not find trickery offensive. Its ingredients include arrogance and belief in the inherent superiority of the autocrat's analysis and conclusions; the autocrat presumes his analysis and conclusions are superior because compared to his colleagues and associates, he thinks he has unmatched sources of information, such as an extensive state security network, which manufacture them on demand. This belief gradually isolates the autocrat, whose information and analyses become limited to what retainers believe he wants to hear.

Autocracy emerges when the mixture of arrogance, absolute control over resources and unlimited appointive power feed the patron's lack of disposition to collective responsibility. He becomes the government. At that stage the patron dispenses with all lesser souls by any machiavellian methods.

The "transformation of production . . . [from subsistence to market needs especially beginning with plantation agriculture] encouraged concentration and centralization of the prerogatives of governance", resulting in the "personalization of authority" by the Liberian presidency. This process started when "free men of color" sought to build a western outpost in Africa to "civilize and christianize" heathens; it was entrenched by the time of the Tubman administration. A private organization whose claim of rights to govern a territory were not supported by public international law, "establish[ed] a receptacle" for them and others as the presence in America of free blacks "threatened the fabric of American society . . . Colonization became more an effort to rid the American society of a perceived threat than an effort to ensure the well-being of black people".

Autocracy emerged in Liberia as the inevitable outcome of many unresolved conflicts rooted in these factors. The cleavages include that between light and darkened settlers; between predominant Monrovia and other settlements, and between settlers and indigenes. Among other causes, the settlers' failure to reconcile the conflicts between customary and statutory laws contributed to the cleavage. Since, for the settlers, "... [it] was not the attraction of freedom but fear of annexation or annihilation" that drove the process of independence, independence led to the supremacy of the presidency among the three "separate but equal" co-ordinated branches of government.

Autocracy was an outcome of the debate among "Liberian political practitioners and publicists . . . preoccupied with the nature and future of the . . . social order. The debate . . . centered more often on what to do and whom to include than on the structure of authority relationships, . . . the types of values and orientations to be propagated".

Sawyer has written a good book describing how autocracy emerged in Liberia, and analyzing its effects on the state and its society. *The Emergence of Autocracy* is readable and analytical. The scholarship of its twelve chapters is indicated by 477 footnotes on sixty of the book's 418 pages.

A proper social science treatise, the book begins with an introduction that reviews the relevant general and Liberian literature; after defining the historical and sociological context of the treatise, chapters Two through Six lay out the facts and data. Chapter Seven, with its 100 footnotes, describes and analyses the immediate sources of autocracy: political proprietorship and economic decline. A mulatto aristocracy brought about half a century of economic decline; when

that was overthrown, a merchant aristocracy of darker-skinned negroes ascended, but it also accepted the Hilary Teage view that would undermine nationhood: Liberia is a western society in Africa. The view prevailed until at least the 1980 coup, as seen in William Tubman and Clarence Simpson's restatements.¹

In political and economic terms, the system failed. The political failure was manifested in the non-resolution of social conflicts which, given the choice to be a western outpost in Africa, was an apparent lack of commitment to building a nation. The failure of economic management is seen in Liberia's persistent debt overhang; it began in 1871 and continues in 1992 .

Sawyer avoids the traditional habit of Liberianists: his book is neither a passionate defense of nor attack on the peculiar behavioral patterns of the Liberian socio-political elites. He presents a balanced discussion of the interaction of characters and clear analysis of the nature of the factors [pattern of authority relationships] which eventuated in the 1980 coup d'état. The overthrow of the century-old repatriate paramountcy produced the tragedy that was Doe. In Sawyer's hands, the arrogant machinations of Edwin Barclay's statism; William Tubman's police state; William Tolbert's inept management of the hegemony and Doe's brutal, supposedly indigenous regime fit easily into a mosaic of the patterns of authority relations which define personalization of power.

Sawyer has written an important, relevant and timely book. The book's importance transcends its considerable scholarship. It provides the objective basis for judging the Sawyer administration, 1990 to date. For even before Sawyer had completed his analysis of the factors producing Liberia's concentration of power in an "overwhelming presidency" that stifles flexibility and growth, he became head of his virtually vanishing patrimony's interim government. He came to head a unit of a partitioned country, after one of the most barbarous acts against peoples of the "dark continent". Yet, expectations that he would (a) initiate indispensable reforms and (b) reunify the country were high. His challenge lay in his perceived ability to design and initiate implementation of reform measures to facilitate "the formulation of rules and the structuring of rule-ordered relationships concerning the production, appropriation, allocation and consumption of goods and services". He was expected to jettison the practice which allowed informal authority relations to supersede constitutional provisions.

Their faith was strong that he would eschew the "trappings of power and symbols of prestige" (Williams, 218) which Doe had adopted as a prelude to an ethnicity that would militarize Liberian politics. Hopes were also high that Sawyer would behave within the scope of a "constitution of order" which would prepare the grounds for institutionalizing accountability; that he would

desist from favoring a tribe, region, or a political party for public appointments. In short, Sawyer was expected, because he knows what was wrong in and with the society and how such faults ignited civil war, to fastidiously ensure that no seeds to eventuate in another tragedy would be sown.

Of course it is premature to assess Sawyer's performance; that must wait. To this reviewer, however, the book's importance lies in the quality of the criteria Sawyer designed to evaluate previous Liberian administrations. His paradigm is essential to any future assessment of his success or failure in meeting the challenge of leadership imposed upon him at Banjul in 1990. Did Sawyer lay the foundation that would ensure democratization of Liberia? In the future, the question might be, did he rebuild the unwanted Liberia that was destroyed? When Sawyer's stewardship is evaluated, his paradigm or criteria would *ipso facto* be acceptable bases for that evaluation. Of course, it is premature to undertake such assessment.

