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The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia

Tragedy and Challenge

Amos Sawyer

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Foreword

THE FOUNDERS OF LIBERIA did not set out to create a society given over to autocratic rule. When they arrived in West Africa in the 1820s the settlers, free blacks from the United States, carried with them prevailing nineteenth-century ideals of democracy and the hope of extending Christianity to the natural-born inhabitants of the territory. Yet, six generations later the descendants of those first Liberians saw presidential autocracy culminate in the tragedy of military dictatorship and cruel civil conflict.

The author of this book is a Liberian patriot who is now head of the provisional government striving to secure peace and establish democratic institutions after the civil war. In a compelling account rich in historical detail, Amos Sawyer examines more than a century and a half of Liberian life. He demonstrates how autocracy emerged from a tradition of patrimonial authority, with the prerogatives of governance persistently concentrated in the hands of successive presidents. This pattern of autocratic control, which was not in itself despotic, was then easily appropriated by a military dictator.

This definitive work shows that a series of social and political choices, the distant outcome of which was not foreseen, produced the conditions that favored autocracy. Among these choices was the colonists' adoption of a written constitution that prescribed unitary government with centralized authority.

Sawyer's analysis makes clear how Liberia, from its unique beginnings, nevertheless came to embody a system of governance typical of postcolonial African states. He identifies key elements of all such states and shows their correspondence to the system of presidential rule that developed in Liberia. In Liberia as in the postcolonial countries, the presidency as the embodiment of the state was allowed to accumulate increasing power and finally to transcend the requirements of accountability.

The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia shows that the lessons of the Liberian experience bear on the future of governance throughout Africa. Sawyer urges both Liberians and citizens of the continent's postcolonial countries to draw upon traditional African institutions for patterns of governance that can blunt the predatory and repressive effects of the centralized state. He holds that if the postcolonial societies can abjure government-imposed unity—that is, relinquish the idea that the national unity achieved during the struggle for independence should be maintained at all costs—they can turn to indigenous traditions and informal structures such as the parallel market for the development of self-organizing capabilities.

All those concerned with freedom and self-governance—not only in Africa but throughout the world—will learn much from this absorbing book and will find in it clear-sighted encouragement to resist autocracy and meet the challenge of building strong, self-governing human societies.

Robert B. Hawkins, Jr., President
Institute for Contemporary Studies

Acknowledgments

I WAS FIRST MOTIVATED to look more deeply into the Liberian experience when, in 1974, as a member of the staff of the University of Liberia, I began teaching a sophomore-level survey course on Liberian society. I greatly appreciate the searching—sometimes embarrassing—questions of successive groups of students who took the course over the years. I am also grateful to Mary Antoinette Brown Sherman, former president of the University of Liberia, Zamba Liberty, Patrick Seyon, and other colleagues who struggled to make the university a center for critical inquiry and whose quest for an understanding of Liberian social processes deepened my own curiosity.

This book was written while I was a research scientist at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University in Bloomington, and I wish to thank the Workshop for its generous support. Far beyond financial support, the Workshop offered intellectual stimulation and a collegial environment. Elinor and Vincent Ostrom, codirectors of the Workshop, are not only able scholars but colleagues whose activities at the Workshop demonstrate a commitment to advancing intellectual inquiry as an enterprise of scholarly communities. I am most grateful to them.

Vincent Ostrom read and reread every chapter of this book and made useful suggestions. I have also benefited from the comments and editorial suggestions of Warren d'Azevedo, Louis DeAlessi, Zamba Liberty, and J. Gus Liebenow, who read the first draft. Susan Wynne of the Workshop read several chapters and was helpful with editorial comments. Works of Vincent and Elinor Ostrom have significantly influenced the analytical focus of this book, just as those of d'Azevedo, Liberty, and Liebenow have had a major impact on the substantive issues discussed in it. The book's shortcomings are not due to a lack of constructive suggestions.

My appreciation to Patty Dalecki, Linda Smith, and Gayle Higgins of the Workshop, who put the manuscript in proper form, and to

Susan Cooper, who helped organize the references. Special thanks to Comfort, who is always there for me.

Amos Sawyer

March 1990

Postscript

After the revised draft of this manuscript was completed, Dr. Sawyer took on the effort of trying to help his country through the tragedies evoked by the autocracy that had come to prevail. With his consent, I have assumed responsibility for seeing the manuscript through publication in cooperation with the editorial staff at ICS Press.

Dr. Sawyer had anticipated making arrangements for maps, but he was not able to complete that task. J. Gus Liebenow graciously offered to make available maps and a chronological table of political leadership and major events that he had prepared for his book *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy,* published by Indiana University Press in 1987. I wish to acknowledge Professor Liebenow's and Indiana University Press's permission to use those maps and the table in this book. Susan Wynne and Warren d'Azevedo have helped provide information of importance to us. Patty Dalecki, Tracy Clagett, J. M. B. Edwards, and I have done our best to bring this book to fruition; but our best cannot take the place of direct oversight by the author himself. We regret any deficiencies that may have arisen in Dr. Sawyer's absence.

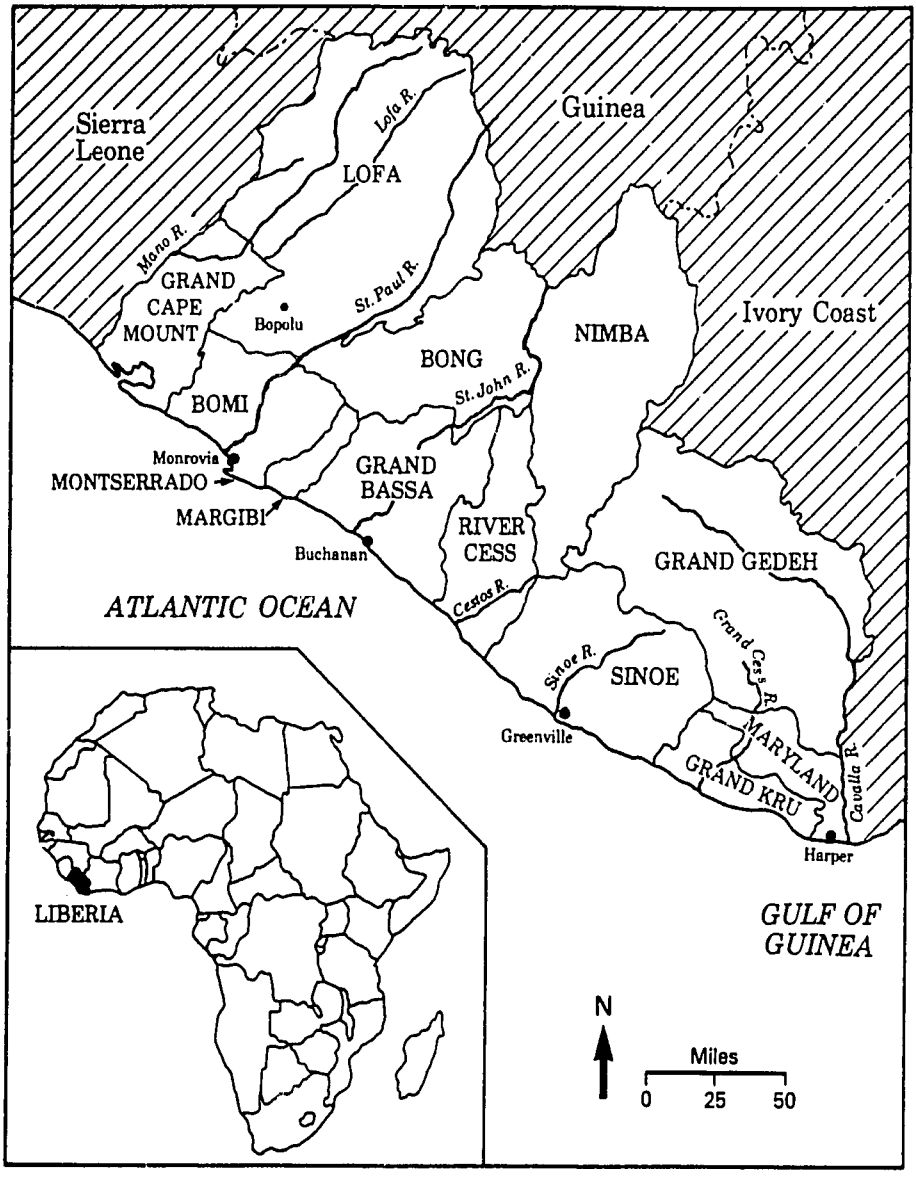
The manuscript was completed before the outbreak of the civil war and its tragic aftermath. These events, however, are illuminated by Dr. Sawyer's analysis.

Vincent Ostrom

July 1991

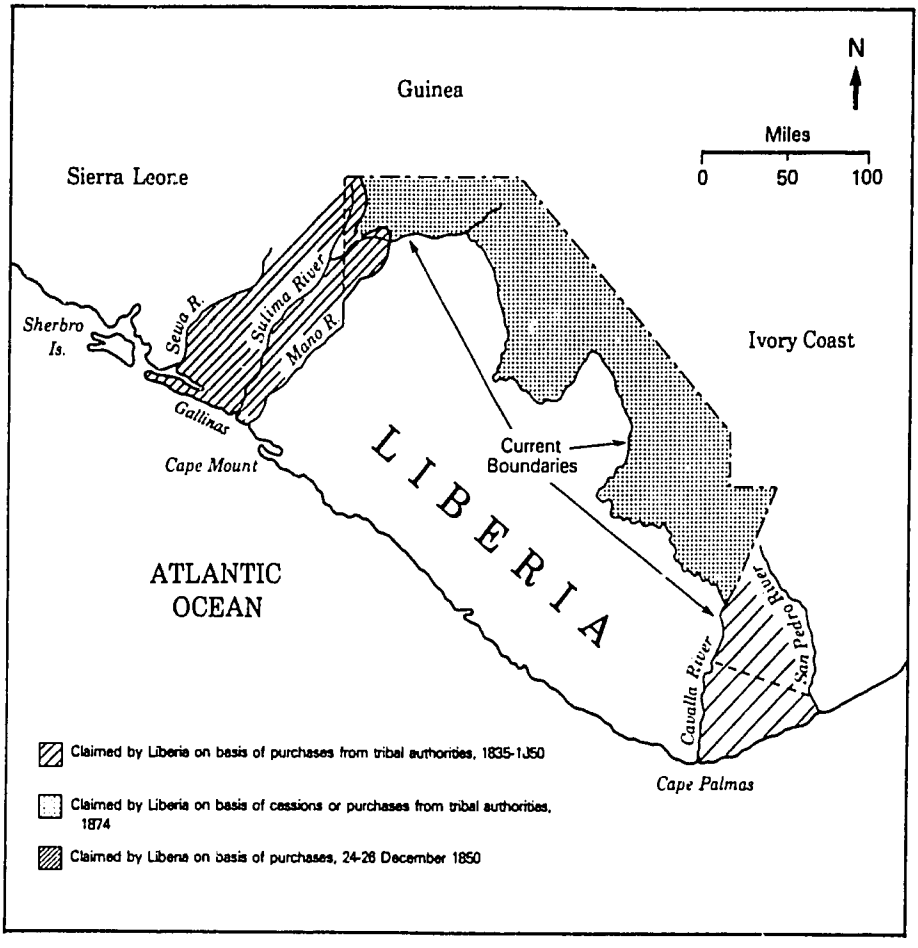
Maps

MAP 1 Liberia and Its African Neighbors



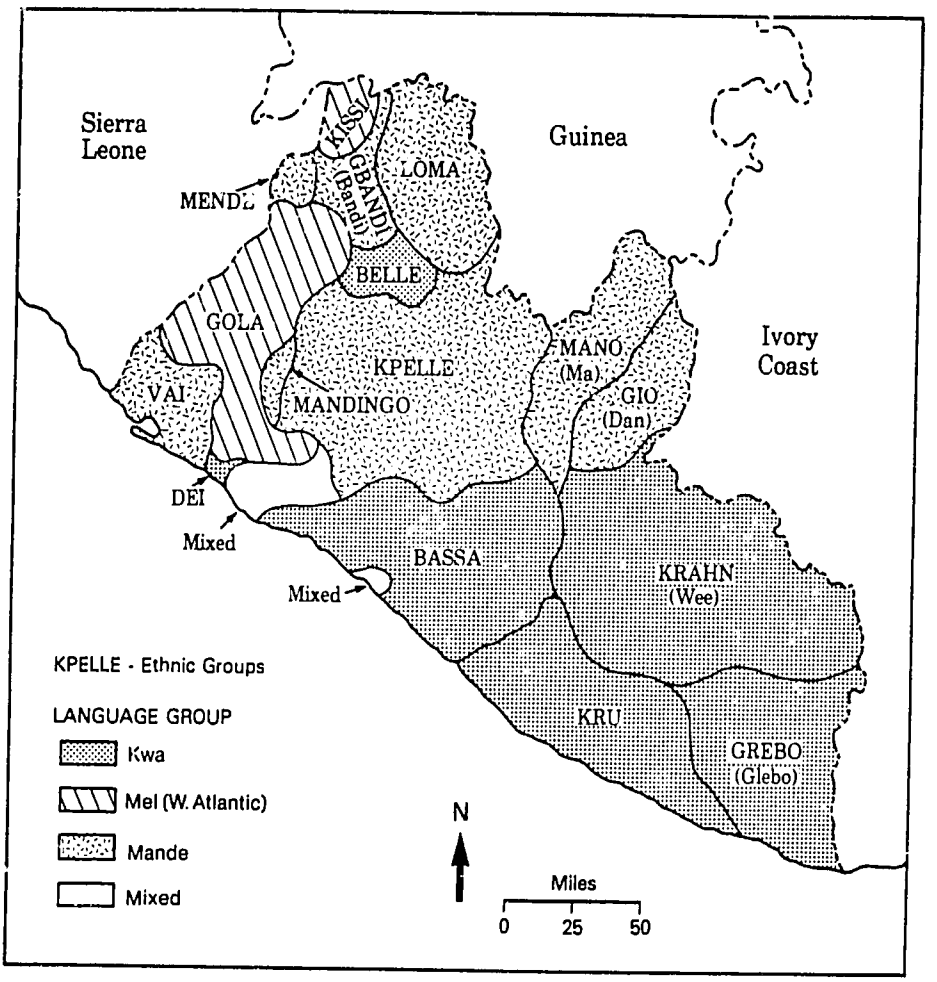
Adapted from J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). By permission of J. Gus Liebenow and Indiana University Press.

MAP 2 Extent of Liberian Territorial Claims



Adapted from J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). By permission of J. Gus Liebenow and Indiana University Press.

MAP 3 Distribution of Major Liberian Ethnic and Language Groups, 1980s



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The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia

★ 1 ★

Social Order and Constitutional Choice

THE STUDY OF LIBERIA has always engendered passions. Conceived and established in the early nineteenth century during the controversy over slavery and the fate of free blacks in the United States, Liberia was quickly declared a resounding failure by the detractors of colonization and a rousing success by its supporters.[1] Striving to maintain autonomy as a black Western society during the era of imperial expansion, Liberia was perceived, largely by European observers, with derision and, sometimes, pity (Wauwermans 1885; d'Ollone 1901; Johnston 1906; Delafosse 1900). As European powers sought to establish colonies, Liberia's right to exist, in spite of its blemishes, became a major focus of attention (Starr 1913; Buell 1928).

Since the early establishment of the Liberian social order, the question of settler dominance—the primacy of Liberia's settler society over the indigenous African communities—has been the central issue in Liberian society. Frequently, analyses have proceeded with strong moral undercurrents. This dominance is a form of colonial caste system akin to European colonial domination in Africa (Akpan 1968, 1973). While not drawing such strong analogies, others have variously perceived it as a class structure reinforced by elements of ethnicity (Brown [1941] 1981), or as a system based on ethnic and kinship considerations but also possessing class-like features (Jones 1962; Liebenow 1969).[2]

When analyzed within its historical context in West Africa as a whole, still others argue, settler primacy in Liberia can be seen neither as a colonial caste system nor as a wholly self-serving class stratification.

Rather, according to C. E. Zamba Liberty (1977:39) its role was to promote "centripetalism" and the "subordination of previously autonomous units" made possible by the emigrants' "political maneuverings" and the "international recognition accorded emigrant state-structure as the sole government of the Liberian region."[3] Going farther than Liberty, scholars such as Elliot Berg (1969) and Martin Lowenkopf (1976) have analyzed the Liberian social order in terms of its capacity for development rather than domination and have found surprising institutional capabilities. To Berg, the question is not solely the nature of the political arrangement but the level of social and economic development that has been achieved despite tremendous handicaps. Lowenkopf similarly perceives the social order as a conservative road to modernization that was "institutionalizing" development.[4]

Since the nineteenth century, Liberian political practitioners and publicists have themselves been preoccupied with the nature and future of the Liberian social order. The debate among them has centered more often on what to do and whom to include than on the structure of authority relationships, the primacy of the settler state, or the types of values and orientations to be propagated.[5]

Any study of the evolution of the Liberian social order has to involve consideration of such external issues as the preexisting and ever-evolving African social setting, the West African slave trade, the institution of slavery in the United States, European colonialism in Africa, and the rise of African nationalism and the independence movement—all of which are full of controversy, readily arousing emotions in some people. Internally, the establishment of a westernized, black-dominated social order in the nineteenth century among an assortment of African societies and in a rapidly changing African setting was not only a unique experience but also a controversial experiment. Unfortunately, most studies of the Liberian social order have dealt only in broad strokes with the dynamics of the interaction between settler society and the numerous indigenous social orders—dynamics that involved questions of conflict, cooperation, adaptation, and domination. For some, the very existence of what was considered a "stable" westernized social order for more than a century amid tremendous transformations within the region was the most important issue for scholarly analysis.[6]

An understanding of the Liberian social order demands the pressing of scholarly inquiry to deeper levels of penetration, deeper than a superficial study of ethnicity and settler-indigene interaction, and deeper than emotional justifications or condemnations of versions of Liberia's past. No student of Liberia has emphasized the need for such inquiry more than Warren L. d'Azevedo. He has articulated a concern that study of the Liberian social order has too often concentrated on the workings of

the society from Monrovia. The result, by and large, has been a shelf of inquiries depicting "a national leviathan which slowly and awkwardly overwhelmed indigenous cultures and was met by futile upsurges of military resistance on the part of disintegrating tribal societies" (d'Azevedo 1969–1971, part 1:4).

In order to satisfy d'Azevedo's concern, studies of Liberia need to investigate the dynamic social processes at work among the various indigenous social orders as well as the settler social order, both singly and concertedly, and the responses of these formations to one another at the "national" and other levels. Given the current state of our understanding of the Liberian social order, one cannot overemphasize the importance of scholarly analyses that penetrate the inner workings of the array of indigenous societies whose existence and interaction tell more about the richness of the Liberian experience and help us understand its complexities.

A few studies of some indigenous communities have been made under the rubric of anthropological or ethnohistorical research.[7] Unfortunately, they have not often been used in investigations of how the Liberian society was constituted. Thus, if we are to move beyond Monrovia-centered analyses and passionate justifications and denunciations, the question of understanding the constitution of the Liberian social order remains as much of a challenge to Liberians and Liberianists as it is a problem of interest to those concerned with the nature and constitution of order in human societies generally. This study is an attempt to press forward on both fronts, relating the general course of events to deeper cultural, economic, and social processes. How social orders become constituted is the focus of inquiry.

Institutional Analysis and the Constitution of Order

Though long-standing, my interest in the question of how the Liberian social order was constituted was heightened in 1981 when I was selected, along with twenty-four others, to draft a new constitution for Liberia. As the Constitution Commission set to work, I was struck by three major developments. The first was the lack of debate, and the virtual unanimity with which the commission accepted the 1847 constitution and the unitary, president-centered structure of government that it promulgated as the basic framework for the new constitution. As the commission held public hearings around Liberia, I realized that the views of Liberians were not identical to that of the commission on this question. I was further struck by a number of proposals made consistently in the hearings that county superintendents should be elected, that the vice president should

not attend meetings of the legislature, and that the term of office of the president be fixed at five, six, or seven years with no opportunity for reelection, or at one term of four years with only one opportunity for reelection to an additional term of four years.[8]

A third set of findings that I found to be curious was that about 50 percent of the issues that were constantly being raised as "constitutional issues" by people participating in the public meetings could not be reconciled with the commission's predetermined list of constitutional issues. Some of them involved the prohibition of smoking in public buses, the expansion of bus routes, the need for rural vocational and agricultural schools, and the construction and maintenance of feeder roads. It was easy to dismiss these issues as having no bearing on the formulation of a document of such fundamental importance as a constitution; accordingly, they were. That such issues were raised at all was attributed to public ignorance about constitutional matters.

These developments suggest that drawing from more than a century of experience, Liberians had evolved a complex mix of predispositions about governance that did not lend itself to simple formulations in a president-centered, unitary structure of government. Faced with the popular desire to have a president, but not an overwhelming presidency, and with grassroots perception that decisions about such issues as public transportation, education, and road building require the involvement of the people, the commission's challenge was to establish an arrangement that would provide opportunities for greater participation by the people and greater accountability of public officials. This challenge could hardly be met within the rigid structures of a unitary, hierarchical constitutional order.

The deeper lesson here is that the constitution of a social order is essentially an exercise in constitutional choice that raises questions related to property rights and the design and operation of diverse institutions. Operationally, property rights and other such institutional arrangements involve the formulation of rules and the structuring of rule-ordered relationships concerning the production, appropriation, allocation, and consumption of goods and services.[9] An understanding of these interactions among rules, actions, objects, and effects illuminates how authority relations and the inner complexities of a social order are put together.[10] Equally important is the fact that such an understanding opens up numerous possibilities for alternative institutional arrangements.

The study or use of a theory of constitutional choice requires the investigation, formulation, or modification of rules and institutional arrangements at three levels of political choice: the foundation or constitutional level of the social order; the law-making or collective-choice level; and the operational level. The nature of the rule-making process and the development and nesting of institutional arrangements at all levels are critical issues for examination in the study or creation of a social order. In such exercises,

it is essential to consider the nature of the processes associated in the social order with production and consumption of goods and services and of other values such as speech, security, and personal fulfillment—the full range of property rights. It is also essential to consider the design and implementation of the appropriate institutional arrangements in keeping with the requirements of the social order.

Returning to the issue of the citizens' desire to prohibit smoking in public buses, for example, one finds in it the problematics associated with collective consumption, or use of a service requiring the formulation and implementation of rules and institutional arrangements at the level of the users: Local people who use a common facility would like to have some voice pertaining to its use. In order for them to do so, there must exist some constitutional rules and other legislation under which institutional structures can be devised for the fulfillment of their purposes. With the benefit of hindsight and considerable reflection, I now realize that one of the most profound shortcomings of the constitution-drafting process in which I was engaged was the failure to come to terms with the dynamics of the sociocultural and socioeconomic arrangements across Liberia. This would have required deeper attention to questions associated with what used to be called "hinterland jurisdictions" or "tribal authority" and is now referred to in such phraseologies as "dualities of law" or "customary versus statutory guarantees." These issues require the availability of constitutional and collective decision-making processes associated with culture, external affairs, resources, and other factors that are compatible with the development of a framework for local collective action. In the Liberian case, these factors impinge upon the processes of designing and implementing institutional arrangements for the collective consumption of public bus service as well as for the resolution of land disputes and "woman palaver" across the full range of cultures and jurisdictions (North 1981; Feeny 1988; Oakerson 1988).

In addition to understanding the rules, institutional arrangements, and factors that operate in processes of constitutional choice, the investigator of how a social order is constituted has a moral obligation to strive sympathetically to understand the circumstances confronted by actors in that order who, under constraints of all types, make decisions whose outcomes may or may not achieve the intended results. The struggle to gain a sympathetic understanding is not incompatible with the requirements of critical investigation.

Institutional Analysis of Patrimonial Regimes

The task of this book is to gain a deeper understanding of the institutional arrangements and social processes that have characterized the

constitution of the social order in Liberia over a period of more than a century. Far from imposing a theory on the Liberian social order, I have attempted to probe the facts as they have been recorded and perceived locally as well as from Monrovia. By so doing, I have tried to show how the processes of constitutional choice unfolded. I have not undertaken any original "field" research for this book but have endeavored to pull together existing researches and extract what pieces of the Liberian puzzle they contain. Based on the available data, my account shows how the processes that have been emerging from roots established in the nineteenth century by black American settlers have created a new social order within a fluid setting of numerous African societies. The new settler society possessed characteristics that are associated with a patrimonial social order that came to be dominated by a ruling merchant elite. The African social orders, in contrast, could generally be characterized as traditional patrilineal formations of varying complexity. These included several types of formations, ranging from the hierarchical "conical clan" type of western and northwestern Liberia to segmentary lineage types of eastern and southeastern Liberia. Most of these were dominated by authority structures legitimized through councils of lineage elders, successors to real or fictional founding ancestors, or by "secret societies" (d'Azevedo 1962a; Davis 1968; Fulton 1968; McEvoy 1971; Schroder and Seibel 1974). As trade, including slave trade, had been a major economic activity of the region for centuries, struggles to secure trade goods and establish strategic positions along the numerous trade routes from the coast to the interior were the major sources of the fluidity in the region.

A digression is necessary at this juncture to elaborate on the concept of patrimonialism as I use it in the context of the Liberian social order. The original Weberian conception defines patrimonialism as a type of personal rule adapted to large-scale societies (Weber [1922] 1978). Under various forms of patrimonial arrangements, rulers exercise control directly or through a network of subordinate officials legitimized by tradition or otherwise held together by coercion, perceptions of obligation, expectations of rewards, or perceptions of reciprocity. Usually, it is a mix of these factors that holds a patrimonial system together. Such systems are said to evolve largely from the adaptation of patriarchal control of households to a larger territory in which the master is perceived to be the source of authority *and* holder of a "patrimony" over the territory and all the traditions and sentiments associated with it. Under such arrangements, kinship, authority, and property relationships are usually indistinguishable. The ruler becomes the source of legal and political authority, the standing of individuals, and the uses to be made of property. These are bounded by factors of kinship and ambiguous, if extant, rules or the prerogatives of rulership.[11]

Precolonial African political orders have been described as patrimonial orders in which kinship and lineage relationships constituted the major bonds of social organization. Since independence, students of African political development have frequently observed that forms of lineage and personal rule have persisted in African political orders. Such regimes are referred to as "neopatrimonial" orders. In these regimes, authority relations seem to be based on principles that apply to control of private or personal domains (Zolberg 1966; Gellar 1973). In quite a few cases, repressive measures and unequal exchange dominate in the maintenance of authority relations (Hall 1977). In most cases, however, maintenance of control depends upon the development of a network of clients and kinsmen backed eventually by the threat and use of coercive measures (Lemarchand 1981; Clapham 1982). Customs and traditions selectively and conveniently come into play as instruments of manipulation. Those aspects of culture that operate to diminish personal authority and encourage accountability are regularly dismissed. Thus, diminishing the role of traditions and customs as factors legitimizing patrimonial rule has introduced adaptations that modify the concept of patrimonialism until it is equivalent to an arbitrary form of proprietorship. Instead of the development of a patrimony of a traditional form, one finds, as in settler Liberia, a proprietorship without the preeminence of traditions and customs, which it selectively manipulates or strives to establish. In the case of the numerous African formations, one finds proprietorships gradually developing with the diminishing role of traditions and customs, the latter as a result of over a hundred years of arduous, precarious, and protracted struggles among the Africans themselves or against the presence of the settler social order. The result has been a series of adaptations, accommodations, manipulations, and impositions. It is these processes that raise the central issues of how the Liberian social order was put together. How are they to be explained?[12]

Emerging Patterns of Order

Although "neopatrimonialism" and "personal rule" are concepts that appropriately describe the political forms and social relationships that exist in a particular type of social order, they do not explain the factors that underlie those relationships or, more importantly, the socioeconomic institutional infrastructure and processes that produce and support them.[13] An understanding of the processes that produce and sustain neopatrimonial political forms also requires an investigation of property rights and the nature of productive processes within such an order. In most African societies, the transformation of production under colonialism

and the assignment of property rights largely to the state, foreign concessions, and a few local individuals relieved the state of its dependence on the wider society for maintaining its functions and solidified the identity of the state with the interests of a few. This development has encouraged a tendency toward the concentration and centralization of the prerogatives of governance, and so toward the personalization of authority.

These transformations are discernible in the evolution of the Liberian social order. Settler patrimonialism was characterized by aspirations about the creation of a "common patrimony" in which all settlers would have a personal stake and with which they could readily identify.[14] Imperialist expansion and the threat of liquidation by imperial powers, with the imperatives of "state-building," preempted entrenchment of the values and sentiments associated with a common patrimony for all categories of peoples in the subregion. Thus, as in the case of many African countries, the circumstances surrounding the development of the Liberian social order forged adaptations that led to the development of state proprietary control, which sought by various means to institutionalize itself amid complex external and internal forces. I have, therefore, referred to the adaptations of patrimonial control in the Liberian case as "proprietary control."

Manipulations and adaptations in response to the requirements of the Liberian state transformed African social orders into various forms of subproprietorships with complex linkages to the dominant settler society. Thus a comprehensive analysis of the Liberian social order reveals interaction processes involving the settler society and the multiplicity of African societies. When one examines the development of the Liberian social order using settler society as the focal point, one discovers that although property rights in land seemed readily available to all settlers, merchant proprietary interests were dominant in the allocation of coastal lands and in economic activities, especially trade, throughout settler-controlled territory. Prerogatives of government were exercised in a proprietary way by a few merchants who operated through networks of relatives, apprentices, and clients.

This social order underwent considerable transformation due to challenges from rural settler planters, indigenous communities, and European imperial powers. By the end of the nineteenth century, mercantile trade was virtually in the hands of European trading houses while settler merchants operated as agents of European commercial interests in exercising the prerogatives of governmental authority. Pressured by imperial powers, the merchant ruling elite sought to expand its authority over larger territories and to establish "effective control" over surrounding indigenous societies. Relations of pacification, cooptation, and cooperation were embodied in the expansion of settler authority over indigenous communities. The state bureaucracy and the frontier force

were established not only as major instruments of control but also as major sources of employment.

The interior bureaucracy also constituted a suitable institutional arrangement for the appropriation of property rights in indigenous labor as a major source of merchant and state income. With the introduction of plantations and mineral concessions by the turn of the nineteenth century, economic dependence on mercantile trade ended. Corporate taxes, royalties, and profit-sharing became the major sources of government income. Merchant proprietary control gave way to a form of patrimonial control by a strong presidency. Gradually the countervailing influences exercised by the norms, customs, and traditions associated with the common patrimony receded or were manipulated in the service of presidential authority. That authority, in turn, was increasingly supported by the appropriation of property rights in labor, land, and natural resources that were consigned by the state to foreign concessionaires and a few local proprietors.

Bearing in mind d'Azevedo's observation that the reactions of African societies were not only manifested in sporadic military clashes, one finds an array of complex responses. In the early nineteenth century these responses involved shifting alliances, for example with settler authorities, slavers, and European powers, that involved the absorption, integration, and disintegration of formations in pursuit or protection of trade—including the slave trade and other interests.

Although the Atlantic slave trade had virtually been terminated by the end of the nineteenth century, demands for labor and trade goods by settler society, European economic interests, and the African formations themselves, together with the expansion of settler authority and European colonialism, made for conflicts concerning control over ports of entry, establishment of trading posts in the interior, and the establishment of a system of interior administration among the indigenous societies. These conflicts precipitated the creation of new alliances, the development of a system of itinerant traders and middlemen from both settler and indigenous societies, together with participation in the emerging interior administrative apparatus and frontier force by settlers and individuals from the various indigenous African societies. Such developments, occurring up to the end of the Second World War, brought with them new forms of property rights and institutional adaptations. The new adaptations required of indigenous African social orders by these developments eventually completed their transformation into forms of subproprietorship under the control of Monrovia, forms in which cooperation and accommodation had their rewards, and conflict and recalcitrance had their costs. The vast array of African societies was carved into hinterland jurisdictions with chiefs becoming the new subproprietors

who owed allegiance more to central authorities in Monrovia than to local populations with their customs and traditions.

With the persistent centralization and concentration of the prerogatives of government in the hands of the president, the personalization of governmental authority came to fruition. I have referred to the process by which the presidency became a self-sufficient personal domain as the emergence of autocracy in Liberia. This process fully emerged after the Second World War, when iron ore royalties and other forms of income from businesses, especially multinational corporations, relieved the government from reliance on hut taxes and indeed on taxation in general. The government thus gained sources of income independent of the performance of its interior administrative apparatus or the evolving subproprietary authorities of the coastal or interior jurisdictions.

I am aware that the term "autocracy" evokes strong emotional reaction and conjures up perceptions of brutality and tyranny. However, in the context of this book, the term is used to convey its literal meaning: "auto" means "self" or "same," and "cracy" means "rule." The personalization of authority as a result of the appropriation of property rights and the diminishing or demolition of countervailing institutions and norms have, indeed, resulted in "self-rule" on the part of those exercising the prerogatives of the president.[15] Autocracy need not connote despotism or tyranny but can easily degenerate into these.

Pressured by expanding self-organizing tendencies at local and national levels at a time when most institutions had already been demeaned and coopted in a quest for total control, and plagued by declining economic conditions, presidential autocracy proved increasingly unable to respond to increasing demands for participation and inclusion. As a result, in 1980, it was overtaken by military force and transformed into a brutal tyranny.[16] Thus, in the case of Liberia, the historic failure to develop institutional arrangements rooted in a democratic theory of constitutional choice has resulted in an institutional collapse and degeneration into despotism. These patterns, however, are not unique to Liberia. One only needs to examine the deeds of Idi Amin of Uganda, Macias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, and Jean-Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic to apppreciate the tragedy to which the emergence of autocracy in Africa has ultimately led.[17]

A few words on the organization of the book will be useful at this point. In Chapter 2, I discuss the intellectual and social background underpinning the establishment of Liberia. The ideas and forces motivating colonization and the initiatives in African colonization taken before the establishment of Liberia are examined. In Chapter 3, indigenous African social structures and institutions are identified and discussed, and the dynamics of their social processes are investigated. An understanding

of how these processes operated is indispensable to an understanding of the transformations of the Liberian social order over time.

Chapter 4 analyzes the processes by which settler society reconstituted order over a larger territory and numerous indigenous communities, thereby becoming the dominant influence in the region by the mid-nineteenth century. The chapter also describes indigenous resistance and adaptations to these developments. Chapter 5 then lays out the social contours of the newly settler-dominated order, identifying and discussing its social institutions and socioeconomic relationships. In Chapter 6, I focus on the continuing efforts to expand settler control against a background of the intrusion of European imperial interests, complicated by continuing indigenous resistance. The raising of questions of territorial control and effective occupation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by European imperial powers signaled the need for the reconstitution of the social order and the institution of state structures.

In Chapter 7, I undertake an analysis of economic and political processes in settler society, discussing the origins, character, and development of merchant proprietary rule in the latter half of the nineteenth century; the challenges it confronted; and the adaptations made by it before and during its decline. In Chapter 8, I turn to the question of the paramountcy of settler ethnicity and its civilizing mission, and examine the approaches taken by settler society in establishing cultural and political control in the region. I discuss the development of the interior bureaucracy as a part of the process of establishing cultural, economic, and political control.

Chapter 8, therefore, sets the stage for Chapters 9 and 10, which discuss the significant transformation in the constitution of order in Liberia as a result of the appropriation of property rights in labor, land, and natural resources by the state. They consider the assignment of these property rights through plantation and mineral concession agreements with foreign firms and analyze the significance of these developments for the consolidation of presidential authority and the evolution of autocracy. The institutional developments associated with the evolution of autocracy and the transformation to military tyranny are discussed in Chapter 11.

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 conclusion of this book explores the continuing challenge posed by the emergence of autocracy.

★ 2 ★

The Idea of Liberia

ONE OF THE GREATEST QUALITIES of human beings is their ability to come to terms with problems by conceiving and grappling with ideas. The translation of ideas into concrete reality is an important quality of human artisanship. The idea of Liberia was conceived in an attempt to find a solution to a critical problem of early American society. Indeed, the idea of founding a country in Africa for free blacks of the United States was as old as the American revolutionary struggle. It is important to understand the evolution of this idea as a basis for the unfolding of the colonization effort that led to the founding of Liberia.

The Social Context of Colonization

Colonization can best be understood within the context of the enduring search for a solution to the problem of slavery in America. The American Revolution provided an occasion to focus upon this issue. The ideals of freedom and democracy and the struggle against British control significantly affected attitudes toward the continued practice of slavery. The antislavery cause, in addition to the strength it drew from the prevailing political ethos of the American Revolution, also benefited as a result of the enlistment of slaves by both sides under pledges of emancipation after the war (Franklin 1956:138; Berlin 1974:15).

The success of those opposed to slavery could be seen both in the number of antislavery societies organized after the American Revolution and in the enactment of abolition legislation in state after state in the North and voluntary manumission laws in parts of the South. The first secular

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antislavery organization was founded in Philadelphia in 1775. By the early 1790s, state and local antislavery societies had been organized in every state from Massachusetts to Virginia (Jordan 1977:343-49).[1]

The success of the antislavery cause was evident from the fact that by 1800 slavery had been abolished in virtually all northern states.[2] Resistance to sweeping abolition was strong in the South, especially in the lower southern states (South Carolina and Georgia); nonetheless, antislavery advocates were successful in getting state legislatures to enact laws permitting private manumission. Starting with Virginia in 1782, most southern states had passed private manumission laws by the beginning of the nineteenth century.[3]

The upsurge of abolition and manumission vastly increased the population of free blacks during the period following the American Revolution. From 1790 to 1810, for example, the free black population is said to have increased by 83 percent (Berlin 1974:15-50). The rise was particularly sharp in certain northern cities. In New York City, for example, the white-black ratio rapidly declined from 21 to 1 in 1790 to 15 to 1 in 1800 and 10 to 1 in 1810 (McMaster 1914, 4:556-57).

As the free black population increased, the question of its future in the United States became important in the debates over abolition. This question was further complicated by two developments: the increase in agriculture in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, and slave insurgencies at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Before the 1790s, cotton production had been depressed as a result of economic dislocation brought about largely by the war. The invention of the cotton gin in 1792 contributed considerably to increased production and a decline in production costs. Cotton production was greatly expanded in the lower southern states, while several old or abandoned plantations in upper southern states like Virginia were refurbished and put back into production. The expansion of plantation agriculture, at this time, created increased demand for slave labor in the South and slowed manumission.[4] It also stimulated expansion of plantation agriculture and the infrastructure of slavery westward via the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers into northern Alabama and Mississippi.

The second development that affected the antislavery cause at the turn of the nineteenth century was the first slave insurgencies. In 1791 in what is now Haiti, then Saint Domingue, slave revolts not only posed a complication regarding United States response to the question of slavery and freedom in that country but graphically brought home the potential danger of slave rebellions, thereby exacerbating uncertainties about the security of slave property within the United States.[5] Fears of slave revolts were heightened when, in 1800, a slave plot led by Gabriel Prosser was

uncovered in Virginia. Free blacks in Virginia were accused of instigating the plot (Aptheker 1943; Woodson and Wesley 1962:177).

Thus, by the turn of the century, fear of slave revolts coupled with expanding demand for slaves on southern plantations had created adverse circumstances for slaves and free blacks in the South, and a search for a solution to the question of slavery generally. Slave codes in the South became more stringent and the rights of free blacks there were severely curtailed.[6] Efforts to stem the flood of private manumissions were so vigorous that in 1806 the Virginia General Assembly enacted a law requiring slaves freed by manumission to leave the commonwealth within twelve months. Maryland and other southern states quickly passed laws prohibiting the immigration of free blacks.

Although prospects grew dim in the South for blacks generally, not all free southern blacks were affected. The mulattoes who constituted the upper crust of the free black community of New Orleans, for example, commanded considerable wealth and social status in Louisiana society (Foner 1970). Though not as affluent, many free blacks in the Tidewater area of Virginia and Maryland were gradually acquiring land in the decades leading up to the Civil War. About one-fourth of them owned taxable property.[7] Near Baltimore, 5 percent of the free blacks owned taxable plots of land, inexpensive dwellings, horses, and other possessions (Frazier 1949:68-70).

Nevertheless, large numbers of free blacks moved to the North where prospects for many were better.[8] Supported by white and black abolitionists, the antislavery cause thrived in the North. There was an array of black community-based organizations, from the religious and economic to the purely social. Assisted by white abolitionists, schools and churches for free blacks were established.[9] Noted among these was the Bethel Church, later known as the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, which was established in Philadelphia in 1794.

Free black benevolent societies, lodges, and fraternities were organized in several northern states. Free blacks of Massachusetts obtained permission from the Grand Lodge of England and established the African Lodge No. 459 of Freemasonry in Boston in 1787. By 1815, three grand lodges of Freemasons had been established among blacks in the United States.[10]

Thus, though affected by the vicissitudes of ecomomic and social developments and the ebb and flow of history, the search for a solution to slavery remained a major preoccupation in both the North and the South from the Revolutionary War until the Civil War. The fundamental question was not whether slavery was compatible with the requirements of liberty and equality but whether there was a place in American democracy for a sizable free black population. Far from being a debate

between two starkly opposed points of view, the search for a solution involved an array of points of view and interests ranging on a continuum from those totally and unconditionally opposed to emancipation to those demanding unconditional emancipation and integration of free blacks into American society. Obviously these positions were not fixed in stone but were subject to the influences of historical change within the American society over time. Thus the idea of colonization encompassed the perspectives of a wide range of people who, driven by a variety of motives at various historical junctures, supported abolition under various conditions. The unfolding of the idea amid changing historical circumstances ultimately resulted in the founding of Liberia.

The Colonization Idea

A careful study of the colonization idea requires close attention to the circumstances and motivations that shaped it. For example, during the period preceding the Revolutionary War, the idea of colonization was expounded largely by northern Calvinists driven by notions of benevolence. As the debate went on during the period of the Revolutionary War and thereafter, a wide assortment of issues and motivations intervened. Some of these concerned the question of the future character of American democracy if it contained both free blacks and black slaves. By the time the idea of colonization became an implementable plan, it had moved through several phases, attracting both support and denunciation from a variety of interests.

Calvinist Trusteeship and Benevolence

Calvinist ideas and activities constituted one of the earliest important tendencies promoting colonization as a solution to slavery and the plight of free blacks. However, the Calvinists' concern with these matters was only part of their broader concern with a society that they perceived as straying from the precepts of puritanical living, the foundation of moral and political life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century northern American society. The Calvinists' approach to social problems can be found in their conception of the nature of God and true holiness. The teachings of a particular lineage of Calvinist preachers, including Samuel Hopkins, had a profound effect in shaping attitudes and solutions to a whole sweep of social ills from drunkenness and slothfulness to slavery and abolition.

Hopkins was a student of Jonathan Edwards at Northampton, Massachusetts. Pressing Edwards's doctrine of predestination further, he

introduced the notion of "disinterested benevolence"—the doctrine that, if people are to attain true holiness, they should be willing to undergo any hardship for the glory of God.[11] By leading a life of disinterested benevolence, Christians can best demonstrate that they are among the elect of God (Elsbree 1935).

Hopkins further argued that if disinterested benevolence was the essence of holiness, then selfishness, the opposite of disinterested benevolence, was the sum of all sin. Disinterested benevolence should be practiced toward "all beings which exist, capable of good, or that can be in any sense or degree, objects of good-will" (Hopkins, cited in Elsbree 1935:541). This included pagans and heathen, the urban and rural poor, the oppressed, the drunk, the destitute, and all sorts and conditions of humanity. Thus, in Hopkins's logic, humanity was perishing because of the failure of Christians to practice disinterested benevolence. True Christianity involved a trusteeship relationship in which Christians were under obligation to serve the downtrodden (Griffin 1960). This Calvinist perspective, which had its roots in colonial America and extended into the postrevolutionary period, motivated many people to stewardship, and constituted the foundation of an array of social movements and organizations dedicated to fight against intemperance, war, poverty, and slavery; it also motivated the founding of Bible societies, orphanages, and Sunday schools (Staudenraus 1961:12). Indeed, it was the major precept of theology taught in some seminaries and in a number of northern universities. Men of Hopkins's orientation organized the first missionary societies in Connecticut and Massachusetts in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and sent itinerant evangelists to the new communities west of the Alleghenies.

Not all preachers agreed with Hopkins's precepts of disinterested benevolence; some, including certain Calvinists, subscribed to interpretations of the principle of Divine Providence, which provided a theological justification for slavery. According to that interpretation, slavery was part of a divinely ordained social order. God had put slaves in the charge of their masters for some divine purpose (Oakes 1982:96; Barnes 1855:31).[12]

Those who espoused Hopkins's Calvinist orientation went on to undertake a variety of social missions. In 1801, Hopkins founded the Rhode Island Missionary Society. Associates and students of his included Ezra Stiles and Timothy Dwight, both presidents of Yale University; Samuel Spring, a founder of the Andover Theological Seminary; and numerous preachers, teachers, and students from as far south as Philadelphia to the new territory of Maine (Elsbree 1935).

An important part of the missionary activities was the effort to make Bibles available to as many as wanted them. By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, hundreds of Bible societies had sprung up

throughout the North. In 1816, these societies were brought together to form the American Bible Society. The two individuals most responsible for this development were Samuel J. Mills and Elias Boudinot; both were to become actively involved in the colonization movement. Mills, whose missionary tours of the West intensified the distribution of Bibles, was a product of Andover Theological Seminary, an institution founded by theologians in Hopkins's tradition. He would be the first emissary of the American Colonization Society (ACS) to Africa to secure land for the repatriation of free blacks. Boudinot, who was president of the New Jersey Bible Society, was a close associate of the New Jersey Presbyterian clergyman Robert Finley, and one of those whose encouragement spurred Finley's efforts to organize the ACS (Staudenraus 1961).

The colonization movement was also linked to other social movements through a network of individuals driven by Calvinist doctrines of social and political morality. For example, Dr. Benjamin Rush, a founder of the Temperance and Sunday school movements, was an outspoken critic of the conditions of pauperism and slavery and an early supporter of colonization. His son, Richard Rush, was a founding member of ACS. Driven by the notion that God had ordained them to save sinners, this group contributed the ideological orientation and the organizational framework for the colonization movement during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

For Calvinists, however, the importance of colonization resided more in the opportunity to send the Gospel to pagan peoples than in solving the problem of social degradation in America. Like the majority of Americans, many Calvinists were convinced that blacks and whites could not live together in America under conditions of equality. But the massive deportation later envisioned was not part of their original plan. Calvinists perceived colonization as atonement for sin, an opportunity to right a grievous wrong and above all, an opportunity to demonstrate disinterested benevolence. Accordingly, the approach to colonization advocated by Hopkins and his associates in the latter part of the eighteenth century revolved around the training of free blacks as missionaries before sending them to Africa. In 1773, Hopkins and Stiles issued an appeal for subscriptions to support two missionaries to the Guinea Coast of Africa. Two free blacks who had come under Hopkins's influence had been admitted to Princeton to study theology and return to Africa as missionaries (Elsbree 1935). These plans were disrupted by the revolution.[13]

Other Impulses Driving Colonization

Besides Calvinist notions of benevolence, several other motives drove the debate about colonization. The most important of these had to do with the

future of free blacks. To many people, the emancipation of blacks was an inevitable fact that flowed from the principles espoused by the new republic and was required to ensure the well-being of the body politic. However, the acceptance of blacks as full members of the body politic was considered by many to be detrimental to the Republic for three main reasons. First, there was widespread belief in the inferiority of blacks. Second, the incorporation of blacks as full citizens was considered a danger to the European heritage of American civilization. Third, blacks were presumed to harbor deep animosity against whites for the cruelties of slavery and their incorporation was perceived to be an invitation to revenge, a risk not to be taken by the new republic (Jordan 1977:542–51). Consequently, a major consideration regarding colonization during the period between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War was to find a formula that would simultaneously ensure the liberation of blacks and a safe, peaceful, and morally acceptable method of removing them from the United States and relocating them elsewhere.

By the early decades of the nineteenth century, the protection of slave property became yet another factor influencing the colonization idea. The perception grew that the existence of free blacks posed a threat to the institution of slavery. This view was particularly strong among slaveholders of the lower southern states and those whose fortunes, life-style, and status rested mainly on the maintenance of "the peculiar institution" (Harris 1982). The renewed profitability of cotton plantations and the beginnings of slave plots and rebellions at the turn of the century strengthened the perception of the threat posed to slave property by the continued presence of free blacks in the South.

Thus, with varying emphasis at different periods, Calvinist benevolence, the search for a morally acceptable method of expatriation of free blacks, and concerns about the protection of slave property constituted the three major impulses driving the colonization movement from the period of the American Revolution to the Civil War. By 1816 these three impulses were combined in the founding of the American Colonization Society. Subsequent to the founding of the ACS, numerous plans for colonization had been proposed by individuals motivated by these impulses.

Jefferson's Plan for Colonization

Among the earliest plans was that proposed by Thomas Jefferson, who seems to have been motivated by the need to find a morally acceptable form of black removal without abruptly disrupting the socioeconomic infrastructure of slavery. Jefferson had given considerable thought to the question of colonization. The plan rested on the argument that blacks were

an inferior race and that the presence of free blacks constituted a threat to American society in several respects. As free people, they threatened to pollute the race if they were permitted to exercise the same freedoms as whites. But, he further argued, their perpetual enslavement compromised the application of the American concept of freedom. Jefferson believed in the notion of divine retribution, and feared that the steady increase in the free black population indicated that "a revolution of the wheel of fortune" loomed ominously and that the roles of masters and slaves could be reversed. "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that His justice cannot sleep forever" (quoted in Staudenraus 1961:2).

Many of Jefferson's colleagues in Virginia shared his concerns. In 1777, the Virginia legislature established a committee chaired by Jefferson to study the possibility of colonization. Two questions were foremost in their considerations: the potential impact on the institution of slavery, and the ability of free blacks to acquire skills for organizing a productive society and a system of governance. Slaveholders feared that, if not properly conceived and executed, colonization would lead to blanket emancipation and thereby undermine the institution of slavery. However, many slave owners supported the idea of colonization provided that it meant complete removal of free blacks and termination of their contacts with slaves. Although the interests and concerns of the slave owners were of prime importance in considering colonization, there also seems to have been concern about the preparation of free blacks to govern their own affairs.

Being fully aware of these concerns, Jefferson included in his report a plan for gradual emancipation—a program for education and preparation for colonization. According to the plan that was presented by the committee to the Virginia legislature, every slave child born after the passage of the law would remain with parents and, at a certain age, if the child was a girl, begin to take instruction in household arts until she was eighteen years old. Boys were to be trained in farming, arts, and sciences until twenty-one. The cost of training was to be underwritten by the state of Virginia. Males were to be subject to colonization at twenty-one and females at eighteen (Locke 1968; McMaster 1914, 4:556). Although not enacted by the Virginia legislature, Jefferson's plan was widely debated in southern society.[14]

The question of colonization continued to occupy Jefferson throughout his life. It is clear that he was keenly aware of the potential political conflicts, the enormous financial costs, and the international requirements attending the implementation of a colonization plan. As a keen observer of the British colonization efforts, he was aware that private initiatives ran the risk of being unable to sustain the necessary level of funding;

the unsuccessful Sierra Leone experiment of 1787–1790 clearly demonstrated this. As an elder statesman, he considered the possibility of using Federal funds from the sale of lands that had been ceded by "the very states needing this relief." However, he was sensitive to the constitutional question raised by such a funding proposal.[15] Jefferson was also aware that given the tenuous relationship between the United States and Britain, no assistance or cooperation could be expected from Britain in this endeavor. All indications suggested that a successful colonization project required the full backing of the government of the United States and the full cooperation of free blacks (Alexander 1846). In the latter quarter of the eighteenth century neither of these seemed attainable.

Other Plans

The rising concern about slave revolts after the Saint Domingue revolt of 1791 heightened interest in colonization. However, some of the colonization proposals predated the revolt. In 1713, a group of Quakers from Germantown, Pennsylvania, proposed a plan for the colonization of Africa by blacks from the Western Hemisphere in order to bring Africa civilization, Christianity, and legitimate commerce (Harris 1982).

In 1785, Dr. William Thornton, a Quaker physician who had unexpectedly inherited a West Indies estate with slaves, devised a plan to dispose of his slaves by establishing a self-sustaining plantation run by the slaves themselves in West Africa or in the West Indies. Thornton proposed to lead the voyage himself and supervise the establishment of the settlement (Staudenraus 1961). He hoped that such initiative would encourage manumission.

In an effort to secure support for his scheme, Thornton communicated with James Madison whose views on colonization did not differ drastically from Jefferson's. Madison maintained that unconditional emancipation was not in the interest of American society nor of blacks because it would require the blacks' complete incorporation, which was "rendered impossible by the prejudice of whites." White prejudice proceeded mainly from the difference of color and was therefore "permanent and insuperable." A settlement on the African coast was preferable to the American interior because if established too far west, a black settlement would be destroyed by Indians (Native Americans) and if set up within close proximity of white settlements, would soon be at war with whites (Jordan 1977:552).

Encouraged by the plan of Granville Sharp and Zachary Macaulay of England, which led to the Sierra Leone settlement already referred to, Anthony Benezet developed a plan for the colonization of free blacks in territory west of the Allegheny (Woodson and Wesley 1962). William

Craighead, a Virginia magistrate, also devised a plan that called for gradual emancipation and colonization in the northwestern territory after a period of preparatory education. Craighead perceived an arrangement in which self-government of the proposed settlement would be encouraged under Federal oversight (Alexander 1846).

There was also the plan of Judge Tucker, a Virginia Court of Appeals judge, who saw a need for a "middle course" between what he felt were the dangers to be brought about by rapid emancipation, whether by abolition or manumission, and the cruelties of banishment through colonization. Tucker proposed that all female slaves born after the adoption of his plan would be free but would serve their mothers' masters until attaining the age of twenty-eight. At that time, they would be given twenty dollars and some clothing, and thereafter be treated in the same manner as white servants. Tucker proposed that free blacks should then constitute a second class of citizens that would be banned from holding public office, acquiring real property, except by twenty-one year lease agreements, bearing arms, except by special three-year authorization, marrying whites, and serving as lawyers, jurors, or witnesses against whites. Tucker argued that his proposals would solve the problem of securing slave property since no one could lay claims of ownership to unborn persons, and would also relieve the nation's conscience of having to expel blacks to the wilds of Africa or elsewhere. Tucker argued that under his proposal, slavery would fade away within 105 years and blacks would voluntarily go away, perhaps to the West Indies, South America, or Africa (Jordan 1977:559-60).

A wealthy slaveholder, Ferdinando Fairfax of Virginia, proposed a modification of Jefferson's plan. Fairfax proposed that Congress intervene to adopt the Virginia plan as a national plan for colonization. He argued, however, that instead of ensuring emancipation by state or Federal law, emancipation should be achieved by manumission. He also proposed the initiation of trade with Africa as a means of financing the colonization scheme (Locke 1968; Staudenraus 1961).

The question of colonization seems to have gained in urgency after the Saint Domingue revolt became a revolution and the Gabriel Prosser plot occurred in 1800. Fear of slave rebellion led the Virginia legislature, in 1801, to instruct Governor James Monroe to seek President Jefferson's support for the establishment of a penal colony in Africa or South America for convicted rebels. The following year, a second resolution instructed the governor to request the president to seek a location to which free blacks or those manumitted in the future "may be sent or choose to remove as a place of asylum."[16] By 1805, the Virginia legislature was proposing the use of a portion of the Louisiana Territory for the establishment of a black colony (Jordan 1977:565). The request for the Federal

government's involvement in colonization was not to be seriously considered for about ten years.

Thus, driven by a mix of motives and interests, the colonization question sparked a vigorous debate in the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War. In New England, Calvinist missionary zeal was the main force. In Pennsylvania, Quakers' concern with the avoidance of racial war in the United States was mixed with the desire to create opportunities so that blacks could live in a just and free society of their own. For others to whom the continuing presence of blacks was incompatible with American democracy, the objective of colonization was to find a morally acceptable method of black expatriation. In the South, there was a general concern with maintaining the integrity of the institution of slavery.

One motivation, however, impelled all the proponents of colonization and defined their common ground: the belief that the presence of free blacks threatened the fabric of American society. As it became the major preoccupation of the national debate about free blacks, 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. Therefore, it was possible that, in spite of fundamental differences in perceptions of the future of America and of strategies for colonization and their anticipated outcomes, northern Calvinists, Quakers, and southern plantation owners found a common basis that was momentarily adequate for forging cooperation in the formation of an organization for the removal of free blacks from American society.

The Colonization Idea among Free Blacks

As early as the 1780s, emigrationist sentiments had found a stronghold among the blacks of New England. These sentiments persuaded proponents of colonization to advise free blacks that, in preparation for the possibility of emigration, they should engage in "wholesome living," invest in land, and strive to lead productive and disciplined lives. Clearly, New England Calvinist doctrines were an essential influence on the black emigrationists' perspective (F. Miller 1975).

In 1787, more than seventy-five blacks of Boston petitioned the court to assist them in emigrating to Africa. A similar appeal came from free blacks of Rhode Island. Some free blacks of New England were in touch with the Reverend Samuel Hopkins and supported his efforts to train and dispatch black missionaries to Africa. In 1794, free blacks of Providence initiated efforts to unite black communities of the North behind a plan for colonization. With the support of the Providence

mercantile firm of Brown, Benson, and Ives, whose motives included making commercial inroads in West Africa, an official of the Providence African Society, the Reverend James McKenzie, was sent to Sierra Leone to explore the possibility of free black emigration. It was only because of complications that developed in the relationship between the colonial authorities of Sierra Leone, the Providence African Society, and the white backers of the plan that no emigration was undertaken (ibid.).

Paul Cuffe's Colonization Scheme

One New England free black who implemented a colonization scheme was a wealthy sea captain, Paul Cuffe.[17] Cuffe was born on Cuttyhunk Island off the coast of Massachusetts. His father was black and his mother was Native American. Over years of entrepreneurship, he was able to put together a considerable business establishment. He owned at least two oceangoing vessels and had other trading interests. Cuffe was deeply concerned about the indignities confronting blacks, including wealthy blacks like himself. He saw the slave trade as the root cause of black people's burdens and believed that Africa should offer a solution. He believed that free blacks had a responsibility to introduce Christianity, civilization, and legitimate trade in an effort to redeem Africa and replace the degradation of the slave trade with productive industry. Cuffe, who had become a Quaker in 1808, saw himself and other black property owners as the instruments of Africa's redemption. Sierra Leone provided the inspiration.

With the assistance of Quaker merchants of Philadelphia, Cuffe established contacts with the African Institution of London, the philanthropic society that was involved in the Sierra Leone experiment. Through these contacts, he formulated plans to visit Africa. Although Cuffe's primary concern was the redemption of Africa, he was also attracted by the prospects of favorable commercial ventures. Arriving in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in 1811, Cuffe began exploring possible trade links between the colony of Sierra Leone and blacks in the United States. It was his view that vigorous trade would promote economic growth in Sierra Leone and attract property-owning, morally upright black American emigrants. Sierra Leone would then become the base from which a new enterprising and self-motivating society would spread a favorable influence over Africa.

While he was occupied with a different long-range strategy, Cuffe sought permission to settle a small number of free blacks in Sierra Leone without delay. In preparation for this undertaking and for future emigration, he organized a local solidarity and support group to facilitate smooth cooperation between New World emigrants and the people of Sierra Leone.

Upon his return to the United States, Cuffe traveled widely along the eastern seaboard to promote his emigration scheme. Counterpart organizations to the solidarity group formed in Sierra Leone were established in New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. After a delay caused by the War of 1812, Cuffe sailed in 1815 for Sierra Leone aboard his brig *Traveller* with thirty-eight emigrants who were free black families from Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. The entire cost of the voyage and settlement in Africa was underwritten by Cuffe himself.

With the completion of that expedition, Cuffe gradually broadened his plans. By 1816, he was convinced that the manumission of slaves had to be followed by emigration from American society. He now envisaged the establishment of two colonies of free blacks, one on the North American continent, perhaps west of the Mississippi, and the other in Africa to be linked by trade, Christianity, and productive enterprise in a concerted effort to uplift black people. It was during this period that Cuffe was sought out by the Reverend Robert Finley, the organizer of the American Colonization Society.[18] Having at first expressed his support for the ACS, Cuffe later withdrew it, apparently suspecting that the organization's real objective was to deport free blacks (Woodson and Wesley 1962:287). Cuffe died before his plans could materialize.

The Founding of the American Colonization Society

The mix of motives that supported the colonization movement was readily evident among the forces that organized the American Colonization Society. Even some abolitionists supported its founding, because they saw colonization as a first step in the dismantling of slavery. Wealthy southern plantation owners who saw in colonization an opportunity for ridding the society of a threat to the institution of slavery supported the ACS. So did northern religious zealots who were driven by a missionary fervor for Christianizing and civilizing as atonement for the oppression of blacks; as did northern commercial interests that sought opportunities to expand trade. Colonization was a solution to a diversity of demands by different groups; and the ACS became the instrument for undertaking the colonization scheme.

Conceiving the American Colonization Society

It took the efforts of Robert Finley, a Presbyterian clergyman from New Jersey, to formulate a structure within which the idea of colonization was to be made operational. Finley was the son of a Calvinist Scots yarn merchant who was a close friend of John Witherspoon, president of

Princeton College and a leading eighteenth-century Calvinist preacher and teacher. Early in his life, Finley had fallen under the influence of Witherspoon, the Reverend Samuel Smith, and Ashbel Green—all active in the Sunday School Union, local Bible societies, and home missionary efforts. He was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1975, pastored a church, and headed the church-related local academy in Basking Ridge, near Princeton, for twenty-two years (Staudenraus 1961).

Finley's labors as a teacher and preacher and his connections through marriage provided him with a network of influential supporters for his scheme of black emigration. Some of his students who became national figures were Samuel Southard, a future secretary of the Navy, United States senator, and governor of New Jersey; Theodore Frelinghuysen, a United States senator, vice-presidential candidate, and later president of Rutgers; and Captain Robert F. Stockton, a naval officer, hero of the Mexican war, and later U.S. senator from New Jersey. It was through Finley's aggressive Calvinist evangelism that his small church soon became one of the most influential in the New Jersey Presbyterian synod. By 1815, he had been elevated to the position of director of a new theological seminary at Princeton.

His wife, Esther Caldwell Finley, was the daughter of Christian missionaries who had been killed by the British. Her foster father was Elias Boudinot, a cofounder of the American Bible Society and influential member of the board of trustees of Princeton College. A strong federalist and associate of Alexander Hamilton, he had served as president of the Confederate Congress and held a Federal government position under Washington (Griffin 1960). His foster son and Finley's brother-in-law, Elias Caldwell, had been editor of a weekly that was instrumental in raising funds for benevolent societies and had also served as Boudinot's lieutenant in the Bible society. He became secretary of the United States Supreme Court at the beginning of the century (Staudenraus 1961).

Finley had observed the increasing number of free blacks in his neighborhood and his parish. He was disturbed by their poverty and their inability to read the Bible and other religious tracts. He was also aware of the growing population of free blacks in New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere in the North and believed that although religious education could improve the literacy of blacks, it could not alter their social standing in American society. Like others of his day, he concluded that the removal of blacks from the United States was the only solution to the race problem and the plight of blacks. By 1816, he had identified the colonization of free blacks as the benevolent cause to which he would dedicate his time and efforts. Finley told an associate, "When I consider what many others have effected for the benefit of their suffering fellow creatures at an earlier age than mine, I am humbled and mortified to think how little I have

done" (quoted in Staudenraus 1961:17). Early in 1816, Finley took every opportunity to debate the idea of colonization and to organize support for it. Beginning in Princeton, he organized a public meeting of professors and members of the Princeton College and Theological Seminary, where he outlined the task as one perfectly suited for a benevolent endeavor.

As he discussed his plan with various audiences, Finley was able to grapple more carefully with the details of the concept and its implementation. By mid-1816, he had formulated a comprehensive set of arguments in favor of colonization. He argued that his colonization plan was from God; that God had destined blacks to live in Africa. Although some might strive to raise themselves to "a proper level" while they remained in the United States, such striving would be in vain. Real improvement of the conditions of blacks was impossible in light of entrenched prejudices and "a sense of inferiority." Colonization would bring opportunities for industrious and virtuous living for blacks, restore American morals and industry, remove the burden of black pauperism, and serve as an incentive for the gradual emancipation of slaves. Finley also saw colonization as a way of spreading civilization and Christian evangelism in Africa. He pointed to Sierra Leone as an experiment designed by God, and argued that just as a group of "virtuous and pious" men had launched the British colony of Sierra Leone, a similar group in the United States could organize a comparable project. Finley argued, however, that since the entire nation shared the guilt of slavery, "a great violation of the laws of nature," it was appropriate that colonization be perceived as an "atoning sacrifice" to be undertaken by the nation as a whole. Thus Finley had woven together a web of justifications for colonization so that every contending viewpoint could find a reason for supporting his scheme. As Staudenraus puts it, Finley's multifaceted argument appealed to those who wished to "uplift free Negroes, those who hoped to expand missionary work to all corners of the globe, those who groped for painless systems of emancipation, and those who perceived the glint of commercial advantage beneath the froth of religious phrases" (1961:22).

In mobilizing financial support, he communicated with many of the leading wealthy men of New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia who were interested in benevolent causes. In a letter to one such individual, John P. Mumford of New York, Finley outlined three objectives to be achieved by colonization:

> The state of free blacks has very much oppressed my mind. Their numbers increase greatly, and their wretchedness too as appears to me. Every thing connected with their condition, including their color, is against them; nor is there much prospect that their state can ever be ameliorated, while they shall continue among us. . . . Our fathers

> brought them here, and we are bound, if possible, to repair the injuries inflicted by our fathers. Could they be sent back to Africa, a three-fold benefit would arise. We should be cleared of them; we should send to Africa a population partially civilized and Christianized for its benefits; our blacks themselves would be in a better situation. [Quoted in Wickstrom 1958:22]

Finley asked Mumford to assist in organizing a substantial number of rich and benevolent men in a colonization society.

Also in 1816, in presenting his ideas on colonization to the New York and New Jersey Synod of Presbyterians, Finley proposed that it support the training of black missionaries for the colonization project. The synod had previously created the African Educational Society as the agency for opening a school for black teachers and preachers for Christian work in urban America. Finley persuaded that body to include the training of missionaries and magistrates for the future African colony as one of the school's objectives.

Having approved Finley's request, the synod selected Samuel J. Mills, a graduate of Andover Theological Seminary and a traveling agent for numerous benevolent societies, as the chief fund-raiser for the African Educational Society. Mills himself had thought about organizing a colony for free blacks in Ohio, Indiana, or Illinois with a view to developing black leadership for a larger colonization effort in the northwestern territory or somewhere along the African coast. Mills was later to become the first emissary of the American Colonization Society to Africa (Griffin 1960; Staudenraus 1961).

Given Finley's concept of colonization, two factors became indispensable to the success of the plan. One was the support of the United States government and the other was the support of the free black community. On the latter, he sought the opinion of black leaders, prominent among whom was Paul Cuffe. On the former, Finley's plan called for the formation of a benevolent association that would assist the government of the United States in establishing a colony in Africa. Just as the colonies of Greece and Rome brought "strength and lustre" to their metropolis, an American colony overseas would "extend the empire of liberty and Christian blessings to surrounding nations," he argued (Staudenraus 1961:21).

Finley knew that the cost of colonization and the potential international entanglements made government backing absolutely necessary. In fact, his plan was to be implemented by the government with the benevolent society providing assistance. This point is crucial in understanding the evolution of the colonization plan, its failures, and the

adjustments made later. In order to achieve government backing, the proposed colonization scheme needed to court the support of politicians and influential individuals in Washington, D.C.

Organizing the American Colonization Society

In Washington, Finley's contacts proved valuable. His brother-in-law Elias Caldwell was well placed in political, social, and business circles.[19] Caldwell enlisted the assistance of his close friend Francis Scott Key, a wealthy Georgetown lawyer and politically influential socialite, in promoting Finley's proposal. Both Key and Caldwell were important members of the American Bible Society and the American Sunday School Union. After considerable groundwork that involved canvassing numerous notables, a meeting for the promotion of "a plan for colonizing the free blacks of the United States" was held at the Davis Hotel on December 21, 1816.

About twenty prominent men attended the meeting. They included senior officials of the United States government, reputable clergymen, wealthy businessmen, lawyers, and proprietors of estates. Among the government officials present were Judge Bushrod Washington, associate justice of the United States Supreme Court and nephew of President George Washington; the Honorable Henry Clay, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress; Robert H. Goldsborough, United States senator from the state of Maryland; Robert Wright and John Carlyle Herbert, member of the United States Congress from Maryland; Daniel Webster, member of the United States Congress from New Hampshire; the Honorable William Crawford, secretary of the Treasury of the United States; and the generals Andrew Jackson of Tennessee and John Mason of Washington, D.C. The latter was also known to be a distinguished constitutional scholar.

The gathering constituted an interesting balance of regional and economic interest and of philosophical and ideological orientations. For example, representing the landed gentry of the South were John Randolph of Roanoke, former U.S. Senator from Virginia, former Jeffersonian leader in the House of Representatives, a leading exponent of states' rights doctrines, and owner of a well-known Roanoke estate; John Taylor of Caroline, a former U.S. senator from Virginia and defender of the old agrarian order who opposed congressional "interference" with the institution of slavery as established under state law; John Lee of Maryland, lawyer and owner of the famous Needwood estate near Frederick, Maryland; and Richard Bland Lee and Edmund Lee, brothers of General

Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, revolutionary soldier and father of the confederate commander-in-chief Robert E. Lee. Secretary of the Treasury Crawford, owner of the Woodlawn estate in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, and a former U.S. senator from Georgia was himself an important voice of the southern landed gentry (*Who Was Who in America 1607-1896*).

Representatives of industrial interests included the wealthy Rhode Island industrialist Obadiah Brown, a philanthropist and partner in the firm of Brown and Almy, makers of the first pure cotton goods in the United States; David English and John I. Stull, noted Georgetown bankers; and Colonel Henry Rutgers, a New York industrialist, philanthropist, and public servant. Calvinist clergymen present included the patriarch Reverend Stephen Balach of the Presbytery of Washington, D.C.; the Reverend James Laurie; and the Reverend Robert Finley, the organizer. Two Episcopal clergymen, the Reverend William Meade, who later became the bishop of Virginia, and the Reverend William H. Wilmer, who was to be one of the founders of the Virginia Theological Seminary, were also present. The Quakers from Philadelphia included Robert Ralston and Richard Rush, son of Dr. Benjamin Rush. The younger Rush was to become secretary of state and later U.S. envoy to Britain. Elias Caldwell and Samuel J. Mills of the Bible and missionary societies were also there.

In presenting his case to the meeting, Finley crafted his statement to avoid controversy. He confined himself to the common grounds of agreement. He dwelled on the social and economic condition of free blacks and on the burden of their presence in American society, appealing to the noble cause to be served by their repatriation. He referred to the Sierra Leone experiment and called upon his guests to accept the challenge to do similarly.

The chairman of the meeting, Henry Clay, saw two important causes to be served by colonization: "Can there be a nobler cause than that which, while it proposes to rid our own country of a useless and pernicious, if not a dangerous, portion of its population, contemplates the spreading of the arts of civilized life, and the possible redemption from ignorance and barbarism of a benighted portion of the globe?" Clay and his colleagues seemed oblivious to the inconsistency in engaging a "useless and pernicious" group of people as instrument for spreading "the arts of civilized life" (quoted in Alexander 1846:81-82).

A number of southern gentlemen were more direct in expressing their apprehension about the possible repercussions of colonization on the institution of slavery. Thus John Randolph of Roanoke stated that, apart from the higher principles articulated, there was "a practical matter" of concern that had not been sufficiently discussed. He stressed that colonization was a good idea. But every measure should be taken so that, far

from threatening the institution of slavery, it must "materially secure the property of every master in the United States over his slaves," for

> it is a notorious fact that the existence of this mixed and intermediate population of free negroes is viewed by every slave-holder as one of the greatest sources of the insecurity and unprofitableness of slave property; that they serve to excite in their fellow beings a feeling of discontent, of repining at their situation, and that they act as channels of communications not only between different slaves, but between the slaves of different districts; that they are the depositories of stolen goods, and the promoters of mischief. [Ibid.:87-88]

He went on to assure the meeting that if a place could be located far out of reach of the United States and a method devised for the shipment of free blacks there, thousands of citizens were prepared not only to contribute to the colonization of free blacks but also to the manumission of some of their slaves and so "relieve themselves from the cares attendant on their possession" (ibid.).

Robert Wright of Maryland seemed opposed to mandatory colonization. He stressed that he was prepared to extend to free blacks the option of repatriation. He was skeptical, however, as to whether free blacks would want to voluntarily "abandon the land of their nativity, so dear to man." Wright also emphasized the need to protect the institution of slavery and secure the interest of slaveholders: "While we wish to promote the happiness of these free people of color, we ought to take care not to furnish the means of transporting out of the reach of the master his property" (ibid.:88).

Not many views were expressed on the means of implementing the colonization program. Elias Caldwell was among the few who addressed that issue. He argued that colonization was "a great national object, and ought to be supported by a national purse [as] a national atonement for the wrongs and injuries which Africa has suffered." Noting that some state legislatures had intermittently taken up the question, he maintained that "as a nation, we cannot rid ourselves entirely from the guilt and disgrace attending that iniquitous traffic, until we have made every reparation in our power." Although private contributions were necessary, the government should bear the major responsibility for colonization: "I should be sorry to see our government dividing any part of the glory and honor which cannot fail of attending the accomplishment of a work so great, so interesting, and which will tend so much to diffuse the blessings of civil liberty, and promote the happiness of man" (ibid.:86).

At the conclusion of the discussion, a number of resolutions were adopted, including the following, which formally organized the ACS:

> Resolved, that an association or society be formed for the purpose of *collecting information*, and *to assist* in the formation and execution of a plan for the colonization of the free people of colour with their consent, in Africa or elsewhere, as may be thought most advisable by the *constituted authority of the country*. [Ibid.:89, my emphasis]

It is of crucial importance to note that, according to this organizing resolution, the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color in the United States, as the ACS was to be known formally, was organized to play a supplementary or supportive role in colonizing free blacks. With the United States government making the principal decisions and undertaking the major responsibilities, the ACS was organized to "collect information" and "assist" the government in this endeavor. However, far from playing a supportive but subordinate role, the ACS was to become the major planning and implementing agency of black colonization. This gap between conception and implementation contributed to the colonization debacle.

Seeking Government Support

Two committees were appointed at the organizing meeting of the ACS. One was to draft the society's constitution and rules and the second was to communicate with the Congress requesting the adoption of measures to fulfill the objectives of colonization. At a subsequent meeting of the society, officers were elected and the ACS commenced a massive publicity effort to expand its membership and develop support among the American people, especially among free blacks.

Although the ACS consisted of government members and other men of considerable influence, the government's reaction to the society's proposal was less than enthusiastic. The Anti-Slavery Committee of the House of Representatives was assigned to study the proposal. The committee's report was cautious and noncommittal. The committee noted that, given the distinct character and relative condition of blacks, their separation from American society "must be such as to admit of an indefinite continuance." Colonizing them anywhere on the North American continent was out of the question. The colonization of black people on another continent, however, was fraught with difficulties. There was the possibility of war with the natives of the land and a need to commit troops for their protection. Moreover, such a colonization scheme would be very expensive. The committee also noted that measures taken to ensure the viability of the colony would most likely induce the intrusion of whites, and would eventually restore the original evil that the colony had been

designed to remove. The report stressed that the international situation was such that the possibility of quarrels and destructive wars with slavers and others in the international community would threaten the existence of the new society. The report further asserted that, even if persuaded by the lofty ideals of the plan, the United States government would have to secure the "explicit assent and engagement of all civilized powers" to ensure respect for the integrity of the proposed new society. Such support would not be forthcoming in view of the current international situation.

A second option, according to the report, was to request Britain to admit emigrants from the United States into the colony of Sierra Leone. However, there were problems with this option: "Will the British government consent to receive such an accession of emigrants . . . from the United States? Would that government agree, that at the period when that colony shall be capable of self-government and self-protection, it shall be declared independent? In the meantime, will it desire to monopolize the commerce of the colony? This would be injurious to the colonists, as well as to the United States" (ibid.:96). The committee therefore recommended that the decision to undertake a colonization scheme be postponed until more information was available regarding the cooperation of the British and other maritime powers. A joint resolution authorizing the president to begin such negotiations was proposed but was never brought to the floor of the Congress; as a result, no action was taken.

Nevertheless, the proposal of the ACS and reports of discussions within congressional committees intensified the national debate on colonization. Within a short period, supporters of the ACS formed affiliate societies in most of the major cities of the eastern seaboard and in some parts of the South. Unlike the members of the House of Representatives Anti-Slavery Committee, many Americans of different backgrounds and orientations worked diligently to bring the colonization scheme to fruition in the hope of finding what Staudenraus (1961:28) has called "a painless way to remove negroes from the United States."

In spite of its failure to obtain formal support from Congress, the ACS pressed on with the colonization scheme. It was hoped that favorable reports of its efforts would attract wider support, especially that of Congress. Contacts were made with the British colonization society. In March 1817, an exploratory mission of two led by Samuel J. Mills, also of the American Bible Society, was sent to England and Africa; his colleague was Ebenezer Burgess, a Connecticut man who was a professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at Burlington College, Vermont. Although officials of the British colonial establishment in London encouraged the colonizing effort, the field officers in Sierra Leone warned against it as a private endeavor in view of the high financial and defense

costs. Mills and Burgess, however, having gone to Africa with preconceptions about the colonization scheme as a divinely ordained undertaking, did not heed such advice. Instead, they prepared a very optimistic report to the ACS. Mills died at sea en route from Africa, and the report when presented by Burgess recommended the immediate establishment of a colony at Sherbro Island near the British colony of Sierra Leone. Burgess's excitement about the novelties and curiosities of Africa compromised his judgment. His exuberance about the possibility of stemming the slave trade was exceeded only by his perception of opportunities for legitimate trade in exotic African commodities (Staudenraus 1961).

The Burgess report was a self-fulfilling prophecy since members of the ACS were already convinced about the viability of their plans. At the ACS's first annual meeting, its president Judge Bushrod Washington dismissed the objections of free blacks to the organization's colonization plan as "springing from first impressions, and . . . the result entirely of ignorance and misapprehension" (American Colonization Society, *Annual Reports* [1818] 1:4). Washington saw emigration to Africa as an easier undertaking than emigration to the western territories: "An emigration to Africa will be attended with less expense, and the emigrant will be exposed to less and to fewer difficulties, when the colony is established than many of the emigrants to the Western country now encounter" (ibid.:6).

Recognizing Congress's concern about suppressing the slave trade, the Burgess report was further crafted to promote colonization as an important initiative in the fight against the slave trade. Cast in this light, the report was submitted to Congress. Through a number of maneuvers within Congress, Representative Charles Fenton Mercer, a supporter of colonization, sought to obtain congressional appropriation for the disposing of Africans who had been rescued from slavers.[20] Mercer's bill authorized the president of the United States to "make such regulations and arrangements, as he may deem expedient, for the safeguarding, support, and removal" of recaptives left stranded in the United States.[21] The president was authorized to deploy a naval squadron and establish an agency on the African coast for this purpose. An appropriation of $100,000 was approved. Upon the passage of Mercer's bill by both houses of Congress, the focus of ACS lobbying efforts shifted to the president.

President Monroe was advised by the ACS to interpret the act as granting him authority to purchase land and establish a colony in Africa. The ACS argued that the intent of the act was not to dump recaptives in Africa but to establish a colony for their rehabilitation. After considerable debate within the president's cabinet, it was agreed that the interpretation of the act could be stretched so that the United States could purchase land, establish a station for recaptives, and send carpenters

and other workers to build shelters and prepare a station. However, if the "safe and comfortable" removal of recaptives required that some free blacks be sent, such a measure was also perceived to be authorized under the act. The first group of emigrants, two-thirds of whom were women and children, left the United States under the guise of being carpenters and laborers, seamstresses, nurses, and cooks—a work party to prepare a rehabilitation station for recaptives (Staudenraus 1961).

Although Charles Fenton Mercer's strategy for securing government support had paid off in the short run, the colonization of free blacks and the establishment of a new society by them in a strange environment had begun in a less than forthright manner and in circumstances that were both dubious and precarious. These conditions would further contribute to the colonization debacle.

Voices against Colonization

No sooner had the ACS announced its existence and published its objective than strong opposition surfaced from the free black communities of the northern cities.[22] Later, as the views of free blacks became widely known among white abolitionists, many who had previously endorsed the ACS withdrew their support.[23] By the 1830s the ACS had become known as an instrument of slaveholders and an opponent of abolition.[24]

To the majority of free blacks and other supporters of abolition, the ACS's colonization scheme was seen as a plan for deporting blacks to secure the institution of slavery. Within weeks of the announcement of the organization of the ACS, some three thousand blacks of Philadelphia gathered in a meeting at the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and issued a strong denunciation of the ACS.[25] Several resolutions were passed at the meeting; one of them expressed the resolve of free blacks to remain in the United States and strive to enjoy the fruits of their labor:

> Relieved from the miseries of slavery, many of us by your aid, possessing benefits which industry and integrity in this prosperous country assures to all its inhabitants, enjoying the rich blessings of religion, opportunities of worshipping the only true God, under the light of Christianity, each of us according to his understanding; and having afforded us and our children the means of education and improvement; we have no wish to separate from our present home, for any purpose whatever. Content with our present situation and condition, we are desirous of increasing the prosperity by honest efforts, and by the use of the opportunities, for their improvement, which the Constitution and laws allow . . . [A]ny

> measure or system of measures, having a tendency to banish us . . . would not only be cruel, but in direct violation of those principles, which have been the boast of this republic. [Mehlinger 1916:278]

Detecting that an objective of the ACS was to separate free blacks from slaves, the Bethel meeting resolved in a second resolution never to be voluntarily separated "from the slave population in this country." The resolution asserted that slaves "are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrong" and that free blacks found "more virtue in suffering privations with them, than fancied advantages for a season." Criticizing the ill-designed colonization program of the ACS, a third resolution of the Bethel meeting noted that "without arts, without science, without a proper knowledge of government, to cast into the savage wilds of Africa the free people of color, seems to us the circuitous route through which they must return to perpetual bondage" (ibid.).

The free blacks of Philadelphia petitioned the city's representative in the United States Congress to oppose any measure brought by the ACS that called for colonization. The reaction of the Bethel Church meeting and other such meetings of free blacks in northern cities was a source of concern to Finley and the ACS. Returning to Princeton after the formation of the ACS, he went to Philadelphia and met with the free black community. Although Finley assumed that the meeting had resolved differences between the ACS and the Bethel group, black opposition continued and spread.

Opposition to the ACS also came from the fledgling antislavery movement of the early nineteenth century. An editorial in the *New York Courier* of January 1, 1817 asked, with a hint of sarcasm: "Why was not something proposed for the enslaved blacks? Why not send them to Africa? That would indeed look a little like humanity and disinterestedness. But the free blacks are a dangerous mixture with the enslaved blacks. Aye—there's the rub—and there the occasion for all this unexpected, unsubstantial tenderness and humanity towards them" (quoted in Liberty 1977:63).

The most devastating attack on the ACS, however, came from the white abolitionist movement. By the close of the second decade of the nineteenth century, many individuals in the abolitionist movement had gradually come to reject colonization because they strongly suspected that the ACS was a tool of slaveholders and believed that blacks, after suitable preparation, should participate fully in the society. Thus, one such abolitionist, Dr. Benjamin Rush, proposed a solution of gradual emancipation with an education program that would see slave masters and other men teaching slaves first to read and write and then a trade. He also advocated abolishing the importation of slaves and imposing a limit on

the period of bondage, so that gradually all slaves would become literate and skilled free men (Griffin 1960).

Other abolitionists, such as Arthur and Lewis Tappan and William Lloyd Garrison, advocated the immediate abolition of slavery. They believed, as Griffin (ibid.:23) put it, "the drive to make slave holders sinless, could not wait upon convenience." Garrison had been an early supporter of colonization and of the ACS; his radical abolitionist stance developed over several years of debating the issue. The nature of black reaction to the ACS particularly interested him. He visited the black communities of several cities and was profoundly affected by their passionate disapproval of the emigration scheme. Upon breaking with the ACS, he became its severest critic.

Garrison accused the ACS of deceiving the public by stating that blacks overwhelmingly supported the colonization scheme. He was flabbergasted by what he perceived as the presumption of the ACS in arrogating to itself the right to decide what was good for black people. He accused the colonization movement of detracting from the main issue, unconditional emancipation, by putting forward a compromise position that was as unrealistic as it was immoral. With profound insight, Garrison argued that the history of colonization was the history of "subversion" of the colonists by the "vices, physical strength, or by the fatal amalgamation" with the natives, or alternatively of the "rapid destruction of the natives by the superior knowledge and avarice of the new settlers." The colony of Liberia could not escape such a fate. He argued that the colony would not only induce bloody conflicts with indigenous societies but stimulate a realignment of the balance of power in the region, pitting tribe against tribe, so that eventually "vice [would] preponderate over virtue, intemperance over sobriety, knavery over honesty, oppression over liberty, and impiety over godliness." Christianity would not take root because the "natives would have seen just enough to hate it and shun it; finding that its fruits are generally bad; that it has no restraining influence upon the mass of its nominal professors." The natives would not "comprehend the utility of abandoning their idolatrous worship; looking only to the pernicious examples of the intruders, they [would] spurn with contempt the precepts of the gospel." The barriers that would be erected "against the progress of the Christian religion" would not be insurmountable but "sufficiently tall and strong to retard its noble career — barriers not only of superstition and ignorance, but of hatred and revenge" (Garrison [1832] 1968:25-29).

Garrison's criticism was widely publicized. It virtually destroyed the ACS's credibility and undermined its support and capacity to raise funds. Conflict developed among its members. Suspicious that the ACS would yield to the pressure of abolitionists, southern slave owners became

lukewarm to the organization. In 1825, in a desperate effort to rally southern support in order to secure Federal assistance, the secretary of the ACS, Ralph Gurley, made a statement that put the organization squarely in the slaveholder's camp: "This society promulgates no new and dangerous doctrine. . . . Its aim only is to remove a people which are injurious and dangerous to our social interests, as they are ignorant, vicious and unhappy" (quoted in Staudenraus 1961:171). Thus in the 1830s the colonization idea lost its popularity and the colony of Liberia which had now been founded, tottered on the brink of disaster. An ill-conceived idea had produced an unwholesome experiment and thousands of blacks were to be left virtually stranded in a difficult situation.

The Idea of Liberia as Design for a Difficult Predicament

In the final analysis, the idea of Liberia has to be evaluated in terms not only of its internal consistency as an idea but of how it was translated into actions. An idea may be logically consistent but may be translated into a flawed design and an undesirable outcome. Similarly, a poorly conceived idea may undergo adaptation and produce a viable or desirable outcome.

The idea of Liberia was conceived by individuals pursuing divergent purposes to solve what was viewed as a serious problem, which was as ill-defined as it was morally controversial. The concept of colonization as a means of preserving the institution of slavery proved to be incompatible with colonization as a humanitarian endeavor. The logics impelling a missionary or humanitarian enterprise and a deportation scheme are starkly different.

Incompatibility of purpose was not the only problem with the idea of Liberia. There were flaws in implementing the idea. A major flaw was the almost total lack of comprehension of the actual African situation into which the emigrants were to be sent. Despite the exploratory mission of Mills and Burgess and the expedition of Paul Cuffe, the organizers of the ACS knew very little about Africa, especially about the social and cultural life of the peoples of the region targeted for colonization. Even though there was a paucity of literature on West Africa at the time, there is no evidence that the ACS searched out and studied such limited information as was available or contemplated undertaking a thorough and systematic study to get them beyond Mills and Burgess's superficial descriptions.[26]

Free blacks themselves knew virtually nothing about Africa beyond historical associations and strong sentimental attachments. Being unprepared in this respect, those who formed the new society were to learn by bitter experience. To establish a settlement that was to be a minority

society in a culturally diverse environment was a difficult undertaking made more difficult by the assumption that ties of race would be strong enough to contain and subdue suspicions, prejudices, and rivalries. Thus the lack of knowledge about Africa was a major flaw and crucial underlying circumstance against which the institutions developed in the new Liberian society must be understood. Moreover, the prospective emigrants were never involved in the design process, but were expected to overwhelmingly endorse it and enthusiastically participate in its implementation.

The successful implementation of the design was contingent upon three assumptions. The first was that the project would be largely funded by the United States government. In addition to funding the preparatory activities and the transportation of colonists, the United States government was expected to fund the establishment, operation, and defense of the new colony until it became self-sustaining. It would appear that the reluctance of the American government to take on such financial responsibility was not anticipated by the organizers of the ACS—especially in view of the involvement of so many government officials in the project. Had the Sierra Leone experience been carefully studied, the ACS would have been most reluctant to continue with its plan in view of its failure to extract a firm commitment of support from the United States government.