This important book is one of few popularly available, painstakingly documented history of the Liberian peoples: indigenes and repatriates. It establishes that Liberia is peculiar and unique in Africa but that she has a commonality with all African countries. Doe's introduction of ethnicity into Liberian politics is perhaps the most vivid confirmation of the commonality. The need to create a nation-state that is prosperous remains the challenge of leadership. Second, the book is a readable and analytic account of the confluences of external and internal circumstances which sustained the cleavages that kept Liberia underdeveloped: the societal, political and economic cleavages that seemed spurred by the Liberian elites' inability (unwillingness?) to create and maintain mechanisms to resolve social and political conflicts. Third, the book is important for the fact that it analyses the complex factors essential to understanding the tragedy that was Doe.

Future analysts will determine whether the environment which was both mid-wife and nanny to the Sawyer Administration differs from that in which each of his twenty predecessors created the conditions that led to tragedy. Was the difference, if any, one only of degree or both of degree and kind? Resources are unavailable to meet myriad needs, satisfaction of none of which ought to be postponed. He accepted the challenge of leadership at a time international circumstances conspired to ignore the mayhem that wrecked Liberia. However, there was no evidence of attempts by colonialists to eclipse Liberia's sovereignty. Or was there?

Compare him to Doe whose "rudimentary education" was a hindrance to comprehending the complexity of public administration including fiscal discipline; or his cosmopolitanism to detribalized Doe's proletarianism. Compare his acceptance of the interim presidency knowing he would not be eligible to run, to Tubman's quarter century, life tenure.

A few more words about the content of the book before ending the review of this good, important book.

In the celebrated debate about quint aspects of capital theory between Professor Joan Robinson of Cambridge, England and Professor Paul Samuelson of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Robinson notes that social science publications are found with an introduction that establishes the range of issues to be investigated. Such publications then present the likely contributions to scholarship the publication will make. They may next state the author's hypotheses, followed by the presentation and analysis of data. The conclusions are seen as logical deduction from the analysis, for the data and analyses support the conclusions. Robinson concludes that social scientists begin writing with an opinion, a notion, or an outlook. They gather data, build models and analyze them to support their notion or opinion which they had when they began the project. A book is a reorganization of the process of writing it.

As a social science treatise, *The Emergence of Autocracy* portrays this tendency effectively. Chapter 7, "Political Proprietorship and Economic Decline" with 100 footnotes, and Chapter 11, "The emergence of Autocracy" in Liberia, with its 90 footnotes, contain the essence of the opus. The historical data and excellent analysis of both chapters support the thesis of the book. Chapter 7 discusses the complex relationship each settlement had with its interior. The chapters describe and analyze the factors instigating and sustaining the transformation of the hinterland policy of Arthur Barclay, the domestic servitude and contract labor system of King, the adoption of the statist policies of Edwin Barclay by William V.S. Tubman who changed them into an autocratic and despotic system. He reveals Tubman's support of the original idea of Liberia as a western outpost.²

The conflict within the ruling class was due to "policy disagreement between rival factions of the merchant leaders". The inability to resolve the dispute, which eventually kept the True Whig Party in power from 1869 to 1980, "provide ample evidence that the political institutions established by the constitution were in fact superseded by the informal authority relations based on merchant proprietorship—and... those relationships were seriously strained".

The tragedy of the Doe regime was an inevitable outcome of an atrophied system, rooted in the weaknesses of William R. Tolbert's character and his inept management of the hegemony. The tragedy was caused not so much by Doe; it was an event waiting to happen. His proletarian tendencies, negatively influenced by detribalization—lacking the character traits of the trusting, innocent tribal society—combined with the capricious elements of the True Whig Party who exploited his phobias, made the tragedy inevitable. The deteriorating economy directed the "politics of redistribution" to harass, intimidate and brutalize—the patron could no longer honor commitments.

The book has several errors. The first of these, a typographical error, dates the ordination of Robert Finley in 1975; the context shows 1875 as the date the Presbyterian churchman was ordained. On pages 47 and 48, we find an obvious contradiction: "... there is no evidence as to when or whether the Kwa-speaking peoples migrated to the coast", yet "... It is known, however, that between the latter part of the fifteenth century and the mid-seventeenth century waves of Kwa-speaking peoples migrated to the coast". If there is no evidence, how is it known? [The question is not epistemological; it is not whether knowledge outside of experience is possible]. There is evidence of migration of Kwa speakers' migration. The Bassa people, for example, are believed to have migrated from "Sudan"; moreover, there appears to be considerable linguistic similarities in the structures of the Bassa and Yoruba languages. Besides, there is a Bassa tribe in the Cameroons; one perceives that there would be evidence of some historical connection between the two. Is Grand Bassam in the Ivory Coast of any research interest in this connection?

Sawyer's statement that "Doukor is the name given to Monrovia by the Vai" also raises concerns. Firstly, Bassa, and not Vai, are the original inhabitants of parts of what is Monrovia; the Dei also can claim it as "papa's land". Sawyer correctly notes that in April, 1821, Bassa Chief Jack Ben and ACS agent Joseph R. Andrus signed a treaty the ACS later nullified; also in December of 1821, Stockton and Ayres signed another treaty with Bassa & Dei chiefs. At the second ceremony, Stockton pulled a pistol and intimidated the chiefs. It seems dubious that Vais, who did not inhabit the territory, would name it. More interesting, the name is Bassa, or perhaps Bassa that have been slightly adjusted by the Kpelle. ["Doukor" could be Kpelle, and "Doughbor" Bassa; the difference in spelling reflects phonetic spelling by westerners of unfamiliar words.]

The settlers renamed the Du the Mesurado River. "Doughbor" became Doukor. Dou actually is "Dlou", eventually spelled Du. "Gbor" means "seat" or "butt" —of the river Du. Doughbor is the mouth or butt of the Du River. [For anyone familiar with idiomatic translation of one language into another, it should be clear that the source of the river can be termed "mouth" or "butt".]

Sawyer's discussion of "Operational Patterns of Social Organizations" creates the unintended impression that in tribal governance, an individual's personal qualities were less important than his lineage. In most such systems, the eldest son was not necessarily the designated successor, precisely because of the importance of an individual's personal qualities. One might also indicate here another point Sawyer did not mention: each quarter was self-contained, even in mono-ethnic communities.

The special obligations of male in-laws in the production system might also be emphasized; these obligations had to be honored first if the male had not "married" the quartermaster's daughter. He has "married" her only when

certain obligations were fulfilled, and only then could she accompany him to his quarter, or clan. These relationships also prevailed when the "chief" "loaned" a "junior wife" to a follower, whether or not related to him.

Indexation would have demonstrated the importance of Liberian trade in the early 19th century, as it would also have given Sawyer's discussion of numbers—tax revenues and expenditures, for example—a greater meaning for his readers.

Chapter I reviews the relevant literature on institutional analysis; it distinguishes between "constitution of order" and the "order of constitution". The study's purpose is to investigate "how the Liberian social order was constituted".

Chapter 2 documents the idea of Liberia, beginning with the social context of colonization. Colonization, as undertaken by the private American Colonization Society, had no support in public international law. Its purpose was to establish "a receptacle", not a haven, for 'free men of color'. Colonization was "an atoning sacrifice" that "became more an effort to rid the American society of a perceived threat than an effort to ensure the well-being of black people". The settlers would themselves adopt the view that they were an "outpost of civilization", that by Providence, sent them to "christianize the heathens".

Chapter 3 introduces the reader to indigenous West African social orders. The chapter provides a good description of the peoples of the Grain Coast and patterns of their migration. It describes the role of land and labor in commodity production and trade. The havoc that the slave trade wrecked on the social order is described. The various forms of governance extant among the ethnic groups are compared and contrasted.

Chapters 4 through 6 describe in considerable details settler society and its relationship with the indigenous peoples; the chapters document European colonial encroachments on hinterland territory claimed by the coastal settlers. We see in these chapters the tension between the settler and indigenous societies which led to outbreaks of hostilities throughout the 19th century. America intervened to prevent destruction of settler society, as well as curtail British and French abuse of Liberia's territorial integrity.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 discuss unsuccessful strategies for assimilation and incorporation of the natives; the existence up to the 1930s of variant forms of domestic servitude, including contract labor, is documented. When the first of numerous concessions granted foreigners, Firestone, succeeds, the loan associated with the project continues the attempt to impose inappropriate public reform measures. To ensure that a Firestone subsidiary's debt to Liberia is repaid, given Liberia's habit of defaulting on payment of external debt dating back to 1871, the international receivers who had managed the customs to

ensure receipts were applied to retire the debt, were replaced by private receivers. However, rubber and iron ore production by the enclave concessions raised gross domestic output; they created a new set of problems: by lessening the president's dependence on the bureaucracy, his personalization of power became complete.

Chapter 11 discusses what Basil Davidson has called the "Blackman's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State". It is the opportunity to transcend the curse that constitutes the greatest challenge of Liberian leadership. Sawyer's predecessors failed. Will he succeed? The questions whose answers Liberian and African historians will need to judge his performance was posed by Sawyer in this excellent book.

What are the prospects and through what types of institutional arrangements can the Liberian people develop a social order that provides opportunities for meaningful participation for themselves, and accountability from their leaders? What institutional arrangements are more likely to foster a self-governing Liberian society?

The importance of Amos Sawyer's *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia* beyond its impressive scholarly contributions, in the years ahead, will be tied to history's assessment of his stewardship: within the context of his opportunities and challenges, did he initiate practices or nurture attitudes which sustained the status quo or begin a revolution?

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Endnotes

1. "Two courses were open to us: one was to merge at the outset the comparatively small advanced elements of the population into the mass of those who, for various reasons, were at a more primitive state of development and to hope that in due course all would progress homogeneously and simultaneously. The other was to preserve the ideal of western democracy on however small and imperfect a scale and to direct our efforts at gradually improving the system and extending it to broader sections of the population. We adopted the

latter." Clarence L. Simpson, Sr., *The Memoirs of C.L. Simpson: The Symbol of Liberia*. London: The Diplomatic Press and Publishing Company, 1961, quoted in D. Elwood Dunn & Ellen J. Sirleaf, "Liberia: An Action Memorandum", a paper prepared for a Consultation of the International Negotiations Network: "Resolving Intra-National Conflicts: A Strengthened Role for Non-Governmental Actors", The Carter Center of Emory University, January 15-17, 1992.

2. "Tubman expressed grave fear that the 'civilized' elements of Liberia stood in danger of being overrun by what he called a large semicivilized population". p. 208

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Recent Publications and Theses

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NEWS AND NOTES

1993 Liberian Studies Conference

The 25th Annual Conference of the Liberian Studies Association will convene April 15–17, 1993 at Albany State College, Albany, Georgia. Proposals for papers and panels from all disciplines are invited. Address correspondence to: Dr. Arnold Odio, LSA Conference Chair, Department of English and Modern Languages, Albany State College, 504 College Drive, Albany, GA 31705. (Tel. no. [912] 430-4833/4689.)