Although many of the reasons for the government's reluctance were expressed by the House committee that considered the ACS's petition, there were others. One was the actual cost of the project. The responsibility for fully maintaining an African colony would have severely strained national resources. Another was that the question of slavery needed to be addressed and resolved independently, despite the view of Madison, Jefferson, and others that "emancipation without colonization would fail to promote the public good or guarantee happiness to the negro" (Staudenraus 1961:7). Colonization was not to provide a painless solution to the question of slavery. As Tocqueville ([1835] 1969:363) later observed, "slavery . . . is attacked by Christianity as unjust and by political economy as fatal; slavery, amid the democratic liberty and enlightenment of our age, is not an institution that can last. Either the slave or the master will put an end to it. In either case great misfortunes are to be anticipated." Tocqueville's prediction was ominous but accurate. Slavery could not achieve a painless ending.

Indeed, it is curious that, in spite of the national debate and the fervent representations made by national figures in favor of colonization, the same figures, when faced with the need to take official action on the Liberian enterprise, faltered and seemed to find many other matters more important. Far from suggesting the existence of an ambivalent attitude toward the issue, such behavior reflected the social, moral, and, in some

instances, personal dilemma that the future of slavery and colonization posed. A significant portion, in fact, the most influential group within the free black community were mulattoes who had personal ties with the white community. This issue was too uncomfortable to be raised frequently; Garrison raised it, however, when, with irony, he demanded that not a single drop of "white blood" should be deported to Africa. Although this dimension of the problem was hardly discussed, it did loom high in the calculations of those involved and contributed to their reluctance to implement a colonization scheme.

The second assumption upon which the implementation of colonization was based was that large numbers of free blacks were so alienated and oppressed that they would perceive the option of deportation more favorably than their continued presence in the United States. This assumption ignored the deep feeling of "belonging," if not of entitlement, that constituted the free black perspective in the United States. The question was to struggle and not to run away, to stake out a claim and not to disavow a heritage. Besides, free blacks also shared the perception of Africa as the "dark and unredeemed" continent. Perhaps it was the obsession with "getting rid of the negroes" that fed a delusion that large numbers of blacks were anxiously awaiting an opportunity to leave the United States. No wonder that after twelve years of operation, only 2,885 blacks had been repatriated to Africa by the ACS, and that almost two-thirds of these were slaves manumitted on the condition of their repatriation (Woodson and Wesley 1962:293).

A third and closely related assumption was that, despite the American racial situation, large numbers of blacks would be prepared to emigrate to Africa under the auspices of an organization totally controlled by whites. This misjudgment not only increased the skepticism of blacks about the nature of the colonization scheme but was a source of enormous conflicts in Liberia for about a half century. The repercussions left in its trail haunted Liberia well into the twentieth century.

In spite of it all, Africa remained a compelling attraction to some blacks. A few free blacks such as the Reverend Daniel Coker of Baltimore and the Reverend Lott Carey of Richmond were so strongly motivated by the calling of missionary service that they were prepared to emigrate to Africa under virtually any auspices. Others such as Joseph Jenkins Roberts of Petersburg and Louis Sheridan of North Carolina saw possibilities for participating in a civilizing mission and exploiting commercial opportunities. Still others such as Abraham Camp and many of "the free people of color residing on the Wabash," although they "love[d] this country and its liberties, if we could share an equal right in them," had "no hope that it ever will be otherwise" and would "rather be gone, though we should suffer hunger and nakedness for years" (Bracey, Meier,

and Rudwick 1970:48). These three types, in addition to the manumitted slaves who preferred any condition to slavery, were to constitute the small pioneering band that would try to give meaning to a thoroughly flawed plan.

What we have seen, then, is that the idea of Liberia was flawed in conception, design, and implementation. For the small band of free blacks and manumitted slaves who had to give it meaning, the idea evolved into a difficult predicament that they had to endure.

★ 3 ★

Indigenous West African Social Orders

THE AREA THAT LATER BECAME LIBERIA is located on the edges of wha was known in the nineteenth century as the Western Sudan, the regio from which the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai had sprung betwee the eleventh and sixteenth centuries. This portion of the Western Sudan which ran along the Atlantic coast, was considered part of the Grain Coast a subregion of the Lower Guinea Coast.[1]

One of the dominant features of the Lower Guinea Coast, particularl of the Grain Coast subregion, was the expansive tropical rain forest tha extended from Sierra Leone on the west to the approaches to th Cameroon Mountains on the east, and north from the Atlantic coast fo about 200 miles. The coastline of this subregion is rather straight and run in a southeasterly direction. It is indented by eight rivers—none of whic is navigable beyond 20 miles—a few bays that do not constitute natura harbors, and an infinite number of small streams. Coastal waters are treacherous and noted for their undertow, beach ridges, and heavy surf that sweeps the coastline building up sandbars in estuaries and creating lagoons just inside the shoreline.

Four topographical features define the subregion. First, there is the coastal plain; interspersed with mangrove swamps and covered with low bush and oil palms, it stretches inland for about 25 miles. Three promontories accentuate the coastal plain at what were later to become Cape Mount, Cape Montserrado, and Cape Palmas. North of the coastal plain there is a 40-to-60-mile-wide belt of rolling hills that rises to about 600 feet. Further north is the dissected plateau, which averages between 600 and 900 feet and covers close to half the land area of present-day

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Liberia. The plateau is often broken by several iron-containing low mountain ranges that rise to about 2,000 feet and, along with the belt of rolling hills, constitute the heart of the tropical rain forest. On the northern fringes of the dissected plateau are the northern highlands, which peak at about 5,000 feet and also contain iron deposits. They are the southerly extensions of the Guinean Highlands, which is an important feature of the savanna woodlands dominating the Upper Guinea Coast (Schulze 1973).

Although today the tropical rain forest is receding as a result of human intervention, in earlier times it began almost immediately at the coast and extended to the highlands. The heaviest rainfall is experienced in the rain forest itself. Even with the rapid recession of the forest, average annual rainfall in the subregion ranges from close to 80 inches in certain parts of the interior to 200 inches along the western coastline.

Heavy rainfall has had a devastating effect on the soil of the subregion. The dominant soil type is lateritic, which is highly susceptible to leaching during the rainy seasons and to "hardpan" formation during the dry seasons. Such soils are not suitable for agriculture. Only 2 percent of the country's soil is ideal for agriculture, and this is the alluvial soil constituted by deposits of clay, sand, and loam along the banks of rivers.

The recession of the rain forest and the leaching of soils was a gradual process up to the early twentieth century. In more recent times, rapid population movement toward the coast and the excessive deforestation from the activities of lumbering concessions have led to drastic and irreversible desiccation.

Very little is known of human habitation in the rain forest before the fifteenth century. It is speculated that the physical conditions of heavy rainfall, dense tropical forests, poor soils, and treacherous coastal waters made the rain forest less attractive for dense human habitation than the savanna grasslands northwest of the rain forest (Mabogunje 1976). Nevertheless, because of the salt factories along the coast and the wild kola nuts of the forest, important trade links existed between the rain forest and the center of economic and political activities in the savanna region before the fifteenth century.

The People

Two major developments in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries had a tremendous impact on the entire region of Western Sudan. The first was the disintegration of the Mali Empire; the second was the arrival of European traders along the coast. The breakup of the Mali Empire created disturbances in the savanna area for the next two centuries,

disturbances that pushed peripheral groups deeper and deeper into the tropical rain forest.

These pressures, as groups fused and disintegrated, led to the formation of an assortment of autonomous political communities, presumably based on ethnic lineage, that now had to work out accommodations among themselves.[2] The conflict and competition among these groups were intensified when European traders, especially slave traders, entered the region. The European intervention substantially increased the flow of socioeconomic activities in the region, making the coastal area into a new socioeconomic nexus. Much later in the early nineteenth century, the arrival of repatriates from the Western hemisphere further complicated an already complex situation.

Although the political environment was rife with conflict and competition, there were stable social institutions with clear and discrete patterns of order within and among the different indigenous political communities. It is important to understand these patterns as they existed before the arrival of the settlers in order to appreciate the nature and impact of the social order imposed by the development of the Liberian state.

Little is known of the demographic and social landscape of the subregion before European intervention. This is not surprising in view of the peripheral role of the rain forest up to the fifteenth century. Unfortunately, however, even the accounts written during the early period of European intervention are far from adequate. It has been left to nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars to piece together the demographic features and social history of the subregion.[3]

It is not known how many people lived in the subregion; by the sixteenth century, however, they were categorized into three ethnolinguistic groups: the Mel-, Mande-, and Kwa-speaking.[4] According to Joseph H. Greenberg (1963) these three ethnolinguistic groups are of different clusters of the same Niger-Congo language stock. Although there was considerable movement and intermingling, these groups seemed to have settled in geographically distinct areas. The Kwa, for example, almost exclusively occupied the eastern and southeastern sections of the subregion while the Mel and Mande were predominant in the west and northwest. Except for two Mande and one Mel group along the coast, the coastal belt was largely occupied by the Kwa-speaking peoples.

The western coastal belt and the inland area just north of it constituted a region that already was and continued to be a very important nexus of trade and cultures. It was here that, before there were any settlers, the three indigenous ethnolinguistic groups converged. It was also in this region that European trade was most intensive and that some of the most active commodity and slave trading posts were established. In the early nineteenth century, the region became an arena for the tremendous

sociocultural interaction that went into the making of Liberia. The trade routes of this region led both westward into a coastal area called the Gallinas, one of the most important trade centers on the Lower Guinea Coast, and northward into the Futa Jallon mountain regions of the savanna woodlands.[5] It was in this region that the settlers first established Liberian government authority on the coast and pressed inland. Thus an understanding of patterns of interaction and relationships within the area of the western coastal belt and its adjoining hinterland is very important for an appreciation of the development of the Liberian state.

The pattern of settlement reflected the nature of social movement in the area over time. The divergence between the Mel and Mande on the one hand, and the Kwa on the other, represented the most significant sociocultural distinction in the subregion before the intervention of the settlers. As will be seen later, this distinction became evident in different principles of social organization as well as different reactions to the imposition of central authority. It should also be noted that the population was more sparse in the eastern and southeastern regions, and that contacts among societies during the period preceding the arrival of the Europeans and the beginning of slaving do not seem to have been too intensive. Agriculture and sedentary society seem to have been less developed in the east and southeast than in the western and northwestern parts of the subregion.[6]

The Mel- and Mande-speaking Peoples

The Mel-speaking group in Liberia is only a small part of the larger Mel-speaking stock of the Western Sudan. The Liberian segment consists of two ethnic groups: the Gola and the Kissi.[7] These two ethnic groups were said to have been originally situated only in the area that became northwestern Liberia, but by the nineteenth century the Gola had also established a number of political communities near the coast in what is now western Liberia. It is not known when or whether the Mel-speaking people migrated into the rain forest region of present-day Liberia. H. Baumann and Diedrich Westermann have suggested that perhaps they were part of "an ancient primitive forest culture of an original negro stock that presumably inhabited all of western Africa in prehistoric times" (quoted in d'Azevedo 1962b:512). The intensive competition among the southern Gola and their new neighbors, the Vai and Dei, for the establishment of spheres of influence around trade routes made for shifting centers of power in the region, so that, by the early nineteenth century,

Gola "frontier hegemony" had been established in what is now western Liberia (d'Azevedo 1969:part 1). Because of their presumed early existence in the region and the social cohesion that seems to be characteristic of their societies despite their wide dispersal there, the Mel-speaking peoples, it is speculated, are the originators of the Poro (all-male) and Sande (all-female) secret societies that are responsible for rites of passage and sacred functions (Liberty 1977).[8] A significant distinction between the Mel- and Mande-speaking societies and the Kwa-speaking communities is the existence of the Poro in the former and its conspicuous absence from the latter.

The Mande-speaking peoples constituted the largest ethnolinguistic group in the subregion. There are eight ethnic groups in that configuration in Liberia: the Vai, Mende, Mandingo (Malinke), Gbande, Kpelle, Loma, Mah (Mano), and Dan (Gio). With the exception of the Vai and Mandingo, these groups and others of the Mande-speaking family of the tropical rain forest are referred to as the "peripheral Mande" (Murdock 1959), that is, peripheral to the core of the Mande stock, which was at the heart of the Mali Empire in the savanna woodlands of the Upper Guinea region.[9]

The Mande-speaking peoples arrived in the rain forest subregion in several waves beginning, perhaps, with the Vai, who reached the coast in the fifteenth century. A later wave that arrived, perhaps, in the sixteenth century included the Kpelle, Mah, and Dan, among others. Some groups crossed the northern highlands and settled in the north central and southwestern regions, pressuring the Kwa-speaking peoples they encountered there southward toward the Atlantic coast.

The Mande-speaking peoples developed a sophisticated, long-distance trade network linking the coast with the Malinke kingdoms of the savanna region. Some of these groups were noted for their agricultural production; they introduced the "slash-and-burn" method of upland farming into the tropical rain forest region (d'Azevedo 1962b).[10] Some of the Mande-speaking people were already Islamized by the time they reached the rain forest societies. It is also believed that the Mande-speaking peoples, as a result of interaction in the savanna region, introduced the chieftaincy system of political order into the rain forest (Liberty 1977).

The Kwa-speaking Peoples

As with the Mel-speaking peoples, there is no evidence as to when or whether the Kwa-speaking peoples migrated to the coast. Some

have speculated that among the original inhabitants who sparsely populated the coastal area of the rain forest region were the precursors of the Kru and Dei (Schulze 1973:45). It is known, however, that between the latter part of the fifteenth century and the mid-seventeenth century waves of Kwa-speaking people migrated to the coast, apparently from the area around the northern sources of the St. John River, and came to inhabit what is now the central area of the coastal belt. Subsequent waves migrating by way of the St. John and Cavalla rivers formed political communities within the eastern coastal region and its interior.

There are six ethnic groups in the Kwa family: the Dei, Belle, Bassa, Kru, Krahn, and Grebo.[11] The Kwa-speaking peoples are said to be of a language group that extends westward from the Niger delta and is different from that of the Mande-speaking peoples of the Niger basin of the Western Sudan. Kwa societies were characterized by smaller settlements and many by a seafaring culture.

The seagoing activities of the coastal Kwa-speaking peoples were well known along the West African coast and to European traders and explorers. As early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, European seamen were recruiting Kru and other Kwa peoples as navigational assistants and for service aboard vessels that sailed as far south as the Cape of Good Hope and as far north as Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, and British ports. By the end of the nineteenth century, Kwa communities had been established in such West African coastal cities as Freetown, Accra, and Lagos (Brooks 1972).

Some coastal Mel- and Mande-speaking groups such as the Gola and Vai had also established independent relationships with Europeans along the coast but did not develop as extensive a seafaring culture as the Kwa. European slavers and commodity traders were keen to form close ties with influential coastal chiefs and headmen. The breaking of such long-standing, independently established ties with Europeans and their subordination to settler control, as was demanded by the Liberian government, was a critical issue and a perennial source of conflict in the efforts to expand settler authority in the region.

Patterns of Social Organization

Let us now look more deeply into the pattern of social organization of the African societies by reviewing their principles of organization and the operational patterns that actually emerged in their societies.

Organizing Principles

Principles of social organization are the theoretical premises that undergird social organizations. They provide basic concepts and structural characteristics in terms of which actual behavior can be assessed. Principles of social organization provide a framework within which operational patterns of social organization can be systematically analyzed. Understanding of the former facilitates deeper appreciation of the latter.

Hierarchical Order

Regarding their social organization, the Mel- and Mande-speaking societies seemed to have been guided by similar principles. This is not surprising, given the close relationships and intermingling among the numerous Mel- and Mande-speaking political communities of the western and northwestern regions. These political units perceived themselves largely as patrilineages or lineage segments. Even when they were not, mythologies were created presenting them as such. The fundamental principle that guided their social organization was the principle of hierarchical control through the lineage of a founding ancestor, which constituted the core lineage and the source of legitimate authority within society. In some instances, legitimacy was strengthened by the myth connecting the founder with demigods of ancient times or a great warrior or wise men who were the founders or rulers of an original homeland (Korvah 1971).

The standing of a lineage segment or household within the political unit was determined on the basis of its relationship to the core lineage. The lineage system became the instrument of authority and the rank ordering of lineages relative to the core lineage constituted the structure of authority in the society.[12] Privilege, prestige, and authority flowed in descending order from the core lineage, among a series of ranked lineages. Leadership in the community was recruited from the lineage segment of the founding ancestors and political influence was, therefore, to be determined on the basis of distance from the core lineage segment. Thus the important ingredient of social interaction was the effort to demonstrate a relationship, be it real or fictitious, with the core lineage.

Poro Authority

Although societies operating under these principles should have been rigidly stratified, most showed considerable flexibility, adaptability,

and accommodation to change. There was considerable scope for opportunistic behavior, especially in creating lineage connections through a variety of fictions.

The countervailing and reinforcing authority of the Poro was the ultimate source of legitimacy in most of these societies. The Poro provided a deeper basis for order and interaction in society and a source of sanctions that transcended the prerogatives of secular authority. As elders and members of the village council, leaders of the Poro selected chiefs and secular rulers; but as "officials" of the Poro, they exercised a higher authority of a "sacred and secret" nature. In the latter role, they protected the values of the patrilineage that gave meaning to the social order and guarded against any arbitrariness of the secular authority, especially against the "tendency of chiefs to construct around themselves a bureaucratic administrative apparatus staffed with nonkin clients who serve to insulate them from the elders of their descent groups" (d'Azevedo 1962a:514). But the Poro itself displayed flexibility and a capacity for accommodation, seeking often to validate adaptations and thereby securing its continuing legitimacy. Even after the intervention of the Liberian government in Mel- and Mande-speaking societies, the Poro continued to be a powerful influence. Evidence of its strength, resilience, and adaptability is demonstrated by the fact that many officials of the Liberian government and influential settlers found it necessary to become members of the organization and to heed the advice of Poro authorities in appointing local officials such as paramount chiefs.

In addition to its concern with protecting the patrilineage, Poro authority was rooted in the collective social and historical experience of the subregion. It therefore had at its disposal a wider range of resources and a deeper legitimacy even than any group of secular rulers whose legitimacy was based on linkage with any specific group of founding ancestors (Little 1966). Commenting on the panethnic, subregional role of the Poro, d'Azevedo (1962b:516) has shown how it provided "a sacred and secret arm of political authority and intergroup diplomacy that helped to maintain stability through appeal to the gerontocratic and hierarchical principles derived from the ideal model of the ranked-lineage structure." Thus the Poro constituted a culture with deep roots in a substantial portion of the rain forest.

It is not known when the Poro began or how it emerged. There are speculations that it emerged from the interaction of a number of ethnic traditions in the rain forest region during the social and political ferment of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[13] The Poro existed in most, if not all, Mel- and Mande-speaking societies in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. It showed considerable adaptability in response to the significant political and social changes that occurred in the region. Only

communities that were Islamized did not have Poro institutions, since Islam forbids participation in such organizations because they are not Islamic. Each political community had its Poro authority structure, which included a number of positions held by elders of the community on the basis of ascription. Each Poro society was linked with other such societies in a panethnic configuration in the region.

Age-Set

The principle of hierarchical control, which undergirded the political communities of the Mel- and Mande-speaking peoples with their Poro and Sande societies, differed markedly from the principles of segmentary social organization that characterized the Kwa-speaking political communities. In these societies, principles associated with age-set relationships were more important than ones associated with hierarchical control. Although deferential to founding ancestors, Kwa social organization was not dominated by the primacy of core lineage. In some cases, the head of the lineage of the founding ancestor was considered *primus inter pares.* In most cases, however, decision-making authority was vested in a council of elders. Before the Liberian government designated chiefs for African societies, many Kwa-speaking societies did not even have chiefs. Where chiefs existed, their authority was very limited. A collectivity of lineage heads together with males of certain age-sets and, where necessary, representatives of certain women's age-sets, constituted the highest decision-making authority in the political unit (McEvoy 1971: 153–71; Davis 1975; Hayden 1971–72).[14]

The principle of age-set relationship was important among Kwa-speaking peoples. Age was an important factor in organizing economic and political activities, individual relationships, and the internal structure of descent groups. Basically, the older the individual in relation to any other person or the general population, the greater his or her authority, prestige, and privilege. A person moved through several age-sets in a lifetime. Generally, social, economic, and political roles and responsibilities were assigned to men and women on the basis of a rank ordering of age-set structures or groupings. Usually, individuals of the eldest male age-set performed the leadership roles and commanded the most respect in the community. Leadership within age-sets was determined in accordance with nonascriptive factors. Certain roles, however, such as that of the "priest," were often assigned on the basis of membership of certain lineages. In some cases, age-set groups transcended local territorial boundaries and performed regional functions (McEvoy 1971:171).

Although Kwa-speaking societies had no institution comparable to the Poro, there were organizations and secret societies that participated in the socialization processes, the resolution of conflict, and the fulfillment of a variety of social functions.[15]

Operational Patterns of Social Organization

In all the African political communities of the subregion, despite differences in organizing principles, the household was the basic unit of social organization.[16] The core of the household was the nuclear polygynous family that was derived from a patrilineal descent line. In addition to this core, there was the extended family of relatives, clients, and other dependents. The household was the physical structure as well as a domestic social unit. It was the most important unit of production, especially in agriculture. Each household operated a farm that provided its sustenance. Each member of the household contributed to the work of the farm under the control of the head of household.[17] It was not unusual for polygynous households to have more than one farm, each worked by a wife and her children.

The status of individuals in the household depended upon their relationship to the head of household, so that the senior wife was the most deferred to, and the oldest son of the senior wife the immediate heir. The social status of the household depended upon the status of the head of household in the larger social unit, the "quarter."[18] Traditionally, the quarter has consisted of related households. Among the Mel and Mande, the quarter was a lineage segment. As such, it was more than the physical cluster of households; it embodied a sentimental attachment of relatives bonded by a presumed kinship derived from a common patrilineage, real or fictive. Among the Kwa, the quarter was a cluster of related patrilineal households with sentiments, allegiances, and history that might connect with clusters of related patrilineal households in other political communities based on the myth or reality of common origins.

More often, however, the quarter referred to a section of a village or town assigned to any distinctive or recognized group. Thus a quarter could be made up of nonkin clients, distant relatives, servants, slaves, wards, or "strangers," each under some designated authority and answerable to the leaders of the town. When quarters became too large, they could split off and produce satellite "half-towns" or villages.

The quarter was the most important political and social unit. In Mel- and Mande-speaking communities, the political influence of the quarter depended upon its relationship to the core lineage. It was in the quarter that family disputes were resolved, family rites conducted, claims made

on the larger society, and obligations to the larger society fulfilled. Land was apportioned to the quarter and individuals staked their claims to land in their quarter. The eldest male of the quarter, who was the nearest kin to the founder of the quarter, was its leader. He governed in consultation with elderly male relatives.

The village or town and its adjoining service half-towns constituted the political community. Among the Mel and Mande, the head of the quarter of the founding ancestor had to be the chief or head of the political community. Decisions were made by the chief and council of elders. The council of elders included the prominent elders of the quarters, and decisions were reached by consensus. Among the Mel and Mande, in case of failure to reach a consensus, the matter was taken to the Poro for resolution. There was a greater tendency among the Kwa to place such issues before a broader assemblage, which many times included the women and young people of the community; matters relating to war or the negotiation of peace, however, required a forum limited to males in most Kwa societies.

As a political community, a village or town was not always without broader ties. Apart from the tendency to form confederacies, as will be discussed later, political communities were usually part of a larger real or fictive patrilineal system. These lineage systems, referred to as *dako* by the Kru, *bloa* by the Krahn, and *fuwa* by the Gola, may not have always had reference to territory but constituted a historic bond of solidarity and cooperation among groups of people. The imposition of the authority of the Liberian government disrupted these relationships.

Accommodation

By simply examining their principles of social organization, one could assume that Mel- and Mande-speaking societies were rigidly stratified and hierarchically controlled, with perpetual deference for hereditary factors, and that Kwa-speaking societies were highly competitive and, perhaps, ruggedly individualistic. These assumptions would be wrong. As any keen observer would know, social reality occurs in complex mixes that challenge categorization and repulse stereotyping. Social reality is usually rife with conflicts that are themselves crucibles of opportunity. So it was with the reality of social order in the indigenous societies before settler political authority was established.

First of all, the social landscape of the subregion had numerous political communities that were in a constant state of change—merging, dividing, disintegrating, reemerging. Second, these communities were largely multiethnic and multilingual.[19] What are being referred to as Vai,

Dei, or Gola political communities were largely multiethnic communities that took their label from the ethnic background and organizing myths of their founders or dominant lineages. Third, many of these political communities were not necessarily permanently fixed in the same physical space at all times. Fourth, their internal structures and institutions were also in a constant state of change and adaptation.

Concerning the last point one has only to look more closely at the organization of the household to see that households were hardly homogeneous units of individuals related by blood or marriage. Instead, they usually contained an assortment of clients and other dependents who may have even come from different ethnic groups. Moreover, even among blood relatives, individuals usually had the flexibility to claim membership in several households depending upon the opportunities being sought. A young man might claim membership in the household of his uncle, older brother, or other relatives in his quest for new possibilities. An individual might deploy several of these claims during a lifetime (Carter 1970). In fact, it was not unusual for an individual to uproot himself from his own community and seek opportunities in another community headed by a chief of a different ethnic group, attaching himself to the household of a man of a different ethnic background and taking on that ethnic identity if necessary. Ethnicity was not only situational but was also quite frequently manipulated for gain. More importantly, it was not uncommon for an entire political community to consist of more than one ethnic group, located in different quarters, and to exploit its multiethnic character to its best advantage in the arena of competing and cooperating political communities (d'Azevedo 1971).

In a similar vein, in most political communities control over production was not always rigidly in the hands of the head of household. After contributing his quota of labor to the household farm, a member of the household was free to cultivate his own farm and its fruits were his to dispose of as he saw fit. It was the availability of such opportunities or the quest to pursue them that made for social mobility and conflict that distorted and threatened the traditional structure, especially at the level of the household and quarter. The influence of wealth and the authority of tradition had to be reconciled. When enterprising individuals undertook economic activities that led not only to considerable personal accumulation of wealth but to social relationships that transcended the political community, they came into conflict with traditional authority relationships. D'Azevedo (1959) has observed that the pressure created by such changing circumstances and by the interaction with Europeans and, later, the settlers, required the institutionalization of deviations that are inherently contradictory. The emergent norms promoted mobility within a social structure that allowed for hierarchies other than those based

on the ranking of ascriptive authority roles. It was in such cases that the Poro served as an instrument of mediation and adaptation.

An excellent example of adaptation was the existence of the position of "war chief" in many Mel- and Mande-speaking societies and in some Kwa-speaking ones. This position, called the *ko-kalohn* among the Kpelle, *kula* among the Mah, *gbaubi* among the Kru, and *bio* among the Krahn, provided an opportunity for mobility to levels of senior administration by any male based on criteria of merit, including military prowess (Fulton 1968; Mekeel 1937; Fraenkel 1966; Zetterstrom 1976).[20] In time of war, the position went to a brave warrior; in peacetime, an able administrator or a popular and influential male might be so rewarded. It was not uncommon for the war chief to become the de facto head in the presence of a weak and lackluster chief; neither was it uncommon for a popular war chief to seize authority upon the death of the actual chief or to depose one who was weak or unpopular. But even in such situations, authority usurped by force had to be legitimized by fictive connections to a founding myth, by Poro authority, or by other means.

On the other hand, there were also positions about which there was hardly any controversy. In virtually all the political communities, such positions as that of the *bulio* among the Kru, *bodio* among the Grebo, and *gbodio* among the Krahn, who was the religious leader and the custodian of the sacred objects of the society, were more often held on the basis of ascription, usually by an elder from a particular quarter.

Thus, far from lending itself to rigid stereotyping and neat categories, the array of social formations that existed in the subregion before the intervention of the settlers constituted a dynamic scenario full of rich variations, adaptations, accommodations, and transformations. Comprehending this scenario would have required a level of systematic observation and meticulous analysis that neither the ACS, nor the settlers, nor the competing European powers undertook before injecting themselves into it.

Land, Labor, Commodity Production, and Trade

In spite of the political communities' persistent shifts in location, land was the basic fabric in their existence. Land was the bond linking the ancestors with the present and the future. Association with it defined the community and legitimized its institutions. In all societies—Mel-, Mande-, and Kwa-speaking—the lineage of the founding ancestors was known as the "masters of the land." For the Mel- and Mande-speaking peoples, the chief needed to have a connection with the founding lineage—even if that connection was fictive or spurious—in order to be considered legitimate. This was not always so among the Kwa. In most

societies, however, the chief was the custodian of the land and, in association with the important elders, was responsible for all matters related to land. Given the small size of the political communities and the vastness of the surrounding territory, there was hardly any land pressure.

Access to land was far from being a matter of direct individual assignment. Individual ownership of land as such did not exist, though usufruct rights were observed. Where allocation of land was necessary, such allocation was made to lineage, that is, the quarter, which in turn made assignments to households and individuals. Allocations of land were also made to nonkinsmen who were resident in the community. Such "strangers" would attach themselves to an existing lineage and then gain access to land through that lineage, or would establish an independent presence and petition the chief and elders for land. Such petitions were usually accompanied with gifts or pledges and with expectations of tribute to the chief.

Organizing Food Production

The most important use to which land was put was horticulture undertaken primarily for subsistence. Farming the land was not simply a matter of production; it was perceived in terms of a deeper relationship with the community and the ancestors, who were not only the ultimate owners and guardians of the land but the source of all productivity. Agricultural production varied within the subregion. Within the western and northwestern areas, rice was the major product.[21] In the southeastern area, tubers, especially yams, were cultivated.[22]

For the rice growers of the west and northwest, the rice-production cycle was the centerpiece of the culture. The cycle involved a series of activities, spanning seven to nine months of the year, such as clearing bush and felling trees, burning, planting, weeding, pest control, and harvesting. Although the household was the basic unit of agricultural production, it did not involve household members exclusively; through kinship ties, friendship, and cooperative work groups, extrahousehold labor was recruited. Exchange of labor took place in cooperative work groups that operated under the principle of reciprocity. These groups usually participated in the clearing, planting, and harvesting. In some societies they were formally organized, in others they were merely informal groupings. Both men and women formed such groups. Labor by kinsmen who were not part of the household was provided under obligations of kinship ties. Although there might be no expectation of immediate return on such labor, there were long-range expectations of personal and kinship esteem and security (Currens 1979).

Under the supervision of the head of household, the men of the household and their associates were responsible for clearing, felling trees, and burning, and the women and their associates did the planting, weeding, and harvesting. Pest control was left largely to the children. Rice cultivation was primarily meant for household consumption. The size of the farms, therefore, reflected the household's perception of its needs or, perhaps, labor conditions. The rice produced was household property to be managed by the head wife under the supervision of the husband. In addition to the household fields, individual household members could work their own farms. The produce from their individual farms were their personal property and could be disposed of as they pleased. After harvest, land would remain unused for a considerable period, sometimes up to ten years, in order to regenerate its nutrients.

Machetes were used to clear the land and axes to cut down trees. Short-handled hoes were used to plant the seeds and for weeding. In some areas, the broadcast method of planting was used. A special type of knife was used for harvesting rice. After harvesting, the rice would be dried and stored in the kitchen top that served as a granary. Production of farm tools—especially machetes and hoes, which were also used for other purposes—was a very important part of economic production in every society. This slash-and-burn mode of agricultural production and the technology that made it possible may well have been part of the savanna Mande inventory adapted by coastal peoples under the influence of Mande migrations, acculturation, and population growth from the fifteenth century on.

Other activities related to food production included growing vegetables and fruits, and the hunting and trapping of wild animals. The former were activities of women and the latter of men. Using special nets, women also engaged in fishing in inland streams. Products of such activities were usually perceived as household property since they were meant to supplement the household diet.

Along the southeastern coast, among the coastal Kwa, fishing was a major economic activity organized by households under the supervision of the head of household. Fishing was done by the male members of the household of a particular age-set under the tutelage of household members of an older age-set. The women prepared and preserved the fish. Maintenance of nets and fishing equipment was the men's responsibility.

Among inland Kwa-speaking societies horticulture was the major economic activity. Tubers have always been the major agriculture product. Before the introduction of cassava in the seventeenth century, yams and other tubers were cultivated. It is not known when systematic rice cultivation began in the southeastern subregion. Oral traditions of the

subregion speak of hunting. Legends about cultivation usually concern products other than rice (Schroder and Seibel 1974). D'Azevedo (1962b:535-37) has suggested that rice cultivation may not have become an extensive economic activity in the southeastern area until very late in the nineteenth century.

Commodity Production

The most important trade item from the rain forest was kola nuts. Before the arrival of European traders, salt was the most important item traded northward from the coast. It was produced by boiling large quantities of seawater in iron or clay pots.

With large deposits of iron ore to be found throughout the dissected plateau, iron works became an industry in every society. In the mid-1600s, ironworking skills existed as far south along the coastal plain as Grand Cess. Some archaeologists have speculated that such skills could have begun being spread south from the northern highlands and dissected plateau as of the eighth century A.D., obviously by precursors of the Gola and Kissi, and by the Bassa, Dei, Belle, and Kru whose occupation of the subregion has not been dated (Holsoe 1979, citing Susan White). Herbert Atherton (1979:32-33) has pointed out that iron artifacts appeared before the fourteenth century among stone tools at a site in Sierra Leone, but that stone tools do not disappear from archaeological sites in the region until the fourteenth century—an occurrence that coincides with the migration of the Mande-speaking peoples into the region.[23]

Iron objects were also items of intraregional trade before the European intervention. Svend E. Holsoe (1979), citing Villault (1669), reports that bracelets, anklets, and other ornamental objects were already being produced by the time European trade in the subregion intensified in the sixteenth century. Such iron-based trade continued over the centuries so that, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, iron nuggets and strips were being used as one medium of exchange, especially in the northern parts of the subregion.

Ironworkers were closely associated with the making of weapons for warriors. Tools, such as machetes and hoes, were also made by ironwork specialists upon order by individuals. Payment was arranged through barter. Tools, including household implements such as pots, spoons, and knives, were household property controlled by the head wife under the supervision of the husband.

There were several kinds of specialists who were not involved in horticultural production. Carl Burrowes (1986) has classified them into three categories. The most privileged were the blacksmiths, herbalists, priests,

and senior administrators and chief warriors. They were either compensated for their services, as in the case of herbalists and blacksmiths, or were the recipients of tributes that were expected or exacted, as in the case of chief warriors. The skills of such specialists as the blacksmith and herbalist were treated as carefully guarded secrets and were transferred only within specific lineages.

The second category of specialists included those who might or might not have also been engaged in farming. These included itinerant hunters, entertainers, midwives, and traders, among others. Many of these, especially entertainers and hunters, were highly respected and widely acclaimed; their skills were likely to be in great demand.

The third category included those individuals who were full-time farmers but undertook specialized activities off season or as the need arose. These included bridge builders, potters, weavers, and carvers. Usually men were the cloth weavers and women the potters. Some sources have noted the existence in the eighteenth century of whole villages in the western and northwestern parts of the subregion, especially among the Loma and Ma, that specialized in a particular activity such as ironworking, carving, or weaving.

These specializations were to be found throughout the subregion as its societies advanced to higher levels of complexity. At the same time, there were local variations in their availability. In the eighteenth century, for example, some coastal communities such as Little Sestro engaged only in fishing; they obtained other commodities through trade with their interior neighbors and others on the coast, sometimes as far west as the Gallinas and east into the area now known as San Pedro in Côte d'Ivoire. Other communities, especially in the area later to be known as Cape Mount and near the Cestos River, specialized almost exclusively in salt boiling (Barbot 1732).

There is much speculation that, up to the early part of the fifteenth century, the economy of the subregion had not advanced much beyond the hunting and gathering stage. However that may be, it was the intervention of the Mande-speaking people in the fifteenth century and of the Europeans along the coast that radically transformed social and economic activities. Agricultural methods improved over time, and the majority of the inhabitants continued to be engaged in subsistence agriculture. Trade meanwhile provided the stimulus for economic growth, social complexity, and intraregional conflict.

With the formation of sedentary societies in the rain forest and along the coast, competition for control over trade routes became the major factor undergirding interaction in the subregion. These routes involved strategic coastal towns and ports, as well as trade towns at the two great ecological boundaries: between the coastal plain and the forest, and

between the rain forest belt and the approaches to the savanna. The rain forest was the terminal point of trade from the savanna region of the Western Sudan. Caravans were vulnerable to the tsetse fly of the rain forests. Caravan routes from the Western Sudan led as far north as the Maghreb. As warfare and other social conflicts impeded trade between the savanna and points north, peripheral groups turned more toward the rain forest. With the intervention of the Europeans at the coast, a new trade pattern emerged.

European Trade

The coming of the Europeans not only intensified the region's trade but also changed its character. By the mid-sixteenth century, Europeans began trading along the coast; they sought gold, camwood (for dyeing), ivory, handwoven cloth, and slaves. In return, they introduced trinkets, cotton cloth, rum, guns, and mirrors.

The European presence induced the development of a new class of intermediaries along the coast. They learned to speak the Europeans' languages, learned their business methods, and acquired new influence. Moreover, the intensification of trade and the availability of new trading opportunities induced large population movements: the Gola of the northwestern area began to move south, the Vai became entrenched on the coast, a second wave of Kpelle moved toward the southcentral area, and waves of Kru groups displaced one another along the southeastern coast (Holsoe 1979). In addition, European trade introduced wage labor among coastal peoples. Deckhands, navigational assistants, and trade intermediaries were recruited largely from among the Kru and Bassa as early as, perhaps, the mid-sixteenth century, and were taken on trade voyages further down the Atlantic coast. The involvement of such local people reduced the need for larger European crews and enhanced European profits. Also, such involvement stimulated greater trade with the interior and intensified movements toward the coast.

The Atlantic Slave Trade and Domestic Servitude

The most important consequence of European trade was the Atlantic slave trade. Although little is known about the social organization of societies in the subregion during the period of European intervention, there are strong indications that some, especially those in the region north of the St. John River, had already developed the social institutions conducive to participation in the Atlantic slave trade. Some researchers have argued

that certain forms of slavery already existed in the subregion and therefore constituted the social infrastructure upon which the Atlantic slave trade was developed (Fage 1969; Mannix 1962; Holsoe 1979).

It is known that the Mande penetration from the north was well under way by the end of the fifteenth century. Holsoe (1977) has shown that, by the end of the sixteenth century, the Vai had already developed a level of organizational complexity, as a result of emergent patterns of production, that warranted the institutionalization of domestic slavery. The Dei and other neighbors of the Vai adapted Mande agricultural techniques and developed complex stratified organizations, including forms of domestic servitude, by the seventeenth century or before (d'Azevedo 1962b; Holsoe 1979). Thus, as Holsoe (1979:73) has surmised, "the transition from a domestic market in slaves to an export trade was relatively easy involving mainly an intensification of well-established methods for acquiring slaves."

The lure of European trade at the coast intensified movements throughout the northern and northwestern interior—movements originally precipitated by developments in the savanna region—accelerating the formation and disintegration of confederacies in the quest for strategic positions in the profitable new slave trade. Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Atlantic slave trade was at its peak, numerous interior confederacies emerged under Kpelle, Mandingo, Mende, and other warlords who established themselves as recruiters and exacted tributes from local communities. Mandingo warlords with bands of mercenaries, who had long raided forest societies and provided slaves to the savanna areas to the north before the coming of the Europeans, now established "market centers and conquest federations" as close as 40 miles to the coast, near the St. Paul River (d'Azevedo 1962b). By the early nineteenth century, the Gola had also established competitive positions and become well known for their slave raiding forays among Kpelle, Loma, and Mah peoples (d'Azevedo 1959; Riddell 1970).

It is not known how early the peoples of the southeastern area became involved in the slave trades. Ronald W. Davis (1976:32) has suggested that the area's relatively sparse population compared to that of the more densely populated northwest must have reduced the incentives for slaving there. Moreover, the seafaring culture of the coastal Kwa-speaking peoples made them far more valuable to Europeans as deckhands and navigation assistants than as slaves. By the turn of the nineteenth century, however, these same peoples were intensively involved in the Atlantic slave trade as middlemen and procurers for Europeans. Thus Bassa and Kru headmen were very active in the region of Trade Town and New Cess attending barracoons for European slavers as well as actually

procuring slaves (Davis 1968). Bassa middlemen purchased slaves among the Kpelle, Mah, and Dan societies of the interior to supply European slavers along the coast (Siegmann 1969). Further south, coastal Kwa groups such as the Kru and Grebo pressured interior Kwa-speaking groups and supplied slaves from interior groups of Kru, Krahn, and Grebo peoples.

Although it has not been established whether the development of domestic servitude preceded the Atlantic slave trade in the region along the Grain Coast, it is clear that each nourished the other.[24] As the Atlantic slave trade intensified, "domestic servitude" was radically transformed into a brokerage system and part of a wider scheme of servitude connected with the Atlantic slave trade.

By the nineteenth century, several adaptations of domestic servitude existed in virtually every part of the subregion.[25] First was the "indentured laborer." This was an individual whose labor was made available to his creditors until he compensated for an indebtedness. The services of indentured laborers' children were also made available. In general, the social distance between indentured servants and free people was not readily noticeable. At the peak of the Atlantic slave trade, indentured servants were sometimes sold as export slaves. This, of course, was not a regular practice.

A second type of servitude that coexisted with the Atlantic slave trade was "pawning." Under this practice a man was empowered to pawn his children or relatives to his creditor until his debts were liquidated. Labor provided by pawns was not compensated. The social distance of pawns within a society depended upon their origins and the relationship of their lineage to that of their masters. Usually, pawns whose origins were within the society in which they had been pawned retained basic freedoms such as the right to maintain kinship and ritual ties with their own families, and the right to marry within the household of the master. In societies that had already developed an advanced stratification system, pawns from other ethnic backgrounds faced severe discrimination and hardships and were likely to be sold for export. Among certain Krahn communities, young people found guilty of incest were also pawned to different communities.

A third form of servitude in communities with advanced stratification was "domestic slavery." Unlike indentured servants or pawns, who in time would be freed or incorporated into the household of the master, the labor of "domestic slaves" was permanently at the disposal of the master. There were four ways in which domestic slaves were obtained. The first was as a result of warfare. Prisoners of war who came from distant groups or who were not ransomed were likely to be reduced to domestic slavery. The second method was by outright purchase and evolved directly

from the Atlantic slave trade. Middlemen of virtually every coastal group purchased slaves from interior headmen and chiefs and then sold them in those societies that had developed the infrastructure to use them. Third, in some societies, hardened criminals were reduced to domestic slavery. Finally, in some societies, the offsprings of domestic slaves or of free men and slave women were also reduced to slavery; domestic slaves could be sold for export.

Holsoe (1977) has shown that, in Vai society, it was considered "uncivilized" for a freeborn Vai to engage in agriculture; domestic slaves constituted the majority of the agricultural workers. Such workers lived in special half-towns much like the ones in the northern savanna (Rodney 1966), and lived and worked under the supervision of other slaves who were trusted by the master. Among Vai, Dei, Gola, and other societies that had developed highly complex social organizations, agricultural slaves were distinguished from those who, having been selected to do household tasks, lived within the household of the master. Domestic slaves were part of the inheritance that an individual passed on to his heir.

"Export slaves" were the final category of servitude. Domestic slaves were acquired largely to enhance agricultural productivity and the master's comfort and prestige; export slaves were acquired for sale abroad. Export slaves were an important source of income for rulers. They were obtained in the same manner as domestic slaves, but usually originated from ethnic groups other than that of the purchaser. As the Atlantic slave trade intensified, the distinction between domestic slaves and export slaves became blurred.

Tracing the development of export slavery in the subregion, Holsoe (1977) has observed that the transformation from domestic servitude as the dominant form of servitude to export slavery coincided with the intensity and precariousness of the Atlantic slave trade. From the early 1500s, when the Mande-speaking groups established permanent settlements along the coast, to the late 1600s, the major export items in trade with Europeans were camwood and ivory. Most slaves were used in subsistence agriculture; few were exported. Although slave exports increased in the 1600s, after the monopoly enjoyed by certain agencies was broken and the slave market was opened to individual Europeans, slave trade on the Grain Coast was still largely for domestic purposes. Besides producing food, slaves were also used in procuring and transporting trade items through the rain forests.

Holsoe has argued that the abolition of slavery by the British in 1807 established a clandestine slave trade and precipitated some adjustment in the recruitment patterns. Slave ships had to dock and load more quickly while slave raids had to be more intensive and synchronized with delivery schedules. Prices rose. Export slavery became more lucrative for the

middleman, and shifted from what was, in Holsoe's view, "a casual system" to the major economic activity. The legal systems of slave exporting societies provided new categories of crimes punishable by reduction into slavery, and new demands for tribute payable in slaves were made.[26]

The new settlers founding Liberia were opposed to slavery. Assisted by the British and United States navies, they terminated the export of slaves by the 1850s. However, domestic servitude and the export of labor did not end. The lucrative slave export business had stimulated the accumulation of slaves in certain societies. Many of these slaves were delivered to British, French, and Spanish labor recruiters for agricultural work in their colonies. Domestic servitude continued well into the twentieth century.[27] Thus the existence of local patterns of domestic servitude and the recruitment of labor have had important implications for later labor practices in Liberian society. Various forms of wardship, and the recruitment of contract and forced labor continued. These issues will be discussed later.

Human labor, no matter what social form it took, was increasingly used under a diversity of organizational arrangements. One of the major factors contributing to the use and abuse of human labor for agricultural production and transport on trade routes was the absence of animals to be used as beasts of burden in the rain forest. The tsetse fly infected the region with trypanosomiasis, which debilitated and killed livestock. A draft animal resistant to trypanosomiasis has not yet been developed.

Power Relationships among Indigenous Political Orders at the Founding of Liberia

What we have reviewed thus far in this chapter are the general social patterns that emerged in the lower Guinea Coast over time. The picture is a fluid one, involving conflict, cooperation, and accommodation among the numerous political entities of the three ethnolinguistic groups and European traders. In order to fully understand and appreciate the consequences of settler involvement, it is important to recapture as precisely as possible the social dynamic of the subregion at the time the settlers intervened. Which specific political entities had gained ascendancy? What were the political alignments? Who were the immediate competitors or allies of the settlers and why?

Political Orders of the Early Nineteenth Century

D'Azevedo (1971:20) has stressed that the political communities of the subregion developed "on the basis of intricate ethnic and structural

compromises among participating groups." The "historical circumstances" of their development were the most important factors underlying their existence (ibid.). On the basis of their "historical circumstances" and pattern of "ethnic and structural compromises," d'Azevedo has identified four types of political communities that existed in the subregion during the nineteenth century at the time of the intervention based upon the idea of Liberia.

One type was the "migrant band." Such communities consisted of a leader, a group of his kinsmen, and a number of clients or followers plus those being held in domestic servitude. A second type was the "conservative village chiefdom." It was this type that was usually perceived to be the model indigenous political community. In this type, authority was vested in a founding patrilineage. There were secondary lineages and others who through intermarriage, ambipatrilineal descent, or fictive relationships constituted an integrated society. D'Azevedo considers them conservative because they were usually small, insular, and guided by principles of kinship and descent. A third type was the "exploitative expanding chiefdom." These, too, were organized around principles of kinship and descent, but were different from the two previous types in that, heterogenous and predatory, they were always striving to incorporate other groups. In theory, as their rituals may demonstrate, they were guided by "the lore of a founding patrilineage"; in reality, they consisted of a number of competing lineages operating through internal councils, and a network of clientships and mercenaries. Leaders of such systems were usually distinguished by great wealth and military prowess. The final type identified by d'Azevedo is the "confederation," which consisted of a mix of the three types under the domination of a powerful chief or despotic warrior. Principles of kinship and descent may have constituted the basic organizing principles within the constituent units, and by extension through intermarriage to the larger confederation. Political authority, however, was wielded by what was "essentially an aristocracy of powerful leaders representing diverse and unrelated groups held together by opportunistic fealty to a supreme ruler" (ibid.:22). The latter accumulated vast wealth, which he used to recruit a loyal entourage and dominate not only the vassal groups but all traditional institutions.

D'Azevedo's typology is only a rough outline of categories needing further refinement; it is, however, an important first step in understanding the elements of macroconstitutionalism in the subregion. Although it was derived from his studies of the historical processes in the western area, it can be applied to the other areas too. It provides a useful framework to outline the political landscape of the subregion at the beginning of the nineteenth century, on the eve of the intervention of the New World settlers.

Power Relationships at the Time of Settler Intervention

Numerous examples of the types of regimes described by d'Azevedo have been identified in the subregion. In the western part (the Gallinas), for example, the profitability of the illicit export slave trade made the coastal ports valuable assets. The Gallinas was one of the most important trading areas along the Lower Guinea Coast and had been so since the fifteenth century. The lineage of Chief Siaka had long established dominance over the northern section of the Gallinas. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Siaka was firmly entrenched, having subdued a number of revolts by the Zawo slaves whom he controlled (Holsoe 1967).

In the southern part of the Gallinas, Zolu Duma (alias King Peter), whose patrilineage controlled the interior town of Gon, organized an army of kinsmen, clients, and mercenaries and swept toward the coast, subduing a number of chiefs including Dwala Fagban, chief of the important coastal trading town of Fanima. Zolu Duma gained direct access to the coast and established relationships with European traders. For about thirty years and until his death around 1830, Zolu Duma ruled over a major region of the Lower Guinea Coast. Zolu Duma's regime was analogous to d'Azevedo's description of a confederation. Beginning from his Gola base, where his legitimacy hinged on a rather weak connection with Kongba, the Gola heartland, Zolu Duma's conquest covered a heterogeneous group of Vai, Gola, and Dei political communities, many of whom were mutually antagonistic because they were competing within the same trade zone. These were brought together in an arrangement that provided opportunities for subordinate chiefs as they controlled their areas within the framework of the higher authority of Zolu Duma. He, in turn, was able to maintain cohesion by using the power and wealth that he derived from the coastal trade—including the export slave trade—from his army of kinsmen and mercenaries, and from his ability to mediate among contending factions.

Within the sphere of Zolu Duma's influence was Chief Gaje who had transformed the small "conservative village chiefdom" of Sowi, over which his forebears had presided since the seventeenth century, into an "exploitive expanding chiefdom" by incorporating within his control an assortment of Vai political communities. With diminished influence, Gaje continued to rule from Sowi but within the shadow and under the expanded authority of Zolu Duma (Holsoe 1967).

Another confederation existed in eastern portions of western Liberia. This confederation, called Condo, was established at the turn of the nineteenth century at Bopolu, a town of Gola and Dei peoples, by a Mandingo called Sao Boso who had been raised by a Gbandi chief.[28] For a time, he worked as an agent for British traders on the coast. By the turn of the

century, he moved inland in search of independent trade opportunities. He settled in Bopolu and was able, through a series of shrewd maneuvers, to put together a political coalition of Gbandi, Mandingo, and related ethnic lineages in Bopolu and to usurp traditional authority. He recruited the most skillful warriors in the region, sent them on expeditions of conquest, and established some of them as de facto overlords of certain areas. By 1820, he was expanding his sphere of influence by guaranteeing safety and support to less effective chiefs who sought his protection. By 1835, Sao Boso controlled thirty-two well-barricaded towns that constituted the core of the confederation. His authority extended over Mandingo, Loma, Fula, Gbandi, Bassa, Gola, Vai, and numerous Kpelle societies ranging from the northern edges of the savannna to the coast and covering much of what is now central Liberia. Bopolu became the largest and most important trading center in the interior of the subregion.

In addition to acquiring territory by conquest, Sao Boso expanded his confederation as he shrewdly annexed territory or obtained the voluntary submission of others. Some joined the confederation in search of safety, having fled from other despotic leaders. Others, including former despots, sought sanctuary from the pursuit of former servants; still others sought opportunities to undertake profitable business ventures. Many chiefs voluntarily brought their communities into the confederation.

Sao Boso administered the core group of towns himself or through trusted assistants; each chief was permitted to administer his own territory while remaining accountable to Sao Boso for his performance. Such subordinate chiefs were allowed to engage in warfare independently of other groups in the confederation. The booty of war was shared by many other leaders. In this way, Sao Boso attempted to maintain camaraderie among disparate and sometimes competing political communities. The Condo confederation flourished until Sao Boso's death in the mid-1830s.

Thus, in what is now western and much of central Liberia, Sao Boso and Zolu Duma had established confederations that operated as a form of indirect rule in the early nineteenth century. Because such arrangements depended largely on the personal skills and military prowess of the leaders, the confederations deteriorated after their deaths. However, the principle of hierarchical authority that underlay their political configurations had always been part of the organizing principles of Mande society (perhaps it also owed something to close association with the Mel-speaking society). Seventy years later, similar principles would be utilized by the Liberian government to organize a system of indirect rule over the entire indigenous population.

In the northern area of the subregion, the picture at the turn of the nineteenth century was different from that in the west and northwest. The northern area, which was occupied by the Mah and Dan peoples, was never deeply affected by the coastal trade. Since their movement

into the forest region in the sixteenth century, the Mah and Dan had remained on the fringes of the northern trade that moved across the Sahara. The southern residual of that trade tapered off on the margins of the rain forest and the savanna grasslands. This portion was under the control of the Malinke chiefs of the region. There were no major trade routes linking trade from that area with the coast. Even the salt used in the area was obtained through the northern trade rather than from the coast (Riddell 1970).

Political control over the area had always been fluid. Another source of persistent conflict that made the area even more fluid politically was slave raiding, both by the Malinke cavalry from the north and by Gola raiders who pursued slaves among the Kpelle, Mah, and Dan. Another source of persistent conflict that further rendered the area fluid was the encroachments of Islamized Mah peoples upon their forest-dwelling kinsmen, whose commitment to the Poro deepened as a defense against Islam. These conflicts were to be compounded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by the expansion of the sphere of influence of the war chief Samory Toure into certain parts of the forest in his resistance to French incursions. Against this circumstance, the northern political landscape was replete with a mixture of "migrant bands," "exploitative expanding chiefdoms," and a few "conservative village chiefdoms," with the last-named struggling to maintain their autonomy.

In the eastern and southeastern areas a different picture had unfolded by the nineteenth century. At the coast, large towns had already been established as a result of commercial possibilities offered by the increasing presence of European traders. Each town was more or less an autonomous political system with a core lineage so that, for example, Settra Kru was known as the town of the Wete, and Grand Cess, of the Siglio. These towns were engaged in persistent competition among themselves, forming shifting alliances as their political and economic interest required (Fraenkel 1966; Davis 1968).

Leaders of Kwa coastal communities in the nineteenth century operated upon the foundations of at least two centuries of intensive contacts with European traders; the Kru, for example, had served as local agents and trading partners, mariners, offshore and onshore labor, and slave raiders. Many of their major towns hosted European factories, stimulating local economic activities and leading to greater population concentration and extensive trade. By the end of the eighteenth century the Kru, for example, had established such extensive trade and labor contacts with Europeans along the coast that they had begun working in the newly established settlement of Sierra Leone. By the first half of the nineteenth century, these contacts had expanded to the Gold Coast

and Nigeria. Permanent Kwa settlements had already begun developing in these places.

North of the Kwa coastal region were a large number of towns that, while independent, also cooperated (and fought) among themselves as well as with coastal towns. These interior towns tended to perceive the coastal towns as barriers in their efforts to trade directly with Europeans. Moreover, the movement of migrant bands of Krahn peoples west of the Cavalla beginning in the eighteenth century intensified pressure in what is now eastern Liberia and set in motion constant movement toward the coast (Person 1961). Up to the turn of the nineteenth century, new groups of interior Kwa were still establishing new communities along the coast or trying to displace older groups in certain areas.[29] Although there is no evidence of hegemonic control in the eastern and southeastern areas such as was developing in the west and northwest, there were persistent conflicts over economically strategic locations, trade routes, and access to coastal ports.

Thus, when the settlers arrived at the beginning of the third decade of the nineteenth century, they intervened in a subregion in which systems of political and social organization were already well defined. Well-established patterns of trade with routes, coastal ports and inland posts, and a profitable commerce in slaves and commodities had existed for at least two centuries. Relations with Europeans were entrenched. It is significant that the ACS, despite its professed intention to establish a settlement of freeholders, deliberately sought locations at strategic trading points. It first attempted to secure land at the junction of the St. John River, being aware of the bustling trade in slaves and commodities that took place there. Having failed, it turned to the area at Cape Mesurado near a major trading post on the St. Paul River. Representatives of the ACS immediately made clear their intentions of terminating the slave trade and competing in commodity trade in the subregion (see excerpts from the journal of Agent Ephraim Bacon in Huberich 1947, 1:158–59). The conflict, cooperation, and accommodation that attended the attempts of the ACS to impose its authority, to establish a settler society, and to create a "sphere of influence," and the reaction of the African political communities of the subregion are the focus of the next chapter.

★ 4 ★

Constituting Settler Society and Establishing a "Sphere of Influence"

STUDENTS OF LIBERIA HAVE IDENTIFIED three distinct periods in the evolution of its formal constitutional framework. These are the colonial period, from 1822 to 1839; the commonwealth period, from 1839 to 1846; and the period of the independent republic that began in 1847. Each of these periods defines a level of relationship between the settlers and the ACS as the settlers moved from a circumstance of total subordination to the ACS to one in which sovereign authority was internalized in the settler community.[1] While these periods do tell us about the nature of the formal relationship between the ACS and settlers, we also need to examine the internal relations among the settlements and their separate and collective relationships with the indigenous communities and the larger international order. In this way we will obtain a more comprehensive picture of the nature of the constitutional order in Liberia and its reconstitution through time.[2]

Considering the broad organizational principles to which settler society and the ACS were committed, and the nature of the interaction that developed within their own ranks, on the one hand, and with the indigenous societies and European powers, on the other, it seems that the early Liberian regime had one basic objective. This was to establish an exclusive settler state in coastal enclaves and maintain control over trade and other developments in a wider surrounding area that consisted of several indigenous political communities. As this objective was pursued, the constitution of order proceeded in two phases. The first phase involved the undertaking of strategic initiatives by the ACS with a view to creating

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an exclusive settler society along the littoral in enclaves extending at most 40 miles into the interior. During this phase, the settlers also struggled to resist ACS authority, which was firmly imposed on the three enclave settlements established along the coast. This phase took place between 1822 and the mid-1840s.

The second phase involved the establishment of a larger "sphere of influence" for promoting trade, terminating the slave trade, and engaging in selective social contacts in keeping with the "civilizing and Christianizing" mission. This phase of creating a "sphere of influence" continued until the turn of the twentieth century when, threatened by imperialist expansion, the settler regime sought to systematically incorporate the surrounding indigenous communities and extend its control over a wider area in the interior.

The preceding chapter considered the nature of the indigenous political configurations that existed in the subregion before the coming of the settlers. In this chapter, I will discuss the pattern of constitutional order that evolved in the first half of the nineteenth century as a result of efforts to establish a settler society and develop "a sphere of influence" in the subregion. This discussion will entail an examination of the formal constitutional framework established by the settlers, the nature of the interaction within settler society, and the nature of the strategic interaction of conflict and accommodation between settler society and the indigenous African communities during the early period of the settlements. All of these contributed to the constitution of the new social order that was emerging in the subregion.

Constituting Internal Order

Before the first settlers embarked on their voyage, they had to agree to certain stipulations. These stipulations, which were called the Plan of Government, included an agreement that the ACS would administer the settlement to be founded in Africa, that all rules and regulations set down by the ACS would be respected, and that aspects of English common law would form the basis of law regulating behavior in the settlement.

The Constitution of 1820

In June 1820, the Board of Managers of the ACS adopted a more formal document containing these and other stipulations in what was called the Constitution for the Government of the African Settlement, later to be known as the Constitution of 1820 (Huberich 1947: vol. 1).

The fact that a constitution was drafted and adopted by a body that was not subject to it was the ultimate in the exercise of Hobbesian sovereign authority. Moreover, the document was meant to apply in territory that was yet to be acquired, thereby imposing limitations on the possibilities for constitutional choice even before territory was obtained. This situation was to have a profound influence on the creation of constitutional order over time.

Another feature of the Constitution of 1820 that should be noted is the granting of extraterritorial rights to the United States government. Article 9 of the document specified that no agency, including the ACS, was empowered to interfere with the "jurisdiction, rights, and claims of the agents of the United States over the captured Africans and others under their care, and control, so long as they shall reside within the limits of the Settlement."[3] This stipulation was a poignant reminder that after all, the United States government got involved in the colonization scheme with the ostensible view of establishing a receptacle for recaptives and not a haven for "free men of color."

Besides these, the details of the Constitution of 1820 also raise other interesting questions. In the first article of that document, freedom and the "rights and privileges" of citizenship such as those enjoyed by citizens of the United States were granted to all who had emigrated to the new colony or were born there. The inherent contradiction between "rights and privileges" of citizenship and the placement of sovereign authority out of the reach of citizens was not addressed by the drafters. However, it has been argued that the Constitution of 1820 was a compact between each individual settler and the ACS, designed to ensure a desired behavior on the part of the former. When viewed in this way, the Constitution of 1820 is simply a set of directives handed down by a colonizer rather than a set of rules organizing relationships among a free people (Huberich 1947, 1:149).

The Constitution of 1820 also suffered a legal defect. It was a contract, though an unequal one, between a philanthropic association in the United States and a foreign community. There were no formal ties between the society and the U.S. government, and as such the ACS could not be said to have been acting on behalf of the U.S. government. In any case, the ACS official in charge acted as a U.S. agent of a foreign power, a relationship permissible under U.S. laws. When, however, the ACS obtained a charter from the State of Maryland in 1831, its continued exercise of authority over a foreign country had no legal standing in public international law but was never challenged (ibid.:25, 150).[4]

It is no surprise that considerable conflicts ensued between the settlers and the agents of the ACS as they operated under the Constitution of 1820. These conflicts involved accusations of arbitrariness on the part

of the agents, unfair distribution of rations and land (town lots), discourteous behavior by agents, and racism.[5]

Suspicions and conflicts finally led to a major disruption in 1823, when a group of settlers sacked the warehouse and threatened not to comply with the agent's directives. A litany of complaints and petitions was sent to the ACS by the settlers. Among their recommendations were the revision of regulations regarding the allotment and cultivation of land, social welfare considerations for widows and orphans, and a recall of the agent who was the administrator of the settlement.

The regulation on land distribution was rejected by the early settlers. Early arrivals who had already staked out claims thought the regulation discriminated against them. Late arrivals thought the two-year period required to build a house and cultivate two acres or forfeit the land was too demanding in view of scarcity of tools and acceptable building materials, difficult terrain to clear, and other problems (Brown [1941] 1981). To these and other complaints the ACS replied with a stern warning:

> Government has made arrangements that a public armed vessel shall visit the Colony monthly; we hope to be able in this way to strengthen the hands of the peaceable, orderly and industrious and to show that there is a power to punish within our reach. . . . We now conjure you, by your own interest and the present and future welfare of your families; by the . . . suffering of bleeding, injured and benighted Africa, by your oaths and obligations to your patrons, friends, your country and your God to make your election, to take your stand, and be found among the supporters of law, order and good government. [Quoted in Huberich 1947, 1:309]

In spite of the threats and exhortations of the ACS, discontent and conflicts continued. The stringency of ACS control was encouraging rebellion, lack of commitment to the enterprise of repatriation, and a breakdown in morale. From the perspective of the ACS, the Constitution of 1820 was meant to provide a basis for tutelage in the arts of modern government. It only served, however, as a basis of arbitrary rule and a source of frustration for the settlers. As their dissatisfaction grew deeper and threatened to erupt into violent rebellion, some adjustments were made in the constitutional order by the ACS. In 1825, the Plan for the Civil Government of Liberia and the Digest of the Laws were adopted by the ACS and promulgated in the colony.

The Constitution of 1825

The petition of 1823 led to a one-person fact-finding mission to Liberia. The Reverend Ralph Randolph Gurley, an official of the ACS, was sent.

Gurley attributed the dissensions within the colony to six faults on the part of the settlers ranging from "an imbecility traceable to the former habits and conditions of life, of many of the settlers," to the "deficiency of power in the government to meet exigencies, to restrain the first tendencies towards insubordination, and enforce the authority of laws." While Gurley found the source of discontent in the character of the settlers, the provisions of the new constitution that he was instructed to review with them seemed to suggest differently (Huberich 1947, 1:317–19).

The Constitution of 1825, otherwise known as the Plan for Civil Government of Liberia, made a few concessions to the settlers. It created the position of vice agent, to be occupied by a settler selected by the agent from a panel of three nominated by the settlers. The vice agent was to act as "general superintendent of public affairs" in the absence of the agent, and was to assist in administration as the agent saw fit. The vice agent and two other individuals nominated by the settlers were to constitute the Colonial Council, an advisory body to the agent. At the same time, the fundamental authority to organize and administer the government and to make laws for such purposes was left exclusively to the Board of Directors of the ACS. The ACS also reserved to itself the "exclusive right" to acquire territory in Africa and to negotiate treaties with African rulers.

Unlike the Constitution of 1820, which vested judicial functions in the agent exclusively, the Plan for Civil Government established a judiciary consisting of the agent and two justices of the peace to be appointed by the agent. While the justices, however, were assigned jurisdiction over matters of infraction of the peace, petty larceny, and actions of debts involving small sums of money, the agent was to be the presiding judge at the Court of Monthly Sessions, which was to handle more serious litigations and maintain appellate jurisdiction over all cases. Judicial proceedings were to be regulated by the common law and customs of the courts of Britain and the United States.[6]

Other provisions of the plan included the establishment of separate committees on agriculture, public works, colonial militia, and health. Each committee except the one on colonial militia was to consist of, at most, three persons nominated by the settlers and approved by the agent, with the agent reserving the right to set aside the nominations if he so desired.[7]

Issued simultaneously with the Plan for Civil Government was the Digest of the Laws, which had also been formulated by the ACS and handed down to the settlers. The digest constituted the operating laws of the colony, largely stipulating which actions were impermissible and the penalty contingent upon them. They ranged from prohibiting drunkenness, Sabbath breaking, "profaneness," and "lewdness" for which the penalties included imprisonment and whipping, to an unspecified category of acts referred to as "offences directly affecting the peace, and good government of the colony" for which expulsion

from the colony was the penalty. The Digest of the Laws also required every healthy person who received rations to provide two days a week of labor on public works projects.

The Plan for Civil Government of Liberia was adjusted virtually every year as demands for participation grew and as new exigencies occurred. Every adjustment, however, had to be made by the board itself as if to substantiate the view that the settlers were not capable of evolving a system of order for themselves. In fact, it was well known that Jehudi Ashmun, the ACS agent during this period, entertained serious doubts as to whether the settlers were sufficiently advanced in their understanding of principles of government to participate in their own governance at that time (Huberich 1947, 1:295–340).

Although the "civilizing mission" remained the fundamental objective, the ACS did not seem to perceive education and human resource development as an essential part of its program. True, it designated the appointment of instructors of public schools as a matter of constitutional importance and reserved such appointments to itself. But there is very little indication that the formulation of an educational program was a high priority for the ACS. Such programs were implicitly assigned to the missionaries, whose parish schools remained outside the supervision of the government for nearly a century and whose activities were as much a source of government criticism as encouragement.

It would appear that three factors, in particular, were to influence the nature and pattern of evolution of the constitutional order in the first half of the nineteenth century. These were the emphasis on trade and the rise of a merchant class, despite pronouncements by the ACS and leading citizens about the virtues and desirability of an agriculture-based economy; strategic interactions with the indigenous political communities over questions of trade and land; and the challenges of European (largely British) traders supported by their governments over trading rights in the subregion. In these transactions, the settler government would be challenged in its efforts to establish its authority along the coast and define a "sphere of influence." It would eventually respond with a declaration of statehood.

Strategic Interactions: Land, Trade, and Warfare

While the primary concern of the ACS in the promulgation of rules for the settlers was to ensure order and—ostensibly—to promote agricultural development, the strategy designed for establishing settlements and relating to the indigenous political communities and Europeans suggested differently. The pattern of land acquisition seems to have been influenced

as much by trade opportunities and the desire to stop the slave trade as by the agricultural possibilities.

It would be wrong, however, to leave the impression that the relationships between the ACS-led government and the indigenous political communities were characterized exclusively by conflict over trade. Trade was a basic element in the relationship and its pursuit involved both cooperation and conflict as the interests of the various parties determined. As discussed in Chapter 3, at the time of the intervention of the settlers, the political landscape of the western part of the subregion, the area into which the settlers entered, showed the existence of a number of political communities interacting within two major confederations with Zolu Duma and Sao Boso as the dominant leaders. While coastal trade seems to have been within the spheres of influence of both rulers, their control was not left unchallenged. For example, although a number of Dei political communities at the coast had fallen to Zolu Duma, autonomous Gola communities launched serious challenges to trading communities along the St. Paul River that were of crucial importance to Sao Boso. Gola efforts at containment of the Condo confederation of Sao Boso was already under way (d'Azevedo 1969–1971: part 1; Holsoe 1967).

It is within this context that the intervention of the settlers along the coast and their acquisition of land for their settlements must be considered. First, the question of land acquisition was a source of misunderstanding and conflict between the settlers and the indigenous political communities. When Ayres and Stockton met with chiefs of the area in 1821 and concluded an "agreement" for land, there was a misunderstanding regarding the concept of "purchase" of land. As discussed above, the alienation of land was not within the perceptions of African societies of the subregion. Before the coming of the settlers, "treaties" had been concluded with European traders and slavers. Such agreements involved a tenancy arrangement in which land would be ceded to a stranger who would operate in the area under the authority and protection of the local ruler. Such arrangements had proven profitable both to European traders and to the African rulers within whose territories trade would be expanded. It is apparent that Dei and Bassa rulers, who were the principal parties with whom Stockton and Ayres negotiated, had hoped to profit from increase in trade anticipated from ceding the land to the ACS, just as they had from ceding land to Europeans.

In addition, the establishment of new settlements by "strangers" was not a novelty to African rulers. Many of the political configurations within the subregion had contained "stranger towns" that had been integrated into the bodies politic over time. Moreover, although land in general was considered inalienable, because of the shifts and movements of political communities over time, most land, except sites designated for towns, farms, and sacred groves, was perceived to be tentatively though not

permanently disposable. The ACS and settlers did not seem to understand and were not prepared to abide by these traditional patterns.

When Stockton and Ayres returned with the settlers in March 1822, many of the influential African rulers in the area were opposed to the establishment of the new settlement. Although they were being influenced by slavers in the subregion, their opposition resulted from a mixture of motives. First, there was disagreement among them as to how the new settlement would affect trade. Those Gola and Dei rulers who had worked out for themselves a favorable position as middlemen in the flow of trade between the coast and the interior felt threatened by this new intervention. Ambitious Gola leaders were already putting pressure on the Condo confederation in a bid to break its domination of trade in the Bopolu region; they pressured all those who seemed to be yielding to or cooperating with Condo domination of trade. Obviously, the intervention of the settlers was perceived as full of new opportunities for those Dei rulers who had lost ground to the emergent Gola confederation. Another reason for opposition to the new settlement was fear of even temporarily alienating land on Cape Mesurado, which contained sacred groves that were of particular interest, to the Gola rulers especially (d'Azevedo 1969–1971).

Thus, as the settlers established their community first on Dazoe Island in the Mesurado River and then on the mainland, misconceptions about land purchases and misinterpretations of treaties arose and multiplied. Intermingled with strategic posturing to protect or promote trade opportunities, they were to stimulate a series of encounters, ranging from conflict to cooperation, between the settlers and all the indigenous coastal political communities during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Conflict at Cape Mesurado

When an expatriate group is introduced into a strange milieu, the first armed encounter is usually recorded as among the most memorable events. In the case of armed conflict between the settlers and the indigenous communities, the first clash was significant not because it was intensive or intended to resolve the conflict once and for all times; it was important because it signified the settlers' determination to remain a permanent presence in the subregion.

The first clash came in November 1822. The settlers who had arrived in March had been quick in assisting some British seamen whose wrecked ship with thirty recaptives aboard was under attack by Dei people near Cape Mesurado. Having already incurred the wrath of certain Dei rulers who questioned their presence in the area, the settlers were now to be the

target of a series of concerted attacks launched by Dei political communities. The leaders were chiefs Bromley, Todo Konko, and another chief known to European traders as King Long Peter; they were assisted by some Bassa communities. The attacks were intermittent throughout December and ended in the defeat of the Dei and Bassa warriors. The presence of the U.S. naval vessel *Cyane* was instrumental in securing victory for the settlers.[8] Of equal importance to the settlers' victory was the refusal of Sao Boso to support the alliance against the settlers. Sao Boso was to become the settlers' staunch ally.[9] A peace settlement was reached on December 22, 1822. This series of armed conflicts served notice that the settlers were to be a permanent feature on the territory. The presence of the U.S. naval ship also served notice that the settlers had powerful friends who would be prepared to help.[10]

The Settler Militia

Although U.S. naval ships, when available, provided military support, the main instrument of defense for the settler communities was the militia. The militia was first organized in August 1822 when, as a result of the impending attack at Cape Mesurado, the agent of the settlements mobilized all "able-bodied" males into a militia force and declared martial law in preparation for taking defensive action.[11] Three years later, the legal status of the militia was set out in the Plan for Civil Government. The plan called for the establishment of a Committee of the Colonial Militia, which was to operate under the supervision of the agent.[12]

Regulations governing the operations of the militia were constantly revised as the population of the settlements grew. In 1839, for example, judges, collectors of customs, and preachers with assigned pastoral charges were exempted from military service, and the strength of the militia was increased from one company to a regiment consisting of at least three companies of forty men each. In that year, provision was made for the organizing of volunteer militia units (companies) by public-spirited males. All militia units had to be certified by the agent through the receipt of a charter. Militia rehearsals were made mandatory four times a year.

By the early 1840s, as the influx of recaptives helped ranks of the settlers increase, others, such as seamen and port hands, and members of the Legislative Council were exempted from military service. The former were required to pay an annual fee of fifty cents each for their exemption. In 1843, the age for compulsory military service was reduced from between sixteen and sixty to between sixteen and fifty. By 1846, the strength of the militia had grown to two regiments. Quarterly parades were now held at several locations instead of only at county seats, a decision that removed

the problem of transporting larger numbers of men to only one or two central locations four times a year for rehearsals.[13]

All members of the militia were required to provide their own equipment.[14] Militiamen were paid when called into active service and veterans were rewarded under the "bounty land grant" scheme (for which see chapter 5, section headed "Land and Property Rights"). Until the formation of the Liberian Frontier Force as a standing armed force at the beginning of the twentieth century, the militia remained the major defense force and service in it was held in great respect in settler society. Most national leaders of the nineteenth century were also active members of the militia and many ambitious young men seized opportunities through the militia to earn public respect and launch political careers. In 1915, for example, William Tubman, then a popular young man, organized a militia unit from Maryland County for engagement in the Kru Coast pacification campaign (see Chapter 11). Frequently, militia units carried the names of their founders or other local or national notables, thereby bringing prestige to such individuals. Though rendered insignificant by the formation of the Liberian Frontier Force and subsequent standing military forces, the militia continued to exist as a reserve force until finally abolished after the military takeover of 1980.

Trade, Conflict, and the Establishment of a "Sphere of Influence"

As soon as a settlement had been established on the mainland, the ACS purchased three small vessels to engage in trade along the coast. Throughout most of 1823, the *Augusta* and two other small vessels sailed between Monrovia and Settra Kru engaging in trade (American Colonization Society, *J. Ashmun Annual Report, 1823*). Agent Jehudi Ashmun had conceived of a priority role for trade and a strategy for its promotion in the subregion. Writing to the Board of Directors of the ACS a few years later, Ashmun was to explain the role of trade in the development of the new society: "The sources of trade and commerce naturally belonging to the colony, placed as it is on the central part of a coast of vast extent, and bordering on populous and industrious nations in the interior of the continent . . . " created, he observed, important opportunities; agriculture was destined "to follow in the train of trade, and not to lead it" (ACS, *J. Ashmun Annual Report, 1828,* quoted in Syfert 1977).[15]

Ashmun's interest in promoting trade was reinforced by the ACS's commitment to obstruct slaving on the coast. The promotion of legitimate trade was to serve as an incentive against slaving by African societies. The strategy for establishing this ACS-dominated social order had three aspects. First was the establishment of settlements at areas of strategic

importance with regard to the flow of trade. Such locations were to be acquired by outright "purchase." Second, selected sites closer to the sources of trade were to be acquired through negotiation or otherwise for the establishment of trade factories and future settlements. Third, the guaranteeing of free passage of trade, the regulation of prices and of competition, and the minimizing of any unrest that might affect the flow of trade were to be arranged by concluding treaties with the surrounding indigenous societies. These treaties were to constitute the framework for founding a cluster of coastal settlements and a larger "sphere of influence" within which dominance over trade would be established. Let us examine how this strategy was implemented.

Trade, Conflict, and Settlements: The "Western" Area

The first focus of concern in implementing the ACS's strategy was the western area that included the major trade entrepôts near the St. Paul River and the Gallinas. Intervention near the St. Paul meant involvement in the traditional trade corridor from the mouth of the St. Paul River running north to Bopolu, the region in which Gola warriors were already pressuring Dei chiefs in an effort to isolate and dislodge the Condo. In 1823, Ashmun initiated negotiations with Dei chiefs of the area and obtained land for settlement of the first upriver communities on the St. Paul.

Within a year of the agreements conflict broke out between the colonial government and the indigenous political communities over terms of trade and the continuation of slaving.[16] Also in 1824, the colony launched a surprise attack against Spanish slave factories at Digby (to be known later as Royesville) and French slavers on Bushrod Island. Further militia attacks destroyed more factories and released more than 250 slaves in the area. Despite the efforts, slaving was difficult to rout out.[17]

In the area near the Gallinas, the colonial government had hoped to deny Vai communities access to legitimate trade until they ended their involvement in slave trading. By 1826, however, being unable to isolate the Vai commercially, the colonial government changed its strategy. Treaties were concluded in that year acquiring land from the Vai for building a factory for colonial trade. The agreement sought to prohibit foreign traders from constructing similar depots in the area and to ensure that prices would be fixed only by mutual agreement with the colonial administration. As a means of controlling trade at Cape Mount, the colonial government also adopted an ordinance prohibiting foreign vessels

that traded at Cape Mount from trading at Monrovia (Syfert 1977).[18] Nonetheless, the government was not to make substantial headway in Vai territory until the early 1830s, after Zolu Duma died, and his confederation collapsed.[19]

As European slavers took sides in the power struggle among contenders to the confederation, which had covered a wide portion of Vai territory, the colonial government began negotiations with certain local chiefs who sought protection from the warlords in the melee and maneuvered among contending factions.[20] By 1838, despite intermittent hostilities, several Liberian traders had established coastal and inland trade factories in the region. As was to be expected, given the unsettled state of the area, considerable trade goods were destroyed in the fighting.[21] These contestations were to continue in the area for the rest of the nineteenth century.

Meanwhile, the struggle between the settlers and the Dei about slaves, trade, and territory continued intermittently. The last such struggle was in 1832 when Chief Bromley, in an effort to recapture slaves owned by his late father that had been set free by the colonial government, put together an alliance of Dei and Gola chiefs of the immediate vicinity, blockaded the trade routes, and began hostilities against the colony. In retaliation, the colony also imposed a trade embargo and launched counterattacks.[22] This episode brought to a close hostilities between the Dei and the colony.

Settler society and the colonial government were ill equipped to comprehend the factors underlying the persistent disturbances in the interior, for they were unfamiliar with political activities in the environs. Concerned about the effect of such disturbances on the flow of trade and the supply of foodstuffs, the colonial government often set out not only to quash armed conflicts with the use of the militia but also to mediate those conflicts.[23]

Just as the death of Zolu Duma and the collapse of his confederation precipitated fighting, so also did the death of Sao Boso and the collapse of the Condo confederation.[24] By 1841, however, hostilities were subsiding. Dei chiefs held a council in January 1841 and began to open the major trade passages in the area. Mandingo traders from Condo and the Guinean highlands reached Monrovia with trade goods by March. With the death of Fan Fila Yenge, aggressive enforcement of anti-slavery regulations was begun by the British along the coast.[25] The crackdown by the British pressured many chiefs, including Fan Tolo,[26] to sign treaties to end slave trading. However, European slavers such as Gomez and Canot continued to elude capture. With persistent harassment, by 1850 the last Spanish slave traders were forced out of the Gallinas. The transatlantic slave trade in the subregion had ended.

In 1843, through the intervention of the Liberian government, peace was achieved between a diminished Condo confederation and Dei chiefs. Governor Joseph J. Roberts visited various political communities in the interior for fifteen days. During his visit, he presided over the settlement of many intercommunity disputes and signed a number of treaties with local chiefs. A most significant agreement was reached between Yodo, an influential Gola chief south of St. Paul, and his rival Balasada, a warlord. The treaty signed by both men committed them to the promotion of free trade and termination of slave trading (Holsoe 1971). Both men, moreover, agreed to submit all insoluble disputes between them and their peoples to the governor for arbitration. Most of the treaties negotiated by the Liberian authorities with warring indigenous political communities were designed to establish a role for the Liberian government as arbitrator and guarantor of peace and stability in the subregion.

Trade, Conflict, and Settlements: The "Eastern" Area

While the ACS-led government struggled to promote trade and establish a sphere of influence in the western part of the subregion, amid tremendous upheaval, it did not relent in efforts to expand its positions along the eastern part of the coast. Through various means, it acquired territory at the mouths of the Junk, St. John, Benson, and other rivers, and at other locations of strategic importance especially in the palm oil and camwood trades.[27]

The colonial government also launched several assaults against the slave trade in efforts to replace it with commodity trade. One major assault was launched against slavers at Trade Town near New Cess, where the government concluded treaties establishing trade factories.[28] The management of the ACS was very pleased with the growth of trade and the expansion of the colonial government's influence in the subregion.[29] Success in legitimate trade went hand in hand with suppression of the slave trade. The strategy of establishing trading stations or an occasional new settlement and negotiating treaties regarding prices and flow of trade continued in the eastern area throughout the 1830s.[30]

Nevertheless, the slave trade remained resilient. Ending it was like trying to put out a brushfire: no sooner had it been suppressed in one area than it would be revived in another. The resources available to European slavers facilitated their moving from one station to another. Moreover, slaving had been the most important trading activity along the coast since the eighteenth century. It had penetrated the entire fabric of indigenous social and economic relationships. Even chiefs who were

strategically situated in the flow of such legitimate and profitable trades as the ones in palm oil and camwood seemed ready to shift to slave trading at the first opportunity.

In 1835, the Bassa chief known to Europeans as King Joe Harris, frustrated by slavers who refused to do business with him so close to the settlement of Bassa Cove, attacked the colony at that settlement. When a settler militia of 100 men restored order, Harris was forced to pay damages, to pledge to abandon slaving, and to deed most of his land south of the Benson River to the New York and Pennsylvania Colonization societies.[31] Harris further agreed to seek colonial arbitration in all future disputes. The settlement of Lower Buchanan was established on ceded land in 1837.

Land was also exacted from Bassa chiefs in 1836 when they were unable to pay private commercial debts to such influential settlers as Joseph J. Roberts, Lewis Ciples, Jonas Cary, and Hilary Teage. Colonial officials pressured chiefs at Little Bassa to sell land in view of their failure to pay their debts. The chiefs preferred instead to mortgage portions of their land for four months. Upon a second default after four months, a colonial commission was sent to Little Bassa to collect deeds for the land. When the chiefs refused to deed land to the colonial authorities, a detachment of militiamen was dispatched to Little Bassa aboard three schooners chartered by the government from settler traders. The government annexed land at Little Bassa (Syfert 1977).

After the settlements near the St. John and Benson rivers, the next point of settler habitation established by the ACS along the coast was near the Sinoe River.[32] In July 1838, Greenville was established. Trade was initiated with the indigenous communities shortly after. Large quantities of rice, palm oil, and camwood were exported from Sinoe that very year.[33]

Between 1838 and 1845 several other contingents of settlers arrived in Sinoe and organized the agricultural communities of Readsville, Louisiana, and Lexington near the Sinoe River. As elsewhere, relations between the settlers and the indigenous communities were mixed. The indigenous societies, being themselves in conflict, were quick to react to the settlers on the basis of the settlers' relationships with other groups. In Sinoe, the land on which the settler communities were built had been acquired from the Sno peoples with whom the settlers maintained friendly relations. The Kabor claimed that the land was theirs and had been transferred to the settlers illegally by the Sno. Underlying this dispute were years of intermittent conflict between the two groups (Sullivan 1978). The Kabor were a seafaring people and were dominant in trade in the area where the settlers established their communities. To establish the settler trading community of Greenville in close proximity

to a Kabor community near the beach was to immediately engender competition and become a source of conflict.[34]

Several devices were used by the colonial government to dominate the coastal area where the new settlements had been established. The killing of Governor Finley by the Fishmen provided one such opportunity to exact reparations, annex territory, fight the slave trade, and gain trade concessions.[35]

The colonial government also concluded extensive agreements and mutual defense arrangements with the Sno and Jlao communities as leverage in relating to the suspicious Kabor, who had not always been on friendly terms with the Sno, and as pretexts to seize Kabor land.[36] Conflict between the settlers and the Kabor communities of the Kru coast was to persist throughout the nineteenth century.

The enterprising spirit of many coastal Kwa peoples, their seafaring culture, and their long-standing relationship with European traders constituted serious challenges to colonial efforts at becoming the dominant influence along the coast. The collaboration between Kru and European traders proved to be a major obstacle that required considerable attention and numerous pacification campaigns on the part of the colonial government. Several commissions were sent to the area from 1843 to 1847 in an intensive move to combat the persistent incursions of European traders. By the end of 1847, treaties of cessation, lease, or purchase had been signed by the Liberian government with all Kwa political communities on the coast except Settra Kru.[37]

Maryland in Africa

Further down the littoral, the Maryland State Colonization Society (MSCS) had "purchased" tracts of land at and near the promontory of Cape Palmas.[38] The Colony of Maryland in Africa, as it was officially called, was begun there in 1834. The Grebo chiefs along the coast had had long exposure to Europeans and were interested not only in promoting trade but also in establishing educational institutions. Thus the treaty signed with the MSCS specified the ceding of land in return for the establishment of educational institutions among the Nyomowe peoples. The treaty also provided for a mutual defense pact, a stipulation that was of great interest to the Nyomowe chiefs who were constantly struggling against the Kudemowe towns in the region (Martin 1968).

The president of the MSCS, John Latrobe, had conceived of Maryland in Africa as the gateway of coastal commerce to the southern parts of the continent. However, the MSCS intended this trade to be undertaken by American traders and the society itself; the new colony was to develop an

agrarian society. In furtherance of this objective, all trade transactions between the indigenous political communities and the settlers were forbidden.

The colony was soon to flourish, given its location near the Cavalla River at the junction of the Atlantic Ocean. It was suitably located for participation in the rice and palm oil trades of the area.[39] Between 1834 and 1849, twelve more treaties were signed enlarging the jurisdiction of the Cape Palmas colony and expanding its trading opportunities to compete with foreign establishments on the coast.

Although the settlers were prohibited from engaging in trade with the surrounding Grebo communities, a cordial relationship developed in the region. Grebo towns and villages were left undisturbed by the colonial government, while the close proximity of the settler and Grebo communities made for intensive interaction between them. Leaders of the colonial government and the Grebo communities even devised a mechanism for conflict resolution.[40]

The cordial relationship between the colony and the Grebo was disrupted by two factors. The first was the arrival of new settlers in 1837. The second was the MSCS's insistence on imposing its laws on Grebo communities. New arrivals required the establishment of new settler communities. The desire to maintain settler communities in close proximity to each other led to a reversal of policy: Grebo political communities were required to leave their towns and villages in the region of the cape. Even as this policy was heightening tension between the colony and the Grebo, the MSCS remained insensitive to the fact that the removal of the Grebo was in violation of the 1834 treaty. In an enormous display of insensitivity in 1839, President Latrobe maintained that "the rooted prejudices of ages are not to be overthrown by treaty stipulations" (quoted in Martin 1968:111).[41]

As soon as new arrivals appeared and others from the Monrovia settlements moved to the new colony, the MSCS insisted on the subjugation of the Grebo communities to colonial laws.[42] Earlier, in 1837, the Grebo had resisted pressure and mounted a trade embargo after hiking the price of rice and palm oil. They had also ordered all Grebo people who worked in the colony to return to their villages. Both the Nyomowe and Kudemowe Grebo had cooperated in the embargo. Again in 1843, Grebo leaders of both Nyomowe and Kudemowe groups united in another trade embargo and an apparent attempt to oust the settlers. This time the intervention of Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the USS *Decatur* saved the situation for the colony.

The territorial expansion of the colony was one threat to settler-Grebo relations. Another was the expansion of British and French trading activities. In 1838, a French naval officer landed at Garraway near the cape to obtain fresh supplies. Being impressed with the anchorage and

quality of service received, he signed a treaty with local chiefs ceding the area to France for trading purposes. Shortly thereafter and even before the French parliament approved the transaction, King Louis Philippe authorized and provided funds for the building of a supply fort at Garraway. Although the fort was never built, the French laid claims to Garraway and used it as a coaling station. This development made the acquisition of land along the coast a matter of highest priority for the MSCS. Having obtained land at Rocktown in 1837, it now sought to obtain land at Fishtown and the remaining ports along the coast. The MSCS tried to extend by purchase the boundaries of the colony from Garraway on the west to Bereby on the San Pedro River on the east. Its purpose was to forestall further intervention by English traders or the French navy, which had already established a foothold at Garraway (Martin 1968).