A Brief Critique on Liberia Boundary Studies

M. Alpha Bah

Relations between Liberia and its neighbors during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries should be examined with greater caution in order to avoid the mistakes of the past. Scholars writing on Liberian boundary agreements with the European colonial powers in the region have often misunderstood, misrepresented or underestimated some very significant points. They include questions relating to Liberian sovereignty, the founding fathers' sense of nationalism, the insincerity of European powers, the United States Government's lack of commitment to Liberia, questions of racism, and finally, the absence of any recognition of a positive role played by the Liberian Administration.

Liberian sovereignty was never respected by Britain and France even though they had pioneered in formally recognizing the Republic of Liberia. The British from Sierra Leone often carried out whatever policies they deemed important for their economic interest, without any regard for the Liberian state. In the history of this region, there are numerous instances to support my contention, such as Britain's unilateral occupation of Kanre Lahun (Kailahun) and other vital economic locations in the area. The so-called agreements between Liberia and Britain on the one hand, and those between Liberia and France on the other were often ultimatums presented or couched in civil language. The predominant doctrine of the period: "Pacta sunt Servanda" (treaties must be observed or obeyed) was always to the advantage of the more powerful European states. Both France and Britain grabbed territories wherever they went in the continent, especially in Liberia. This little black Republic, in the eyes of the colonial powers and others, had no real sovereignty.

Reasons for the Liberian declaration of independence have seldom included the founding father's sense of nationalism. Solutions to the legal status

of the Commonwealth of Liberia and the financial difficulties encountered by the American Colonization Society and the pioneers have often been advanced as the only reason for the declaration of independence. A large number of the founding fathers were free men of color whose main reason for immigrating to Liberia was to build and run a black nation of their own. This aspect of the founding of the Republic of Liberia has frequently been underestimated or often denied.

Most major works on this period in Liberian history fail to adequately illuminate the racist attitude toward the black republic of Liberia and the economic interests of the Western Powers, particularly England and France. Both England and France, particularly the former, persistently used force to snatch Liberian territories and successfully pressured Liberia to sign unequal and unbalanced agreements. The sinking of the "Quail" by Spain, the French maneuvers in the Kru coast and the British unilateral annexation of two areas in the Gallinas and Sulima are clear indications of "gunboat" diplomacy and racism. The abandoning of the Northern rivers to the French should not be viewed as a British concession to the French.¹ The emergence of the Duola revolutionary leader Samoury Toure' and British confidence that its economic interest especially trade with Fouta Jallon and the Niger Valley was safe, led to the solution of the Mellacoure problem. In the eyes of British policy makers, Liberia was not a true state whose sovereignty deserved recognition partly because it was black, poor and powerless.

Braithwaite Wallis, British Consul in Monrovia did not merely "assume an uncompromising attitude towards Liberia,"² but clearly manifested racism in dealing with the black Liberian administration. Wallis is reported to have written to the colonial office in England: "Chief Fabundo, a prominent chief, with whom I am well acquainted, has frequently told me that he would never 'sit down' (would not submit to or allow himself to be ruled by), to the Liberian Government, and rather that do so he would 'make war'. He says the Blackman cannot rule Blackman."³ The above statement might have been made up by Wallis himself, who did all he could to convince the colonial office to divide up Liberia with the French. Wallis, in most of his communications with the colonial office suggested the blacks were not capable of self-rule.

Of course, both the French and the English used naked military force in reaching agreements along their colonial borders with Liberia. The Franco—Liberian agreements of December 8, 1892 along the Cavalla river was signed under duress from France, without much help from the US. However, any attempt to portray the British policy towards Liberia as milder is erroneous.⁴ The border disputes and agreements of 1885 and 1911, remain Liberia's most humiliating boundary lines in the history of the black republic. Britain did not hesitate to abandon agreements reached with Liberia on boundary lines whenever they believed the changes to be economically beneficial to them.

The frequent charges against the black republic that it was unable to control its hinterland could not be adequately justified. Since Britain and France had to justify their encroachments on Liberian territory, charges of inefficiency, corruption,, inadequacy of funds, the lack of capable administrators and the unavailability of trained paramilitary force were used as excuses. The boundary agreements of 1885 between Britain and Liberia, that of 1892 between France and Liberia, and the subsequent agreements of 1903, 1907, and 1911 led to numerous annexations of Liberian territory to their neighboring colonies of Sierra Leone (British), Guinea and Ivory Coast (French). The principle of effective occupation as adopted by the Berlin West African Conference of 1884–5 seemed to be more rigidly applied in the case of Liberia as compared to Portugal and Belgium in their respective African territories.

The rivalry over Kailahun, (Kanre Lahun) and the conflicts between Fabundeh, Chief of Luawa and Kafura of Wulade Kenema need a more detailed discussion and analysis. The conflict in this region should not be regarded as mere “Kissi raids”⁵ Kafura’s aim was to become the most powerful Kissi ruler in the region. The British supported Fabundeh whom they had helped to succeed Kailondo, the former ruler of Kailahun. Furthermore, Kafura was believed to be favored by the French. The Fabundeh—Kafura conflicts were highly representative of the Anglo—French competition in this rich cash crop region. What might have seemed a more cordial relationship between Britain and Liberia was due to the fact that the former had an agenda. The boundary between British Sierra Leone and Liberia did not present a major threat whereas the Franco—British boundary was part of the global European imperialistic rivalry.