By 1843, most of the coastline from the border of the Liberian settlements to the San Pedro River was being claimed by the Colony of Maryland in Africa. Meanwhile the colony maintained a precarious domination over the Grebo societies thanks largely to the breaking of a fragile solidarity between the Kudemowe and Nyomowe Grebo groups, the fortification of the cape, and the knowledge that hovering above all was the might of the United States naval vessels that made frequent trips along the coast.

All told, we have seen a complex situation in which the expansion of settler influence in the subregion was driven by a mix of motives. In the drive to establish settler domination, a mix of commercial motives, abolitionist imperatives, territorial expansionism, and the civilizing mission seem to have combined to provide mutual reinforcement. An assortment of instrumentalities were employed in these endeavors. They spanned the spectrum from negotiation of treaties of trade and amity, to the establishment of mediation commissions and arbitration boards, to the institution of trade embargoes, to the threat and use of force—both with and without the assistance of European and American naval power. Settler society, under the aegis of the ACS, had, over a period of twenty years, become established as the dominant authority along the coast. Trade had been an important instrument promoting this new status and would be a motivating factor in sustaining it.

African response reflected the pattern of conflict, adaptation in competition, and cooperation that had characterized interaction in the subregion for more than 200 years. Indigenous political communities vacillated between strategies to gain advantages in trade and strategies to resist or minimize colonial influence and protect their autonomy. Operating within a completely different cultural frame, indigenous rulers engaged in land transactions on the basis of traditional tenancy principles under which land was used by "strangers" but never totally alienated from the indigenous "masters of the land." It was to become clear that

the Liberian colonial authorities were far different from European traders and that their presence in the subregion and their claim to land were permanent—even if these had to be enforced by the sustained use of military power.

Reaping Independence While Pursuing Trade

Liberia, as we have seen, was conceived as a society to be developed on sound agricultural foundations. Why then was trade so central to the development of its economy? There were several reasons. First, trade was already a major economic activity of the subregion and had been for at least two centuries before the settlers' arrival. It was easier for a band of newcomers to try to secure a place in mainstream ongoing economic activities than to reverse the trend. Furthermore, not only was trade the major economic activity in the subregion but the trade of the subregion had become thoroughly integrated in the stream of European trade so that pressure to maintain it was far-reaching.

Second, for at least a century before the settlers' arrival, the Atlantic slave trade had become the dominant form of trade in the subregion. If such trade was to be eliminated, it would have to be replaced. Legitimate commerce provided a convenient replacement. Moreover, the type of trade transactions being undertaken required little toil and little capital investment. Because of these characteristics, a career as a trader was within easy reach of many.

Third, the settlers' negative memories about agricultural work were well known. The association of field work with the conditions and status of slaves was a legacy of their past. Trading, on the other hand, was perceived as a respectable enterprise worthy of the participation of free and civilized people.

Fourth, while agriculture was to become the major economic activity of the "upriver" communities for most of the nineteenth century, the locations of the principal settler towns made them natural hubs for commercial activity. In fact, major trading posts had already existed at or near some of these places before any settlers inhabited them.

Finally, it would seem that, perhaps inadvertently, the ACS was more prone to promoting trade than agriculture.[43] Even in promoting agriculture, the steps taken by the ACS were counterproductive. For example, in the first years of the settlements, the ACS was keen on the development of what it called "government farms" as demonstration farms and as sources of food. Unfortunately, such farms were seen more as labor camps than as experimental enterprises. Settlers complained about being forced to work them or forfeit rations; therefore, they were

easily perceived as a way of "punishing the poor" since those who succeeded in trade or commanded some resources could either hire help to work their own farms or purchase food. Resistance to working such farms was widespread. While agriculture was laden with such negative orientations, the ACS itself was engaged in commerce. Commerce, moreover, especially coastal trade, was intertwined with defense and communications between the coastal settlements, which spanned more than 150 miles of coastline.

When the ACS initiated coastal trade, settlers who gained employment on coastal vessels found an important gateway to establishing trading enterprises of their own. Francis Devaney, Joseph J. Roberts, and Daniel Warner were all employed as pilots of ACS vessels in the early years of coastal trade. All three became merchant magnates; two, Roberts and Warner, rose to become president. Trade flourished throughout the coastal settlements and Monrovia became the major entrepôt.[44]

Gradually, the ACS as such withdrew from participation in trade and encouraged Liberians to get involved in it. There were two distinct aspects to the flourishing enterprise. One was referred to as the "country traffic." This was the inland trade that began at the coast and moved northward into the savanna. The other was the trade conducted by schooners and other types of boats along the coastline. This type of trade was referred to as "coast-wise trade."

In the western and northwestern regions, the Mandingo controlled the northern terminals of the country traffic. Goods brought coastward through the trade corridors by the Mandingo included the cotton fabric known as "country cloth." This fabric was woven on indigenous looms. On some occasions, trade items included horses brought from the Futa Jallons.[45] Settler legend told of a very prosperous kingdom of the Mandingo beyond the northern highlands. Musardhu was presumed to be the southernmost outpost of that kingdom. As early as the 1820s, a few settlers had ventured north in an effort to link up with the source of trade. The prosperity of Musardhu was presumed to be only the tip of the iceberg.[46] An opportunity to conclude trade agreements with the northern kingdom not only would have ensured a richer supply of trade goods but seemed likely to establish the basis for greater security in the subregion. The settlers would ensure security at the coast while the Mandingo kingdom would guarantee the security of trade routes outside settler jurisdiction.

Since inland trade involved travel for long distances over land, many more settlers were capable of participating in it. Although many small merchants were involved in such trade, the merchants who were involved in coast-wise trade dominated inland trade also. The chief competitors of the coastal merchants in inland trade, however, were not the small

settler traders but the well-established African chiefs who had previously been engaged in the slave trade and were gradually and reluctantly shifting to commodity trade.

Coast-wise trade was undertaken largely by settlers of means. This trade involved bartering European goods for African goods to Africans and settlers in the villages and towns along the coast. More than a dozen Liberians who owned schooners engaged in coast-wise trade; and many also owned trade factories along the coast just as they owned such factories at inland trading posts at places such as Millsburg and Sowi.

In the early 1840s, palm oil and palm products (kernels and fiber) began a steady rise in prices largely because of increased demand from the British seaport of Liverpool. By the peak period of 1854, 1 ton of palm oil sold for £45 on the Liverpool market (Syfert 1977). Palm oil and palm products were largely trade items found near the coast. They did not constitute a substantial part of the inland trade, and their increased profitability intensified coastal trade competition. Many Liberians concluded their own agreements with chiefs and elders of indigenous political communities, built warehouses, and assigned their agents on the coast. Moreover, the existence of rich oil-bearing palms in Liberia proved irresistible to British traders in Sierra Leone, who constantly encroached upon the Liberian coast to engage in such trade. The Liberian government therefore became determined to take steps to secure Liberian trade by reducing European competition.

Imposing Taxes and Establishing Ports of Entry

The concern at the time was to increase Liberian participation in coast-wise trade and limit European competition by restricting European participation. Both the government and settler traders were concerned about the intensity of European involvement in coastal trade. Such trade was a major source of income for the colonial government, which seemed both unwilling and unable to impose and collect other taxes. In efforts to protect the interest of settler traders, the colonial government attempted to establish regulations affecting trade relationships between indigenous political communities and Europeans and between settlers and Europeans. It tried to curtail direct trade between the indigenous political communities and Europeans by inserting into treaties signed with those communities provisions that prohibited Europeans from opening trade factories and maintaining warehouses along the coast.

Another measure directed at Europeans was the imposition of anchorage and harbor duties. In ordinances issued in 1825 and 1827,

the colonial government sought to regulate direct trade between Liberians and Europeans. Europeans wishing to trade in Liberian territory were required to have Liberian agents or partners. Both ordinances forbade Africans living in territory controlled by the colonial government to trade with Europeans who refused to pay the duties.

None of these measures met with much success. The colonial government therefore struggled to devise new ways to ensure tax collection and limit Europeans' trade. These efforts required a more elaborate and efficient infrastructure. In pursuit of the latter, and of a capability to strengthen control of the coast, the colonial authorities of Montserrado, Sinoe, and Bassa formulated and issued the Ports of Entry Law of 1838. The following year they instituted a more centrally coordinated constitutional order known as the Commonwealth of Liberia.

The Ports of Entry Law sought to restrict all foreign commercial activities to a number of specific ports and to make illegal foreign commercial activity outside these ports. In implementing this law, the commonwealth sought to curtail smuggling and therefore increase its revenues, exercise control over trade with indigenous communities, and provide better trade opportunities to Liberian traders. The objective was to ensure the standing of settler merchants as the exclusive middlemen in trade between Europeans and indigenous and settler communities. If a monopoly for Liberian merchants were created in the coast-wise trade, it was anticipated that Europeans would then confine their efforts to transatlantic commerce (Syfert 1977). In 1840, the commonwealth government sent an emissary to the English Colonization Society in London in the hope of getting it to pressure Britain to comply with the Ports of Entry Law (Brown, 1941). Evidently, no such assurance was given.

Constituting the Commonwealth

Although the failure of European traders to comply with the new law was a major factor in the establishment of the commonwealth, other factors were equally as important. Among these were the desire for greater settler participation in the government and the need for closer coordination of affairs now that support from the ACS and its affiliated societies was dwindling.

In 1838, a committee of settlers in Monrovia formulated a draft constitution for the commonwealth and submitted it to the ACS. The draft constitution (known as the Monrovia Draft) reposed titular authority in the ACS while setting up the Legislative Council of the Commonwealth as the effective lawmaking body. While the governor of the commonwealth was to be appointed by the ACS, he was not given veto powers.

An independent judiciary was also to be organized under the Monrovia Draft. The ACS rejected the draft and replaced it with one of its own.

The major features of the commonwealth constitution supplied by the ACS included the retention of veto powers by the ACS and its agent, who was to be known as the governor of the Colony of Monrovia and president of Liberia. The governor was to be appointed by the ACS and subject to removal only by the ACS. A commonwealth legislature was to consist of the governors of the colonies of Sinoe, Bassa, Montserrado, and five delegates elected by the colonial councils of the three colonies. The commonwealth legislature was given the power to declare war in self-defense, to provide for a common defense, and to make treaties with the indigenous political communities. It was also to institute uniform rules for naturalization and common criteria for citizenship. It had the power to ensure a standard value for Liberian currency and for monies and other forms of exchange between settlers and the indigenous political communities. It also had the power to regulate the economy by imposing and collecting taxes and ensuring a uniform tariff code for foreign goods. Each colony was to collect tariffs at its ports and make deposits in the local treasury under the authority of the colonial council of that colony.

Judicial powers were vested in the Supreme Court of Liberia, to be headed by the president or governor of Monrovia and the governors of the various colonies. Decisions from colonial courts were appealable to the supreme court.

The continued domination of the political process by the governor or president was a source of concern to many settlers. However, the greatest threat to the commonwealth was perceived to be the continued refusal of European traders to observe the ports of entry laws because without the collection of custom duties the government could not function. British traders contended with the support of their government that Liberia had no greater claim over land where they had established trade factories even before the coming of the settlers or land on which both Liberian- and British-trading factories were located. The British questioned the legality of Liberia's efforts to establish jurisdiction over any portion of the subregion since it was the colony of a private American organization.

The ACS was not successful in securing United States government involvement in the controversy. When the British sought clarification from the U.S. government as to its interest in Liberia, the U.S. secretary of state asserted that although the United States had a "peculiar interest" in Liberia, the latter was not a U.S. colony and the United States would not "settle and adjust differences" between the colonists and the British government (Huberich 1947: vol. 1). Realizing that there was no alternative to independence, the ACS, in early 1845, encouraged the

"purchase" of all coastal lands between the trading posts at Cape Mount on the west to the borders of the Colony of Maryland on the east. The sum of $20,000 was made available to the commonwealth by the ACS for this purpose. By the end of 1846, the entire coastline, except for a small portion near Maryland that was being claimed by the French, was assumed to be Liberian territory.

Meanwhile, having ascertained the position of the United States regarding Liberia, the British secretary of state for foreign affairs advised British naval units along the West African coast that while they should "avoid involving themselves in contentions with the local authorities of the Liberian settlements," they must "afford efficient protection to British trade against improper assumption of power" on the part of those authorities (ACS, *African Repository and Colonial Journal* [1844] 20, no. 6:176).

A serious situation arose when, in April 1845, the *Little Ben*, a schooner owned by Cortland and Davidson, a British trading firm in Sierra Leone, refused to pay duties at Bassa Cove. Its cargo was seized by Liberian customs officials. Infuriated by this act, the British dispatched the brig HMS *Lily* to Bassa Cove and seized the vessel, *John Seys*, owned by a Liberian merchant Stephen Benson, and all its cargo of palm oil and imported wares (Benson was to become the second president of Liberia). The *John Seys* was taken to Freetown ostensibly as a slave ship. Although investigators concluded that the *John Seys* was not a slave ship, Benson was required to pay costs of capture and storage estimated at about $1,200. After he refused to pay, the schooner was sold to a Brazilian in 1847 (Syfert 1977).

In January 1846, the ACS adopted a resolution enabling the commonwealth to take on full responsibility for its own governance. Acting separately but at about the same time, the commonwealth had proposed to recommend the same measure to the ACS. As the final portions of coastline were "purchased" in late 1846, preparations were under way for the convening of a constitutional convention. On July 5, 1847, the constitutional convention commenced in Monrovia. On July 26, a declaration of independence was issued and the Republic of Liberia was proclaimed.

Forming the Republic

The constitutional convention of July 1847 prepared a constitution for a unitary form of government. It created three "separate but equal" branches of national government, namely, the legislative, executive, and judiciary. All other institutions were designed to be subordinate to these

three. As chief executive, the president was given sweeping powers of appointment. Except for the members of the bicameral legislature, all public officials, including judges, were to be appointed by the president. With the exception of judges, all appointed officials were to serve at the president's pleasure.

It is curious that the settlers, who—as the Monrovia Draft showed—had desired greater participation in decision making, would now design a highly centralized constitution that provided very few opportunities for participation in decision-making roles. No provision was made for local government. Perhaps the external political environment at the time stimulated a preference for strong centralized authority in the face of British and French incursions, on the one hand, and hostile indigenous communities, on the other.

It is known, however, that certain issues seem to have deeply divided settler society at that time, so that a unitary form of government must not have been universally acclaimed. A major point of disagreement had to do with the domination of Monrovia over the political process. Monrovia's role had been an issue of concern to the settlers of Bassa and Sinoe since the founding of the latter. This issue surfaced at the constitutional convention and manifested itself in the form of the debate regarding the role of the ACS after independence. The ACS had proposed to retain ownership to land reserved for the settlement of recaptives. While this idea was totally rejected by the Monrovia delegation, it was embraced by the Bassa delegation largely because of the perception that a continuing presence of the ACS in Liberian affairs would counterbalance the domination of the Monrovia merchants (Huberich 1947, 1:822-32).

The question of Monrovia's domination was so hotly contested that, at the referendum on the draft constitution, opponents in Edina and some of the other settlements of Bassa obstructed the voting process by forcing the closure of the polling places. In other settlements, voters were canvassed to vote against the draft constitution or not to vote at all.[47]

While the new constitution seems to have only transferred authority from an external source, the ACS, to a national triumvirate located high above the society, the lack of physical as well as institutional infrastructure seriously limited the central government's ability to exercise control at the county level. Therefore, a certain degree of local autonomy was retained if not by law at least by circumstance. It would be well into the twentieth century before the necessary infrastructure would be developed.

In summary, the establishment of settler political order in the subregion involved a dynamic process of interaction among several contending and cooperating forces and interests. It included the acquisition of land under conditions clouded by cultural differences and hidden objectives and interests on both sides, and by the ACS's use of force

backed by U.S. naval power. It also involved strategic interactions by the ACS and an emergent group of merchant settlers under its tutelage in establishing a dominant role in commerce in the subregion. Through force, commercial agreements and treaties of friendship, and shrewd annexation of territory, the ACS and its junior partners, the merchant class among the settlers, created a sphere of influence in which slave trading was stifled and commercial and political objectives promoted.

For the indigenous political communities, what was initially thought to be the introduction of another contestant in the continuing struggle for favorable trade positions turned into a permanent and menacing presence—a presence unwilling to conform to local rules of tenancy, and supported by superior military power in its quest for domination of the subregion.

Curiously, the declaration of independence by the three clusters of settlements was more a move to protect trade opportunities than an assertion of a spirit of liberation. It was also a protective reaction in view of perceived abandonment by the U.S. government rather than a deliberate action designed to achieve a long-desired aspiration. It was not the attraction of freedom but fear of annexation or annihilation that drove the process of independence. In this way, Liberia's independence was different from twentieth-century African independence.

★ 5 ★

Settler Society in the Nineteenth Century

A TOTAL OF EIGHTY-SIX SETTLERS and three officials (two representing the United States government and one representing the American Colonization Society) left from New York City for Africa on January 31, 1820, aboard the ship *Elizabeth*.[1] This was the first of several waves of emigrants from the United States to Africa over the next three decades.

Within six weeks the party reached the West African coast at Sherbro Island in the Gallinas, a rest stop from which they were to proceed to identify and negotiate territory for their settlement. Within three months of their arrival at Sherbro, all three officials and twelve of the eighty-six settlers had died; the swampy coastal terrain proved too much for them. The rest of the settlers, now led by the Reverend Daniel Coker, a fellow settler and former official of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church of Baltimore, relocated to the British colony of Freetown on the mainland.

Although the news of the death of so many people was received with shock by the ACS, a second group of thirty-three settlers and a new team of officials was dispatched in early 1821 aboard the brig *Nautilus*.[2] Having settled temporarily at Freetown with the others, the officials proceeded farther down the coast in search of a location for a permanent settlement. On April 12, 1821, they signed an agreement with a Bassa chief who had been named King Jack Ben by European traders. Ben agreed to provide the settlers with a place to build their settlement provided they would not disrupt the flow of trade, including the slave trade, that was going on in his territory. Although the agent of the ACS, the Episcopal preacher Joseph R. Andrus, signed such an agreement, it was to be nullified by the ACS before the settlers took up occupancy of the territory.

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By November 1821, a new agent, Dr. Eli Ayres, had been dispatched by the ACS to replace Andrus who, incidentally, died before his replacement arrived. Ayres sought the assistance of Lieutenant Robert F. Stockton, commander of the USS *Alligator*, in inspecting the coast west of King Jack Ben's territory for a suitable site.

On December 15, 1821, Lieutenant Stockton and Dr. Ayres met with the Dei and Bassa chiefs whose territory was to become the site of the first settlement. After considerable discussion, in a move to speed up the "negotiations," Lieutenant Stockton pulled a pistol, put it to the head of King Peter (one of the chiefs), and obtained a favorable settlement. The "Doukor Contract," as the "agreement" is sometimes called, was then concluded.[3] The land "purchased" was a small island near Cape Mesurado. Four months later, new "purchases" were made of land on the mainland. By 1847, when self-government devolved upon the settlements, the new society had laid claim to more than 200 miles of coastal land, acquired by "purchase" or treaty. Over the next fifty years, its claims would extend over a total area exceeding 100,000 square miles with an estimated local population of close to one million.

Who were the settlers? Where in the United States did they come from? How well equipped were they for this undertaking? Let us now examine some of the demographic features of early settler society.

Demographic Features

At least one contingent of settlers was dispatched from the United States to Liberia each year from 1821 to the turn of the century.[4] By 1842, a total of 4,571 settlers had arrived in the new colony. Concurrently, as of 1831, yearly contingents of settlers were also being sent to the Colony of Maryland in Africa, which was being organized and supported by the Maryland Colonization Society, an affiliate of the ACS.[5] Between 1834 and 1862, a total of 1,454 repatriates had been settled in the Maryland colony.

Although 4,571 settlers had arrived in the colony by 1842, according to the census of 1843, only 2,388 people lived in the colony in that year; of these, 1,819 were repatriates. These repatriates, then, represented only some 40 percent of the total number that emigrated to Liberia. About 12 percent or 529 immigrants had reemigrated. Of these about 75 percent had gone on to other parts of Africa and slightly more than 20 percent had returned to the United States. By far the most important cause of attrition in population was death. The mortality rate was very high. Almost half of the deaths were caused by malaria (Shick 1971).

Age, Sex, and Origin

According to Tom W. Shick (1971), emigration records from the United States show a balanced ratio between the number of men and women who emigrated. Analysis of the records by age shows a wide base of infants and young children, signifying that emigration from the United States to Liberia was a family undertaking. Had it not been for the high death rate, there would have been a basis for healthy and steady population growth.

More than 60 percent of those who emigrated to Liberia between 1820 and 1842 came from Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland. A considerable number also came from other slaveholding states such as Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi. Only 6 percent came from states such as New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Ohio, and Iowa, which had already abolished slavery.

Literacy and Occupation

About a quarter of the repatriates had some literacy.[6] Close to 50 percent of all free blacks who emigrated from northern states were literate. For example, 60 percent of those from Connecticut, 56 percent from New York, and 42 percent from Pennsylvania were literate. In contrast only 17 percent of the immigrants from Virginia, the homeland of close to 36 percent of all repatriates up to 1843, were literate.

The occupations of the immigrants covered a wide range of activities. There were professionals, artisans, semiskilled individuals, and unskilled workers. The professionals included teachers, preachers, apothecaries and pharmacists, missionaries, newspaper editors, and owners of small business enterprises. Many from this category were to form the upper class and ruling elites of Liberia; many too, reemigrated from Liberia to other parts of Africa or back to the United States. The artisans included blacksmiths, printers, stonemasons, cabinetmakers, and nurses. Among those considered semiskilled were bricklayers, barbers, gardeners, midwives, and apprentices to artisans. The unskilled included washerwomen, house servants and laborers, farmers, and field hands (the last-named also considered themselves farmers). The largest group of immigrants was unskilled and the largest groups of unskilled were engaged in agriculture (Shick 1971).

Social Status at Emigration

The repatriates sent to Liberia were of two types. The first consisted of repatriates who were freeborn or had obtained their freedom

unconditionally. In fact, it was for such individuals that the colonization idea was concretized into a program: Liberia, in the words of its own Declaration of Independence (1847), was founded as "an asylum for the free people of color." The second type consisted of slaves who had been manumitted for the purpose of repatriating them. From 1821 to 1827, emigrants to Liberia consisted mainly of individuals of the first category. Between 1827 and 1850, the majority of the repatriates were manumitted slaves and recaptured Africans.[7]

By 1843, less than one-third of the population of the colony of Liberia had been born in the colony. This included only one of the 652 heads of household. This situation is significant in that as 1843 was only four years away from independence, the basic family structure and value orientations that characterized the colony at its founding had not changed. The infusion of new orientations was minimal; so also was the severing of linkages with the past. A constant reinforcement of norms and values from the United States was taking place with the arrival of every new immigrant group.

Pattern of Settlement

By 1843, the repatriates had established a number of settlements along the coast and on the banks of rivers that flowed into the Atlantic Ocean. In 1825, the settlement of Caldwell was established on the banks of the St. Paul River for the immigrants who arrived on the brig *Hunter*. The alluvial soils of Caldwell made the settlement most suitable for agriculture. The success of Caldwell led, in 1828, to the establishment of Millsburg north of Caldwell and further away from the coast. From a frontier settlement Millsburg became an important trading town. In 1830, a road was opened from Millsburg to the neighboring indigenous communities.

The population of recaptives was about 287 in 1843—a modest 6 percent of total immigration. Throughout the 1820s, the recaptives were easily absorbed into existing communities.[8] As their numbers grew, the settlement of New Georgia was established for them in 1834. Located on Stockton Creek near Monrovia, New Georgia, like Caldwell, became a flourishing agricultural community.

On the coast, also in 1834, the settlement of Bassa Cove was founded at the mouth of the St. John River. Along the banks of the St. John River, a number of settlements such as Bixley, Fortesville, and Hartford would develop. Other coastal settlements, Edina and Marshall, would be Edina across the St. John River opposite Bassa Cove, and Marshall at the mouth of the Junk River.

Still farther down the coast, about 140 miles from Monrovia, the settlement of Greenville was established in 1838 at the mouth of the Sinoe River. Lexington, Louisiana, and Bluntsville were to become upriver settlements established along the banks of the Sinoe River and some of its tributaries. The pattern of settlement was the same at all points on the coast: first, a major settlement at the coast (Monrovia, Marshall, Edina, Bassa Cove, and Greenville), near the mouth of a river; then a number of upriver settlements (Caldwell, New Georgia, Millsburg, Bixley, Fortesville, Lexington, and others) running north toward the interior along the river banks.

The occupational composition of the coastal settlements did not differ from that of those near Monrovia. In Greenville, for example, the skills of the settlers were found in the same relative proportions as elsewhere in Liberia. In 1843, the majority of the settlers were semiskilled and unskilled. Among the semiskilled were a few carpenters, seamstresses, and traders. About a quarter were literate or semiliterate. The professionals included one schoolteacher. There were four artisans and two merchants. The majority of the unskilled and illiterate became farmers.

Similarly in the Colony of Maryland, of a population of 262 in 1837, 11 were professionals; among them were a schoolteacher and a Baptist preacher, and a few appointive officials of the colonial government. A few of the settlers were artisans but the majority were semiskilled and unskilled individuals who were also illiterate. These were largely farmers. It is important to point out that although the majority of the settlers in all the settlements in Liberia and Maryland were farmers, they did not consider themselves to be farmers. Many were farmers by necessity, in search of other opportunities. Moreover, even artisans such as blacksmiths also engaged in farming because opportunities for full-time employment in their crafts were lacking. Farming was an essential activity for the sustenance of most individuals. Even those who were government officials maintained backyard gardens or small farms. During the early years, when the major food items were supplied by the ACS, local farms supplemented the rations.

Thus it can be seen that the settlements that constituted Liberia were essentially a number of communities located in clusters at the mouths of major rivers. These clusters, which existed at intervals over a distance of some 150 miles along the coast, did not extend for more than 25 miles into the interior. Each set of communities was linked to a major settlement that served as a local capital. All of the clusters were under the control of the government in Monrovia.[9]

The wave of emigration from the New World to Liberia was to continue until the turn of the century.[10] However, the waves turned into trickles over the years, so that after 1863 both the ACS and the Liberian

authorities found a need to step up their propaganda campaign to recruit settlers for the Liberian experiment. In 1865, a major group of settlers arrived from the West Indian island of Barbados. They were settled in a new St. Paul River settlement called Crozierville. This became the first of several groups from the West Indies that were to enrich the population of the fledgling country.

On a whole, the quantity and, perhaps, the quality of emigrants from the United States were rather disappointing to the ACS. Most blacks were not prepared to emigrate while many of those who wanted to were reluctant to settle in Africa under the sponsorship of the ACS. Nonetheless, until its dissolution at the beginning of the twentieth century, the ACS persisted in its efforts to promote repatriation as the most viable solution to the race question in the United States and to perceive its mission as a high Christian duty.

By 1847, the settlements had been constituted into three counties: Montserrado, which consisted of Monrovia and the St. Paul River settlements; Grand Bassa, which included Buchanana (formerly Bassa Cove), Edina, Marshall, and the St. John River settlements; and Sinoe, with Greenville and the Sinoe River settlements. Maryland became the fourth county in 1857.

Early Social Cleavages

In the new country's social and economic structure, there were several cleavages marked primarily by demographic factors. The first was the cleavage between Monrovia and the rest of the settlements. The primacy of Monrovia was a source of irritation and inconvenience to other settlements. This cleavage manifested itself as an antagonism between Monrovia and the St. Paul River settlements, on the one hand, and Monrovia and the coastal counties on the other hand. Monrovia was the center of commerce and trade while the St. Paul River settlements were the major trading posts along the trade routes into the interior. Monrovia was also the major consumer of agricultural products that were supplied largely from the upriver settlements. A similar cleavage existed between the major city and the upriver settlements in each county. The antagonism between Monrovia and the counties was based mainly on Monrovia's efforts to exercise authority over the counties in the wake of poor social infrastructure.

A second cleavage had to do with race. A considerable number of the freeborn settlers were mulattoes. Most of them lived in Monrovia, engaged in commerce, and held positions of authority in the government. This engendered resentment from the darker-skinned members of the

community, who saw in this correlation semblances of the white overlordship that had been experienced in the United States.

A third cleavage involved recaptives, who by 1867 numbered more than 5,000 and were perceived to threaten "civilized society." These recaptives constituted the major portion of the laboring classes both in agriculture and commerce. Having not reached a destination in slavery but being of African cultural heritages quite different from that of the local cultural milieu, the recaptives existed on the fringes of settler society and, in a way, constituted a social buffer between the New World settlers and the African societies that were part of the environment. The "civilizing" of the recaptives was a major objective of settler society.

A final cleavage was the one that existed between the settlers as a group and the indigenous societies. This cleavage involved not only a clash of cultures but also a political struggle for the establishment of spheres of influence regarding the flow of trade and, later, incorporation of all political communities of the subregion into a single body politic. The major issues that characterize historical processes in Liberia are dominated by the colonial and, later, the national government's efforts to incorporate diverse political communities into a settler-dominated body politic. In order to be able to examine the processes of incorporation, it is important to understand the social processes that drove settler society in its role as the centerpiece of a new authority structure in the Grain Coast subregion.

Social Patterns

As we have just seen, what is generally referred to as "settler society" was far from a homogeneous group of North American blacks. The differences among them were wide-ranging, spanning a spectrum from race and status at birth to education and skills. In order to understand the social patterns that existed in settler society, it is important to first identify and clarify the values and motivations that drove it.

Fundamental Principles

Our search for the primary principles that drove settler society may well begin with the mission of colonization. While it is true that a mix of motives attended the undertakings of the ACS, as far as the majority of the settlers were concerned the high purpose that gave justification to their departure from the New World was the establishment of a beachhead of civilization and Christianity on the African continent.

How can this objective be reconciled with the fact that a majority of the settlers were slaves who had been manumitted solely to emigrate? While repatriation to Africa was not the choice they would have made had there been an array of options available, repatriation presented at least a possibility for self-actualization. The breaking of the psychology of oppression and the possibility of becoming black torchbearers of civilization posed challenges and provided opportunities for both the manumitted slave and the freeborn. Letters written even by the unskilled, semiliterate manumitted slaves in their darkest moments of despair to their former masters and friends "reverberated with a swelling pride in their young, fragile republic, a nation wrought with their own black hands" (R. Miller 1975:108).

In its instructions to agents of the colonization efforts, the ACS directed that both settlers and Africans be instructed in "the arts of civilized life" (quoted in Blamo 1971). What the ACS referred to as the "arts of civilized life" involved basically the inculcation of Western values within a socioeconomic framework of Jeffersonian agrarianism (R. Miller 1975, 1978). Considered more closely, this in turn had to do with a devotion to hard field work and self-reliant accumulation based on smallholder agriculture, and with upward mobility by bootstraps laced with fortitude. Social concomitants of these included the development of a spirit of community pride and solidarity. The political dimensions of the "arts of civilized life," in the sense of Jeffersonian agrarianism, required the pursuit of democratic freedoms and civil liberties with emphasis on the development of democratic political institutions essentially at the local level.

Existing hand in hand with, and supporting the "arts of civilized life," were certain selected Christian dogmas that were perceived by the ACS to be crucial to Christian living in such frontier situations. These precepts included belief in human fallibility and in the omniscience and omnipotence of God. More importantly, however, they also included the precept that adversity was a dispensation from God; therefore, acceptance of adversity was in compliance with the will of God (Alexander 1846). Endurance was perceived as a fundamental Christian virtue and the capacity to endure was clear evidence of success (Curley 1835; Liberty 1977). Even the black abolitionists who opposed the involvement of whites in the colonization effort perceived Christianity as the instrument of "African regeneration" and the medium for spreading civilization "among a heathen people" (Crummell 1862).

Settler operational patterns and perspectives. Despite the aspiration of developing a Christian society based on the principles of agrarian democracy, it was the pursuit of trade and commerce that was to determine the colonial government's basic approach to constituting order on

the Grain Coast. The very location of the clusters of settlements at strategic nexuses of trade affected their pattern of development. Moreover, with all its professions of a commitment to the development of agrarian freeholdership, the ACS itself led the way in the pursuit of commerce. Thus, without a strong positive incentive to pursue agriculture, it is not surprising that in the new society, consisting as it did largely of manumitted slaves, agriculture and field work, which carried symbolic representations of slavery, would be avoided. The perception was prevalent that agriculture and similar activities requiring manual work in the fields were not honorable vocations. Thus engagement in agriculture became a basic criterion delineating the stratification system. A civilized man should more respectably be seen keeping the store than tilling the fields—except, possibly, to provide for his own sustenance.

In the political sphere, there was the emergence of a public realm where contestation of ideas took place. Open debate was initially a hallmark of settler society. The existence of numerous newspapers and printed tracts from the incipiency of settler society attests to the emergence of an active public realm. Unfortunately, such a public realm was bounded by low literacy rates, growing social distance between merchants and others, widening economic disparities, and the development of patrimonialism. As a result, political discourse, over time, became more a contest under patrimonial guidance than a free discussion of ideas with a view to affecting political action. Where genuine, unguided contestation of ideas took place, as it did in the upriver settlements for most of the nineteenth century, the creeping centralization of authority was later to smother community-based political action.

However, the symbols of what was perceived to be democratic government were well maintained. A stately presidency, a bicameral legislature that met regularly, and a supreme court with an assortment of subordinate courts constituted the instrumentalities of government. They functioned effectively when permitted to do so.

More importantly, the locus of political authority and of conflict resolution resided outside the formal structures and within a network of patrimonial relationships. These relationships produced a core of individuals usually referred to as "leading" or "prominent" citizens who constituted the effective structure of decision making in settler society. The nature of this leadership core is investigated later in this chapter in a discussion of the social structure of settler society.

Settler Perception of the Mission

The settlers perceived a close relationship and mutual reinforcement between Christianity and "civilization." There was a convergence of

interest between church and state; therefore, churchmen were perceived as statesmen and vice versa.

There were two aspects to the settlers' perception of the Christianizing mission of repatriation. The first was the need to promote the Christian values of perseverance and fortitude that sustained individuals through difficulties. The religious underpinnings attributing adversity to a divinity contributed to the provision of a framework for patrimonialism. The paternalism of the ACS and the organization of highly centralized authority relations in a political system of growing and visible inequities were both supported by a precept having to do with the "will of God" and a divine endorsement of adversity. This precept provided religious sanction for transferring the parental tutelage exercised by the ACS to a leadership elite.

Adversity was perceived as a test of faith. The Christian principles of endurance and patience were considered among the highest human virtues. Providence was seen to be the guardian of the society: "[Having] successfully gotten us where we are today, Providence will continue to guide us into the future" was a widely taught precept (H. R. Johnson 1882). Having served as the guiding light during slavery, these precepts provided an orientation for coping with the harsh pioneering conditions and all the pressures of life in Africa.[11]

There was a second aspect to the Christianizing mission: to win souls for Christ by teaching that conversion was a necessary and requisite condition for wholesome civilized living. Professions of being Christian were an essential element of being civilized. A sharp dichotomy existed between Christian and heathen, a dichotomy drawn from Western standards of civilization at the time. Thus the proselytizing function of the church—its missionary function, in other words--became a very important civic function.[12]

The church was the vehicle for the propagation of Christianity and also the purveyor of other civilized values. Literacy, education, and other social welfare functions were considered important aspects of civilized life and were undertaken largely by the church. Church leaders were the most important civic leaders. It is not surprising that, beginning with the first contingent of settlers, preachers were the most important leaders of both the upper and lower classes.[13]

In all aspects of settler life, the symbolic display of "civilized and Christian" living was of crucial importance. Careful personal grooming in formal nineteenth-century Western attire complete with umbrellas, handkerchiefs, gloves, and hats was considered evidence of a civilized lifestyle. The maintaining of a Western diet of imported hams, rice, cod and smoked fish, flour, claret and Madeira wines, and ginger ales and other beverages was also important. These symbols of a "civilized

lifestyle" meant something. There was a pressing need to show the world that the black people who had been sent to Africa were not failures; they, like Europeans and Americans, were capable of maintaining civilized standards. In a way, the viability of the idea of Liberia and the survival of Liberia as a country have depended upon its capacity to vindicate itself by survival in the most adverse circumstances.

What we have seen, then, is that settler society had as its foundation a unifying perspective of itself as a special society in Africa designed for the propagation of Christianity and civilization. This mission was perceived as divinely inspired. All settlers, especially their leaders, seem to have been infused with this view, which can, in a way, be perceived as part of the total cosmology with which the settlers operated. Both material conditions and spirituality blended in that cosmology.

How to pursue the mission. Although the upper class of settler society served as custodians of the basic values and orientations, acceptance of these values and orientations was not confined to the upper class. Adherence to the symbols of civilized living was widespread throughout settler society. The tenacity with which they were accepted and observed at lower levels of society was meant to delineate a very important distinction. The poorest of settlers were quick to declare themselves Christians and to adorn themselves in frock coats and neckties as indications of their worth. Acceptance of these symbols was also a precondition for acculturation of nonsettler peoples into settler society.

The question of acculturation draws into focus the question of relations with the indigenous society. This was one of the most controversial issues in settler society. What was to be the strategy for developing a country that should become a beacon of civilization in Africa? This question had an important bearing on the character of the Liberian state. There were two points of view. The dominant one was that Liberia should remain an exclusive settler state, situated on the coast and undertaking selective relations with the surrounding African societies, and in doing so, should promote Christianity and "the arts of civilized life." Only gradually over time, as they absorbed Christian values and Western civilization, should indigenous peoples be incorporated into the body politic. In this view, Liberia was perceived as a missionary state propagating new ways of life into the African environment by precepts and practice. To operate in this way, the Liberian authorities only needed—at least for the foreseeable future—to establish a sphere of influence in the interior to ensure the existence of order. The incorporation of the indigenous societies and the establishment of effective control over them was not an immediately desirable objective. This was the view of the

Monrovia establishment, for whom trade links were the most important relationship desired with the interior. It was feared that an expansionist policy would eventually result in a change of the character of Liberian society. A policy of selective involvement, on the other hand, could lead to the strengthening of trade and other relationships that settler society might find to be essential for the protection of its own interests. Hilary Teage was a major proponent of this position.[14]

The second view was that Liberia could not be in Africa and strive to be apart from Africa. The mission of Liberia, according to proponents of this view, was to build a civilized African society. It was the responsibility of Liberians to introduce the most desirable aspects of Western civilization to Africa with a view to enriching the African cultural heritage. The more extreme exponents of this perspective, such as the Reverend Edward W. Blyden, called for coexistence among Christianity, Islam, and African religions and similarly among English, Arabic, and African languages in Liberia to make for a rich cultural heritage. Liberia's role was to be a catalyst in forging a great African civilization by itself becoming a part of Africa and taking the lead (Blyden 1862; Ferguson 1908). The contestation between Islam and Christianity, its relation to African civilization, and its effects on the development of Liberia are enduring issues that cannot be resolved in this volume. They are considered by others elsewhere.

The course of development in Liberia throughout the nineteenth century was influenced by the former strategy. However, historical circumstances created largely by the expansion of British and French imperialism in the latter part of the nineteenth century precipitated a review of this strategy and the institution of a policy of incorporation. Nevertheless, even within the framework of a policy of incorporation, efforts were exerted to ensure that the character of the settler state was not compromised.

In a sense, the debate between those who wanted limited engagement in Africa and those who wanted a more African Liberia has continued in one form or another into the present. Today's debate is couched in terms of Liberia's commitment to its traditional relationship with the Western powers, on the one hand, and its obligations as a torchbearer in Africa, on the other (Dunn 1979).

Settler Social Structure

Having discussed the orientations that drove settler society, let us now examine its stratification system. How did the settlers relate to each other? It has already been mentioned that they were not a homogeneous group; they were divided by color, status at birth, wealth, and education. In the

first half of the nineteenth century, these factors seemed to correlate in a way that designated a number of social classes.

The merchant-dominant upper class. The upper class consisted of those settlers who were freeborn or had purchased their freedom, were better educated, and had been engaged in some productive economic enterprise of their own prior to their repatriation to Africa. Dominant in this group was a ruling stratum consisting largely of merchants who also controlled the government. This stratum was based in Monrovia. In the early years of the Liberian experiment, it was dominated by mulattoes. It was within this stratum of merchants that national decisions were made and the major officials of government, including presidents, were selected during the nineteenth century.

The individuals who made up the upper class, especially the merchants, were among those confronted with a peculiar set of circumstances in the United States before repatriation. Their condition had been better than that of slaves, but they were not among the ranks of the wealthy and influential blacks. They were owners of small parcels of land or small businesses whose ambitions to expand and become large-scale entrepreneurs could not be realized within the existing social realities of the United States. For them, emigration to Africa provided opportunities for investment consistent with the background in business and social infrastructure that they had already developed in the United States. They too were interested in proving that they were as enterprising as any successful black or white entrepreneur.

The case of Joseph Jenkins Roberts, the first president of Liberia, is very instructive. The Roberts family was a landowning family in the free black American community of Petersburg, Virginia. Roberts himself was engaged in business with a Petersburg barber and small property owner called William Nelson Colson. Together, they ran a small schooner and several boats on the James and Appomattox rivers in Virginia. Upon emigrating to Liberia, Roberts continued his business partnership by exporting such African products as camwood, ivory, and palm oil to American import houses through Colson. One of their shipments to a Philadelphia firm was valued at $3,389.80 (Shick 1977). Roberts was the most prominent Liberian personality of his day. He was chosen as the first settler to serve as deputy governor and then governor of the Commonwealth of Liberia, and became the first president in 1847. Whether as president or as presiding officer of the core of "leading citizens," Roberts dominated Liberian politics until his death in 1876. Every important institution of the society had to bear his imprint to be considered legitimate. He was head or titular head of every major

institution. When Freemasonry was introduced in 1851 and the Independent Restoration Grand Lodge was established, Roberts was installed as one of the earliest grand masters. When Liberia College was established as the first government-sponsored institution of higher education in 1862, former president Roberts was chosen to be its first president. He was chief patron of the Liberia Lyceum, the first literary society established in Liberia, and lay leader of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Monrovia. When in 1871 disagreements over government policy led to the removal of President E. J. Roye, it was the aging Roberts who was called upon to return to the presidency.[15]

Roberts was not atypical of his class of merchants. There were many others such as the Reverend Colston Waring who emigrated to Liberia in 1823, when he was thirty. Waring owned real estate in the United States valued at $1,037.50. He sold his U.S. holdings and established a commercial firm in Monrovia in partnership with another settler. By 1830, the volume of business turned over by the firm amounted to about $70,000. In 1836, Joseph Jenkins Roberts was married to Jane Rose Waring, daughter of Colston. Intermarriage was the method most often employed for consolidating wealth and social status.

There were many others in the ranks of the merchant ruling class besides Roberts and Waring. One researcher has identified at least twenty-six Liberian shipowners, at least seven of whom in 1847 owned trade stocks and property in excess of $10,000 and nine in excess of $5,000, and sixteen of whom had held at least one political office (Syfert 1975).

Not all members of this class acquired seed capital in the United States. Some developed capital by being employed by Liberian or foreign merchants. Hilary Teage, for example, served as consignment agent for John Dean Lake and other British trading companies that operated from neighboring Sierra Leone. By 1841, Teage was a commissioned agent for at least seven European firms. In 1843, he and three other commissioned agents were estimated to have undertaken an annual commission business totaling about $50,000. Teage was the author of the Declaration of Independence in 1847, one of the drafters of the Liberian Constitution, editor of the influential *Liberian Herald* newspaper, an elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a much sought after orator.

It was not unusual for the more affluent of these traders to establish their own outposts in the interior and hire lower-class Liberians to serve as their agents there. Such employment was preferred over working one's own farm (Brown [1941] 1981; Syfert 1975). Liberian merchants also made profits from the ACS, for whom they occasionally procured provisions during the early days of the settlements. Later, after independence, these merchants accrued profits by enjoying trade advantages made possible by government regulations, as well as by procuring goods for the

government, leasing warehouses and other storage facilities to the government, and making loans to the government at considerable interest.

It is also very clear that the merchants were the immediate beneficiaries of the government's efforts to secure trading posts at strategic locations in the interior and along the coast—efforts that were the source of protracted armed conflict with the indigenous societies from the inception of the Liberian colony until the 1930s. Liberian merchants benefited by procuring supplies and leasing vessels to the government when armed conflicts were undertaken.

Thus, from the inception of the Liberian colony, the merchants and the governing authorities had maintained close cooperation. Even during the colonial period (1820–1839), when the policies of the ACS were frequently attacked by the Methodist Church, the "merchant princes" were among the ACS's staunch supporters. By 1840, one of their own, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, had become vice governor; by 1847 he was president. By 1876 when Roberts died, the merchant aristocracy was already in decline. The Monrovia elite, however, though now being reduced to agents of European traders rather than competing with them, still exercised firm control over the political process. The mantle of leadership was passed on to Hilary Richard Wright Johnson who had served as private secretary to Liberia's second president in 1856, as editor of Teage's *Liberian Herald*, and as secretary of state and confidant of Roberts during the latter's return to the presidency in 1872. Johnson did not become president until 1883, but he was the most important voice on national issues from 1877 to 1900 even though, during this period, there were three presidents who served before him and two after him.

After Johnson and with the death of the Senate president A. B. King, who seems to have been the "heir apparent," the mantle of ruling class authority fell to Arthur Barclay, who dominated the political process until his death in 1938. Barclay, like Johnson, had been a protege of Roberts. He had served as private secretary to Roberts in 1874 and in a number of cabinet positions. He maintained the most prestigious law practice of his day, serving as legal counsel to most of the major commercial establishments. Six other presidents (three before him and three after him) operated in his shadow. It was only after the Second World War and considerable transformations in the national polity that the center of control shifted from the old merchant-dominated elite in Monrovia.[16] Tubman, who was not part of that elite, assumed the presidency in 1944 and dominated the political process until his death in 1971.

The development of oligarchical control of the Liberian political system by a core of "leading citizens" was not confined to the national political structure. Each county operated as a political enclave under the control of a group of "leading citizens" dominated by merchants who

operated in league with, if not under, the direction of the Monrovia establishment. The Monrovia establishment perceived their coastal counterparts as colleagues and treated them with respect—and, in some cases, with deference.

In Sinoe County, for example, Jacob J. Ross was the dominant political figure from the mid-1870s until his death in 1899. A wealthy businessman, he developed close contacts with the German and Dutch traders who controlled commerce on the coast in Sinoe by serving as their lawyer and renting buildings and land to them. He used this influence to control the local officials assigned to regulate commerce, and he dominated the local political process. He served in a number of local positions: as judge, superintendent three times, and in 1896–1899 as vice president of Liberia.

Ross's political machine was passed on to his son Alfred, who was the most influential local political figure from the turn of the century until 1929. At that time, his business involvement in the contract labor recruitment scandal ruined his reputation (see Chapter 9). The political mantle eventually went to J. Lemuel Gibson, an influential itinerant trader who operated on the Kru-Bassa coast between Sinoe and Grand Bassa Counties. Gibson was to remain Sinoe's political patriarch from the mid-1930s until his death in the mid-1950s.

The relationship between the principal political figure and his colleagues was a relationship of first among equals. He operated on the basis of consensus, being sensitive to the interest of his colleagues and ensuring the existence among them of a relationship based on reciprocity. Each of his colleagues developed a small clientele of his own. It was the responsibility of the principal political figure at the county level to inform local people of developments in Monrovia, translate policies, assuage expectations, and where needed, provide supplements to their sustenance. Such individuals were expected to import barrels of provisions for distribution to the faithful, secure government sinecures for local people, and ensure the smooth operation of the political process.

The case of J. Lemuel Gibson is instructive. Gibson had established a respectable business before he was elected senator. He is reported to have brought the first radio receiver to Sinoe in the late 1930s and to have spent hours among crowds of local people on his front porch explaining the news being transmitted. He ran a small provision shop and extended credit to local people. He saw to it that they were organized to repair the roads and renovate public buildings. He ensured that every ailing widow received an annuity from the government. Gibson was the last of the merchant patriarchs in Sinoe.[17]

The urban "middle class." A second important stratum in settler society consisted of the small-scale urban traders, professionals, and

government employees. These were largely urbanites about whom little is known. Many of these traders were small shopkeepers who purchased goods from or served as agents for the merchants. Some of them operated out of their own homes; they included professionals such as teachers and nurses and such public service functionaries as clerks of court and justices of the peace. Many of the individuals in this group constituted part of the political clientele of the upper-class merchants who controlled the government. A patron-client relationship was cemented by the opportunities to dispense patronage.

Another important element in this group was the preachers and catechists who were employed by foreign missionary societies for work at mission stations. While these may not have constituted a part of the merchant clientele network, their independent source of income from foreign mission boards made them an important factor in settler society.

The urban poor. A third stratum in settler society included the semi-skilled of the urban areas. These consisted largely of manumitted slaves whose freedom had been conditional upon their deportation to Africa. Some of these had been trained as artisans by their former masters in preparation for colonization. Others were not only unskilled but illiterate. Life for such people was very difficult in urban Liberia. While there were opportunities for employment, payment for services was quite frequently made in trade goods, which were difficult to exchange for food and essential household provisions. The existence of large numbers of unskilled soon made many apprentices available to artisans and just as soon flooded the market with half-skilled tradesmen. Life for this group was very difficult. Many of them lived on the fringes of disaster. The case of the Skipwiths is an example worth explaining.

Payton Skipwith and his brother James were slaves of John Hartwell Cocke of Virginia. After a period of preparation for repatriation, the Skipwiths were freed in late 1833 on the condition that they all leave for Liberia. Payton and his wife and two of his six children left in 1834. Payton had been trained as a stonemason, but in a small community there were many others around with similar skills. Work was seasonal and he often complained about not being paid in resources that were easily exchanged for staples for his family. He built himself a house and trained a few apprentices. Shortly after his arrival his wife died. He struggled to give his children religious training and education. He became a member of the Baptist church and remarried a widow who had two children. In 1849 he took ill and died.

With Payton's death, the Skipwith family sank to a deeper level of poverty. His daughter Matilda married an artisan who died shortly after. The family now desperately needed to be rescued. Payton's brother James,

a baker, arrived in Monrovia in 1859 to pick up the pieces. He opened a bakery in Monrovia and purchased ten acres of land in the hope of cultivating cash crops. He also took an interest in civic activities, doing jury duty and voting in elections. But James's fortunes were not to improve. Three years after his arrival, he took ill and died. A few years later, a visitor to Monrovia who had known the Skipwiths in the United States visited Matilda and her second husband and three children and wrote as follows: "I called upon her and was disappointed to find her inhabiting a miserable shanty in a low, damp part of town, but she seemed and doubtless was thankful to Providence that matters were no worse" (quoted in Shick 1977:53).

The rural "planters." The stratification system so far discussed typified urban Liberia through the nineteenth century. When one considers rural settler society, however, a slightly different picture emerges. The upriver settlements show a different set of relationships. Unlike the coastal settlements, those upriver came closer to the ideals of Jeffersonian agrarianism. Not only was agriculture their economic base, but social distances in them did not seem to be as wide as in the urban settlements. There was also a greater sense of solidarity among members of upriver communities, perhaps because they felt dominated by Monrovia. This solidarity induced a more pervasive sense of efficacy.

Between 1821 and 1843, as we have seen, most of the repatriates who were settled in the upriver settlements were illiterate or semiliterate and without skills. They were manumitted slaves who had been freed on condition that they be repatriated to Africa. Others, such as those in the settlement of New Georgia, were recaptives. It was inhabitants of these upriver settlements that engaged in farming and supplied food to coastal settlements. By the mid-1800s, the status relationship between the upriver settlements and the coastal settlements began to change. A major factor here was the immigration of several new waves of settlers who chose the upriver communities in which to live. Most of the new immigrants were skilled and literate.

The coming of the new immigrants in the mid-1800s coincided with improvements in the prices of cash crops, thereby triggering a new and intensive interest in agriculture. As a result, from the late 1840s through the 1860s, the upriver settlements flourished with food crops and such cash crops as coffee and sugarcane. Such settlers as Othello Richards, who was manumitted in 1850 and came to Liberia with his family the same year, took advantage of the new opportunities in agriculture and lived respectable and comfortable lives in the settlement of Clay-Ashland (Shick 1977). In Sinoe, to take another example, Isaac Mason,

a forty-nine year-old literate free farmer from Burke County, Georgia, arrived with a large family in 1848. He preferred not to live in Greenville, and with other such families founded the upriver settlement of Lexington. The settlers of Lexington, like those of Clay-Ashland and most of the upriver settlements, were known to be hardworking and productive farmers. Commenting on the upriver settlement of Sinoe, one visitor wrote to a contact in the United States: "In the settlements in the farming districts, an idle man, we are informed, is not to be seen" (quoted in Sullivan 1978:174).

Thus the planters (as they were called) of the upriver settlements constituted a social stratum of their own. They were very independent and sensitive to any encroachments by the merchant elite of the coast. In fact, many of them had been attracted to the upriver settlements because of the smothering control of the merchants in the coastal cities. Other preferred to mix agriculture with missionary activities and so needed to locate themselves on the frontiers of the indigenous societies.

The recaptives. The final stratum of settler society was the recaptives. This population hovered around a little over 200 during the first two decades of the establishment of Liberia. As of 1846, the population of recaptives began to rise steeply. Seven hundred and fifty were recaptured off the coast of Kabinda near the Congo basin and brought to Liberia in that year. In 1860, about 4,700 recaptives were brought to Liberia; most of them had been recaptured off the Congo River or near the coast of Florida. By 1867, their numbers almost equaled those of the New World settlers.

Their resettlement put considerable strains on the local resources and created much tension in the society. Although the ACS continued to maintain an agent who was responsible for the resettlement of recaptives after Liberia's independence in 1847, their absorption into the community was largely the responsibility of the Liberian government. Citizens were usually encouraged to take recaptives into their care as apprentices and were paid a small stipend for assisting with their training. Many citizens were skeptical about the presence of so many recaptives of a background different from their own. Most recaptives, however, were settled in special frontier settlements on the fringes of territory occupied by the New World settlers or in expansions to already existing upriver settlements.

The recaptives, who were otherwise known as "Congoes," constituted the lowest stratum of the settler social system. They performed most of the manual labor in settler households and in the fields, and served as porters on long-distance travels. When Benjamin J. K. Anderson undertook an expedition in 1868 to Musardhu in the lands of the Western

Mandingoes, the porters who carried his gear were recaptives (Anderson 1971). It was usually a proud boast and an indication of status for New World settler families to have recaptives working in their fields or households. Such proximity, however, led to rapid acculturation, so that by the last quarter of the nineteenth century recaptives constituted a significant part of the group of "middlemen," or itinerant traders, who were also purveyors of culture and servants of the settler state. By the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century, the distinction between the two groups had disappeared. The assimilation of recaptives into settler society was complete.

Thus it can be seen that far from being a homogeneous group, nineteenth-century settler society was stratified into several levels based on status of birth, occupation and economic resources, regional differences, and access to political authority. These differences made for dynamic social processes in settler society and greatly influenced the nature of interaction between the settlers and the indigenous communities. Let us now look at some of the social institutions through which interactions took place in settler society.

Social Institutions

Two of the most important functions performed by settler social institutions were to ensure social cohesion and solidarity in settler society and to fulfill its civilizing and Christianizing mission. Among the most important institutions in the nineteenth century were the family, church, educational institutions, fraternal organizations, and civic clubs. Each of these was vital to the promotion of social values and orientations and to ensuring solidarity and cohesion despite, as we have seen, a high degree of social stratification.

The Family

While the nuclear family was at the core of the settlers' concept of family, it did not constitute the sum total of what was considered "the family." The family included a wider circle of relatives by blood, marriage, and adoption. For the better part of the nineteenth century, that circle included family members both in Africa and in the United States. Settlers at all levels of society maintained an ongoing relationship with relatives including former slave masters in the United States. Such contacts were not only a source of material support (in the form of tools, provisions, or books, as well as money) but, more importantly, a reinforcement of cultural ties that provided settler values with some resilience.[18]

While the nuclear family was perceived as a monogamous unit, informal polygynous relationships were quietly accepted but not flaunted. Children from such relationships were brought into the household and treated as offsprings of the family. Settler men of every social status maintained permanent informal wives in nearby settlements, on their farms, or even at other houses within the settlements where they lived. Such liaisons were not only perceived as a means of social integration but also as an avenue for the assimilation of more people into the "arts of civilized life." In most cases, the second woman involved in such a liaison was likely to be of indigenous background and her offsprings from such a relationship were taken into the home of the father.[19]

The family was the basic point of reference, the source of social status, and the basis of an individual's identity. This is why the protection and promotion of its status, honor, and fortunes were essential obligations of all of its members. Marriage and divorce, in this respect, were not considered social transactions between two individuals but between two families. Marriage was the principal vehicle for social mobility and the most important mechanism for ensuring cohesion and solidarity among settlers. Thus the network of interrelationships among settler families tended to be very extensive in all settler communities.[20] Because the family was perceived to be so important for the perpetuation of settler society, divorce was perceived to be a threat to family integrity and, therefore, to the fabric of the nation. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, all divorces required legislative approval (Snick 1977). When the law was changed in the 1870s, authority was given to judges of the court of quarter sessions and common pleas in each county to grant divorces on grounds of proven infidelity on the part of either spouse. Even engagements preceding marriage were accorded legal protection. A disappointed fiancé or fiancée could seek legal redress. Such redress was made available as a means of protecting the status of individuals and families and ensuring the integrity of marriage as an instrument of social stability and cohesion.

The Church

The church was both the custodian of the values of settler society and the moral conscience of the society. In fulfillment of the former role, the church provided the principles that shaped settler orientations and in terms of which those orientations are justified. In fulfilling the latter, the church became the yardstick by which social action was evaluated. The roles of the church were seen as being mutually reinforcing. Because the church was perceived as the source of values, it was also perceived to be their most authoritative interpreter and a better judge of performance based on those values. Nevertheless, as close as the relationship was

that developed between the church and civil society, it has not always been problem free.

The church in Liberia is as old as Liberia itself. Not only were religious leaders and motives prominent in the founding of Liberia, as discussed above, but the most influential leaders among the settlers of the pioneering voyages were Christian ministers. The Reverend Daniel Coker, a Baltimore slave, purchased his freedom, became a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and emigrated to Africa with the first group of settlers aboard the *Elizabeth*. As we have seen, it was Coker who briefly served as leader of the contingent when both agents died in Sierra Leone in 1820. The most influential of early settler ministers was the Reverend Lott Carey who emigrated to Liberia with the second group of settlers in 1821. Carey was born a slave in Virginia. He purchased his freedom, studied to become a minister, and was sponsored by the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society as a missionary to Liberia. Carey built and pastored the first church, Providence Baptist Church, in Monrovia in 1823.

In the 1830s, missionaries from the Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Protestant Episcopal mission boards of the United States were sent to Liberia to open mission stations for the propagation of the faith and the promotion of civilization.[21] Other Christian denominations such as the Pentecostal and Roman Catholics arrived in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century.

Missionary work in Liberia was directed primarily at evangelism. At the same time, education, especially literacy in English, was perceived as an indispensable instrument of Christian conversion and the Western style of life as requisite outward evidence of conversion.

The church was an important instrument of settler solidarity and a purveyor of civilization. For the settlers, Christian rituals not only symbolized commitment to a civilized life-style but also to the body politic. Embracing Christianity as evidenced by participation in rituals was perceived as showing appreciation to Providence for having established and guided the settler society in the face of enormous adversity. In this sense, the church not only served as an instrument of settler solidarity but also set the basis for patrimonial leadership. Acknowledging the hand of Providence in fashioning settler society and the parental tutelage of the ACS in guiding it was the basic justification for connecting its leaders with the directives of Providence, and the lot of its members with dispensations of Providence to be managed by such leaders. It is in this sense that the church supplied and justified the political orientations of the society.

The church also supplied the political leaders of the society. From the Reverend Lott Carey, who served briefly as agent of the colonial government in 1828 and was elected vice agent in that year, almost

every settler who held the position of agent, governor, or president during the nineteenth century was first a high lay church official or a Christian minister.

It was also the role of the church to call attention to injustice and the moral faults of the society. It was usually in the performance of this function that conflicts developed between the church and political institutions. As early as the 1830s such religious leaders as the Reverend John Seys of the Methodist Episcopal Church were being openly critical of the patronizing approaches of Governor Buchanan, the ACS's administrator of the colony.[22] Allies of Seys organized the first opposition party that in one form or another, for about ten years, was known as the voice of the planters and lower classes of settlers against the dominance of the ACS and the trading interests that inherited political authority from the ACS.

Educational Institutions

Educational institutions in settler society constituted one of the most important agents for socializing individuals into the "arts of civilized life"—and Christianity. There were several problems confronting Liberian education throughout the nineteenth century. First, the ACS did not seem to perceive education in the colony as a priority. Second, the population of the colony being basically illiterate did not constitute an adequate base from which teachers could be recruited and school materials mobilized. Third, the high mortality rates that caused the settler population to decline also affected the numbers of school-age children in that population. Fourth, besides the merchant class with their high standard of living, most of the settlers were poor and could not afford the requirements placed upon them by educational institutions. Nevertheless, as early as the 1830s, a superintendent of education was appointed in the colonial government. By independence, in 1847, only sixteen primary schools had been established by the government. A few private schools had also been established by individuals who were associated with certain Christian churches. Educational growth was slow.[23]

Throughout the nineteenth century, it was the religious denominations, mainly through foreign missions, that played the leading role in Liberian education. This was true in terms of both the number and the quality of schools. As mission stations were established in the 1830s, parish primary schools were attached to them. It was only in the 1840s that secondary education was initiated. Even then it was introduced not as a means of meeting the need for skills in the settler community, but

rather for the religious denominations to train a higher level of individuals for the further propagation of the faith.[24]

In 1839, the Methodist Mission established the Liberia Conference Seminary. The seminary, one of the prestigious educational institutions of settler society, was renamed the College of West Africa in 1898. Although its doors were open intermittently, it produced a considerable number of individuals who became important in settler society in the latter part of the nineteen century. It continued into the twentieth century as a bedrock of the socialization process.

Another major educational institution that produced prominent public officials and church leaders in the nineteenth century was the Alexander Academy School, which was opened in 1849 by the Presbyterian Mission.[25] The Protestant Episcopal Church, which operated mainly in Cape Palmas, established a secondary school at its Mount Vaughan Mission in 1850, the Orphan Asylum for Girls in 1855, and the Hoffman Institute in 1862. The Methodists also established the Cape Palmas Seminary in 1857; this institution, too, was very prestigious through the nineteenth century.

The training of preachers, catechists, and church leaders for expanded work among the indigenous societies as well as within settler society was the primary interest of foreign mission boards in these endeavors. The entire educational system of Liberia was geared to promoting the mission of "Christianizing and civilizing" to the neglect of technical and vocational endeavors and of social learning related to the African environment. An examination of the curriculum of the Hoffman Institute, which was situated in a frontier community to train pupils of both settler and indigenous background, is revealing. It included courses in English Grammar, Literature, Geography, History of Rome, Spelling and Definition, Bible History, and (vocal) Music. The curriculum of the College of West Africa included a more diversified set of courses: Algebra, Geometry, English Literature, Rhetoric, Botany, Physics, Zoology, Latin, Greek, French, History, History of Education, Psychology, General Knowledge in Quotation, Political Science, Music, and Bible History (Azango 1971). As diversified as the curriculum was, however, it still lacked the basis for training in skills essential for the technological, agricultural, cultural, and social advancement of society. Even scientific training as intended in the curriculum suffered from two major drawbacks: first, learning was largely done by memorization (Sherman 1982); and second, the contents of the textbooks were wholly unsuitable for the African experience. As late as the 1930s the following observation was made about a science class in a community school near Monrovia:

> These little tribal Africans were being carefully instructed to eat plenty of beefsteak, baked potatoes, good fresh white bread with pure butter, and to drink milk at least three times a day. The utter absurdity of this sort of thing is apparent when one considers that the African tribesman is lucky if he gets a piece of beef to eat once a year; that fresh cow's milk is unknown; that butter comes in tins at a dollar a pound; that white bread, being made of imported flour, is confined to the residents of the Coast; and that white potatoes are imported from the Canary Islands or from Europe at an almost prohibitive price even for foreign residents. [De la Rue 1930:316]

In spite of the slow pace of development of secondary schools, in 1851 Liberia College was chartered by the legislature. It finally opened in 1862 and instituted its own college preparatory program. In 1889, the Episcopal Church also opened a postsecondary school, Cuttington Collegiate and Theological School, in Cape Palmas. It operated until 1929.[26] Both institutions provided courses from a classical curriculum and in theology. The Christianizing and civilizing themes that dominated life in settler society permeated the curricula at all levels of the educational system. Vital vocational and industrial skills were taught only through informal education. Such skills were passed on through an unorganized, unsystematized appprenticeship arrangement that was continuously looked down on by settlers and considered unimportant for evangelism by missionaries.[27]

Fraternal and Other Associations

Community organizations in settler society served the dual function of promoting solidarity among settlers and demonstrating a commitment to a "civilized life-style." Such organizations spanned the spectrum from social clubs organized for entertainment and pleasure to literary and debating societies, to economic associations, to fraternal organizations of the politically influential. While one may perceive the maintenance of group solidarity and cohesion as a function common to all such organizations, four types of community organizations can be identified by virtue of their specific objectives.

1. *Fraternal* orders constituted one type of organization that seems to have been constituted as an expression of brotherly and sisterly solidarity, and as a mechanism to assist with the preservation of the social order. The Independent Order of the Sons of Ham was organized in 1849. This organization together with the United Brothers of Friendship, which began later that century, was established to advance black pride

and solidarity. The establishment of Freemasonry in 1851 was apparently intended to provide for patterns of brotherly association in settler society comparable with such institutions among whites in nineteenth-century American society. Membership in a Masonic lodge became an important status symbol. The most influential leaders of settler society became Freemasons. Joseph Jenkins Roberts was one of its organizers and its second grand master. Other fraternal organizations such as the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, which was established in 1888, also symbolized the settlers' participation in universal bonds promoting civilized values (Shick 1977).

2. *Social welfare* organizations constituted a second type. Among them were the Ladies Benevolent Society of Monrovia of 1836, the Ladies' Mutual Relief Society of Cape Palmas, organized in 1886, and the various Dorcas Societies, which sprang from religious denominations. These organizations were meant to assist the poor and victims of disaster, of whom there were many because of the high death rate and continuous warfare with the indigenous communities. These societies were also important as agents of social mobility for individuals of lower social statuses. They were strikingly similar in goal and motivation to the social welfare movements of nineteenth-century America that may have inspired them.
3. *Economic* organizations were related to economic production. These included the Liberia Agricultural Society, which consisted largely of upriver cultivators of sugarcane; the Union Mechanics' Association, which was organized in 1859 mainly by printers and blacksmiths; and the Young Men's Mercantile Association of Bixley.
4. *Cultural* organizations were devoted to cultural and intellectual pursuits. These included associations such as the Liberia Lyceum, which was organized in 1847; the Monrovia Athaeneum, of 1864; and the Female Literary Institute of Edina, of 1881.

Each of these organizations devoted enormous attention to public display and ceremonies, always essential in settler society as evidence of solidarity and success. Form, in Liberian society, has always been as important if not more important than substance because of the psychological imperative to demonstrate success and to be perceived as being as "civilized" as any group of Europeans or Americans. Thus even as settlers sought reaffirmation and security among themselves through their associations, their need to vindicate themselves or justify their worth to a larger international audience remained undiminished. Free blacks of the United States faced this same situation in the nineteenth century (Frazier 1949; Franklin 1956).

Land and Property Rights

Upon the arrival of the first group of settlers, the ACS devised a scheme for the allocation of land. Each settler family was allotted one town lot. The head of family was assigned 5 acres of farmland, the wife 2, and each child 1; the total farmland allotted to a family was not to exceed 10 acres. Certificates confirming the allotment were replaced with title deeds once a "substantial" house and fence were constructed on the town lot and at least 2 acres of farmland cultivated within a period of two years. Title deeds conferred rights of inheritance and exchange in fee simple.

In addition to the original assignment, land could be acquired by virtue of participation in the militia under the "bounty land grant" scheme. Under this scheme, which was formulated in 1863, volunteers who performed military service in the settler militia during armed campaigns against indigenous communities were to be compensated in farmland located on the outskirts of towns. A third method of land acquisition was through outright purchase of what was considered "government-owned land." Such land was delimited to include all land within what the ACS considered to be the territorial limits of Liberia that had not been deeded to individuals or otherwise assigned (Akpan 1968; Shick 1977).

Real property ownership, in nineteenth-century Liberia, was very important for social participation in settler community life. It was considered an indication of social responsibility and evidence of true membership in the community. It was a requirement for voting and for holding public office, and served as partial evidence of assimilation into civilized living. For the latter reason, first recaptives and later indigenous individuals were granted land after serving periods of apprenticeship and upon the recommendation of respectable settlers.

Despite its importance as evidence of social status, land was not universally perceived in settler society as an essential ingredient of a productive life. The mercantile nature of nineteenth-century settler economy put a higher premium on ownership of select portions of land near the seacoast for the building of warehouses, stores, and residences to be leased out to European merchants. Rural farmland was abundant because the urban merchants were only interested in such land to the extent that they needed to produce certain supplements to their diet of largely imported foods. Ownership of portions of rural farmland also served as a status symbol, a retreat, and a base from which liaisons with indigenous women could take place.

Because rural land was of such marginal importance to coastal merchants, upriver planters were assured ample access to it throughout the nineteenth century. The failure of agriculture in nineteenth-century

Liberia was not due to a scarcity of land but instead to other factors including labor scarcity, declining prices, lack of mastery of the techniques essential to agricultural production in the tropics, the control of markets by urban merchants and European traders, and a negative social status generally associated with agriculture. At the turn of the century, with the introduction of a plantation economy, relationships pertaining to land ownership and property rights were to undergo a significant change. These will be discussed later.

This chapter has shown how a diverse population of freeborn, manumitted slaves, and recaptives, facing myriad hazards and opportunities, established a structure of society with certain distinct characteristics. How did this society, operating as an independent commonwealth, cope with the challenges of independence in an imperial world? Chapter 6 addresses this question.

★ 6 ★

Expanding Control amid Imperial Challenges

AT INDEPENDENCE, THE TERRITORY that was under the direct authority of the Liberian government consisted essentially of the coastal enclave towns and the upriver settlements. The merchant-led government of settler society was not as interested in territorial expansion as it was in consolidating a sphere of influence to ensure the security of settler society and protect trade routes. Therefore, upon proclaiming independence, the government declared a "constitutional zone" that included a coastline extending from the area of Cape Mount to the Kru Coast region bordering on the territory claimed by the Colony of Maryland. The constitutional zone also extended north for 45 miles into the hinterland. This zone identified the territory legally claimed by the newly independent state and within which it sought to exercise sole and sovereign authority.[1]

In addition to the constitutional zone, however, the Liberian government sought to exercise influence over a wider area that was considered essential to its vital interests. This wider region contained the important trade routes that led to the coastal and upriver towns. They included the region lying west of Monrovia and extending into the Gallinas, north and northwest from Bopolu, and north of the constitutional zone surrounding every coastal settlement.[2] The exercise of influence essentially meant ensuring the friendship and cooperation of the leaders of the indigenous African societies, and maintaining peace and stability within the wider area. In order to achieve these objectives, the Liberian government initiated efforts to obtain international recognition of its territorial claims and continued its campaigns of pacification.

The Declaration of Independence in 1847 provided the legal basis for Liberia's case for autonomy and territorial integrity. This case was taken to Europe and successfully pursued among the powers that posed the greatest challenge to Liberia's sovereignty. Britain was the first of them to recognize Liberia's independence. The British action was prompted largely by Liberia's interest in stemming the transatlantic slave trade that at this time had become repugnant to contemporary British morality and inimical to wider British commercial objectives in West Africa.[3] The French government and the governments of the Hanseatic German Confederation soon followed Britain's example.[4]

Recognition by the major European powers would become less meaningful as colonial rivalries intensified in the later nineteenth century. These rivalries were to bring about considerable encroachment of Liberia's territorial claims. More importantly, they would constrain the Liberian government to organize administrative machinery for the interior in order to demonstrate effective occupation as required by the imperial powers. In the meantime, however, the larger interest of the Liberian government at mid-century was to secure the hinterland as a sphere of influence. In order to achieve this objective, the government was to continue its campaign of pacification, concluding trade agreements and establishing settler authority as the arbiter of conflicts and the guarantor of peace and stability in the region. At times it also established new settler communities within the region as a strategic countermove to the activities of unfriendly but influential leaders of indigenous societies. A good example is the establishment of Robertsport, discussed in the next section.

Pacification and Control in Western and Northwestern Liberia

From its inception, Liberia faced a double dilemma. The creation of a Western settler state required the support of the Western powers in imposing settler authority in the area; however, the Western powers whose support was essential were themselves the major imperial powers whose activities in the region posed a challenge to Liberian territorial claims. In warding off imperialist claims, the Liberian state needed the support of the indigenous communities that it already sought to incorporate within its control. In an attempt to resolve these dilemmas, and having neither the sustained goodwill of all the influential indigenous societies nor the genuine support of the imperial powers, Liberia was constrained to become a subproprietor, as it were, in its relationships with the major imperial powers. Assumption of this role became the price Liberia had to pay to have its minimum territorial claims and autonomy

respected by European powers. These dilemmas will be illustrated as we review the dynamics of territorial acquisition through the pacification campaigns, and the efforts to consolidate territorial claims amid European colonial expansion.

Pacification of the Western Territory

In order to establish control over the western area near the Gallinas, the Liberian government engaged in three types of activities. It concluded treaties of trade and friendship with indigenous leaders; undertook armed campaigns of pacification; and established the settlement of Robertsport near the Gallinas.[5] Besides the commitment to keep the trade routes open, all treaties signed with indigenous leaders exacted from them commitments to terminate participation in the Atlantic slave trade and to recognize the Liberian government as the final arbiter of conflicts. At times, these commitments were themselves producers of instability as they threatened the vital economic and social institutions of the region. In 1852, for example, the Zawo people, slaves of the Massaquois of the Gallinas, fled the communities of their masters and took up residence elsewhere in the western region.[6] Their flight and the protection accorded them by other rulers in the area proved to be a source of tension and conflict for many years. Similarly, the insistence of the Liberian government that treaty commitments were binding on successive leaders of a given society also induced conflicts.[7] In 1856 President Stephen Benson, who in that year succeeded President Roberts, visited the western area in an attempt to mediate disputes and put an end to hostilities. Although Benson's visit increased the stature of the Monrovia government in the region and promoted the standing of those chiefs who were cooperating with the government, it did not end the continuous violent rivalries among chiefs or inspire sustained support for the government.

The condition of life in the western region, like conditions in most of the hinterland, had always been characterized by social upheavals caused largely by the slave trade and, at this time, by resistance to efforts to terminate it. Policies leading to the expansion or consolidation of authority through pacification and shifting alliances were not novel to the hinterland. Many chiefs perceived the Liberian government initiatives as yet another attempt at regional realignment and therefore responded opportunistically, just as the introduction of successive groups of slave traders and waves of migrants from the interior in previous times had always required the chiefs to adapt (d'Azevedo 1969–1971; Holsoe 1967).

The importance of the Gallinas in coastal trade, including the slave trade, increased the volatility of the western area. As one of the earliest

areas of British colonial activity, it was an arena of intensive interaction involving the Liberian government, powerful indigenous chiefs, and the emerging British colonial forces. Chief Manna, who controlled the northern portions of the Gallinas, felt deeply threatened by the intrusion of both the British and the Liberian governments and by the loss of his Zawo slaves. The attack on the slave trade in the region threatened the basic fabric of Vai society as a whole and threw social relationships that were three centuries old into serious disarray. Between 1868 and 1872, the Liberian government dispatched at least three expeditionary forces of militiamen to the region (Holsoe 1967).[8]

The pacification of the region entailed an assortment of maneuvers on the part of the Liberian government just as it required adaptations on the part of chiefs.[9] In 1873, the Liberian legislature granted nonvoting seats to influential indigenous chiefs and appointed Chief Sando of the southern Gallinas as a nonvoting representative of the Vai in the legislature. While such measures of cooptation advanced the authority of the government in the western area, the total pacification of the region had to await the resolution of a broader boundary dispute between the Liberian government and the British. The imperial expansion of the British at this time was not only a source of further instability but also supplied another element in the calculations of options by both the local chiefs and the Liberian government. The eventual resolution of the border disputes involved more than the conclusion of an agreement between the two major actors in the region; it also involved reconciling the interests of the influential indigenous actors.[10] Thus Liberia's campaign of pacification in the western region could only be achieved in the first quarter of the twentieth century, after European colonial expansion had run its full course.

Another measure undertaken as a means of pacifying and bringing the western area under the control of the Liberian government was the creation of a Liberian settlement in the area. This measure had been contemplated before 1847, but resources were never available to implement it. In 1855, the legislature approved an act for establishing the settlement of Robertsport at the promontory of Cape Mount. It was hoped that such a settlement would provide a base from which greater supervision and control of the western area could take place. Appeals were made to the ACS to recruit new emigrants for the settlement and to provide finances to cover the initial costs.

By early 1856, the new settlement had been established. The government wasted no time in organizing an administration there for the handling of affairs related to the surrounding African societies; a militia was added. In 1857, the position of native commissioner was created. Such commissioners were responsible for mediating disputes among

indigenous societies and promoting their acquiescence to the authority of the Liberian government (Holsoe 1967).[11]

Thus, except for short intermissions of peace, the western region remained in a state of constant upheaval until the resolution of border disputes between the British and the Liberian government in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Until that time, the government was constantly engaged in hostilities, for the most part in support of allied chiefs against their rivals, and in attempts to remove trade blockades, to stem participation in the residual Atlantic slave trade or unauthorized "forced labor" practices, and to enforce Liberian government regulations to meet British requirements of effective control.

Pacification in the Northwest

The situation in the Gallinas is crucial to an understanding of the nature of the conflict and the attempts at pacification and control in the western area during the first quarter-century of Liberia's independence. Developments in the northwestern areas, in contrast, were determined largely by the conditions at Bopolu and surrounding the trade corridors from Bopolu south to the coast and north into the savanna. This trade route was most critical to the economy of Monrovia and its upriver settlements.

During the early years of the settlements, the initial cause of instability in this area was the efforts of the settlers to acquire territory, gain control of the coastal terminus of this trade, and ensure a more accommodative and secure environment. The extension of settler authority over the Dei and Mamba Bassa was virtually complete by independence. The Gola, who had earlier challenged both settler control at the coast and Condo control of Bopolu, had launched a sustained effort throughout the preindependence period to dislodge the Condo and seize control of the trade routes into Bopolu. These efforts were so successful after the death of Sao Boso that by the late 1840s, Gola dominance of the trade corridor from the coast to Bopolu was well established (d'Azevedo 1969-1971).

After the establishment of Gola control over the territory between Monrovia and Bopolu, an accommodation was reached between the influential Gola chiefs of the region and the Liberian government even though hostilities continued among Gola, Kpelle, and Dei chieftains who were struggling to establish dominance over the area south of the St. Paul River. On the northern side of the St. Paul, Gola agriculture prospered. The Gola contribution to the vigorous coffee, palm oil, and rice trade that marked the prosperity enjoyed in the region from the 1840s through the 1860s was substantial. During these years, Gola chieftains accepted the primacy of settler government at the coast and adapted

opportunistic strategies to cope with this new situation in the hope of retaining their autonomy.[12]

Thus, by the end of the 1870s, the Liberian government had sufficiently pacified and coopted the indigenous societies in its immediate environment so that the constitutional zone of 40 miles that it claimed was fairly well under its control. Pacification efforts were to focus on the frontier regions to the far west and far northwest of the region, which were the areas of continuing disturbances.

By the early 1880s, the level of hostilities in the Cape Mount area and in the far northwest had risen considerably. About this time, two important sets of developments occurred that were to produce sustained conflict in west and northwestern Liberia for the next twenty-five years. Between 1884 and 1887, the two most powerful chiefs of the Gallinas and western area died. Chief Moana Sando of Tewo died in 1884. The Liberian government intervened in the selection of his successor, taking the opportunity to control the appointment of chiefs in that important part of the west thereafter. In 1887, Mende war lords under pressure from the British, who at that time were undertaking colonial expansion in Sierra Leone, overran the Gallinas and killed Chief Jiah, the successor to Chief Manna.[13] The deaths of the two most powerful political leaders in the region were bound to produce a high level of instability.

Before the instability subsided, the French had begun pursuing Samouri Toure in the Guinean savannas. The result was the protracted upheaval known as the Sofa Wars.[14] By 1885, the French had dislodged Samouri Toure from the coast and pressured him into retreating northward. After the French captured the Bure goldfields, Samouri's forces turned to intensive slave raiding of the forest societies to the south in order to finance their resistance. Both the retreat of Samouri's forces and their propensity for slave raiding caused disruptions in the north and northwestern frontiers of Liberia and had a ripple effect throughout the greater region.[15]

Thus, from the early 1880s through the turn of the century, a new configuration of supportive Malinke, Loma, Mano, and other chiefs and collaborators of Samouri Toure posed a challenge to both Liberian and European colonial authority throughout north and northwestern Liberia (Suret-Canale 1966; Riddell 1970; Massing 1978-1979). Moreover, in addition to the warring activities of Samouri's highly organized Sofa cavalry, there were the marauding bands of individual warlords associated with the Sofa campaigns that were available as mercenaries to Gola, Vai, and other rulers or pretenders.[16]

The Liberian government was at a loss to understand the full scope of what was happening in the north and northwestern frontiers at this time. Reacting to the local manifestations of what were internationally driven conflicts, the government launched expedition after expedition in

support of one or another friendly chief. These expeditions took a heavy toll on the national treasury. Both President Joseph Cheeseman in 1894 and his successor President William Coleman from 1896 onward pursued an interventionist policy in the hope of stemming the upheavals, opening up the trade routes, and asserting government authority on the side of friendly chiefs. The heavy toll in resources and the disruption of trade and rumors of heavy casualties made the government's involvement in military campaigns very unpopular.[17]

The defeat and capture of Samouri Toure left a power vacuum that put the French colonial authorities and the Liberian government at loggerheads. The assortment of indigenous leaders who supported Samouri feared submission to the French and preferred the protection of the Liberian government. Many of Samouri's Loma and Mah collaborators preferred to live with "the Americans," as the settlers were called, than with the French. These leaders also feared domination by Malinke collaborators of the French. The disturbances drove a deeper wedge between the Golas of the northwestern frontier and those in the south nearer Monrovia. The pressure of the upheavals drove the latter into stronger alliances with the Monrovia government, while the former struggled to maintain their autonomy under the conviction their southern kinsmen had sold out (d'Azevedo 1969–1971; Massing 1978–1979).

By the end of the nineteenth century, a war-wearied interior population, especially in the western and northwestern areas, groped for a respite. Many of the indigenous societies of the western and northwestern frontiers had been dissipated by a quarter-century of sustained or intermittent hostilities. Most of their leaders were now prepared to exchange a certain amount of autonomy for the protection of a more resilient authority. The Liberian government and the competing colonial authorities were to be the ultimate beneficiaries of this situation. The resolution of the borders was to advance the fortunes of the Liberian government particularly among such groups as the Kpelle of central Liberia, who until the turn of the century remained almost completely beyond the reach of either its authority or its direct influence.[18]

Pacification and Control in Eastern and Southeastern Liberia

Despite the disruption of the hinterland by war, the Monrovia government lacked the capacity to impose its authority over the region. Moreover, in the face of British and French colonial expansion, the government was virtually impotent. Accordingly, the resolution of border disputes on terms dictated by the European imperial powers and the organization of an interior administration were the measures that would

eventually establish Liberian government control over the hinterland. Before investigating Liberia's border disputes with the British and French, however, we need to examine the government's pacification campaign as it proceeded in eastern and southeastern Liberia.

The Kru Coast

The coastal regions of eastern and southeastern Liberia were also areas of critical interest to the Liberian government, mainly because of the potential there for expanded trade with the European powers. As discussed in Chapter 4, the establishment of ports of entry regulations before independence was already an issue of conflict among the Liberian government, the indigenous societies of the area, and the French and British colonial authorities. This conflict did not cease with the declaration of independence. As trade goods diminished and the government's economic problems increased, enforcement of ports of entry laws became all the more important.

Besides the enforcement of ports of entry laws, another source of conflict was the constant jostling between settler merchants and indigenous rulers for control of strategic positions in the southward flow of trade from the interior.[19] Related to this type of conflict was the intermittent struggle of indigenous groups inland to dislodge coastal groups in order to break the latter's domination of employment for wages aboard European ships and trade in ports free of settler control. Further down the coast, conflict between settlers and the Grebo in the latter half of the century centered on a campaign spearheaded by Grebo intelligentsia for either inclusion as citizens with equal standing or disengagement from the Liberian state and the exercise of full autonomy (Martin 1968).

While the region of the east and southeast was always in a state of tension and conflict, some flare-ups of violence there were more intensive, protracted, and destructive than others. Among these was the Sinoe War of 1855, which pitted the people of Butaw against the Sinoe settlements.[20] The surrender of Butaw and its allies led to the imposition of heavy fines and the demand for substantial trade concessions by the Liberian government.[21] Severe hardships were experienced in this region in the aftermath of the war. It was reported that more than seventy people died of starvation and exposure as food crops, agricultural and other implements, and household goods were destroyed. The area never fully recovered from these conditions because of the steady decline in agricultural prices from the beginning of the next decade (see Chapter 7). This decline, which was to become progressively worse over the next two decades, served only to intensify conflict in the region.

By 1865, the Kru Coast was again in a state of unrest. Such interior groups as the Sasstown Kru forced their way to the coast upsetting the trade patterns of the region and precipitating the formation of new coastal alliances (Davis 1975). The Liberian government once again entered the fray when a settler trader was killed at Settra Kru in 1866. As a result of the government's intervention, Settra Kru was forced to comply with the ports of entry laws, which it had long resisted.

For the remainder of the century, the Liberian government sought through a mix of measures to gain control of ports of entry along the Kru coast and to ensure the submission of Kru communities to Liberian authority. The various Kru communities continued to fight among themselves and with settler communities for advantageous trade positions. Major issues evoking conflict included the exaction of indemnities from Kru societies for pillaging wrecked ships, disputes over the enforcement of ports of entry regulations, and government insistence on mediating disputes among the Kru themselves (Sullivan 1978).

By the turn of the century, the government had granted nonvoting representation in the legislature to chiefs of Grand and Little Butaw, Sno, and a number of other Kru societies. It had also formed alliances with and officially recognized Nifu and Nana Kru, among others, as additional ports of entry on the Kru Coast. In spite of these evidences of "improved" relations, suspicion between the Kru and the settlers ran deep and the Kru sought every opportunity to exercise autonomy. Defiance of the ports of entry laws remained widespread. The Kru actively sought the support of the British, who were also involved in border disputes with the Liberian government. Toward the end of the century, in 1895, disputes over land and ports of entry once again erupted into a major conflagration on the Kru Coast. This time, the intervention of a Liberian government gunboat failed to ensure victory for the government. Strapped for money to prosecute a long war, the government resorted to diplomatic measures. In March 1896, President Cheeseman, who already had the Sofa Wars and the widespread upheavals in the west and northwest to contend with, dispatched a commission of senior government officials to seek a peaceful solution. The resulting peace settlement provided a hiatus that was to end with more sustained and intensive warfare in 1915 and again in the 1930s. These conflicts will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Pacification Campaigns among the Grebo

In the Cape Palmas region of southeastern Liberia, the attempts to extend government authority over Grebo societies were characterized by three elements. The first was the long-standing rivalry between the two groups

of coastal Grebo, the Kudemowe and the Nyomowe. The second was the involvement of the Protestant Episcopal Church in evangelical and educational work in the area. The third was the trade and colonial interests of Europeans, especially the French, in the region.

The area of Maryland County was one of the more problematic areas for the Liberian government. The distance of the region from Monrovia diminished the influence there of the already weak and struggling Monrovia government. The intensity and protracted nature of the conflict that ensued in the region upon the intervention of settler authority was related to the long-standing relationship between the Grebo and Europeans, a relationship that predated the arrival of the settlers. Like the Kru, the Grebo were not prepared to subordinate that relationship to a new external authority. The conflicts were made more complex by the rapid development of a cadre of indigenous people who attained Western education through mission schools in the area, and who were prepared to stake claims for inclusion in Liberian society or else agitate for complete separation.

The increasing appropriation of Grebo territory for new Liberian settlements had led to the War of 1857, which forced the Colony of Maryland to join the newly independent state of Liberia. This war, which required the intervention of militiamen from Monrovia, further complicated matters of security for the settlers of Maryland because it forged an alliance between the Nyomowe people and their traditional rivals, the Kudemowe. Even though the alliance would prove tentative and fragile, the relationship between the settlers and the Nyomowe was henceforth to be characterized by deep suspicion.

Under the Treaty of 1857, concluded at the end of the war, the Grebo were obliged not only to pledge they would launch no further attacks on the Maryland settlements and would seek peaceful remedies to disputes with the settlements, but also to submit disputes between Grebo societies to arbitration by the Liberian government. It was clear that the dominance of Liberian government authority in the region would not go unchallenged, especially in the wake of the tremendous economic activities of the region during the 1860s. Increasing trade with the British, French, and Dutch, largely in palm oil and labor recruitment, was also to revive old rivalries between Kudemowe and Nyomowe groups and their allies among the peoples of the immediate interior.

The Grebo Reunited Confederation and the War of 1875

Early in the 1860s, hostilities broke out as a result of a land dispute involving the people of Cavalla. Fighting was to continue intermittently

for the next ten years, with allies of the Nyomowe and Kudemowe being drawn into the melee. Some of the engagements were very destructive in lives and property. For example, in two engagements between Graway and Cavalla in 1868, about 127 people were killed. Unable to mobilize resources and debilitated by partisan political conflict, the Liberian government could not mount a credible intervention.[22] First it sought to intervene as ar ally of one side and then as an arbiter while, at all times, attempting to enforce the Ports of Entry Law in the region.

It was the intervention of the Episcopal Mission that made a difference. Operating through the Grebo intelligentsia of both sides, a decade of hostilities was brought to a close in the early years of the 1870s. The agreement ending the hostilities was much more than a peace treaty; it was a compact organizing the Grebo Reunited Confederation.[23] In December 1873, the leaders of the Nyomowe and Kudemowe Grebo agreed not only to live in peace but to organize themselves into the Grebo Reunited Confederation in order to ensure "the progress of civilization and Christianity" among their peoples (Valentine, quoted in Martin 1968:264).[24]

Although spokesmen for the confederation insisted that Grebo autonomy was not the alliance's goal, it was natural that the Liberian government should harbor such suspicions. Since Grebo autonomy, on the one hand, and political inclusion as citizens, on the other, were both perceived by the Liberian government as unacceptable alternatives, it was clear that such an alliance would soon find itself on a collision course with the government. The first substantive issue dealt with by the confederation was the contract labor question.[25] By December 1874, one year after the confederation had been formed, certain Grebo chiefs disavowed the Treaty of 1857. In the ensuing squabble, Grebo chiefs of Cavalla wrote to British colonial officials disavowing Liberian government jurisdiction over them and expressing a desire to enter into an independent treaty with Britain.

The actions of the Grebo Confederation were triggered in part by the failure of the Liberian government to take steps to ensure the inclusion of the Grebo—especially educated, Christian Grebo—as citizens. Moreover, it is reported that certain government officials at the county level were in the habit of displaying callous disdain and disrespect for Grebo chiefs. Additionally, with the arrival of new settlers as late as 1873, the Liberian government continued to appropriate more land from the Grebo.

Skirmishes had already begun when a special commissioner of the Liberian government in the person of president-elect James S. Payne arrived in Harper to investigate the disputes between the settlers and the Grebo. The major issue raised by the Grebo in the investigation was the question of land ownership. The Grebo maintained that the Treaty of 1834

that ceded land to the settlers was invalid. They claimed that the area of land ceded was smaller than that appropriated by the Liberian government. Payne's ruling was essentially a restatement of Liberian government policy: the Grebo were subjects of the Liberian state, their chiefs were subordinate officials of the Liberian government, and Grebo land was essentially government land that, according to law, could be made available to any Grebo or Liberian citizen upon proper application and payment of the appropriate fees (see Republic of Liberia [1875], "Report on the Grebo War" which was prepared by Payne himself).

Payne's conclusions only added fuel to the fire. The Grebo Confederation now stood united behind repudiation of the Treaty of 1834 and began preparations for war. Five to seven thousand men were mobilized by the confederation. The Liberian government dispatched militia forces from Monrovia, Bassa, and Sinoe to Cape Palmas for a total fighting force of about a thousand better armed but poorly disciplined men (Martin 1968).

The first major attack launched by the Liberian forces was on Sunday, October 10, 1875, on Hoffman Station. The government's forces were routed and forced to beat a hasty retreat to Harper. Liberian citizens of the settlements also escaped to Harper where a garrison was established for greater protection.[26] Realizing the Grebo's level of mobilization, the Liberian government evacuated most of the troops in order to prepare for a protracted war that would end only with the intervention of the U.S. warship *Alaska*.

Having earlier informed the United States resident minister of the seriousness of the situation and of its inability to protect the lives and property of American missionaries at Cavalla and elsewhere in Maryland, the Liberian government later requested the intervention of a U.S. warship to prevent the further deterioration of the situation (U.S. Department of State [1875], *Despatches*, nos. 184, 192). As the situation continued to grow critical for Liberia, the government sought to pressure merchants to pay up customs duties and other citizens to pay their taxes without delay (RL [1875], "Proclamation Issued by the Acting Mayor of Monrovia"). Failing to get a prompt response from the United States, former president Roberts was brought into the picture to add his prestige to the petition of the Liberian government (USDS [1875], *Despatches*, no. 209).

The United States warship *Alaska* arrived in Monrovia in February 1876 and proceeded to Cape Palmas. Captain Semmes of the *Alaska* met with Grebo leaders and, after threatening the use of maximum force, secured their submission to a settlement (Martin 1968). Although the Grebo had won a victory and Harper was virtually under siege, the intervention of the United States on the side of the settlers was a key factor in Grebo calculations. Moreover, the Grebo intelligentsia was not only predisposed to a settlement but encouraged the chiefs to accept

the settlement proposed by Captain Semmes and the Liberian government (Martin 1968). The settlement called upon the Grebo to, among other things, acknowledge the supremacy of the Liberian state and submit to its authority, accept the legitimacy of the Liberian government's claims over the land, and strive to become citizens of the country. The Liberian government, in turn, was to grant full citizenship to all Grebo who met the legal requirements and ensure that such individuals would be accorded the same rights of land ownership and participation in trade and public service as any settler. Certain Grebo chiefs would take their places among other chiefs in the legislature as nonvoting delegates (RL [1876], "Treaty of Peace on the Grebo War").

The war of 1875 brought to the fore the worst fears of the settler authorities. It was the most serious challenge faced by the settler state since independence. The strength of the combined Grebo forces and the solidarity manifested elsewhere in many indigenous communities provided a sobering lesson for thoughtful settlers.[27] By 1875, the Episcopal missions of Cape Palmas had trained more than fifty teachers, preachers, and catechists who in turn operated mission stations throughout the Grebo littoral. These mission stations were now beginning to produce a third generation of educated Grebo who were as committed to Christian teachings and life-style as any settler. The question of full inclusion of this Grebo intelligentsia had to be dealt with. The irony of the war was that the major underlying issue was the desire for inclusion and full participation and not the opposite. The dispute about the authenticity of land claims was only important as an alternative to full inclusion. It was after ten years of petitioning and agitating that the provisions of the settlement pertaining to full citizenship for the educated Grebo were implemented. Nonetheless, the Liberian government did not implement such a policy with general application to all indigenous societies until well into the twentieth century (see Chapters 9 and 11).

For a while after the settlement of the 1875 war, relations between the coastal Grebo and the settlers were cordial. Interior Grebo were also interested in improving relations with the Liberian government as a means of gaining access to coastal trade. Many concluded treaties with the Liberian government.[28] By the end of the 1880s, however, trouble flared among the coastal Grebo again. Scars from the war were not completely healed. The slow pace of progress in meeting the terms of the settlement and the activities of European traders and colonial officials contributed to a growing restlessness.[29]

The Kudemowe communities of Rocktown and Cavalla declared their independence from the Liberian government, and in 1893 the Liberian government, with the assistance of the German firm Woermann and Company, dispatched 200 militiamen to the area on a newly purchased

Liberian-owned gunboat called the *Gorronammah*. President Cheeseman led the expedition. A combined force of Liberian militiamen and Nyomowe fighters subdued the forces of Rocktown and Cavalla so that by the end of November the pacification campaign was over.

Having failed to obtain the assistance of a British warship during the conflict, the leaders of Cavalla invited the French to protect their territory. The French used the invitation as a bargaining chip to ensure a more favorable position in border negotiations with the Liberian government. While it can be said that the conflicts of 1887–1893 were settled, like all preceding conflicts, the settlements were to prove temporary. Violence once again erupted, first in 1896 and then through the first quarter of the twentieth century, until the border disputes with the French were resolved and the status of the indigenous peoples in Liberia clearly defined.

What we have seen thus far shows that the struggle to extend the authority of the Liberian government over the territory it claimed in the latter part of the nineteenth century involved a combination of responsive measures. Far from constituting a well-thought-out plan in pursuit of defined objectives, the government's approach consisted of sporadic measures in response to crisis situations. Several of the measures taken were designed to stifle colonial intervention, others were in pursuit of economic advantage, and still others driven by the need to enhance settler security. The leaders of settler society understood that, as a modern state, Liberia needed to have defined borders; that was why they suggested a 40-mile "constitutional zone" that was perceived to delimit the effective territorial borders of Liberia. With respect to the larger region, there were economic and security interests as well as interests connected with the wider mission of Liberia to be pursued. While the full integration of indigenous societies into the body politic was out of the question, the government struggled to impose control over the indigenous societies within its constitutional zone and establish a protectorate relationship with the larger hinterland. This struggle became even more precarious in the face of expanding European colonial interests. The vigorous pursuit of these by the British and French compelled the government to perceive the hinterland as an integral part of Liberian territory and to develop a system of interior administration. To pursue its objectives in the face of colonial expansion required considerable accommodation and the reduction of Liberia to the role of subagent in the unfolding imperial scheme in the region.

We have also seen that the reaction of the indigenous societies was not uniform. Far from the existence of a universal Vai, Gola, Kru, or Grebo position, for example, there was a diversity of positions not only across ethnolinguistic groups but within groups. The leadership of each political

community reacted in its own interests as perceived under the particular circumstances and against its history and prior experiences. The state of upheaval in the region predisposed most societies to seek alliances that provided greater protection, and to adapt opportunistic strategies for promoting security and commercial interests. It was this characteristic of the region more than the military prowess of the settler government or the assistance of the American navy that enabled the settlers to emerge as the dominant force in the area.

The European Colonial Challenge

Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, European interest in West Africa seemed confined to trade. In the area of the Grain Coast, the shift had occurred from the slave to commodity trade. Palm oil was the most important trade item. With the beginning of regular steamship lines along the coast as early as the 1850s, European commodity trade seemed to take on a new structure. The need for regular supplies necessitated greater dependability and, therefore, greater control over sources of trade goods. The scramble for territory was to begin. This changed situation adversely affected Anglo-Liberian relations that had hitherto been friendly.

The Sierra Leonean–Liberian Border

The British were the first to recognize Liberia's independence when other European powers hesitated and when even the United States, torn by the question of slavery, refused to recognize the new black state. Britain had seen the new state as an ally in the fight against the slave trade. President Roberts had been warmly welcomed by Lord Palmerston, the British foreign secretary during the former's visit to Britain in 1848, and a treaty of amity and commerce was signed between the two governments. Although British officials—especially those of the colonial administration in Sierra Leone—protested the Ports of Entry Law and the Liberian government's efforts to suppress illegal trade along the Liberian coast, relations between the two countries remained basically cordial. Because of Liberia's success in fighting the slave trade, the British Admiralty encouraged the expansion of Liberian territory along the coast. Liberian ownership of the Gallinas was acknowledged by the British Admiralty as of the 1850s (Foley 1965).

The interest of the British Admiralty in fighting the slave trade and the interest of British merchants were not, however, identical. As a result, the British colonial government at Freetown, Sierra Leone, being

influenced by British merchants along the coast, was dissatisfied with British support for the expanding territorial claims of the Liberian government, especially where those claims interfered with trade relations involving British merchants. As the slave trade ended, British territorial claims in support of expanding trade were to change the nature of Anglo-Liberian relations. The displeasure of the British colonial government over Liberian efforts to exert authority over commercial activities in the Gallinas was the immediate incident that sparked a protracted border dispute between Britian and Liberia. It lasted for the remaining years of the nineteenth century and the early period of the twentieth century.

In November 1860, the Liberian government dispatched the schooner *Quail* to the area of Cape Mount to prevent a Spanish slaving vessel from purchasing slaves from Chief Mannah, who appeared prepared to do business with it.[30] After disrupting the transaction, the *Quail* remained in the area and discovered two vessels owned by a British trader, John Myres Harris of Chatham, England, unloading cargo near the Sulima River in Liberian territory without the permission of the Liberian authorities in the area. The two vessels were seized and taken to Monrovia. Harris complained to Stephen J. Hill, British colonial governor of Sierra Leone, who dispatched HMS *Torch* to Monrovia to inquire about the seizure of the vessels. Exercising little patience and an unwillingness to consider Liberian government claims over territory in the Gallinas, Commander Smith of the *Torch* towed the two vessels out of the port of Monrovia and returned them to Harris, who resumed trade in the Gallinas. Governor Hill transmitted several dispatches to London in an effort to influence the Foreign Office to withdraw recognition of the Gallinas as Liberian territory. While the incident regarding the action of the commander of the *Torch* was still fresh, the *Quail* intercepted a second Spanish ship, the *Buenaventura Cubano*. Once again the intervention of Commander Smith of the *Torch* created an unpleasant situation, which led to the burning of the *Buenaventura* on his orders (Foley 1965; Johnston 1906).

These developments made the settlement of Liberian borders with the Sierra Leone colony an urgent question. Through a flurry of diplomatic activities, in 1861, the Liberian government received communication from Lord Russell, British foreign secretary, that Britain recognized Liberian territorial boundaries as extending from the Jong or Sherbro River on the west to the San Pedro River on the east. The British position stipulated that Liberia's exercise of effective control and occupation in the region was essential to the continuous recognition of its jurisdiction over the area specified. The British Foreign Office also maintained that if the area claimed by Liberia as constituting its western border was coterminous with the British territory of Sierra Leone, it would be appropriate for a joint border commission of Liberian and Sierra Leonean officials to

undertake delimitation of the frontier after thorough investigation of the claims (Foley 1965).

While the British Foreign Office under Lord Russell seemed predisposed toward a prompt and amicable settlement with the Liberian government, the colonial administration in Freetown was of another mind. Governor Hill and his council were more concerned about losing valuable trading ports to Liberia than with questions of fairness and good neighborliness. With the Liberian government's claims extending beyond the Gallinas, the colonial government in Sierra Leone was not prepared to cede such valuable sources of British trade (ibid.).

The Boundary Commission met in Monrovia in March 1863. Governor Blackall headed the Sierra Leonean delegation for the British and former President Roberts led the Liberian side.[31] The British proposed the Mano River as the western limit of Liberian territory while the Liberian delegation claimed territory extending to the Sherbro River. A compromise proposed by the British would have extended Liberian territory to the Gallinas but the Liberian side rejected it (ibid.).

After the failure of the commission to reach an agreement in 1863, the British government remained unresponsive to Liberian attempts to achieve a settlement of the border question until 1871, when President Roye visited London to arrange a loan from British commercial houses. During the visit, it was agreed that the two countries would once again constitute a border commission and that the United States would be requested to designate an arbitrator to resolve any disagreement. Britain proposed that the western border of Liberia be set at the Sugaree River and that any extension of Liberian territory beyond that point was to be determined by the commission upon verification of the validity of Liberian deeds. Negotiations failed to begin, however, because the United States delayed selecting the arbitrator and political turmoil broke out in Liberia.

In 1877, President Anthony Gardiner sent Edward W. Blyden to London to pursue a settlement of the border question. The Liberian government accepted the 1871 agreement as the basis for negotiation. However, with Lord Salisbury in charge of the British Foreign Office, the British position had changed substantially. The revised British position excluded negotiation concerning any territory claimed by Britain. Only territorial disputes between the Liberian government and local chiefs were to be considered by the commission. Commodore Schufeldt of the United States Navy had been appointed arbitrator. No sooner had the commission met in Freetown in February 1879, than it was deadlocked by the unilateral revision of the initial basis for negotiation by the British. No agreement was reached and the British refused to go to arbitration (ibid.).

Amidst the controversy with the British there occurred the *Carlos* incident, which pitted the Liberian government against the Germans at

the same time. In 1879 the German ship *Carlos* ran aground at Nana Kru. The ship was looted and the crew abused by local Kru people. The German warship *Victoria* was dispatched to Nana Kru, bombarded the town and adjacent towns, and proceeded to Monrovia to demand £900 as damages incurred by the crew of the shipwrecked *Carlos*. Under threat of bombardment, the Liberian government appealed to local merchants to raise a loan in order to meet the demands (Starr 1913).

Meanwhile, British traders who included John Myres Harris and former Governor Hill expanded full force into the territory between Cape Mount and the Gallinas. In the early 1870s, the Liberian government had attempted to impose its authority over the area by sending in a number of expeditionary forces. Claims were made by the Sierra Leonean colonial authority for compensation for property allegedly destroyed by the Liberian militia. These claims were revived as the 1879 negotiations faltered (Foley 1965; Azikiwe 1934).

In March 1882 Sir Arthur Havelock, the new colonial governor of Sierra Leone, exasperated by the refusal of the Liberian government to accept the British position as a settlement, invaded Monrovia with a flotilla of four gunboats. He demanded Liberian acceptance of the British terms for the settlement of the border and payment of an indemnity for the loss of trade goods by British traders during the Liberian pacification campaign in the Gallinas. Intimidated by this move and unable to pay the claims, President Gardiner urged Blyden to reach an agreement with the British. The Blyden-Havelock Agreement, which was concluded in 1882, was an agreement dictated by the British colonial administration in Sierra Leone (ibid.).

The agreement required Liberia to pay indemnity to British merchants while abandoning claims to land west of the Mano River. In return, the colonial administration in Sierra Leone was to secure British recognition of Liberian sovereignty over territory up to the Mano River. Britain was also to reimburse the Liberian government for all monies paid to local chiefs for territory that was now being ceded by the Liberian government. Havelock remained in Monrovia until the agreement was prepared and signed. The agreement was so unpopular among the Liberian people that Blyden was forced to leave Monrovia temporarily for his own safety. The Liberian Senate rejected it. It is reported that Havelock returned to Monrovia in September 1882 with an ultimatum (Johnston 1906). Shortly thereafter, Havelock declared the agreement ratified and proclaimed British sovereignty over the 60 miles of territory between the Mano and Sulima rivers in the Gallinas (Foley 1965). These developments so overwhelmed an ailing President Gardiner that he resigned in early 1883.

Despite a Liberian protest to Britain and petition to the "civilized nations of the world," the Blyden-Havelock Agreement remained

essentially the settlement of the western Liberian border. A special appeal for American intervention also failed to yield favorable results for Liberia. In 1884, when Havelock was replaced by former Governor Rowe, the Liberian government under President Hilary R. W. Johnson sought to renegotiate the agreement but was able to achieve only minor concessions. Thus, in 1885, after continuous appeals for U.S. intercession, the Liberian government ratified the agreement and in return received reimbursements of a little over £4,700.

There were other sources of pressure to ratify the Blyden-Havelock Agreement. In 1868, France had signed treaties with a few chiefs along the Kru Coast, notably at Garraway in Maryland County. In 1883, the French government claimed to have ratified those treaties, a clear indication of its intention to become more active in these places. In 1885, the Berlin Conference enunciated the principle of effective occupation. In the context of these developments, it was conceivably in Liberia's interest to accept the Blyden-Havelock Agreement as a means of preventing further European incursions into territory claimed by Liberia but not under its "effective occupation."[32] It was also perceived to be in Liberia's interest to settle its dispute with Britain in order to secure British support in forthcoming border disputes with the French. These disputes will be discussed in the next section.

With the ratification of the Blyden-Havelock Agreement, relations between Britain and Liberia were normalized. Meanwhile, the turbulence that developed in the northwestern border region as a result of the Sofa Wars, the Sierra Leone Frontier Force's pacification campaigns against the Mende, and the consolidation of control over Kissiland by Chief Kailondo reopened the question of the northwestern border. In terms of their impact on the Anglo-Liberian border question, the activities in Kissiland were more significant than the other developments that occurred in the region at the turn of the century and warrant brief discussion.

Colonial rivalry in Kissiland. In 1895, the death of Kailondo, the Kissi chieftain who had struggled against many rivals for control of the Luawa area of Kissiland, created a succession problem. The rivalry among contenders made for an unstable situation. The situation was further complicated by British and French rivalries in Kissiland. The resultant agreement, negotiated largely between the British and French, divided Kissiland into three parts to be ceded to France, Britain, and Liberia. The portion ceded to Liberia, largely as a result of disagreement between the European powers, contained the prosperous market town of Kailahun. As the division of Kissiland ignored clan and subethnic divisions, enormous unrest developed in the area. Fabundeh, a British-supported chief whose section of Kissiland had previously contained Kailahun,

insisted on maintaining control over that town. Many inhabitants of Kailahun and supporters of Fabundeh crossed over into the British-controlled section making for confusion and hostile encounters that also affected trade along the border (Bah 1987; Wyse 1977).

After the Blyden-Havelock Agreement, Britain became interested in involving the United States in a compact to guarantee the territorial integrity of Liberia. The British plan was presumably to prevent any possible French encroachments on Liberian territory, since they would have required a similar response from Britain. Britain's interest also extended to curtailing German domination of Liberian trade. The British hoped to eliminate the Germans as potential rivals in the event of the total collapse of the Liberian government (Foley 1965). The United States, which had declined one such invitation in 1897, was predisposed to participating in talks designed to find solutions to the growing problems but remained unprepared to guarantee Liberia's territorial integrity (Buell 1928).

While negotiating American involvement in the settlement of the border problem, Britain was also trying to reach a secret treaty that would guarantee British "protection" of Liberia. Arthur Ponsonby and Sir Harry Johnston, leaders of a British commercial syndicate, were instrumental in these efforts. Britain's proposals to Liberia were far-reaching. They included an agreement to put a Briton in charge of the management of Liberian finances, to organize and operate a Liberian border police force whose commanding officers would be Britons, and to promote a "closer union" with Britain for the protection of Liberian independence.[33]

In 1903, a new Anglo-Liberian boundary commission was set up to resolve the problems regarding Kissiland and other border questions affecting Anglo-Liberian relations (Bah 1987). A further agreement called for the establishment of two Liberian customs posts at the border in Kissiland, one being at Kailahun. Chief Fabundeh's rejection of the Anglo-Liberian agreement, which was made in light of U.S. intervention, served the purposes of the Sierra Leone colonial authorities, who were reluctant to accept the agreement anyway.

Meanwhile, the situation in the region was further complicated by British pursuit of resisting Mende warriors in the area. Many of these crossed into Liberian territory at will. The activities of Sofa warlords and Gola and Vai chieftains also required attention. Britain claimed that Liberia's inability to ensure order in the region required the intervention of the Sierra Leone Frontier Force (Massing 1978–1979; d'Azevedo 1969–1971; Holsoe 1967). In 1904, the Liberian government granted permission for a contingent from the Sierra Leone Frontier Force to enter Liberian territory to pacify the area. When, in 1906, Liberian officials

reached the area, British forces were still there. The British refused to withdraw, maintaining that their continued presence was a deterrent to French encroachments on Liberian territory.[34] Also, at this time, the activities of the Liberian militia led by Major Lomax did little to endear the Liberian government to the hearts of the people in the area. The Kissi people fled from Liberian militia to the British side of the border (Bah 1987).

The Liberian government sent a delegation to London in 1908 but failed to secure British withdrawal from Liberian territory. It then sent another delegation to Washington the same year in a desperate attempt to seek a U.S. guarantee of Liberian independence. Although the United States would give no such guarantee, it was prepared this time to send a fact-finding mission to Liberia. This evidence of U.S. concern was essential in preparing the British to reach a new settlement of the border.

The British proposed a settlement that called for the ceding of Kailahun to Britain in return for portions of the Gola forest. The Liberian government rejected this proposal; it was not prepared to give up the commercially prosperous area of Kailahun for the unexplored Gola forest. Upon the intervention of the United States, however, the Liberian government accepted the proposal and in 1911 the Boundary Commission reached an agreement in which, in addition to the exchange of territory, the Liberian government received £4,000 as additional compensation for the ceding of Kailahun (ibid.).

Many Kissi were still unhappy with the arrangement because it still left Kissiland divided. The flight of relatives in both directions across the border threatened further destabilization in the region. Finally in 1917, Liberian government officials and Sierra Leonean colonial officials met with Kissi communities on the borders in an attempt to inform them that the agreement was a permanent settlement and would not be reconsidered to relieve their displeasure (ibid.).

The French West African–Liberian Border

The border dispute with France was just as tedious and protracted as the Anglo-Liberian one. France after 1885, like Britain, considered its encroachments on territory claimed by Liberia to be justified under the principle of effective occupation agreed upon by the Berlin Conference. The maneuvers of France in Liberia to claim territory were motivated by suspicions of British and German intentions regarding Liberia and by interest in gaining access to the supply of labor along the Kru Coast. These motives were to drive a complex system of interaction mainly

among France, Britain, and the Liberian government over a period of some twenty years before a final agreement was reached.

In 1868, France signed treaties with Grebo and Kru headmen at Garraway, Fishtown, Cavalla, and a few other points on the Kru Coast and the territory between the Cavalla and San Pedro rivers. Although these territories were said to have been Liberian land acquired by the independent Colony of Maryland before its annexation to Liberia, the Liberian government did not exercise effective control over the areas. The French insisted on the legitimacy of their claims in spite of Liberian protest to the contrary. Initially, France was reported to have wanted the territories as storage depots for fuel for French ships that traveled along the coast. Although treaties were said to have been signed, the French did not establish a presence or show an interest in the area for close to twenty years after their presumed acquisition of the territories.

In 1883, as violence continued in Cape Palmas in the aftermath of the Grebo War, France announced that the treaties establishing its possession of the territories had been ratified in Paris. As if to establish a favorable bargaining position in the face of an impending dispute, France also made claims on territories in Bassa and Cape Mount. In an attempt to forestall French occupation of the Kru Coast territories it was claiming, the Liberian government announced the establishment of a port of entry at Cavalla in 1885. Resistance by the local Kudemowe leaders was vigorous. Violence broke out in Cavalla in 1887 and the Liberian government was hard pressed to maintain order in the area let alone establish and control a customs port. Caught without the resources to prosecute war and establish evidence of effective occupation, the Liberian government appealed to the United States to use its good offices to dissuade France from occupying these territories at Garraway, Fishtown, and Cavalla.

The failure of the United States to obtain a favorable reply left Liberia with no alternative but to consider negotiating with France. Earlier, in 1887, perceiving the development of possible border disputes with France, President Hilary R. W. Johnson had sought an amendment to the Blyden-Havelock Agreement to ensure British recognition of Liberia's southeastern border as extending to the San Pedro River. The British government refused to accept the amendment. A further Liberian strategy had been to grant trade and mining concessions to a British syndicate in the hope that the activities of the syndicate throughout Liberia under the authorization of the Liberian government would be perceived to constitute effective occupation and so mollify the French. The Liberian government anticipated that the presence of British business interests would have attracted the British government's protection of Liberian territory.[35]

In early 1892, apparently as a concession to the United States, the French modified their claims and presented the Liberian government with a draft treaty for negotiation. France dropped its claims to territories in Bassa and Cape Mount and demanded that Liberia recognize its rights to the territory east of the Cavalla. Having failed to get international support for its position in the dispute, the Liberian government acted swiftly to conclude an agreement with France so as to resolve the question before France escalated its demands for territory. The Liberian consul in Paris, Baron de Stein, a Belgian, was authorized to represent Liberia in the negotiations.[36]

In the Franco-Liberian border agreement, which was signed in December 1892, Liberia ceded all territory east of the Cavalla including the Niger basin to France. In return, France withdrew all claims to enclave territories west of the Cavalla. France also paid F25,000 to Liberia for territory lost and obtained a pledge from the Liberian government to facilitate the engagement of Kru labor to French traders on the coast. In addition, France pressed for and obtained the right to pursue Africans from Ivory Coast who might seek sanctuary in Liberia.

The most notable aspect of the treaty was the provision by which France reserved the right to invalidate the agreement and reconsider its recognition of Liberian sovereignty in the event Liberian independence was impaired, or any part of its territory alienated to another country. This provision alarmed Britain and was interpreted by British commercial and colonial interests as an indication that France was looking for an excuse to occupy Liberian territory (Foley 1965).

For the next ten years British, French, and Liberian government diplomatic and commercial maneuvers increased. British commercial and colonial interests now leaned toward making Liberia a British protectorate or securing American involvement in guaranteeing Liberian independence as a means of preventing annexation by the French. The French, on the other hand, feared British designs in Liberia and, realizing the fragility of the Liberian government, stood prepared to lay larger claims on Liberia should its government collapse or find itself constrained to cede territory to Britain. Both British and French feared German involvement in Liberia. German commercial interests were the largest foreign commercial involvement in Liberia in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Developments following the Grebo War, in which German officials from Gabon had laid claims on Liberia, had alarmed both the French and the British. Liberia remained helpless in the middle of the squabble. While not wanting to see Liberia liquidated, the United States was not prepared to guarantee its independence or to prevent any encroachments of European powers on Liberian territory.

By this time, around the turn of the century, the French were engaged in a major pacification campaign against Sofa warriors in

Liberian-claimed territory in the northwest. Uncertain about the commitment of the Liberian government to conclude the secret treaty of protection, the British also initiated secret negotiations on a Liberian settlement with the French. Sir Harry Johnston reached an unofficial agreement with Louis Binger, a French colonial service official. The agreement sought to prevent the expansion of French interests in southeastern Liberia in exchange for portions of Kissiland, known as Trans-Makona, that were being claimed by Liberia. France would, among other things, protect those Kissi chiefs who had sided with Britain in the pacification campaigns in that area (ibid.).

After much wrangling and considerable intrigue, the Liberian government concluded two agreements in 1907. One was with the French demarcating the Franco-Liberian border and the other with the British concerning questions of internal stability and financial management. The Franco-Liberian Treaty of 1907 also provided for the erection of Liberian border posts that were to be manned by French frontier troops until such time as the Liberian frontier police could take over. The treaty also reaffirmed France's 1892 position reserving the right to intervene in the event of an impairment of Liberian sovereignty. This time, the provision did not alarm the British largely because the provisions demarcating the Franco-Liberian border did not differ very much from the Binger-Johnston Agreement. Moreover, with the secret treaty with the Liberian government and the establishment of the Liberia Development Company, the British position regarding the settlement between the Liberian and French governments became less antagonistic.

Although the agreements of 1907 and 1917 led to the establishment of defined borders with both the French and British colonial territories, in such an age a weak and ineffective Liberian government seemed to be an irresistible invitation to colonial expansion. The Liberian government was not unmindful of its precarious situation and attempted to constantly balance off French designs against British. It was aware that it could not walk this tightrope endlessly. Accordingly, the only permanent solution it perceived to the problem of security against the colonial powers was to attract greater American involvement in its internal affairs. In this regard, some indications of greater American interest became apparent in 1910 with the visit of the American fact-finding commission. It was not until the involvement of Firestone in the 1920s, however, that Liberian officials felt the threat of absorption by the British or French had disappeared (R. Anderson 1952).

The Anglo-Liberian and Franco-Liberian border settlements were an ordeal that constituted a major challenge to the Liberian government. Occurring at the peak period of colonial expansion in Africa, the border questions pitted Liberia against the most powerful imperial forces in

West Africa. Liberia's position was further weakened by its government's relative lack of legitimacy, which impaired its ability to consistently command the support of indigenous communities. Coupled with the lack of legitimacy was the lack of an effective pacification force in a situation in which the settlement of borders was a significant part of the process of colonial pacification. When perceived in this context, the adaptive behavior of the Liberian government can be properly understood. While the settlement of the borders signified the end of European imperial encroachments, it did not imply a resolution of problems pertaining to the constitution of authority within those borders. The border settlements, however, were a necessary precondition for the establishment of internal order. In the next chapter, I will discuss the socioeconomic developments that occurred in the wake of these internal and external considerations.

★ 7 ★

Political Proprietorship and Economic Decline

THE SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT of Liberian society during the post-independence period was dominated by the proprietary control of merchants who, at independence, assumed authority in place of the ACS.[1] Although hampered by "racial" strife between blacks and mulattoes, merchant proprietary rule presided over a quarter-century of prosperity through trade and then over about a half-century of economic decline so profound that the government itself became the most significant economic enterprise. This chapter will examine the interplay of domestic and international features in this debacle.

Merchant Proprietary Rule in the Postindependence Period

To get a clear understanding of political and economic developments after independence, one must return to the basic ideas underlying the establishment of Liberia and the mission it sought to fulfill. It is against this background that the nature and character of the emerging political configurations of the postindependence period and the interaction with external forces can best be understood.

Jeffersonian Agrarianism, Mercantile Exchange, and Political Proprietorship

The tension between the aspiration to establish a society based on Jeffersonian agrarian ideals and the reality of merchant control was a

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significant feature of the social order after independence and a defining characteristic of the political structure. The establishment of Jeffersonian agrarian democracy required an openness to opportunities from private owners of small, real property holdings as the cornerstone of socioeconomic relations. The soil and productive artisanship were to sustain society, thereby making the freeholder the producer of prosperity and the guardian of freedom.[2]

Despite this aspiration, the reality that evolved had seen authority transferred from the ACS to a political proprietorship dominated by merchants. In Chapter 4, I described settler social structure and the nature of the merchant-dominated ruling elite. It is important here to examine the merchant elites more closely so as to understand the pattern of control they exercised over the social order. In Chapter 4, I argued that the Monrovia merchants were perceived as custodians of the Liberian heritage. The acceptance of their leadership was due as much to acknowledgment by other settlers that merchant leaders had acquired education and experience in governing their own affairs as to the command of such merchants over resources through trade and the general acceptance of trade as the most honorable livelihood. The political proprietary control of merchants was made possible through relationships associated with trade and control of governmental policies. In these relationships, coast-based merchants maintained a coterie of subproprietors, agents, couriers, and apprentices linked in a patron-client network under terms of trade established by laws, including ports of entry laws. This network was often reinforced by kinship among settler families (Liebenow 1969; David 1984).

In Chapter 5, I also argued that differences within settler society on the strategy for pursuing the civilizing and Christianizing mission reflected differences in perception about the character of the state and its relationship with the indigenous societies. Exploring these differences more deeply, one finds significant implications for socioeconomic development in nineteenth-century Liberia.

Most merchants viewed Liberia as a Western society in Africa and proposed to carry on the civilizing and Christianizing mission as an "outreach function." To such merchants, the legitimacy of Liberia's claims to statehood depended upon its standing among the "civilized powers." To them, Liberia had to do what was necessary in order to be perceived as an infant republic worthy of consideration as a junior partner in the councils of world powers. They also believed that the quest for legitimation by world powers and the efforts to achieve economic development were most likely to succeed through the diligent pursuit of trade with those powers; and that measures should be taken to stimulate their interest in engaging in economic ventures with Liberia. Liberia's ultimate

security, according to this strategy, resided in the encouragement and support of foreign investment in its economy.[3]

This outwardly directed approach reflected the mainstream thinking and predisposition of merchant proprietary rule not only in economic matters but also in matters such as internal relations within settler society, and relations with the indigenous societies that were to be pacified and incorporated within the Liberian state.[4] This outward orientation was the dominant perspective throughout the nineteenth century. Although it was challenged from time to time by other views and approaches, it has remained the dominant factor shaping policy in Liberia until today. It was the precursor of the Open Door economic policy of the period after the Second World War, a policy that is still in force. Joseph Jenkins Roberts, first president of Liberia and patriarch of Liberian merchants, was the major exponent of this outward-directed approach.

The alternative strategy saw the solution to Liberia's social and economic problems and the key to the fulfillment of its mission as residing in the development of a strong black civilization. According to this perspective, the African population was essential to creating a productive and prosperous society. While trade was viewed as the path to economic development, the protection of trade and the cultivation of the human resources of Africa were viewed as the most efficient means of promoting trade and ensuring prosperity in the long run. Thus this group differed from the mainstream to the extent that it included a stronger element of cultural and racial nationalism and a more protectionist orientation.[5] Although this perspective did not necessarily inspire increased productivity or autarkic tendencies, it commanded a wide following among the predominantly darker-skinned settlers.

Daniel B. Warner and E. J. Roye were among the major merchant exponents of this approach.[6] Warner became the third and Roye the fifth president of Liberia.[7] Roye was reputed to be one of the wealthiest men of his day. The pursuit of racial dignity was a theme constantly emphasized by both men as a major goal of Liberia.[8] Because of disagreements over policy matters, Warner had earlier resigned from the position of secretary of state in the government headed by J. J. Roberts. His advocacy of intermarriage as a possible solution to the "aboriginal problem" and of protectionist measures through strenuous ports of entry restrictions and the licensing of hinterland-bound traders were incompatible with the dominant views of the merchant class (U.S. Department of State, *Despatches*, Oct. 25, 1864; Republic of Liberia, *Annual Message*, 1846, 1866).

The differences in strategic outlook between the two factions of merchants was initially overshadowed by the acuteness of the race problem and was therefore seen purely in racial terms.[9] The racial problem first surfaced in the contest among merchants to succeed Roberts, who

was retiring from the presidency in 1855 after having served four two-year terms as president. The election of Stephen A. Benson, a dark-skinned merchant, was perceived among the poor and dark-skinned settlers as a racial triumph.[10] Racial conflict that beclouded the more salient differences in perspective among merchants remained a major issue in settler society until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the ranks of the mulattoes had been dissipated through intermarriage and death.

While the racial question per se was one element of conflict among merchants, the more profound difference had to do with the clash of the outward-directed with the African nationalist strategy for socio-economic development. This difference induced two major crises in settler society in the first quarter century of independence. One was the Roberts-Benson conflict of 1864 and the other was the Roye affair of 1871. The Roye episode will be discussed later. The conflict between Roberts and Benson flared up at the expiration of Benson's term of office in 1864. Benson was accused of having and later found to have misappropriated public funds.[11] For Roberts and others who subscribed to the outward-directed approach, Benson's actions were repugnant not only because it was dishonest and deprived the government of needed funds but, more importantly, because such actions tarnished the image of Liberia abroad, affecting its "good standing" and its potential as a credible partner in international commercial transactions. Roberts brought the full force of his influence and moral authority to bear against Benson so that not only was Benson chased away from the presidency but from Monrovia as well. Mulattoes and dark-skinned settlers were equally opposed to Benson's actions (see USDS, *Despatches*, May 5, 1864).

The perennial tension in Liberian society has been between those who subscribe to the outward-directed approach to Liberia's development and those who propose the building of an African nationality. At some historical junctures, this difference of strategic outlook has expressed itself through political parties and produced sharp internal conflicts and violence, as will be seen from the Roye affair. Nevertheless, with the entrenchment of merchant trade as the fundamental economic activity of Liberia throughout the postindependence period, the outward-directed approach was bound to be the one most consistently pursued. Therefore, from independence to the first quarter of the twentieth century, one can perceive the political economy of Liberia to be, in Adam Smith's terms, a mercantile economy, mainly characterized by efforts of merchant proprietors as a ruling elite to dominate trade relationships.

Proprietary and Subproprietary Relations

While racial differences and differences over the approach to the question of development were sources of tension, another important difference emerged after independence as a result of the attempt to impose control over previously semiautonomous societies. Before independence, as we saw in Chapter 5, the three clusters of settlements that were known as Liberia were constrained by their physical separation, if not by the circumstances of their founding, to operate, in a sense, as semiautonomous entities within an ACS-supervised commonwealth. This arrangement facilitated the development of local proprietorships dominated by the merchants of each cluster. The adoption of a unitary structure of government at independence required adaptations to the semiautonomous local standing of the several communities.[12]

One adaptation that emerged was that the Senate came to be composed of the subproprietors or local bosses of the various counties. This arrangement facilitated annual consultations among them and ensured their input in the distribution of patronage (Liberty 1977). Appointment of superintendents, judges, customs officers, and other local officials was usually done from Monrovia upon their recommendation. While taxing powers were reserved for the central government, the collection of taxes was entrusted to the general supervision of local authorities. In each county, tax collection was the responsibility of the superintendent, a subtreasurer, and a number of tax collectors appointed by the president upon the recommendation of the leader of these subproprietorships. As customs duties were always the main source of government revenue, the occupant of that office was usually selected with great care so that loyalty to the subproprietorship would be ensured.

A revenue-sharing arrangement existed whereby a portion of the taxes was used locally by the superintendent and his officials for locally determined purposes. This arrangement broke down quite often due to the excessive influence of local subproprietors and the lack of adequate transportation and communications through which Monrovia's authority could have been exerted.[13] Conflict often ensued between Monrovia and the counties over control of tax revenues.[14]

Subproprietary control in the counties was deeply undermined by the economic decline of the last decades of the nineteenth century. As customs intake declined and the debt burden increased, the central government and, later, international receivers sought to exercise greater control over the collection and disbursement of all revenues, thereby undermining the basis of subproprietary control. In their desperation to

maintain a source of revenue in the wake of declining customs receipts and greater involvement on the part of the central government, local officials initiated the collection of customs receipts on goods transshipped from one Liberian port to another.[15] Their control was further eroded in the first quarter of the twentieth century by the development of a structure of interior administration. These transformations not only diminished local subproprietary arrangements but also accrued greater powers to the president at the expense of other branches of government. These issues will be discussed later, particularly in Chapter 11. For the moment, an analysis of the economic prosperity and subsequent decline that were experienced during the second half of the nineteenth century can provide a foundation for understanding the emergence of excessive presidential authority in twentieth-century Liberia.

Economic Prosperity and the Rise of Plantation Agriculture

Although observance of the ports of entry laws by European powers and indigenous African societies was sporadic and halfhearted, mercantile trade flourished and the Liberian economy prospered during the first two decades after independence. The Roberts government continued to strengthen its pacification campaigns and secure all coastal territories not under its control; its goal was to eliminate the slave trade completely. Roberts's European visit in 1848 had brought diplomatic recognition and assistance. He had concluded treaties of amity and commerce with Britain, France, and the Hanseatic republics of Lübeck, Bremen, and Hamburg, and raised from abolitionist sources more than $2,000 to acquire the remaining coastal enclaves that were suspected of continuing as nests for slave traders. These treaties were also important to Liberia because they extended recognition to the Liberian government and legally admitted Liberia into the community of commercial nations. Meanwhile, the vigorous "country traffic" (hinterland trade) and the coastal trade that had developed before independence continued with full force as the future of the infant republic looked bright. The success of this trade was to have a positive impact on agriculture in the upriver settlements.

Coastal and Inland Trade in the 1850s and 1860s

Liberian participation in the coastal trade reached a high point during the two decades following independence. Dwight Syfert (1977:166) has suggested that as many as 139 vessels were built, bought, and operated

by Liberian merchants along the coast from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas and, less frequently, from Monrovia and other coastal cities to New York, Liverpool, and other foreign ports. This robust trade was made possible by the high demand for Liberian products on international markets. Palm oil was the major export. Camwood, coffee, and sugar were also exported in considerable quantities. In 1859, 500,000 gallons of palm oil are said to have been exported abroad (American Colonization Society [1861] *Annual Reports* 44).[16] An enterprising merchant from Bassa, Samuel S. Herring, devised a method of shelling palm kernel in order to extract the oil from the kernel, thereby making palm kernel an exportable commodity. He became the first person to export palm kernel from West Africa when he shipped his first consignment abroad in 1850 (Johnston 1906; Syfert 1977). Palm kernel became such a fast-growing export item that in 1862 more than 19,000 bushels were exported from Monrovia alone (Syfert 1977:173).

The high demand for camwood, a source of blue dye, also made that commodity a brisk trade item. For a single quarter in 1862, for example, 62 tons of camwood were exported from Liberia. The secretary of the treasury reported that in the fiscal year of 1864, 113.5 tons of camwood were exported from the port of Monrovia (RL, *Annual Report to the Legislature*, Dec. 1864). This commodity, which sold for about $85 per ton in Monrovia, reaped as much as $165 per ton in Europe and $200 in the United States during this period.[17]

The coastal trade was fed by the country traffic. Commodities such as palm oil and camwood were obtained from sources near the coast or ferried to the coast in canoes and light boats. Other commodities like ivory, hides, rice, cotton, and cotton cloth were brought by traders overland directly to coastal towns or to trading posts located at various points near the rivers. Large quantities of these commodities were available from hinterland sources during this period. For example, more than 3,000 pieces of cotton cloth and 844 pounds of cotton were procured from sources beyond the tropical rain forest and exported from Monrovia in 1864.[18] Almost 2,000 elephant tusks were also exported from Monrovia in that year (ibid.).

Liberian traders were major participants in hinterland, coastal, and transatlantic trade. In 1859, the *Eusebia N. Roye*, which was owned by Edward J. Roye, carried a consignment of goods to New York. The transaction yielded $20,000 (Syfert 1977:172). Vessels owned by McGill Brothers made numerous voyages to Europe and the United States between 1850 and 1870. During this period Liberians were known to have owned at least six vessels that were involved in transatlantic trade. Francis Payne, Beverly Yates, R. A. Sherman, J. T. Dimery, and W. F. Nelson were among the merchants of Monrovia who individually or in

partnership were involved not only in coastal trade but also in transatlantic trade. Merchants from Bassa, Sinoe, and Cape Palmas were also actively engaged in coastal and international trade. For example, John L. Crusoe and Brothers operated at least eight vessels along the coast between 1850 and 1880. J. T. Gibson and C. H. Harmon of Cape Palmas operated a partnership that owned two schooners in the 1860s. George Washington Young of Sinoe owned and operated the *Mary Elizabeth* from Sinoe (Syfert 1977:176-83).[19] In addition to operating their own businesses, many Liberian merchants also served as commissioned agents for European business houses. Dennis Brothers of Monrovia and David Attia and Company of Bassa are examples of Liberian firms that also served as local agents for European commercial houses (Syfert 1977).

The major terminals of the coastal and hinterland trade were markets in Europe and the United States. Hamburg, England, Holland, and the United States were the major recipients of Liberian produce. Of the 333,506 gallons of palm oil exported from Monrovia in 1864, 52 percent went to Hamburg and about 20 percent to England, mainly Liverpool (RL, *Annual Report to the Legislature*, Dec. 1864).[20] Major foreign firms involved in trade in Liberia included the Hamburg trading houses of A. Woermann and C. F. Wilhem Jantzen, the Dutch firm of Hendrick Muller of Rotterdam, the British firm called Company of African Merchants of Liverpool, and the American firm of Yates and Porterfield. The German firms had a more extensive involvement than other foreign firms (Schmokel 1976).

Mercantile Prosperity and the Coffee Economy

The profitability of the export trade encouraged the development of new export items. Enterprising Liberian exporters soon realized there was a growing demand abroad for the distinctive type of coffee that came from Liberia. Since the 1830s, Liberian coffee (*Coffea liberica*) had been exported to the United States through the ACS in small quantities, as examples of indigenous produce (Brown [1941] 1981; Syfert 1977). It was only during the trade boom of the 1850s that large quantities of it reached European markets. By 1861, more than a million coffee trees were under cultivation in Liberia.

Because of the success of Liberian coffee, the economic boom period of the 1850s and 1860s is usually exclusively associated with coffee production. Sugar, however, was another new commodity that became profitable in the 1850s. In the early 1850s, small quantities of Liberian sugar or molasses were exported to Sierra Leone and reexported to Europe. At about the same time, small quantities were also exported to the United

States.[21] By the end of the decade, the demand for Liberian sugar had grown to such an extent that four Liberian vessels transported about 100,000 pounds of sugar to the United States in 1859 (Syfert 1977:179). By 1863, the Liberian merchant C. L. DeRandame of Buchanan alone exported close to 50,000 pounds of sugar to the United States. By the beginning of the 1870s, Liberian planters on the St. Paul River were producing at least 300,000 pounds of sugar a year (ibid.:174).

The success of Liberian coffee and sugar brought about the first serious effort to systematically produce export commodities through cultivation. This development had a significant impact on the political economy of the period. Coffee and sugar were largely produced in upriver communities in small family holdings as well as on plantations. The development of plantations was made possible by the availability of labor as a result of the tremendous increase in the number of recaptives who arrived on board the *Storm King* and other vessels in 1860.[22] Moreover, the Apprenticeship Acts of 1838 and 1846 had already provided the legal framework by which recaptives and indigenes could be brought as apprentices into a production unit such as a plantation.

D'Azevedo (1969–1971, spring 1969:15) has observed how the impact of the coffee boom affected neighboring Gola societies, which in previous decades had been engaged in fierce struggles for favorable trade positions: "It was a period of relative prosperity, intensive trade, and development of stable agricultural chiefdoms. The slave trade with Europeans and the former frontier economy had given way to an agricultural emphasis based on the use of domestic slaves for farming."[23] One would suspect that other indigenous political communities enjoyed similar prosperity.

The development of stable agriculture, as an important part of the export economy, introduced new interests and concerns that had to be articulated. Planters' associations were organized in almost every agricultural community, and in those communities along the St. Paul River an association of planters' associations was organized (*Observer*, Feb. 1880). Planters' associations consistently discussed problems related to production, quality control, and the mechanics of marketing. For example, the lack of a strong national currency was a major concern. Farmers found it difficult to undertake transactions in government-issued scrip or in barter. The middleman role of urban merchants was also scrutinized. There is evidence that by, at most, the middle and late 1870s, planters' associations had already organized committees to inquire about world market prices and attempted to establish direct trade links with Europe and the United States (*Observer*, Feb. 26, 1880; *Liberian Gazette*, Sept. 13, 1894).

The greatest impact of the coffee boom was felt in the political sphere. A new political vibrancy emerged in coffee-producing communities and

affected the nature of the political relationships of those communities with coastal merchants. The proprietorship of the mulatto merchants was subject to closer scrutiny. This was becoming evident as early as in 1852 when, at a town meeting in Clay-Ashland, a resolution calling for, among other things, "improvement upon the general system of elections," "national protection to agriculture and the mechanic arts, "encouragement of domestic manufactures," "sedulous protection to our domestic and foreign commerce," and "strict construction of our constitution in all its parts" was adopted (*Liberian Herald*, Mar. 16, 1853).

As the upriver settlements became a hotbed of political agitation, it was not long before a strong political bond was established between the mostly dark-skinned upriver planters and the dark-skinned faction among the coastal merchants. It was this alliance that culminated in the formation of the True Whig party in Clay-Ashland and the election of Edward J. Roye as president in 1869. The economic mismanagement of Roye and his violent removal and death, the reassertion of dominance by the established merchant elite, and the lack of competitive options with regard to development policies contributed substantially to the subsequent economic decline.

The prosperity of the 1850s and 1860s engendered predictions of a bright future for Liberia even from pessimistic and cynical observers of the Liberian experiment. Dr. James W. Lugenbeel (1853), medical officer assigned to Liberia by the ACS, was one such observer. Nevertheless, he was constrained to refer favorably to Monrovia of the 1850s as "this little bustling metropolis" and to commend the "most enterprising farmers of Caldwell" and the "beauty and health" of Millsburg.

A decade after Lugenbeel's observation, the United States resident minister to Liberia, Abraham Hanson, reported that "the elements of substantial prosperity are being certainly developed" in Monrovia and that "many merchants here are active, energetic, persevering men, and there are a few among them who are laying the basis deep, broad and firm, for extensive operations and ultimate wealth." Minister Hanson reported similar progress in Bassa, where he found "business in a flourishing condition," Sinoe, and especially Cape Palmas, where he "found more business and bustle than I have seen for many months" (USDS, *Despatches*, Oct. 25, 1864). Unfortunately, the prosperity of this period did not continue.

Political Conflict and Economic Decline

The economic prosperity of the 1850s and 1860s was not sustained in succeeding decades. A number of factors related to the character of the

domestic political and economic situation, the nature of mercantile trade, and the structure of the international environment gradually eroded that prosperity, leaving Liberia desolate and bankrupt by the 1880s. The fact that Liberia had simply survived was viewed as a major accomplishment.[24]

From Conspicuous Consumption to Institutional Failure

The economic decline can, in part, be attributed to the failure of successive governments and the dominant merchant class to promulgate policies conducive to the promotion of sustained economic growth. Special interests and social attitudes militated against the development of a more viable economic policy and the establishment of key financial institutions.

To begin with, the social attitudes and caste-like structure of the Liberian society encouraged consumption rather than savings. As a result, most of the income earned from trade was used to support an opulent life-style. For example, in 1864, 66 percent of the total value of imports represented expenditure on food items, spirits, and tobacco. About 60 percent (of the 66 percent) was spent on such food items as ham, bacon, smoked pork, flour, and fish. Moreover, 11 percent of the total value of imports at the Port of Monrovia represented purchases of cosmetics such as beauty powder, perfumes, and accessories such as handkerchiefs and "fancy goods." Less than 5 percent of import expenditure accounted for purchases of tools such as cutlasses, hoes, and other implements of production (RL, *Annual Report*, Dec. 1864).

Wealthy Liberians maintained an outward-looking orientation that was very expensive. It was not unusual for a merchant to travel to Europe or America with his entire family on a vacation or ostensibly for "health reasons." Much like the *évolués* of Senegal or the Creoles of Sierra Leone, the coastal merchants and the elite of settler Liberia were interested in maintaining substantial economic and social ties abroad (see Delafosse 1900; Porter 1966).[25]

Moreover, the government seemed unable to institute the appropriate policies for stimulating sustained economic growth. There is not much evidence of serious efforts to develop infrastructures that would facilitate sustained economic progress. In the late 1850s, two agricultural fairs were held with a view to encouraging greater interest in agriculture. In 1856, President Benson informed the legislature of the application of a group of Liberians to organize a company "for the purpose of facilitating intercourse and transportation to and from the interior, by opening roads" (RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1856). Scores of such applications were to be put before the legislature in the next fifty years with no apparent result.

The government's will and capacity to raise revenue to undertake civil works were limited. Customs receipts were the major source of government revenues. Without the capacity to enforce ports of entry laws, intake from this source was meager. In 1856, total receipts of the Liberian government were $42,614.44, while its expenditures were $59,349. Failure to enforce ports of entry laws was not the only reason underlying the government's inability to raise revenues. A major factor was inherent in the nature of the government itself.

The major Liberian importers and exporters were themselves the high officials of government. Payment of taxes was not one of their virtues. For example, the national accounts for 1859 put the total value of real estate of the cities and settlements at $641,717. In that year, only $1,668.26 was collected as real estate taxes (RL, *Annual Report*, Dec. 1859). Moreover, the collection of taxes from foreign firms operating in Liberia was hampered by the close association of government officials with such firms. Many upper-class Liberians were lawyers, landlords, or commissioned agents of such firms.[26] More importantly, the government was constantly indebted to these firms. Monies and goods were borrowed from them to pay salaries, undertake military expeditions, and for other purposes—and in exchange for tax credits.[27]

The failure to develop a viable currency and banking system was a major institutional problem that became obvious as the economy declined. Merchant operations were severely constrained so that even at the peak of prosperity in the 1860s, major commercial transactions were still undertaken through barter. When available, British and American currency were legally tendered. The shortage of species was usually compensated for by issuing paper notes of dubious worth. The constant devaluation of paper currency and debenture notes contributed substantially to the steady reduction of the value of Liberia's exports.

Foreign commercial houses operating in Liberia exercised market power by controlling transportation and currency. Moreover, far from enhancing the opportunities for capital accumulation through a medium of exchange, the unsystematic use of multiple currencies by Liberians led only to a chaotic financial situation. With these foreign commercial houses operating as financial institutions as well, opportunities for capital accumulation through the medium of a European currency were very limited for Liberian traders. Even the most enterprising Liberian merchants relied upon the local branches of European commercial houses for establishing lines of credit, undertaking financial transfers, and other financial activities. While a few accumulated substantial wealth, their investments were held largely in trade goods and small savings with European firms in Liberia and abroad.[28]

The average Liberian wage earner stored savings with commercial houses against which debts were paid by the issuance of verbal

authorization or by written notes. Credit was obtained in trade goods and other items. For decades, the German firm A. Woermann and Company served as the equivalent of a national bank (Schmokel 1976).

Several unsuccessful efforts were initiated to reduce government spending, reschedule payment of domestic claims, and institute a program phasing out scrip and debenture papers while easing the liquidity problem. In 1868, the government enacted a revenue law withdrawing paper currency from circulation and raising import duties from 9 percent to 12 percent. As a reaction to this measure, merchants demanded payment from Liberian purchasers in specie and restricted credits to food items (Syfert 1977). President Roye had proposed the negotiation of a loan in order to establish the foundations of a sound currency at par value so that import duties could be paid in Liberian currency or specie (ibid.). Measures similar to those proposed in 1868 were again proposed in 1872 and 1874 by presidents Roberts and Payne, but the government issued new paper currency in order to finance the military operations in Cape Palmas in 1875.[29]

The numerous pacification campaigns discussed above were a major source of expenditure that kept the Liberian government constantly in debt. In 1874, the government was still negotiating the rescheduling of payments for arms and ammunition received from the United States in 1868 to conduct military expeditions in western Liberia. Far from being able to liquidate the loan, the government was able only to pay interest that had accrued on the loan for four years (USDS, *Despatches*, Mar. 7, 1874). The Grebo War and the succeeding armed conflicts among the Grebo and Kru along the coast during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in addition to the persistent conflict in the northwest from the late 1870s to the turn of the century, proved financially draining.[30] The government increased its domestic borrowing and printed more paper currency to meet war expenses (Brown [1941] 1981).[31]

Settler dependency and failure to produce. The wars not only depleted the public treasury; they also disrupted trade. Trade routes were not secure, and the deployment of the militia meant the withdrawal of men from production and trade.

Except for the cultivation of coffee and sugar, the settlers demonstrated very little interest in the cultivation of export commodities in the nineteenth century. At first, the hinterland was thought to contain a rich source of trade goods; the challenge was to penetrate deeper into the interior where richer sources remained unexploited. The myth of the existence of a rich "Mandingo Kingdom" in the heartland of the western savanna discouraged any thought of conservation or systematic extraction of trade goods near the coastal areas. The overwhelming desire of

settler merchants was to link up with this kingdom and form a political and commercial alliance. Between the late 1850s and the early 1870s, at least three expeditions were organized to explore the northern interior.[32]

The significance attached to the formation of an alliance with the so-called Mandingo Kingdom was demonstrated in 1879 when, after rumors of an impending alliance had circulated for several years, an emissary of one of the chiefs from the savanna region finally arrived in Monrovia. The *Observer* hailed the visit as "the most important domestic event of the year." With indications of desperation, the newspaper wrote that "the president and people of Liberia favor a speedy alliance with this distinguished chief and with a view to promoting this and all similar measures, the Interior Department has just been enthusiastically revived by the present Legislature" (Jan. 8, 1880).

The dependence on others for trade goods and the aversion to their cultivation were demonstrated in the handling of transactions regarding cotton. In 1856, President Benson informed the legislature of a flourishing cotton industry in the interior. He reported that "thousands of domestic cloths which must consume millions of pounds of raw cotton" were brought to the coast for sale annually. Benson's concern then focused on the appointment of "an influential agent" to encourage increased cultivation of cotton in the interior so that "in a very few years, millions of pounds would be brought down annually and exported." The prospects of settler cultivation of cotton or the learning of indigenous weaving by settlers in order to produce the valuable "country cloth" themselves seem to have escaped Benson. Instead, the Liberian government signed an agreement with the Manchester Cotton Supply Association in 1858 for the procurement of several barrels of cotton seeds for distribution among the chiefs of the indigenous societies for cultivation. Benson later lamented the failure of the indigenous societies to increase the supply of "country cloth" (RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1856, Dec. 1859).

Brown has attributed the collapse of the Liberian economy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the poor trade practices of the settler merchant leaders and their lack of understanding of the forces of "Western capitalism." His is one of the most biting of the criticisms leveled against Liberia's merchant leaders:

> They preferred to exploit the grossly underpaid "native man" and refused to accept the European tenets of continuous work and the social habits of self-support. They made no effort to emancipate themselves from the alms-taking effects of their colonization cradle, but continued to seek support outside themselves. Lured by quick profits from overseas trade, and fascinated by visions of ever-increasing demands for those products extracted from their natural environment, they failed to achieve

> a sound balance in their national industries, and to examine trends in commerce and industry which might be detrimental to their economic welfare. [(1941) 1981:139-40]

Thus the changed circumstances of the Liberian economy were to have a profound effect on the character and viability of merchant proprietary rule, necessitating significant adaptations in its internal and external relations and leading ultimately to its demise. The conflict involving President Roye was another development that further diminished it.

The Deposition of President E. J. Roye

One of the most tragic and costly examples of institutional failure was the deposition of E. J. Roye as the result of a power struggle within the merchant leadership. The major factor underlying the conflict was policy disagreement between rival factions of the merchant leaders. However, this struggle found full expression in the seething racial animosity that existed. The policy disagreements, social polarization, and debilitating rivalries that precipitated the incident or emerged as a consequence of it contributed in a substantial way to the economic collapse of the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Edward James Roye was a freeborn pure black of Newark, Ohio. He was educated at Ohio University and became a successful merchant. He emigrated to Liberia in 1844 at the age of twenty-nine. Roye soon became one of the most prosperous businessmen of his day. He operated numerous trading vessels, a printing press, and other enterprises. He quickly became a very influential political figure. He was elected to the House of Representatives and then the Senate, and from 1865 to 1868 he served as chief justice of the Supreme Court. Roye perceived Liberia as an opportunity for the black race to demonstrate its ability to develop and sustain a black civilization with Liberia as its nucleus. Accordingly, he was often at odds with those (mostly mulattoes) within the merchant leadership who held an opposing view.

By 1852, it was evident that disagreement within the merchant leadership was breeding political factions. Being skeptical of the commitment of the merchant leadership, especially Roberts, to the exploration of the interior and the improvement of the lot of the lower classes, Roye presided over the caucus of a faction of the Republican partisans of Monrovia that year and proposed the nomination of a presidential candidate who would, among other things, "regard the interest of the whole people and country . . . and explore and open roads into the interior and do other

improvements as the wisdom of the Legislature may suggest" (*Liberian Herald*, Mar. 16, 1853).

By the late 1860s, heightened racial tension and policy disagreements among the merchants led to an open break. A faction of black merchants with their coterie of recaptives and upriver supporters organized the True Whig party with Roye as standard-bearer.[33] Having won the hotly contested and acrimonious elections of 1869, Roye was determined to implement his ideas of national development through further exploration of the hinterland. He was also bent on enforcing a dubious constitutional amendment that extended the tenure of the president from two to four years.[34] In pursuit of his national development objectives, he proposed to contract a foreign loan for constructing the infrastructure essential for the expansion of trade in the interior. Roye's loan proposal was very controversial.[35]

The pursuit of an extended term of office and a controversial foreign loan were to be Roye's undoing. His opponents demanded elections in May 1871 and proceeded to organize them over his official objections. Former president Roberts was put forward as the opposing candidate and in late May 1871 Roberts was declared by the opposition to have won the elections. He was expected to take over as president in January 1872.

Meanwhile, as the furor raged, Roberts left ostensibly for "summer vacation" in England, where the Roye government was negotiating a loan with British financiers. Roye had initiated the negotiation in 1870 when he visited London to discuss the boundary question. The Liberian government had proposed to obtain a loan of £100,000 at 6 percent interest, and together with a 2½ percent sinking fund to aid repayment, for a period of twenty-one years. A loan commission consisting of two officials, Spencer Anderson and H. W. Johnson, was appointed to continue negotiations in London. In September 1871, the commission accepted terms that were far different from the Liberian proposal. It committed the Liberian government to a loan of £100,000 discounted by 30 percent, at 7 percent interest, payable in fifteen years.[36]

News of the loan precipitated an uproar in Liberia. Roye's government was accused of "selling the country."[37] Moves to drive Roye from office increased when Roberts returned from his vacation in October 1871. He was given a "state reception" with a twenty-one-gun salute and a dinner organized by his supporters. On the evening of his return, a cannon was fired into the residence of President Roye by "unknown parties."[38] Roberts's supporters in Monrovia organized two days of "citizens' meetings" with the purpose of "determining the best course to pursue with reference to securing the greatest safety to the country" (USDS, *Despatches*, Oct. 30, 1871). On October 24, a resolution demanding the resignation of the president was approved at a "citizens' meeting"

and a delegation was sent to meet with the president to request his resignation. Apparently, Roye agreed to resign after a second delegation met with him not only to demand his resignation but also to specify a time for it.[39] Far from intending to resign, Roye declared a state of emergency. However, opposition sentiments ran too strongly against him.[40] All efforts to maintain himself in office having failed, Roye attempted to escape from the country on board an English mail steamer. He was arrested at the wharf and deposed by mob action.[41] A "provisional government" was set up to conduct government affairs until the inauguration of President Roberts in January 1872.[42] On October 28, 1871, Roye and his secretaries of state and the treasury were arrested and detained.[43] In early November, Loan Commissioner H. W. Johnson was also arrested and detained upon his arrival in Monrovia from London.[44]

In early January 1872, after the inauguration of Roberts, a series of trials were held. Former vice president Smith of Bassa, who had been impeached, was tried and acquitted. Roye and many other members of his party and government, including members of his cabinet, were tried for treason by the judiciary.[45] On Saturday, February 10, 1872, Roye was convicted of treason. Also convicted of treason and condemned to be hanged were the deposed secretary of state, J. N. Lewis, and five other former officials.[46]

The opposition to Roye had precipitated an atmosphere of hysteria that could not serve the ends of justice.[47] Racial strife was rekindled as the mulattoes temporarily regained control of the government.[48] The divisions in the society were so sharp that the people of the upriver communities apparently contemplated secession.[49] On the night following his conviction, Roye escaped from prison. Upon being discovered by a posse the next morning, Roye attempted to swim to an English ship that was in port and drowned in the process. His estate was confiscated by the government (USDS, *Despatches*, Feb.14 1872).

Although some members of the new government advocated termination of the loan agreement and refunding the portion already received, after all the castigation of Roye and denunciation of the loan, the government accepted and the legislature voted to appropriate $12,000 from it for the payment of salaries to its members and for defraying other costs connected with the deposition of Roye. Another $12,000 was appropriated to redeem depreciated currency previously issued (RL, *Annual Report*, Dec. 1873; USDS, *Despatches*, May 30, 1875).

The Roye affair was the first serious test of the institutional arrangements set forth in the constitution. The trend of events 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 that even those relationships were seriously strained.

The conflict between Roberts and Roye had left settler society in a state of debilitation. While Roye's actions were frowned upon by most settlers, Roberts's patriarchical role was widely acknowledged among them. Nevertheless, the fact that a dark-skinned leader had failed and had been deposed by his mulatto rivals created an uneasiness in the society and a sense of national failure among many dark-skinned settlers. When combined with the enormous debt incurred as a result of the loan, the national mood bordered on despair. Friends and well-wishers of Liberia as well as many Liberians seemed convinced that settler society could not succeed in Africa.[50] Thus both the institutional breakdown occasioned by the Roye affair and the debt itself substantially contributed to the economic collapse that began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Technological Changes

Although social attitudes, lack of financial infrastructures, institutional failures of settler society, and conflicts among its merchant leaders constituted the internal factors that contributed enormously to the economic collapse, there were also exogenous factors that played a critical role in precipitating it. These factors include changing technology, declining world prices, and the changing pattern of European imperial involvement worldwide.

The introduction of steamships. One of the first technological innovations that threatened Liberian merchants and therefore the Liberian economy was the introduction of steamships. The first steamship to reach the Liberian coast arrived in February 1847 (Syfert 1977). Until 1858, four British steamships of the African Steamship Company paid occasional visits to Liberian ports en route to Lagos from Liverpool.[51] Thereafter, Liberian ports were regular stops for steamships.

The introduction of steamships had an enormous impact on Liberian trade. It reduced transportation costs and travel time. Moreover, many new and independent transport companies emerged. This encouraged a larger influx of independent European traders and intensified the competition for trade goods. Larger quantities of piassava (palm fiber), palm oil, camwood, and other commodities could now be shipped at lower rates. Moreover, Liberian merchants had now to compete not only with the established European firms but also with numerous independent European traders. Low ocean transport costs also enabled merchants to bear heavier land transportation costs. As a result, areas deep into the interior could be penetrated in the search for trade goods, which made

for the more rapid depletion of exhaustible trade goods that were not being replenished (McPhee 1926).

By the early 1870s, the number of steamships making regular stops at Liberian ports had greatly increased. The African Steamship Company of Britain had ten vessels that made regular stops at least once a month each at the port of Harper in Cape Palmas and at Monrovia. By the 1880s, it maintained a fleet of twenty steamships for a total of 30,000 tons engaging in trade along the West African coast (Syfert 1977). Its rival, the British and African Steam Navigation Company, had been organized in 1869. In 1890, the African Steamship Company and the British and African Steam Navigation Company were merged as Elder Dempster and Company (McPhee 1926).

Meanwhile, there were monopolistic tendencies evolving in European trade with Liberia. With an influx of foreign traders and the establishment of the independent steamship line, the major commercial houses sought to protect their trading interests. The steps taken included the introduction of steamship lines by these firms and the concluding of special commercial arrangements with the large steamshipping companies. For example, Woermann and Company began its own steamship line to West Africa in the 1870s. This link between European firms and the steamshippers proved devastating to Liberian merchants who could not compete. It also increased the dependence of the Liberian government on European commercial houses.[52]

Thus, by the middle of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the use of steamships had shortened travel time, made transportation cheaper and more regular, increased the volume of trade, facilitated a more rapid depletion of exhaustible trade goods, and transformed the organization of trade by facilitating the dominance of transport by the major European commercial houses.

These major houses also began to supplant Liberian merchants in land-based trade. By the beginning of the 1870s British and American firms such as Hatton and Cookson, Yates and Porterfield, and Ogden and Roberts had all established branches in Bassa. The Dutch company of Hendrick Muller purchased the business of former president Warner in Monrovia in 1872 and, by 1883, had established branches at several places including River Cess and Nifu.[53] As foreign firms expanded, Liberian commercial firms collapsed; they could not compete. Demonstrating the magnitude of the collapse, Syfert has this to say:

> The seriousness and success of foreign competitors with Liberian merchants is perhaps most evident in the acquisition of Liberian commercial assets by foreigners. For example, in 1870, the German merchant Wilhem Jantzen purchased S. A. Horace's coaster *Jane Rebecca*. A year later, Jantzen bought E. J. Scotland's cutter *Faith* for $700. Nicholas J.

> A. Maarschalk, agent of Hendrick Muller and Company acquired mortgages on W. M. Fish's schooner *Good Wife* and H. A. Williams' schooner *Speculator* in 1872. Even the court house at Monrovia was rented from Woermann by the Liberian government, and, by 1894, German and Dutch traders had a lien on duties collected by the government. [1977:198]

Syfert also reports that the dominance of shipping and land-based trade by the major European houses induced prejudicial treatment against Liberian merchants. Liberian cargo was often refused. By 1885, Liberians were finding it difficult even to transport mail abroad. When these problems are considered within a context that includes the pressures of the Blyden-Havelock Agreement and other manipulations by imperial British, French, and German authorities, the Liberian economic and political dilemma of this period can be fully appreciated.[54]

The development of product substitutes. A second impact of technological change on the Liberian economy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the development of synthetic and other substitutes for Liberian products. Aniline dyes replaced Liberia's camwood, whose price drastically fell (Johnston 1906; Syfert 1977). Similarly, Liberia's sugar industry suffered from the introduction of beet sugar (Johnston 1906).

The greatest impact of product substitution was on palm oil in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Petroleum discovered in Pennsylvania in 1860 and marketed as kerosene made lighting and heating oil available more cheaply in Europe. Demand for palm oil was reduced by the development of methods for extracting oil in commercial quantities from nuts and seeds in India and by the availability of tallow from Australia and Russia (McPhee 1926).

The rapid advancement of industrial technology affected merchant trade virtually everywhere. With the production of larger quantities of industrial goods, the search for markets and for specific types of natural commodities became more important than the general promotion of all trade items. This transformation from trade dominated by merchant trade goods to industrial goods changed the character of economic operations. As a result, imperial involvement took on a sedentary character—hence colonialism (North 1981).

The Changing Structure of Imperial Involvement

The most important factor in the economic decline of Liberia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century has to do with the nature and character

of British and French colonial expansion in West Africa. In the second half of the nineteenth century, European imperial involvement moved steadily into the interior and took on a permanent presence. The British and French in West Africa were engaged in the development of durable social and physical infrastructure for both trade and political control (Wickins 1986). By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, infrastructural development included the building of railroads. By this time, trade with the emerging colonial possessions involved industrial commodities as well as merchant trade goods and was considerably more important than trade with Liberia. With the availability of tropical trade goods in the colonies and protectorates, Liberian resources were largely supplements. For example, British palm oil industries and cotton cooperatives in Nigeria were infinitely more important to British trade than Liberian palm oil and cotton. So also was Sierra Leone piassava and camwood (Wickins 1986; McPhee 1926).

Liberian coffee (*Coffea liberica*) was one of the few Liberian products that did not seem to exist in large quantities elsewhere. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, coffee scions from Liberia had been taken to Gabon by German traders and to Surinam by the Dutch (*Observer*, Jan. 1880). By the turn of the century, Europeans were not only dominating Liberian trade but had also created new sources of distinctively Liberian produce. Liberian coffee, of which German traders were major exporters, was reexported to New York and elsewhere from Germany (*Liberian Gazette*, Sept. 13, 1894). By 1893, Liberian coffee was also being referred to on the international market as "coffee of Gabon" (*International Bureau of the American Republics Monthly Bulletin* [1893] 1:8). Moreover, as of the mid-1870s, Brazil alone produced about 50 percent of the world's supply of coffee. Its closest rivals were Java and Sumatra, which produced 16 percent.[55] Brazilian coffee, like Javanese and Sumatran, was controlled largely by British exporters and integrated into British and European export networks (Burns 1980).[56]

The growth of alternative sources of Liberian products was not the only way in which the European colonial presence contributed to Liberian economic decline. The development of physical infrastructures in the colonies and protectorates surrounding Liberia, in the absence of those facilities in Liberia, provided the colonial powers with greater access to Liberian trade. By 1896, for example, railway construction had begun in Sierra Leone. In a few years, more than 330 miles of railway had been built. The main railway line proceeded eastward from Freetown to Pendembu near the Liberian border (Fyfe 1962; McPhee 1926). Trade from northwestern Liberia proceeded westward through Koindu and Kalaihun into Pendembu and then by rail to Freetown (Bah 1987).[57] Similarly, in northern and northeastern Liberia, trade routes led into the French

possessions and linked with major trade corridors at Gelemu in Ivory Coast and Macenta and Bissandugu in Guinea. These developments directed trade away from Liberian trading centers.

In addition to the structural changes induced by colonial expansion, the world recession of the 1880s also contributed to Liberia's economic decline during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For example, palm oil, which sold for £33 per ton on the Liverpool market in 1871, drew only £16 10s. in 1888 (Brown [1941] 1981; Syfert 1977).[58] Camwood also lost about 50 percent of its 1870 value (Johnston 1906).[59]

It is clear, then, that the factors responsible for the decline of the Liberian economy in the last decades of the nineteenth century were complex. Settler society found itself trapped in multiple dilemmas. Within the society's own ranks, the perception of cultivation as being antithetical to civilized endeavor contradicted the fundamental assumptions upon which societies of freeholders are built. This predisposition, combined with a checkered relationship with the indigenous societies, not only deprived the society of the full development of its human resources but placed it at a distinct disadvantage in trade competition and in the effective occupation of territory. Additionally, the growing European imperial dominance of trade and consolidation of the European colonial hold dealt a deathblow to Liberian economic enterprises that were already impaired by such domestic problems as continuing warfare, political instability, and a debilitating burden of national debt. These developments led to the displacement of merchant proprietary rule and, eventually, the transformation of the social order.

Economic Collapse and Foreign Domination

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Liberian economy had virtually collapsed. The vibrant merchant class all but disappeared.[60] Liberian merchants who had controlled the mercantile economy in earlier years were now reduced to serving as agents and helpers of European traders.[61] The major European trading houses thoroughly dominated all aspects of trade. They operated wholesale and retail stores at all coastal cities and ports, maintained branches in the towns of the coast, and hired itinerant traders who penetrated still deeper into the hinterland (Brown [1941] 1981:159).

The German firms were the dominant trading houses in Liberia. By the turn of the century, there were as many as twenty Hamburg trading houses operating in Monrovia (ibid.:160). The largest was A. Woermann and Company.[62] Woermann served as agent for the government in the recruitment of labor, established the Deutsche-Liberian Bank, bought the major portion of Liberian bonds and scrip, and was the major creditor

of the Liberian government.[63] At the turn of the century, German firms briefly operated an electric power station, established a telephone system, and had already established the first international cable link with Pernambuco, Brazil (Azikiwe 1934:84). By 1906, three-fourths of Liberian trade was in German hands and 233 of the 347 ships that berthed at Liberian ports in 1908 were German. German firms were the largest employers in Liberia. In addition to Liberians who were employed by Germans as agents and itinerant traders, more than 20,000 workers were seasonally employed on German ships (Schmokel 1976:28).[64] Besides being the chief employers in Liberia, European traders—especially the Germans—maintained a warm relationship with Liberian officials. Many of these traders endeared themselves to Liberian officials by providing them with loans and gratuities (Foley 1965).

While European firms dominated the economy, the Liberian government tottered perpetually on the brink of bankruptcy. The burden of the 1871 debt, mismanagement, wars, and the lack of productive enterprise had brought the society to its knees. The government's major preoccupation was to contrive means of maneuvering among the major European countries whose governments encroached on Liberian territory and whose business firms dominated the Liberian economy. The major objective was to maintain a modicum of autonomy and to survive as an independent state. By playing a facilitative role for European commerce, the government collected customs duties and head money on labor recruits.[65] Due to the lack of productive economic enterprise in the society, these government receipts, supplemented by private receipts mainly from labor recruitment, constituted the major sources of income for settler families.[66] Thus, in this sense, the government itself became the major economic enterprise in settler society. For years, the government operated on credit from the major European commercial houses by issuing scrip and floating bonds that were sold at a substantial discount. German commercial houses were the principal beneficiaries of this arrangement. Credit would be given to the government at an advance of about a third above the regular selling price (Brown [1941] 1981; Lewin 1939). By the turn of the century, salaries of government employees were paid one-half in "orders" issued for merchandise from European merchants and half in cash.[67] Merchandise obtained in this way often cost twice as much as the regular price. The government itself obtained supplies through "orders." While such "orders" were accepted at a discounted value, they were, in turn, accepted by the government as payment of customs duties for goods received and sold by the merchants six to twelve months after they had been received (Buell [1928] 1965:797).

What were the steps taken to achieve economic recovery? The return of Roberts to the presidency meant a shift in economic policy. Instead

of attempting, as formerly, to have the government obtain loans for Liberian entrepreneurs to develop physical infrastructures and exploit natural resources, Roberts sought to pursue an economic policy in which foreign entrepreneurs would operate in Liberia, thereby ensuring Liberia the protection and cooperation of the foreign powers.[68] While the faction of darker-skinned merchants opposed this policy, the failure of E. J. Roye had put their cause at a disadvantage. Roberts's effort to attract foreign investment was to become the dominant strategy of economic development and would eventually be pursued by succeeding governments—including those from the True Whig party that controlled the government after the Roberts era.[69]

The Quest for Foreign Investment

The concluding of concession agreements to permit economic activities other than trade was perceived as the alternative to merchant trade long before the return of Roberts to the presidency. In 1869, for example, a group of Liberians obtained a concession from the government to engage in mining. They established the Mining Company of Liberia but failed to raise the necessary capital for operation (Johnston 1906). In 1881, the concession was renamed the Union Mining Company and granted a charter to engage in a wide range of activities such as building railways and engaging in trade and mining. This purely Liberian venture again failed to raise the necessary capital to begin operation (ibid.). Liberians continued to aspire to the formation of chartered companies for mining and other purposes. In 1875, the Liberian Saint Paul River Steamboat and Tramway Company was chartered "for the convenience and facility of the citizens traveling and for the interior trade" (RL, *Acts of the National Legislature*, Jan. 18, 1875).[70] In the same year, the legislature chartered the Mountain Mining Company of Sinoe (ibid., Feb. 20, 1875).[71] None of these local efforts proved successful, largely because they planned grandiose capital intensive schemes for which they could not raise funds.

While not discouraging local initiatives, Roberts concentrated his efforts on attracting foreign investment to Liberia. In 1873, he negotiated an agreement with a group of British engineers for the construction of railways, docks, landing stages, jetties, warehouses, sawmills, furnaces, and other works, and for the mining of minerals. The concession agreements that were approved by the legislature in 1874 granted exploration, extraction, and trading rights for fifty years in return for payments of royalties to the government upon deduction of 6 percent on capital account. The concessionaires were expected to begin operations at most one year after investigating the resources of the country.[72]

After extensive communications between the Liberian government and the concessionaires, nothing was ever accomplished. Nevertheless, Roberts and his immediate successors continued to seek the introduction of foreign entrepreneurship as a basis for development. They also took other steps to improve the economy. They initiated reforms in the collection and disbursement of revenues and attempted to improve fiscal management in three ways: by upgrading the quality of personnel in the revenue service; by devising a system of revenue sharing to ensure greater intake to the national government than it was receiving; and by appointing auditors in each county.[73]

Reform measures continued in the 1880s as the government tried to cope with the rapidly depreciating currency by issuing a ten-year, 6 percent domestic bond to replace the paper currency. As a measure to control disbursements and therefore hold down the depreciation of the currency, the government declared it a misdemeanor for disbursing officers to issue orders for payment of monies except upon warrant and unless money was actually in the treasury (Buell [1928] 1965:797). The government also attempted to handle its debts by scheduling payments partly in paper currency and in gold coins (ibid.). By 1889, economic conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that leaders such as H. R. W. Johnson, who had been stoutly opposed to Roberts's efforts to attract foreign investments, enthusiastically pursued that policy. As president, Johnson proposed an amendment to the land lease law so that foreign investors would be granted what amounted to an automatic extension of fifty years on land lease agreements. He also proposed to open up more ports to trade by foreigners (see RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 30, 1889).[74]

In an effort to reduce domestic spending, the government announced its intention to limit the budget expenditures to about $107,000 a year for a few years. Unfortunately, it did not have the capacity to curb spending. Customs officials and local subproprietors maintained control over local funds while uncontrolled purchases and unappropriated expenditures were continuously made (see RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 11, 1888; ibid., Dec. 30, 1889; both by H. R. W. Johnson). Fiscal restraint was not one of the strengths of the Liberian government (Brown [1941] 1981:145). Moreover, the lack of productive activities in the society, persistent mismanagement and mishandling of public funds, the tremendous foreign debt, and the continuing costs of the pacification campaigns ensured economic decline.[75]

By the turn of the century, Liberia's debt was approaching $1 million.[76] At about the same time, coffee exports dropped by close to 50 percent (ibid.:158). Meanwhile, the government's continuing efforts to attract foreign investors remained unsuccessful, largely because of the internal situation in Liberia. The continuing instability was uninviting to European

investors, who were intensely pursuing opportunities elsewhere in Africa where "a responsible flag" guaranteed stability, a predictable and reliable legal system, and a reliable supply of labor. The Liberian government proved too weak and ineffective to serve as a sponsor for foreign capital investment.

Despite the efforts made by the Liberian government, the collection of wild rubber was the only new attraction for foreign capital in Liberia. In 1888, the government granted a concession to Benjamin L. Thompson and partners of London to gather, collect, and prepare "India rubber within certain sections of Liberia" (RL, *Annual Message*, 1889). Thompson and partners sold the concession to another British chartered company, the Ponsby Syndicate.

Meanwhile, as Britain, France, and Germany showed growing interest in Liberian territory, anxieties ran high in Liberian government circles about the question of effective occupation. Having appeared to have reached a settlement with the British, the Liberian government actively sought British investment as a means of countering excessive German economic control and warding off French encroachments. The election of Arthur Barclay in 1904 was the beginning of intensive efforts to attract British investments. Britain, at the same time, pressed Liberia for trade concessions in return for supporting Liberia against the French while attempting to supplant Germany as Liberia's dominant trade partner.

These efforts began earlier when Barclay was secretary of state; he was the principal negotiator on the boundary question. In 1901, the Liberian legislature approved the transfer of the charter of the Union Mining Company to a British syndicate called West African Gold Concessions Limited. The company could not raise money on the international money market. In 1904, the English speculator Colonel Powney, who was the principal proprietor of West African Gold Concessions, obtained approval from the Liberian government to expand the activities of the company. The company was then renamed the Liberia Development Company and granted a concession with a mandate to engage in general development schemes. Powney hired Sir Harry H. Johnston, a former British colonial officer, to run the company. Powney also bought the concessions of the Liberia Rubber Company and renamed it the Monrovia Rubber Company. Further negotiations between Johnston and the Liberian government led to the extension of the rubber concession for eleven years until 1932 in return for payment of £5,250 and fees and royalties of at least £75,000 to the government (Foley 1965).

The Liberian government seems to have presumed that by concluding an agreement with the Liberia Development Company it had made a major breakthrough in attracting foreign capital for the development of the Liberian economy. The Memorandum of Agreement signed in 1904

between the Liberian government and the company granted to the company exclusive rights to prospect for minerals in Maryland and Montserrado counties and nonexclusive rights to open a bank and issue paper currency; import goods duty free; build bridges, roads, canals, telegraph and telephone systems, gas and electric works, harbors, warehouses, and "all systems of lighting, heating, power and transport"; and, in general, "to engage in any other works which may tend to the development or improvement of the territories of the Republic and to benefit the company" (quoted in Foley 1956:137).

The Liberian government guaranteed up to £10,000 of the cost for the construction of two roads.[77] The bank to be established under the agreement was to be capitalized at a minimum of £60,000. The government of Liberia was to pay interest at 4 percent on capital investment for ten years. Customs receipts were to serve as guarantee. The bank, in turn, would advance to the government £25,000 to retire outstanding bonds held mainly by German firms. Bank loans to the government were also to be guaranteed by customs receipts. For these purposes, the bank would be authorized to assign agents at customs houses.[78]

The role of the Liberia Development Company was crucial in the government's calculations with respect to economic recovery. The government saw the company as an opportunity for diversification, thereby breaking German dominance of the economy.[79] It also encouraged British presence through the Liberia Development Company in order to satisfy French demands for "effective occupation" of the interior. Finally, it was also believed that the chronic economic depression would be alleviated by the success of the company. President Barclay seemed prepared to give the company assistance to ensure its success in raising the capital necessary to commence its operations. The British government, on the other hand, also saw the company as its best opportunity to replace the Germans and upstage the French in exercising control in Liberian economic affairs. The British Foreign Office, which was an informal party to the negotiations, promised to encourage speculators to provide financial assistance to the company and renewed its offer to send a customs expert to serve as controller over Liberian customs receipts (Foley 1965).

Most Liberians were suspicious of the motives of foreign entrepreneurs. The mood within the leadership and among ordinary citizens was unpleasant as these developments were watched critically. The dominant sentiment among Whigs and within settler society at large was opposed to foreign penetration of the interior. A popular slogan of the time was "By the foreigner we fall." Many advocated what was called the Closed Door policy (Azikiwe 1934:91).

While the internal debates continued, the gravity of the economic problem and of colonial demands required urgent action.[80] Having

concluded an agreement, the Liberia Development Company, under the aegis of the Liberian government, sought to raise the necessary funds on the international money market to undertake its operations. These efforts were to culminate in the loan of 1906.

The Loan of 1906 and British Receivership

After several unsuccessful attempts to secure a loan, an agreement was signed in February 1906 between the Liberian government and d'Erlanger Brothers of London.[81] D'Erlanger was to make available to the Liberian government through the Liberia Development Company the sum of £100,000. The government of Liberia would receive £30,000 of this sum to meet urgent obligations and redeem bonds and treasury notes. The Liberia Development Company would retain £7,000 to meet some of its pressing commitments. This sum was to become part of the capital of the state bank to be opened by the company. The remaining £63,000 was to constitute a loan from the Liberian government to the company to be used to finance the bank and road construction projects. The Liberian government, in turn, agreed to repay the loan at an interest rate of 6 percent. Liberian customs receipts were to be used to meet the payments. The Liberian government further pledged to request the British government to nominate two persons to be appointed as customs inspector and financial adviser to institute reforms in the Liberian customs service. Salaries of these persons were to be paid by the Liberian government.[82]

When considered in conjunction with the requirements of the border settlement, the loan enormously increased the British presence. By 1908, three Britons exercised influence over the collection and disbursement of customs receipts and a British officer was in charge of the recently organized Liberian Frontier Force. More Britons were now involved in the operations of the Liberia Development Company. Liberians became highly suspicious of British motives as an uneasy relationship developed between the two countries.[83]

Barely eighteen months after the Liberia Development Company had begun operations, the Liberian government terminated its relationship with it. The company was accused of extortion and misappropriation of funds. It had used £33,000 in a year to construct only 15 miles of road and to purchase a small steam launch and two automobiles (Buell 1928:799; Azikiwe 1934:114).[84] A bitter dispute broke out between the Liberian government and Sir Harry Johnston. The Liberian government and d'Erlanger renegotiated the terms of the loan.[85]

The failure of the Liberia Development Company dashed hopes of early economic recovery and increased Liberia's susceptibility to colonial

pressures. With payments of two unproductive loans owed to British financial houses, Liberia was increasingly vulnerable to British pressures. In an attempt to buttress its position in Liberia after the failure of the Liberia Development Company, the British government demanded that Liberia employ additional Britons as custom officials, undertake reforms of the Department of the Treasury and the courts, and allow the Briton who served as inspector general of customs to sit in the cabinet and exercise veto powers over expenditures. The British insisted that if within six months these measures were not undertaken, Liberia would forfeit any further British assistance. It would also have to accept new conditions for meeting obligations incurred under the 1871 and 1906 loans and an adjusted British position on the boundary question (Brown [1941] 1981:166).