The January 27, 1911 boundary agreement between British Sierra Leone and Liberia was not a minor historical incident as some have suggested. The incident over Kanre Lahun which concerned a small area was the exception to the rule and the problem was solved in 1911.⁶ The conflict over Kailahun was very significant in the history of the region. If the dispute was trivial, why was there a need to redraw the Liberia—Sierra Leone boundary along Kissiland? British colonial administration’s desire to control the rich cash crop region (Kailahun) greatly influenced their (British) insistence on taking Kailahun in spite of previous boundary agreements.

British pressure on Liberia to give up Kailahun was so great that President Arthur Barclay requested the assistance of the United States. Prominent Liberians criticized British policy in the area, especially the call to redraw a boundary line which had once been accepted by both parties. In response to the Liberian request, the US sent a team to Kailahun to study the boundary dispute. This US commission became convinced that the British mainly wanted to take Kailahun. Nonetheless, Britain successfully influenced the US to pressure Liberia into accepting the idea of redrawing the boundary. The United States yielded to British pressure and asked Liberia to accept the redrawing of the boundary line

in Kissiland. The US administration supported the British proposal to give to Liberia the Gola Forest and some money in exchange for Kailahun. President Barclay's rejection of the exchange of the sparsely populated Gola Forest was met by US threat to cut off all aid to Liberia if Barclay and his administration insisted on refusing the new proposed boundary.⁷

Final European partition of the hinterland of Liberia with the British along the southwest and northwest; and with the French along the northeast and southeast robbed the black Republic of much of its territory. Britain and France simultaneously beat on this little state from all directions, including the sea. Agriculturally fertile areas and territories rich in minerals were seized by the world's most powerful colonial empires. Agreements and promises were seldom kept. Ethnic groups were forcibly divided, separating families to facilitate the new modern European state system. For example, the Kissi people were divided into the modern states of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. The Vai people were also divided into modern Sierra Leone and Liberia while the Loma and Mandinka were similarly divided between Liberia and Guinea. In spite of the weakness of Portugal and the atrocities she committed against Africans, both Britain and France permitted her to take Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde during the Berlin Conference. Liberia, a state recognized by both France and Britain was not allowed to keep its own territory intact. Treaties signed between the Liberian government and indigenous rulers were hardly recognized by these two European powers. Any serious discussion on Liberia's boundaries must take into consideration the size, strength, determination to plunder; and the will to occupy and dominate by Britain and France. The consequences of arbitrary boundary lines drawn by colonial powers are at the root of some of the conflicts in the region today. Disagreements between Sierra Leone and Liberia since the late 1970s have all had boundary implications.

Endnotes

¹Yekutieli Gershoni, "The Formation of Liberian's Boundaries: Part. I: Agreements", *Liberian Studies Journal* XVIII, 1 (1992) pp. 25-45.

²*Ibid.*

³ M. Alpha Bah, "The Nineteenth Century Partition of Kissiland and The Contemporary Possibilities for Reunification." *Liberian Studies Journal*, XII, 1 (1987), pp. 38-55.

⁴Gershoni, "Formation of Liberia Boundaries", pp. 25-45.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Bah, "Partition of Kissiland" pp. 38-55.

**Letter of former U. S. President Jimmy Carter to
ECOWAS Heads of State,
September 14, 1992.**

To ECOWAS Heads of State President Nicophore Soglo, President Blaise Compaore, President Ibrahim Babangida, President Felix Houphouët-Boigny, President Dawda Jawara, President Joao Bernardo Vieira, President Abdou Diouf, President Ghasslingbe Eyadema

Having just returned from Liberia and knowing of your personal commitment to peace and stability in the country, I would like to share my personal thoughts with you. In every West African country I visited, I found leaders very anxious about the potentially explosive nature of the long-standing Liberian confrontation. Recently, as you know, ULIMO troops moved with little opposition from Sierra Leone into the region of southwestern Liberia formerly occupied by Charles Taylor's NPFL forces. NPFL claims that the ECOMOG force was supposed to maintain the status quo and preserve the cease-fire, but encouraged or at least condoned this intrusion. The ECOMOG commanders claim that they deplore the movement of ULIMO troops, who were already in Liberia when ECOMOG forces took over the area. Regardless of the facts, both sides blame and distrust the other. It is generally known that some West Africa leaders have called for the elimination of Charles Taylor, and it is claimed that Sierra Leone and Guinea have long supported ULIMO.

I went to Freetown, Sierra Leone, where I met with Raleigh Seekie and other ULIMO leaders, and obtained what seemed to be a reluctant commitment from them to keep their troops in place and to honor the cease-fire unless attacked by NPFL forces. They denied receiving any outside support and claimed to be a group of Liberian refugees who just want to return to their homes. It is known, however, that the core group is well trained, supplied with good weapons, and strongly supported from several nations. I found other ULIMO leaders in Monrovia to be much more vocal in their plans to attack and punish NPFL.

In Monrovia, I also held extensive talks with the interim president, the ECOMOG commanders, heads of Liberian political parties and international organizations, and other influential leaders who are mostly confined to the small area around the capital that has not been controlled by NPFL. All were mostly concerned about 508 ECOMOG soldiers who were not being permitted by the NPFL to return to Monrovia. There is also a more chronic anger at Charles Taylor's continuing reluctance to disarm and encamp his troops in compliance with the Yamasoukro peace agreements.

I then traversed multiple ECOMOG checkpoints and drove to a beautiful home formerly used by the Firestone rubber plantation supervisor, in the midst of the company's one million acres of rubber trees. Charles Taylor and his cabinet were there to meet us. They explained that the ECOMOG soldiers had not been arrested or harassed, that they had their vehicles and radios, but would have to remain in his territory to avert a publicly threatened military attack on his forces. I told him that I could not associate with anyone who was considered to be holding hostages, and would have to leave without further discussion. He consulted with his ministers, then agreed to let the soldiers return to Monrovia without further delay, and later announced this decision to the assembled news reporters. I understand that process is now underway.