Internal opposition to President Barclay, who was seen as a proponent of British interests in Liberia, grew intense. Other Europeans, especially the Germans, fanned the anti-British mood. Liberians began to search for other options to a British takeover. Faced with total economic collapse and possible dismemberment, the Liberian government turned to the United States. In 1908, a Liberian delegation was dispatched to the United States to seek American aid to relieve the country from British domination. The Liberian government also sought to obtain a U.S. guarantee of Liberia's independence. Although the United States maintained that such a guarantee was "impractical," a commission was sent to Liberia to study the situation so that an appropriate American response could be formulated.

In the meantime, Liberian government finances remained in dire straits as domestic borrowing spiraled.[86] The country was in the throes of despair when the American Commission arrived in May 1909.[87] The commission recommended, among other things, that the United States should assist Liberia in its boundary disputes with France and Britain; give Liberia a loan for the payment of all its outstanding loans and assume receivership of its customs receipts; assist Liberia in reorganizing its financial management; provide assistance to the Liberian Frontier Force; and establish a research station and a naval coaling station in Liberia. The commission was considered sympathetic to Liberia's plight. Its proposed solution to Liberia's problems, however, was to substitute American domination for British domination. The recommendation to establish a naval coaling station was apparently designed to ensure a permanent military presence (Buell [1928] 1965: 802-3)

As an indication of seriousness of purpose, the Liberian government at this time enacted some new revenue and expenditure laws. In 1911, it imposed a duty of 12.5 percent on most imports and the following year passed a law reducing salaries of government employees by one-third

(ibid.:803). In spite of these measures, lack of control over financial and fiscal management continued to plague the government. As soon as it seemed as if help would be obtained from the United States, domestic debt shot up astronomically.[88]

The Loan of 1912 and International Receivership

The report of the American Commission was partially accepted. The United States government seemed unprepared to establish a receivership directly under its control and sought instead to involve private lending institutions.[89] European creditors of Liberia, for their part, were not prepared to relinquish control to an exclusively American receivership. Thus, under the auspices of the government of the United States, an international loan was arranged for Liberia from a consortium of American and European banks.[90]

The loan, in the sum of $1.7 million at 5 percent interest, was to be redeemed in forty years. Its purpose was "the adjustment of the indebtedness of the Republic and the settlement of claims and concessions, while any eventual balance of the proceeds of the loan will be used for productive purposes" ("Loan Prospectus," quoted in Buell [1928] 1965:805). Payment was to be guaranteed by customs receipts, rubber collection taxes, and head monies. These were to be constituted as "assigned revenues" and their collection and disbursement undertaken by a customs receivership with four members: an American, to be designated by the United States government as the "general receiver," and three receivers from Germany, Britain, and France, to be designated by the governments of those countries.[91] The first claim on the assigned revenues would be for the payment of members' salaries; the second would be to service the loan. Residuals were to be turned over to the Liberian government. Interest and sinking fund on the loan were to amount to $99,500 a year (ibid.).

As part of the loan package, Liberia was to receive from the United States assistance in the training of the Liberian Frontier Force. The receivers were to set aside funds for the maintenance of the force. The general receiver was to serve as financial adviser to the Liberian government. Budget estimates prepared by the Department of the Treasury were to be reviewed and approved by him before their submission to the legislature. In the event that the legislature approved a budget that exceeded revenue estimates, the president, secretary of the treasury, and the financial adviser were to constitute a Board of Revision to make the appropriate adjustment.[92] In the execution of their duties, the general receiver had the authority to suspend or make temporary appointments

of customs officers and to make adjustments in the rules and regulations governing the collection of assigned revenues without reference to the legislature (Brown [1941] 1981:169).

The loan proved to be a bonanza for foreign firms that had bought heavily discounted government bonds, scrip, and debenture notes. Most of these instruments were redeemed at or above par, accruing handsome profits to these firms (Buell [1928] 1965:804). Liberians, according to George W. Brown ([1941] 1981:170), were exceedingly pleased to have been released from creditors. Some Liberians, according to Frederick Starr (1913:207), saw the loan as the beginning of a new era of closer relations with the United States. However, the presence of foreign receivers was a major irritant to Liberian sensibilities, and violence was directed at Europeans and Americans in some parts of the country.[93]

The economic relief provided by the loan was only temporary. In the absence of sound productive enterprises and institutional arrangements, it was not very long before the Liberian government was again bankrupt. Within five years, German claims, continuing resistance on the Kru Coast and elsewhere in the interior, the decline in trade as a result of the outbreak of the First World War, and the perennial problems of mismanagement plunged Liberia into another deep financial crisis.

Once again, the government resorted to the usual methods of crisis management to alleviate the immediate problem. Under the Emergency Mode of Procedure Act, which was passed in 1915, government payroll was reduced by retrenchment of some employees and by payment of 50 percent of salaries. In lieu of the other 50 percent, the government issued "statements of indebtedness" that were nontransferable and noninterest-bearing instruments with which their owners could purchase public land or pay taxes. Another law sought to raise revenue by imposing a stamp tax above customs on imported goods.[94]

The economic situation was made more difficult by the expulsion of German firms on the insistence of Britain and the United States during the First World War. When the United States entered the war, Liberia was requested to terminate its relations with Germany. Because the German presence over the years had been a strong one, there was some resistance to the request. Britain increased the pressure by restricting exports to Liberia. The break with Germany terminated a major source of personal income to Liberians; in fact, government salaries remained the only major source of personal income at this time. Thus public outcry over the measures taken under the Emergency Mode of Procedure Act was sharp. As a means of looking more closely at the problem, in 1917, the government appointed the Domestic Debt Commission to handle debt management and the salary question. The commission issued bonds to the amount of $215,000 at 3 percent and was able to redeem some of

the "statements of indebtedness," especially from the men of the Frontier Force. In spite of these measures, claims against the government mounted. These claims were largely in the form of salary arrears, previous bonds, interests, and payables due from the provision of supplies and services.

Government revenues experienced such a steep decline that from 1914 to 1918 assigned revenues dropped from $359,409 to $161,449, a decrease of almost 45 percent. Not only were there no residuals from the assigned revenues to pay over to the Liberian government but interest payments on the loan were seriously threatened, bringing into question the effectiveness of the receivership (Buell [1928] 1965:809-10).

Having reached the brink once again, Liberia saw the evolving relationship with the United States as the only hope. Efforts were initiated by Liberia to secure a credit of $5 million from the United States under the Second Liberty Loan Act.[95] Negotiations were commenced in 1918. This loan would have paid off the loan of 1912 and established an exclusively American receivership that would have had control over all revenues, not only "assigned revenues." After the deduction of payments on the loan, administrative expenses, and other charges, further expenditure of Liberian government revenues was to be made in accordance with a formula enforced by the general receiver in person. Moreover, at least twenty-two officials designated by the United States government would supervise interior administration and the Liberian Frontier Force.

After much hue and cry by officials of the Liberian government, expressions of outrage from many quarters of the society, and protracted negotiations, the terms of the loan were accepted by Liberia with minor adjustments. Nonetheless, the United States Senate refused to authorize it.[96] The failure of the loan was once again followed by a series of strenuous measures to squeeze more taxes from imports and exports and to improve the system of tax collection.[97] As was to be expected, these measures proved temporarily successful. But because they fell short of affecting the profound structural problems of the economy, the lack of productive orientation in the society, and the indebtedness to European financial interests, their impact was not sustainable. It would take the involvement of Firestone Tire and Rubber Company to produce a significantly new economic structure.

The UNIA and Liberia

Confronted with the threat of liquidation by European imperial powers, Liberia was in a plight of grave concern to the entire black world. Even for those blacks who viewed Liberia's internal policy as an

embarrassment to black people, the survival of the country was still perceived to be an essential breakthrough for the downtrodden black race (see Padmore 1956).

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was one black organization that sought to respond to Liberia's request for assistance. The UNIA had been organized in 1914 by Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican-born pan-Africanist. Garvey's objective was to build a strong and powerful black patrimony so as to develop the human and material resources and restore the dignity of the black race (Jacques-Garvey 1926). By the early 1920s, Garvey had built an impressive organization of thousands of blacks largely in the Americas. He saw in Liberia the possibility of establishing a beachhead from which his objective of African liberation could be pursued.

In 1920, a delegation of the UNIA proposed to the Liberian government a scheme under which the UNIA would raise funds to liquidate the more than $2 million debt owed by the Liberian government in return for a concession in the form of land for agricultural and industrial development, the transfer of its headquarters to Liberia, and the opportunity to resettle at least 20,000 black American families in Liberia yearly (Cronon 1957). Pressed for money, the Liberian government was not just receptive but enthusiastic about the UNIA proposal. A two-man delegation headed by the mayor of Monrovia and son-in-law of President King was sent to the convention of the association in New York in 1920. At the convention, the mayor was appointed an official of the UNIA for Liberia (Sundiata 1980).

By 1923, the foundations of the movement had been established in Liberia and a number of its representatives were already resident in Monrovia. The Liberian government appointed a committee of two as liaison between the association and the government in the implementation of the plan. The first phase of the plan had called for the immigration of 3,000 families to be settled in six settlements of 500 families each near Liberia's borders with the British and French colonies (ibid.). Heavy equipment for agriculture and industry was landed, and the scheme seemed set to take off. Many Liberians who dreamed of the development of an African civilization in Liberia were enthusiastic about the plan. Garveyism, as the objectives of the UNIA were called, found a committed following especially among the upriver planters.[98]

By early 1924, relations between the UNIA and the Liberian government broke down. In July, three of Garvey's representatives were arrested and deported, farm equipment seized, and the movement proscribed. The Liberian government stressed that the doctrine of the movement was subversive and that the true motive of the organization was to make Liberia a focus of racial animosity and anticolonial agitation.

Several factors had come to bear on the relationship between the Garvey movement and the Liberian government. First, it seemed that, from the start, the Liberian government's enthusiasm was connected solely with the possibility of obtaining loans and not with the elaborate resettlement scheme. Apparently the government was either fearful of the success of the Garvey scheme or did not think that the Garvey movement was capable of implementing something so elaborate. But with the establishment of the Black Star steamship line, the procurement of equipment, and the preparation for implementing the first phase of the plan, the presence of the Garvey movement seemed pervasive and ominous. Marcus Garvey's self-bestowed title of "provisional president of Africa" seemed exceedingly threatening to the Liberian government. Furthermore, Garveyites resident in Liberia had become critical of the internal policy of the Liberian government.[99]

More importantly, however, for a country trying to fend off European imperial annexation, the embrace of Garvey was seen as the kiss of death. Both the British and French colonial administrations pressed the Liberian government not to allow the establishment of an organization that preached racial hatred and sought to disturb colonial peace and order.[100] There were also black American organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), that bitterly opposed Garvey's activities in the United States, and therefore worked with the American government to prevent the successful establishment of Garvey's movement in Liberia. W. E. B. DuBois, Garvey's principal opponent in black America, was the official U.S. representative to the second inaugural of President King in January 1924 and a spirited advocate of the Firestone scheme as an acceptable alternative to the UNIA (Sundiata 1980). Many Liberians who supported the Garvey movement opposed the Firestone Agreement. The appeal of Garveyism seemed entrenched among those Liberians who sought to establish an African civilization. Although the UNIA was expelled, individual Garveyites continued to migrate to Liberia in small numbers until the late 1950s, when the appeal of the movement seems to have declined steeply in the Americas.

In assessing the socioeconomic situation in postindependence Liberia, one finds the country located in a hostile imperial environment. The constraints imposed by imperial powers, combined with those imposed on the society by its own restrictive social structure and institutional arrangements, limited its capacity to pursue social and economic development. As a result, the government was reduced to the status of a client of the more powerful imperial powers as its people were immersed in despair.

★ 8 ★

Strategies for Assimilation and Incorporation

THE DEBATE REGARDING SETTLER RELATIONS with the indigenous communities continued throughout the nineteenth century. It was largely a debate between proponents of an "outreach" approach and advocates of integration.[1] As a result of this debate and other social and environmental factors, several policy measures regarding relations with indigenous communities were adopted and implemented. The most significant of these included the efforts at assimilation through the so-called apprenticeship system and through the creation of new settler enclaves among indigenous communities; the attempts to promote education as an instrument of assimilation; and, under pressure of European imperial powers at the turn of the century, the institution of a system of interior administration and "indirect rule" over indigenous communities by the Liberian government. Many of these efforts were pursued simultaneously. They were the antecedents of the "unification policy" pursued in the period after the Second World War.[2]

The Apprenticeship System

The apprenticeship system was initiated by the ACS. In its instructions to the exploratory party sent to Africa in 1819, the board stressed the desire to "aid the natives in procuring instruction in the elements of knowledge in agriculture, and the arts of civilized life, and in the doctrines and precepts of our Holy Religion" (American Colonization Society,

Proceedings, Dec. 10, 1819). The apprenticeship system was one of the methods employed to accomplish these objectives. This system involved the recruitment and assignment of indigenous adolescents in settler homes as "apprentices." The practice seems to have begun informally in about 1825, when roughly sixty indigenous youths were placed with settler families. In 1838 the ACS promulgated an act delineating the relationship between apprentices and the settler families (ACS, *African Repository and Colonial Journal* [1838] 14).

The Apprenticeship Act stipulated that children recruited from indigenous communities were to live with settler families until they reached the age of twenty-one, in the case of boys, and eighteen, in the case of girls. The binding of children to settler households was to be done with the consent of the parents as well as the children and with the approval of the Probate Court. The law also stated that serious conflicts arising from "insufficient allowance of food, clothing or lodging, or want of instruction," among other omissions, or "desertion without good cause, or other misconduct" on the part of the apprentice were to be adjudicated by the Monthly Court of Sessions of the colony or the justice of the peace when the Monthly Court was not in session. Apprentices were to be taught "some art, trade, or business" and also "reading, writing, and common arithmetic." At the end of the period of apprenticeship, each apprentice should be given twelve dollars by the master, presumably to organize a new life upon returning to his own society (ACS, *An Act Concerning Apprentices*, quoted in Huberich 1947,1).

Although the Apprenticeship Act regulated the practice of apprenticing indigenous children and young people into settler households, the number of children so apprenticed remained relatively small throughout the first two decades of the Liberian settlements. Some indigenous leaders were anxious to have children from their communities "learn the ways of the settlers," but the climate of suspicion and lack of reciprocity in these relationships discouraged many parents from apprenticing their children. The practice of giving children to the households of other societies was a normal way of sealing a positive relationship between two peoples in African societies. Curiously, however, the impetus that accelerated the practice of apprenticeship developed not as a result of expanding relations with the indigenous communities but rather from the influx of large numbers of recaptives during the new settlements' second decade. By the end of 1845, more than 700 recaptives had been landed in Liberia. After fifteen years, this group exceeded 5,000 and constituted close to one-half of the settler population. Considering the cultural differences among the recaptives and between them and the black American settlers, a program for their assimilation was imperative.[3]

In view of the influx of recaptives, a second Apprenticeship Act was promulgated by the Legislative Council in 1846. The act provided for the training of adults as well as children. It specified that each male adult recaptive was to be assigned to a settler who practiced a craft or managed an enterprise so that the recaptive would learn skills within the shortest possible time. Female recaptives were to serve apprenticeships under settler women in order to learn domestic skills. The act also applied to the apprenticing of young children in the same manner as the act of 1838 applied to indigenous youth. The 1846 act, however, specified that training of children apprentices was to include at least one month's tuition each year in an elementary school.[4] It required the establishment of a three-person monitoring committee by the government to ensure that apprentices were well treated by their hosts. Where children were concerned, violations of the act were to be reported to and investigated by the Orphans' Court (see ACS, *Acts*, 1845–1846).

There seem to have been two inducements to settler families to accept recaptive apprentices. From the inception of the colony until the mid-1860s, allowances were paid to settler families who hosted recaptive apprentices. These allowances were provided from the funds allotted by the United States government for the rehabilitation of recaptives. A second inducement was the labor provided by apprentices. To a large extent, it was the labor of recaptives under the apprenticeship system that produced the agricultural prosperity of the mid-1800s.

Regarding the involvement of indigenous youth, as the settler government assumed the function of guarantor of peace and arbiter of intercommunity disputes, the frequent peacekeeping and inspection forays by government officials into the interior provided numerous opportunities for recruiting young people. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there were as many as 2,500 indigenous youths living in settler households at any given time. As they reached their majority, their numbers were replenished (Akpan 1968).

In some instances the apprenticeship system became nothing more than an exchange of labor for board and lodging.[5] Education was frequently neglected, not only because apprentices were viewed as laborers but also because of the general lack of schools. Although the ACS had developed an effective commercial infrastructure, it had not become involved in the development of educational institutions. Even within the core of settler society, education was largely a matter of family instruction or left to missionaries. Despite the involvement of missionaries, very few schools existed that remained open consistently.

Thus apprenticeship training consisted largely of practice in agriculture and household chores or as purchasing agent for local merchants

in the "country trade." It also included induction into the religious denomination of the host family, learning to speak English, wearing Western attire, adopting Christian names, and subscribing to settler social practices.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, abuses of the apprenticeship system had brought it into some discredit. Liberian government officials were defensive about it and took pains to explain how it differed from slavery (see ACS, *Liberia Bulletin* [1892], no. 1). Many settler families were said to have insisted on keeping apprentices well beyond their eighteenth and twenty-first birthdays in order to retain access to their labor. Some of the negative reports tell of apprentices being required to enter settler homes through the back door and work unusually long hours (Stewart 1886; Akpan 1968). However, there were also numerous positive stories such as those of Jesse Sharp and other upriver farmers who taught their apprentices the cooper's trade and other crafts, and of settler women who taught female apprentices dressmaking and homemaking (ACS, *African Repository*, 30).

Where the apprenticeship system was applied to recaptives, the idea was to prepare them for assimilation into settler society. Therefore, upon the completion of their training, they were settled in towns adjoining those of the settlers and provided with farmland. As a result, a number of recaptive communities, called "Congo towns," were established in close proximity to settler communities. Thus, for the recaptives who had no cultural roots in the subregion and whose numbers were relatively small, the apprenticeship system provided the primary vehicle for absorption into settler society. By adopting settler names, religion, and culture, and by serving as agents for settler merchants, producers of settler food, and volunteers in the settler militia, the recaptives had, by the turn of the century, become totally assimilated into settler society. To be assimilated was to be accepted as a citizen. Admission to citizenship entitled a person to a town lot and the right to vote and to hold public office.

The practice of apprenticeship for indigenous peoples was different. The purpose of apprenticing indigenous people was to prepare them for civilized leadership in their own societies. As might have been expected, the impact of the apprenticeship system on the indigenous societies was marginal. It was not possible to transform the local cultural patterns by identifying, training, and returning a few "civilized indigenes" to their societies. Nonetheless, the apprenticeship system was one of the principal means by which settler society attempted to carry out its civilizing mission.[5] Throughout the nineteenth century, government officials and local merchants were encouraged to recruit young men and women from surrounding indigenous communities for placement in settler homes.

The system of apprenticeship ceased to be an official policy of the Liberian government by the second decade of the twentieth century; however, the practice of recruiting indigenous rural youth as foster children in urban households continues today as part of a wider network of social relationships between urban and rural Liberia. This practice is driven by the presumption that urban dwellers have better educational, health, and employment opportunities. They are expected to accept children of rural relatives, friends, and clients as foster children and wards. As guardians of rural children, many urbanites exact household labor in return for sending them to school and providing board and lodging. The apprenticeship system of the nineteenth century is the direct predecessor of the "guardian-ward" system practiced today.[7]

Educational Institutions and the "Civilizing Mission"

In addition to the apprenticeship system, the Liberian government pursued its civilizing mission by establishing schools and training programs for indigenous youth. Unfortunately, during the period of ACS control, very little support was given to these efforts. Although education and moral training were perceived as purveyors of civilization, it was left almost entirely to settler and foreign missionaries to provide them (Wickstrom 1958). Settler missionaries included Lott Carey, who in 1827 opened a mission station among the Vai. Another settler missionary established a mission in the Condo federation in 1835, but was forced to withdraw because of persistent violent strife in the area. As early as 1831, American missionaries of the Presbyterian and Methodist denominations began work among the coastal Bassa (ACS, *African Repository* 6–11). In 1843, of the total of 543 children attending school in the Liberian settlements, 190 were reported to be from surrounding indigenous communities (Akpan 1968).

The Liberian government undertook a serious effort to open schools for both indigenous and settler children in the early 1860s. A number of public schools were established and the position of commissioner of education was created in each county to supervise the operations of schools. By the end of the decade, however, most of the schools had closed down, apparently for lack of funds (ibid.).

In 1868, members of the Liberian Baptist Convention organized the Liberian Baptist Missionary Union to undertake missionary work in the interior. During the next two years, they established several mission stations among indigenous communities near settler towns in Montserrado and Bassa counties. Lack of funds and the persistence of

violent disturbances in the interior prevented the extension of their work deeper into the interior (ibid.).

The Episcopal prelate Garretson W. Gibson and Dr. Edward W. Blyden, both of whom were proponents of integration, visited towns deep in the interior in 1870 and met with Chief Momolu of Bopolu at Totoquellie. With the chief's support, they established a school at Totoquellie that they hoped would serve as a base for more school projects deeper in the interior. Pupils attending the school included five of Chief Momolu's sons. Unfortunately, Chief Momolu died in 1871 and Gbande invaders overran Totoquellie, seized the schoolteacher, and brought the operations of the school to a halt. These events ended hopes of establishing more schools in the area (see ACS, *African Repository* 68).

Throughout the nineteenth century, the government's efforts to promote "civilization" through the development of schools in the interior was largely indirect, halting, and ineffective. A major effort by the government was undertaken in the early 1880s when forty-three schools were opened around the country and five commissioners of education were appointed. At this time, Liberia College, the highest public institution of learning, which was established in 1862, opened its doors to indigenous youths. The first indigenous young men, including the son of a Bassa chief at Trade Town, were admitted to Liberia College by Dr. Blyden in 1881 (see RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1882 [Anthony Gardiner]).

The failure to establish and maintain schools in the interior during the nineteenth century can, in part, be attributed to the persistence of conflicts and violence in the interior during much of the century. The lack of sustained initiatives regarding education on the part of the government also contributed to the failure. However, the inadequacy of initiatives in education must be seen within the context of the conditions that confronted settler society. These conditions included an original population largely lacking in formal education, a population reinforced at mid-century by several thousands of illiterate and destitute recaptives whose immediate circumstance required considerable social adjustment and use of community resources (Sherman 1989).

The neglect of education by the ACS presented a paradox in view of education's supposed value as a prerequisite for a civilized life.[8] In fact, much of the progress made in education within settler society can be credited to the efforts of missionaries not associated with the ACS. For example, the major institutions for the education of settler and indigenous youths from the early 1830s to the turn of the century were Alexander Academy, which was established by Presbyterian missionaries, and Monrovia Seminary, later known as the College of West Africa, which was established by Methodist missionaries.

The educational institutions that became influential purveyors of civilization and acculturation were established by religious institutions

that operated outside the sphere of influence of the Liberian government. Principal among these in the nineteenth century were the schools of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, which operated among the Grebo in the southeastern parts of the subregion.[9] From the mid-1830s, when its missionary work began, to the mid-1860s, the Episcopal Church missions had trained an impressive cadre of Grebo as preachers and teachers and opened numerous mission stations in many of the coastal Grebo communities. As a result of these efforts, by the mid-1800s, there were at least twice as many educated Grebo in the southeastern county of Maryland than there were educated settlers (Akpan 1968; Martin 1969).[10] In 1887 Samuel Seton, an educated Grebo, became the first indigenous person to be elected to the Liberian legislature as a bona fide member of that body. He was one of three legislators elected from Maryland County.[11]

In the 1870s, Episcopal missionaries also moved into the western region of Liberia in response to the belief that Islam was rapidly spreading among the Vai. In a very short period, Episcopal mission stations had been established in many Vai towns. As a result of these efforts, the Grebo and Vai were among the first to develop an indigenous intelligentsia, to be considered "civilized," and to challenge settler authority in Liberia.

The successes of the Grebo and Vai were repeated among other indigenous coastal groups. Unlike the development of the Grebo, which could be traced directly to the work of missionaries, the Kru intelligentsia sprung up as a result of the Kru's extensive international exposure. The Kru traveled widely in West Africa and in Europe. By the 1880s, Kru communities were emerging in Freetown, Cape Coast, Takoradi, Accra, and Lagos. Kru youth attended British-sponsored educational institutions in these cities and many of them returned to Liberia to champion the cause of their people against the Liberian government. During the first decades of the twentieth century, many more young male Kru, such as Didwho Twe, Plenyono Gbee Wolo, and Bishop Patrick Kla Juwle, were educated under the auspices of American missionaries of the Episcopal, Methodist, and Roman Catholic denominations. Many continued their studies in the United States. As was the case with the Grebo, the Kru intelligentsia won acceptance only after a bitter struggle with the Liberian government that did not end until the late 1930s.

A major bone of contention between the Liberian government and foreign missionaries who operated schools during the nineteenth century had to do with the independence of missionary work—especially as this work was seen to be affecting the relationship between settler society and the indigenous societies. Having opened mission stations in the indigenous societies, foreign missionaries were often accused of being responsible for what was perceived as negative behavior by certain

influential individuals among the indigenous communities. In the 1870s, for example, the Episcopal Church was accused of fomenting dissent among the Grebo (Martin 1969).

Most of the missionaries were white. The color-conscious settlers were always quick to see an ulterior design in their activities. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, Liberian politicians were advocating the severing of relations between Liberian churches and foreign mission boards. In 1880, the very influential politician and intellectual Hilary Richard Wright Johnson asserted that Liberia needed to be independent in its religion as it was in its politics. In 1881, the head of the Methodist seminary, the Reverend Mr. Kellog, was accused of being a "negrophobist" and expelled from Liberia (*Observer*, 1881).

Although the educational system as directed largely by missionary efforts was, indeed, a purveyor of the "civilizing mission," little attention was paid to the practical sciences. This shortcoming was all the more conspicuous in view of the pervasive lack of mechanical skills among Liberians. Moreover, as had been demonstrated by such outstanding seventeenth-century Christian scholars and scientists as Galileo, Newton, and Hobbes, the teaching of mechanical skills was consistent with the religious objectives of Christian-based education.[12] For them God, the Creator, could be appreciated by a study of His creation. The latter propelled scientific inquiry.

The failure of American missionary-sponsored education to give attention to the teaching of mechanical skills was also curious in view of the new emphasis on the development of agricultural and mechanical colleges in the post-Civil War era in the United States. This new emphasis contributed to the development of farm machinery to replace animal power. In fact, the scientific study of nature and the application of science for the improvement of daily life was an important characteristic of Jeffersonian agrarianism, which was the ideal upon which Liberia was ostensibly founded.

Unfortunately, even in the early twentieth century, as the government's pacification campaign proceeded in the interior and missionary work began expanding throughout the country, training in mechanical skills was still not a priority. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, Lutherans opened mission stations among the Kpelle and southern Loma in central Liberia then worked their way northward. At the same time, Episcopal missionaries expanded their work among the Vai, Gbande, and northern Loma. The Methodists worked among the Mah and Dan, and the Roman Catholics along the Kru coast.

Government efforts to establish educational institutions remained sporadic through the first half of the twentieth century. The coming of Firestone in 1926 was the beginning of a change. Although it created a

greater demand for unskilled labor, it also focused attention on the overall lack of skilled manpower in the society. In 1929, a number of missionary and philanthropic groups, organized largely on the initiative of the Phelps-Stokes Funds, established the first major vocational and industrial program in modern Liberia.[13] More than thirty years later, in response to the demands of the iron ore industry, two other technical and vocational programs were established by iron ore mining concessionaires.

It was not until the boom days of iron ore exploration in the 1950s that the government began a systematic program of educational expansion. This development coincided with the promulgation of the unification policy, a critical juncture in the assimilation of indigenous communities into the Liberian body politic.

The Settlements Policy

One of the strategies fervently promoted by proponents of integration was the settlements policy. The policy called for the establishment of a "chain" of settler communities deep into the interior of Africa as far north from the coast as the Niger River. It was believed that, by creating settler communities in very close proximity to indigenous societies, the barriers of fear and suspicion created by mutual ignorance would be broken down. Proponents argued that such communities would present Christianity to the neighboring African peoples as a guide in daily living and not as abstract teachings. The most ardent advocates of the settlements policy, such as Professor Edward Blyden, hoped that the intermingling of communities would promote the emergence of an "African nationality" that would consist of the best of both cultures and constitute the basis upon which a black civilization could be built (Blyden 1862).

Not all members of the ruling elite were enthusiastic. Many did not care much about integration or the extension of territorial claims over larger territory; however, they did not oppose the proposal. It was seen as an opportunity for expanding trade and concluding more treaties of commerce and amity with indigenous communities that were situated far beyond the frontiers of settler society.[14] By the time the proposal gained currency in the 1860s, during the boom of the coffee economy, many thoughtful settlers were already becoming apprehensive about the tenuousness of their economic prosperity. Their apprehension was induced by the rapidly decreasing supply of trade goods from the interior and the gradual shift of European traders to other sources for products they had earlier acquired in Liberia (Brown [1941] 1981).

Liberians were exploring new sources of trade beyond the frontiers of their society and searching for the legendary Mandingo kingdom to

the north. The government had commissioned the Anderson expedition in 1868 for this purpose. Furthermore, emigration to Liberia from the United States had declined sharply after the American Civil War. Settler authorities feared that their numbers would be depleted and proposed to the ACS that an advertising campaign be launched to recruit new settlers. Thus the Monrovia establishment was skeptical; it accepted the settlements proposal as a national policy in the hope that it would attract new immigrants and promote trade.

Proponents of integration worked hard to initiate the plan. Throughout 1868, Professor Blyden exchanged letters with the ACS and other sources in the United States in an attempt to raise money for the establishment of the first of a series of new settlements. In 1869 William Coppinger, the secretary of the ACS, received an endowment of £1,000 from Robert Arthington, a British philanthropist. Blyden persuaded Secretary Coppinger to use the money to transport a new group of settlers to Liberia (ACS, *Letters Received from Liberia* [1869] 21). In November 1869, the settlement of Arthington was established by twenty settlers from North Carolina. Also late in 1869, the Pennsylvania Colonization Society made available to the parent ACS a sum of money for the establishment of another interior settlement. With those funds, the settlement of Brewerville was established in 1870 (see Chapter 5).

In the early years of the new settlements, significant linkages were developed with surrounding indigenous communities. Schools for African and settler children were established; settler farmers and their indigenous counterparts sometimes cooperated in the task and, on the whole, more integration seemed to be emerging. Buoyed by the promise of the settlements policy, integrationists were quick to declare it a success.[15] Unfortunately, the persistence of violent outbreaks in the interior was bound to affect relations between settlers and indigenous communities. Moreover, very few new settlements were established along the frontiers because of the decline in U.S. support for colonization as a viable solution to the American race problem after the Civil War.

Disappointed by the turn of events, integrationists advocated intermarriage as the solution to the problem of alienation between the settlers and the indigenous societies. Recognizing the difficulty but convinced that intermarriage was the only way to ensure integration, former president Daniel Warner, a staunch integrationist, wrote to the ACS in 1878:

> It would require on the part of the man of the least culture, strong moral courage to break through the strong prejudices against the intermarriage of the colonists and natives which [prevail] here among the Americo-Liberians, and yet this will have to be done otherwise our efforts hitherto to raise up a great Negro State here [have] been to no purpose. [ACS, *African Repository* (1878) 40)][16]

The highly respected settler lawyer, William Davis, saw intermarriage as the only way to prevent the extermination or subjugation of settler or indigenous societies.[17] In 1881 Davis married E. J. E. Seton, a Grebo woman who was the sister of Samuel Seton. Another significant marriage between a male settler from high society and a woman of indigenous background took place between John Gardiner, the son of President Anthony Gardiner, and Mary Hines, the daughter of a Mamba Bassa chief. Both women were educated and wholly acceptable by settler standards (ibid.:43).

The failure of the settlements policy did not leave the integrationists without hope of building a great "Negro State." They continued to pursue relationships with indigenous communities by encouraging the work of missionaries and by attempting to find new approaches to integration that would be acceptable to the ruling elite. Their admiration for the Mandingo was always a point of departure. They continued their attempts to build bridges to the Mandingo not only for the promotion of trade and the securing of trade routes but also to promote the civilizing mission. The integrationists perceived a cultural similarity between themselves and the Mandingo. They were attracted by the "sense of order" they perceived in Mandingo society because of its rigid hierarchical structure. Although the Mandingo were Islamic, their monotheistic beliefs were perceived to be congruent with those of settler society and were believed to represent an appropriate "transition" from "paganism" to Christianity (ibid.:45). The knowledge and cosmopolitanism of the Islamic Imams were viewed in settler Liberia as a useful connection with the larger, nonwestern world (Blyden 1967). The desirability of working closely with Islamized Africans was communicated by Blyden to Mr. Coppinger in 1871:

> The Mohammedans deserve the attention and respect shown them. The Mohammedans are the only people who now possess amid the political wilderness of intertropical Africa any tolerable form of civil policy or bond of social organization. They are the only people upon whom the only civilization which has penetrated to any extent the interior of the African continent has left its stamp. [ACS, *Letters Received from Liberia* (1871) 21]

The admiration for the Mandingo, then, was grounded in something beyond the desire of the settlers to establish trade links with them. The hierarchical authority structure of all Mande societies was most pronounced in Mandingo society. Mandingo political structures controlled considerable territory in the northern sections of the region, beyond the frontiers of settler influence. This sphere of influence provided a reassuring sense of order in view of the turbulence of life nearer the coast.

Settler leaders were similarly attracted to the coastal relatives of the Mandingo, the Vai, whose societies were also structured in rigid hierarchies and were under the influence of Islam. As proponents of both the outreach and integration approaches wrestled with the problem of the interior, these societies that "possessed a sense of order" became convenient instruments for relating to the rest of the indigenous communities. It is not surprising, therefore, that as the settler government faced the imperatives of establishing effective control, they would adopt the hierarchical form of organization associated with Mande peoples and clearly articulated in Vai political communities and impose such arrangements upon the entire hinterland. The development of a system of "indirect rule" superseded all other strategies and became the cornerstone of Liberian government policy toward indigenous communities for a period of more than fifty years.

"Indirect Rule" and the Development of an Interior Administration

Several circumstances converged to evolve a system of "indirect rule" over the interior. It could be argued that the formulation of such a system was a logical outgrowth of the role of guarantor of stability and arbiter of disputes in the subregion, a role that the settler state had assigned itself from the beginning. Other factors contributed, however, to the institution of this policy.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the rapid decline of the economy required new approaches. Ways had to be found to draw upon the reservoir of human and material resources in the interior. Establishing administrative control over the interior was one possibility considered in the national debate. In 1880, for example, G. W. Gibson proposed a scheme by which full citizenship would extend to indigenous communities in return for increased production of agricultural commodities. He proposed that, in return for the franchise, each prospective voter from an indigenous community would grow 500 coffee and cocoa trees, or half that number provided that the individual cleared 5 acres of land for later cultivation (ACS, *Letters Received from Liberia* [1880] 20). It is clear that Gibson's proposal was motivated as much by the desperation of the economic situation as by his well-known desire for integration.

In 1881, a group of Liberians organized the Liberia Interior Association as a private effort to "promote our commercial, agricultural, and political interests in the interior" and to "impress the government and nation with a due sense of the importance of these interests to the

country" (*Observer*, Sept. 1881). The question of how to explore and develop the interior seems to have been on the minds of many Liberians during this period.

Although declining economic conditions were a compelling reason for attempting the organization of control over the interior, the real incentive that drove the Liberian government's interior policy was the expansionist pressures of European imperial powers. The establishment of effective control over the interior was the only means of repulsing the encroachments of the British and French as the scramble for territory intensified.

Measures to organize an administrative structure for the interior had been contemplated several years earlier. In the 1869–1870 session of the legislature, an act creating the interior department had been passed. A few years later, the position of commissioner general of the interior was created as a roving official responsible to the secretary of the interior. Although the position of secretary of the interior was created by the Interior Department Act, nobody was appointed to this position until 1892—twenty years later.[18]

As imperial pressures intensified, so did efforts to control the interior. In his annual message of 1893, President Cheeseman proposed the establishment of a standing army. His successor, President Coleman, during whose administration the Sofa wars waged fiercely in the interior, proposed a scheme for the organization of an interior administrative structure (see Chapter 6). Coleman proposed to make each ethnic group an administrative unit; each would contain a military detachment whose commander would be the administrative head of the unit and operate in consultation with an indigenous person to be called the "general superintendent," who would play a role in settling internal disputes and receive a government stipend (RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1896 [William Coleman]).

Unable to understand or end the Sofa wars or gain support for his scheme, Coleman abandoned his proposal to establish military rule in the interior. In 1900, in his inaugural address, he revived the settlement policy with the hope of rapidly establishing settler communities in areas of intercommunal dispute, thereby bringing a prompt end to the conflicts. He was forced to resign the same year. Coleman's successor, G. W. Gibson, also formulated a plan to administer the interior. He had been a teacher and missionary, and had espoused the integrationists' views regarding the interior for a long time. His proposal called for assigning experienced teachers to all influential chiefs in order to instruct them in "the laws and ways of the Liberia government." Chiefs were to be commissioned as government officials and given salaries.

Each chief would be assigned a clerk who would make record of cases and prepare quarterly reports for the secretary of the interior. Chiefs would also be responsible for collecting taxes. Gibson also proposed to amalgamate ethnic groups into districts, but did not define a structure for the governance of the districts (RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1901, Dec. 1903).

The Barclay Plan

The persistent threats of the British and French to intervene in communal disputes if the Liberian government proved unable to maintain order made the task of devising a comprehensive plan for the control of the interior more urgent. It became the principal administrative problem of Arthur Barclay, who was inaugurated as president in January 1904. Barclay's plan was based on the aforementioned principle of indirect rule, whereby the territory of the interior would be controlled by the ruling lineages of indigenous societies. The ruling lineages would be supported by and "encouraged to work with" the government. Thus, the principle of indirect rule implied a recognition of the legitimacy of indigenous authority structure and a commitment to guarantee its control over indigenous societies.

The interior was to be divided into districts demarked in the way least disruptive to the ethnic and cultural patterns of indigenous communities. Each district was to be administered by a commissioner appointed by the president and responsible to him through the secretary of the interior. indigenous chiefs within the districts were to be chosen in accordance with the laws and customs of their societies but approved and commissioned by the president. The district commissioner was to uphold the authority of the chief except where that authority conflicted with the policies of the government. He was to make recommendations concerning the improvement of agriculture and commerce in the district, report on the condition of schools and health facilities, preside over a court that would hear appeals from the courts of the chiefs, and enforce the laws and policies of the Liberian government in the district. Appeals from the court of the district commissioner were to be heard by the judiciary; however, the president had the authority to adjudicate any appeal involving a "serious criminal act" (ibid., *Annual Message*, Dec. 1904 [Arthur Barclay]). The president also reserved the right to tour the country at any time and hold "executive councils" for the purpose of hearing grievances and adjudicating complaints.

The primary functions of the chief were to maintain peace and order, encourage farming among his people, resolve conflicts in accordance with

the customs and traditions of the society, and ensure the collection of taxes and respond to all other requirements of the Liberian government. Among these obligations were the provision of labor for public works, porterage, and other purposes, and of food supplies for the district headquarters.[19] Taxes collected by the chief included the hut tax imposed on every habitable dwelling in his jurisdiction, sometimes a poll tax, and an educational tax. Chiefs received a commission of 10 percent of all taxes they collected (Jones 1962). Thus chiefs were given a substantial personal incentive for mobilizing resources for the government.

The clan chief was the highest indigenous official in the structure of interior administration.[20] Operating in association with the council of elders, he was responsible for performing his duties among his people in accordance with the customs and traditions of his society. In the early years of the plan, indigenous communities were left largely to themselves to work out their internal relations with a minimum of government interference. By the outbreak of the First World War, this situation had changed.

Each president after Barclay made adjustments in the administrative structure, and each adjustment produced greater centralization of authority in the hands of the president. The persistent deterioration of government finances and the growing demand for labor coupled with increasing indigenous resistance necessitated closer supervision and greater government involvement in the interior. In 1913, the position of attaché was created to handle matters related to the Poro and "other secret societies." The position of commissioner-at-large was also created as a traveling inspector responsible to the secretary of the interior (RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1913; Jones 1962).

In 1914, new provisions for the restructuring of interior administration called for the amalgamation of clans into chiefdoms to be headed by a paramount chief. The new provisions called for the "election" of chiefs. This ostensible election was a significant departure from the traditional method of selecting them, and was designed to provide the government greater opportunities for manipulating the selection process. The government became more actively involved in promoting the fortunes of certain elements over others, but as it took active control over the "election" of chiefs, the legitimacy of the office within indigenous communities diminished. Frequently, some chiefs became perceived more as the government's representatives among the people than vice versa.

The new proposal of 1914 also called for the division of interior administration into two jurisdictions: "hinterland" and "county." County jurisdiction included indigenous communities on the seacoast and up to forty miles inland. These were constituted into county districts and administered by district commissioners who reported to the secretary of

the interior through the county superintendent. Because the districts were large, the position of assistant district commissioner was created. Many of the proposals made in 1914 were not implemented until a decade later. In 1923, for example, more districts were created to clearly distinguish county from hinterland jurisdictions. In the early 1930s, hinterland districts were further amalgamated into three provinces—eastern, central, and western—headed by provincial commissioners to whom district commissioners reported (see RL, *Interior Regulations*, 1923, 1931, 1949).

The persistent centralization of the administrative machinery of the interior would not have produced effective control had the Barclay Plan not contained a second aspect, the creation of the Liberian Frontier Force. Upon the urgings of the British and French, President Barclay, in 1906, proposed an act to the legislature for the formation of such a force. Its functions were to maintain order in the interior, keep trade routes open and safe, undertake geological surveys, and enforce all laws and regulations of the government in the interior.

The Frontier Force functioned as an integral part of hinterland administration. In 1912, the force was about 600 men strong (Fulton 1968). By the early 1920s, it had grown to about 1,500 men deployed in several posts at various points in the country (Jones 1962). Military detachments were also set up at all district headquarters. The commanders of those detachments were responsible to the district commissioners; they were considered part of the district staffs. Thus military capability was an integral part of interior administration and was to be deployed not only for pacification but also as an instrument available to the district commissioner for general administrative purposes.

As the government's financial position failed to improve, new regulations were promulgated by the Interior Department in 1921 giving district commissioners the right to make salary payments to their staff from taxes collected within their districts. In addition, rations of food for the district commissioner and the Frontier Force were exacted monthly from the chiefs and people of the various towns and villages within the district. Local people were obliged to respond to the commissioner's request for more food items and other services required to meet any official need. Visits of the president or any official of government from Monrovia were usually occasions for new demands from the district commissioner.

Besides the collection of taxes in their various forms, the Frontier Force was used to help recruit indigenous labor for public as well as private purposes that ranged from construction of the district headquarters and roads to porterage for private individuals. Additionally, the recruitment of labor for work on plantations owned by private individuals and concessionaires as well as for export as contract labor was a significant part of the economic arrangements in the society. Thus

this system of interior administration, especially the role of the Frontier Force in interior administration and labor recruitment, is crucial to an understanding of the political economy of Liberia in the first half of the twentieth century.

Administering the Interior

To establish a system of indirect rule, people had to be recruited to run it. The interior bureaucracy was to exercise total control over more than two-thirds of Liberian territory and more than three-quarters of its people.[21] In exercising exclusive control over the interior, the presidency had control over the largest bureaucracy and was the most important source of patronage in the country.

Very few upper-class Liberians had any experience with the interior or were interested in establishing residence in district headquarters. Except for holding cabinet positions with overall supervision of the interior bureaucracy, upper-class settlers were not attracted to interior administration. Four types of individuals were recruited. The first consisted of middlemen in inland and coastal trade who, with the decline of trade, found interior administration a suitable alternative. They were closely followed in importance by the second lower-class or unsuccessful relatives and clients and attendants of members of the settler ruling elite. Together, these two groups constituted the core of the patronage network that initially characterized interior administration; they were also the groups upon which merchant proprietary control had been built in the nineteenth century. The third group was one of settlers from British African colonies who were attracted by opportunities to hold positions in technical and professional areas in Liberia, and had been denied those opportunities in their home colonies. In some instances, British colonial policy encouraged Liberia to recruit such individuals.[22]

Finally, there were enough members of the coastal indigenous intelligentsia seeking entry into higher-level public service positions to constitute a fourth group. Performance in interior administration provided evidence of loyalty to the Liberian government and of ability to hold senior-level positions in public service. For this group and for settlers from British West Africa, interior service was a career pattern leading eventually to their acceptance in settler society. Members of the indigenous intelligentsia who joined interior administration saw themselves as the link between the settler authority structure and indigenous societies and hoped to serve as catalysts in the process of integration. Two notable individuals of this type were Momolu Massaquoi and Didwho Twe. Massaquoi, the son of a Vai chief from the Gallinas, was one of those entrusted with "shaping an

interior policy" during the administration of Arthur Barclay. His role as a mediator of communal conflicts and as a respected emissary of the government in the pursuit of friendly relations with indigenous communities made him an outstanding factor in early interior administration.[23] Twe, the son of a Kru chief from Sasstown, was born and raised in Monrovia. Though not as accomplished a negotiator and administrator as Massaquoi, Twe was renowned for his concern with the gulf between literate and westernized Liberians and the illiterate indigenous peoples. He perceived the interior administration as an instrument to bridge this gap. He chided senior government officials for not visiting the interior more often and attending to its problems. He criticized the restrictions imposed on travel by coastal Liberians to the interior and the lack of intensive efforts at education in the interior. Twe perceived the educated indigene as the key to resolving conflicts between indigenous and settler societies and to the enlightenment of the interior.[24] Not surprisingly, Twe became an intractable foe of presidents King, Edwin Barclay, and Tubman. He was expelled from the legislature during the Edwin Barclay administration, and was forced into exile in the 1930s by Edwin Barclay and again in 1952 by Tubman when he stood against Tubman as the presidential candidate of the Reformation party.

Thus the establishment of the interior bureaucracy brought an end to the patron-client network that had constituted the infrastructure of merchant proprietary rule, an infrastructure that was now replaced by presidential rule. It also signified the reconstitution of the social order by the establishment of a new framework more suitable for hierarchical control than for democratic governance. In this respect, the process of institutional development in Liberia became similar to the process of institutional development elsewhere in Africa.

The new administrative system was full of abuses. Indigenous communities resisted the imposition of Liberian authority and the abuses of the system of indirect rule. Before exploring these issues, however, we need to examine the urban extension of the interior administrative complex.

Administering Urban Ethnic Communities

A frequently overlooked link in the network of institutional arrangements governing Liberia is one that has evolved in special ethnic communities of the urban areas as an adaptation of interior administrative principles. With the development of the plantation economy in the early 1920s, increasingly large numbers of people moved toward Firestone and thereafter to Monrovia and other coastal urban areas. With the introduction

of mining, urbanization became a characteristic of Liberia after the Second World War. Even before these developments, however, such coastal Kwa-speaking groups as the Kru, Bassa, and Grebo concentrated in urban centers of Liberia and elsewhere along the West African coast in search of employment (see Chapter 9). The existence of large numbers of indigenous enclave communities within urban centers has required institutional arrangements to be adapted in a special character.

Several types of urban communities are either not dominated directly by settler institutions or are governed by a complex mix of settler and indigenous institutions. Notable among these are such communities as New Kru Town, Logan Town, and Vai Town that developed within coastal cities; or that, like Unification City, sprang up around mining and production areas; or that, like the Municipality of Grand Cess, developed from indigenous communities as a result of advances in Western education and in economic, and social status by their former members. Each of these urban communities has developed in accordance with the special conditions surrounding them, but they all display certain common institutional features.[25]

In most of these communities, property rights were originally held by a corporation with a communal base (as in New Kru Town and Bassa Community in Monrovia), a traditional lineage structure (as in Vai Town and Logan Town in Monrovia), or as a replication of prevailing land-use patterns based on principles of communal ownership still practiced in the parent indigenous society (as in the new towns of the Kru Coast). In the case of urban mining communities, property rights are usually held by the mining concessionaires. Inhabitants of those communities are either squatters or company-authorized residents.

The way in which their property rights have been appropriated and the purposes served by those communities have influenced the nature of authority relations within them. For example, New Kru Town in Monrovia is a transplant of Kru Town, which was essentially a labor pool from which seagoing labor and dock workers were recruited. Head men and other Kru notables in Monrovia formed the Kru Corporation, which obtained title deed to the land and was granted the legal status of a borough. The corporation, in turn, issued deeds in fee simple to members of the community who purchased land within it. Authority within the community was held by the corporation, which was headed by a governor and a council. In the early years of the corporation and before the development of an interior administrative machinery, the governor and council members were elected by the members of the community (that is, by the property owners). Their election was based on a formula that reflected traditional patterns recognized in the mother communities on the Kru Coast.[26] The governor and council constituted an administrative

as well as a judicial body. Initially, the courts of the governor operated on the basis of indigenous customs and traditions. This authority structure interfaced with numerous indigenous age-set groups, welfare associations, and indigenous and national labor recruiting bodies that operated at various levels with intricate sets of rules.

Vai Town and Logan Town were governed by indigenous leaders that claimed legitimacy on the basis of lineage descent. The case of Logan Town is particularly interesting because Chief Logan, its eponymous head, was presumed to be heir of one of the chiefs who originally ceded land to the settlers. Logan was an important intermediary between the Liberian government and the Dei and Mamba Bassa communities of the Monrovia area. He operated virtually autonomously of the Liberian government.

As the Barclay Plan began to unfold and the interior administration grew, government intervention in the governance of these communities increased. The selection of "tribal governors or chiefs" was not simply left to procedures determined by the customs and traditions of the communities; instead, it was made either by the president, after consultations with individuals influential within the communities, or by the communities upon recommendation or nomination by the president. In any case, the president played an important role in selecting governors of ethnic urban enclaves as interior administration grew. Before the establishment of the interior bureaucracy, urban ethnic governors reported perfunctorily to the president. Later, they were brought within the jurisdiction of the interior administration.[27] By the mid-1960s, most "tribal governors" had also been commissioned as justices of the peace, and were therefore eligible to apply statutory law in matters of limited jurisdiction.

Urban communities that broke away from adjoining indigenous towns usually worked out arrangements with the mother towns so that land surveys were conducted and title deeds in fee simple were secured by their inhabitants. These new communities were declared townships and administered under township ordinances that removed them from the control of the indigenous leadership structures of the mother towns. Strong links with the mother towns always remained, however, and manifested themselves in the control and use of farmland and the meeting of kinship and other obligations within the mother towns. In such breakaway towns, both statutory law and indigenous customs and traditions operate side by side. Legal jurisdictions are not always clearly defined. Determination as to where a matter can be heard depends upon the social status of the individuals involved as well as other factors. In such situations, people constantly had to work out accommodations among themselves.

Urban mining towns operate similarly. Where these are squatter communities, administrative authority may be exercised by outside entities, perhaps by concessionaires, as in the case of Unification City and Congotown, Bomi, which began as mineworkers' camps. An important

feature of these communities is the presence of numerous "tribal governors," appointed by the county superintendents. They operate courts based on indigenous customs and traditions and resolve conflicts among individuals and entities of their ethnic groups within these communities. Appeals from their courts are usually taken to the magisterial courts and through the judiciary or to the superintendent and therefore through the interior administration. One set of structure always prominent in mining and industrial communities is the system of magisterial courts and labor inspectorates.

Thus the urban ethnic community represents a special type of community, namely, one that requires adaptations of both indigenous and western institutions. The institutional arrangements under which these communities are governed display considerable flexibility and so facilitate indirect control, which is exercised largely through presidential-related institutions.

Problems, Abuses, and Resistance to Indirect Rule

From the foregoing, it seems clear that the system of interior administration in Liberia did not evolve totally from the culture and experiences of the societies to which it was applied. Just as clearly, it was not a product of local artisanship that involved considerable consultation and experimentation. In his annual message of 1911, President Arthur Barclay admitted that his plan for the organization of the interior was a response to the Berlin Conference's requirement of effective occupation. In meeting this requirement, institutional arrangements based on principles applicable to hierarchies were imposed indiscriminately on the entire hinterland with hardly any consideration for local institutional arrangements. Hierarchical institutional forms were compatible with the institutional structure of Mande and Mel society but not with the Kwa-speaking societies. The specific form adopted for administering the interior seems more suitable to the Vai and Mandingo societies, which more rigidly conform to principles of hierarchical ordering, than to any other indigenous societies in the area. It was therefore logical to expect that there would be considerable conflict in interior administration simply for lack of a conceptual reference against which some indigenous societies could understand the new administrative arrangements. Kwa-speaking societies in particular could hardly adjust to the imposition of a clan chief, let alone the imposition of a paramount chief and district commissioner.[28]

Within settler society itself, there was considerable ignorance of the institutional arrangements of indigenous societies. The dire economic straits of settler society and the increasing pressure of imperial encroachments led to greater concern about establishing control and organizing

a system for extraction of resources than about stimulating the productive capabilities of people and social arrangements in the interior. Even if it is established with the best of intentions, such a system of indirect rule, when it is used as an instrument to pursue economic goals, is bound to result in serious abuses.[29]

One of the most serious abuses endemic to a system of indirect rule has to do with the question of collective responsibility and collective liability. This problem is inherent in institutional arrangements in which a government relates to members of a society through intermediary agencies. Placed in such situations, individuals are forced to bear collective penalties for individual transgressions. Similarly, they are forced to rely upon their local leaders while, at the same time, their ability to select leaders of their own choice is usually curtailed because those at the center demand local leaders of a more pliable kind. The government's intervention in the selection of chiefs and the placing of chiefs in a larger structure of hierarchical order was destructive of autonomy and local initiative. Thus the interior administration as conceived and established turned out to be more suitable for procuring forced labor and the extraction of resources than for developing indigenous agriculture or even promoting mercantile entrepreneurship. It constituted the ideal institutional framework for the development of the plantation economy and labor depots, with all their abuses.

In addition to the shortcomings that are inherent in a system of indirect rule, the abuses of the system through its misuse by government officials became legendary.[30] Resistance to the control exercised by the interior bureaucracy and the excesses of the Frontier Force turned into violent encounters in many parts of the country. Violent eruptions took place on the Kru Coast in 1915 and 1916 over the government's continuing attempts to exercise control over ports of entry (Sullivan 1988). In 1918, an alliance of indigenous communities in central and northwestern Liberia led by Gola chieftains refused to pay taxes and provide labor and put up violent challenges to the Liberian government (Jones 1962; d'Azevedo 1969). In quelling this rebellion, the government received considerable assistance from powerful, friendly Loma chiefs (Fulton 1968). From 1919 to 1921, the Frontier Force was engaged in pacification campaigns against the Jorquellie Kpelle of central Liberia who continued to resist the control of the Liberian government (Fulton 1968). Pacification of the Krahn by the Frontier Force continued throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. From garrisons in Webbo and Gbarzohn, the force in the early 1920s moved into Konobo, Zwedru, Gborbo, Putu, and Sikon, among other areas (Schroder and Seibel 1974).

After the League of Nations investigations that followed the Fernando Po labor scandal, the Liberian government seemed weakened and

demoralized, which encouraged continued resistance especially on the Kru Coast. The ruthless crushing of indigenous resistance left deep scars and grave suspicions that were not reduced until the Second World War and the beginning of the economic boom induced by international demand for Liberian iron ore.

The Unification and Integration Policy

The period of nationalist agitation for independence in the colonial territories all around Liberia that followed the Second World War coincided with the new age of economic prosperity in Liberia, fueled by increased demand for iron ore. These developments had a significant impact on attempts to restructure the relationship between the Liberian government and the indigenous communities.

The selection of William V. S. Tubman in 1944 to replace President Edwin Barclay marked the first time that a settler outside the original core settlements of Montserrado and Grand Bassa counties had been chosen president. Tubman's reforms, then, were as much an effort to build an independent political base for himself as they were a response to the social and economic conditions of the society and the international environment. His first move was to revise the law so that women and members of indigenous communities could be enfranchised. Tubman proposed that each indigene who owned a hut upon which he paid tax should be admitted to full citizenship and become eligible to vote and hold elective offices.

Tubman's proposal was a radical departure from past practices. Until this time, participation of indigenes in the political process was contingent upon their acceptance as assimilated individuals within the context of settler society. Political representation of indigenous communities in the legislature had been provided under the referee system instituted in 1870. At that time, as a means of repulsing British and French encroachments, and of winning friendship among certain influential chiefs, the Liberian government promulgated a law permitting a representative of each ethnic group to sit as a "referee" in the legislature. Each referee was charged an eligibility fee of $100 and permitted to speak only on issues considered pertinent to the interests of his group. Referees were not permitted to vote.[31]

In 1880, some steps were taken to improve the nature of indigenous representation under the referee system. The representatives of ethnic groups were to be changed from referees to delegates and given the right to vote on all matters pertaining to the indigenous population. It was expected that delegates would be important chiefs of towns or clans; they

were to receive an annual stipend of $100 (USDS, *Despatches*, Feb. 1881). These arrangements extended a form of quasi-corporate citizenship to those ethnic groups that opted for representation in the legislature.

Although Tubman's proposed extension of the franchise to individual members of indigenous societies was an improvement, it was not implemented until several years later. The hinterland was still governed as a protectorate. In fact, Tubman expressed grave fear that the "civilized" elements of Liberia stood in danger of being overrun by what he called "a large semicivilized population." He proposed to stimulate immigration of technically competent blacks from the United States, the West Indies, and British West Africa to strengthen the enlightened elements of the Liberian society (Townsend 1959).[32]

Tubman's apprehensions did not deter him from trying to improve relations among the various elements of Liberian society. One of the avenues he explored was a series of "national unification councils." The first of these was held in 1954 in Harper, Tubman's hometown. Chiefs from all over the country were brought together with officials of the Liberian government. Tubman called for a new era of understanding and cooperation among the various ethnic communities of Liberia. All "divisive ideologies, symbols, and nomenclatures" must be abandoned, he stressed, and "all of us must register a new era of justice, equality, fair dealing, and equal opportunities for every one from every part of the country regardless of tribe, clan, section, element, creed, or economic status" (ibid.: 236). Although the Harper meeting did not accomplish any tangible transformation, it provided an enormous psychological boost for a society troubled by ethnic problems.

The second unification council was held four years later in Voinjama in the western province. Again, themes of reconciliation and cooperation were sounded. The promotion of an understanding and appreciation of indigenous culture was emphasized as a national policy. More importantly, Tubman raised the question of whether to restructure the administrative divisions of the country so as to end the system of indirect rule. Four years later, at the third national unification conference in Sanniquellie in the central province, Tubman proposed the reorganization of the interior by creating four new counties to be equal in status with the five coastal counties dominated by settlers.

Tubman also instituted the practice of holding regular "executive councils" in various parts of the interior. The presidential executive council had been instituted at the turn of the century as a forum for resolving intercommunal disputes and was later formalized in the Barclay Plan. Tubman adapted it as an instrument to dispense instant justice and exert personal authority in the interior. The upgrading of the political and administrative status of the interior was paralleled by the expansion of

education there, largely because of the economic growth brought about by iron ore extraction. Education in the interior, which had been an activity implicitly assigned to missionary and philanthropic enterprises, became a major government undertaking in the early 1950s when the first network of rural elementary schools was built. By the late 1950s, at least four government-sponsored senior high schools had been constructed. In 1952, Liberia College, which had tottered on the brink of collapse ever since it was opened in 1862, became the University of Liberia, an important training ground for the rural intelligentsia. The education explosion continued through the 1960s and into the 1970s.[33] The concept of the multilateral high school, which was introduced in the late 1960s, stimulated the amassing of large numbers of young people from various regions of the country into "magna" schools and created an unprecedented process of intercultural and interregional exchange and awareness. Many graduates of these schools went on to the University of Liberia.

The unification policy should be seen as an approach to the interior inspired partly by the sentiments of self-determination that spread through Africa in the 1940s. But it was also inspired by Tubman's attempt to transform himself from a political surrogate into an independent leader exercising proprietary control. Tubman used the administrative reforms to consolidate his authority.

Additionally, he used returns from iron ore mining to maintain an enormous personal patronage network and an elaborate security network. By dispensing gratuities, wielding traditional symbols, and making token gestures of "unification," Tubman developed a clientele that extended to the village level. He tried to present a picture of the country achieving "unity" with himself as the embodiment of that "unity." Nonetheless, the unification policy, especially the creation of new counties, provided a major psychological uplift to the interior and created fleeting expectations of true unification combined with a system of government characterized by freedom and justice.

The euphoria of unification and perceived opportunities that engulfed Liberia during this period intermingled with the activities of the patronage and security networks to produce currents of change that began to erode the insecure foundation of Tubman's proprietorship. The collapse came at the close of the 1970s. Unfortunately, the military government that took over in 1980 and its successor assumed that the seizing of political authority by soldiers of indigenous background would be the ultimate solution to the question of ethnic division in Liberia. This is far from happening.

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Domestic Servitude and the Political Economy of Labor

CHAPTER 3 HAS SHOWN that by the seventeenth century, forms of servitude such as domestic slavery, indentured servitude, and pawning had developed in societies on the Grain Coast. Such forms of servitude were adapted to the Atlantic slave trade and continued after the abolition of the slave trade in general. Exploitation of indigenous labor became one of the major economic activities in Liberia, as a result of the severe economic decline in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the development of European plantation agriculture overseas. This chapter will show how the exploitation of contract labor accentuated preexisting forms of domestic servitude, and became an important socioeconomic activity that ravaged Liberian society for half a century.

From the Atlantic Slave Trade to Contract Labor

The transformation of production technology, which contributed to the ending of the Atlantic slave trade in the early years of the 1800s, also precipitated increased demand for certain commodity items and, by the 1820s, changed the structure of trade along the coast of West Africa. Such commodities as palm oil and coffee, as we saw in Chapter 7, took the place of slaves in dominating trade relationships. This transformation created new markets and induced the commercialization of new commodities such as peanuts and cocoa (Hopkins 1973; Brooks 1975). Tremendous social dislocations occurred in societies that had earlier supplied the slave trade.[1]

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Meanwhile, production of commodities such as sugar and cotton, which had utilized slave labor, required new labor arrangements as slaves became free. Distaste for the gang-style labor associated with slavery contributed to the reluctance of former slaves to engage in such labor (Engerman 1986). The shift to indentured and contract labor provided a solution to the problem faced by producers of cotton and sugar.

Indentured and contract labor did not suddenly arise as substitutes for slave labor All had been intertwined in a network that serviced trade in commodities and slaves along the West Coast of Africa and elsewhere (Klein 1977; Manning 1983; Gemery 1986; Mauro 1986). Even at the peak of the slave trade, commodity trade also persisted. Both the slave trade and trade in commodities required the services of local navigators, bargainers, porters, and other intermediaries. Thus many slavers maintained domestic slaves, indentured servants, and contract laborers who functioned as intermediaries in both the slave and commodity trades.[2] George E. Brooks (1972) has shown that, as early as the mid-seventeenth century, Kru workers operated alongside domestic slaves as longshoremen, barracoon attendants, and in other capacities in Atlantic slave trading and in commodity trading. Such domestic slaves were treated differently from slaves acquired for sale in the Atlantic slave trade. By the mid-nineteenth century, despite the existence of some residual trade in slaves, the transformation from slave labor to contract or indentured labor was virtually complete.[3]

For societies that supplied slaves or served as intermediaries in the slave economy, certain social adjustments became necessary depending upon the role of servitude in their social organization and social stratification. In Liberia, for societies such as the Vai, which had developed a social stratification system based on servitude, the transition from slave labor to contract labor was difficult. The social infrastructure that recruited and maintained slaves struggled to continue the slave trade through the system of contract labor. The Kru who, on the other hand, maintained a less rigid social stratification structure and among whom maritime employment was common even during the slave trade, handled the adjustment differently. Before discussing the impact of contract labor on these different societies, it will be useful to review the development of contract labor in the region.

Contract Labor in West Africa

The shift to contract labor was a convenient means of ensuring a continuous supply of West African labor especially to European plantations in the West Indies. In most cases, the same mechanism used to

recruit slaves was used to recruit contract labor. Thus, with the indigenous societies and resident slavers providing the instruments of procurement, maritime lines that had previously been available for the transport of slaves and other lines engaged in commodity trade were now also available for participation in the new trade in contract labor.

Needless to say, coercion and capture were used in the recruitment of contract labor. Nonetheless, contract labor was usually presented as "gainful employment," free of exploitation. It was also justified as a form of developing skill and as a "civilizing experience" ostensibly organized within a system of apprenticeship (Schuler 1986). It is important to point out that not all contract laborers were recruited by coercion or capture. Many, such as the Kru of the Liberian coast and recaptives of Sierra Leone, were recruited not only on the basis of economic incentives but also within institutional frameworks that included local governmental authorities (Banton 1957; Biyi 1929-1930). Although the conditions of recruitment, which included stipulations to return the worker to his home or port of recruitment, were not always fulfilled, labor recruitment in West Africa was well organized and became an important economic enterprise in British and French colonial economies as well as in the Liberian economy of the mid-1890s.

The development of plantation agriculture in the Americas and, by the second half of the nineteenth century, in the African colonies, set in motion an elaborate economic system based on contract labor. This system involved labor recruiting companies, specialized shipping lines, and specialized government agencies (Fyfe 1962; League of Nations 1930). The system of contract labor not only serviced plantations but also provided labor for colonial European expeditions of exploration and pacification and other economic ventures (Wickins 1986).

The British interest in contract labor during the first half of the nineteenth century was for working the plantations of the West Indies and Central and South America. Initially, British policy was to recruit contract workers among recaptives who had been landed in Sierra Leone, the South Atlantic island of St. Helena, and the Seychelles Islands in the Indian Ocean (Schuler 1986; Fyfe 1962). These recaptives were usually "apprenticed" to local employers and settled on or near plantations in British Guiana. Others were transported to Trinidad and Jamaica and signed to contracts for one to five years (Schuler 1980). In 1841, about 425 contract workers were taken from Sierra Leone to British Guiana and about 600 to Jamaica. The objective seems to have been to create communities that would become self-sustaining labor pools as well as economically viable entities (ibid. 1986).

Given the existence of residual forms of the Atlantic slave trade at that time, recaptives were not enthusiastic about emigrating to the West

Indies. By 1843, British authorities in Sierra Leone relaxed the laws governing recruitment and emigration. Between 1843 and 1846, schools that had been set up for the children of recaptives were also serving as centers for the recruitment of child labor for export to the West Indies. A greater element of force became evident in British recruitment practices (ibid. 1980). With lax law enforcement, contract labor recruitment became highly profitable and attracted numerous European firms. The British-chartered Hyde, Hodges and Company of London became the major recruiter and transporter of contract labor for the Caribbean and British Guiana in the late 1840s (ibid. 1986).[4] It is estimated that about 32,000 Africans were taken from Sierra Leone and St. Helena to British colonies in the Caribbean and British Guiana between 1841 and 1867 (Asiegbu 1969).

The economic viability of recruiting and transporting contract labor from Sierra Leone served as an inducement to certain officials of the colonial government to facilitate the process in the form of a commission fee for each person recruited. Moreover, connected with such traffic was commodity trade in food, clothing, and other items. Monica Schuler (1986) has reported that the British Colonial Office estimated that recruiting companies sometimes earned profits as high as 500 to 600 percent by selling provisions for contract laborers.

The French, who had abolished their Atlantic slave trade in 1817, developed an even more elaborate network in contract labor traffic.[5] With the emancipation of slaves in French Guiana, Martinique, and Guadeloupe in the mid-nineteenth century, new sources of labor were sought and recruitment of contract labor increased considerably. French recruitment extended from Goree in Senegal to the estuaries of Gabon, and companies such as the Maison Maes of Nantes were particularly active in Liberia.[6] In Senegal, the French instituted the policy of *engagement à temps* under which Africans could be "engaged" through purchase and then indentured for up to fourteen years to provide labor on French plantations in the Caribbean and in the Indian Ocean.[7] Africans were also indentured to provide military labor in Martinique, French Guiana, and Gabon (ibid.).

Between 1854 and 1862, more than 20,000 contract workers were shipped from West Africa to French Guiana, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. The activities of Chevalier, recruiting agent for Maison Maes of Nantes in the region from Goree to the Ivory Coast, are legendary for their inhuman contract labor practices. So also are those of the Victor Regis Company of Marseilles, which recruited and transported labor from the West Coast to the Caribbean and to Mauritius and the Comoro Islands.[8]

The Portuguese officially abolished slave traffic in 1836 and slavery in 1858; however, both slavery and the slave trade continued under several

guises. The system of *libertos* that was put into effect after the official abolition of slavery made obligatory the provision of services by the former slave to his former master without wages for two or more years (Kloosterboer 1960). Stringent laws against vagrancy carried penalties of labor in the service of the state. By 1878, African resistance to these disguised forms of slavery forced the Portuguese to revise their system of labor conscription and rely upon chiefs and colonial officials. Operating side by side with the new contract labor system were laws against vagrancy. Africans who were not prepared to make themselves available as contract workers were frequently declared to be vagrants and subjected to obligatory labor. By 1902, the requirement of obligatory labor had been imposed by colonial regulations.

Thus the Portuguese contract labor system relied heavily on a companion system of compulsory labor. Together, the two systems serviced Portuguese plantations and transformed the Portuguese colonies into labor reserves for other areas. Contract workers from Angola were taken to São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea to work cocoa plantations that in 1905 produced one-fifth of the world's supply of cocoa. Numerous coffee plantations also existed on these islands. An average of 4,000 Angolans per year were recruited and taken to São Tomé and Príncipe from 1900 to 1910 (Kloosterboer 1960; Mantero 1969). The Portuguese system of labor recruitment, said to have been among the most repressive, was undertaken by Portuguese traders who worked for themselves, for larger companies, or for the state (Duffy 1967). Africans were forcibly recruited as a result of inability to repay loans granted by recruiting agents, through commissions and bribes paid to African chiefs, and through outright raids and kidnaps. Brutal caravans of as many as 1,000 workers at a time would be taken to the coast (Kloosterboer 1960; Mantero 1969).

Portuguese plantation owners also recruited labor from British, German, and other colonial territories in West Africa as well as from Liberia. More than 2,500 contract workers, mainly from Cape Coast and Cape Palmas (Liberia), were recruited in 1875 and 1876 (Mantero 1969). British colonial authorities seemed antagonistic to Portuguese labor recruitment practices in West Africa and constantly found themselves in legal encounters with Portuguese colonial authorities and entrepreneurs.[9] The Portuguese also recruited labor from Cape Verde, where agriculture was poor; in 1903, for example, close to 2,000 contract workers were recruited there for the plantations in São Tomé and Prínicipe (ibid.).

Up to the mid-twentieth century, Portuguese colonies were the labor reserves for South African and European enterprises in southern Africa. A major function of colonial government in this respect was to facilitate the recruitment of labor through the passage of convenient regulations.

Regulations promulgated by Portuguese colonial authorities in 1914 and readjusted in the 1930s reinforced the obligatory nature of contract work for at least six months a year in São Tomé and Príncipe and eight months in Portuguese Guinea. Private entrepreneurs and public agencies could apply to the colonial government for contract workers. In São Tomé, compulsory labor also extended to women between the ages of fourteen and fifty. Many such women were employed on road-building schemes (Davidson 1955).

In summary, the recruitment of contract labor was widespread after the abolition of the slave trade. Contract workers were taken to British, French, and other colonial territories and plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas; they were also recruited for public works, colonial pacification, and exploration purposes. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the largest use of contract labor had shifted to colonial plantations in Africa. As of the 1860s, export of contract workers to the Caribbean and the Americas had virtually ceased. African contract labor in the Caribbean was replaced by labor recruited from Asia, mainly from India and China (Engerman 1986). The antislavery forces of Britain and the United States had increased their pressure against the use of African contract labor, arguing that it represented a continuation of the Atlantic slave trade (Asiegbu 1969). More importantly, the rise of trade in such commodities as palm oil, peanuts, coffee, and cocoa had led to the development of an expanding plantation economy in most colonial territories in Africa (McPhee 1926). The development of cocoa, cotton, coffee, and tea estates in Nigeria and the Gold Coast under British auspices; German tea and coffee estates in the Cameroons and Gabon; Spanish cocoa and coffee plantations in Fernando Po; and Portuguese coffee plantations in São Tomé and Príncipe became the focus of colonial labor recruitment. It was largely for the servicing of commodity trade and the plantation economies of the West African colonies that Liberian labor was desired.

Liberian Contract Labor in the Nineteenth Century

Coastal societies in the area now known as Liberia have engaged in labor exchange with Europeans since the beginning of European expeditions along the West African coast. Mel- and Mande-speaking peoples such as the Gola and Vai maintained a primary role as middlemen in the Atlantic slave trade and thereafter in the export of contract workers. Kwa groups such as the Kru, whose occupancy of the coast has not been dated, are seafaring peoples known to have served not only as middlemen and

operatives in the Atlantic slave trade but also as onshore and offshore wage employees of European slavers and traders.[10]

Labor Recruitment among the Coastal Mande and Mel

The transition from slave traders to exporters of contract labor was not easy for societies such as the Vai and Gola, who had been among the most important slave traders. Although the Liberian government, with the support of the British and United States navies, sought to stamp out all residuals of the Atlantic slave trade during the mid-nineteenth century, societies whose economies and social structures had been geared to the export of slaves took advantage of every opportunity to export slaves in cooperation with Spanish, Portuguese, Brazilian, and Cuban slavers. British firms, especially the firm of Hyde, Hodge and Company, under the justification of an "apprenticeship system" approved by the British government, recruited labor for work in British Guiana and other Caribbean plantations in 1853. Vai and Gola chiefs were all too prepared to recommence the export of slaves under this guise (Holsoe 1977). The company paid the chiefs ten dollars for each person recruited. This, incidentally, was the same amount paid for a slave during the slave trade (see *Liberian Herald*, March 16, 1953).

In 1857, French labor recruiters obtained workers from Vai for export to Réunion, in the Indian Ocean. The cooperation between Vai chiefs and French recruiters in what was essentially the export of slaves continued for about a year (Holsoe 1977). Spanish slavers were also active during this time. In 1860, they exported workers provided by Vai chiefs to plantations in Cuba (ibid.). These practices continued intermittently throughout the nineteenth century with disastrous consequences, to be discussed later, for the social fabric and productivity of the Vai.

Labor Recruitment on the Kru Coast

According to George E. Brooks (1972), the earliest reference to Kru offshore employment relates to a Spanish vessel that stopped at Elmina on the Gold Coast in February 1645. In the eighteenth century, Kru migrated to Freetown and from there were employed on vessels owned by the Sierra Leone Company. By the end of the 1790s, more than 50 Kru were employed as deckhands and in other jobs on British colonial vessels. Kru participation in contract work in the nineteenth century was almost always voluntary. A typical tenure of employment was for eighteen months to two years, after which the migrant worker returned to his home for a

respite and then resumed overseas employment. The Kru were noted for their knowledge of the coast and as skillful navigators. Their services were always sought by Europeans. In the early nineteenth century, the Sierra Leone Company offered cash inducements for Kru workers to establish permanent settlements in Freetown. In 1816, special land was set aside in Freetown as residence for Kru migrant workers (ibid.).

By the mid-nineteenth century, Kru workers were engaged in an assortment of offshore and onshore employment with British and other Europeans. Beginning in the 1830s, Kru were recruited as auxiliary seamen and petty officers on British men-of-war, frigates, and schooners. By mid-century, hundreds of Kru were employed by the British Royal Navy. Many were also employed in the palm oil trade in Nigeria and elsewhere along the coast and traveled to Liverpool and other British ports. United States vessels also recruited them for trade expeditions from as far south as Angola to the United States (ibid.). At least 80 Kru were recruited among almost 600 workers sent to Jamaica and British Guiana in 1841 (Schuler 1986).[11]

As the scramble for territory intensified, so did the recruitment of Kru for many of the European exploratory and pacification expeditions in Africa. In 1833, Kru were recruited by the Rhode Island expedition that attempted to explore the Niger River. The British Niger expeditions of 1833 and 1841 and the 1854 expedition of David Livingstone recruited Kru assistants (Brooks 1972). From 1882 to 1885, Kru were engaged with the French in the Congo campaign and also served as members of the Corps de Gendarmerie, which was organized for the pacification of the Congo. About fifty men were recruited on the Kru coast to handle the first artillery pieces transported up the Congo River in 1883 (ibid.). In 1884 and 1885, more than 250 Kru boatmen were recruited to navigate supply boats through the cataracts of the Nile on British expeditions intended to rescue Gordon at Khartoum (ibid.:52).

Wages paid to contract workers varied with skills, tasks performed, and the reliability of the worker as determined by the employer. In the 1830s and 1840s, for example, Kru workers recruited in Sierra Leone were paid a daily wage of nine pence and ration. Those recruited to serve with exploration expeditions were paid from two to four dollars a month (ibid.). Quite often those employed by the British navy were paid in accordance with the official British naval compensation rates which, by the third quarter of the nineteenth century, included for seamen a base pay of £4 10s. per month with ration (ibid.). In the 1890s, Mary Kingsley (1897) noted that the average monthly wage of a Kru contract worker was £1 a month.

Most frequently, compensation received by contract workers was in both cash and kind, sometimes all in kind. During the mid-nineteenth century, most of those employed aboard European trading vessels

received compensation in trade goods valued from three to five dollars monthly. The trade goods included cloth, guns and gun powder, gin, tobacco, brass rods, household utensils, clothing, fish hooks, needles, and thread. Kingsley observed that each trade item had an exchange value that had been meticulously worked out (cited in brooks 1972:53).

Liberian Contract Labor and the Panama Canal

One of the most widely noted engagements of Liberian workers during the latter part of the nineteenth century was for the construction of the Panama Canal. In 1887, the Liberian government concluded an agreement with Xavier Renée, a French merchant from Libreville, Gabon, who served as agent for the firm of Ferdinand de Lesseps and others who were to construct the canal. The German firm of Woermann and Company served as the government's agent for the recruitment of contract workers at that time. Under the agreement, the government granted permission for the recruitment and export of up to 5,000 persons to work for the canal construction company for a period of one year. The agreement specified that such workers were not to be put to any military service or subjected to inhuman treatment. They were to be transported to the canal construction site and returned home at most fourteen months later at the contractors' expense. Payment for their services was to be made in specie. In case of death before the completion of term, wages were to be paid to the Liberian government for transmission to the family (see "Government Proclamation of Agreement on Panama Canal Labor," Jan. 1887, in U.S. Department of State, *Despatches*, June 9, 1887).

Under the agreement each person recruited was to be paid $10 a month and provided with medical care. An advance of $2.50 was to be made to each worker before his departure. In addition, a cap, a shirt, and a blanket were to be given to each recruit (see RL, "Government Proclamation of Agreement . . . "). The government received $2 in head money per worker (Kuhn 1975). Passport and other fees were also charged by the government. As a safeguard against abuses, the government claimed to have intended to appoint a resident officer in Panama and to dispatch local chiefs to Panama to ascertain conditions for the first set of recruits before more would be sent. The first set, 282 according to official records, landed at Colon in Panama in April, 1887. By the end of that year, 1,006 had arrived. Each worker was given one Colombian peso every two weeks for personal expenses that did not include food and lodging.

Mortality among the workers was high. By the end of the first year, at least 90 out of the 1,006 had died.[12] Despite many deaths and evidence of labor abuses, the Liberian government did not terminate the contract.

Liberian workers were recruited once again in 1897 along with workers from Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and elsewhere on the West Coast. Close to 100 Liberians were among the 500 workers recruited from the subregion in 1897 (ibid.). In sending workers to Panama, the Liberian government had ignored warnings from sources that were aware of the conditions to which workers were subjected in that country.[13]

Government Response to Contract Labor Recruitment

In 1853, following a request to the Liberian government, the British had recruited Liberians as contract workers for Guiana. The Liberian government, finding it difficult to stop indigenous communities from exporting labor and both difficult and impractical to deter the British, sought to regulate and generate revenue from this new source of income. It required that all vessels recruiting Liberian laborers call at Monrovia for inspection and to ensure that all "emigrants" were proceeding voluntarily (*Liberian Herald*, Mar. 16, 1853).[14] Liberian passports were to be issued and the appropriate port fees paid.

By issuing the proclamation of 1853, the Liberian government officially recognized labor recruitment as a permissible practice and a major potential source of income. This policy was restated in 1897 regarding the export of workers to Panama. The government maintained that, given the long-standing practice of labor migration that predated the founding of Liberia, Kru laborers would continue to work on ships and emigrate as laborers to other places with or without the Liberian government's approval. The best that it could do, the government insisted, was to regulate the outflow by enacting appropriate shipping and passport laws and other regulations for the protection of contract workers (see USDS, *Despatches*, "Government of Liberia Reply to Confidential Statement of Concern," June 14, 1887).

By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the volume of labor recruited had become exceedingly high. Jane Jackson Martin (1968) has estimated that British steamers alone recruited as many as 20,000 workers from the Kru Coast each year in the late 1860s. The government found it difficult, however, to raise revenue from this traffic because of the resistance of both European traders and the indigenous societies. The lack of infrastructure to collect taxes was also a major problem.

The enactment of ports of entry laws in the early 1860s was one effort made by the government to limit recruitment of contract labor to designated ports. It hoped thereby to gain an opportunity to supervise and tax the labor traffic as well as other trade. The government also imposed a head tax of two dollars to be paid by recruiting agents for each

worker recruited and four dollars for the recruitment of each worker to be employed in plantation agriculture outside Liberia (Schmokel 1977).

Its continuing inability to ensure collection of the labor head tax drove the government to grant a proprietorship to the German firm of Woermann and Company to serve as the sole agent of the Liberian government in the recruitment of labor. Under the auspices of Woermann, the government netted $10,000 to $12,000 a year in head money (ibid.). In view of the failure of the coffee economy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, labor head money became an important source of government revenues. With the establishment of the receivership when the loan of 1906 was contracted, head money was the only revenue that was exempt from the control of European receivers (Brown [1941] 1981). Needless to say, the government's practice of drawing on this money in advance strengthened the already central role of Woermann in the Liberian economy during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Woermann was to remain the most important firm in Liberia until the outbreak of the First World War (Schmokel 1977).

In addition to receiving head money from the labor traffic, the Liberian government also benefitted from it by imposing taxes on the goods brought in by returning workers. The tendency of customs officers to impose exorbitant discretionary taxes on those goods or confiscate them was a perennial source of tension between indigenous peoples and the Liberian government, particularly along the Kru Coast. These practices contributed to the tension that led to the violent clashes between the Grebo and the government and the attempted secession of Half Cavalla (suburban Cavalla) at the turn of the century. The Liberian government responded to these developments by appointing Grebo customs officers at many of the ports in Grebo country (Martin 1968).

Having failed to turn to agriculture or to cope with the growing importance of European firms, Liberian traders and planters all but disappeared in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Moreover, having contracted the debilitating loan of 1871, the government was hard pressed to meet its obligations. By the turn of the century, the economic importance of labor recruitment had greatly increased—as had its social consequences.

Labor Recruitment and Indigenous Social Structure

The Vai, the Gola, and the coastal Kwa, especially the Dei, Bassa, and Kru, were the indigenous societies most involved as middlemen in the slave trade in the nineteenth century. As the Liberian government solidified its control over trading posts and routes that were previously

under the control of these societies, their direct participation as intermediaries in the residual slave trade of the latter part of the nineteenth century diminished. Still in existence, however, were the indigenous social structures and economic processes of which the Atlantic slave trade had become part.

In virtually all the indigenous societies, wealth and prestige have been and continue to be defined in terms of the number of individuals who are available in the service and under the control of a given ruler, household head, or individual. Thus marriage to many wives, parentage of many children, and control over large lineage segments are perceived to be indications of power, wealth, and prestige. Despite this, as the Atlantic slave trade was terminated, different indigenous societies viewed servitude differently and responded differently to the demands for contract labor. These differences can be seen when, for example, the pattern of labor recruitment is considered in relationship to the different social structures of the Vai and Kru societies.

Labor Recruitment and Vai Social Structure

Before the abolition of slavery, Vai society had developed an elaborate system of servitude. Slave raids by Vai notables or their mercenaries were as important an economic activity as Vai participation in commodity trade. Wealth in Vai society was determined by the number of domestic slaves, pawns, and indentured servants held. Many of these were Kpelle and Bassa acquired also by purchase, failure to redeem pawns, or failure to fulfill long-standing indebtedness (Holsoe 1967). Vai agriculture was completely dominated by slave production. Thus the choice between the use of a slave in agriculture or as an item for sale had been an option in nineteenth-century Vai society.

As the residual slave trade became more hazardous at mid-century and prices increased, many of those in servitude in Vai society were diverted from agriculture and sold. Holsoe (1977) has noted that between 1840 and 1850 up to 15,000 domestic slaves, indentured servants, and pawns were sold annually by Vai middlemen.

When the Liberian government approved the export of contract laborers in 1853, Vai notables continued to export their pawns, domestic slaves, and indentured servants through European labor recruiters as they had previously exported them as slaves. European recruiters continued to pay the same fees for contract workers as slavers had paid for slaves. Although the export of contract labor was said to constitute a different legal transaction, to Vai traders it was a continuation of former patterns of trade in human beings. Realizing this, the Liberian government

attempted to terminate contract labor recruitment in Vai country. But the Vai resisted vigorously, thus accounting, in part, for the many military confrontations throughout the 1860s and 1870s (ibid. 1967).

When export of labor by the Vai was made difficult by the intervention of the Liberian and British governments during the 1860s and 1870s, the Vai deployed their domestic slaves in the prosperous palm oil, palm kernel, and coffee trades. At the same time, although they continued to use their domestic slaves in agriculture, they realized that using them in long-distance trade was more profitable. Their slaves were the porters who carried trade goods over long distances to and from the coast. Thus, while the Gola deployed their servants on coffee plantations during the boom years of the coffee economy, the Vai used theirs in long-distance trade (d'Azevedo 1969–1971; Holsoe 1967).

While the intervention of the government reduced the incidence of unauthorized labor exportation from Vai society, the government's interior policy in the latter half of the nineteenth century encouraged the Vai to acquire indentured servants and pawns. The exactions of taxes in cash by the government, as it tried to impose its authority over the hinterland, induced many heads of households to seek assistance from Vai middlemen by pawning their kinsmen or entering into other forms of debt bondage. Thus, while the government's intervention attempted to curb the incidence of slave exportation among the Vai, its policy of incorporation and occupation further stimulated the economic role of Vai middlemen to engage in human traffic and reinforced Vai structures of servitude.[15]

In the 1890s, the government lifted the embargo on the export of labor from Vai country and permitted it under controlled circumstances. This change of policy was dictated more by the financial desires of the government than by observable changes in Vai practices. Within a very short period, Vai chiefs were, once again, exporting their pawns, domestic servants, and indentured servants. This practice continued intermittently until the Fernando Po crisis of 1930.

Labor Recruitment and Kru Social Organization

Even though Kru societies are less hierarchically stratified than Vai or Gola societies, forms of domestic servitude such as pawning and indentured servitude have been practiced in some Kru communities. Where they existed, however, these practices were more the exception than the general case (Davis 1968). Although the Kru were not usually taken into slavery, they performed the functions of middlemen and intermediaries in the slave trade.[16] Like the Vai's, their coastal location made them

natural intermediaries between Europeans and the interior. Thus, as long as there was an incentive to engage in slave raiding, Kru notables were a menace to their neighbors of the interior. However, the acephalous structure of Kru society could not accommodate servitude as an integral feature. Thus slaves were neither held over long periods nor integrated into Kru society. As a result, the role of Kru middlemen in the slave trade ended with the slave trade without distress to Kru patterns of social organization. Moreover, seagoing employment onshore and offshore had been an integral part of Kru economic and social processes at least since the seventeenth century (Brooks 1972; Biyi 1929-1930; Mekeel 1937). Even as some Kru were engaged as middlemen in the slave trade, others obtained wage employment onshore and offshore simultaneously. Therefore, the shift away from the role of intermediaries in the slave trade to other forms of trade and employment was easy.

Indications of the integration of Kru overseas employment into Kru social processes can be seen in the relationship between the pattern of recruitment of contract labor and the socializing processes of Kru society. When undertaken through Kru social structures, recruitment of contract labor was not done randomly or on the basis of a queue. Rather, it was handled by headmen who were themselves experienced seamen and reputable individuals in their age-set and community. Thus, whether in Kru migrant communities in Freetown or Monrovia or among the Kru communities of the Kru Coast, headmen were directly connected with the indigenous authority structure of Kru society. Their recruits were usually of an age-set lower than themselves. Such recruits were often recommended by their relatives and elders and perceived as apprentices, much as were other young men who stayed at home and served other types of apprenticeships in the socializing processes known as the *gbor*. In many societies, seagoing employment was a required part of the *gbor* training in preparation for the responsibilities of manhood (Davis 1968). This is why the entire community had a stake in the apprentice's first employment overseas (Brooks 1972:9).

A Kru contract worker would usually serve for two years and then return to his village. The demands on his first wages and benefits were enormous. A portion went to the headman who had taught him the trade and was responsible for his well-being. Tributes had to be paid to the elders and chief who approved his voyage, to relatives, and to members of his age-set in order to enhance his standing in the community. After such commitments had been met, the major portion of his take was given to his father to be used as bridewealth in securing a wife for the young man. Although the young worker might be left with nothing after making the appropriate tributes and disposing of his earnings, he would have earned an enormous amount of goodwill, social standing, and prompt endorsement to undertake another voyage. Moreover, the wide

distribution of an individual's resources earned him community help in making a farm or building a house.

Earnings from every succeeding voyage contributed to the securing of wives, the building of a farmstead, and the procurement of farm implements. It was not unusual that, upon his return from overseas employment, a worker would make a gift of a substantial portion of his earnings and acquisitions to his mother or sister. This was an indirect way of saving such resources because gifts made to mothers and favorite sisters were hardly ever demanded by other relatives or community authorities to be put to other purposes. They could be stored for later use by the giver (Brooks 1972).

Wives were responsible for cultivating the land. In this way, each wife supported herself and her children by cultivating rice, cassava, or peanuts.[17] The quantity and quality of a wife's production contributed to the social standing of her husband. The man's relatives supervised and protected his wives when he was away. The tributes and gifts made to them were in acknowledgment of their support during his absence.

Contract labor performed by the Kru was often exploitative. It was not unusual for workers to return without anything, having been short-landed (put off the boat short of their destination), robbed, or cheated. Many died abroad. Nonetheless, seagoing employment was a major source of capital accumulation and a significant part of the socializing processes among the Kru. Thus, in many Kru societies, prestige, assessment of leadership ability, and overall achievement were often related to a man's overseas or seagoing experiences.

As the Liberian government intervened in these relationships, the element of exploitation increased. The resistance of the Kru to the government's control of ports on the Kru Coast and of the flow of labor abroad continued well into the mid-twentieth century. The incorporation of the Kru pattern of recruiting contract workers under the aegis of the Liberian government substantially changed its character. The effect was to increase the exploitative factors associated with the appropriation of the wages and resources of the worker without affording him the benefit of community assistance. As Kru headmen became selected by and/or accountable to government labor and tax agents, the nature of their relationship with seagoing apprentices was significantly altered; so also was the nature of the relationship of the apprentices with their communities. A discussion of the events leading to the Fernando Po crisis will clarify this point.

Labor Recruitment and the Fernando Po Crisis

By the turn of the twentieth century, despite the Panama disaster, the government was still encouraging contract labor recruitment. The granting

of more recruitment permits was both a means of earning revenues and a response to the pressure of the colonial powers who wanted to recruit Kru and Grebo labor (Foley 1965). The French particularly were keen on ensuring unimpeded access to Kru and Grebo labor as a condition for the settlement of the southeastern border (Murdza 1981).

In 1897, the Liberian government gave a four-year labor concession to a German firm. Shortly after the turn of the century, German shippers attempted to recruit contract workers for plantations in the Cameroons, as did the Spanish for plantations in Fernando Po (Buell [1928] 1965). The government seemed reluctant to approve these requests, but in 1903 it enacted legislation regulating and taxing the recruitment of labor.

According to the law, every recruiting agency was to obtain a government-issued license at a cost of $250 and make a deposit of $150 as guarantee of the workers' return. Recruiters were also charged head money of $5 per worker recruited and prohibited from recruiting workers under twenty-one years of age. Wages were to range from 24 to 36 cents a day (ibid.: 777). In 1904, the government prohibited the recruitment of workers from the western and central coastal areas apparently because of pressure from employers of farm labor there.

Frequent reports of abuse of workers led the government to enact a new law in 1908 that imposed a fine of $50 for violations of the conditions of recruitment or mistreatment. The new law also ordered that all workers be returned to port of embarkation and be strictly accounted for by the recruiting agency. The act further reinforced the prohibition on the recruitment of workers from Montserrado and Bassa counties (ibid.:775). The promulgation of the law did not solve the problem because the government lacked the capacity to enforce it. Thus abuses continued. Workers were often recruited and left stranded without pay or short-changed in their pay. Many were off-loaded at ports down the West Coast and had to find their own way back to their homes. Moreover, the conditions under which they worked in the plantations of the West Coast left much to be desired.

In 1913, the British government lodged a complaint with the Liberian and Spanish governments that Liberian workers exported to Fernando Po were working under slave-like conditions. The Liberian government sent a mission to Fernando Po that same year to investigate. Displeased with the conditions of workers on Spanish plantations on the island, the Liberian government threatened to terminate the export of labor until the conditions were improved. In the same year, the Liberian government also imposed a ban on the export of workers to the Portuguese colony of Príncipe after reports of an outbreak of sleeping sickness on that island (ibid.:778).

The Convention of 1914

Negotiations between the Liberian government and Spanish colonial authorities culminated in the signing of an agreement known as the Convention of 1914. According to the agreement, the Liberian government was to establish a consular office in Fernando Po with rights to inspect the conditions of workers on the plantations, hear grievances, and ensure that they were investigated. A government-appointed labor agent was to be assigned to each port of embarkation to supervise recruitment and departure processes.[18] These agents were to be responsible to the Liberian customs authorities of the various counties. The Spanish Governor of Fernando Po was to appoint a recruiting agent who would work in Liberia under the supervision of the Spanish consul in Monrovia. He was to ensure that Spanish shippers, local recruiters, and others involved in recruiting and transporting workers observed the laws of Liberia.

The agreement also set a minimum tenure of one year and a maximum of two years for workers on the plantations of Fernando Po. Workers were to be properly documented and the Spanish consul and recruiting agents were to guarantee payment of wages, one-half of which was to be paid in "English money" upon the return of the worker and in the presence of the labor agent of the Liberian government at the port of disembarkation. The other half was to be paid in monthly installments in local currency in Fernando Po. Any party could terminate the agreement after giving six months' notice.

Collusion and Abuses

Both the Spanish colonial authorities and the Liberian government were pleased with the 1914 agreement. Fernando Po employers, especially the small plantations that did not possess the recruiting infrastructure available to owners of larger plantations, were expected to benefit from lower-wage labor (Sundiata 1980). The Liberian government was also deeply in debt and most of its customs and other revenues were under the supervision of the international receivership established as a result of the 1906 loan. Revenues from the export of contract workers, it will be remembered from Chapter 8, were exempt from the supervision of the receivership.

Moreover, the capacity of the Liberian government to control Liberian territory was steadily improving. At the insistence of the British and French, the Liberian Frontier Force had been organized, and an interior administration based on the system of indirect rule (described in

Chapter 8) was being put in place. Several districts had already been created and were being administered by district commissioners assisted by indigenous chiefs, many of whom were appointed by the Liberian government. With increased control over the interior, government use of indigenous laborers as porters and in the construction of roads and military barracks had considerably increased. Thus, by 1914, the Liberian government had substantially improved its capacity to recruit and deploy labor.

This deployment was multifaceted. Indigenous labor, in addition to its use for public works, was also being used in increasing quantities for export to Fernando Po and other European plantations on the West Coast. Moreover, interior communities were required to provide weekly quotas of food and other items to the newly established administrative headquarters of the interior and to Frontier Force detachments. These allotments were locally produced and were distinct from other taxes that had to be paid in cash (League of Nations 1930).

Thus it is within the framework of expanding government control that the provisions of the Convention of 1914 must be assessed. First, there was an urgent demand for labor and for taxes; second, the government's capacity to recruit labor and collect taxes had been improved with the establishment of the interior administration and the Frontier Force. Third, the structure set up by the Convention of 1914 had improved the government's capacity to extract resources from workers.

In 1917, Woermann's control over labor recruitment was terminated because of the war as well as the government's improved capacity to administer the recruiting system.[19] The new system provided enormous opportunities for both personal enrichment and increased government revenues. For example, the Liberian consul general in Santa Isabel, Fernando Po, was to receive two shillings on every worker put to work on the island and four shillings on every one released for repatriation (Buell 1928). The former was apparently to cover his administrative costs and the latter to take care of contingencies associated with repatriation. In addition to receiving head money of four dollars for every worker recruited, the Liberian government was to receive one dollar head tax—as levied upon all indigenous individuals—and passport fees.[20] There were also the government's labor agents who operated with the Spanish recruiting agent to calculate the half pay due returning workers. Since most of the workers were illiterate, they were forced to rely on the honesty of these officials. Thus evidence of collusion between recruiting officers and government agents was not a surprising discovery (League of Nations 1930). It is also not surprising that the government lifted the ban on recruitment from Montserrado and Bassa and, in 1918, authorized the re-engagement of workers who had been recruited in 1915 for an additional two-year tenure (Sundiata 1980).

Having expanded its hegemony over the hinterland, the government completely controlled labor recruitment and was tapping it for public and private purposes. Frontier Force officers, district commissioners, and chiefs were the chief recruiters—each obtaining a fee or receiving some other type of incentive. After the implementation of the 1914 regulations, the indigenous system of recruitment and payment of tributes had been superseded by a nationally integrated system of recruitment, and both the elements of compulsion and the tributes paid by contract workers increased. Buell (1928:775) has noted that Kru labor recruited in Monrovia upon returning was now faced with an extensive list of expenses. In addition to the gifts for the local Kru governor, each worker had to pay one shilling into the Kru Town Municipal Fund for the maintenance of roads, the governor's house, and other facilities; sanitation tax of three and a half shillings; government head tax; and headman fees. Additionally, customs officers stood ready to levy import taxes on the goods brought home by workers or to appropriate them for themselves under the guise of confiscation for failure to pay taxes. The practice of taxing and confiscating the goods of returning workers continued unchecked even though in 1908 an act was passed exempting from taxes many of the returning workers' personal items (Sundiata 1980).

There were also debts to be paid for food, clothing, and other items procured by wives and children during the worker's absence (ibid.). It was not unusual that a returning worker was left stranded in an urban community without the goodwill, enhanced social status, and community assistance that were available in his own village. The pressure to collect taxes from contract workers was so great that, on several occasions, Kru and Grebo chiefs on the coast appealed to the United States government, the ACS, and the "international community" to intervene in order to relieve their societies from unjust exactions imposed by the Liberian government. In 1910, Chief Gyude, a Grebo, wrote to the ACS seeking redress (Martin 1968). The imposition of arduous taxes and the control of ports were also salient issues that triggered uprisings by some Kru societies against the Liberian government in 1915 (Sullivan 1988).

Reports continued to reach Monrovia of mistreatment of contract workers, especially in the Spanish colonies. On a number of occasions, Spanish ships were accused of dumping workers in Monrovia or elsewhere instead of taking them to their home ports. The British government also expressed concern to the Liberian government about these reports. In early 1921, the Liberian government announced its intention of canceling the agreement under which workers were exported to Fernando Po (Sundiata 1980). The traffic continued, however. Then came an incident, involving the Liberian consul general in Fernando Po, that played a major role in bringing the traffic to a halt. In 1924, the consul general was prevented from inspecting cocoa plantations and was arrested

and detained while attempting to meet with Liberian workers on the island. The Liberian government broke relations with the Spanish colony and claimed indemnity of $2,000. Spanish planters, who feared the termination of the labor traffic, raised the money and paid the claims through the Spanish colonial authorities. The public outcry against the incident could not be ignored by the Liberian government.

The Labor Contract of 1928

The suspension of the export of contract labor to Fernando Po posed a serious problem for Spanish plantations there. Most of their workers had been recruited from the Spanish-controlled mainland enclave of Rio Muni and from Liberia.[21]

Although the Liberian government refused to enter into new agreements with the Spanish authorities to supply labor to Fernando Po, it did not prevent individual Liberians from doing so.[22] In 1928, representatives of a group of Spanish planters who were organized as the Sindicato Agricola de Guinea signed a two-year agreement with a group of Liberians organized into a recruitment company headed by former vice president Samuel A. Ross, Jr. At the time, Ross was postmaster general in the government of President C. D. B. King. Another member of Ross's recruitment agency was E. G. W. King, the president's brother. Vice President Allen Yancy, who operated a recruitment agency in Cape Palmas, was a subcontractor.

Ross in Sinoe and Yancy in Cape Palmas were the most powerful leaders in their counties. Both were heads of the local proprietary groups that dominated county political life. Therefore, their official positions and political authority could not be separated from their private involvement in labor recruitment. Both men had in fact been involved in it earlier in the decade. It is clear that, because of the involvement of such influential people of high office, labor recruitment was never terminated despite the abuses that were constantly reported.[23]

President King had known of these incidents and had either ignored or excused them.[24] Although the record is scanty, it is clear that there were other Liberians who either subcontracted or maintained labor recruiting agencies of their own. For example, a Liberian known as Alhaj Massaquoi was the agent of the Danish firm E. & H. Nissen of Copenhagen. The latter was a concessionaire in the French Congo, and it was to engage in logging operations in the French Congo that Liberian workers were recruited for this company in the 1920s (League of Nations 1930).

The agreement of 1928 should be considered against this background of prior engagement in labor export by an assortment of Liberian

government officials and their subagents using the instrumentality of the government. Under the agreement, 3,000 workers were to be recruited for Spanish plantations in Fernando Po. The syndicate was to pay the recruiting agency £9 or U.S. $45 per worker and provide a bonus of £1,000 for each 1,500 workers recruited. Transportation from the ports of Greenville and Harper to Fernando Po was the responsibility of the syndicate.

The recruiting agency, in turn, would pay all taxes and fees. These included government head money of $4.00 per worker and assorted taxes that totalled $2.50. Each worker was to be advanced $5.00 and provided with money to buy food during the interim between recruitment and travel. Most often, workers were required to bring their own food from their villages when recruited.[25]

Each worker was to earn one pound ten shillings a month plus food. One half of the wages was to be given in pesetas in Fernando Po and the other half in British or American currency upon the return to the port of embarkation. From April 1928 to the end of 1929, 2,431 workers were shipped under the agreement.

Economic Ramifications of the 1928 Agreement

When investigated closely, the economic transactions related to the export of labor can be seen to involve virtually the entire society, not only specific officials of government and their operatives.[26] For example, an affidavit had to be obtained for each worker. Local lawyers were hired to process these documents at ten shillings five pence per affidavit. Some lawyers were permanently retained by foreign consulates and European shippers, others entered the proceedings as representatives of workers who sought "just compensation." In some instances, such foreign representatives as vice consuls were Liberians. Local women operated hostels for the accommodation of workers until their departure. The operators of these hostels received five shillings for each worker accommodated. In addition to the district commissioners, Frontier Force officers, chiefs, and headmen, there were the itinerant subagents and labor canvassers who assisted with the coordination of recruitment at the coast. Thus, as an economic activity, labor export ramified throughout the society. In 1928–1929, for example, recruitment of 2,431 workers at $45 per worker meant an infusion of $109,395 into the economy.

The League of Nations Inquiry

The abuses that occurred under the 1928 Fernando Po agreement were no worse than those experienced previously. Because of the hotly

contested presidential elections of 1927, however, an international glare was cast over the shipment of labor under the agreement. The defeated candidate, Thomas J. R. Faulkner, a first-generation immigrant from the United Sates, protested the election results and published an account of forced labor in Liberia in an American newspaper. The publication stirred British and later American governn ent concern, eventually leading to an investigation by the League of Nations.[27]

The investigations that were sparked by the export of labor under the Fernando Po agreement of 1928 revealed incredible accounts of forced labor and a variety of other abuses by government officials acting in their private capacities and by chiefs and headmen. These abuses ranged from failure to fully compensate returning workers to clear evidence of forced labor and practices analogous to slavery.[28] There was also evidence of official connivance and the exploitation of intertribal feuds to recruit workers for export. The Wedabo Beach incident was an extraordinary example of what appeared to be the complicity of the president in the misuse of his office to assist in the forcible recruitment of workers for export.[29] The consequences of the labor recruitment practices utilized in Liberia have been starkly summarized by the report of the International Commission of Inquiry of the League of Nations in the following statement:

> Although all laborers to Fernando Po have not been forced, it is quite clear that force has been relied upon for numbers; that the blind eagerness for private profit has carried the traffic to a point scarcely distinguishable from slavery; and that only by help of the instruments and offices of Government could the traffic have reached such tragic effectiveness. A great deal could be said of the danger, everywhere evident, to the wholesome economic development of the country, the deserted villages, neglected farms, "hungry time." At least an important element of the native population, which is without doubt the strength of the country, cannot look but with restless, harried dissatisfaction upon the general abuses of the machinery by which they are ruled. [League of Nations 1930:46]

Although the Fernando Po crisis gave rise to the investigation of how labor was recruited and used in Liberia, exportation of contract labor was not the sole problem. Indigenous practices of domestic slavery, indentured servitude, and pawning have already been noted. Unfortunately, as the government increased its control over indigenous communities, its intervention by means of indirect rule in many cases exacerbated these abuses. Some efforts were made to terminate certain forms of domestic servitude. But exactions of taxes, imposition of judicial and administrative fines, labor quotas for porterage, public works, and

private and concession plantations accentuated domestic servitude instead of reducing it.[30]

Although the government spoke out against domestic slavery, the cost of redeeming individuals from it was rising. In 1912, for example, in Vai society and among certain Loma, Gola, and Kpelle who maintained domestic servants, the price for redeeming a woman from domestic servitude was four pounds. It must be remembered that women were the primary tillers of the soil. By 1920, six pounds was required to redeem a woman (League of Nations 1930:13).

The scope and incidence of pawning were not declining. The league's report showed considerable evidence that demands for taxes and fines for delinquencies in connection with road work were subject to pawning.[31] Moreover, it was shown that the controversy surrounding the provision of labor quotas for road building or public works concerned not only the actual recruiting of men for the tasks, but the responsibility of the communities for supplying tools and food for the men and for accepting collective liability for any offense committed by a worker.

Conscription for road work was often handled by government labor agents. They also recruited workers for export and for private plantations to punish them for having evaded recruitment for other purposes. Most importantly, laborers conscripted for public works or porterage were not paid. In this fundamental respect, labor conscription practices as a form of servitude exercised by the Liberian government differed from those in the African colonies dominated by European powers (Buell 1928; League of Nations 1930).

Ironically, the construction of roads was not always perceived as an improvement. Easy access to communities often led to their decimation. The increased conscription that resulted from easy access often led villagers to flee. Thus indigenous societies were confronted with a situation in which local patterns of labor exploitation became a part of a complex set of economic and political relationships and a strategy for the development of a "national infrastructure" based principally on the exploitation of indigenous labor. This development, which was accelerated by the decline of the coffee and palm oil trades in the latter part of the nineteenth century, reached its maturity in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The arrival of Firestone in 1926 was facilitated by and, in turn, reinforced this pattern of labor exploitation (see Chapter 10).

Consequences of the Labor Crisis

The League of Nations investigations produced a number of summary findings and recommendations whose implementation had far-reaching

consequences not only for labor relations in Liberia but for the nature of social organization in Liberian society. The investigations concluded that the indigenous practices of domestic servitude and pawning were analogous to slavery, and that the Liberian government had not exercised its best effort to eliminate those practices but, as in the case of pawning, had accepted or even indulged them. It also asserted that, although there was no indication of the practice of slavery by the government, contract workers were recruited "under conditions of criminal compulsion scarcely distinguishable from slave raiding and slave trading, and frequently by misrepresenting the destination" (League of Nations 1930:84).

On the question of local plantation labor, the commission accused the government of misusing its authority to undertake recruitment of workers for private purposes. It further accused the government of using forced labor for public works, porterage, and the use of private citizens, and asserted that Vice President Yancy, county superintendents, district commissioners, and other high officials had "given their sanction for the compulsory recruitment of labor by the aid and assistance of the Liberian Frontier Force."

The commission recommended, among many measures, that the contract labor policy and the practices of pawning and domestic servitude be terminated; that interior policy undergo "reconstruction" and that interior administration be reorganized; that a civil service be instituted; and that there be a readjustment of the duties of and "much stricter control" over the soldiers of the Frontier Force.[32]

The findings and recommendations of the commission had a profound impact on Liberian society. The exposure of the Liberian government to international censure was a development that demoralized settler society to its core and severely undermined its claim to a "civilizing mission." The condemnation did not evoke a reaction of settler solidarity because government labor practices had long been a source of criticism by many settlers and educated Liberians of indigenous background.[33] There was a sense, however, that by his own indirect involvement and more importantly, his failure to protect the society from disrepute, the president was culpable.

As soon as the commission's findings were published in late 1930, a number of citizens' caucuses were held in Monrovia and around the country. The consensus in settler society was for the impeachment of the president. Having lost his moral authority, President King was forced to resign in December 1930. Vice President Yancy also resigned.[34]

The effort to preserve the integrity of the presidency was not sufficient to avoid major tensions in Liberian society. A deeper wedge now existed between settler society and the indigenous societies, especially those communities whose leaders had provided testimony to the

commission. Among indigenous leaders who had often felt threatened by the authority of the Liberian government, there was now the perception of the existence outside Liberia of a higher political authority to which grievances could be directed and from which redress could be sought. The authority of the Liberian government was grossly diminished by the international censure to which Liberia had been subjected.

For almost ten years after the League of Nations report, the Liberian government struggled to reassert its control over the indigenous societies. Its authority was repudiated on the Kru Coast, among the Vai, and in many Kpelle societies.[35] The government also engaged in numerous acts of recrimination against those societies whose peoples or influential elders testified against its labor policies. In addition to engaging in acts of recrimination and the pacification of indigenous societies by the Frontier Force, the Liberian government sought to reorganize interior administration to enhance its control. New interior regulations were promulgated in 1932 creating new hinterland districts and amalgamating districts into provinces to be administered by provincial commissioners. New Frontier Force posts were established and the authority of the Poro in the resolution of local disputes was severely curtailed.

The misuse of the authority of chiefs in labor export further undermined the authority of many of them among their people. The appointment of chiefs by the government, a practice that had steadily evolved since the establishment of the interior bureaucracy, had already been a source of tension. As a result of the government's labor policy, chiefs in many parts of the interior were now viewed as an integral part of the machinery that waged war upon its own people.

The government not only sought to tighten control over indigenous societies but also to stifle dissent within settler society. Sweeping sedition laws, emergency powers laws, and press censorship laws were promulgated. The net effect of these developments was the substantial increase of the powers of the president.

The abolition, as the commission had recommended, of the indigenous practices of pawning and domestic servitude had a most profound impact. The social structures of the Vai, Kpelle, and certain Loma and Gola societies were drastically transformed by this ruling. The termination of servitude and the release of domestic servants undermined the social status of many Vai chieftains, reducing them to poverty virtually overnight. Vai agriculture collapsed when the "Vai-ized" Kpelle "servant" farmer migrated to Kpelle societies. Similarly, enormous dislocations occurred in Kpelle society as Kpelles who had been uprooted, in some cases for over several generations, returned to their "homeland."

The impact on the societies of the Kru Coast was just as drastic. The continued pacification campaigns of the government and the pursuit of

recalcitrant chiefs resulted in the destruction of many villages, towns, and farms. Moreover, abolishing the compulsory export of labor led to the expansion of opportunities for voluntary wage labor, and thus to increased migration from the Kru Coast to Monrovia and other cities in Liberia and elsewhere on the West Coast. This exodus contributed to the decimation of societies on the Kru Coast.

Economic failures in the nineteenth century, colonial labor demands, and failure to develop indigenous human resources led to exploitation of unskilled indigenous labor as the major economic activity of the Liberian society for a half-century. The exploitation was facilitated by and, in turn, reinforced labor practices that were already culturally entrenched within indigenous Liberian societies. This development deepened the wounds within Liberian society, debilitated its population, retarded agriculture, and weakened its social fabric.

The heavy-handed repression by government and the resultant widespread alienation were responsible for the further strengthening of presidential authority and the ready acceptance of the gratuitous but largely benevolent dictatorial rule of Tubman. He further consolidated autocratic rulership in Liberia for a quarter of a century under the peculiar exigencies of a postwar reconstruction economy after the Second World War.

★ 10 ★

Property Rights and Concessions in Modern Liberia

THE NATURE OF THE RIGHTS to the use of resources, including labor, and their enforcement convey a deep political meaning that is of fundamental importance at the constitutional level of a social order (Loveman 1976). The transformation of property rights in Liberia in the early decades of the twentieth century was of such profound magnitude that it provided the foundation of a new constitutional order, an order that remained essentially intact throughout the twentieth century despite a military coup, the writing of a new constitution, and the declaration of a "second republic."

I will first summarize the principles of property rights that were applied in indigenous and settler societies in the nineteenth century. I will then show how relationships involving property in land, labor, and other resources were transformed by the assumption of sovereign authority by the Liberian government over the hinterland and the granting of concessions for the production of rubber, iron ore, and other commodities. I will also discuss the alliances that developed among foreign and local proprietors and the Liberian government as a result of mutual proprietary interests, and the legal and social institutions developed for the protection of those interests. These constitute the foundations of authority relations in modern Liberia.

Property Rights in Nineteenth-Century Liberia

Throughout the nineteenth century, Liberia was nothing more than a number of coastal enclaves dominated by the settlers who strove to

influence, if not to control, the larger political environment. Imperiled by their own social and economic constraints and aspirations and by a rapidly expanding European imperial presence, the settlers strove to impose their authority on the indigenous communities. At the core of the social and economic constraints that separated settler society from the indigenous societies were differences in conceptions and practices regarding property in land, labor, and other resources.

Property Rights in Indigenous Societies

Certain basic principles of property relations existed in most, if not all, indigenous societies. Among these principles was the conception of land as the property of the founding ancestors, left in the custody of current elders whose descent pattern was linked to those ancestors. Thus the residual ownership of land was communal and inalienable.

Usufructuary rights were recognized and assigned to lineage segments, households, or individuals based on patterns involving lineage associations, customs, and traditions. These rights were usually not transferable to nonlineage members, although opportunities existed for nonkin to be adopted as kin. Any transfer outside the lineage was a matter for community-wide decision. The cultivation of household farms was based upon usufructuary rights. The produce of such farms was household property entrusted to the custody of the head of the household; private property rights were recognized in the fruits of additional individual production that resulted from individual initiative. Private property rights in the ownership of tools and equipment were also recognized, although the social obligations associated with such rights were enormous and, quite often, laborious.

Rights of inheritance to private property and, in some cases, of usufruct in land were usually recognized. However, descent patterns of inheritance differed among societies. Most societies were dominated by patrilineal descent patterns and observed residual property rights based on matrilineal and other consanguineous and associational affiliations. The payment of rent in substantial kind, or in symbolic tribute, was often required for the use of land outside of one's lineage segment or immediate descent group.

These principles, with variations over time and between groups, guided property relations and constituted the basis of authority relations in the indigenous societies. Thus the descendants of the founding ancestors or "masters of the land" were always the most significant among the political authorities of each society. Property rights were fused with political authority and resided with the elders of the society operating

either as a communal council, or a secret society, or both. They constituted the governing authorities and the instruments of conflict resolution. These were patrimonial forms of political order.

Closely associated with the principles of property rights in land were those pertaining to the role of the individual in society. Through their internal dynamics and interaction in the region, indigenous communities developed forms of social stratification that included domestic servitude. In many societies, social stratification was based on social distance to the core or founding lineage. In all societies, however, some degree of social mobility was possible as a result of individual achievement. By and large, human beings had standing based on ascriptive status and were viewed as social beings belonging to ("owned by") the lineage or the collectivity (Wai 1980; Legesse 1980). This conception of the individual not only guided indigenous patterns of production. More importantly, it was also adaptive to the persistent conditions of warfare in the wider region and, eventually, to the requirements of the Atlantic and other types of slave trade, and to the demands of settler society functioning as a political entity.

Nevertheless, these social arrangements, coupled with a low level of technology and tumultuous and persistent social upheavals, created indigenous political communities that were relatively unstable. Centuries of rivalry, fighting, and tumultuous movements in the region, precipitated by such forces as the collapse of empires, the Atlantic and other slave trades, the jostling associated with other forms of legitimate trade, the European imperial intrusions of the nineteenth century, and the establishing of the Liberian settlements, placed limits upon productivity and the development of more complex social institutions.

The most complex economic relations that developed among the indigenous communities were based largely on servile labor whether in long-distance commodity trade, the slave trade or, later, contract labor and migration. The failure to develop a beast of burden or to adapt one was conspicuous in the region. This was a consequence of trypanosomiasis, carried by the tsetse fly and fatal to horses, cattle, and other large animals. The conditions of social upheaval, migration, and intermittent warfare continued until European imperial penetration pressed the settler government to establish effective occupation over the interior.

Property Rights in Settler Society

Property rights in land in settler society were based on principles of freeholdership and were associated with a concept of liberty and self-reliant development. Ownership of land was a requirement for voting, holding public office, and exercising other rights of citizenship. It was

perceived as evidence of maturity and, in this sense, an indication that the rite of passage to full citizenship had been completed.

Every settler was granted access to a town lot and several acres of farmland to be developed as a homestead. This access, however, was converted into ownership only upon improvement of the land by construction of a home on it and cultivation of the farmland. Property rights in land were also acquired through the Bounty Land program, initiated as compensation to veterans and members of the militia, and by outright purchase. All individual property rights were held in fee simple. Rights of inheritance were respected and there was no restriction on the quantity of land that an individual could own.

Land ownership was restricted to individual citizens and associations of citizens. However, non-Liberian charitable and social institutions, such as missionary societies, were granted title to land for their specific purposes. Such land was subject to forfeiture if used for purposes other than those specified. Instructions issued by the ACS in June 1820 specified that only persons actually residing in the settlements should hold land and that only blacks were eligible for citizenship. By 1836, the link between land ownership and citizenship had been clearly established so that only blacks were eligible to become citizens and own land.[1]

Although the principles underlying property rights in land were designed by the ACS to encourage the development of democratic communities of smallholders, agrarian democratic institutions did not universally develop as intended. This failure can be traced to the historical circumstances surrounding the establishment of Liberian society and to the mode of production then prevailing in the region.

The machinations of the merchants who initially constituted the ruling elites of the new society, the existence of a generally negative attitude toward agricultural work, and the lack of an agrarian orientation in the social environment militated against the establishment and survival of democratic institutions based on conceptions of smallholder property. The single-minded extraction of natural trade goods, and later, the subordination of local merchants to European traders more concerned with recruiting labor than with stimulating agriculture, combined (as we saw in Chapter 7) to stifle production of coffee and other commodities.

Even the itinerant traders who served as brokers between the indigenous societies and the settlers were largely political rather than business entrepreneurs. The failure to develop an infrastructure to facilitate trade and the competing demands on indigenous labor for porterage, public works, and export detracted from the economic prospects of these middlemen. As a result, they were either rewarded with land grants that they failed to develop, mainly because labor was scarce, or with positions in the government bureaucracy.[2]

Another important aspect of settler society was the conception of property rights in human labor. Having emerged from conditions of servitude in the Americas, the settlers subscribed to the proposition of an inherent equality of human beings and respect for the integrity of the human person. These principles were supported by the Judaeo-Christian foundations of the "civilizing mission." Nonetheless, the operational principles that guided settler practices regarding property rights in human labor were based on a distorted notion of the "civilizing mission," and were quite similar to the prevailing European view about Africans. Conversion to Christianity, the assumption of a Christian name, and the attainment of literacy skills were the informal criteria for indigenous people to become citizens, obtain ownership of land in fee simple, and become recognized as human equals. Although these criteria emerged through customary and informal practices, they frequently did constitute legal rules for becoming "civilized." Thus the determination of "civilized" behavior was often left to the prevailing circumstances within settler community and the sentiments of its leaders.

The dominance of merchant over agrarian interests and the development of merchant political authority favored the creation of a merchant-dominated patrimonial order. This was accomplished by the domination of property rights in land and labor by merchants who exercised political authority. The linking of land ownership to notions of good citizenship was not the only method by which property rights in land and emergent agrarian tendencies were subordinated to trading interests. The same effect was achieved by the abrogation of labor rights through the use of political authority and economic resources to create an extensive network of couriers, itinerant traders, and labor recruiters who were also government functionaries. Thus the subordination of property rights in land to property rights in trade and the merger of these with political authority exercised by merchants constituted the essence of a merchant-dominated patrimonial regime. The circle of leading merchants was the patriarchy of society. The resulting system of social stratification placed manumitted slaves and recaptives who toiled in agriculture at the bottom of the social order and urban merchants at the top.

For about a century after the founding of the Liberian settlements, life in the region was dominated by patrimonial regimes based on these principles of property rights. It was not until the turn of the century, when Europeans demanded that Liberia provide evidence of its capacity to exercise sovereign authority, that the settler proprietary regime redefined property rights to accord with its new interests, and established a fundamentally different constitutional order that became the foundation of modern Liberia. I will now examine property rights as they developed under the sovereign authority of the Liberian state.

Sovereignty and Property Rights

The pacification of the hinterland was virtually complete by 1925. A rudimentary infrastructure of interior administration had been established. Little by little, these administrative structures were modified to create smaller jurisdictions based on subethnic categories, and to incorporate these units into larger jurisdictions also based on ethnic factors.

The pacification of the interior and the establishment of an administrative machinery confronted indigenous communities with major changes. First of all, the pacification campaigns, ruthless in execution, achieved a high level of stability in the region. Thereafter, people and goods moved with minimal obstruction. However, this stability also imposed a freeze on the continuing transformations that had characterized indigenous political communities over the centuries. These communities now became permanent fixtures locked into specific identities and locations. The administrative adjustments made by the Department of the Interior further accentuated the communities' ethnic character and increased their ethnically derived sense of identity.

Second, by virtue of the exercise of sovereignty, the Liberian government established new laws transferring residual ownership of land from the indigenous societies to itself. Liberian "sovereign" authority became the new "master of the land," undermining the authority of the indigenous political communities. Laws earlier promulgated by the Liberian government recognized essentially two types of property rights in land: public and private. All lands within the borders of settler society to which private titles had *not* been obtained were considered public land "owned" and controlled by the Liberian government. Under the new rules associated with sovereign authority over the interior, limited property rights in narrowly delimited "tribal land" were extended to indigenous communities.

Tribal Lands

The *Liberian Code of Laws* specifies that "each tribe is entitled to the *use* of as much of the *public land* in the area inhabited by it as is required for farming and other enterprises essential to tribal necessities. It shall have the right to the possession of such land as against any person whomsoever" (RL, *Liberian Code 1956*, 1, chap. 11, sec. 270:60; my emphasis). Although the law holds out the possibility of "possession," indigenous societies are not automatically granted ownership to the land they long occupied.

In order to acquire possession of tribal lands, the appropriate "tribal authority" is required to apply to the president and bear the cost of delimiting the land. Such lands are then considered "communal holdings." The "tribal authorities" are considered trustees over such holdings but cannot sell them. "Communal holdings" can be used by persons other than members of the ethnic community. Outsiders may petition the chief and agree to "pay some token in the nature of rent, such as five or six bunches of rice out of every farm" and the hut taxes associated with the property in order to obtain use of communal holdings (ibid., sec. 273:61). Thus it is clear that communal holdings confer user rights to indigenous communities and, with the permission of the indigenous communities, to outsiders. At the same time, these arrangements do limit the ability of the indigenous communities to extract the economic rent for the use of land by outsiders. The major beneficiaries of such rental arrangements would be the outsiders themselves and the government that collects the hut tax or taxes on other improvements. With ownership of communal holdings vested in the sovereign authority of the Liberian state, the chief and the district commissioner are the two major authorities in making decisions regarding the right of outsiders to use communal holdings. The risks are great that no one will have incentives to preserve communal rights preempted by the authority of the state. Thus the exercise of property rights in land by lineage segments and descent groups is severely weakened. By contrast, communal holdings become available for private plantations under indefinite tenure to well-connected individuals.

The only provision available to guarantee and protect indigenous access to communal holdings is to convert them into family holdings. However, according to law, only when "a tribe shall become sufficiently advanced in civilization" may it "petition the government for a division of the tribal land into family holdings" (ibid., sec. 272:60–61). That this provision is problematical is readily apparent. First, it requires evidence of collective evolution to "civilized" status. Second, it provides no specific legal criteria for determining when that evolution has occurred.

In addition to the provisions of the Tribal Lands Law just cited, several laws regarding property rights in human labor also impinge upon the exercise of property rights in land in indigenous communities. One such law has to do with "exemptions from porterage and other tribal labor." Under chapter 10, section 252 of what is called Aborigines Law in the *Liberian Code of Laws of 1956*, "laborers employed on farms by persons who are not aborigines, shall be exempt from doing porterage and other tribal labor except cleaning of roads." Thus labor for plantation and farms owned by nonindigenous peoples is protected while labor associated with indigenous enterprises could be commandeered for porterage and other purposes.

Concession Leases

Although foreigners are prohibited from owning land in Liberia, user rights in private and public lands are permitted. The Public Lands Law authorizes the president "to lease any portion of the public lands not appropriated for other purposes to any foreign individual, corporation, or company for engaging in agricultural, mercantile, or mining operations in Liberia" (RL, *Liberian Code 1956* 3, chap. 5, sec. 70:1,192). The amount of land that can be leased by any foreign individual or corporation is not limited. However, the term of leases cannot exceed fifty years with the possibility of renewal for an additional fifty years. All such concessions granted foreigners require the approval of the Liberian legislature.[3]

The granting of property rights to foreign entities for vast expanses of land and other natural resources in return for rent, royalties, and profit sharing has been an important strategy for stimulating economic development in Liberia since the 1870s. With the pacification of the interior and the establishment of government control, the granting of concessions became the principal strategy of the Liberian government for economic development. After the Second World War, it constituted the foundation of an Open Door policy, which has been in force since then.

In addition to the possibility of acquiring user rights in public lands and resources through concessionary leases from the government, foreigners can also acquire user rights in land from Liberian citizens who hold private land titles. Foreigners may be granted concession rights through lease agreements for a period of twenty-one years and two additional optional periods of twenty-one years each. The conditions of such leases are negotiated between the parties (ibid., chap. 2, sec. 20:1,015). The Liberian government reserves to itself exclusive property rights in all mineral and other natural resources in, on, or above all lands within the country. By exercising rights of eminent domain, the government can appropriate any private property upon payment of "just compensation." This provision of the law makes possible the reversion of private landholdings to public ownership and the granting of concession leases to foreign enterprises for the development of such property.

A more detailed discussion of the nature and magnitude of the exercise of property rights through concession agreements will be undertaken later in this chapter. It should be emphasized, however, that the strategy of undertaking economic development through concessionary agreements to foreign entities has always been contested in Liberian society. The ports of entry laws in the early years of independence were, in part, an attempt to prohibit foreign traders from penetrating Liberian territory. Despite the control of Liberian mercantile trade by European trading houses and, later, by Lebanese and Indian traders, foreign traders

were given direct access to the interior only with the coming of Firestone and as a result of the recommendations of the League of Nations Commission of Inquiry and the subsequent Plan of Assistance proposed by the United States. Before this time, foreign traders were required to operate through commission agents and itinerant traders who were Liberian citizens (see Huberich 1947:vol. 2).

The granting of concessions to foreign entities was thought to have two advantages. First, it would put Liberia in partnership with the major economic centers of Europe and America and, in the process, enhance the country's standing as a "civilized nation." Second, at the turn of the century, the central motivation became the protection of the territorial integrity of Liberia. This was the primary motivation behind President Arthur Barclay's encouragement of British investment at the beginning of the twentieth century. By the 1920s and 1930s, in the wake of enormous economic hardships and renewed questions concerning the viability of the Liberian government, the introduction of foreign concessions in Liberia was seen as a more desirable alternative to the possibility of becoming a colonial mandated territory. With the development of the interior administration structure, the minimum condition for the operation of foreign concessions in the interior was considered to have been met. It was against this background that Firestone was granted the first successful major concession agreement in 1926.

Private Land Titles

Only Liberian citizens have the right to acquire private title to land. Most transactions regarding the acquisition of private landholdings involve the purchase of private titles to public land or transfers of titles among private parties. Although the latter involve public surveyors, processes of probation and authentication, and the payment of registration fees, they are routine transactions. The acquisition of private property rights to public land, by contrast, involves political consideration.

Only those public lands that are not being used for significant public purposes can be made available for purchase. Authentication is the responsibility of the land commissioner and local authorities. In the case of tribal lands, the district commissioner who also serves as land commissioner must secure the approval of the paramount and clan chiefs as evidence that a spirit of goodwill and good neighborliness has surrounded the transaction. The purchaser "shall pay a sum of money as token of his good intention to live peacefully with the tribesmen" (RL, *Liberian Code 1956*, 3, chap. 3, sec. 30:1,188-1,189).

Land commissioners have the incentive to encourage sale of public land because they are paid a commission of 5 percent by the government. District commissioners, who are also land commissioners in the hinterland, where thousands of acres of public land are sought by private individuals for rubber and other agricultural uses, have the incentive to sell public lands rather than reserve them as communal holdings for the local people. The system has also provided the president with opportunities for patronage of political supporters.

The granting of property rights by the government to foreign entities through concessionary agreements and the enormous opportunities available to well-connected individuals and government officials to purchase large tracts of public land for their private purposes fostered a partnership between those who wielded political authority and foreign interests. The resulting structure has controlled the political life of the country and dominated the economy. I will now turn to a closer consideration of the role of concessions in the Liberian constitutional order.

Foreign Concessions and Property Rights

After his return to the presidency in 1874, Joseph Jenkins Roberts visited England and negotiated a number of concession agreements with British business interests. One of these agreements committed the Liberian government to grant to Samuel Forbes and George Wells, engineers and contractors of London, rights to construct railways, tramways, docks, landing stages and jetties, warehouses, and other facilities for business and commercial use, and to explore and exploit mineral deposits. In undertaking these activities, Forbes and his associates were granted the "right to erect upon all government or public land, free of charge" structures necessary for the pursuit of these activities. In return for these concessions, the government was to receive 10 percent of the net profits on all gold, silver, and other minerals extracted by the company and 50 percent of the net profits from the commercial use of the railways and tramways, after the deduction of 6 percent interest on capital investment (RL [1874] "Propositions to the Republic of Liberia for Concessions of Land"). Although this and other concession agreements negotiated by Roberts were approved by the Liberian legislature, they were never implemented chiefly because the concessionaires failed to mobilize the required capital. Nonetheless, the agreements signed by Roberts in 1874 became the model for many other agreements concluded between the Liberian government and foreign investors for almost 100 years.

Three important features are common to most such agreements, at least the major ones. First, the agreements are comprehensive and

all-inclusive. They grant generous use-rights to extraordinarily large and undefined or ill-defined tracts of land and to all mineral, timber, and other resources contained in or on the land. Second, they grant duty and tax exemptions and related benefits. Third, they give the Liberian government a key role in procuring the supply of labor.

In return, the government usually obtained, with varying degrees of success, employment opportunities for a larger number of Liberians in an expanding money economy, improvement of physical and social infrastructure, and rent, royalties, and a percentage of net returns. Since the 1950s, the Liberian government has opted for joint-venture arrangements with profit sharing.

The major concessions since the turn of the century have involved rubber and agricultural plantations, iron ore, and timber. I will briefly discuss a few of the major concession agreements as a basis for examining the political meaning and impact of such concessionary grants.

Firestone and Other Rubber Concessions

Firestone came to Liberia as the result of several considerations. The failure of the Liberian government to obtain a $5 million U.S. government loan in 1920 left it unable to retire its indebtedness to the consortium of European and American banks and terminate the international receivership that had scrutinized and controlled its expenditures since 1906. The burden of rising debts to European powers, which also seemed to fit colonial designs on Liberian territory, created a sense of desperation among Liberian officials. As we have seen, efforts to obtain U.S. guarantees of Liberian sovereignty were never successful. While the Liberian government, to ensure its security and economic relief, sought ways of obtaining U.S. assistance, British decisions regarding the supply of rubber focused on Liberia the attention of private American investors.

By 1922, the United States used 70 percent of the world's production of rubber, much of it destined to a rapidly expanding automobile industry. At the same time, British colonies accounted for 75 percent of that production. The expansion of rubber cultivation in the British Far East colonies before the First World War had undermined the collection of wild rubber that had flourished in Africa and Latin America in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The United States and other countries became more dependent on British-controlled supplies. In an attempt to regulate the price of rubber in 1922, the British government adopted the Stevenson Plan.[4] In response, U.S. industries sought new sources of rubber.[5] Liberia had been not only one of the suppliers of wild rubber but also the

location of the small Mount Barclay rubber plantation, which had been abandoned in 1908 by the Liberia Development Company, a British firm.

The Firestone Agreements

In 1923, Firestone sent experts to Liberia to investigate the possibility of establishing a rubber plantation. Negotiations with the Liberian government resulted in three agreements.[6] The first granted to Firestone a lease on the 2,000-acre Mount Barclay rubber plantation for a period of ninety-nine years at a rent of $1 an acre for the first year and, thereafter, $6,000 yearly. The second agreement granted Firestone the option to lease up to 1 million acres of land for ninety-nine years at 6 cents an acre to be paid on the land actually used, provided that within five years no less than 20,000 acres would be used and a minimum of $1,200 paid annually as rent to the Liberian government.[7] The third agreement provided for the construction and maintenance of a harbor in Monrovia within five years. The Liberian government was to compensate Firestone for an amount not to exceed $300,000 for construction of the harbor. Firestone would collect harbor fees until the balance of the cost was liquidated at an interest of 7 percent per annum. Although the third agreement was duly signed, it was never implemented.[8]

The second agreement remained the most important of the three. Among other provisions, it granted to Firestone the right to "construct and establish at its own expense lines of communication such as highways, roadways, waterways, and railways *outside the lands selected under this Agreement*" (emphasis added), so as to "best serve the purpose of efficient operation of its plantations and enterprises." Firestone was also granted the right to "construct and establish . . . enterprises such as telegraph lines, telephone lines, and wireless stations outside of the confines of the lands selected under this Agreement . . . and to the extent necessary for such purpose [to] use, without the payment of rent for such land, any Government lands not already devoted to some other use." In case of war or other emergency, the government would "have the right to use such lines of communication."

Subsequently, Firestone proposed an additional clause (clause K), providing that a wholly owned Firestone institution, the Finance Corporation of America, would grant the Liberian government a loan of $5 million for adjusting its outstanding indebtedness, constructing public works, developing agriculture, increasing education, and supporting the Liberian Frontier Force.[9] The loan was to be repaid in forty years from revenues collected by the Liberian government from its customs, postal, and interior administrations, which were to operate under the

supervision and direction of a Financial Adviser and his assistants. These individuals were to be "designated by the president of the United States and appointed by the president of Liberia."

There was considerable public outcry against clause K and the Liberian government initially rejected it. One of the main purposes for its wanting U.S. involvement was to terminate the receivership that had controlled Liberian finances since 1906.[10] Firestone had wished to replace a multinational with an American receivership to guarantee that the concessionary terms it had received from the Liberian government would not be granted to any other investor. The Liberian government accepted clause K after Firestone threatened to withdraw from all the agreements that had been reached.

The Firestone agreements were clearly a most generous and all-inclusive concession of property rights, especially land use rights, to the company. When the involvement of the government in labor recruitment for Firestone is considered, the concession seems even more generous.

Labor Recruitment for Firestone

Under article II of the act establishing the Firestone plantations, the Liberian government agreed to "encourage, support, and assist the efforts of [Firestone] to secure and maintain an adequate labor supply," and assumed a major responsibility for recruiting workers for Firestone. The Bureau of Labor, which had been created in 1912 as an agency of the Department of the Interior, was fully activated. Labor agents acting in cooperation with district commissioners and chiefs recruited labor for Firestone. The full machinery of the interior administration, already deployed for the conscription of laborers for public works and porterage and of contract workers for export, was now charged with recruiting workers for Firestone.[11] For a brief period, Firestone supplemented its labor supply through its own recruiting staff and from private recruiting brokers. Private brokers, however, relied unofficially on the interior administration.

By agreement, Firestone paid one cent to the government, a half cent to the district commissioner, and a half cent to the chiefs for each day's work performed by each worker recruited through them.[12] Thus the government and chiefs had incentive not only to recruit workers for the Firestone plantations but also to keep them there.[13] There were competing demands for workers, however. The profitable Fernando Po labor export has already been discussed. District commissioners, labor agents, chiefs, and other recruiters operated in what could be viewed as a "competitive market" for them.[14]

Some Modifications of the Concession

Firestone only developed two rubber plantations, using about one-third of the land ceded to it under the agreements. The larger of the two is located in central Liberia about 30 miles north of Monrovia and the smaller plantation in southeastern Liberia about 30 miles north of Harper. By the early 1950s, Firestone had not only recovered its total investment but had also accrued net earnings of twice the initial investment (Clower et al. 1966).[15]

In 1962, as a result of an understanding with the government, Firestone agreed to pay 35 percent of its net profits from the Liberian plantations to the Liberian government (ibid.). Later, in 1976, fifty years after the concessions were granted, Firestone agreed to reduce its domain to slightly less than 300,000 acres in order to reflect its actual operating area. Under this modification, Firestone ceded to the Liberian government all sub-soil rights and agreed to an increase of the rental fee to fifty cents per acre annually. Firestone also agreed to provide for the education of its employees' dependents up to junior high school level. Firestone retained the right to engage in other economic activities within the concession area, but agreed to seek a new concession agreement if it wished to engage in economic activities outside the concession (van der Kraaij 1983).

The Political Economy of Rubber Concessions

Since the establishment of Firestone, at least four other rubber concessions and a number of other agricultural concessions have been granted to foreign entities. Although none of these agreements has been as generous and far-reaching as the Firestone Agreement, all have contained the general features discussed above.[16]

Robert Clower and his colleagues (1966:146–47) have summarized the general characteristics of rubber concessions in Liberia. First, the shares of rubber firms are wholly owned by parent firms or individuals abroad. Because local rubber firms are not joint ventures, the profit-sharing arrangements used for most mining concessions do not apply. Second, rubber firms are granted "reserve areas" from which they may choose "development areas." Rent is paid on the "development areas" but not on the reserves. Third, all rubber concessions since Firestone have granted income tax exemptions ranging from fourteen to seventeen years from the date of planting. Fourth, rubber firms are required to provide elementary schools and medical benefits for employees and their families and compensation for tribal lands otherwise appropriated by

the government for the company's purposes. Fifth, rubber firms are assured the "good offices" of the government in securing an adequate supply of labor.

For about thirty years—from the early 1930s when Firestone came into full operation until the late 1950s when iron concessions became dominant—revenues from rubber concessions constituted at least 40 percent of the government's annual income. It was through the auspices of Firestone that the Bank of Monrovia was eventually established.[17]

Firestone also provided a major impetus to the development of Liberia's road network. The establishment of Firestone in central Liberia shifted the direction of trade and economic activities from a northwesterly to a northerly direction. An example is the construction of the major trunk road from Monrovia through the Firestone plantations to Sanniquelli. Both the Port of Monrovia and the international airport were developed as a result of the presence of United States economic and strategic interests in Liberia during the Second World War. Moreover, for about two decades, the hospitals operated by Firestone at Duside and Cavalla were the major medical centers in the country. Although they were accessible only to employees of Firestone and their relatives and to other well-connected persons, they constituted a significant contribution considered against the wretched state of health care facilities in the country as a whole.

Plantation Concessions, Private Proprietors, and Labor

By their very nature, plantation concessions are great users of land and labor. Since the arrival of Firestone, rubber concessions have been the largest source of employment in Liberia. More than 30 percent of Liberian workers are employed on rubber plantations, and more than 85 percent of this number are unskilled and illiterate.[18] Wages on rubber plantations and agricultural enterprises generally, although they have shown a slow but steady rise, are among the lowest in the country. Until the right of collective bargaining was granted to agricultural workers in the 1970s, the personal interests of government officials (who were themselves proprietors of rubber estates) and the long-standing government policy of guaranteeing an adequate labor supply combined to hold wages down. Agricultural wage rates were set by the government at below-market levels to benefit the inefficiently run private estates of the well-connected, and instrumentalities of the state were used to ensure a supply of labor.[19]

The presence of Firestone and other rubber concessions so quickly stimulated the development of private proprietorship that, by the latter part of the 1930s, government officials, district commissioners, and some chiefs were also proprietors of large rubber estates. The relationship

between holding government office and owning rubber estates has been so strong that even a casual observer can determine the period during which certain families and individuals were important in government by the proximity of their rubber estates to Firestone's.

Patrimonial order and enclave economics. The control over property rights for rubber estates depended upon access to central political authority. This is only one aspect of the difficulties associated with the evolution of the plantation economy in Liberia. The plantation economy thrives on and reinforces patrimonial relationships because control over property rights and political authority merge. Those without access to either are limited in what can be done because social, economic, and political endeavors are fused: the company store, the employment office, and the magistrate's chambers are interconnected in dominance relationships that confine opportunities, leaving the individual with more limited options than would exist in a more complex economy. Moreover, the plantation concessions that operate in Liberia represent an almost pure example of an enclave enterprise (Clower et al. 1966). They have virtually no links to other sectors of the economy. Local labor is the only significant domestic input into their operations.[20]

Rural Adaptations to Plantation Concessions

One of the most important consequences of the rubber concession has been its impact on communal land rights. In addition to the existence of six major rubber concessions, there are at least 3,000 independent private rubber estates. Although recent figures are not available, in 1964 these concessions and estates covered 3.5 million acres or about 15 percent of the total land area of the country. Given the fact that this amount of land contains the highest proportion of roads and other social and physical infrastructural facilities, its significance is far greater than the 15 percent surface area it represents.[21]

The isolation of plantation villages from farmland, which is a consequence of the way in which plantations have been established, poses an acute problem for rural productivity especially in view of the slash-and-burn method of cultivation that is widely used throughout Liberia. When this problem is weighed against the enclave character of the plantations and their enormous labor demands, the impact of plantation concessions on indigenous food production is not favorable.[22] If rubber cultivation had been undertaken as a smallholder enterprise available to rural households, it might have encouraged more intensive food cultivation,

more extended social infrastructures, and a move away from slash-and-burn farming.

The money economy expanded as a result of the introduction of the plantation and, later, the mining concessions. Developing at a time of increasing governmental demands on the interior population for taxes and other levies in money, plantation and mining concessions provided an important source of wage employment. In many parts of southeastern and coastal Liberia, among the Kru, Grebo, and Bassa ethnic groups, where labor migration abroad was the major source of wage earning, rubber and mining concessions provided an acceptable alternative. In northern and northwestern Liberia, among the Mah, Dahn, Kpelle, Loma, Kissi, and other groups, the introduction of wage employment induced considerable transformations in socioeconomic practices and created a "pull" factor that counterbalanced the pressure of involuntary labor recruitment.

Far from replacing indigenous production patterns, wage employment on the concessions was integrated into the socioeconomic production patterns of rural societies to become an important component in a cycle of activities that included labor migration to concessions and return home to engage in the production of crops for own-consumption and cash. Thus, in addition to inducing labor migration and providing new domestic sources of wage employment, the concessions and the improvement of physical infrastructure—no matter how slight—also stimulated the development of food crops, if not cash crops, as an important part of indigenous production.

James C. Riddell (1970) has observed that in northern Liberia, among the Mah, skills gained by observation and work in plantations have been utilized in managing the production of tree crops. Tree crop production has been stimulated by decreasing availability of land for slash-and-burn, as well as by increasing knowledge of tree crop management. Tree crop cultivation has not, however, become a substitute for the cultivation of rice and other food crops. The social division of labor and the production cycle allow for specializations and work intervals so that the same individuals can fell trees and clear land for rice cultivation, plant or harvest tree crops, and migrate to concessions (J. Cole 1967).[23] In some cases, wage employment has permitted those working on concessions to hire others to help in rice and tree crop cultivation. It has also stimulated adaptations in the roles of women and greater reliance on cooperative labor for clearance and the construction of grain storage facilities (Riddell 1970). The integration of wage employment and cash cropping into the social fabric of rural societies has been so thorough that in most places these activities have become a part of the rites of passage. Labor migration for wage employment on concessions constitutes a virtual

extension of the kinship organization and other indigenous social forms into new environments.[24]

The adaptation of traditional agricultural patterns to wage employment on concessions cannot simply be attributed to entrenched cultural patterns. Another factor is that the wages paid by concessionaires have been kept low, thereby inducing a worker either to engage in agriculture himself or to find other means to supplement his income for meeting the economic obligations of the extended family.[25] This adaptation has cushioned the wage-labor force in Liberia as it has elsewhere in Africa and militated against the development of raging class consciousness and alienation among workers. This adaptation has also enabled workers to cope with repressive labor laws and the possibility of starvation that faces them and their families upon the closure of a mining concession or labor retrenchment.[26]

In sum, it is clear that, after the introduction of Firestone, the granting of rubber concession rights by the government stimulated a transformation in the economic, social, and political life of Liberia. The Liberian economy became more integrated into the market economic system of Western Europe and the United States, the government's capacity to control became greater, and wage employment transformed social and economic relationships in both urban and rural Liberia. These processes were intensified when, as we shall now see, iron ore concessions became more important.

Iron Ore Mining Concessions

The introduction of concession rights in the development of rubber was the dominant influence that shaped political and economic relationships in Liberia from the mid-1920s to the mid-1950s. But it was concessions in iron ore mining that became the most important factor in the political economy of Liberia in the latter half of the twentieth century. Unlike the aura of national desperation that attended the introduction of Firestone in 1926, the beginnings of iron ore mining were a result of an effort to expand the already "open door" economy of Liberia by taking advantage of what were perceived to be new opportunities presented by the Second World War.[27]

Between 1946 and 1958, at least four agreements granting concession rights associated mainly with the exploitation of iron ore resources were concluded between the Liberian government and foreign firms. The agreements that eventually resulted in the operation of iron ore mines in Liberia were those under which the Liberian Mining Company was established in 1946, the Liberian American Swedish Minerals Company

in 1956, the National Iron Ore Company in 1958, and the Bong Mining Company also in 1958.

The Concession Agreements

All of the agreements contained the essential features granting generous rights to large and poorly defined tracts of land and all the mineral, timber, and other resources contained in and on the lands. All of the agreements also provided duty exemptions, long periods of tax holiday, and government assistance in the recruitment and maintenance of an adequate supply of labor.

Except for the first concession agreement—the one under which the Liberian Mining Company (LMC) was established—all of the concessions were joint ventures in which the Liberian government claimed ownership of 50 percent of the capital stock and received annual returns equaling 50 percent of the net profits. All other taxes were waived except personal income tax, ground rent, and an exploration tax that did not amount to much.

In the case of LMC, the agreement assigned land and other resource rights to a wholly owned foreign company at a tax that constituted 35 percent of net profits. These arrangements were renegotiated in the early 1960s so that 50 percent of the net profits went to the Liberian government.

Except for the National Iron Ore Company, whose concession covered an exploration area of 24,560 acres, all of the other concession agreements covered exploration areas of several million acres of land from which exploitation areas were selected. In one case, that of the Liberian American Swedish Mineral Company (LAMCO), exploration rights were granted for some 500 square miles of territory in three counties (van der Kraaij 1983). As of 1964, the four active iron ore concessions were operating on exploitation areas of about one-half a million acres of land. All of the concessions were valid for periods of at least seventy years.

Independent experts who have reviewed the joint venture agreements have stressed that the Liberian government negotiated away many conditions that would have benefited its position. Some of the major criticisms of the agreements refer to their lack of specificity regarding the obligations of foreign concessionaires and vagueness in the formula for determining profit sharing. Questions concerning debt-equity ratio, the government's inability to monitor the agreements, and the lack of provisions for the updating or renegotiation of the agreements were criticisms also raised by independent observers of the LAMCO and Bong Mining Company (BMC) agreements (Coale 1978; Clower et al. 1966).

After several years of discussions, agreements were finally reached in the early 1970s for the negotiation of supplemental agreements to the

two major joint venture agreements, those with LAMCO and BMC. Among the many features of the supplemental agreements negotiated between the Liberian government and its LAMCO partners were the conversion of subordinated debentures into preferred stock taxable by the Liberian government; the retroactive payment of royalties to the Liberian government; the reduction of the concession area from an exploration area of 500 to one of 300 square miles; and the increase of ground rent on area of actual exploitation from six cents per acre to fifty cents per acre. The Liberian government also obtained the right to inspect and audit the records of the company, while the company was obliged to undertake a more comprehensive set of health, safety, and education and training activities for its employees and their families (van der Kraaij 1983).

Iron Ore and Capital Investment

Throughout the period when rubber concessions dominated the Liberian economy, capital investment in Liberia was well under $50 million. Iron ore extraction, by its very nature, required a much higher capital investment. As a result, from 1955 to 1962—the period of the establishment of three iron ore concessions—more capital investment was made in Liberia than in all the preceding years. By 1964, capital investment in Liberia exceeded $300 million. In other words, the steady increase in economic growth that began in the 1930s and continued through the 1940s suddenly turned into a sharp rise by the late 1950s.

The sudden leap in economic growth also translated into qualitative change in the social circumstances. Not only did the number of jobs increase; the quality of jobs improved. In addition to the demand for rubber tappers and unskilled labor, such skilled workers as electric shovel operators, mechanics, electricians, accountants, bookkeepers, and clerical personnel were now in greater demand.[28]

By 1960, iron ore and rubber each accounted for about 40 percent of Liberia's export earnings. Thereafter, however, iron ore became the major export earner and has remained so for at least three decades. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and the 1980s, it accounted for at least 70 percent of export earnings and more than 35 percent of government revenues.

Iron Ore and Social Growth

Coinciding with the surge of African independence, this situation of rapid economic growth put the Liberian government in a position to

undertake the massive public works schemes commensurate with what it perceived as its status in African affairs. Massive showcase projects such as an eight-story executive mansion, an eleven-story finance ministry, and a five-story law courts complex were among the projects undertaken during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The government also undertook major road construction projects. It was at this time that the first road links were constructed connecting southeastern Liberia with the rest of the country and Buchanan with Monrovia. City streets and hundreds of miles of feeder roads were also constructed.

The Mount Coffee Hydroelectric Project was initiated during this period. The government also embarked upon a program of extending electric power to most of the major coastal cities.

Health care was also given attention. The country's first comprehensive public medical center was constructed and several new hospitals were built in the coastal counties and in Voinjama and a few other places in the interior. The first set of rural health officers were trained and assigned to a number of clinics and health posts around the country. In the cities, the concept of the "well baby clinic" was introduced as a means of reducing the high level of infant mortality.

The most dramatic and far-reaching improvement occurred in the area of education. School enrollment rose astronomically. In the early 1950s, for example, there were about 20,000 pupils in elementary schools throughout Liberia, whereas by 1960 there were more than 58,000, and more than 120,000 by 1970.[29] A similar increase occurred in secondary school enrollment, which increased from about 870 students in nine secondary schools around the country in 1951 to 5,574 students in sixty secondary schools in 1962. This increase can be traced largely to the opening of new schools—frequently, in some areas of the country, for the first time (Azango 1968; Sherman 1982).

The most significant progress in education, however, was to be found in the promotion of teacher training and technical and vocational education. The teacher training school that had been established in 1947 was upgraded and integrated into the newly established University of Liberia in 1951. In the early 1960s, two rural teacher training institutions were established. By the end of the decade, these institutions had produced more than 400 graduates (Sherman 1982).

Technical and vocational education, which had been neglected throughout the history of Liberia, received some attention at the time the agricultural concessions were introduced. The Phelps-Stokes Foundation, in coordination with the local and foreign agencies, established the first technical and vocational educational program in Liberia in 1929 in Kakata, a few miles away from the operations of the Firestone concessions. The

Liberian government undertook full responsibility for the management of this institution in 1951, and sought to expand its offerings during the bounty years of the 1960s. Meanwhile, two of the mining concessions established technical training centers largely to meet their own needs, in view of the shortage of skilled technicians. The Liberian Swedish Vocational Training Center was established by LAMCO in 1964 under a management that involved the Liberian government and the concession with assistance from the Swedish government. In 1965, the Bong Mines Vocational Training Center was established by BMC (ibid.).

Finally, even this brief account of the education explosion must note the establishment of the University of Liberia in 1951, as a result of the merger of several autonomous professional programs with the liberal arts institution, Liberia College, which had been established in 1862. A school of forestry was added in 1957 in direct response to the expanding operations of timber concessions in Liberia. In the 1960s and early 1970s, programs in agriculture, medicine, business, science, and technology were added.

It is clear that the increased revenue intake by the government as a result of the operations of concessions made possible dramatic socioeconomic growth from the mid-1950s onward. This growth seems the more spectacular when considered against the socioeconomic deterioration that characterized the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the national crisis of the 1920s and 1930s. However, as impressive as this social and economic growth may appear, it must be accounted modest when considered in the context of the overall need for social and physical infrastructures. As we saw in Chapter 8, for example, despite the dramatic improvement in education, more than one-third of the school-age youth was not attending school by 1980. Though on a decline, infant mortality was still as high as 34 per 1,000 for children of two and younger. Illiteracy rates remained above 70 percent and villages and towns remained isolated for lack of roads.

More importantly, it is clear that the Liberian people were producers of this growth by their labor but not participants in the conception, design, and implementation of the patterns of growth, although they did benefit from the new schools, clinics, roads, and increased income. Officials of the Liberian government and the proprietors and managers of concessions were the important actors. Substantial participatory institutional arrangements for local communities were conspicuously absent from this development. That is why the economic survey undertaken by Northwestern University during this period concluded that Liberia was engaged in a process of unprecedented growth but without development (see Clower et al. 1966).

Socioeconomic Consequences of the Mining Concessions

One of the more visible consequences of the establishment of mining concessions can be seen in the transformation of the demographic features of the Liberian society. The opportunities for wage employment led to considerable migration to mining areas and the development of new communities. The availability of wage employment, moreover, began to produce an industrial working class, as increased mobility and the spread of communications technology increased public awareness of national events.

Urbanization

As was the case with the rubber concessions, there were "pull" as well as "push" factors propelling migration to the mines. In addition to the "pull" factor of the possibilities of engaging in wage employment, many gravitated toward mining towns as a result of or in an effort to escape labor recruitment. The abolition of pawning in the 1930s had released large numbers of people who were required to find a home elsewhere. Firestone in the 1930s and Firestone and LMC at Bomi Hills in the 1940s became new homes for many. It was during this period that such cities and towns as Kakata near Firestone, Plebo near Firestone Cavalla, Unification Town near Yekepa (LAMCO), and Congo-Cross near Bomi Hills grew from small rural villages or—as in the case of Unification Town—from nothing into urban centers of more than 3,000 by the late 1950s (see RL [1962], *National Population Census*).

Monrovia was the terminus of the process of stepwise migration that was at work. Although no census data were available before 1962, it is known that Monrovia's population doubled from about 200,000 in 1962 to about 400,000 ten years later (see RL [1974], *National Housing and Population Census*). Buchanan, about 80 miles east of Monrovia, grew from a semi-isolated coastal town to a bustling city of more than 20,000 as a result of the railway and iron ore shipping facilities of LAMCO. One need not be reminded of the enormous social and economic problems that attend the process of rapid urbanization. Karl-Heinz Hassellman has noted that in Lofa County and presumably elsewhere in the interior, migration patterns proceeded from the rural farming village direct to urban industrial centers or to Monrovia, bypassing the principal cities of the interior such as Voinjama, Zorzor, and Ganta.[30]

The Emergence of a Working Class

As described earlier, the introduction of rubber concessions in the 1920s led to the integration of wage employment into rural life cycles. As a result, the mostly unskilled agricultural workers were also seasonal traditional farmers rotating in and out of wage employment. Not all workers followed this cycle. Many agricultural workers who did not rotate to the village farms sought usufructuary rights of land from communal holdings or the plantation concessions and produced food crops largely for their own consumption.

With the development of mines, however, a new type of worker emerged. This new worker was a skilled or semiskilled individual removed from the farm. Unlike his counterpart on the agricultural plantations, he did not rotate in the rural production cycle, although he maintained social links with the village. Wage employment was his sole economic activity. In the pattern of migration, he moved on from one mining center to another and eventually to Monrovia, but not to the village. As the economy expanded through the 1960s, his group multiplied, broke out of patrimonial domination, and constituted the nucleus of the Liberian trade union movement. Recognizing its potentially critical political role in the society, the ruling elite sought to coopt it by installing high officials of government as leaders of the emerging labor unions from the late 1950s onward.[31]

Information, Communication, and Public Consciousness

The improvement in communication and the flow of information was another significant development stemming from the iron ore mining economy. The high level of mobility that developed as a result of improved transportation and the search for employment and educational opportunities created a flow of information that for Liberia was unprecedented. The movement of students, workers, traders, and others by public transport throughout the country made a greater control of the flow of information almost impossible.

The introduction of a government-owned radio station in the late 1950s, the upgrading of its capacity, and the introduction of television in the early 1960s made images of the imperial presidency and the omnipotence of government part of the daily diet of the country. The establishment of a second radio station at this time under the proprietorship of a religious denomination, coupled with the availability of transistor radios in increasing numbers in the remotest villages, had the somewhat different effect of linking rural villages with each other and with urban centers

in Liberia and with the rest of the world. The development of radio programs designed to package news, messages, and other information in the local languages created a direct and instantaneous communication link that eliminated the powerful role of local officials and other local influentials as information brokers in local communities.

These developments had a disruptive effect on patrimonial control. On the one hand, they stimulated a sense of "Liberianness" regarding a common set of national aspirations; however, they sharpened awareness of deep social divisions and polarity while increasing demands for inclusion and participation. These demands were to intensify through the 1970s.

Government, Concession Rights, and Development

Since the turn of the century, the Liberian social order has been constituted in accordance with an arrangement in which property rights in minerals, lands, and other natural resources have been appropriated by the government and allocated through concession agreements to mostly foreign firms. By the mid-1960s, the operations of these concessions covered more than one-fourth of the land area of Liberia. In many of these arrangements, the government had assumed the role of a partner by virtue of the exercise of sovereign authority over the resources and as the instrument that controls the supply of labor. National laws and regulations had been fashioned in keeping with such allocation of rights, and social and economic developments had proceeded accordingly. Revenues in rent, royalties, and profit sharing constituted the major portion of the intake of the public coffers.

The impact of these arrangements on the society was profound. First, they increased the capabilities of the government in a manner that further strengthened institutional capacities at the center. The proprietary role of the government—the president, in other words—was enormously increased. Reliance on rents, royalties, and profits gave the presidency an independent existence, with the capability to operate without any of the pretensions of accountability that would have been required had the president been dependent on income or other taxes raised directly from the people.

With the interior bureaucracy already in place, the central government had now developed the capability to penetrate local communities. Farmers' cooperatives, unions, and other local, county-wide, and national units of collective action were coopted and controlled. Monies in the public coffers were perceived as largess available to the president. So-called development projects took on a personal attribution. The government was

the sole authority; and the president was the embodiment of that authority. This will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. It is clear, however, that the president, aided by the system of interior administration, had become the effective master of the land in a new patrimonial order in which concessionaires operated in enclave economies and tribal lands supported a subsistence agriculture and constituted the core of the "informal economy."

In addition, the new arrangements in property rights had other profound social and economic impacts on the society. The appropriation of land and the introduction of wage employment had, at once, induced indigenous adaptations and provided new opportunities in rural areas. In urban Liberia, these arrangements had speeded up the processes of urbanization, expanded industrial growth, and stimulated the process of manpower development, among other things. The arrangements under which socioeconomic transactions were undertaken had undoubtedly produced substantial transformations in social and economic infrastructures. It is clear that the development of such physical infrastructure as hydroelectric works, highways and streets, seaports, and airports would not have been possible without resources and organization of considerable proportions.

One of the serious negative consequences of these arrangements has been that the enclave nature of the operations of concessions does not ensure any sustainable contribution to the long-term development of the economic and social life of the society. The lack of meaningful integration of the activities of enclave concessions into the entrepreneurial activities of the local economy limits the society's gains from these entities largely to the wages they pay out to workers and the rent, royalties, and other monies that momentarily accrue to the government. The evidence from the closure of the LMC in 1976, forty years after the signing of the concession agreements and about as many years before the expiration of the agreement, is sobering. Within two years of its closure, Bomi Hills, the bustling site of its operations, became virtually a ghost town.

★ 11 ★

The Emergence of Autocracy

ANY SERIOUS INVESTIGATION of the constitution of order in human societies has to take into account not only the prescribed institutional arrangements but the actual practices, the formal and informal patterns of relationships, that are fashioned by a society's internal dynamics and the external influences on it (V. Ostrom 1980, 1987a). In the case of Liberia, we have seen the emergence of institutional arrangements in which a Western-style, unitary form of government prescribed by a written constitution was imposed upon a settler-derived patrimonial authority structure and the various forms of patrimonial and clientelist arrangements of the indigenous societies. We have also seen how the property relationships that undergirded and resulted from the intermingling of these institutional arrangements over time emerged as a system of concessionary rights in labor, land, and natural resources that became the dominant form of property rights. A further consequence of these patterns of institutional relationships has been the emergence of a structure of political autocracy in Liberia.

In this chapter, I will show how the developments outlined in the previous chapter, that is, the appropriation of property rights by the government and the granting of such rights in concessions, and the establishment of an interior bureaucracy altered institutional relationships in a way that produced an enormously powerful presidency as the embodiment of "the state." I will further show how, by accruing new perquisites and prerogatives, presidential authority transcended the requirements of accountability and was fully transformed into a type of personal authority that led ultimately to military dictatorship. I will begin, however, with a discussion of the political process in nineteenth-century

Liberia in order to provide a basis for understanding the development of presidential authority and the personalization of that authority by the mid-twentieth century.[1] Actions were taken that, without being intended to do so, allowed the emergence of a despotic order of tragic proportions.

Patrimonial Authority and the Political Process of the Nineteenth Century

The centralization of authority as prescribed in the written constitution reinforced the proprietary control exercised by the Monrovia merchants. At the same time, the existence of semiautonomous local proprietorships established by local merchant groups in the coastal counties constituted a form of deconcentration of authority that was incompatible with the prescriptions of the written constitution.

Although the written constitution prescribed three coequal branches of government, merchant proprietary control created a fusion of political and legal authority within a framework dominated by kin and dependent relationships. Thus political order in nineteenth-century Liberia was characterized by tension between the prescriptions of the written constitution, on the one hand, and the realities of settler (merchant) patrimonial control, on the other. The various adaptations of the institutions set forth by the written constitution to merchant proprietary rule constitute an essential part of the dynamics of the Liberian political process.

Patrimonial rule in nineteenth-century Liberia was characterized by certain special features.

1. Merchant proprietorship was perceived as the legitimate heir to the ACS and the natural source of leadership in the struggle to develop Liberia as a civilized society. In this respect, except for brief periods in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, merchant proprietary control was accepted in most sectors of Liberian society as the enlightened path to the future. At all levels of the society, there were aspirations regarding the development of a "common civilized patrimony." Merchant rule, especially under President Roberts, was perceived as the instrumentality capable of achieving that aspiration.
2. Merchant proprietary control was organized around a network of trading agents, dependents, and kinsmen in a structure of authority that fused executive, legislative, and judiciary authority in a small group often referred to as "the leading citizens." Headed by a distinguished merchant, this group consisted largely of prominent merchants from Monrovia and the coastal and upriver settlements. Many of those, from the coastal settlements themselves,

operated as semiautonomous regimes in the overall structure of deconcentrated authority.

3. Rules defining property rights remained as ambiguous as were the boundary rules determining entry into the ranks of the oligarchy of leading citizens. These rules operated at the wishes of that group. Generally, the formulation and enforcement of laws depended upon that same group's predisposition and did not operate independently of it. An individual's standing before the law depended upon his standing with the oligarchy. All legal and political institutions were adapted to merchant proprietary control.
4. Though merchant proprietary control was the dominant pattern of authority relations, it did not operate without some constraints. For one thing, the deconcentration of authority among merchant leaders of coastal enclaves constituted a form of constraint on the dominant Monrovia merchant group. The legislature imposed some constraints on executive authority. More importantly, however, such institutions as the church, which was established and supported for the most part independently of settler authority, remained the moral conscience of the society throughout the nineteenth century. The receding influence of the upriver planters was also a source of constraints.

By the end of the nineteenth century and under pressure of European imperial demands, a new social order was emerging. This new order was characterized by the development of an interior administration, expanding control over land beyond the domain of the initial settlements, and a narrowing of the definition of communal property rights so as to give the government dominance over property relationships. Under this new order, merchant proprietary authority gave way to presidential authority in the establishment of a new autocracy. When fully developed, the new order would be supported largely by the management of property rights through concessions. A closer examination of the workings of the political process during the nineteenth century will reveal the structural path to the development of presidential autocracy.

Patrimonial Authority and the Presidency

Although the members of the merchant ruling elite that exercised control in the nineteenth century were divided on the question of race and the strategy for achieving Liberia's mission, they were united in their conception of the patrimony. Liberia was perceived both as a way out of their past oppression and as an expression of their aspirations. It was

a legacy to be protected and a torch to be kindled. The responsibility for doing both was left to the leadership of settler society, the group that Liberty (1977) has called the "upper echelon settlers."

As we saw in Chapter 5, the leader of the upper echelon settlers was considered primus inter pares. He was expected to fulfill two important functions: to ensure the protection and security of civilized values; and to serve as a symbol of the dignity and promise the society offered to free blacks. The political authority exercised by such a leader was based as much on his moral stature as on the patronage and levers available to him. The leader was not always expected to be the president, but he was expected to possess the moral authority to ensure that presidents did not perpetuate themselves or make mockery of the settlers' civilizing aspirations. If president, the leader was not expected to seek to perpetuate himself in office or perform in ways that demeaned the office and by extension, the promise.

It was against the backdrop of such moral authority that Roberts, as leader of Liberian society, exacted accountability from Presidents Benson and Roye, thereby precipitating Benson's retirement from the presidency in 1859 and Roye's ouster in 1871 (see Chapter 7). In the same spirit, President Warner argued that national leaders should be seen "cheerfully making sacrifices" so as to engender confidence in the people to do the same (Republic of Liberia, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1864).

Although moral leadership did not always reside in the presidency, that office was always considered the symbol of the dignity of the society. Presidents were supposed to be showpieces, eloquent speakers, and charismatic personalities. They were to convey to the world through their persona that Liberia was a country of civilized citizens. Because of this demand, such high-profile positions as secretary of state provided the training ground for potential presidents. At least half the men who became presidents had served as secretary of state or speaker of the House of Representatives.

The selection of the president also depended on regional considerations. Throughout the nineteenth century, with few exceptions, men from Montserrado and Bassa alternated in the post.[2] Vice presidents were selected from virtually all the counties as indication of a commitment to a policy of inclusion.[3]

The fusion of legal and political authority into a patrimonial authority was made possible by the existence in nineteenth-century Liberia of a special set of circumstances. Among these were the dominant role of merchants and the subordination of agrarian interests, the financial impoverishment of government and its lack of enforcement capabilities, and the lack of infrastructures such as roads and communications facilities. Under these conditions not only was the presidency limited in its scope

of operation but it was constrained to operate through an assortment of largely nongovernmental institutions such as the gathering of leading citizens through which the ruling merchant elites could exact accountability. Moreover, the limited tenures served by presidents was a clear indication of the constraints under which they operated.

Throughout the nineteenth century presidential tenure was limited to two years. Although there were no limits on the number of terms any president could serve, no president served consecutively for more than eight years. In fact, only Roberts and H. R. W. Johnson served consecutive terms totaling eight years each; and both men, though considered outstanding leaders of settler society, experienced enormous opposition to their final terms.[4]

The limiting of the presidential term of office to two years was adhered to tenaciously as a measure against arbitrary leadership. Even though it was realized that such a short term of office was impractical, efforts to change it had to proceed very cautiously and with great circumspection. Debate on the question continued for half a century. It was only in 1908 that a constitutional amendment extending the tenure of president to four years was ratified. Two of the most notorious incidents of political violence in Liberia were connected with the attempt of E. J. Roye to increase his term of office and the manipulation of the constitution by Tubman that extended his term of office. Both involved assassinations and considerable bloodshed.

Thus, in the nineteenth century, presidential authority was far from absolute. Not only was the president not always the most influential individual in the political process, but even when such a person was the president, he was constrained in the exercise of authority by numerous factors including the lack of finances, poor communications, inadequate roads and other social and physical infrastructures, a limited tenure of office, and, above all, the existence of an effective group of citizens that constituted an oligarchy and demanded accountability.

The Exercise of "Legislative" Authority

The group of leading citizens whose role circumscribed presidential prerogatives and whose leader, if not president, was more powerful than the president, also functioned as the "legislative" authority. This group usually included the president and his cabinet, leading and influential members of the legislature, former presidents, and others who were notable merchants and planters. Although this group had no standing in law, it was the final authority especially in times of national crises.

It was as a result of pressure by this group regarding his handling of the border dispute with Britain that President Gardiner resigned in 1883. President Coleman was also forced from office in 1900 when a "citizens' meeting" rejected his interior policy and blamed him for the continuing hostilities in Gola country and other parts of northwestern Liberia. Faced with German aggression in 1914, President Howard summoned a meeting of the leading citizens for advice and suggestions. Even as late as 1930, President King's ouster was precipitated by the withdrawal of support by the leading citizens, who thereby cleared the way for the legislature to begin formal impeachment proceedings.

The legislature was a formal instrument that functioned as a part of the group of leading citizens. When considered in this context, one can then understand why on some occasions that body seems to have exercised the prerogative of requiring presidential accountability. Moreover, in a situation of semiautonomy, many members of the legislature, especially those from the coastal counties, were themselves local proprietors who exercised authority in a social order characterized by the deconcentration of proprietary authority. The Monrovia government needed the cooperation of the leading citizens of the semiautonomous coastal counties in collecting and reporting custom revenues and for other purposes. It therefore took their views and concerns into serious consideration. Thus, when the secretary of the treasury reported to the legislature, such reports were not always a perfunctory exercise. Similarly, in the exercise of patronage powers, the president was circumscribed by closely observed convention and practices.[5] The point is not to suggest that there existed a totally independent and effective legislature that ensured the functioning of an effective system of "checks and balances." After all, while it is true that members of the legislature relied on sources of income other than their salaries, presidential favors were very important in the maintenance of their individual statuses in the larger society. However, when the legislature is considered as one of several structures— perhaps, the most important formal structure— through which accountability was sometimes exacted from the president, its role in the political process in the nineteenth century can be more fully appreciated.[6]

In addition to ensuring presidential accountability, the legislature performed other roles in the political process in the nineteenth century. A most important role was to determine the winner of inconclusive presidential elections. The process of selecting a president usually involved the reaching of a consensus within the group of influential citizens. In most cases, such consensus was reached without strife or division. However, there were cases when differences based on "race," ideology, or personality required the institution of formal and open contestation among candidates. In such cases political parties became

important. Since a candidate needed to win a majority of popular votes in order to be elected, it was not infrequent, in cases where a consensus could not be reached among influential citizens, that the legislature had to decide who would be president.[7]

Until the establishment of the interior administration and the expansion of the bureaucracy in the early decades of the twentieth century, the legislature was the major channel of communication and the most important political structure linking the semiautonomous counties with the central government in Monrovia. It was also the medium through which the government's attempt at undertaking social welfare measures penetrated local communities.[8] Thus, in a sense, the legislature was one of the most important institutions that conveyed a sense of the existence of a national polity to local communities in Liberia even though local communities were under the dominance of local merchants.

Finally, as already stated, the legislature provided a framework in which local proprietors met at regular intervals and consulted about the distribution of patronage, reaffirmed their commitment to the body politic, and reinforced their status in local communities. By the early decades of the twentieth century, it became clear that the legislature would lose what little influence it exercised. Presidential authority prevailed over interior administration, and representations of indigenous communities were largely spectators in the Liberian legislature.

The Fusion of Judicial Responsibilities in Patrimonial Authority

Commenting on the role of the branches of government in Liberia after the Second World War, J. Gus Liebenow (1969:161) has said that the judiciary "is very much the third branch of government." It has always been that way. Compared with the presidency and the legislature, the judiciary in nineteenth-century Liberia was an inferior institution. Liberty (1977) has observed that, far from being the institution that interprets the law and resolves constitutional disputes, the judiciary has been effective only in minor disputes and in matters involving individuals of lower social status. Quite frequently, it has been used as a sinecure for political opponents who needed to be appeased.[9]

In the absence of a thriving economy and of opportunities for the development of technical skills, the study of law through apprenticeship provided a major avenue to a respectable source of income. It also provided access to public office. The relationship between a successful law practice and political influence has always been very strong. During the period of mercantile trade, European commercial houses sought protection by retaining important political figures as lawyers and resident agents. The role of lawyers in contract labor transactions has already been

discussed. As rubber production, iron ore, and timber extraction under concession agreements became the major economic activities, the role of lawyers in the operations of concession arrangements remained important.

Lawyers in Liberia have always been more important as instruments for mediating economic transactions in the political process than as artisans of jurisprudence or defenders of liberty. Similarly, the judiciary has been an instrument of manipulation and a device for the legitimization of activities of the government; the removal of judges has always been a very simple exercise involving the passage of a "joint resolution" by the legislature. Thus, in the political process of the nineteenth century, critical judicial decisions were largely worked out in meetings of leading citizens—the same group of influential citizens who made other national decisions.

The Electoral Process

In nineteenth-century Liberia, elections were a formality that was carried on in keeping with the requirements of the written constitution. Most decisions regarding the selection of "elected" officials of government took place in informal meetings of the ruling elite. With political parties, elections only became important at junctures where the mechanism for reaching political consensus broke down.

If elections were not an important institution for the selection of leaders, they served other functions in the political process. Because they were required by the constitution, they became an important instrument for the legitimation of political leaders, though not for their selection. Even in the absence of controversy and competition, candidates already chosen had to be submitted for election. This process of legitimation was meant not simply to fulfill local expectations but also to enhance international perception of Liberia as a democratic, civilized country. Elections were good for the image abroad since they were considered to be an important institution in civilized societies.

Besides serving to fulfill a constitutional requirement and the function of legitimation and promoting a good image, elections have sometimes served as a screening process whereby a field of candidates could be narrowed to a few contenders among whom influential citizens operating through the legislature would select national leaders. This screening process served as one means of entry into the group of leading citizens. Additionally, elections have also served as an opportunity for public discussion of national issues. Such issues as a constitutional amendment of the president's term of office were usually debated during elections in the nineteenth century. Other issues such as port of entry restrictions,

the loan of 1870, the nature of trade and exploration of the interior, and the northwest border dispute with the British were hotly debated issues during elections. While these debates may not have always had an impact on the outcome of elections, they did sensitize the decision makers to public opinion.

Finally, elections served as a framework for the socialization of new generations into the political process. They provided opportunities for younger citizens to gain exposure to the political process by interacting with leaders and making themselves available for recruitment into the party or the government. It was largely at such times that the "rules of the game" became known and ambitious young individuals could gain access to the political process.

By 1879, after the Roye affair and the return of Roberts to the presidency, the dominance of the True Whig party was established. During the final two decades of the nineteenth century, the only elections that were held for the purpose of selecting a president were those of 1885 when, after a bitter contest within the True Whig party, Blyden defected to the declining Republican party and challenged Hilary R. W. Johnson for the position of president. This contest, however, was more than a contest for the presidency; it was a struggle for the leadership of settler society. Johnson's victory over Blyden established him as the most influential political figure in settler society for the remainder of the century.

A final comment on the machinery and procedures for conducting elections: There is no indication in the Liberian experience that the electoral machinery was ever meant to be an instrument for conducting free and fair elections. From earliest times, electoral commissioners and registrars were selected either exclusively from the ruling party or by the incumbent president, who was either running for reelection or supportive of a particular candidate. This lack of integrity in the electoral system can be attributed to the dominance of the system by the ruling party, exacerbated by the lack of an adequate infrastructure to ensure the prompt and impartial tabulation of ballots and the communication of election results. It was not unusual that election results reached Monrovia for final tally and verification months after the votes had been cast. Moreover, the time span between elections and the assumption of office by the incoming government was usually as long as seven months—ample for contentious and possibly destabilizing developments.

Political Parties

Political parties were largely short-lived factions that surfaced from time to time and operated within the fold of the ruling elites of settler society.

The first political factions that manifested themselves as political parties emerged as a result of differences regarding trade policy and the political dominance of mulatto merchants. Settler "citizens' meetings" could not resolve the disputes stemming from the pressure for political ascendancy by darker-skinned settlers and their advocacy of protectionist trade policy. For twenty years these differences were seasonally articulated during elections, after which leaders of the darker-skinned settlers' faction and the advocates of protectionism would be coopted into succeeding governments.[10]

It was not until 1868 that the cleavage between the two factions was institutionalized in what became two standing political parties known as the Republican party and the True Whig party. By that time, however, with the passage of the port of entry laws and the defection of Daniel Warner, a former ally of Roberts, the True Whig position emerged as the dominant one in Liberian politics. The Republican, free trade faction did not survive the death of Roberts in 1876. In 1879, with the election of President Gardiner and the growing political influence of H. R. W. Johnson, the True Whig party became the dominant political organization in Liberia. As economic conditions deteriorated in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and the government itself became the major source of personal income, the party's role as a dispenser of patronage became crucial. At that time, the position of chairman of the party was one of the most influential positions in settler society and one of the most important sources of patronage. While in most cases the president was left free to choose his own cabinet, the chairman and general secretary of the party played an important role in the appointment of individuals to positions in the financial and administrative bureaucracies and in the selection of candidates for the legislature.

To a considerable extent, then, the chairman and general secretary were powerful enough in the party to counter tendencies toward arbitrariness on the part of the standard-bearer. The national convention of the party was also an important forum for the discussion of party and national issues. This arrangement continued into the early decades of the twentieth century. As the interior bureaucracy grew, however, and as resources became available to the president through the granting of concessions, the powers of such party officials as the chairman were eclipsed, and the role of the president as standard-bearer became all-encompassing. At that time, roles were reversed so that the standard-bearer of the party became powerful by virtue of the patronage powers of the presidency rather than the presidency being reliant on the all-inclusive nature of the party. The decline of the roles of party chairman and party general secretary marked a significant development in the evolution of presidential authority.