The NPFL leaders tried to make it clear that they want peace, stability, and free elections in Liberia, but fear that they and their forces will be destroyed if they abandon all their defenses. Taylor and his ministers emphasized that the 7,000 ECOMOG troops with their 105-mm howitzers, heavy machine guns, and rocket launchers in Monrovia, frigates off the coast, and war planes in Sierra Leone were more like an offensive force than one designed to preserve peace among his disarmed and encamped soldiers. I suggested that some reductions might be possible and, since ECOWAS leaders have already extended such an invitation, a small group of observers from the United Nations might monitor implementation of Yamasoukro IV. This would help to prevent any aggressive acts against the NPFL. The group seemed to accept this idea, and some other proposals I made, compatible with Yama IV, that could contribute to peace and free elections. Taylor seems to have two primary motivations: to avoid another all-out war and to have free elections, with the expectation that he would be chosen as President. The only item on which he would not agree was my request for his public commitment to a cease-fire. He made it clear that he could not accept with equanimity the occupation of territory by ULIMO forces. I told him that I would call for a national cease-fire with armed forces *in situ*, and he would have to decide whether to initiate hostilities.

Although his past actions do not justify confidence, my hope is that he can be induced to comply with the Yamasoukro IV agreement which he signed. Last October and this week he and I have gone into some detail about where and how many NPFL troops would return to their homes, the number to be encamped, how and to whom arms would be delivered, when and how the road blocks would be removed, the role of the interim government in Monrovia, authority of the election commission, etc. His abiding fear, more pervasive among his cabinet officers and military commanders, is that they will be destroyed unless there is some trustworthy restraint on ECOMOG. Another related problem is that there is no dependable means of communication between NPFL and the outside world. Every question goes unanswered, every problem grows, and distrust leads to hatred.

There are some complicated options, but the simplest is for the U.N. Secretary General to consult with the ECOWAS leaders and then send a small (not more than 20) unarmed observer group to Liberia, with a senior person as its leader. Their responsibility would be to urge implementation of Yama IV by a certain date (within a month) and assure the NPFL that ECOMOG would remain neutral and not assault them. I personally believe that a reduction of ECOMOG troops by about half and the removal of heavy offensive weapons would also be advisable. There were a few other suggestions about where troops from different nations might best be deployed, with which the ECOMOG commander, General Bakut, indicated his agreement.

Decision about these matters are, of course, to be made by you and other ECOWAS leaders and by the NPFL. My only hope is that the Liberian question can be resolved, since it can become a far-reaching problem that might affect much of West Africa with economic damage and even violence.

Sincerely,

(sgd) Jimmy Carter

**Economic Community of West African States
First Meeting of the
Standing Mediation Committee and
the Committee of Five
Cotonou, 20 October 1992**

Final Communiqué

Pursuant to the decision taken on 29th July, 1992 in Dakar by the Authority of heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) relating to sanctions against parties to the Liberian conflict which fail to comply with the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Accord of 30 October, 1992, the first Joint Summit meeting of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee and the Committee of Five was held in Cotonou on 20 October, 1992 under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Nicéphore Dieudonné SOGLO, President of the Republic of Benin and current Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority.

Present at the Joint Summit were the following Heads of State and Government or their duly accredited representatives:

- His Excellency Mr. Nicéphore Dieudonné SOGLO President of the Republic of BENIN
- His Excellency Mr. Felix HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
- His Excellency General Joao Bernardo VIEIRA President of the Council of State of the Republic of Guinea BISSAU
- His Excellency General Gnassingbe EYADEMA President of the TOGOLESE Republic
- His Excellency Admiral Augustus AIKHOMU Vice-President of the Federal Republic of NIGERIA representing the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of NIGERIA
- His Excellency Lt. General Arnold QUAINOO Member of the Provisional National Defense Council representing the Head of State of the Republic of Ghana
- The Honorable Alhaji Lamin Kitti JABANG Minister of Interior, representing the President of the Republic of The Gambia
- His Excellency Mr. Aquebourou PIARRAH Ambassador of the Republic of Mali to Ghana representing the President of the Republic of MALI
- The Honorable Mr. Djibo KA Minister of Foreign Affairs representing the President of the Republic of SENEGAL

Attending the Joint Summit at the invitation of the two Committees were:

—His Excellency Mr. Blaise COMPAORE President of FASO,
Head of Government Burkina Faso.

—The Honorable Mr. Alseyni Rene GOMEZ Minister of Internal
Affairs and Security representing the Head of State of the Republic
of GUINEA

—The Honorable Mr. Gabriel BACCHUS-MATTHEWS Minister
of Foreign Affairs representing the President of the Interim Gov-
ernment of National Unity of LIBERIA

Attending in an observer capacity were:

—The Under Secretary-General of the United Nations, represent-
ing the Secretary-General of the United Nations;

—The Assistant Secretary-General (EDECO) of the Organization
of African Unity, representing the Secretary-General of the Orga-
nization of African Unity;

—The West African Regional Representative of the United Na-
tions High Commission for Refugees, representing the High
Commissioner for Refugees.

The Joint Summit Meeting had been preceded by a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the members of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee and Committee of Five in Cotonou on 19 October 1992 which prepared the ground for the Joint Summit Meeting.

Review of the Liberian Situation

Heads of State and Government reviewed developments relating to the situation in Liberia since the last Summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held at Dakar from 27 to 29 July 1992 in the light of the reports made by the of the Authority and the Field Commander of ECOMOG.