In summary, what we have seen is that the political process of the nineteenth century was characterized by merchant proprietary dominance. Political and legal authority were exercised by a small group of leading citizens through a network of kinship and patronage relationships. Property rights in land remained ambiguous or loosely defined, reflecting the lack of commitment to family farms and agrarian development. Property rights concerning trade and commodities were controlled by those structures and by individuals who exercised political and legal authority. Formal institutions such as political parties, the legislature, and the electoral process underwent adaptations that made them subordinate instrumentalities of merchant control through the informal institution known as the group of "leading citizens." These adaptations produced a patrimonial order that was unique to the nineteenth-century Liberian experience. This situation was to change gradually as the economic prerogatives of the presidency increased. The first half of the twentieth century was a period of transition leading to the evolution of an autocratic presidency in the period after the Second World War.

Transition to Personal Rule

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the aggressive pursuit of the territory near settler communities by European imperial powers had contributed to a significant shift in settler perspective on Liberia. In earlier times, Liberia had been perceived simply as a settler society with a mission to enlighten Africa. To many of the leaders of that time, the perspective of Liberia and its mission included only a rather vague notion of territoriality. By the turn of the century, Liberian elites were forced to think about the country as a modern state in a world of nation-states. The drive to consolidate a modern state was among the factors most responsible for the emergence of presidential authority as predominant over every other source of authority. Developments during the first three decades of the twentieth century provided the transition through which nineteenth-century merchant proprietary authority was transformed into strong presidential authority and, later, into the personal authority of the president.

President Coleman and the Rudiments of Presidential Authority

The transition began with the presidency of William D. Coleman in 1896. Raised in the upriver settlement of Clay-Ashland, Coleman had lived in close contact with indigenous societies and had developed a deep

concern about the problem of instability in the interior. Having served in the legislature for many years and as vice president, he was also aware of the enormous pressures from European imperial powers to annex the interior. One of his major preoccupations when he became president upon the death of President Cheeseman was to end the sustained upheavals that had existed in northwestern Liberia for many years. Coleman, as was recounted in Chapter 9, sought to establish military garrisons in the interior and, by military means, impose Liberian government authority over the region. Although his policy caused an uproar in settler society and did not curb hostilities, it led to the establishment of the first permanent military garrison as an instrument of control over the interior. Coleman was forced to resign, but the military garrison he established at Suehn remained. The "consultation and advisory meeting of the leading citizens"—the group that denounced Coleman's policy and forced him to resign—recommended that the garrison be put under more professional military leadership.[11] The establishment of a permanent military garrison in the interior signaled the beginnings of an effort to strengthen direct presidential control over the interior.

Howard, King, and the Decline of Party Authority

The ouster of Coleman from the presidency by "a consultative and advisory meeting" of the "leading citizens," which convened under the aegis of the True Whig party and other structures, signified the role of the party in ensuring accountability in public affairs. This role was to be diminished shortly thereafter. The decline of the role of the party began with the machinations of Daniel E. Howard who was elected president in 1912. His father, Thomas, had served as chairman and himself as secretary of the True Whig party. With so many years of experience between them, the father-son team of Thomas and Daniel Howard had built a network of allies and clients. This network proved to be a major asset to Daniel. As president, he was now in charge of the establishment of an interior administration, an effort begun by his predecessor, Arthur Barclay. Through the skillful manipulations of the party and the emerging interior bureaucracy, Howard, as president, was able to reduce the powers of party functionaries and amass considerable influence over the party machinery (Liebenow 1969).

By the time Howard left office in 1919, the president's control over the party was so evident and widely acknowledged that his successor, President Charles King, had little difficulty legalizing presidential dominance of the party by having the party's constitution amended to repose supreme authority in the position of standard-bearer (C. Johnson

1987). The consolidation of control over the party by King was facilitated by the president's exclusive control over interior administration and its use for recruiting contract labor, and by the introduction of Firestone as a concessionaire, both of which made new and independent sources of government revenues available to the president. Ironically, it was the misuse of such excessive and exclusive presidential authority over the interior and the absence of a countervailing authority that precipitated the undoing of the King presidency.

Edwin Barclay and Statism

The forced resignation of the King administration in the face of the contract labor scandal struck a blow to presidential authority. The League of Nations' attempts to establish a mandate, under which Liberia was to become a protectorate of a European imperial power, created a grave crisis for the Liberian elite. Developing concomitantly with the pressure to reduce Liberia to a colonial protectorate were internal demands for secession, particularly along the Kru Coast. Faced with these internal and external pressures, President Edwin Barclay sought to reestablish presidential authority. For him, however, the establishment of presidential authority was not an end in itself; he sought to use that authority as an instrument to preserve the integrity of the state. Thus it was only in the 1930s that the concept of the Liberian state fully emerged as the dominant political concept and with it the notion that the ultimate purpose of government, including the presidency, was the preservation and promotion of the state.

Edwin Barclay undertook three sets of measures to preserve the integrity and promote the security of the Liberian state.

1. He took steps to stamp out internal rebellion and stifle dissent. He not only launched military campaigns against rebellious communities, but also established new military garrisons at strategic locations around the country. As a measure to reduce dissent, in 1933, Barclay ensured the promulgation of stringent sedition laws. He also assumed emergency powers as he deemed necessary, thereby enabling him to operate, in certain circumstances, unrestrained by the constitutional authority of the legislature.
2. He made a serious effort to improve the efficiency and autonomy of the state bureaucracy. The Civil Service Act was passed in 1935. The purpose of the act was to develop a professional core of civil servants to manage the state bureaucracy and remove the bureaucracy from

patronage influences. As we saw in Chapter 8, Barclay also revived and promulgated proposals for the consolidation of the interior bureaucracy through greater centralization.

3. He pushed through a constitutional amendment limiting the tenure of the president to one term of eight years. Up to this time, presidential terms had been set at four years with no limitation on reelection. President King's insistence on a third term had sparked the controversy that eventually drew international attention to Liberia's contract labor problem.[12] Therefore, in limiting the tenure of the president, Barclay sent a clear signal of his intention to reestablish the institutional authority of the president rather than secure his personal authority.

Quite clearly, the pursuit of these statist policies by Barclay was made possible by the existence of a standing military force, an interior jurisdiction under exclusive presidential control, and new sources of government revenue from concession rights. Although these capabilities made possible the pursuit of such policies, Barclay's motivation was derived largely from international pressure, especially the report of the League of Nations Commission of Inquiry, and the internal threat to the government's authority. In addition to the proposals for reform made by the Commission, new proposals were made by special commissions, that the League subsequently sponsored.[13]

Among the most demanding proposals of the international community was the recommendation of the Brunot Commission that Liberia seek a new loan, and the insistence of the American, British, French, and German governments that the Liberian government should submit to international supervision.[14] President Barclay and the ruling elite perceived these demands as a call for the liquidation of the Liberian state. In an astute maneuver, Barclay succeeded in implementing most of the administrative reforms without the "surrender of sovereignty," that is, the effective transformation of Liberia into a colonial protectorate.

Not only did Barclay's government refuse to negotiate a new loan, it also unilaterally declared a moratorium on the repayment of the Firestone loan of 1926.[15] Barclay's commitment to preserving the integrity of the state against international intrusion seemed as resolute as his commitment to eradicating internal strife. He was also staunchly committed to the original Whig principle that economic development should be promoted from within. As Brown ([1941] 1981:227) puts it, Barclay had a vision of Liberia as "a country raising itself from amongst the least important nations by its own efforts." By 1935, he had instituted a policy for self-reliant economic development.

Barclay's economic development strategy was based on the view that indigenous technologies should constitute the foundation of Liberia's development efforts. Accordingly, he encouraged the reintroduction of the spinning wheel and attempted to revive and expand local craft industries. He perceived the development of local cooperative societies as the institutional arrangement for undertaking agricultural and other economic activities in rural areas. In 1936, the Cooperative Societies Act was promulgated.[16]

Economic nationalist as he appeared to be, Barclay recognized a role for foreign investment in Liberia's development. He supported the view that the exploitation of Liberia's iron ore deposits be undertaken by granting concession rights to foreign firms. Such concessions, however, were not to be granted until plans had been made and institutional arrangements devised for using royalties to develop local communities (Brown [1941] 1981). For him, foreign investment was to be one aspect of a developmental process dominated by locally driven economic activities. This approach underscored a fundamental distinction between the economic policy of Barclay and his successor Tubman.

In view of the situation confronting Liberia in the international community, Barclay preferred a policy of neutrality at the outbreak of the Second World War. Unable to repel allied pressure, Barclay negotiated Liberia's involvement in the war on the side of the Allies in return for the construction of certain infrastructural facilities for Liberia. In 1942, Liberia and the United States signed the Defence Areas Agreement granting the United States the right to build, operate, and protect certain military installations in Liberia. By signing this agreement, Liberia became eligible for aid through lend-lease. In 1943, the Mutual Aid Agreement was signed by Liberia and the United States. Under these agreements, the first deep water seaport was constructed and the trunk road network was expanded to the frontier regions of the country. These and other projects marked the first major infrastructural development program to be undertaken since those connected with the introduction of Firestone almost twenty years earlier (Simpson 1961).

The statist policies of Barclay were very popular with the Liberian elite. Demoralized by the disgrace brought about by the contract labor scandal and threatened by international pressure to make Liberia a protectorate, the settler elite was rejuvenated by the policies of a president who could stand up to the international community. In their perception, Barclay had saved the country and restored its dignity. His interior policy was also broadly supported in settler circles. The pacification campaign launched on the Kru Coast and the liberal use of the sedition laws against the indigenous intelligentsia were perceived in settler circles as appropriate measures designed to restore stability and peace.

While Barclay was considered a national hero among settler elites, he was perceived as a tyrannical leader by the indigenous intelligentsia, who opposed his pacification campaigns and sought international intervention on behalf of the rebelling indigenous communities. After the pacification campaigns of the early 1930s, Barclay sought to repair his relationship with the chiefs and people of the interior.[17] Despite his efforts, the scars of the conflicts—especially those since the turn of the century—were deep. In most indigenous communities, the period following the contract labor scandal was marked by fear and suspicion. Edwin Barclay was perceived as a stern president who engendered fear and respect but not friendship.

Thus, under Barclay, the Liberian government had not only steered a course away from being reduced to a colonial protectorate; it had also struggled to pursue an essentially self-reliant approach to economic development. Looming supreme above these initiatives were efforts to develop the institutions of the state as the dominant institutions governing Liberian society. The Barclay presidency was the crucial instrument driving these efforts.

In changing circumstances, as substantial resources became available from the exploitation of iron ore, timber, and rubber, it was left to Tubman to develop a cult of the presidency, and to transform that office into a personal domain maintained by generous use of both the carrot and the stick.

The Personalization of Authority

True to his commitment to the institutionalization of state structures and procedures, Barclay retired from the presidency at the end of his term of office in 1943. It was evident that the presidency was by that time the unchallenged authority in the land.[18] The choice of the new president was eventually left to the retiring one. After considerable jostling within the ranks of "leading citizens," Barclay endorsed William V. S. Tubman of Maryland County.[19]

In order to appreciate the nature of the political process that led to the personalization of authority under Tubman, several factors need to be understood. Among them are the background, political career, and personal qualities of Tubman; the nature of the postwar Liberian economy; the domestic social processes of postwar Liberia; and the upsurge of nationalist sentiments in postwar Africa generally. All of these factors influenced the Tubman presidency and contributed to its transformation into a personal cult.

Tubman, the Outsider

As we have previously seen, all the presidents of Liberia since 1896 had come from Montserrado County. Indeed, with the exception of Coleman, all had come from the city of Monrovia. Moreover, since the founding of the country, the dominant core of leading citizens always consisted of Monrovians. The point here is that whether it was the mulatto elite of the early and middle 1800s or the declining merchant-politicians of later periods, the Monrovia establishment had always been the driving political force in the Liberian social order. By the incumbency of Howard, when the influence of the party began to decline, the personal resources including the style, values, and predispositions of the president became an even more important element in the political process. Thus Howard's administration was marked by tendencies toward "machine" rule, while King's smacked of folksy cronyism, and Barclay's of bureaucratic rigidity.[20] Despite personal differences, these men were from the same circle of friends and relatives that constituted the core of the Monrovia establishment. There was an implicit solidarity among members of this group.[21] Tubman was decidedly an outsider and his elevation to the presidency was destined to have a profound effect on the office and the nature of political authority in Liberia.

William Tubman was born in Harper, Maryland County (Cape Palmas), in 1895. He attended the Cape Palmas Seminary, a Methodist high school, and also "read" law under notable local legal practitioners. His public service career began in 1916 as a recorder at the Monthly and Probate Court in Harper. Subsequently, he held a number of positions in county administration. A very affable person, he easily cultivated friendships at all levels of local society. By representing many clients who were poor, and mixing socially, he became enormously popular among the local common folk. He joined all of the fraternal orders that were important in settler society and founded a militia unit that fought in the pacification campaigns on the Kru Coast in 1915 (Wreh 1976; Dunn and Holsoe 1985; Dunn and Tarr 1988).

His father, a Methodist preacher, had been a senator and an inner member of the local political proprietorship that was later dominated by Allen Yancy for the better part of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Tubman himself entered national politics through that link and secured local endorsement as well as the endorsement of President King for a seat in the Senate in 1923. He became a protégé of King (Wreh 1976).[22] Having served as a lawyer for Yancy when the latter ran a contract labor operation, Tubman was rejected by the national party when nominated by the local True Whig party for reelection to the senate in 1931. Thanks to his enormous local support, however, he was reelected in by-elections held in 1934. According to Tuan Wreh (1976), upon the ouster of King,

Tubman carefully cultivated a relationship with President Barclay and in 1937 was appointed associate justice of the Supreme Court.

Once selected president, Tubman began to fashion the office to suit his personal desires. He gradually broke the hold of the Monrovia elite on power by dismantling the national leadership structure. He reconstituted the leadership of the True Whig party and the membership of the legislature by replacing well-known leaders with individuals of a lower social status or by members of the Monrovia elite who had become disaffected with the Barclay government. Being an outsider, Tubman was not bound by the social constraints that had obliged his twentieth-century predecessors to continue a Monrovia high society tradition of national leadership.[23]

In constituting his own power base, Tubman undertook a number of political measures that were aimed at healing the wounds of the hinterland while gaining personal support. As part of his unification and integration policy, suffrage was extended to the hinterland population and three seats in the House of Representatives were allotted to the three interior provinces. He also made a few symbolic appointments of indigenous individuals to significant positions in government.[24] One of Tubman's most important machinations was his manipulation of the interior administration. He forged personal friendships with a few chiefs and installed several of his household attendants, dependents and confidants as chiefs irrespective of their lineage status or popular appeal among their people (Dunn and Tarr 1988; Lowenkopf 1976; Wreh 1976).

On a wider scale, far from continuing Barclay's efforts to develop and institutionalize a professional civil service, Tubman expanded the civil service and utilized it as a patronage scheme. He also carefully cultivated a new constituency among women. Having extended suffrage to women, he appointed a few to positions of authority.[25] Thus, taking full advantage of the prerogatives that had accrued to the presidency, Tubman set out to create an independent base of support and to stamp his personal imprimatur on the office. With increased economic resources at his command, by the end of his constitutional eight-year term of office in 1952, Tubman was prepared for an all-out confrontation both with the indigenous intelligentsia, which had been a constant source of opposition since the King administration, and with the Monrovia establishment, which resisted his consolidation of personal power.

Crushing the Opposition

Throughout the nineteenth century, opposition to the Liberian government was usually derived from two sources. One source resided within settler society and sometimes involved differences regarding policies but

most often, rivalries over access to positions, mainly the presidency. This opposition manifested itself sporadically as short-lived opposition parties at election time. The second source of opposition was to be found in the indigenous communities. Led by the indigenous intelligentsia, this form of opposition was essentially a struggle for inclusion. Having suffered several military setbacks, minimal participation in the significant decision-making structures, and unanswered appeals to the international community, by the 1940s, the indigenous intelligentsia was resorting to efforts to organize a political party. In 1951, the first attempt was made by some members of the indigenous intelligentsia to legally register a party. Failing to gain legal registration of the United People's party, the indigenous intelligentsia then coopted a dormant but registered political party known as the Reformation party and posed the first open political challenge to Tubman (Wreh 1976).[26]

At this time, having pushed through a constitutional amendment enabling the president to succeed himself for an unlimited number of terms of four years, Tubman was bent on perpetuating himself in office. In its opposition to Tubman, the Reformation party advocated, among other things, special trading rights for Liberian traders in the interior, election of judges, the overhauling of the electoral system, and the depoliticization of the civil service (ibid.). Tubman did not allow the party's candidates to be listed on the ballot, charged its leaders with sedition, and disbanded it. Sought by security forces, Didwho Twe, the party's presidential candidate, fled to neighboring Sierra Leone.[27]

Although the banning of the Reformation party left Tubman unopposed during the 1951 elections, discontent about his efforts to perpetuate himself in office continued to grow. A coalition of the alienated Monrovia establishment and indigenous intelligentsia was to mount a new initiative to retire Tubman from office. Headed by former president Edwin Barclay, this coalition organized the Independent True Whig party and attempted to field a slate of candidates in the 1955 elections. As election time approached, the political wrangling that developed ended in an assassination attempt on Tubman's life and the ruthless crushing of the opposition. Not since the Roye affair of 1871 had opposition politics engendered such levels of violence.[28] The fate of the opposition served notice on two generations of Liberians as to the length to which Tubman was prepared to go in preventing a challenge. It was to be some twenty-five years before initiatives would be taken to organize an opposition political party without concealment.[29]

Developing a Security Network

The killing of opposition leaders signified the introduction of violence as an instrument of political competition in modern Liberia. The question

of "state security" became a matter of highest priority. The establishment of a modern secret police network became a Tubman imperative. Beginning in the mid-1950s with the establishment of the criminal investigation division of the police force, the security apparatus expanded by the mid-1960s to include the Special Security Service, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Executive Action Bureau, and the National Intelligence and Security Service. In addition to these, Tubman transformed what began as an informal welfare and pension scheme into a full-blown network of informants, called public relations officers (PROs), reporting directly to the executive mansion.

By the time of Tubman's death in 1971, the security network was in virtual control of Liberia. At least three celebrated treason trials had been held.[30] In addition, countless instances of arbitrary arrest, detention and torture of students, civil servants, and others had taken place under a veritable reign of terror as suspicion and fear gripped the society.[31] Dismissal from positions in government and from employment with mining and other concessionaires "for administrative reasons" was a tool of control and punishment frequently used by Tubman.

In addition to his personal characteristics and the nature of the political processes of the time, the factors that made Tubman's consolidation of personal authority possible included the fervor of nationalism and independence that swept across Africa at the end of the Second World War and the tremendous economic growth of the postwar Liberian economy.

African Nationalism and the Personalization of Authority

The era of nationalism presented a challenge and an opportunity for Tubman as he sought to consolidate his personal hold on the presidency. When he took office at the end of the Second World War, discussion of African liberation and self-determination was rife in the colonial territories of Africa. As Africa's oldest independent state, Liberia was expected not only to participate in the discussion but to be a leader of the struggle for independence in Africa.[32] The image of Liberia as a settler-controlled state and, moreover, a repressive and mismanaged one required urgent repair in the wake of the rise of African nationalism in the postwar period.

An obvious tension existed between promoting independence and self-determination in Africa at a time when Tubman's efforts to consolidate his personal authority required the compliance and submission of the whole Liberian people. Questions of liberation and self-determination struck sensitive cords and stimulated rising expectations among the indigenous peoples of Liberia who had felt subjugated by previous

administrations. Tubman's unification policy proceeded on two fronts. He attempted to mollify these expectations without unduly upsetting the structure of social relations. At the same time, he set out to build a personal constituency among peoples who hitherto had been alienated from the Monrovia establishment by the excesses of the contract labor system and by the pacification campaigns (Dunn 1979; Fahnbulleh 1985).

Thus, by promoting unification through policies of limited inclusion and symbolic gestures, Tubman reduced suspicion, created a new atmosphere in the hinterland and, at the same time, developed a system of control based on personal loyalty, graft, threats, and use of force.[33] Such measures also served to reduce international criticism of Liberia's seemingly unbridgeable class and ethnic divide. In consolidating his control, Tubman often sought to keep his interior networks secure by manipulating the fears of chiefs and other hinterland notables. He often suggested that the opposition encountered from the Monrovia establishment was caused by its resentment of his policy of inclusion for the hinterland (Wreh 1976). Thus the unification policy was at once a domestic response to African nationalism and international criticism as well as an instrument of personal control.

Economic Growth and Presidential Authority

The transformation of the presidency into a personal domain could not have taken place under Tubman without the financial and other resources made available to the government as a result of the extensive exploitation of Liberia's natural resources in the postwar period. The Tubman presidency coincided with the growing demand for rubber and steel after the Second World War. Unlike Barclay, who perceived the exploitation of iron ore and other mineral resources by foreign investors as one aspect of a general economic strategy, Tubman's Open Door policy placed it at the core of Liberia's approach to economic development.

Such an economic policy, based on joint ventures between the government and foreign investors, had the effect of stimulating rapid economic growth, more government-controlled employment, and more expansive scope for presidential patronage.[34] More importantly, the new economic prosperity changed the source and increased the amount of revenue available to the government. Up to the end of the 1940s, government revenue hovered around $3 million annually, with customs receipts and hut taxes as the most important sources.[35] As rubber production steadily increased in the 1950s, so did government revenues. By 1950, corporate income tax from Firestone alone accounted for about 26 percent of government revenues (Clower et al. 1966:173-74).[36] By the mid-1950s, with the

beginning of iron ore production and the expansion of timber extraction, more than half of government revenues came from corporate taxes, royalties, and other concession-related sources.[37]

The shift from customs receipts and hut taxes, the collection of which required considerable bureaucracies, to corporate taxes and royalties reduced reliance on the customs and internal revenue bureaucracies and hinterland administration. The presidency was financially able to pursue its objectives free from dependence on sluggish tax-collection bureaucracies and accountability to tax-paying constituents.

Evidence of the use of this new income could be seen in the dramatic expansion of physical and social infrastructures during the 1950s and 1960s. But Tubman also used the new income to tighten his grip on power by financing his network of informants and expanding his security apparatus.[38] The tremendous expansion of physical and social facilities and the free spending of money increased Tubman's popularity. By establishing a practice of doling out public funds as private gifts to whomever he pleased, Tubman not only institutionalized graft as an instrument of political manipulation but also made this form of corruption a national virtue expected of the "good" leader.[39]

Finally, the nature of economic growth under the Open Door policy of the Tubman years contributed to strengthening and personalizing presidential powers in another respect. Although the Liberian economy grew at a rate between 4 to 7 percent annually during the period from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s, more than 80 percent of this growth was produced by activities directly connected with the exploitation of iron ore, rubber, and timber. The greatest portion of this growth represented investment in capital equipment. While payments of wages and of direct and indirect taxes on foreign firms had some impact on economic growth, the spinoffs from these extractive industries contributed little to the development of any substantial and sustained entrepreneurial activities among Liberians.[40] In fact, there are instances that demonstrate that pursuit of measures designed to facilitate foreign investment contributed to the stagnation or decline of local production.[41] To the extent that the development of local entrepreneurship has been encouraged under the Open Door policy, such enterprises have always been dependent upon personal political connections. Under Tubman's Open Door policy, successful participation in private enterprise, like employment in public service or parastatal organizations, was wholly dependent upon personal relationships within the presidentially dominated structure of authority.

The Presidency as a Cult

With the primacy of the presidency already well established in previous years, the increase in financial, social, and human resources now available

to it elevated the office to a position of veneration. Additionally, the seemingly endless tenure of Tubman made him personally indistinguishable from the presidency. Liebenow (1969) has argued that this extraordinarily long tenure, coupled with Tubman's "remarkable personality" and mastery of the "political terrain," enabled him to have a significant impact on the presidency as such.[42] With changed circumstances under Tubman, the presidency transcended its original role as the symbol of the dignity of Liberia, the guardian of the primacy of settler society, and protector of the state. It became, directly or indirectly, the ultimate source of individual livelihood. Whether derived as a gratuity from the briefcase carried by Tubman's valet or from earnings from private agricultural estates or peasant farms, all incomes were perceived to be derived from President Tubman. Accordingly, all praises went to him.[43]

Commenting on the unique opportunity available to Liberia's first president since the Second World War, C. L. Simpson (1961:241) wrote in his *Memoirs* that "perhaps for the first time in the country's history a Liberian president could aim at doing more than keeping the country's head above water." Clearly, almost every physical or social project undertaken under Tubman was a pioneering effort that enhanced his image among most Liberians. Little wonder that scores of educational, health, agricultural, military, cultural, sports, and other facilities such as bridges, roads, and cities bear his name or those of his relatives.

By the late 1950s, his birthday was celebrated by a circle of individuals that extended beyond his relatives and friends.[44] Not only was it declared a national holiday by the legislature but preparation for its observance required annual deductions from the salaries of public employees and "contributions" from the private sector.[45] These celebrations were also the occasions for undertaking "development" projects, for which involuntary contributions were imposed without accountability. In many cases, the quality of the projects undertaken left much to be desired.[46] But thanks to the tremendous economic growth, increased government expenditure, the pursuit of measures to mollify the age-old problem posed by settler dominance, and the pioneering efforts in numerous new development schemes, citizens generally look upon the Tubman years as the golden years of twentieth-century Liberia. Some analysts have even referred to the Tubman years as the era of "modernization."[47]

While due recognition must be given to Tubman's achievements, an objective assessment requires that we examine those achievements against the backdrop of the great increase in resources available to the government and the length of his tenure as president. Tubman did in fact succeed in reducing tension and attempting to break the long-standing suspicion that existed between settler society and many of the indigenous communities.

More importantly, however, one must perceive the personalization of authority by Tubman for what it was, namely, a failure to build institutions that operate according to rules of law and attain legitimacy based on their own performance in the society. The celebration of graft and corruption as a national virtue distorted the national ethos. The establishment of a pervasive security apparatus and the victimization of individuals for personal and political reasons provided a powerful disincentive for the development of an open public realm and the enhancement of participation in the development of the society. The failure to promote independent Liberian entrepreneurship encouraged economic dependency and stifled creativity. Finally, the transformation of the presidency into a personal domain posed an inescapable problem for the continuation of the social order upon the death or retirement of the leader. The political and social upheavals of the 1970s and the destruction of the regime in 1980 make this point all too apparent.

Exercising Personal Authority without Patronage

The configuration of social, economic, and political factors upon which the personal rule of Tubman was established and maintained began to unravel before his death in 1971. In the late 1960s, the economic growth rate began to decline as a result of decreasing levels of capital investment and the decreasing prices of many of Liberia's natural resources in the world market. Furthermore, heavy government investment in construction of public buildings the ever-expanding public sector payroll, and debt servicing as a consequence of short-term borrowing at high rates of interest took their toll on the public treasury as the rate of increase in government revenue declined.

At the same time, the educational expansion of the 1950s and early 1960s had produced thousands of high school dropouts, and graduates as well, who could not obtain the hoped-for employment in an already stagnating economy. The decline in capital investment also contributed to decline in employment opportunities. At the same time, the development of the nation's social infrastructure increased mobility and social and political consciousness. Public grumblings of disapproval about the Fahnbulleh treason trial of 1968,[48] increased circulation of underground leaflets critical of the government, and a proliferation of wildcat strikes and work stoppages were indications that Tubman's autocracy was gradually losing its leverage.

Tubman had come to the presidency at a time of economic growth. In contrast, William Tolbert's assumption of office in 1971 coincided with economic stagnation and decline. The oil crisis of 1973, global recession,

and the continuous decline of the price of iron ore were among the external factors that made the 1970s a period of recession. Needless to say, these deteriorating economic conditions had an adverse effect on standards of living, especially among ordinary citizens.[49] Furthermore, the ending of the Tubman autocracy gave rise to an outburst of hitherto repressed social forces. This outburst manifested itself in the formation of many political and social groupings and organizations in all sectors of the society. Struggling at this time to establish himself as the legitimate occupant of the office, Tolbert was initially constrained to accept this upsurge of self-organization. Such slogans as "Total involvement for higher heights" were designed to present the Tolbert presidency as a new and all-inclusive social order.

But in trying to fashion a new order, Tolbert was also struggling to maintain the extravagant prerogatives of the presidency while rejecting Tubman's paternalistic style and patronage network. In other words, he sought to pursue two contradictory courses. Amid pressures for empowerment and self-organization, Tolbert labored to reconstitute the political order by rationalizing the presidency without diminishing its excessive and exclusive privileges. His aim was to shape the emergent social forces into a pattern of order while controlling the processes of self-organization and empowerment initiated by communities and entities all around the country. He sought to "de-Tubmanize" Liberia, but without successfully developing viable political infrastructures as alternatives.

"De-Tubmanizing" the Presidency

In attempting to establish his imprimatur on the presidency, Tolbert sought to dismantle Tubman's political and security apparatus—an apparatus that had also produced himself. Under the pressure of such emergent social groupings as the intelligentsia, technicians and professionals, trade unions, and others who had felt disaffected with Tubman, he sought to replace Tubman's patronage network with a system of civil administration.[50]

In the first year after becoming president, he disbanded the system of public relations officers (PROs) and replaced it with an ill-conceived social welfare program.[51] In 1973, he revitalized the Civil Service Commission with a view to instituting standardization and the merit system in public service employment. He also retired more than 400 aging soldiers (Lowenkopf 1976).[52] Retired soldiers were replaced by young recruits from urban areas, many of whom were then poorly trained at the Tubman Military Academy. This development drastically changed the character of the military in Liberia with consequences already well known.[53]

A further measure taken by Tolbert as a departure from Tubman's practices involved an effort to increase the level of participation of Liberians in the economy. One aspect of this effort was aimed at increasing the number of Liberians in staff and technical positions in the joint ventures and other concessions.[54] Another aspect involved the creation of opportunities for Liberians to participate successfully and independently in private enterprise.[55]

In rural Liberia, Tolbert's policies supported the further penetration of agrarian life by the structures of the "integrated rural development" schemes being promoted by international agencies. As a result, more farmers were brought into tree crop production and other forms of commercial agriculture. Rural marketing cooperatives were organized and the Agricultural Credit and Development Bank established. Under such arrangements, the scope of rural administration was expanded and the concept of "rural development" was constantly emphasized. Chiefs were required to function as much as motivators of production as officers in the system of tax collection and labor recruitment.

In accordance with his desire to rationalize interior administration, Tolbert replaced Tubman's provincial conviviality with a rather formal and official relationship with the chiefs and elders of the interior. The practice of electing chiefs therefore became more widespread, to the extent that certain patterns of traditional authority had escaped Tubman's tampering; these also were largely dismantled by Tolbert's efforts to establish bureaucratic rationality.

Finally, Tolbert tried to build a political constituency of his own. For a president who wanted a constituency that would support his attempts to establish rationality in administration, such a constituency had to include the emerging group of young professionals, technicians, and bureaucrats; the university constituency; the emerging rural educated elite; the growing core of Liberian entrepreneurs; and the hierarchy of a more professionalized military. Under Tubman, all of these groups had either been in their infancy or were purposely repressed.[56] Tolbert's efforts to cultivate these sectors of the society amid persistent economic decline and the growing social and political awareness were resisted by such countervailing forces as the receding patronage network of Tubman, by the natural tendency toward self-organization at grassroots and other levels of the society, and by Tolbert's own personal predispositions and idiosyncracies. The clash among these countervailing forces produced the violence that brought about the downfall of the regime.

Countervailing Forces

One of the most potent forces that confronted Tolbert was to be found within the ranks of the patronage network he inherited from Tubman.

His effort to establish bureaucratic rationality and introduce a more formal style of government was bitterly resented by the old guard.[57] Many of them perceived Tolbert as moving too fast, breaking with tradition, and showing disrespect and ingratitude to the old order that had produced him and elevated him to the presidency. He seemed to be conducting a flirtation with "young upstarts" whose advanced education, familiarity with technology, and clamoring for democratic freedoms left them feeling threatened and insecure.[58] Alienated by his style and policies, the old guard strove unsuccessfully to stem the tide of change that was steadily engulfing the society.

Faced with the resistance of the old guard on the one hand and the pressure for change on the other, and entrapped by his personal predispositions, Tolbert vacillated between making concessions to the former and fulfilling family demands, while moving haltingly—sometimes only symbolically—in a new direction. In the meantime, a capacity for self-organization was emerging at all levels of the society. Trade union secretariats lost their grip on workers' organizations as workers engaged in self-organization at the plant level and constituted independent secretariats at the national level.[59] The newly established Liberian Caucus of the Chamber of Commerce became very assertive in demanding changes in business policies and practices.[60] Student organizations became more democratic as student elections were regularly held in most schools and universities.[61] In rural Liberia, the political slogan of self-reliance was taken one stage further by local people and utilized as a principle of organization.[62]

Numerous newspapers and other publications circulated regularly around the country, and a full range of national and international issues were publicly discussed.[63] The irrepressible Albert Porte, whose one-person campaign against constitutional abuses had begun in the 1920s, stepped up his advocacy for an open society.[64] In the churches, Christian preachers went so far as to examine critically social and political issues in their sermons—a practice avoided during the Tubman years.

While several urban social movements rose and disintegrated during this period, two proved enduring. These were the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) and the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL). Organized in 1973 by a group of students and professors of the University of Liberia, MOJA was initially a liberation support group. It was dedicated to enlightening the public and mobilizing material support for the wars of liberation against Portuguese colonial forces and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. As membership in the movement expanded, the movement was motivated to concern itself with local issues. Questions about civil liberties, equality of opportunity, and urban and rural poverty in Liberia became as important among its concerns as the problems of Portuguese colonialism and South Africa. Within seven years, MOJA,

with the help of supporters, had organized grassroots opposition to the legalization of gambling, support for the legal defense of Albert Porte in a libel suit brought against him by the president's brother (who was also finance minister), and the creation of a socioeconomic advisory service called Susukuu. In early 1980, MOJA decided to collaborate with other groups and individuals in the society to organize a political party and to contest the forthcoming 1983 elections.[65]

PAL was organized by a few Liberians in the United States in 1975. It was essentially a pressure group in search of an opportunity to organize a political party. In 1978, it established offices in Monrovia and cultivated a constituency among the unemployed and underemployed of urban Liberia. The rice riots that took place in Monrovia in April 1979 were the result of the government's use of military force to prevent a demonstration organized by PAL against a planned increase in the price of rice. Late in 1979, PAL organized and registered the Progressive People's Party (PPP), the first legal opposition party in Liberia in twenty-five years. Unfortunately, for the most part because of the nature of its constituency, its lack of objectives other than to contest for power, and constant subjugation to security harassment, PPP could not rise above anomic outbursts. In early 1980, it called for a nationwide strike until the government resigned and formed a coalition government of active political parties. The government's response was to arrest its leaders and charge them with treason.[66]

Contradictory Tendencies

The general problem of replacing a personalized autocracy after the death of the ruler precipitates dislocations and unleashes hitherto stifled aspirations. Since the levers of control used by Tubman could no longer be relied upon, Tolbert was confronted with the problem of constituting a new regime. His task was to conceive of an acceptable formula for the constitution of order in Liberian society. His efforts to formulate new political arrangements were circumscribed largely by forces that included his own personal circumstances and predispositions.

Anxious to break with the past, no sooner had Tolbert become president than he promised an open society and committed his government to the protection of civil liberties. He released Tubman's political prisoners, encouraged free debate, and invited criticism of government officials.[67] As press criticism was leveled at high officials who were his relatives, however, Tolbert drew the line. In 1974, for example, a news magazine was banned and the editors imprisoned for criticizing his finance minister brother whose already extensive business interests rapidly

expanded when Tolbert became president. The Supreme Court, presided over by the father-in-law of the finance minister, fined Albert Porte close to a quarter-million dollars as a result of the libel suit brought by Finance Minister Tolbert.

By the end of 1973, President Tolbert had assumed emergency powers and was pushing for a stronger sedition law. Gradually, the activities of the security forces increased and a broad assortment of people including outspoken clerics, university professors, student leaders, newspaper editors, and reporters were subjected to security surveillance. Self-censorship and sporadic government censorship of newspapers increased as reporters and student leaders were frequently arrested and imprisoned. Clearly, Tolbert seemed committed to the protection of civil liberties and the promotion of an open society as long as his own actions and those of his relatives were not subject to close scrutiny.

Other contradictions were to be found between his declared commitment to equality of opportunity for entrepreneurship and the dominance of his and his relatives' business interests. He replaced the monopoly control of Tubman relatives and cronies over rice importation with a monopoly controlled by his own family (Lowenkopf 1976). Tolbert and his relatives maintained extensive and sometimes dominant business interests in fishing, automobiles sales and service, poultry, and the distribution of textbooks and uniforms. He was most insensitive to questions of conflict of interest that involved himself and his relatives.[68] He would frequently have junior officials of government charged and prosecuted for embezzlement and malfeasance while using human and material resources of government ministries to construct buildings or an artificial lake and undertake millions of dollars of other improvements on his personal property in his hometown.[69]

Tubman, indeed, had also raided the public treasury—but without the pretense of being a reformer. Against the background of an increasing sense of efficacy in the society, such duplicity contributed to the emergence of an uneasy situation. Two developments in 1979 dramatically demonstrated the regime's insensitivity and lack of moral authority, and foretold its decline. The first involved a series of events surrounding the rice riots; the second was the race for mayor of Monrovia.

The public's passion to demonstrate against an increase in the price of rice stemmed not only from the fact that under it a bag of rice would have cost as much as one-third of the monthly wages of low-income earners, but also from the widespread perception that Tolbert, his relatives, and a few high officials, as large-scale rice producers and importers, were to be the direct beneficiaries of this policy. Tolbert seemed insensitive to this conflict of interest. As the government seemed set to announce the price increase, a demonstration was called by the PPP.

Intervention of the security forces as crowds gathered for the demonstration left about 200 persons dead and hundreds injured. The military, which had been sent to restore order, led mobs in looting shops and other commercial houses. Although Tolbert accepted many of the recommendations of a commission on "reconstruction" set up after the riots, the recommendation that he scale down the expanding business interests of his family was not one of them (Boley 1983; Dunn and Tarr 1988).[70] It was clear that the safeguarding of special economic opportunities for himself and his family took priority over his support for free enterprise, just as the sheltering of his relatives from criticism superseded his commitment to civil liberties. Thus, instead of attending to the serious problems exposed by the rice riots, Tolbert resorted to tightening up the security forces.[71]

That Tolbert was constrained to call upon the military to break up an impending demonstration was indicative of the failure of his moral authority and other instruments available to him as president. Moreover, the looting of shops and other commercial houses by the military was a clear indication of its lack of discipline and, therefore, unreliability. The vulnerability of the regime was clearly exposed.

Another development that exposed the moral and political bankruptcy of the Tolbert regime was my own campaign for mayor of Monrovia. The Sawyer-for-Mayor campaign marked the first time in twenty-five years that any Liberian had sought public office outside the framework of the True Whig party (TWP). One of its objectives was to use the electoral process to challenge the government to make good on its often professed commitment to the legal and constitutional process. Supported by a cross-section of people that included students, teachers and professors, artisans and traders, disgruntled Liberian business entrepreneurs, and low-level civil servants, the Sawyer-for-Mayor campaign challenged the existence and selective use of the property ownership qualification for voting, and insisted on the full and proper execution of such procedures as voter registration, inspection of voter rolls, and representation at the polls as stipulated in the elections law. It became apparent that the old TWP machine had grown too rusty to cope with such demands. Faced with the prospects of defeat, the government postponed the elections and, in doing so, diminished its already declining stature in the eyes of the public.[72]

Entrapped by its own inconsistencies, overtaken by the pace of social change, and isolated without any significant base of support, the Tolbert regime collapsed in April 1980, when seventeen privates and non-commissioned officers of the Monrovia detachment of the Liberian army forced their way into the living quarters of the executive mansion and killed President Tolbert.

The fall of the Tolbert government brought an end to more than a century of True Whig party dominance. It also brought to a close more than a century and a half of settler hegemonic control in the region known as Liberia. The military takeover proved, however, to be essentially a reconstitution of autocracy with a heavier reliance on the threat and use of military force. I will now examine the attempt by the military to reconstitute the Liberian social order.

Military Tyranny

Although the military takeover of the Liberian government came as a shock to Liberians, for many it was also a welcome relief from the increasing repression of Tolbert's last days. Nonetheless, in spite of the broad support it initially enjoyed, the military was unable to establish its legitimacy among the Liberian people. By instituting a corrupt and inept tyranny within a short time, the military was perceived by most Liberians to be wholly unsuitable as an instrument of governance.

The military takeover proved to be tremendously disruptive because it was at once a takeover of the Liberian government and of the military itself by privates and noncommissioned officers. Thus even the military that was the new source of authority was itself in the throes of upheaval. Composed of poorly trained privates and noncommissioned officers, the new military junta immediately purged senior officers, creating a void of experience and expertise within the military.

The People's Redemption Council, as the military junta was called, consisted of seventeen men who had stormed the executive mansion, and was headed by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, the highest ranking officer among the coup makers.[73] The majority of the coup makers came from southeastern and north central Liberia and were from the Krahn, Dan, and Kru ethnic groups. More importantly, almost all were young men who had grown up in urban Liberia, attained about ten years of schooling, and joined the military in the early 1970s in search of new opportunities.[74] While these men were all from indigenous ethnic backgrounds, only a few had lived and grown up in their communal areas and been socialized in indigenous values. Many of them partook of the subculture of the urban unemployed and reflected the characteristic suspicion and opportunism typical of that group, tempered by the harshness of urban poverty and neglect. Operating within the unfamiliar and complex environment of government, the junta seemed immediately possessed by fear, suspicion, and opportunism. Two impulses seemed to dominate its behavior. The first was the impulse to rule in a brutal and tyrannical manner with liberal use of the machine gun; the second was

to satisfy personal greed by raids not only on the public treasury but, with the use of the gun, on people in the society.

Brutal Repression

The repressive rule of the military was felt within the military itself as well as in civil society. Within the military, a series of bloody purges began. The members of the ruling military council itself were not exempt from its own harsh deeds.[75] Noteworthy among these were the execution of the vice chairman of the council in 1981, the dismissal of the commanding general in 1983, and his subsequent execution in a coup attempt in 1985.[76] These purges established Doe as the sole authority in the military government. As of 1983, the major objective of the military government was to design and implement a strategy by which the military dictator would respond to the people's desire for a return to civilian government without actually relinquishing control.

The purges of the ranks of the military were accompanied by a campaign of arrest, detention, torture, and murder of civilians. The killing of Tolbert was followed ten days later by the killing of thirteen officials of his government and with the detention, under conditions of torture and hard labor, of hundreds of other officials and relatives of Tolbert.[77] Within weeks, military operations in the countryside had also involved considerable bloodletting, even in the settling of private scores. Hundreds of people were arrested on allegations of conspiracy to overthrow the government or for acts allegedly undertaken or contemplated to defame the government and spread confusion.[78]

No sector of Liberian society escaped military repression. Upon seizing power, the military banned all political activities, decreed strikes to be illegal, banned student campus political organizations, closed newspapers, imprisoned editors, and looted business houses. People of the interior did not escape military terror as individual members of the military junta imposed their personal control over villages and districts, sometimes instigating communal conflicts among ethnic groups or lineage segments. The only consistency about military rule in Liberia was the repression rained upon the people and the looting of the society.

Attempts to Reorganize the Social Order

Upon seizing power in an atmosphere of euphoria, the military junta initially sought to organize a civilian support base consisting of members of the PPP, MOJA, professionals and technicians who had been excluded

by Tolbert, and members of the Tolbert government who were not perceived by the military to be tainted by their service in that government. The fundamental orientation and basic objective of the new regime were unclear. Consisting of such a hodgepodge of groups, the regime vacillated between an attempt to establish a populist program of development, on the one hand, and a retaliatory indigenous hegemony with a Krahn core, on the other.

Plagued by internal disagreements and entrapped by greed, opportunism, suspicion, and fear, the military junta turned on one constituent group within the government after another until it finally found a comfortable ally among those professionals and former politicians who sought personal fortune at any cost. Many had been junior officials in the Tubman and Tolbert governments.[79] Some had even been on the fringes of Tubman's elaborate patronage network that had penetrated deep into urban and rural communities.

One of the first acts of the military junta was to increase military salaries by as much as 150 percent and those of the public service employees, in some cases, by as much as 100 percent. In addition to raising public service salaries in an ailing economy, the junta increased public service employment by about 300 percent over a period of three years.[80] Similarly, government borrowing rose steeply. The government's external debt burden, which stood at $750 million in 1979, approached $1.4 billion in 1985 (Dunn and Tarr 1988). By 1985. Doe, the head of state, was constrained to admit that the economy was on the verge of total collapse.[81]

In the rural areas, the junta attempted to augment the integrated rural development strategy with new emphasis on the cultivation of community-owned farms as a means of supporting community development projects. Promoted by a core of military officers who served as superintendents, the idea of the community-based farm degenerated into one of government-controlled farms worked by local people under military supervision. Also, the appropriation of the produce by local officials served as a further disincentive. The idea of the community-owned farm as the centerpiece for community development was abandoned in 1983 when it became clear that such farms were a greater source of conflict than of crops. The next strategy was to encourage the intensified cultivation of individual farms. However, the government's commitment to this strategy did not seem to move beyond slogans. By 1984, slogans about the "green revolution" and symbolic involvement of government officials in farming constituted the sum total of the new approach to rural development.

All along, however, the integrated rural development scheme initiated under Tolbert and funded, in large measure, by foreign agencies

continued to operate. As government resources dried up, these rural development schemes became the new sources of graft for superintendents, other officials of government, and the ubiquitous security forces. Unable to collect loans from hard-pressed farmers and plagued by poor management and raids on their resources, these ill-conceived projects began to disintegrate, thereby bringing agriculture in Liberia close to total collapse.[82]

The military government's approach to industrial development and to concessions was also disastrous. Although the junta remained committed to the Open Door policy, the social upheavals in the society posed a problem for the operation of concession ventures. Labor unrest continued around the country in spite of an antistrike decree. Official and unofficial demands made on concession enterprises were exceedingly high and detrimental to the operation of those ventures.[83] Equally detrimental were the rapid turnover of officials in the ministries and the constant changes of policy.[84] The mechanisms regulating relationships between the government and concession ventures, though weak in the past, broke down under the military government; as a result, the Liberian economy became attractive to ill-reputed speculative capital, loan sharks, and international confidence men.[85]

In the urban areas, the overwhelming preoccupation of the military government was the construction of market sheds, military and police barracks, and a few public facilities. While these projects were meant to appeal to a significant urban constituency, there was another reason why they were so vigorously pursued. Because financial resources were lacking, most of these projects were undertaken on the basis of "prefinancing" arrangements under which the contractors negotiated foreign loans to finance the projects. These arrangements provided ample opportunities for connivance between officials of government and "contractors."

All told, while it is true that repression and social malaise were not first introduced into the Liberian society by the military junta government, these conditions became more intensified under military rule. Murder, torture, and imprisonment became normal instruments of national policy. Similarly, graft and corruption were also perceived as normal business practices. The combination of ill-trained military people in search of bounties and ambitious former clients of a decaying patronage system seeking to maintain their privileges had produced the right chemistry for ineptitude, plunder, and brutal repression—the trademarks of military rule and tragedy in Liberia.

Disguising Military Rule

As soon as the brutality, corruption, and ineptitude of the military regime became apparent, public clamor for return to civilian rule began.[86] The

process of preparing a new constitution became the vehicle for moving the society toward a civilian government. A committee was established in April 1981 to prepare a new constitution as the first step in a staged process leading to the establishment of a democratic constitutional government in 1985.[87] Amid the growing displeasure and resistance of the military government, the committee completed its work in early 1983.[88]

Although the preparation of the draft involved a process of consultation through public hearings, national debate, and the press reports, the draft did not depart significantly from the constitution that had been recognized before the military takeover. The major points of departure were designed to meet the public's desire for greater accountability of leaders and for an effective mechanism by which they could be retired from public office.[89]

Another body, the Constitutional Advisory Assembly, was organized to review the draft. This body, which consisted of fifty-nine persons, was selected through a series of caucuses at the chiefdom and district levels in accordance with a formula devised by the constitution commission. As events turned out, the importance of the Advisory Assembly extended beyond the review of the draft constitution. Not only did it remove from the draft every measure designed to exact greater accountability of public officials, but it altered the draft to suit the specific political ambitions of Doe.[90]

Under the caucus formula devised by the constitution commission for the selection of the assembly, the commission had unwittingly provided greater opportunities for the selection of intermediaries, junior clients in the old patronage network, and opportunistic professionals than any other groups in the society. Thus, when the ambition of Doe backed by military force meshed with the cunning and personal interests of members of the assembly, a method was found for prolonging military rule under a civilian disguise.

By mid-1984, the military regime had transformed itself into a transitional, caretaker government. Doe drew from the assembly the largest block of members of the newly organized Interim National Assembly. He also drew from the ranks of the assembly some of the key members of the political party he promptly organized and the subsequent civilian government he headed as the constitutionally elected civilian president. In positioning himself to be president, Doe also took every measure possible to prevent others from mounting a credible challenge against him. He ensured that the elections commission was dominated by members of his party and that its rules were biased in his favor. Opposition leaders were imprisoned, banned, and subjected to harassment and intimidation by security forces. Excessive rigging of the elections triggered an abortive coup by the ex-commander of the army, a former Doe ally. The failure of the coup resulted in a bloody orgy of revenge by Doe's forces.

Having established the disguise of a constitutional government, Doe continued to rule Liberia as a military dictator. Beneath the trappings of a constitution that contained guarantees of civil liberties, a legislature, and a judiciary, the military, under the control of a Krahn ethnic core, remained the ultimate instrument of Doe's authority.

The Incipient Social Order

The introduction of military rule in Liberia has induced radical transformations and reinforced long-standing social patterns. There are two significant ways in which the social order has been radically transformed. The first is the physical removal of the descendants of the settlers from control over the levers of power in the society. Closely associated with the wresting of power from the descendants of the settlers is the militarization of the society and the demolition or diminution of every other significant social institution. In the unlimited exercise of military control, every institution that formerly imposed social and cultural constraints on the exercise of power was destroyed or severely weakened. Churches and religious leaders who had exercised moral authority have been denounced, threatened, and subdued. Institutions of higher learning that were perceived as repositories of knowledge and sources of critical analysis—even if perceived by previous regimes to be biased—have been ransacked and purged. For once in Liberia, the attainment of education is not perceived as an essential requisite for becoming "civilized" although becoming civilized remains a widespread social aspiration. Even indigenous institutions, such as the Poro, which were manipulated by previous governments, have been further demeaned by crude cooptations, physical cruelty, and public intimidation of the elders of rural society. It is thus apparent that radical transformations have taken place in the Liberian social order.

On the other hand, there are some basic social patterns that have been reinforced by military dictatorship. Most striking is the way in which the network of individuals who were junior officials in the central government and intermediaries with rural societies have not simply survived but prospered under military repression. This group, which consists largely of college-educated persons, was thought to represent the eventual inheritors of proprietary control. Upstaged by the military, however, many individuals of this group have been easily coopted so as to provide a civilian coloration to military rule. Having been acculturated into settler social processes, they have also become symbolic guardians of social values and the embodiment of "civilized" aspirations.

The adaptability and prosperity of these individuals have a deeper significance for the social order. They signify the resilience of the goals and aspirations of the Liberian society as set in the early nineteenth century by the ACS and the settlers. Though distorted in conception and implementation, the Christianizing and civilizing mission still remains entrenched at the foundation of the Liberian social ethos. As a social value, it has transcended the narrow confines of settler society and is distinguishable from that society. The paradox is that while it divides the larger Liberian society into the "civilized" and the "uncivilized," it defines a common set of aspirations about which Liberians seem united.

What happened in Liberia was the appropriation of the autocracy of the presidency by a military dictator. Organized around a Krahn ethnic core, supported by military power, and serviced by a core of civilian officials of varying levels of acculturation, a despotic order confronted a new and precarious social order that seemed to be emerging. Having arrested the social processes through which the constitution of a social order of inclusion and participation was likely to evolve, the military autocracy faced only one area of uncertainty: the timing of its eventual downfall and the nature of its replacement.

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The Continuing Challenge

THIS BOOK RECOUNTS how a relatively small number of people with limited resources persevered for a century and a half in fashioning Liberian society. The ACS heritage, the heritage of the indigenous societies, and the heritage of Western civilization placed great burdens upon the viability of an experiment whose successes and failures no one could have anticipated over the course of some six or more generations. But the options exercised on the part of settler society, indigenous communities, European nations, and the United States, led to the emergence of an autocracy that became institutionally articulated in a particular system of governance. That system was centered on a presidency, an interior administration, a weak economy, property rights dominated by government ownership of the public domain to the exclusion of tribal and private property rights, and contract labor bounded by diverse forms of servitude to tribal and public authorities.

In Liberia's presidential autocracy, the presidency became the nexus of a series of social, economic, and political relationships that became indistinguishable from authority relationships. In all matters, the role of the president was more prominent than a rule of law. The president stood entrenched, autonomous, and sovereign. These are the marks of autocracy.

The collapse of the government as a result of the 1980 military takeover was not the collapse of presidential authority but rather the collapse of the already declining vestiges of settler patrimonial control and the degeneration of presidential autocracy into despotism. When one considers the deep and pervasive penetration of Liberian society by presidential authority in light of the tyrannical mold within which that

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authority was cast as a result of the 1980 coup d'état, the presidency can be perceived as the formidable instrument of repression and plunder it has become.

One can only speculate about what kind of institutional alternatives might have evolved had Liberian society been conceived quite differently. Perhaps a different configuration of institutional arrangements would have developed if institutions based on principles other than those of dominance and subordination had emerged. Perhaps such institutions would have unleashed the creative potential of the people of the subregion and stimulated the development of a more productive and viable Liberian social order. The reality, however, is that Liberia faced a dilemma: In order to maintain its autonomy, it had to meet the requirements of the prevailing international system by demonstrating evidence of state control. By the same token, the imposition of an alien order upon indigenous communities as evidence of state control subverted productive potentials among indigenous institutions and destroyed much of their creativity. The question of what might have been remains a continuing challenge.

The Postcolonial African State and Presidential Autocracy

Surprisingly, despite its unique history, the outcome produced by the nineteenth-century Liberian experiment closely resembles the typical contemporary African political order as seen elsewhere on the continent. This, perhaps, demonstrates that bonds of race and common patterns of oppression did not constitute incentives strong enough to overcome cultural hostilities, economic circumstance, and the consequences of prevailing colonial patterns. In any case, Liberia today exhibits a problem common to most African countries: the existence of a set of highly centralized structures, called the state, superimposed upon the array of social structures and processes that constitute civil society. This arrangement is often referred to as the postcolonial state.

Scholars of both the Right and the Left are in agreement that the highly centralized, postcolonial state is overbearing, restrictive, and predatory (Wunsch and Olowu 1990). It concentrates state power in one or two institutions, and ultimately subjects that power to the dominance of the executive arm of government—the president. This arrangement has been variously referred to as presidentialism (Tordoff 1984) or neo-presidentialism (Selassie 1974).[1]

The postcolonial state is also noted for its attempt at social penetration. As an interventionist state it strives to restrict the social life of citizens by using draconian as well as petty means to assure its dominance. It also strives to exercise total control over all economic activities, using an

assortment of economic "isms" supporting measures of nationalization or state-assisted privatization. In the political sphere, it is most intolerant of open public discourse and dissenting views (Goulbourne 1987:28–29). The source of these problems can be traced to the colonial heritage of the postcolonial state or, in the case of Liberia, the imperatives of establishing a settler-dominated, "civilized society," in addition to the impact of European colonial influences. As Naomi Chazan and her colleagues (1988:41) have observed, "the formal agencies transferred to African hands were thus alien in derivation, functionally conceived, bureaucratically designed, authoritarian in nature, and primarily concerned with issues of domination rather than legitimacy. During decolonization, these patterns were, in most cases, elaborated rather than transformed." They are patterns that, unfolding within the context of global bi-polarization, have elicited state predation and repression in the name of one "ism" or another.

Failure of the Postcolonial African State

While the nature of colonial experience (or, in the case of Liberia, the special historical circumstances surrounding its foundation) explains the emergence of the highly centralized, overbearing, restrictive, and predatory state in Africa, national policies in postcolonial Africa have not sought to rectify this phenomenon, but instead have operated to reinforce it. It is well known that precolonial indigenous societies were themselves characterized by struggles and conquests; colonial impositions, however, disrupted their dynamic evolution and stifled or redefined their institutions. Therefore, postcolonial social orders faced a major challenge requiring the fashioning of new social arrangements within which African institutions would work themselves out, reaching new accommodations and evolving more productive human orders.

This challenge has been interpreted largely in terms of two crises: the crises of "unity" and "development." The crisis of unity is manifested in the social and communal cleavages and tensions by which the postcolonial African social order is threatened. The postcolonial African state has not, however, been fully capable of addressing this crisis because, far from being the appropriate framework for resolving such a problem, it is itself a substantial part of the problem—at least in how it defines the problem and its possible solutions. In many cases, for example, the actions of contentious social forces that threaten national cohesion are perceived as disloyalty and the breakdown of the "unity" that attended the struggle for independence. Instead of exploring ways of accommodating those forces through conflict resolution and social pluralism,

national leaders frequently insist on maintaining "national unity," that is, an imposed uniformity. It is assumed that the unity achieved during the struggle for independence should be maintained at all costs. Thus the need to maintain this national unity becomes a justification for deeper state penetration, dominance, and repression. State-imposed unity is "unity" from above. It fails to come to terms with the sources of conflict and to work out arrangements that can achieve conflict resolution by searching out complementaries among the diverse interests.

Similarly, the quest for "development" has inspired the mobilization of people and resources by the state rather than the unleashing of the potentials of people and communities through their own empowerment for their own advancement. But even where development is perceived in terms of the establishment of social and physical infrastructures, most African states still have little to show.[2] "Development" is frequently conceived as the antithesis of "democracy." Public discourse and accountability are then seen either as "freedoms" to be deferred until "development" is achieved or as "bourgeois freedoms" not compatible with certain ideological conceptions of "development."

State and Civil Society in Postcolonial Africa

The fundamental issue that is entangled in the so-called crises of African countries has to do with the nature of the relationship between the state and civil society. The perception that the state, the postcolonial state particularly, can be the instrument through which African social problems can be solved has led to attempts to strengthen its functional capacities, that is, its mandatory and coercive capabilities. Unfortunately, far from solving problems, these have largely led to more centralization and personalization of authority, larger and more inefficient and corrupt bureaucracies, and greater predation and repression—a situation Nelson Kasfir (1976) has aptly called increasing "constitutional concentration" and declining "civic capacity." Fortunately for African peoples, it is this very inefficiency, with other manifestations of the "weaknesses" of the African state, that blunts its predatory and repressive effects and offers possibilities for the survival of individuals and communities through disengagement.

The process of disengagement from the African state is evident in the existence of the informal economy, with the organization of alternative institutions such as the parallel market and the reversion to traditional institutions such as *susu* clubs (Chazan 1987; Lemarchand 1987; MacGaffey 1987).[3] This trend has not only provided opportunities for survival in many African communities; it has also demonstrated what human ingenuity

can do. More importantly, for the analysts and those concerned with problems of governance, it points to where they should be looking to discover emerging patterns of self-organizing capabilities. Solutions to the problems of governance in Africa will have to be found by ferreting out and investigating the potentials of current and emerging trends within African societies themselves, not by the political engineering by postcolonial states.

Thus, correctly put, the question of the relationship between the postcolonial African state and civil society must underscore civil society's need for autonomy and its primacy over the state rather than the reverse. The struggle for such autonomy is manifested in the continued dynamic unfolding of social forces and processes with and without the intervention of the African state. Analysts of the Right and Left are in basic agreement that, although contemporary notions of the autonomy of civil society in the face of "sovereign" authority of the state are largely an outgrowth of the Western historical experience, such autonomy is widely accepted as part of the common heritage of humanity (see Amin 1980; Berman 1983; Goulbourne 1987).[4] The debate, then, is not about whether African peoples should have the opportunity to fashion their institutions of governance; it is about how those institutions should be fashioned.

Sadly, however, analysts considering this issue frequently resort to social engineering at the level of the postcolonial state. Views are usually polarized by ideologies so that there is either advocacy for "smashing" the capitalist state and replacing it with a socialist state or vice versa. Put another way, such an approach casts the argument as a stark choice between Leviathan and markets. The conceiving of institutions of governance a priori as a question of choice between hierarchies and markets, or capitalism and socialism, not only misses the point but draws attention away from the crucial question, which has to do with the dynamics of unfolding social processes within society and their self-organizing and self-governing potentials.[5]

If we relate this to what is called the crisis of the African state in general and to the Liberian situation in particular, we can see that the question confronting the African social order is not whether African societies should be governed by unitary presidential systems or by parliamentary systems, or whether they should have *Jamahirias*, African humanisms, or African socialisms. The question of governance should be addressed with reference to the specificities of the internal dynamics of social processes, the nature of local institutions, and considerations of tradition, custom, and other constraints and opportunities.

Analyses of postcolonial African social orders have frequently faltered because the colonial experience has been used as the paradigm and generalizations extracted from that paradigm have been applied across

the board. True, it may often be useful to note that precolonial African systems were "tributary" (Amin 1976; Gonidec 1981), hierarchical and segmentary (Cohen and Middleton, 1970; Eisenstadt 1959; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard [1940] 1970), or what not, and that their evolutionary processes were affected by colonial impositions. It is more useful, however, to press the inquiry further in the case of every specific African society in order to discover specific adaptations, transformations, and emergent tendencies within each society than to use broad generalizations and apply them as universal principles to every society. It is precisely this assumption of universality about African societies that characterized colonial analysis, thereby leading to the imposition of universal structures of domination and exploitation. In the case of Liberia, the imposition of a general system of interior administration, for example, also proceeded on these same assumptions about indigenous societies.

Rethinking Governance in Africa

What is being suggested here is that in thinking about reconstituting the African political order, we would do well to move away from a preoccupation with the building of hierarchies or the stimulation of markets and, instead, try to get a clear understanding of the dynamic processes that exist among the diverse African societies. We need to investigate African social processes and traditional patterns critically as a starting point for the development of systems of governance for African societies.

Let me quickly stress that this suggestion does not proceed from romantic notions of the African past or inflated sentiments of cultural nationalism, for African social processes are full of perversities that should be overcome. But these processes, with all their adaptations, transformations, and modifications, have proven to be resilient. They constitute the shelters for survival and foundations for de facto patterns of order, despite the prescriptions of the African states and the ideological incantations of their leaders. This is precisely the meaning of Amilcar Cabral's (1973) advice to "return to the source." And this is how it should be, for societies are culturally organic entities whose institutions evolve from both individual and collective experiences and learning processes that accrue over generations. The organon of the "culturally organic" is the mind, not the gonads. Thus the organization of a system of governance from the top down is as unnatural and illogical as building a house from the roof to the ground.

Having inherited a political order constructed from the top down for achieving dominance over others in the context of both African and European empires, Africans are now challenged to replace instruments of dominance with institutions of self-governance. This task requires

close investigation of both microconstitutional and macroconstitutional arrangements, and of how they can be constructively linked to one another (E. Ostrom 1990).

Microconstitutional Infrastructures for Self-Governance

An appropriate starting point is at the level of the microconstitutional processes in Africa (see E. Ostrom 1989). These have to do with the analysis of how diverse local communities, societies, and groups organize themselves over time for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, for the achievement of just, rule-ordered relationships, and for the general advancement of knowledge and artisanship. Such an analysis would reveal how they cope with problems, devise solutions, order their social relationships, and create linkages with others. These are the essential relationships embodied in any constitutional order.

Numerous studies of the African experience and the experiences of others are helpful in uncovering the nature of property rights and social organization under changing social and economic circumstances and within different environmental conditions. Studies having to do with smallholder agriculture; the organization and use of common-pool resources such as communal farmlands, water resources, fisheries, and other sustainable resources by local communities; the introduction of cash crops into subsistence agricultural communities and other opportunities that show how communities organize themselves and attend a variety of problems; all these provide us with a more concrete and realistic starting point than concerns about how the bureaucracy is organized as the "modernizing" force in society. Many of these studies have shown that, far from remaining slaves to custom and tradition or being oblivious of them, African societies, like societies everywhere, continue to invent and adapt innovations and use their social institutions as technologies to cope with change, foster growth, and contribute to individual and collective well-being. Far from conforming to stereotypes and broad generalizations upon which rules are applied from external sources, African societies show enormous diversity. The recognition of this diversity is essential to the constitution of social orders at the microlevel.

Several studies have examined the rich diversity at the microconstitutional level. A study by Robert Netting (1990) of property rights among the segmentary, lineage-based Kofyar of the Jos Plateau of Nigeria, for example, is illustrative of inventiveness and adaptability that defy the conventional wisdom of those who look to states and bureaucracies as the modernizing elements in society. The conventional wisdom that has guided the application of rules about land use in many African countries

including Liberia has emphasized communal ownership by lineage chieftaincies or kinship descent groups with usufruct rights to households and individuals. Netting has found that under conditions where arable land is scarce and population pressure great, the Kofyar, who were peripherally involved in market exchange, have developed a system of private property rights in land that includes rights of transfer through inheritance, tenancy, and sale.

Netting's study gives accounts of land tenure practices from numerous studies of Asian, South American, and African societies. He shows that these societies present a rich variety of such practices created by the peoples themselves as part of their agricultural and ecological systems. These systems have evolved in ways that not only sustain the use of resources but ensure both accountability and mechanisms for conflict resolution that are considered fair and just—all designed and administered from within the societies themselves.

In a similar vein, a study by Paul Richards (1985) of indigenous farming systems in West Africa shows how farmers in such systems in Sierra Leone and Nigeria have, over the years, not only operated with an understanding of universal scientific principles but—surprisingly—have appropriately and prudently applied those principles as the ecological situation demanded. Richards argues that a major flaw in the approach of intellectuals, development agencies, and governments to agriculture in Africa has been their failure to pursue environmental management problems at a localized and specific level that will produce a "local and ecologically particular response." He urges agricultural researchers to start their investigation by first seeking to identify and understand changes already taking place within the smallholder farming sector, and then to build upon the best of such local initiatives.

Richards argues that the "inventive self-reliance" of the rural population is Africa's "most precious resource." Development initiatives should aim to take better advantage of this resource. The failure to address problems of participation by local people in the design and the development of new technologies in agricultural schemes has usually resulted in "inappropriate innovations" and support for the least appropriate groups in the farming community. Richards's call for "ecological particularism" and respect for the "inventive self-reliance" of local peoples is grounded in the recognition that a top-down approach does not constitute a sound basis for developing institutions and solving problems.

A study by Elinor Ostrom (1990) of institutions governing common-pool resources also provides deep insights and enlightening clues into alternative forms of social organization at the microconstitutional level. Using case studies largely from local communities in the United States, Canada, Europe, and the Far East, Ostrom shows a wide array of

institutional arrangements devised by local peoples for the management of such common-pool resources as irrigation systems, fisheries, and grazing lands. The success stories are those arrangements that have operated to minimize opportunistic behavior such as "free riding"—putting less than one's proportionate share into the joint effort—and to ensure the sustainability of resources.

Rejecting the notion that individuals sharing common resources are bound to experience the collective irrationality known as the tragedy of the commons, Ostrom (1990:14) argues that "the capacity of individuals to extricate themselves from various types of dilemma situations *varies* from situation to situation. . . . Instead of basing policy on the presumption that the individuals involved are helpless, [one should seek] to learn more from the experience of individuals in field settings." She argues for close and intensive studies of the experiences of individuals in their communities and local social settings so as to identify "the key variables that can enhance or detract from the capabilities of individuals to solve problems."

Ostrom (ibid.:14–15) also takes issue with the view that privatization and state control present the only two options available in the fashioning of institutional arrangements:

> Institutions are rarely either private or public—"the market" or "the state." Many successful CPR institutions are rich mixtures of "private-like" and "public-like" institutions defying classification in a sterile dichotomy. By "successful" I mean institutions that enable individuals to achieve productive outcomes in situations where temptations to free-ride and shirk are ever present. A competitive market—the epitome of private institutions—is itself a public good. . . . No market can exist for long without underlying public institutions to support it. In field settings, public and private institutions frequently are intermeshed and depend on one another, rather than existing in isolated worlds.

Studies of microconstitutional processes provide a better understanding of the self-organizing capabilities of individuals acting together in communities, and of the necessity to begin the process of creating social order from the strong foundations provided by local circumstances. In the case of Liberia, particularly, this approach requires investigation of the self-organizing capabilities displayed by local communities that are disengaged from the national Leviathan or that have had to develop special mechanisms for coping with its enormous demands. The ingenuities of individuals in such communities provide considerable resources for self-governance. The Putu Development Association of the 1970s was one such example. An association of rural villages, it relied upon a mix of property rights and authority relations, based on traditional as well

as newly established democratic norms and principles, to acquire resources and produce and use a variety of goods and services. These included education, health, roads and bridges, and employment opportunities (see Sawyer 1988). Similarly, the initiatives of local communities in Nimba County in the late 1980s also show the self-organizing capabilities of local communities when subjected to enormous pressure from state structures.[6]

There are other examples from urban Liberia showing how ethnic enclaves have coped with or faltered when confronted with legal rules and institutions derived from both indigenous sources and those imposed by government edicts. These situations involve considerable conflict regarding property rights, the legal standing of women, and questions of legal jurisdiction.

In short, the first important step in the reconstitution of social order in Liberia, as in any other African country, requires that studies be undertaken of the array of indigenous institutions that people use in organizing their lives. While such studies can be expected to show both the perversities of traditional social relationships and the impact of central institutions, they will also reveal the nature of local self-organizing capabilities and the wider possibilities for building upon those capabilities. These elements of local self-reliance are the foundations for democratic self-governance in the wider society. They form the microconstitutional infrastructures that can then be related to macroconstitutional superstructures in order to constitute a system of governance based on empowerment from below.

Creating the Macroconstitutional Superstructure

Advocacy of self-governance by empowerment from below should not be construed as a repudiation of centralized institutions. Many public services can more appropriately be provided by a central authority. Experience has also shown that, in many instances, centralized institutions have helped to protect the rights of local minorities and achieve the aspirations of a society. Quite often, in the give-and-take of governance, majoritarian desires supersede minority interest, and issues concerning fundamental values recede under pressures for immediate gain. Therefore, centralized institutions do have an important role to play in the process of governance and should be considered as among the array of essential institutions in the governance of societies. The challenge is to create a configuration of institutional relationships that foster self-governance in such a way that centralized institutions can function without transforming the structure of governance into an autocracy.

One way of addressing this challenge is by developing a critical awareness of how constitutional choice can be based on principles of polycentricity. Vincent Ostrom and his colleagues (1961) have suggested that a polycentric political system consists of multiple centers of decision making, formally independent but not necessarily functioning independently of one another. Each center acts in ways that take account of others through processes of cooperation, competition, conflict, and conflict resolution. Such a system relies on the self-organizing capabilities of each unit and finds cohesion in their interdependence. Their democratic character is ensured by the operating presumptions that "those being governed have equal liberty and equal standing in the constitution of an order where rulership prerogatives are subject to effective limits among multiple agents, each exercising a limited public trust" (V. Ostrom 1991:227).

This arrangement of democratic self-governance is not to be confused with decentralization as usually undertaken within centralized states. Decentralization has often meant the deconcentration of administrative responsibilities within centralized structures by the creation of regional subcenters or "semiautonomous agencies that report directly to the center" (Cheema and Rondinelli 1983). These arrangements more successfully create direct channels of control for centralized authority than institutions with independent foundations of authority. Since the mid-1960s and the implementation of the recommendations of numerous advisory bodies, deconcentration of authority has been taking place in Liberia with the creation of numerous public corporations and autonomous agencies and the establishment of county and district development councils. Far from leading to the empowerment of citizens, all of these measures have only led to a more effective extension of presidential authority over society (Sawyer 1990).

Contrary to what occurs in decentralizing a centralized political system, the democratic character of a self-governing political system is more assured when individuals of the various local communities remain the source of authority. Their involvement in multiple social, political, economic, and other relationships creates multiple centers of limited authority that operate concurrently, each counterchecking the others (V. Ostrom 1987a).

Thus the conception, design, and implementation of democratic political orders based on a polycentric theory of constitutional choice require considerable understanding of cultural patterns over time, as these bear upon social, political, and economic opportunities. They also require an appreciation of the values and aspirations of the peoples involved. Liberian scholars in particular and African scholars in general are challenged to acquire a deeper understanding of their social reality so as

to help in undertaking the task of reconstituting their societies in ways that will replace presidential autocracy with systems of democratic self-governance.

One of the most important lessons to heed in this respect is the fact that it is hard to find even a single instance in which individuals who have aggregated institutions of supreme authority have willingly divested themselves of that authority. We are reminded that since autocrats are usually prepared to pay a substantial price to maintain their dominant position over society, local units of collective action (that is, individuals acting together through local community associations and other institutions of collective choice) will do well to increase the cost of domination (Oakerson 1988). The challenge is to devise ways to make domination extremely costly and unprofitable for those exercising autocratic authority. That is best done by creating limits that expose the exercise of authority to public scrutiny in diverse communities of relationships.

Resisting Autocracy

Experience has often shown that it is easier to replace one form of autocratic rule with another, than to return to the source of human artisanship and build upon the cultural resources of the African peoples. The African scene is replete with rulers who, under various guises, have seized power and manipulated popular institutions and norms only to secure for themselves exclusive power over their societies. The list of "life presidents" and "people's republics" in Africa attests to the pretensions of particular leaders that they are indispensable and of various regimes that they are "grassroots-based." Although an obsession with the fear of replacing one form of autocracy with another could stifle the will to resist, it is critically important that measures are taken to ensure that resistance, when undertaken, will be based on principles and strategies that promote self-governance.

The two sets of principles that seem crucial in this light are principles associated with the promotion of genuine participation rather than the ceremonial and perfunctory involvement of individuals, and principles that operate to ensure accountability. A distinction is drawn here between participation and mobilization. By participation I mean the voluntary involvement of individuals in processes of conception, design, and implementation, not the mobilization of crowds, cheering squads, or work units for implementing central directives. Similarly, accountability refers to the development of institutional arrangements with "checks and balances" and the organization of methods to ensure open discourse and critical examination of issues and actions. It is also important that the

strategy for replacing autocracy begin at the level of the local communities where individuals develop the foundations for institutions of collective action. Any framework lacking these principles or attempting to transform an autocratic regime solely from the top, if successful, would most likely succeed only in replacing one form of autocracy with another.

Finally, resistance involves conflict. While it is often impossible to determine the form that conflict will take in any given situation, experience has shown that tyrannical autocracies employ coercion as their instrument of control. In such situations, it is difficult to preclude violent responses as measures to resist violence. The use of violence becomes appropriate as an instrument for removing the essential core of a tyrannical autocracy, not as an instrument for social control or social reordering. Unless this distinction is made and adhered to, violent resistance to autocratic tyranny can itself degenerate into a terrorist bloodbath, thereby defeating its purpose.

Thus the question of resistance treads very delicately at the cutting edge of fundamental processes of social transformation that can unleash the creative ingenuity of human beings or call forth and feed upon their vilest passions. This is a puzzle of substantial magnitude, but solving it does not exceed human powers of knowledgeable artisanship.

APPENDIX: Chronicle of Leadership and Events

Political Leadership		Major Events	
Agents of the ACS			
		1816	Founding of American Colonization Society
		1820	First landing in Sierra Leone
1821–1824	Eli Ayres (intermittent)	1821	Purchase land at Cape Mesurado
1822–1828	Jehudi Ashmun	1822	First settlers at Cape Mesurado
1828–1829	Richard Randall		
1829–1833	Joseph Mechlin		
1833	George R. McGill		
1834–1835	John B. Pinney		
1835	Nathaniel Brander		
1835–1836	Ezekiel Skinner		
1836–1839	Anthony D. Williams	1838	Settlements unite, forming Commonwealth
Governors, Commonwealth			
1839–1841	Thomas Buchanan		
1842–1848	Joseph J. Roberts	1847	Declaration of Independence
Presidents of the Republic			
1848–1856	Joseph J. Roberts	1851	Founding of Liberia College
		1854	Maryland becomes independent republic
1856–1864	Stephen A. Benson	1857	Maryland joins Liberian Republic
		1862	Lincoln extends U.S. recognition
1864–1868	Daniel B. Warner	1865	Arrival of the Barbadians
1868–1870	James S. Payne	1868	Anderson's journey to Musardhu
		1869	True Whig party founded

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APPENDIX: Chronicle of Leadership and Events (*continued*)

Political Leadership		Major Events	
1870–1871	Edward J. Roye (a)	1871	Disastrous British loan
1871–1872	James S. Smith (b)		
1872–1876	Joseph J. Roberts		
1876–1878	James. S. Payne		
1878–1883	Anthony W. Gardiner (c)		
1883–1884	Alfred F. Russell (d)		
1884–1892	Hilary R. W. Johnson	1885	Gallinas annexed by Great Britain
		1889	Initial founding of Cuttington College
1892–1896	Joseph J. Cheeseman (e)	1892	French claim eastern areas
		1893	Grebo/settler conflict
1896–1900	William D. Coleman (f)	1900	Gola victory over settlers
1900–1904	Garretson W. Gibson (g)	1903	Boundary with Sierra Leone fixed
1904–1912	Arthur Barclay	1904	Extension of citizenship to tribal sector; beginning of Indirect Rule
1912–1920	Daniel E. Howard	1912	Loan and customs receivership
		1918	Monrovia shelled by German submarine
		1919	Liberia enters League of Nations
1920–1930	Charles D. B. King (h)	1926	Firestone Agreement
		1927	Beginning of Fernando Po scandal
		1929	League of Nations inquiry begins
1930–1944	Edwin J. Barclay (i)		
1944–1971	William V. S. Tubman (j)	1944	Enunciation of Open Door policy and Unification Program

		1944	Liberia enters Second World War
		1945	Women's suffrage amendment
		1946	Suffrage extended to tribal Liberians
		1964	Extension of county system to interior
1971–1980	William R. Tolbert (k)	1979	Rice Riots
		1980	Coup, assassination of Tolbert
1980–1986	Samuel K. Doe (Head of State, PRC)	1984	Referendum on the Constitution of the Second Republic
		1985	Elections, Quiwonkpa coup attempt
1986–1990	Samuel K. Doe	1989	Beginning of Internal War
		1990	Assassination of Doe
	Interim Government of National Unity		
1990–			

Key: (a) deposed; (b) filled truncated term of Roye; (c) resigned; (d) filled unexpired term; (e) died in office; (f) filled unexpired term, elected, resigned; (g) filled unexpired term, elected in his own right; (h) forced to resign; (i) filled unexpired term, elected in his own right; (j) died in office; (k) filled unexpired term, elected in his own right, assassinated.

Source: Adapted from J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 14–15. By permission of J. Gus Liebenow and Indiana University Press.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. From its inception, Liberia was perceived by some, such as Garrison ([1832] 1968) to offer a bleak prospect for repatriates. Contrarily, as early as the first few years of the 1840s, Alexander (1846) declared the Liberian settlements an "extraordinary" success due to the "remarkable smile of Providence." These assessments had as much to do with the debate over the question of slavery and the position of free blacks in American society as with the viability of the emerging Liberian social order.

2. See also Hlophe 1979. For an insightful critique of the ways in which concepts of class and ethnicity have been used in studies on Liberia, see Burrowes 1988a.

3. Liberty (1977:29–30) argues that the attribution of the problems of Liberia to the paramountcy of a settler ruling elite is "conspiratorial and monocausal." He justifiably attributes such analysis to Dalton (1965), whose work reflects intense passion, and, unjustifiably, to Liebenow (1969), whose study is more an analysis of the evolution of what Young and Turner (1985) have called "the patrimonial presidency" than a comprehensive analysis of the Liberian social order.

4. Lowenkopf's thesis is readily evident in the subtitle of his book: *Politics in Liberia: The Conservative Road to Development* (1976).

5. Because the structure of authority within the social order is a crucial question, it will be a recurring theme of discussion in this book.

6. Writing before the 1980 military takeover, some scholars had perceived Liberia's stability, especially the avoidance of a crisis of succession after the death of President Tubman, as evidence of an "institutionalized" system. See Lowenkopf 1976; Liberty 1977; Clapham 1976.

7. McEvoy's (1971) study of labor migration and agriculture production among the Sabo of Eastern Liberia; Martin's (1968) historical work on interactions involving the Grebo, the Episcopal Church, and the Liberian government; and Fraenkel's (1964) study of ethnic enclave communities in Monrovia are excellent examples.

8. The vice president was often referred to as the president's spy in the legislature. It was assumed by many who spoke at the public hearings that, because of the vice president's reports, members of the legislature were frequently victimized by the president if they disagreed with the latter's proposals.

9. Rules refer to the essential threads making human organization possible. Elinor Ostrom (1986) has stressed that they have to do with criteria distinguishing what is prohibited ("must not"), what is required ("must"), and

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what is permitted ("may"). Rules define an array of relationships involving rights and duties and, as such, specify authority relations. The complex configuration of relationships in which human beings engage involves a complex configuration of rules. Similarly, the way in which human beings use knowledge for production (artisanship) and impute meaning into production is a further essential aspect of human social organization. Vincent Ostrom has aptly referred to the former as "a grammar of rules" and to the latter as "a grammar of economics."

10. I owe an enormous debt to Vincent Ostrom, Elinor Ostrom, and all my colleagues at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University for stimulating my interest in the body of literature concerning constitutional choice and institutional analysis. For an understanding of questions related to constitutional choice, see V. Ostrom, Tiebout, and Warren 1961; V. Ostrom 1980, 1987a; North 1986. Complementing these and others is a body of literature on institutional analysis. See, for example, V. Ostrom and E. Ostrom 1977; Hunt and Hunt 1978; Kiser and E. Ostrom 1982; E. Ostrom 1986.

11. For a full discussion of the Weberian concept, see Weber's *Economy and Society* ([1922] 1978).

12. Jackson and Rosberg (1982), for example, have referred to these transformations as the emergence of "personal rule" in Africa and have developed a typology based largely on characteristics associated with certain contemporary African leaders.

13. More often, such studies describe how political and social institutions are manipulated or destroyed by personal rulers and detail the pervasiveness of such corrupt practices as stealing. Andreski (1970) has even taken the issue of corruption so far as to suggest that what he calls "kleptocracy" is the dominant system of government in contemporary Africa.

14. The intensity of the settlers' aspirations to create a patrimony can be seen in the words of Elijah Johnson, an early nineteenth-century settler leader whose son later became president of Liberia. When faced with the choice of accepting British assistance—and probably the British flag—to repel indigenous forces or risk extinction at the hands of those forces, Johnson is reported to have said: "We want no flagstaff put up here which will cost us more to pull down than it will to whip the natives" (Henries 1967).

15. Tullock (1987:6-7) identifies a type of autocracy he refers to as "standard dictatorships." These are characterized by the assumption of total control of the prerogatives of government by a dictator who may efficiently run the economy, as in the case of Singapore under Lee Kwan Yew, or Zaire, "one of the worst governed countries in the world," under Mobutu Sese Seko.

16. Jackson and Rosberg (1982:234-35) argue that tyrants are distinguishable from other personal rulers by their use of "force and fraud" as the principal instruments for retaining control. Because their abuse of power brings them many enemies, "cunning and ruthlessness in the control and uses of power are everything" to them. In my view, it is the magnitude and the near-exclusive use of "force and fraud" that distinguish the military regime and its successor from all of its predecessors.

17. For the 1970s, *Africa Contemporary Record* and *Africa Confidential* have provided adequate documentation of the deeds of Amin, Nguema, Bokassa, and others.

Chapter 2

1. According to Jordan (1977:343), the first antislavery society was called The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes, Unlawfully Held in Bondage and was organized largely by Quakers, curiously as a result of a freedom suit brought to court in Philadelphia on behalf of a Native American slave. Although the suit was lost, the antislavery cause was strengthened by taking institutional form.

2. Vermont abolished slavery in its constitution of 1777, Pennsylvania passed an abolition law in 1780, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut by 1784, New York in 1799, and New Jersey in 1804. No laws were passed in New Hampshire, but only eight slaves were reported there in 1800 and none in 1810. In all states except Massachusetts abolition was gradual, not abrupt. The conditions of freedom included the provision that blacks born after a certain date were to become free upon reaching their twenty-first or twenty-eighth birthday (Jordan 1977:344–46).

3. Delaware passed private manumission laws in 1787; Maryland, beginning in 1790; Kentucky, in 1798; and Tennessee, in 1801. North Carolina took several faltering steps but, like South Carolina and Georgia, was eventually prepared to allow manumission only sparingly and under very stringent conditions (Jordan 1977:346–48).

4. Frazier (1949:63) has argued that by the turn of the nineteenth century, the plantations of the Tidewater area of Virginia were exhausted. In an effort to make them profitable, they were reclaimed and broken up into smaller units and worked by smaller numbers of slaves under the supervision of headmen who behaved more like foremen than slave drivers.

5. Jordan (1977:381) states that reports were rife that slaves brought in by refugees from Saint Domingue were sowing seeds of insurrection among blacks in the South. He cites an article in the October 1793 edition of the *New York Journal and Patriotic Register:* "They write from Charleston (S.C.) that the NEGROES have become very insolent, in so much that the citizens are alarmed, and the militia keep a constant guard. It is said that a magazine has been attempted to be broken open." Jordan further reports that the entry of blacks from Saint Domingue was also of concern to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, who wrote to warn the governor of South Carolina of two Saint Domingue mulattoes whose intention was to incite insurrection.

6. For example, Virginia and Georgia proscribed the licensing and employment of free blacks as captains and pilots of river boats, employment considered prestigious among free blacks. North Carolina required urban free blacks to register with the town commissioner and wear a shoulder patch inscribed with the word *FREE* (Berlin 1974:93–97). In all southern states, manumitted blacks were required to carry their certificates of freedom with them at all times. In Florida and Georgia, all free blacks were required to have white guardians. In North Carolina, free blacks were prohibited from traveling beyond the county adjoining the county in which they resided (Franklin 1956:216).

7. Some of the prominent free blacks who emigrated to Liberia and held positions of leadership came from these areas. Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Liberia's first president, was from Petersburg in the Virginia Tidewater region.

8. As early as 1800, for example, free blacks of Philadelphia owned about one hundred homes and plots of land. James Forten, a free black, had accumulated more than $100,000 as a sailmaker in Philadelphia before the Civil War. Forten became one of the most outspoken critics of the American Colonization Society (Franklin 1956:222).

9. In New York, the African Free School was established by the New York Antislavery Society in 1787. The following year in Boston, a school for black children was established in the home of Primus Hall, a prominent member of the free black community. By the turn of the century, with the support of white abolitionists, schools were also established in Richmond and the Virginia Tidewater area (Franklin 1956:159).

10. Regarding benevolent societies, Franklin (1956:224) reports that by 1835, there were as many as thirty-five such societies in Baltimore alone. Among them were the Friendship Benevolent Society for Social Relief, the Star in the East Association, and the Daughters of Jerusalem. Many of these societies were said to have substantial savings.

11. Hopkins maintained that everything in the universe is in keeping with God's preordained plans. Even though everlasting punishment is to be meted out to sinners, their sins serve the highest and noblest of God's purposes. The existence of sin provides opportunities for the elect of God to attain true holiness. The essence of God is holiness and holiness consists in benevolence. Benevolence is not simply an attribute of God, Hopkins asserted, it is the very nature of God—God Himself. Therefore, a person can attain a true Christian life through a state of complete mental indifference toward one's own future reward or punishment as one thinks and acts in benevolence (Elsbree 1935).

12. In the early nineteenth century, many religious denominations passed resolutions citing biblical support for slavery. The following, for example, was passed by the Charleston Union Presbytery in the 1830s: "Resolved, That in the opinion of this Presbytery, the holding of slaves, so far from being a sin in the sight of God, is nowhere condemned in his holy word—that it is in accordance with the example, or consistent with the precepts of patriarchs, apostles, and prophets, and that it is compatible with the most fraternal regard to the best good of those servants whom God may have committed to our charge; and that, therefore, they who assume the contrary position, and lay it down as a fundamental principle in morals and religion, that all slaveholding is wrong, proceed upon false principles" (Barnes 1855:31).

13. According to Jordan (1977:550), however, by 1793 Hopkins had become convinced that blacks would never be accepted as equals in the United States, and that it was therefore best to send free blacks to Africa so that they could be "a free and happy people." Thus, his advocacy of colonization was eventually motivated by the desire both to spread the gospel and civilization and to ensure the well-being of free blacks.

14. Jefferson's commitment to colonization has been questioned by some accounts. Alexander (1846), for example, argues that if there was a single individual capable of influencing the legislature of Virginia, Jefferson had to be the one. Perhaps Jefferson thought himself unable to cope with the powerful forces to be encountered in getting the plan enacted into law. Alexander also contends that

Jefferson's failure to give liberty to his own slaves indicated that he lacked total commitment to the cause of emancipation.

15. "I am aware that this subject involves some constitutional scruples," Jefferson wrote, "but a liberal construction, justified by the object, may go far, and an amendment of the constitution, the whole length necessary" (quoted in Staudenraus 1961:171).