The informed the joint session about a number of measures he had taken since the July 1992 Dakar Summit to facilitate the application of the relevant Authority Decision on the Liberian crisis. He referred in particular to a meeting he convened in Cotonou in August to enable the various Liberian parties to consult with each other, but which was not realized due to problems of communication. He had therefore developed a missive including a special envoy of the of the Authority, which met with ULIMO and obtained its agreement to cooperate with ECOMOG to ensure the speedy implementation of the Yamoussoukro Accords.

The Meeting also received a report from the Field Commander of ECOMOG in which he reported that there had been no compliance with the Yamoussoukro

Accords by the warring parties at the expiration of the deadline of thirty days stipulated by the July 1992 Decision of the Authority. Instead of making progress towards the establishment of conditions conducive to the holding of free, fair and democratic elections in Liberia, the Meeting noted that the situation had deteriorated sharply in Monrovia and elsewhere in Liberia.

The Joint Session noted in particular the intensification of hostilities between ULIMO and NPFL, and the taking of hostage by NPFL of over 500 ECOWOG troops deployed into NPFL controlled territory as part of the disarmament and encampment exercise, and the unprovoked and premeditated armed attack by NPFL against ECOMOG forces. The Meeting was also informed about a letter written by former United States President Jimmy Carter to members of the Committee of Five, in which he had proposed, *inter alia*, that the size of ECOMOG forces should be reduced and a small UN unarmed observer group be sent into Liberia to monitor the neutrality of ECOMOG..

Status of ECOMOG

In the circumstances, Heads of State and Government strongly reaffirmed their trust in ECOMOG and reiterated their confidence in its absolute neutrality in the performance of its functions in Liberia. They also reaffirmed the right of ECOMOG, as a peacekeeping force, to defend itself against armed attacks from any quarter.

Cease-fire in Liberia

The Joint Meeting stressed the necessity for an immediate cease-fire to be observed by the forces of ULIMO and NPFL. The Meeting, therefore, strongly urged all the warring parties to ensure the strict observance of a cease-fire throughout the territory of Liberia. In this connection it accepted the declaration by ULIMO of its intention to abide by the terms and conditions of the Yamoussoukro Accords.

The meeting therefore decided as follows:

- (i) That ULIMO and the NPFL shall declare an immediate cease-fire effective midnight on Wednesday 21 October 1992;
- (ii) A Monitoring Committee comprising Benin (Chairman), Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo is hereby established:
 - (a) to inform the warring parties concerned of the decisions of this meeting;
 - (b) to closely monitor the strict implementation by all parties concerned of the provisions of Yamoussoukro IV Accord which Accord must be fully implemented within 10 days from the declaration of the cease-fire;

(c) to meet five days before the deadline to assess the extent of implementation of the Yamoussoukro IV Accord;

(iii) In the event that the Yamoussoukro IV Accord is not implemented by the warring factions concerned at the expiration of the deadline, the Sanctions Decision' A/DEC.1/10/92 adopted by the Meeting on 20 October 1992 shall apply fully and automatically.

Return of ECOMOG Property Seized by NPFL

Heads of State and Government condemned the taking hostage by NPFL of ECOMOG troops deployed in its area. The Joint Meeting demanded the immediate return by NPFL of all items unlawfully seized from the ECOMOG forces concerned.

Imposition of Sanctions

In the event of failure by the warring parties to comply fully with the Yamoussoukro IV Accord, Heads of State and Government determined that such action would constitute a serious threat to the peace and security of Liberia in particular and the West African region as a whole. Heads of State and Government, acting on behalf of the Authority of Heads of State and Government would impose sanctions against the warring parties entailing the blockade of all entry points into Liberia by land, air and sea in order to deny to them access to the sinews of war and the export of any commodities or products originating from areas of Liberia controlled by them. In this connection, Heads of State and Government made a special appeal to the three neighboring Member States of ECOWAS sharing land borders with Liberia for their cooperation to ensure the strictest application of the sanctions decision.

The Joint Meeting also decided to ask the assistance of the Security Council of the United Nations to endorse the sanctions decision and make it mandatory for the entire international community in accordance with relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. In this regard, the Meeting mandated the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo, accompanied by the Executive Secretary, to proceed to New York to make the necessary representations to the Security Council.

The Sanctions Decision is annexed to this Communiqué and shall form an integral part thereof.

Role of the UN Observer Group

Heads of State and Government re-affirmed the Authority decision of July 1992 requesting the presence of a UN observer group to facilitate the verification and monitoring of the electoral process in Liberia. Within the spirit of the Yamoussoukro

IV Accord, the UN observers may wish to visit Liberia, during the period of encampment and disarmament, in order to reinforce the confidence of the warring parties.

Vote of Thanks

The Joint Summit Meeting of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee and the Committee of Five expressed its appreciation to His Excellency Nioephore Dieudonné SOGLO, President of the Republic of Benin for the way in which he conducted the Meeting. The Heads of State and Government paid tribute to President Soglo for the personal interest shown and the special effort he made since the Dakar ECOWAS Summit in July 1992 to improve the situation in Liberia. The Joint Meeting also expressed its sincere gratitude to President Soglo, the Government and people of Benin for the very warm and fraternal welcome extended to all delegations and for the excellent facilities made available to ensure the success of this first Joint Summit Meeting of the Standing Mediation Committee and the Committee of Five.

**Done at Cotonu This 20th
Day of October, 1992.**

**Economic Community of West African States
First Meeting of the Committee of Nine on the Liberian Crisis
Abuja, 7 November 1992**

Final Communiqué

In conformity with the decision taken on 20 October 1992 in Cotonou by the Joint Meeting of the Standing Mediation Committee and the Committee of Five, the first Summit Meeting of the Monitoring Committee of Nine was held in the ECOWAS Headquarters Building at Abuja on 7 November 1992 under the chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Nicéphore Dieudonné SOGLO, President of the Republic of Benin and current Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority.

Present at the Summit were the following Heads of State and Government or their duly accredited representatives:

—His Excellency Mr. Nicéphore Dieudonné SOGLO President of the Republic of BENIN

—His Excellency Mr. Blaise COMPAORE President of FASO, Head of Government Burkina Faso.

—His Excellency Mr. Felix HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

—His Excellency Ft.-Lt. (Rtd.) Jerry John RAWLINGS President of the Republic of Ghana

—His Excellency General Lansana Conté Chairman of the Military Committee for National Reconstruction, Head of State, President of the Republic of Guinea

—His Excellency General Ibrahim Badamasi BABANGIDA President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

—His Excellency General Gnassingbe EYADEMA President of the TOGOLESE Republic

—Honorable Alhaji Lamin Kitti JABANG Minister of Interior, representing the President of the Republic of The Gambia

—Honorable Djibo KA Minister of Foreign Affairs, representing the President of the Republic of Senegal

The Meeting also received a situation report from the field commander of ECOMOG in which he confirmed that none of the warring factions had heeded the call of the Cotonou Meeting for a cease-fire. The Field Commander stated that the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was at the center of the raging hostilities: on the one hand it was engaged in an armed struggle with the United Liberation

Movement of Liberia (ULIMO) for territorial control, and, on the other hand, it had mounted a massive military offensive against ECOMOG forces.

Reaffirmation of ECOWAS Commitment to Peaceful Resolution of the Liberian Crisis

The Meeting reaffirmed the full commitment of ECOWAS to a peaceful resolution of the Liberian crisis by way of democratic elections which underpinned the ECOWAS Peace Plan and offered the best possible framework for restoring peace and stability to Liberia. The Meeting, therefore, reaffirmed the Yamoussoukro IV Accord and the decisions of the Cotonou Joint Summit Meeting of 20 October 1992.

Condemnation of NPFL Attack Against ECOMOG

Heads of State and Government unreservedly condemned the unprovoked and premeditated aggression by the NPFL against ECOMOG forces in Liberia, and expressed full support for the defensive action taken by ECOMOG. Heads of State and Government again reaffirmed the right of ECOMOG, as a peace-keeping force, to defend itself decisively against armed attacks from any quarter.

Heads of State and Government, in the face of mounting evidence of atrocities, warned all warring factions against the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Liberia. The Meeting paid tribute to all who have perished in the senseless war being waged by Charles Taylor, including in particular the nuns who were recently killed by the NPFL, and expressed condolences to the bereaved families.

Strengthening of ECOMOG

Heads of State and Government reaffirmed the vitality and necessity of ECOMOG in Liberia and expressed their profound gratitude to the Member States which had contributed troops to ECOMOG. They agreed all the other Member States of ECOWAS, especially those States in whom the NPFL had shown to have confidence, should contribute to ECOMOG in order to strengthen its capacity to discharge its peace-keeping mandate and also enhance trust and confidence among all the warring parties.

Cease-fire in Liberia

In renewing its call to all the warring parties to declare a cease-fire effective midnight 10 November 1992, the Meeting directed ECOMOG to ensure not only respect for the cease-fire by all the warring parties, but also that the cease-fire is implemented concurrently with the encampment and disarmament of all combatants of the warring parties.

Heads of State and Government invited the Secretary-General of the United Nations to appoint a Special Representative to cooperate with ECOWAS in the implementation of the ECOWAS Peace Plan. Heads of State and Government equally requested the Secretary-General of the OAU to appoint an Eminent Person to collaborate with ECOWAS in the implementation of the ECOWAS Peace Plan.

Holding of Elections in Liberia

Heads of State and Government recommended and encouraged the Ad Hoc Elections Commission of Liberia to consider organizing democratic presidential and parliamentary elections as soon as conditions allow but in any event not later than three months from the installation of a cease-fire in Liberia.

Application of Sanctions Decision

Heads of State and Government stressed the need for full cooperation by all the parties concerned for the effective establishment of conditions that would conduce the holding of free, fair and democratic elections in Liberia. Consequently, Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their decision in Cotonou to impose sanctions against any warring faction that failed to comply with the provisions of the Yamoussoukro IV Accord and declared that in view of the failure of all the warring parties to implement the terms of the Yamoussoukro IV Accord at the expiration of the deadline of 5 November 1992' as stipulated by the Cotonou Summit Meeting, the Sanctions Decision shall be deemed to have entered into force against all the warring parties as from 5 November 1992.

Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their mandate to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Nine, accompanied by the Executive Secretary, to proceed to New York, as soon as possible to make the necessary representations to the United Nations Security Council with a view to securing the Council's endorsement of the ECOWAS Sanctions Decision and making it mandatory for the entire international community in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

Vote of Thanks

The Heads of State and Government expressed their appreciation to His Excellency General Ibrahim Badamasi BABANGIDA, President, Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Government and people of Nigeria for their exemplary role in ECOMOG and for the great contribution they were making to sustain the capability of ECOMOG to discharge its mandate in Liberia, for the very warm and fraternal welcome extended to them and their delegations, and for the excellent facilities made available to ensure the success of this first Summit Meeting of the Committee of Nine.

**Done at Abuja This 7th
Day of November, 1992.**

CO BUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

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