16. Jefferson's letter to the United States Minister to Great Britain requesting him to find out whether the Sierra Leone Company would receive free blacks from the United States also reflected how deeply the Saint Domingue revolution and the Gabriel Prosser plot had affected the colonization question. Jefferson explained the background to his request: "The course of things in the neighbouring islands of the West Indies appears to have given a considerable impulse to the minds of the slaves in different parts of the USA[;] great disposition to insurgency has manifested itself among them, which, in one instance, in the state of Virginia, broke out into actual insurrection" (quoted in Jordan 1977:564).

17. This discussion of Paul Cuffe has benefited from F. Miller (1975, esp. chap. 2).

18. Samuel Mills, the leader of the ACS's exploratory mission to Africa, had proposed that Cuffe be requested to accompany the first group of ACS settlers to Africa and serve as the agent of the United States government (ACS, *Annual Reports* [1818] 1).

19. Caldwell had practiced law, served as clerk of the U.S. Supreme Court, and engaged in business in Washington, D.C., for about sixteen years. When the British burned down the Capitol in 1814, Caldwell converted his home into a temporary meeting place for the Supreme Court. His friends included Henry Clay, John Calhoun, Daniel Webster, and General Lafayette (Staudenraus 1961).

20. As a member of the Virginia House of Delegates before his election to the United States Congress, Mercer had discovered the Jefferson plan and correspondence between the Virginia authorities and the Federal government on the question of colonization in the latter part of the eighteenth century. He had been persistent in his efforts to resurrect the issue.

21. As will be shown in Chapter 4, recaptives were individuals rescued from slave ships largely by British and American naval patrols after the abolition of the slave trade. Many of these were held at ports along the southeastern coast of the United States in stations called "receptacles." Recaptives are not to be confused with free blacks or slaves who were purposely manumitted to be sent to Africa.

22. Stebbins (1853) provides a summary of scathing attacks on the ACS from free blacks. Angelina E. Grimke's (1969) *Letters to Catherine E. Beecher* ([1838] 1969) summarizes many of the arguments made by white abolitionists against colonization.

23. Jordan (1977:548) argues that abolitionists had not been very clear on the question of colonization. Until the founding of the ACS, many abolitionists neither endorsed nor condemned colonization. Their reluctance to endorse the idea was due to circumspection. They did not condemn it because they found no great evil in it and no conspiracy to promote slavery by removing free blacks. However, as the activities of the ACS unfolded, abolitionists denounced the organization

as a proslavery instrument. Thus abolitionists drew a distinction between earlier discussions about colonization that involved men known to be genuinely committed to the antislavery position and discussions involving the ACS, an organization that, by the 1830s, was supported largely by men who wanted to protect slave property.

24. The image of the ACS was not helped at all when, in 1821, its president, Bushrod Washington, sold half his slaves to slaveholders in the Deep South (Jordan 1977:566).

25. This meeting became the precursor of what was to be called the Convention Movement, a major black initiative, through a series of conventions, to find an alternative to colonization. One of the projects initiated by the movement was an apprenticeship program under which free blacks were assigned to journeymen to learn various trades. When, by the middle of the nineteenth century, Frederick Douglass became head of the movement, the apprenticeship training program had grown to be a major part of the abolitionist scheme (Frazier 1949:80–81). As will be seen in Chapter 8, a variation of an apprenticeship training arrangement would become a major strategy for the skill development and assimilation of indigenous peoples into Liberian settler society.

26. There were written accounts of peoples and cultures encountered by European explorers and traders. Some of them, especially the accounts of M. William Hawkins, Jean Barbot, William Bosman, Olfert Dapper, and a few others (Hallet 1965) had been published since the seventeenth century and were well known to Europeans. There did not seem to be a deep appreciation for the experiences of the Sierra Leone colony, about one-third of whose settlers died by the end of the first rainy season and whose settlement was overrun in 1789 by hostile local chiefs.

Chapter 3

1. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese designated the region from Cabo Blanco to Sierra Leone as the Upper Guinea Coast, and from Sierra Leone to Cameroon as the Lower Guinea Coast. Subregions of the Lower Guinea Coast were designated by their principal exports: thus the area now known as Liberia was called the Grain Coast because of the large quantities of "grain of paradise" (malagueta pepper) found there. Also, European ship captains sometimes referred to the coast of the subregion as the Windward Coast, from the direction of the prevailing winds in that part of the Atlantic (see Fage 1969:57; Davidson 1977:252).

2. For lack of a better descriptive concept, I have used "political communities" to refer to the numerous social formations that existed in the area now known as Liberia. These entities ranged from stable, well-established patrilineages to transient bands controlled by warlords.

3. See, for example, Murdock 1959; Johnston 1906; Rodney 1970; Hair 1967.

4. Burrowes (1986), for example, has speculated that, by the early eighteenth century, the population of the coastal area of this subregion was about 140,000. This population is said to have covered an area extending some 300 miles east from what was known as the Gallinas region in present-day southeastern Sierra Leone to the Cavalla River, Liberia's current border with Côte d'Ivoire.

5. This nexus of trade is often referred to as the "Mandingo corridor," a name that indicates the importance of its trade routes from the coast—especially from the area near the St. Paul River and the Gallinas—to the Savanna region dominated by the so-called Western Mandingo (Brown [1941] 1981; Holsoe 1974). The settlers recognized the importance of this trade corridor very early and dispatched the first major expedition to explore the economic opportunities of the interior through this region. The expedition traveled along the well-established trade route from St. Paul through Bopolu to Musardhu, a town that was thought to be a major center of trade for the so-called Western Mandingo (see Anderson 1971). In several of his works, Holsoe (1967, 1971, 1974, 1979) has emphasized the importance of the area between the Gallinas and the St. Paul River to the economic interaction within the subregion even during the pre-European period. Both Holsoe (1971) and d'Azevedo (1969) are among the scholars who have painstakingly documented the importance of conflicts and accommodations among social formations, including the settler state, in the establishment and consolidation of the authority of the Liberian state.

6. Jehudi Ashmun, one of the early agents of the ACS, provided the first documented recognition of these sociocultural differences between the northwestern and the southeastern parts of the coast in his journal of a trip along the Windward Coasts (see ACS, *African Repository* [1827] 3:241–48). My thanks to Warren d'Azevedo for bringing Ashmun's journal to my attention.

7. Others in Sierra Leone include the Bulom, Limba, Sherbro, and Temne (Murdock 1959).

8. The Poro and Sande were compulsory panethnic secret societies. In addition to being rites-of-passage organizations, they provided training in technical skills. The Poro had substantial responsibility as the ultimate decision-making body in critical questions of war and peace. Liberty's (1977) speculation on the origin of the Poro is challenged by d'Azevedo (1959, 1962), who has argued that the Poro was probably an emergent regional phenomenon developed, as an instrument of diplomacy and communication in a complex ethnic and political environment, by the fourteenth century.

9. Others of the "peripheral Mande" include the Loko and Kono of Sierra Leone (Murdock 1959).

10. D'Azevedo (1962b) has proposed that among the Mel- and Mande-speaking peoples, intensive rice cultivation underwent diffusion with other Sudanic cultigens, together with iron implements for slash-and-burn practices, beginning, perhaps, in the fourteenth but definitely in the fifteenth century.

11. Other Kwa-speaking groups include the Bakwe, Bete, Dida, and Wobe of Côte d'Ivoire (Murdock 1959).

12. Expanding on Kirchhoff 1955, d'Azevedo (1962a:504-5) has called this type of social organization the "hierarchical, nonunilineal, and nonexogamous 'conical clan'." He explains the system as follows: "Members of such 'clans' may reckon relationships and degree of membership by 'nearness' to a common ancestor. Thus, descent may be reckoned either unilaterally or alternately through males and females. Emphasis is placed on validating connections with the focal ancestor, rather than on the sex of a parent and a particular line of ancestors. . . . Genealogies become special devices for the validation of lines of descent, and endogamy offers a means to preserve the status of the competing sublineage."

13. Dapper (1686) referred to the Sande rather than the Poro in his account of social formations in the subregion.

14. Schroder and Seibel (1974:65–71) have reported that among the Krahn, although leaders in most political communities were elected, the tremendous countervailing influences of the council of elders and the special prerogatives given to the wealthy and warriors reduced the elected leaders' powers; sometimes, indeed, it tilted the balance in favor of those of wealth and valor. Such shifts in influence and authority required virtually no structural adaptation.

15. The most widely known of such organizations was called the Kwi by the Grebo, Krahn, and Kru, or the Krue by the Bassa (see McEvoy 1971; Schroder and Seibel 1974; Siegmann 1969). It should also be noted that some of the Kwa-speaking societies that border Mande-speaking societies, for example, adopted Poro institutions. These, however, are exceptions.

16. The household was called *sa* by the Gola, *pelei* by the Loma, or *kabiowe* by the Grebo (see d'Azevedo 1962a; Carter 1970; McEvoy 1971). Other sources used in this chapter with reference to indigenous names include Davis 1968; Fraenkel 1966; Fulton 1968; Riddell 1970; Schroder and Seibel 1974; Schwab 1947.

17. Control over food produced on the farm may be in the hands of the head wife, as for example in Loma society (see Carter 1970).

18. "Quarter" is the name commonly used by anthropologists and Liberianists to describe the area of a village or town occupied by a lineage or lineage segment. The "quarter" is now also a subjurisdiction designated by the Liberian government within a town. It may or may not consist of related households. Such an area is called differently in the various Liberian languages—*gbein* in Mah, *panton* in Kru, *bo kuwa* in Gola.

19. This was more the case in western and northwestern Liberia than in southeastern Liberia, where communities tended to be more homogeneous and dispersed.

20. The *gbaubi*—or *tibawa*, as he was called in Grebo society—was always important in Kwa society irrespective of war conditions because of his role in civil administration, especially in supervising age-set socialization among males.

21. D'Azevedo (1959) contends that rice cultivation was introduced into the subregion by the Mande-speaking peoples who came to the rain forest by the fifteenth century. Until this time, most societies in the subregion were engaged largely in hunting and gathering and, perhaps, some rudimentary forms of crop production. Burrowes (1986) has taken issue with this assessment, claiming that there are indications that the precursors of the Kwa who were known to have lived in the subregion before the coming of the Mande-speaking peoples perhaps did cultivate wild rice. Unfortunately, Burrowes does not say who these "precursors of the Kwa" were, or when and how they cultivated wild rice. Holsoe (1979), citing Buttikofer (1890) and others, states that the type of rice that was first cultivated in the subregion was of an indigenous African variety, *Oryza glaberrima*, and not of the Asian variety, *Oryza sativa*, which has gained wider distribution across Liberia.

22. By the end of the seventeenth century, cassava (*Manihot utilissima*) was introduced by Europeans. It gradually became the staple in the southeastern area (see Holsoe 1979).

23. There is no evidence as to whether these iron artifacts were locally made or obtained in trade; neither is there any information as to whether they were ritual objects or tools.

24. Rodney (1966) has argued that European observers confused internal lineage subjugation in presixteenth-century Upper and Lower Guinea Coast with "domestic slavery."

25. Holsoe (1977) delineated these forms of domestic servitude with reference to the Vai. However, evidence from other parts of the region show that, by the turn of the nineteenth century, many of these forms of domestic servitude were practiced throughout the subregion. D'Azevedo (1959), Siegmann (1969), Riddell (1970), and Schroder and Seibel (1974) are among those who have described forms of domestic servitude in Mel, Mande, and Kwa-speaking societies in the northwestern, northcentral, and southeastern areas of the subregion.

26. Holsoe (1977) estimates that between 1840 and 1850 about 15,000 slaves were being exported annually through Vai middlemen alone. Curtin (1969) has estimated that 12 percent of all slaves taken in the Atlantic slave trade between 1690 and 1807 came from the "Windward Coast." The Gallinas (Cape Mount area) and River Cess supplied large numbers of these slaves.

27. Zetterstrom (1976:72) reports that domestic servitude was practiced among the Yamein Mah as late as the 1940s. This is not surprising since pawning and other forms of domestic servitude were not officially abolished by directives of the Liberian government until 1930. It is not unusual to encounter individuals who were only released from domestic servitude in the 1940s. In 1983, the author met two elderly Kpelle men who returned to their villages near Sanoyea, Bong County, in the 1950s after having been released from domestic servitude in Gola communities. Questions related to the use of labor after the intervention of the Liberian authorities will be discussed in Chapter 9.

28. This discussion of the Condo has benefitted from Holsoe 1966.

29. The new towns of Nana Kru were only established on the coast in the first half of the nineteenth century (see Davis 1968). Many Krahn communities of Gborbo, Gbarbo, and Nijru peoples, for example, reached their current locations in the interior of southeastern Liberia between 1910 and 1919 under pressure of French military operations in the area of Toulepleu in Côte d'Ivoire (Schroder and Seibel 1974).

Chapter 4

1. "Colony" was the ACS's official designation for the Liberian settlements up to 1839. This was the period when the agent of the ACS was the sole authority there. He exercised agency relationship only to the Board of Directors of the ACS in the United States. Similarly, "colonial government" was the official designation for the governmental machinery headed in the Liberian settlements by the agent of the ACS. I have therefore used the terms "colonial government" and "ACS-led government" interchangeably.

As will be seen in Chapter 5, three clusters of settlements (Montserrado, Sinoe, and Bassa) constituting the Liberian colony were established by the ACS

and two of its auxiliary organizations—the Pennsylvania Colonization Society and its equivalent in Mississippi. Theoretically, each cluster of settlements was a separate "colony" to be administered under the auspices of the ACS or one of the auxiliary organizations, with oversight responsibilities falling to the agent of the ACS in Monrovia. This arrangement was never fully worked out. Sinoe, for example, was hardly ever administered locally during the colonial period. The administration of the "colony" at Bassa was hard to distinguish functionally from that of Montserrado. Thus the designation of the Monrovia-based, ACS-led government as the "colonial government" was, indeed, an accurate representation of the reality.

As of 1839, reference is made to the "commonwealth," officially signifying the formation of an association of "colonies" coordinated from Monrovia. The formation of a Legislative Council, made up at this stage of elected representatives of the settlers, signified their increasing role in decision making. These issues will be clarified in this and the next chapter.

2. I have drawn a distinction between a constitution and the constitution of order. The former usually refers to a legal document drawn up by a group or "convention" as the basic law governing a society. The latter refers to the whole configuration of fundamental rules, including but not limited to those in the document called the constitution, that structure rule-ruler-ruled relationships in the society. For an elaboration of the concept of constitutional rule and the theory of constitutional choice, see V. Ostrom 1987a.

3. This right of extraterritoriality was to be a major bone of contention in 1847 as the settlers debated the conditions for independence.

4. From 1817 to 1831, the ACS was legally an unincorporated voluntary association of individuals involved in a colonizing mission. As such, it could legally function in the same way as any unincorporated philanthropic society running charitable institutions abroad. It could also raise funds and undertake economic activities in support of its objective, namely, the colonizing of free blacks in Africa. Its scope was limited, however, to activities related to its specific mission. As questions arose concerning the expanding activities of the ACS, which amounted to exercise of sovereign authority in the governance of the colony, the ACS petitioned Congress for a charter. When Congress denied one, the ACS sought and was granted a charter by the State of Maryland in 1831. Under that charter, it could undertake its colonizing and philanthropic activities in Africa and serve as the agent of a foreign entity in the United States. Huberich (1947, 1:35) argues that one could stretch the ACS's role as an agent of a foreign entity to legally cover the exercise of powers conferred on it by the Constitution of 1820 and subsequent constitutions. The United States Congress did not agree with this interpretation. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives issued a report in May 1844 questioning the legality of the ACS's constitutional role in Liberia. No action was taken against the ACS, however, until the Liberian settlements declared themselves an independent republic on July 26, 1847 (ibid., 1:23–37).

5. As most influential blacks in the United States were opposed to repatriation, only whites were sent out to administer the colony as ACS agents. Against

the background of developments in the United States, it is not difficult to see why a high degree of controversy would surround the persons of the agents.

6. A number of other positions were provided for in the plan. They included a clerk of court, two constables, a commissaire of ordinance, the colonial secretary, a storekeeper, a librarian, instructors of public schools, a crier of court, and an auctioneer. All of these appointments including those of instructors of public schools were to be made by the agent without nominations from the settlers. The storekeeper, commissaire of ordinance, and colonial secretary were to be compensated in food rations or otherwise (Huberich 1947, 1:295–340).

7. Although the Plan of Civil Government left the defense of the colony to a volunteer militia, it provided for the creation of a special guard force of twelve privates, two corporals, and one commandant to be "raised, appointed, officered by, and subjected to, the entire and direct control of the ACS, and their agent" (Huberich 1947, 1:334–35). It is clear that the disruptions of the previous years had sensitized both the ACS and its agent to the need for a special force to protect the agent and other ACS officials in the colony.

8. Huberich (1947, 1:284) maintains that the British colonial schooner *Prince Regent* intervened on the side of the Liberians. Midshipman Gordon and eight men from the schooner provided reinforcement. The captain of the schooner tried to mediate the conflict without success. Another British vessel, a trading ship, is said to have brought new provisions of food and gunpowder.

9. Sao Boso's support of the settlers was motivated by the expectation that an alliance with the colonial government, as that government rapidly established a sphere of influence at the coast, would secure trade routes from the coast into the middle passages that were under Condo control. In this way, Condo trade from the coast to the Guinean Highlands would be secure.

10. The victory over the indigenous communities has been perceived as a major event in settler history. The major episode in the series of skirmishes was the Battle of Crown Hill. According to settler legend, the battle was going against the settlers until a brave and patriotic woman called Matilda Newport, who was in close proximity to the fighting, lit a cannon with a coal from her pipe and demolished the ranks of the indigenous warriors. This legend has made its way into historical accounts written by certain settlers and sympathizers and was assumed to be a historical fact. Until the military takeover of 1980, December 1 of each year was a Liberian national holiday, Matilda Newport Day. For an interesting historical search for Matilda Newport, see Martin 1974.

11. Agent Ashmun's journal carried the following entry pertaining to the military capabilities of the settlers: "Our means of defence are, thirty effective men, one brass field piece, a six pounder, one iron piece of ordinance of the same size, one iron four pounder, and two swivels. These are mounted. We have unmounted, one long eighteen pounder, and three iron four pounders, one or two of which are probably useless. There are barely muskets enough to arm the men, and, for the present, a sufficiency of suitable ammunition" (quoted in Huberich 1947, 1:280).

12. Interestingly, the plan provided for the election of the officer corps of the militia by the men under arms and the confirmation of their appointment

by the agent. Noncommissioned officers were to be appointed by the senior officers with the approval of the agent (see the "Constitution for the Government of the African Colony at Liberia" in Huberich 1947, 1:331–35).

13. Between 1839 and 1846, four legislative acts were passed concerning the militia (see Huberich 1947, 2:1387–1662).

14. Militia equipment consisted of "one working musket with bayonet, one cartridge box, and a suitable knapsack" (see "Act Regulating the Militia, 1843," in Huberich 1947, 2:1495).

15. It is reported that Ashmun came to Liberia with plans for private commercial activities in mind. In 1822, he suggested that the ACS appoint him sole agent of Liberian trade, prohibit foreign ships from trading at Monrovia, and tax all trade that was not, as he determined, in the interest of the ACS. The ACS did not approve Ashmun's proposals. The ACS maintained a substantial corporate involvement in trade for at least the first half-century of the founding of Liberia. A considerable portion of the cost of transporting and maintaining the settlers was met from income from trade. The Maryland State Colonization Society, for example, reported net profits of almost $60,000 in fifteen years of trading (Huberich 1947, 1:47). James Hall, John Latrobe, and Francis Scott Key were among the officials of the colonization movement who were always keen on emphasizing the connection between colonization and commerce, and strove to enlist the involvement of the United States government and private entrepreneurs in the commercial aspect of African colonization (Huberich 1947; Spraggins 1957). By mid-century, commercial interest was not as important in African colonization as it was in colonization in Central America and the Caribbean Island (Spraggins 1957).

16. Dei leaders who had hoped to profit from the new trade in the area mounted a trade embargo against the settlers in 1824 in a dispute about prices. Both Zolu Duma and Sao Boso, the major authorities in the subregion, disapproved the embargo. As a result, it was lifted. A treaty guaranteeing peace and free trade was signed between the colonial government and Chief Ba Caia, another Dei chief known to Europeans as King George, and a Bassa chief known to Europeans as King Joe Gray. Another embargo was attempted in 1827, but settler retaliation and disagreements among the major forces in the subregion led to its termination (Holsoe 1967).

17. By the mid-1830s, the slaver Pedro Blanco had established new depots among the Dei and Gola who were at war with each other. He supported the war and obtained prisoners from both sides (Holsoe 1971). Several attacks against slaving posts were undertaken by the colonial government in the first ten years of its existence. Slave depots were operating less than 5 miles from the settlement of Monrovia.

18. Reporting to the Board, Ashmun was very optimistic about trade possibilities with the Vai. In 1826, he reported that if successful, the new trade station at Cape Mount would "secure to the colony the whole trade of that station, estimated at $50,000 per annum and [might] ultimately lead to its annexation to the territories of Liberia" (Huberich 1947, 1:346). Ashmun's optimism was ill-founded.

19. His son, Jalla Finge, was unable to keep the constituent elements together. Fan Fila Yenge (known as Jenkins to the settlers), an assistant and warlord under

Zolu Duma, gained ascendancy in the Gola and Dei sections of the confederation, and Fan Tolo laid claims to the Gawula and Tombe sections (Holsoe 1967).

20. Late in 1831 the colonial government under Agent John Mechlin sent Augustus Curtis, a settler, as negotiator among the Vai (Holsoe 1967).

21. Among settlers who had established trading factories in the area were Joseph J. Roberts and Reuben Dungee at Sowi, and Colson and Company at Manna. Dungee's factory was destroyed by fire while James Thomas lost $1,200 worth of goods. Abraham Cheeseman lost goods worth about $400 and so did the firm Yates and Payne (Holsoe 1967).

22. Again, the Dei-Gola alliance was unable to dislodge the settlers or accomplish its objectives because of the lack of sustained, concerted effort. Some Gola warlords were also attacking the Condo federation at the same time. Also, several Dei chiefs were less than cooperative in this endeavor; as a result, the alliance lacked the capacity to regroup and sustain a credible attack (Holsoe 1971). The Dei became allies of the settlers after initial skirmishes. Coastal Dei communities found a strategic advantage in alliance with the settlers in view of Gola attacks against both.

23. In 1836 alone, three commissions were dispatched to various parts of the western area to mediate armed conflicts that resulted from the collapse of Zolu Duma's confederation (Holsoe 1971).

24. Holsoe (1971) estimates Sao Boso's death to have occurred in 1837. As the struggle for control of the constituent elements of his confederation intensified, Fan Fila Yenge continued his assault on the Dei and his blockade of trade with Bopolu. In 1838, he made a major breakthrough when his forces defeated the forces of a leader known as Chief Bristol and captured and killed some 200 people. This military success enabled Yenge to move to a strategic location near Digby and build a town from where he could better control the flow of trade around the important trade stations nearby. As internecine conflict raged among rival groups within the Condo, Yenge consolidated his control of the trade routes. One of the contending Condo groups, led by a Loma chief called Gotola, launched a devastating assault against the Dei people, who were forced to seek safety in the upriver settlements. Another contending band, led by Getumbe of Suehn, attempted not only to interdict trade routes but also, in a massive assault in 1840, to dislodge the settlers. The capacity of the colonists to repulse the attack, which then led to the disintegration of the band, established the colony as the "balancing force" in the area (Holsoe 1971).

25. Fan Fila Yenge had established control of a major trade route and only sought to dislodge one of his last rivals, Jalla Finge. In 1842, he attacked Gon, the headquarters of the former confederation of Zolu Duma. It would appear that Yenge was killed when a retaliatory strike was made on his headquarters at Digby (Holsoe 1971).

26. See note 19, above.

27. In October 1826, the colonial government acquired "perpetual lease" to territory at the mouth of the Junk River in an area of strategic importance for control of the camwood trade on the Junk, Gba, and Farmington rivers. Operating further in that area, the colonial government also acquired the site known as Factory Island, which dominated the palm oil trade of the St. John River. Other locations

on both the St. John and Benson rivers and in Little Bassa were acquired by the colonial government in 1826 and 1827, giving it substantial control of the palm oil and camwood trades that flourished in the area (Syfert 1977).

28. In the 1826 assault against Trade Town, the colonial militia was transported to the site more than 100 miles east of Monrovia by three U.S. naval vessels. A three-hour battle was fought with employees of the notorious slavers Theodore Canot and Pedro Blanco and with Bassa chiefs who cooperated with them. Canot was an Italian slaver who initially worked for Blanco, a Cuban, but later established his own slave factories at Cape Mount. The colonial government had earlier concluded treaties establishing trade factories in the area of New Cess as it had at Digby. New Cess (then known as Young Sesters) was an important trading site for rice. Chief Freeman of New Cess had agreed to "lease" territory to the colonial government under the condition that no settlement would be established there. Freeman was prepared to forego rent in return for favorable trade agreements (Syfert 1977).

29. In its 1826 report the colonial government boasted of possessing by purchase or lease territory "from Cape Mount to Trade Town, a distance of 150 miles [with] four of the most important [trade] stations including Montserrado [and the] right of use and occupancy of trading factories established [near New Cess] under the superintendence of a family from Monrovia." Ashmun had reported that the New Cess factories were already a "valuable source of income to the colony" (quoted in Huberich 1947, 1:346).

30. Between 1830 and 1835, the colonial government secured more sites near the St. John River and established the settlements of Edina in 1833 and Bassa Cove in 1835. Apparently the settlers' resolve to employ lethal force with the assistance of U.S. naval squadrons weakened the resistance of the surrounding indigenous communities, which could hardly muster an equivalent retaliative capability. Many Bassa chiefs, noted among whom was the chief known as Bob Gray, now sought to work out a favorable accommodation with the new force while grudgingly accepting the growing influence of the settlers as a fait accompli.

31. The Pennsylvania Colonization Society consisted of a large number of Quakers whose pacifist orientations were initially infused in the governance of the settlements near the St. John and Benson rivers.

32. In July 1838, thirty-seven immigrants who arrived aboard the brig *Mail* were sent to a new settlement situated at the mouth of the Sinoe River. The settlement was under the sponsorship of the Mississippi Colonization Society. Greenville became the major town of the new settlement. The thirty-seven settlers were joined by others who had preceded them on the *Rover* in 1835, but were temporarily situated in Millsburg, until houses could be built for them in Sinoe (Syfert 1977).

33. The first oceangoing vessel built by settlers outside Monrovia was launched in Greenville in 1838. Named the *Natchez*, after Natchez, Mississippi, in the southern United States, it was owned by the Mississippi Colonization Society. It was free blacks from Natchez who, in 1832, had organized themselves and collected money to foster emigration to Liberia. They sponsored the trip of two emissaries to investigate conditions in Liberia and report on the advisability of emigration. The emissaries, the Reverend Gloster Simpson, a Methodist

preacher, and Archy Moore returned with a favorable report. Later, the two men were themselves to emigrate to Liberia (see Sullivan 1978; Brown 1941).

34. Sullivan (1978:108 n. 8) reports that according to oral traditions, sometime in the early part of the 1800s when American settler communities were being established along the coast, a Kabor man called Tagbe was sent to the United States from the Kwa communities near the Sinoe River to request that a community of settlers be founded in their area.

35. In 1841, the colonial government demanded from the Fishmen near Bassa Cove, where the governor was killed, an indemnity payment of $1,000 and rights to land between Bassa Cove and Tobacconee. The Fishmen were also pressured into treaty commitments to end their participation in the slave trade and to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the colonial government on the coast and its authority as the ultimate arbitrator of disputes (Sullivan 1978).

36. Kabor suspicions were justified because in 1843, after an exercise in intimidation by the USS *Macedonian*, the colonial government moved to evict the Kabor from their communities near the beach under the pretext that the Kabor were an annoyance to the Sno. Some Kabor homes were burned down and others turned over to the Sno. By removing the Kabor, the colonial government had succeeded in eliminating a powerful competitor in coastal as well as inland trade. The Kabor were to return in small bands so that, by 1845, they were once again cooperating with British traders in challenging the trade regulations established by the colonial government (Sullivan 1978).

37. Settra was the busiest port along the Kru Coast. Foreign traders were too entrenched and trade was too profitable for it to be abandoned without a struggle.

38. These transactions were undertaken by the MSCS with Chief Pa Neimah (known as King Freeman) of the cape area, Chief Weah Boleo of Graway, and Chief Baphro of Cavalla—the most influential of the Nyomowe chiefs of the area (Martin 1968).

39. The prevailing winds in the Gulf of Guinea and along the Atlantic Ocean are said to have made Cape Palmas the last convenient port of call for ships outbound from West Africa (see Syfert 1977).

40. They agreed on a new code of laws that had been prepared in Baltimore, setting up a panel of Grebo and settler magistrates as judges and appointing Grebo constables. Cases on appeal were to be tried by the colonial agent and at least two Grebo magistrates. The agreement was periodically revised and continued in use through 1837, by which time it had evolved provisions for final appellate jurisdiction that involved the colonial agent and Chief Pa Neimah. Relations had evolved so amicably that governors Hall and Russwurm of the colony had agreed that, in the event of a clash of laws, disputes between settlers and the Grebo people were to be settled in keeping with Grebo customary law and traditions. This provision was never approved by the MSCS board (Martin 1968).

41. According to Martin (1968:111), some sources have maintained that, although the early governors of the colony were personally well disposed toward the Grebo, the relationship between the Grebo and the colonial government as directed by the MSCS was kept on a cordial basis only because the MSCS realized that the colony did not have the physical strength and armed capacity to enforce colonial laws.

42. In 1839, Grebo chiefs were pressured into committing themselves to a treaty outlawing trial by ordeal (sassawood). The colonial treaty gave the governor and officials of the colony the authority to take into custody any person suspected of being forced to drink the poisoned water from the sassawood bark (Martin 1968).

43. It is curious that Jehudi Ashmun, who was the architect of the strategy promoting trade, was also the major proponent of agricultural development. The manual he prepared for agriculture is said to have been innovative, meticulous, and exhaustive (Brown [1941] 1981).

44. In the words of a correspondent from Monrovia: "Our town is now becoming a place of resort of natives from the Condo country and countries beyond, bordering on Foota Jallon. The Mandingoes also visit us in considerable numbers, and are the means of making us known to the nations of the interior. By the provisions of a treaty lately concluded with the kings and chiefs of the Dei tribes, still greater facilities will be afforded to this branch of commerce, it being expressly stipulated in that treaty, the natives of the interior resorting to the colony for the purposes of trade should be allowed a free passage through their territory" (quoted in Brown [1941] 1981:118).

45. The settlers had also attempted to introduce donkeys from Cape Verde as beasts of burden, but both horses and donkeys were found unsuitable for the climate because of the tsetse fly, which spread trypanosomiasis.

46. In the early 1820s, Reuben Dungee, a settler trader, reached Bopolu, the flourishing commercial town presumed then to be midway between Musardhu and the coast. Dungee's report about Bopolu stimulated greater interest in the presumed prosperity of the points beyond that were considered to be the actual source of trade goods (Brown [1941] 1981; Holsoe 1974).

47. The colonial physician Dr. Lugenbeel reported that out of the 600 eligible voters (males of twenty-one or older), only 269 cast ballots; 211 of these were in favor of the constitution and 58 were opposed. Lugenbeel stated that if all hose opposed had voted, the tally would have been much closer, perhaps yielding a plurality of 50 in favor of the constitution (see Huberich 1947, 1:845–46).

Chapter 5

1. The settlers referred to the ship as *Elizabeth, the Mayflower,* as if to draw an historical parallel with seventeenth-century European settlers of the New World. As noted in Chapter 2, the settlers were listed as "workers" hired to construct a government station in Africa for recaptives. Financial support received by the ACS from the U.S. government was for the repatriation of recaptives. Workers were to be sent to Africa to construct a resettlement station. Thus the first group of emigrants were sent under the guise of being workers.

2. Although seemingly very concerned about the death of so many of the first group of emigrants, the ACS called the tragedy "dispensations of the Almighty" to which "we bow in submission and at the same time resolve to go in the path of duty." The ACS downplayed the deaths as unfortunate occurrences that attend all human affairs and, in doing so, hoped that potential emigrants

would not change their minds. Later, as the mortality rate continued to rise, the ACS organized a publicity campaign to alleviate fears and encourage further emigration. It stressed that health conditions in the part of Africa where repatriation was going on were no worse than those in many parts of the United States, and that many of the fatalities were attributable to failure of the sick to take necessary precautions, for instance by not convalescing long enough, staying in the sun too long, or eating too many raw fruits (see Shick 1971).

3. Doukor is the name given to Monrovia by the Vai.

4. The largest number of arrivals in any single year was in 1833, when 713 or 15.7 percent of the total arrivals by 1843 reached the colony. The number of black Americans who were willing to repatriate diminished significantly after the American Civil War (Shick 1971, 1977).

5. Support for the repatriation efforts was organized by auxiliary chapters of the ACS in various states so that the Pennsylvania Colonization Society organized and supported the settlements that were later called Grand Bassa, while the Mississippi Colonization Society worked in what became Sinoe. Both the Sinoe and Grand Bassa settlements were part of the original colony of Liberia. The Colony of Maryland in Africa, which later became the State of Maryland in Africa, was annexed to the Republic of Liberia in 1857.

6. Shick (1971) states that some elementary forms of instruction were given to slaves in certain areas. Free blacks had access to better educational opportunities than slaves; however, the educational facilities available to free blacks varied in quality.

7. The recaptured ("recaptive") Africans were those who were being taken into slavery after slave trading had been officially abolished by Britain and the United States. Slave ships containing their human cargoes were intercepted on the high seas and rerouted to Liberia, where the former slaves were unloaded. Most of these individuals had been taken from various points along the west and southwestern coast of Africa. They were commonly referred to in Liberia as "Congoes," under the presumption that they came from the region of the Congo basin.

8. This picture was to change by 1846 when the ship *Pons* was intercepted with a total of 756 Africans being taken into slavery. In the next fourteen years, more than 5,000 recaptured would be landed in Liberia posing a threat to the cultural homogeneity of the new society (Shick 1977).

9. The distance over which settlements were established along the coast was about 200 miles, if Maryland is included. Given the vast distances, however, especially from Monrovia to Sinoe, the influence of the government was hardly felt there. In the case of Sinoe, in fact, from 1838, when the governor died, until 1844 there was no local representative of the Monrovia government (see Sullivan 1978).

10. Between 1843 and 1880, at least ten new settlements had been established along the shores of the St. Paul River. These included Clay Ashland, in 1847; Careysburg, 1859; Arthington, 1869; and Brewerville, 1879.

11. Stuckey (1987:57) has argued that to blacks during the antebellum period, release from the degradation of slavery seemed to require nothing short of a miracle. Thus the aspects of Christianity most emphasized were those concerning

the invocation of God's help. Quite naturally, this same orientation existed as the settlers experienced enormous hardships from all directions in establishing a new society in Africa.

12. Stuckey (1987:119) has shown that a major orientation of nineteenth-century African-American society was an allegiance to the people of Africa coupled with the belief that they lacked civilization. Emphasizing the two ways in which Christian sentiments bonded African-Americans to Africa, he narrates an incident at a dinner given by free blacks in Boston in 1828 and held in the African Masonic Hall in honor of Prince Abdul Rahaman of the Futa Jallons who had been enslaved in the south. Two toasts were offered on that occasion. The first was: "May the happy era be not far distant when Africa universally shall stretch forth her hands unto God, that the time soon arrive when the sons of Africa, in all parts of the world, shall be emancipated and happy, and the word slave never more be heard." The second toast was: "May the sons and daughters of Africa soon become a civilized and Christian-like [sic] people and shine forth to the world as conspicuous as their more highly favored neighbors." The former invokes God's miracle; the latter is a summons to Christian missionary duty.

13. Besides the Reverend Daniel Coker, there was the Reverend Lott Carey, a manumitted slave who became an influential leader among the rank and file of the early settlers, and the Reverend Colston Warring, who was among the early "merchant princes."

14. Interestingly, Teage, a wealthy trader, a local agent for numerous European firms, and the owner of the *Liberian Herald,* was an eloquent advocate of the development of agriculture as the foundation of the Liberian economy (see *Liberian Herald,* 1842, 1846, 1849, various issues).

15. Liberty (1977) has aptly called nineteenth-century Liberia the "Robertan Republic."

16. Liberty has referred to this leadership core as the "higher echelon stratum" of settler society; its membership, he argues, was restricted to "the president, ex-presidents, high government, business, and social personalities." It would seem that the categories of people mentioned by Liberty were functionaries who obtained their positions as a consequence of membership of the group rather than vice versa. Apparently in recognition of the latter, Liberty further asserts that "foreigners generally encountered only its [higher echelon stratum's] better educated and more cosmopolitan members. Such persons were not necessarily the most powerful at the time" (1977:xi).

17. Information on Gibson was obtained through interviews with some of his contemporaries from Sinoe.

18. Two volumes of letters from former slaves to their relatives and former masters have now been published. The letters reveal the depth and closeness of the relationships that were maintained between settlers and their kinsfolk in the United States (see R. Miller, 1978; Wiley, 1980).

19. It is not surprising that polygynous tendencies could be found in settler society despite professions of Christian monogamy. Stuckey (1987:31) has brilliantly demonstrated the connections and cultural continuities between slave culture and the African experience even up to the mid-1840s. The African-American conception of Christianity and practice of such Christian rites as

baptism, marriage, and burial were infused with African influences. Such influences, according to Stuckey, were constantly reinforced up to the early nineteenth century by new waves of slaves. For example, the overwhelming majority of slaves brought into Virginia until the end of the slave trade were African born.

20. Liebenow (1962, 1964, 1969) has been able to trace such family ties and sketch the network of mid-twentieth-century family relationships that made government as he put it, "a family affair."

21. Melville W. Cox was the first foreign missionary sent to Liberia. He was sent by an American Methodist Episcopal Mission Board. He arrived in Monrovia in 1833 (Dunn and Holsoe 1985).

22. Seys was also editor of the *African Luminary*, one of the first newspapers published in the colony.

23. Although legislation was promulgated in 1839, 1841, and 1912, requiring compulsory primary education for all children under sixteen, such legislation meant nothing in view of the inability of the government and religious denominations to provide enough places.

24. Even so, by 1868, more than forty years after the establishment of the first settlement, there were fewer than thirty schools in settler and frontier indigenous communities, with an average of fewer than twenty pupils per school (Sherman 1982).

25. Alexander High was named in honor of Archibald Alexander, a friend of the Reverend Robert Finley, founding head of the ACS. Alexander wrote a very sympathetic history of the ACS and the founding of Liberia. Both Edward W. Blyden and H. R. W. Johnson were products of the prestigious school.

26. The institution was reopened in 1948 as Cuttington College and Divinity School at a new location in Suacoco in central Liberia.

27. It was only toward the end of the nineteenth century that the Protestant Episcopal bishop Samuel David Ferguson expressed regret that mechanical and industrial training had not been included in the curriculum of schools and called for their inclusion in order to enhance self-reliance in Liberian society.

Chapter 6

1. See "Laws Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives at the First Session, January and February, 1848," as cited in Huberich 1947, 2:1011–12.

2. Liberty has defined three types of Liberian territory: "nucleus" Liberia, which consists of the coastal towns and settlements; "original" Liberia, which includes the constitutional zone and the hinterland beyond it; and "greater" Liberia, which consists of the constitutional zone and that portion of the hinterland administered by the Liberian government. In 1847, the aspiration of the Liberian government was to consolidate its authority over the constitutional zone and exercise influence over the hinterland of Liberty's "original" Liberia (see Liberty 1977: xvi–xviii).

3. The antislavery lobby, which had successfully won government support for the colony of Freetown, played an active role in securing official recognition and financial assistance for Liberia (Foley 1965).

4. In 1848, President Roberts visited Europe to seek diplomatic recognition and respect for Liberian territorial integrity. The governments of Britain, France, and the Hanseatic German Confederation concluded treaties of amity and commerce with Liberia and, in doing so, recognized Liberia's legal authority to levy taxes and exercise control within its borders (Yancy 1954).

5. In May 1849, the government signed a treaty of amity and commerce with an indigenous ruler known to European traders as King Robin and with other chiefs in and around Tewo. In 1850, the government "purchased" territory from the chiefs of Manna Rock for $600. At about the same time, more treaties were signed with groups beyond the Mano River in Sherbro (Holsoe 1967).

6. The Zawo people constituted the Mendemassa clan near Tewo (see Holsoe 1967).

7. In 1853, for example, the Liberian government tried to subdue Chief Cain who did not want to keep treaty commitments made by his predecessor. Cain was captured during skirmishes with government militia and held prisoner in Monrovia until he pledged to acquiesce to the treaty stipulations, which included protecting trade routes and observing the authority of the Liberian government as the ultimate authority in conflict resolution in the region (Holsoe 1967).

8. The Liberian government borrowed arms and ammunition from an American naval vessel to launch an armed campaign in 1868. The government's failure to pay for the consignment was an issue in U.S.-Liberian official correspondence up to the time of the Grebo War of 1875. One of the campaigns of 1869 drew British involvement when the trade goods of a British trader were said to have been destroyed in the fighting. The British seized a Liberian schooner and demanded payment of indemnity. The Liberian government was humiliated by the actions of the British (see USDS, *Despatches*, 4, Jan. 1874–Mar. 1875).

9. While Chief Manna was perceived as an enemy by the Liberian government, Chief Moana Sando, who exercised control over the southern parts of the Gallinas, was perceived as an ally. Sando persistently walked a tightrope to ensure Liberian government support and protection when necessary while maintaining his autonomy and position of authority and respect among the political communities of the area (Holsoe 1967).

10. This is more clearly demonstrated in the resolution of border conflicts and the pacification campaigns in the Kissi region, as discussed later in this chapter (see also Wyse 1977).

11. The Liberian government also levied a tax of one dollar on each adult male in surrounding indigenous societies. This exaction was meant to constitute payment for protection that was to be guaranteed these societies against their enemies. Like other taxes that were to be enforced elsewhere in the interior in the nineteenth century, this one could not be consistently enforced. The Liberian government did not have the capacity to enforce such taxes nor did it possess sufficient legitimacy to ensure voluntary compliance on the part of indigenous leaders (Holsoe 1967).

12. These strategies included the exchange of gifts, the placing of low-status Gola youth in settler homes, and vigorous participation in trade with settler merchants (d'Azevedo 1969).

13. According to Holsoe (1967), Jiah's death brought to an end the overlordship of the Massaquoi clan in the Gallinas.

14. Sofa was the term used to refer to the Mandingo horsemen who made up the cavalry that was the backbone of Samouri Toure's defence force. The term also referred to all warlords of Samouri forces.

15. Samouri's organized forces engaged in a process of pacification among the societies of the north and northwestern frontier in order to secure trade routes for their allies. The trade corridor from Bopolu north had fallen into the hands of Gbande warriors who overran Bopolu upon the death of Momolu Sao in the early 1870s. Sofa forces assisted Malinke traders and political leaders of Musardhu and surrounding areas to reclaim control of these vital trade corridors (Massing 1978–1979). These routes constituted part of the supply lines to Samouri forces. The supply of arms to Samouri through Liberian ports was an issue that had to be resolved in negotiation of the border disputes between Liberia and France (Foley 1965).

16. For example, in 1893, a force of Sofa warriors roamed and pillaged parts of the northwestern countryside, having been invited there by a warring Gola faction. Another Sofa group led by Bondo Potto pillaged Vai and Gola territory for some time in 1892. In most of these instances, Sofa mercenaries were presumably aiding chiefs who had challenged rulers backed by the Liberian government (Holsoe 1967).

17. As an indication of popular discontent, the government's pacification campaigns were dubbed the Coleman War, after President William D. Coleman who as vice president became president upon President Cheeseman's death in office. Coleman intensified the pacification campaigns. Dissatisfaction with his interior policy forced his resignation in 1900 (see Chapter 11).

18. Southern Gola chieftains and Kpelle rulers clashed intermittently for many years during the second half of the nineteenth century as the Gola strove to establish control immediately north of Liberian government jurisdiction. These conflicts, particularly the Kpelle-Gola wars of 1889–1891, had a disruptive effect on a large portion of what is now central Liberia (see Fulton 1968).

19. In the area of Grand Bassa, there were intermittent skirmishes over the control of trade between the Liberian government and Chief Grando for some three years (from about 1850 to 1853) before an accommodation was reached (Starr 1913). More protracted engagements took place in the Sinoe region of the Kru Coast, notably between settler merchants of Greenville and their allies among the local Sno peoples, on the one hand, and the Blue Barre people and their allies, on the other.

20. The genesis of this particular conflict was to be found in the trade blockade imposed by the peoples of Butaw on trade from the interior destined for settler communities. The Liberian government attempted to retaliate by interdicting trade with Butaw and some of its allies in 1853. Tension mounted as interior groups pressured the Butaw alliance in the hope of gaining favorable coastal trade positions. The settler authorities of Sinoe were sympathetic to these interior challenges against their perennial coastal rivals. In 1850, Kru leaders from Settra Kru and towns surrounding Greenville petitioned the British government for protection against Liberian encroachment. They were opposed to the extension

of government authority over ports and to the government's insistence on concluding treaty agreements with certain Kru societies (Davis 1975). While these conflicts raged, the government laid claim to more land for new settlements, thereby alienating a hitherto friendly Sno community. With the settler communities on the verge of desperation from economic hardship and internal political strife, the spark came when, in November 1855, people from Blue Barre seized three deckhands from the British ship *Ariel* anchored near Greenville. The three men, who were from the interior, were accused of breaking Blue Barre control over employment on British ships by taking their jobs without approval. The fighting that ensued quickly spread throughout the Liberian settlements. All of the upriver settlements were raided and at least eight settlers were killed in the initial fighting. Fighting also broke out in the interior as coastal Kru settled scores with their interior competitors. As fighting continued, the Liberian government, with the aid of a German firm, dispatched a unit of militiamen from Monrovia to Greenville. President Benson himself traveled to Greenville during the hostilities. From March to June 1856, militiamen went on a rampage through enemy towns leaving a heavy toll in life and property including agricultural products (Sullivan 1978).

21. In addition to being fined $1,500, peoples of Butaw had to pledge not to take up arms against the Liberian government and to guarantee free passage of trade and Liberians through their territory. The concession exacted from the people of Blue Barre was nothing less than the ceding of their land to the Liberian government (Sullivan 1978).

22. By the end of the decade, political rumblings, which were to lead to the E. J. Roye episode, were already being heard (more on this episode in Chapter 7).

23. The alliance was called "Reunited Confederation" in recognition of an earlier alliance of Nyomowe and Kudemowe societies shortly before the arrival of the settlers.

24. Martin (1968) argues that educated Grebo had closely followed the formation of the Fante Confederacy on the Gold Coast at about this time and were also informed about the formation of the roughly contemporaneous German Confederation.

25. The confederation decided that contract laborers should receive part of their wages in advance and that their well-being should be of greater concern to their employer than it apparently was (Martin 1968). The contract labor question is discussed in Chapter 9.

26. News of the defeat of Liberian government forces spread throughout the country. The coastal Kru, neighbors of the Grebo, demonstrated solidarity with the latter and attempted to disrupt sea traffic to Maryland. The Liberian government, fearing that the defeat would trigger uprisings against its authority in other parts of the country, issued a proclamation that prohibited, among other things, sales of arms and ammunition to indigenous individuals, interference with the "native population by threats, quarrels, or otherwise," the firing of guns, and undertaking any kind of action that might be perceived as belligerent (RL, "Proclamation Issued by the President, October 18, 1875"). A later proclamation lifted the embargo for all areas except for Grebo country and limited trading activities in that area to the port of Harper (ibid., "Proclamation Issued by the President, November 2, 1875").

27. Some settlers were said to have interpreted the battlefield successes of the Grebo as a warning from God for failure to incorporate the indigenous population (Martin 1968).

28. In 1882, ten such groups entered into treaty agreements recognizing the sovereignty of the Liberian state, opening their territories to trade with the settlers, and pledging to abide by the laws of the Liberian government and to ally with the government in all military encounters. The Liberian government, in turn, promised to pay a yearly stipend to a few chiefs and to build schools from receipts of a poll tax to be paid by local people (Martin 1968).

29. In Cavalla, sentiments favoring secession were rife. Educated Grebo who opposed such sentiments had to flee. Finding no support from the Liberian government, most of them returned to Cavalla several months later. Within two years, the region was back in turmoil. Old conflicts between the Nyomowe and Kudemowe resurfaced and the Liberian settlements of Cape Palmas took side with the Nyomowe. French, German, and British traders and colonial officials were very active along the Grebo littoral at this time.

30. The Spanish later took reprisal by launching an attack on the Port of Monrovia shortly after the interception of the Spanish slave ship (Holsoe 1967).

31. Governor Blackall returned to Freetown after a few days and left a two-man delegation consisting of Commander Leveson Wildman and Major Rokeby Jones as the British commissioners. Secretary of State J. N. Lewis was the second commissioner from the Liberian side (Foley 1965).

32. With the burden of the loan of 1871 to bear, the Liberian government was even more vulnerable to British pressure. This and other loans are discussed in Chapter 7.

33. Fearing French and German reaction in the event these agreements were made public, the British Foreign Office proposed that the word "union" be changed to "relations" while the understanding remained unchanged (Foley 1965).

34. Liebenow (1969:6–7) quotes from a secret letter from the governor of Sierra Leone, Sir Leslie Probyn, to Lord Elgin of the Colonial Office recommending the takeover of parts of northwestern Liberia to ensure the security of the Sierra Leone Railway, which was close to the Liberian border. These developments, in addition to the activities of the Liberia Development Company and the British government regarding the loan of 1906, constituted the basis for grave suspicions on the part of many Liberians as to the true intentions of the British. The loan of 1906 and the Liberia Development Company will be discussed in Chapter 7.

35. It was the pursuit of this strategy that the Liberia Development Company was granted liberal terms of operation in Liberia (see Chapter 7).

36. Until the 1930s, all of Liberia's permanent representatives abroad were non-Liberians.

Chapter 7

1. I define the postindependence period roughly as the period covering about seventy-five years from independence in 1847 to the introduction of Firestone in the third decade of the twentieth century. This period was characterized by

the proprietary control of merchants and the search for a strategy that would have ensured territorial integrity and national autonomy, on the one hand, and economic development and internal cohesion under settler hegemony, on the other.

2. This aspiration resounded in the boastful reference of Samuel Benedict (president of the constitution convention) to his compatriots as "proprietors of the soil . . . and possessors of the rights of free holders" (quoted in Burrowes 1988a:14). Burrowes has correctly observed that at least at the level of settler aspiration, the attainment of freeholder rights was perceived as both a "measure of worth" that had been denied in the United States and as a measure of good citizenship.

3. This brief sketch of the orientation and strategy promoted by the merchant leaders of Liberian society is distilled from the pronouncements made by such leaders and the policies recommended by them during their tenure as presidents and high officials of government. See, for example, RL, *Annual Message of the President of Liberia*, Dec. 1851, Dec. 1873 (both by J. J. Roberts); Dec. 1868 (J. S. Payne). See also USDS, *Despatches from United States Ministers in Liberia*, May 25, 1872.

4. For example, in 1872, having returned to the presidency, Roberts tried to implement a policy of resettling the indigenous population of the hinterland areas near Liberian jurisdiction into large villages. This policy of "villagization" obviously had implications for the creation of markets and labor pools, as well as for the dispensing of social services and the imposition of taxes. The policy was abandoned because the indigenous peoples failed to cooperate (see RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 15, 1873 [J. J. Roberts]).

5. For an indication of this approach, see RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1864, Dec. 1866 (both by D. B. Warner). See also USDS, *Despatches*, Oct. 25, 1865; ibid., May 25, 1872; *Liberian Herald*, Aug. 31, 1849; *Observer*, Sept. 1881.

6. It was Edward Blyden, however, who was its most radical and provocative exponent. See his *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*.

7. The deposing of Roye signified a major clash within the merchant leadership. This episode, discussed later in this chapter, had enormous implications for the nature of the governing political coalition and the course of economic activities in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth century.

8. See, for example, Roye's statement accepting the letters of accreditation of the U.S. Minister to Liberia (USDS, *Despatches*, no. 1870).

9. As an indication of the deep-seated division over race, the story is told of a toast proffered at an official function by a wealthy mulatto merchant. The toast was offered "to the fairest of the land." It is reported that an embarrassed President Roberts immediately intervened to suggest that the toast was actually meant for "the fairer sex of the land" (see Akpan 1968).

10. Starr (1913:90) narrates a conversation that vividly demonstrates the perception of race and control in the first quarter-century of independence. The conversation that took place at election time was between a dark-skinned manumitted slave and a visitor from Virginia in the United States:

VISITOR: Which of the candidates for the president are you going to vote for?

REPLY: Oh, Benson, sir.

VISITOR: Has Roberts not made a good president?

REPLY: Oh yes, he is a very smart man and much respected abroad. . . . But the fac's just this, . . . the folks say as how we darkies ain't fittin to take care o' oursel's—ain't capable. Roberts is a very fine gentleman, but he's more white than black. Benson's colored people all over. There's no use talkin' gov'ment an' making laws an' that kind o' thing, if they ain't going to keep um up. I vote for Benson, sir, 'cause I wants to know if we's going to turn nigger or turn monkey.

11. Official findings of the investigation into the conduct of Benson revealed that, among other things, monies from the accounts for the rehabilitation of recaptives had been transferred to his personal use; that goods received for recaptives were invoiced to his account at low sales prices, sold by the government store at high prices to those entrusted with the support of recaptives, and the monies received transferred to Benson; and that Benson had drawn $7,000 from the recaptive accounts to finance a foreign trip when the Liberian government had already appropriated $6,000 for the same trip (see RL [1864], *Report of the Special Committee of the House of Representatives on Public Accounts*).

12. For a discussion of these adaptations with reference to local administration, see Sawyer 1990.

13. See the Revenue Acts of 1869 and 1875 in RL, *Acts of the National Legislature.*

14. An interesting incident of conflict and conflict resolution between proprietary control from Monrovia and subproprietary control in the counties is narrated by Sullivan (1978:237–40). According to her account, in 1894, as a result of internal challenges to the leadership of the local patriarch of Sinoe merchants, the superintendent of Sinoe ordered an audit of the accounts of the local subtreasurer of Sinoe County. The subtreasurer refused to submit to an audit and disclaimed any responsibility to the superintendent and his local council. Acting without the approval of the president, the superintendent dismissed the subtreasurer and replaced him with a more loyal person. The subtreasurer obtained an injunction from the local judge to prevent his being replaced. Angered by the arbitrary action of the superintendent, the president ordered the reinstatement of the subtreasurer. The superintendent refused. A stalemate obtained. A few months later, the superintendent asked to be relieved of his position. The president chose one of the former superintendent's closest political allies as his replacement. Thus a major conflict was resolved as presidential authority was exerted within a framework that acknowledged the role of the local proprietorship.

15. See RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 11, 1888 (H. R. W. Johnson).

16. Although prices of commodities in Liberia during the nineteenth century are not readily available, Syfert (1977:209–10) has compiled the following tables of prices of palm oil for certain years in Liberia and on the Liverpool market. Unfortunately, prices are not fully shown for the last decades of the nineteenth century, when Liberia's palm oil trade virtually collapsed.

Palm Oil Prices in Liberia, 1824–1886

	Cents per gallon	Location
1824	37.00	Monrovia
1830	8.00–10.00	Coast

Palm Oil Prices in Liberia, 1824–1886

	Cents per gallon	Location
1835	50.00–55.00	Monrovia
1836	25.00	Cape Palmas
1841	33.33	Cape Palmas
1842	46.00	Monrovia
1846	34.00	Monrovia
1847	33.33–35.00	Monrovia
1854	33.33	Liberia
1855	33.00	Liberia
1885	33.33	Monrovia
1886	25.00	Monrovia

Palm Oil Prices in Liverpool, 1871–1888

	Pounds, shillings, and pence per gallon
1871	£33–37
1872	30 (Monrovian oil only)
1873	28–34
1874–1878	32–36
1879	26.19–31.10
1880–1882	27–29.10
1883–1884	31–37.10
1885	29.5–29.10
1886	19.12.6–21
1887	19
1888	16.17.6

17. According to Syfert (1977:205) prices of camwood fluctuated on the Liverpool market at levels illustrated as follows:

	Pounds and shillings per ton
1871 (Sept. 23–30)	£21.5
1871 (Dec. 23–30)	19.10
1873 (July 19–26)	26.5
1874 (Feb. 7–14)	15
1875 (Jan. 2–9)	34.5–34.10

	Pounds and shillings per ton
1876 (Jan. 22–29)	£18–22.10
1878 (July 12–19)	27–30
1882 (July 21–28)	35.18–36.18
1886 (Feb. 5)	27
1886 (June 25)	25.5–27.10

18. While prices for cotton cloth sold in Liberia are not readily available, it is known that prices for African cotton generally were consistently higher than those for British cotton cloth. In 1880, for example, local cotton cloth in Gambia sold at 1 shilling per square yard while cotton cloth imported from Britain fetched only half as much. In Sierra Leone, a special type of African cotton cloth was sometimes used as currency for buying goods and paying court fines. "Mandingo" cloth, a more expensive type of African cotton, sold for as much as 120 shillings a piece as early as the 1680s, when Indian cotton cloth was only fetching 5 to 10 shillings a piece (M. Johnson 1978:263).

19. Needless to say, many of these individuals held important positions in government. J. T. Gibson, for example, was vice president to President James S. Payne in 1868, and R. A. Sherman served as secretary of war in several governments. President Roberts himself resumed his commercial activities upon retiring from the presidency in 1856. He also served as commercial consul for Belgium in Liberia in 1859 (USDS [1859], *Despatches* 2:1,858–64).

20. Trade with the United States fluctuated. Before the American Civil War, American ports received a major portion of Liberian commodities. As Liberia's trade with the United States fell off during the Civil War, much of that trade was diverted to Hamburg and England. It is reported that in 1864, President Warner expressed concern about the increasing amount of Liberian exports that was going to Britain and expressed the desire to increase trade with the United States as a means to ensure greater diversity in Liberia's trading relations (USDS, *Despatches*, Oct. 25, 1864).

21. Brazilian and Cuban sugar sold for about 21 shillings per hundredweight during the mid-1800s. Sugar from British colonies, however, sold within Britain at a higher price of about 49 shillings per hundredweight (see MacInnes 1935:362).

22. The number of recaptives began to grow steadily in the late 1840s. In 1860 alone, more than 4,000 recaptives were rehabilitated in Liberia in a settler population of less than 15,000 (see Shick 1977; Huberich 1947:vol. 1).

23. D'Azevedo's observation supports the view that there was a shortage of indigenous labor for work on coffee plantations. Indigenous communities along the coast, such as the Kru, traditionally found greater incentive in seagoing labor activities. The vigorous coastal trade provided enormous work opportunities for such groups. One may speculate that not only the Gola but many other indigenous communities of similar circumstance and location during this period engaged in coffee production on their own account, leaving settler plantations to be worked largely by recaptive labor.

24. In reviewing the decade of the 1870s, a decade referred to as "a period of upheaving," the *Observer* in its first editorial in 1880 (Jan. 8) wrote: "It was

during this decade now just ended that the Republic experienced the most serious strains on its domestic and foreign relations; when the thoughtful at home were alarmed and our friends abroad were anxious. But the Republic has survived. We have passed through the trying ordeal of the 6th decade and hope that we have left behind the depositions and impeachments of presidents and other high officials. . . . We are now on the threshold of the 7th decade. Hitherto hath the Lord helped us! In six troubles we have held on our way; for the 7th we may take courage and go forward." The remainder of this chapter shows how the "troubles" of the last quarter of the nineteenth century unfolded.

25. In the late 1870s, the *Observer* (April 1880) reported that Jesse Sharpe, a wealthy planter and owner of one of the largest sugar estates in Liberia, was trying to purchase a home in Madeira or Tenerife.

26. Even the illustrious Daniel B. Warner was the landlord of Hendrick Muller and Company of Rotterdam, one of the largest foreign firms operating in Liberia in the second half of the nineteenth century (*Observer*, Jan. 1880).

27. In 1873, for example, 68 percent of total government expenditure represented payment of salaries, domestic debts, and other claims such as the redeeming of government-issued scrip and debentures held mostly by local merchants. It should be mentioned that about $15,800 of government receipts was actually monies used from the much castigated loan of 1871 (see RL, *Annual Report*, Dec. 1873). In spite of the economic prosperity of the 1860s, the government was usually operating on a deficit. In 1864, when a deficit of $14,126.30 was reported, 97 percent of government expenditure was made to pay current salaries and arrearages (ibid., Dec. 1864).

28. In 1880, for instance, H. R. W. Johnson declined an appointment to London to negotiate the northwestern border with the British government because his personal bank account in London had been depleted by previous visits abroad (*Observer*, Feb. 1880).

29. For details of these efforts, see RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1868 (by James S. Payne).

30. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, monthly military salaries were as follows:

Brigadier general	$40
Colonel	38
Lieutenant colonel	35
Major	30
Captain	22
Lieutenant	17
Orderly sergeant	15
Corporal	10
Enlisted man	8

Additionally, each officer or enlisted man who served in a campaign for at least thirty days was entitled to 30 acres of bounty land. Pensions of $150 to $250 were paid annually to each of those wounded in action and to widows and children of those killed in action (RL, "Letter from the Secretary of State," June 8, 1887).

31. See, for example, RL, *Acts*, 1875-1876.

32. While the extension of trade and the formation of political alliances were major objectives of these expeditions, they were also meant to enlighten settler society about the nature of the interior as the society groped for a policy for dealing with the indigenous population. The establishment of an interior administration is discussed in Chapter 8.

33. Roye had previously competed for the presidency in 1867 against the Reverend James Spriggs Payne and Dr. James Moore. None of the candidates won the majority needed to become president as provided for by the constitution. In making a final decision, the House of Representatives voted in favor of Payne, the candidate favored by the mulatto merchant leaders (see USDS, *Despatches*, Jan. 8, 1868).

34. The question had been raised several times before Roye's election that the two-year tenure of the president was too short a period for an administration to achieve its objectives. No decision had been taken to change the term of office. A referendum was held on the question during the elections of 1869, in which Roye was a candidate. It would appear that there was public indifference to the issue largely because support for it was contingent upon the outcome of the elections. When the Roye faction claimed victory, it also claimed that the amendment had been endorsed by the voters. Roye's opponent claimed that the amendment had been rejected. They impeached the Speaker of the House of Representatives and other prominent officials of the legislature in an effort to prevent acceptance of the amendment. President Roye had entered the fray by vetoing a bill that sought to nullify the controversial referendum. Roye further issued a proclamation declaring his term of office to be four years. Opponents of Roye denounced his action and rejected the proclamation. They insisted that national elections be held in May 1871, as stipulated in the unamended constitution (USDS, *Despatches*, Oct. 30, 1871).

35. Roye disclosed to the U.S. resident minister that the Roberts faction among the merchants had claimed to be the only group with the international respectability and contacts to contract a loan abroad. Their opposition to him was therefore intensified because of his success in securing an international loan (ibid., Sept. 13, 1871).

36. The financiers maintained that the stringent conditions of the loan were justified because Liberia had not established an acceptable international credit rating and that all it had to offer as security was future customs receipts (see Brown [1941] 1981).

37. Roye claimed that not having been informed about the conditions of the loan in detail before it was accepted by the commission, he had assumed that the loan had been accepted on the terms originally proposed by his government (see his letter to the U.S. minister in USDS, *Despatches*, Sept. 13, 1871).

38. Roye claimed that Roberts had delivered an inflammatory speech at the dinner held for him by his supporters. He therefore accused Roberts of being responsible for the attack on the Executive Mansion (ibid., Oct. 30, 1871).

39. The resolution also condemned the firing of the cannon into the president's house (ibid., Oct. 30, 1871).

40. In a letter dated October 23, 1871, and addressed to the U.S. resident minister in Liberia, Roye sought the protection of the United States legation by

offering to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. He was politely rebuffed (ibid., Nov. 1, 1871).

41. In a dispute with the opposition, in September 1871, Roye had called up the militia forces of the upriver settlements to protect him in Monrovia. He was forced to rescind those orders after a countermobilization of forces by the Monrovia opposition. In related developments, the postmaster general in Roye's government was assassinated in early September 1871 and a few other people lost their lives in the melee (ibid., Sept. 4, 1871). Roye's vice president had been impeached and was awaiting trial by the legislature in its forthcoming session of December 1871.

42. In a rather sanctimonious "manifesto" issued on October 27, 1871, the so-called Chief Executive Committee of the interim government, which consisted largely of mulatto merchants, justified the deposition of Roye by claiming, among other things, that he had insisted on serving a four-year term despite legislative objections; and had contracted a foreign loan "contrary to the law made and provided, and, without an act of appropriation by the Legislature, with his officers had been receiving the proceeds of that loan." They also charged Roye with a breach of promise when he failed to resign after having given assurances that he would. The manifesto asserted that Roye's real motive for attempting to leave the country was to organize forces to "triumph over the people." In justification of the failure to remove Roye through the constitutional process,the manifesto asserted: "[K]nowing . . . that 'when a people have failed to act in a prompt and energetic manner, they have lost their liberties and not unfrequently their lives and property,' and fearing that it might be fatal to await the assembling of the National Legislature, the People decided to act at once in the matter" (see RL, "Manifesto Issued by the Provisional Government of Liberia").

43. Roye was accused of drawing down and being in possession of $75,000 from the loan. He and his colleagues were held in detention upon failure to post bail, $20,000 for him and $7,500 each for the others (USDS, *Despatches*, Oct. 30, 1871).

44. W. Spencer Anderson, the second loan commissioner, refused to disembark from an English steamer when he arrived in Monrovia later and learned of the deposition of the Roye government and the arrest and detention of his colleague. He also refused to relinquish to the provisional government the sum of $24,000, a drawdown on the loan, in his possession. The captain of the ship prevented government agents from embarking to serve a writ of arrest on Anderson. Anderson returned to Monrovia after a short period (ibid., Nov. 28, 1871).

45. Two other officials of the government were also acquitted. They were the attorney general and Roye's son and former secretary of the treasury, E. F. Roye (ibid., Feb. 14, 1872).

46. Loan Commissioner Johnson was released and rearrested following rumors that President Roye had given him and his wife $20,000 from the loan. Johnson and his wife were convicted and sentenced to six years' imprisonment and fines of $10,000 each (ibid.). None of those sentenced to death by hanging were executed. Roberts is reported to have said that he commuted the death penalties to life imprisonment because he was of the opinion that

"hanging persons for political offenses would not do for civilized nations" (ibid., May 25, 1872).

47. With reference to the nature of the political atmosphere at the time, the United States resident minister in Liberia made the following observations in his dispatch: "Such was the unpopularity of the Ex-president that it was with great difficulty that he procured legal counsel. This latter fact is true as relates to all the prisoners, especially the ex-officers some of whom reached conviction without legal counsel. The ex-attorney general, having been acquitted of treason, undertook the defence of the ex-president, but was called away in the midst of the trial, by a summons from the Senate to be present at the trial of impeachment of himself. Being unable to obtain a stay of proceedings in either court, and having the expressed opinion of the presiding officer of the Senate to the effect that his impeachment would prove equivalent to his expulsion from the legal fraternity, the ex-attorney general decided to remain before the Senate and superintendent his own trial. Thus, the ex-president was left during the remainder of his case without counsel" (ibid., no. 39, Feb. 14, 1872). The conditions and manipulations described by the minister are typical of situations that have occurred repeatedly in Liberian political history, most notably in 1940, 1955, and 1973, when treason charges were brought against certain individuals by the government.

48. The United States minister reported that being dark-skinned, he was suspected of supporting Roye and was often called a "nigger" by Roye's opponents. His suitability to serve as minister being a black man was also called into question (ibid., Mar. 30, 1872).

49. On October 26, 1871, the superintendent of Montserrado County, H. W. Erskine, wrote a letter to the U.S. resident minister informing him that due to President Roye's "compulsory resignation and . . . the fact that without consulting two-thirds of the legal voters" a provisional government had taken over, the people "on the St. Paul River . . . will not endorse these high-handed acts of disorganization." They were "determined to quietly secede . . . and place themselves under the protection of the government of the United States" (ibid., Nov. 1, 1871).

50. Retreating from his former optimism about the prospects of Liberia, the United States resident minister in 1872 wrote the following: "I think it quite certain that the future success of Liberia depends greatly more than on any other thing, upon the amount of immediate, close, and practical attention given by generous philanthropists to the indigenous aborigines whose wholly unperverted manliness has never been by unfavorable contacts degraded. Whose faith in himself and his race is not weakened by dependence. . . . If future prosperity would be secured to this land, its friends at home and abroad should apply their efforts to the improvement of and incorporation into this state of the aborigines rather than to indiscriminate accessions from abroad" (ibid., May 25, 1872).

51. These ships, the 400-ton *Forerunner*, the 900-ton *Faith* and *Hope*, and the 1,000-ton *Charity*, touched mainly at Cape Palmas (Syfert 1977).

52. Woermann, which was already a major creditor to the Liberian government, increased its influence over that government by agreeing to transport legislators to Monrovia free of charge in return for the waiver of the payment of tonnage, light, and anchorage duties (Syfert 1977).

53. According to Syfert (1977), by 1885 Woermann had established branches at five locations in Liberia; Hendrick Muller and Company of Rotterdam, eight; and the Société Belge et Libérienne, three.

54. It should be recalled that Germany had by this time become a major imperial power following the proclamation in 1871 of the Second Reich dominated by Bismarck's Prussia.

55. Most of the Latin American countries were rapidly developing coffee industries. Notable among them were Cuba, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Venezuela, and Colombia. Haiti had been producing coffee since the early eighteenth century (*International Bureau of the American Republics Monthly Bulletin* [1893] 1:25). These sources and British-controlled exports supplied North American markets.

56. The Brazilian coffee industry prospered because it was developed within the slave-based plantation economy that had previously produced sugar. Slavery was not abolished in Brazil until late in the nineteenth century. As of that time, other social arrangements that bordered on servitude, plus the influx of immigrants, provided labor for the coffee industry (Burns 1980:133–41).

57. It was as late as the early 1970s that the area of Vahun in Lofa County was connected with other parts of Liberia by road. That region was integrated into the social and economic life of Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leonean leone was the major currency used there.

58. The price at which palm oil was purchased in Liberia by local merchants remained relatively constant at about 33 to 35 cents per gallon for a considerable time during the nineteenth century; however, the Liverpool selling price experienced sharp decline in the latter part of the century leaving Liberian merchants unable to cope with the new circumstance (see table of prices in note 16 to this chapter).

59. Camwood was also purchased and exported by Liberian merchants at a rising cost while prices on the European market fell sharply in the last decades of the nineteenth century. For example, in 1875, a ton of camwood exported for about $92 (slightly more than £19, at that time). A year later, the price had risen to about $100 (or almost £21) per ton (see also the Liverpool market prices in note 17 to this chapter).

60. A Swiss botanist who visited Liberia in the 1880s wrote to an American correspondent as follows: "The energy shown by the settlers of half a century ago is, I am sorry to say, not to be found among the present generation in general. There are exceptions, of course, but in general the young men of the present time born in Liberia, are too much dandies, who believe that manual labor dishonors, instead of seeing a blessing in any honest work. My conviction is that what is most wanted in Liberia are industrious, enterprising new settlers to bring new blood into the old body; otherwise, I fear a fatal lethargy will take the place of former energy and enterprise" (Buttikofer 1894).

About twenty years later (around 1910), as conditions deteriorated further, the French anthropologist Maurice Delafosse wrote about Liberia as follows: "I have said that the spectacle that offers itself today in the eyes of the visitor is that of a nation in decadence. In fact the beautiful broad streets cut at the beginning still exist, but they are invaded by vegetation and guttered by deep gullies which the rain has cut, and which one does not trouble to fill up; the enclosing

walls about the different properties are half destroyed without anyone seeking to repair them; a mass of houses in ruin take away from the smiling and attractive aspect of the city; even houses in process of construction are in ruins; a superb college building, erected at expense upon the summit of the cape, is abandoned, and one permits it to be invaded by the forest and weathered by the rain; . . . the plantations of sugarcane and ginger are matters of ancient history, and fields that formerly were well cultivated, have returned to the state of virgin forest; coffee plantations have run wild, choked by the rank vegetation of the tropics" (quoted in Reeve 1923:62-63).

Similar observations were made in 1908 by a noted Liberian clergyman: "Compare, you say, the present to the past. Where are the schooners and cutters that were used to be built here in Liberia, when nearly every responsible man had his own? Where are the tons of sugar that used to be shipped to foreign parts by our fathers, and the barrels of molasses, and the tons of camwood? Where are the financial men of the country that looked upon the holding of public office almost beneath them, who had to be begged to fill the offices? Where are those who when they made their farms lived off the farms? Oh, where are the honest, upright and loyal government officials of the 1847? You answer for yourself. Where are the great Liberian merchants of Monrovia, Grand Bassa, Sinoe and Cape Palmas? Gone!" (Ferguson 1908).

61. In Bassa, for example, by the turn of the century, S. Harmon was the only major Liberian merchant. All others had disappeared. Many having died, their offsprings could not continue their businesses (see Johnston 1906; Brown [1941] 1981).

62. Adolph Woermann, the proprietor of A. Woermann and Company, was a member of the German Reich in the late nineteenth century. The local representative of the company in Liberia served as consul to Liberia accredited from the Hanseatic Confederation. At the turn of the century, Herr Dirklage, a manager of Woermann in Hamburg, served as Liberian consul general there (see Foley 1965:123; Brown [1941] 1981:160; Schmokel 1976:27).

63. Buell ([1928] 1965:809) reports that in the early 1900s, the British Bank of West Africa, which was owned and operated by Sir Alfred Jones of Elder Dempster, made a deal with the Deutsche-Liberian Bank: the German bank could have the Liberian market to itself in return for a pledge not to compete with the British bank elsewhere in Africa.

64. J. W. West alone employed at least twenty agents and itinerant traders in its operations, which maintained a branch in every major coastal settlement and town (Schmokel 1976:28).

65. In 1873, government expenditure totaled about $210,000. About half of this amount was spent to pay salaries and contingency allowances and rents for the use of private buildings. The major portion of the remainder was spent on servicing the national debt. Government receipts that year were put at the same amount, $210,000. This, however, included a drawdown from the 1871 loan and other domestic loans in addition to customs duties, head and other taxes, and licenses (see RL, *Annual Report*, Dec. 1873).

66. The salary of senior cabinet officials and the chief justice in 1879, for example, was $1,000 annually; the president earned $2,500. Judges earned $700

annually and legislators, collectors of customs, and subtreasurers earned $500. When compared with the salary of the U.S. resident minister in Liberia ($1,500), for example, or—thirty years later—with the average annual salary of the international receivers ($3,000), Liberian government salaries seem to have been competitive if not slightly high in view of the chronic economic problems of the country. However, it should be noted that salary payments were virtually never made on schedule or in specie (Buell [1928] 1965). In 1878, an irate citizen, D. A. Check, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Observer* commending the president for visiting the "leeward counties" but criticizing the secretary of the treasury for spending $30 a day to charter a schooner for the president's visit when the president could have traveled on a commercial steamer and "saved the government $1,400 spent on transportation for the trip" (see *Observer*, Oct. 1878).

67. There is very little information available that gives a comprehensive picture of wages and the cost of living in Liberia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Putting together a composite of fragmentary data (using RL, *Acts*, 1878-1879; Brown [1941] 1981; and USDS, *Despatches*, 1887), it would seem that by the third quarter of the nineteenth century, annual salaries and wages approximated the following:

Worker	Salary or wages
The president	$ 2,500
Chief justice	1,000
Members of the legislature, cabinet members, and other senior officials	500-700
Senior military officials	300-500
School teachers, other civil servants and professionals	100-300
Skilled workers, coopers, sugar makers	75-200
Unskilled workers	40-60

The cost of living was high in view of the declining economic conditions. Transportation, for example, was rather expensive. One-way passage by steamship from Monrovia to Cape Mount or Grand Bassa cost $5.00; from Monrovia to Greenville, $7.50; and from Monrovia to Cape Palmas, $15.00 (Syfert 1977:200). Brown ([1941] 1981:182) asserts that prices of essential commodities were exorbitant during the early decades of the twentieth century. At certain times of the year, rice, for example, was sold at 10 to 12 cents per pound, and tobacco at 20 to 25 cents per head.

68. The approach to agriculture was lean and halfhearted. In 1875, the legislature passed an act by which awards in cash would be given to farmers who produced large quantities of coffee. For every 1,000 coffee trees up to 5,000 an award of $10 was to be given and thereafter $12 per 1,000. Awards were also announced for producing arrowroot, groundnuts, and ginger (see RL, *Acts*, 1875-1876). There is no evidence that this measure served as a positive incentive.

69. While Roberts's return to the presidency may have been seen as a victory for the mulatto faction of merchants, it was perceived in the wider society as a measure taken by the father of the nation to rescue the society from disintegration. The rule of Roberts's mulatto colleagues came to an end just two years after his death—a clear indication that Roberts's return was a personal triumph.

70. The list of members could have constituted a partial Who's Who of upriver Liberia. It included M. R. and S. D. Richards, R. C. Cooper, J. W. Blackledge, W. D. Coleman, G. W. Walker, I. J. and Joseph Ash, G. W. Gibson, E. T. Holder, Francis King, S. C. Fuller, T. C. Lomax, and others of Montserrado County, and W. E. Harris and S. H. Crayton of Sinoe County (see RL, *Acts*, 1875).

71. Members included Z. B. Roberts, R. S. Jones, F. J. Grante, Josiah Neyle, N. J. A. Maarschalk, William Kelly, Edward Berquine, and W. W. McDonough, all of Greenville, Sinoe (ibid., Feb. 1875).

72. See concession agreement between the Government of Liberia and Joseph Samuel Forbes, George Wells Engineers and Contractors and their partners of London. Other agreements negotiated by Roberts included concessions for the establishment of a bank in Monrovia and a telegraphic service (RL, *Acts*, 1874).

73. See RL, *Acts*, "Act Providing for the Support of the General Government," Jan. 18, 1875, and "Act Providing for the Appointment of Auditors of Public Accounts," Jan. 25, 1875.

74. Johnson broke with Roberts in 1874 and resigned from the position of secretary of state due to "the absence of progressive policy in conduct of the affairs of the government" (USDS, *Despatches*, 4, Feb. 1874).

75. In 1898, after lengthy negotiations, the government accepted responsibility for a sum estimated at $375,000 as principle of the loan of 1871 to be paid at a progressive rate of interest from 3 to 5 percent. The government also agreed to consider the offer of a British expert to assist in reorganizing the customs service. The loan of 1871 was not repaid until 1913, with monies from the 1912 loan (Brown [1941] 1981:144; Buell 1928:797; Foley 1965).

76. In 1904, total debts were put at $800,000 of which about $480,000 was from the 1871 loan. Internal bonded debt was about $135,000 of which $36,000 bore interest at 6 percent and the balance at 3 percent. The floating debt, consisting of bills and drafts largely held by foreign merchants, was put at about $200,000 (see Buell 1928:798).

77. One from White Plains to Careysburg and the other from Millsburg to Bopolu. The company was to charge tolls until £10,000 was recovered (Foley 1965:138).

78. A similar scheme had been implemented between British firms and Imperial China at about this period. Sir Robert Hart was the British collector in control of Imperial Chinese customs (ibid.: 139).

79. Despite their extensive involvement, German firms were never prepared to make capital investment or to offer major loans to effect structural changes in the Liberian economy. They supported elements within the Liberian society who were opposed to efforts to promote capital investment (Schmokel 1976, 1977; Foley 1965).

80. In 1904, the German government supported the claims of the firm of Fischer and Lemeke against the Liberian government for the payment of £5,000

as damages for the destruction of property by some Liberians (USDS [1904], *Despatches*, nos. 42, [illegible] 76). Such claims added to the pressures that were put on the Liberian government by the French and the British and made the situation urgent.

81. Sir Harry Johnston, the head of the Liberia Development Company, had approached a number of financiers including the shipping magnate Sir Alfred Jones of Elder Dempster and proprietor of the British Bank of West Africa. But the persistent instability within Liberia, Liberia's uncertain status with regards to colonial rivalries, and the opportunities available elsewhere in Africa induced demands for official guarantee of a loan by one of the interested colonial powers. Johnston eventually received a positive response from Baron Emil d'Erlanger, head of the London branch of the international bankers of the same name. D'Erlanger operated in Paris and Berlin in addition to London (Foley 1965).

82. The British had been urging the Liberian government for some time to accept British financial advisers and customs inspectors (see Chapter 6).

83. One of the causes of the strains in Anglo-Liberian relations was the Cadell incident. Major McKay Cadell was a former British constable who was appointed commandant of the newly organized Liberian Frontier Force in 1908. Cadell was accused, among other things, of expanding his authority, recruiting Sierra Leoneans into the force, and instigating a mutiny. He was suspected of trying to engineer a situation that would have led to a British takeover. Cadell was forced to resign. This incident further increased Liberian suspicions of British true intentions (Buell [1928] 1965:787–89).

84. Foley maintains that although there was evidence of extortion and misappropriation, the major reason why the company could not accomplish its objectives within the estimated cost was because the estimates were unrealistic. Moreover, Liberians as well as other Europeans were opposed to the operations of the company. Some Liberians went so far as to sabotage the company's road works (1965:167–77).

85. A balance of £31,000 was to be turned over to the Liberian government by the Liberia Development Company. The company was also required to refund £19,000 to the government as monies to be used for the government's internal purposes (Buell [1928] 1965).

86. In 1910, Liberia's total debt was $1,289,570. It could be broken down as follows (see Buell [1928] 1965:801):

Foreign debt	
Loan of 1871 (at 4.5%, principal and unpaid interest)	$ 443,025
Loan of 1906 (at 5%)	464,640
Domestic debt	
Funded at 3% (principal and unpaid interest)	$ 113,207
Funded at 6% (principal and unpaid interest)	30,000
Unfunded, noninterest-bearing	238,698
Total	$1,289,570

87. It consisted of three members. Its chairman was Dr. Roland Post Faulkner of the U.S. Immigration Commission. The other two members were Dr. George Sale, superintendent of schools of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and Mr. Emmet J. Scott, secretary to Booker T. Washington (Brown [1941] 1981:357n).

88. Between 1910 and 1912, domestic borrowing had risen by $268,315, from $381,905 to $605,220 (Buell [1928] 1965:804).

89. The U.S. Senate is said to have rejected a similar proposal for the establishment of a direct receivership over the customs receipts of Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic (Buell [1928] 1965:803).

90. Banks participating in the consortium included, from the United States, J. P. Morgan and Company, Kuhn Loeb and Company, The National City Bank of New York, and the First National Bank of New York; from Britain, Robert Fleming and Company of London; from France, Banque de Paris et des Pays Bas; from Germany, M. M. Warburg and Company; and from Holland, Hope and Company (Azikiwe 1934:117).

91. The salaries and emoluments of the general receiver were put at $5,000 annually. Each of the other three receivers was paid a salary of $2,500 (Buell [1928] 1965:805).

92. Buell argues that although the board was given such authority, it used it only once when, in 1913, it reduced budget estimates (ibid.:806).

93. In one instance, in 1912, German property was destroyed. The German government sent the *Panther* to serve the Liberian government with an ultimatum. A joint German-Liberian commission established to examine claims agreed to make awards up to $5,602 to German merchants for damages incurred. The Liberian government was obliged to pay these claims in 1913 (see Buell [1928] 1965:807).

94. According to Buell (ibid.:809), the Emergency Relief Fund was so named in order to avoid being collected as "assigned revenues," which were under the control of the receivership.

95. Buell (ibid.:813) states that under this act, the president of the United States was authorized to make credits available to U.S. allies to facilitate prosecution of the war.

96. Negotiations continued until the war ended and the authorization granted the president of the United States under the act lapsed. The loan proposal became subject to congressional approval. A major objection in the U.S. Senate was the rate at which bonds held by European firms were to be retired. Buell (ibid.:816) states that in 1921, Liberian bonds were valued at 55 percent of par but, as a result of the loan negotiations and the promise of a new loan, the value rose to 102.5 percent of par in 1922.

97. Buell (ibid.:814) reports that in 1925, government revenues rose by 275 percent over 1918 intake.

98. From interviews with Albert Porte held in 1984-1985.

99. A report to the headquarters in New York prepared by a local representative is said to have fallen into the hands of the Liberian government. The report cautiously advised moderation and quiet compliance in order to establish "a strong foothold in the country, to act as we see best for their [the indigenous population's] own betterment and that of the race at large" (Akpan, quoted in Sundiata 1980:115).

100. Buell ([1928] 1965:733) has reported that during a visit to Sierra Leone in 1925, after having expelled the Garveyites, President King was warmly received by the colonial officials. At a dinner given by Sir Ramsford Slater, governor of Sierra Leone, King was praised for breaking with the Garvey movement: "Lastly, may I say how warmly we in Sierra Leone appreciated your courage and applauded your statemanship in taking such prompt and vigorous steps to show that Liberia would have nothing to do with any movement having as its avowed object the fomenting of racial feeling of hatred and ill-will. Your Excellency, by slamming the door on spurious patriots from across the Atlantic, men who sought to make Liberia a focus for racial animosity in this Continent, deservedly earned the gratitude not only of every West African government but of all who have the true welfare of the African at heart."

Chapter 8

1. The development of Liberia required a strategy with substantial elements of both approaches. Unleashing the human potential of the indigenous and settler communities and channeling it into productive social and economic activities is, like participation in international trade and commerce, an essential element of a wholesome approach that would have been more constructive than the contracting of burdensome loans and the establishment of a political order characterized by a system of indirect rule. This observation, however, reflects more a contemporary analysis of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Liberia than an analysis of how Liberians saw themselves and understood their plight at the time.

2. This chapter has benefited enormously from the works of Akpan (1968, 1973).

3. It should be remembered that the ACS was able to extract support from the U.S. Congress for the Liberian colony because the colony was, ostensibly, to serve as a station for the rehabilitation of recaptives into African society. A U.S. government agent for the settlement of recaptives was assigned to the colony from its inception.

4. In 1850, this provision was revised so that child apprentices were to stay in school for at least three months a year (see Akpan 1968).

5. About a week after he took up his post as U.S. Resident Minister to Liberia, Charles H. J. Taylor assessed the Liberian situation in a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State. Among the factors of Liberian life that gave him great concern was what he called "rampant laziness among the settlers." Taylor, who later became a strong advocate for Liberia in the U.S. State Department, noted with derision that every Liberian settler family had available to it about six to eight indigenous boys "who may even have to carry their children and their children's books on their backs as the children go to school" (see U.S. Department of State, *Despatches*, June 8, 1887).

6. Evidence of the influence of settler culture was discovered deep in the interior in the 1860s by William Spencer Anderson. Anderson met Chief Momolu of Totoquellie, who had earlier been an apprentice in a settler household. Momolu's attempt to retain a "civilized" life-style could be seen in his U.S. southern-style

house, his use of water drawn from a well, and in his partially western attire (American Colonization Society, *African Repository and Colonial Journal* #42). Benjamin Anderson also reported that Momolu hired John B. Jordan, a "civilized" indigene, as a school teacher in Totoquellie (see B. Anderson 1971).

7. For a discussion of the "ward system," see Shick (1977).

8. The neglect of education was a matter of concern to most observers. As early as 1850, Dr. James W. Lugenbeel had noted the need for "a more uniformed, permanent, and effectual system of education" (Lugenbeel 1853:11).

9. Sherman (1989:4) has observed that mission schools generally were boarding schools and, as such, took "the unnatural step of divorcing [children] in their early years from their cultural and physical environment." Thus mission schools also transmitted the bias against indigenous African culture and sought to isolate children from its "corrupting" influence.

10. Writing from Cape Palmas in 1879, a correspondent for the *Observer* called for the formulation of a "systematic plan" for "the assimilation and incorporation of aboriginals into the body politic." The correspondent praised the "loyalty" shown by "civilized Grebo" who "formed a separate line to participate in the parade of the militia" in Harper. He recommended that town lots be given such individuals and full citizenship bestowed upon them (see *Observer*, Oct. 17, 1879).

11. Seton's tenure in the legislature was not a very pleasant experience for him. He encountered considerable prejudices from his colleagues. A rather aggressive individual himself, he was often the center of controversy. He proposed a bill to enfranchise all of the indigenous people who lived within Liberian territory. The bill was never scheduled for debate throughout his tenure in the legislature (ACS, *Letters Received from Liberia* 24; Martin 1969; Dunn and Holsoe 1985).

12. See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 2, "Of the Kingdom of God by Nature."

13. The Booker Washington Institute was designed to approximate the Tuskegee Institute model of vocational and technical training adopted for blacks in the southern United States in the early 1900s at the urging of Booker T. Washington.

14. Leaders of indigenous communities were expected to protect the Liberian trading posts established within their jurisdiction in spite of the controversy that often surrounded their establishment and operation. In 1879, for example, settlers at Robertsport sought the removal of a Vai chief who was unwilling to provide protection to settler traders (see *Observer*, Nov. 13, 1879).

15. The case of Solomon Hill was perceived as the sterling example of the policy's success. Hill, an Arthington farmer, is reported to have raised seven indigenous youths from infancy. When they reached maturity, he purchased for them 1,000 acres of land from the government and gave them enough coffee seedlings to start their own farm (ACS, *Liberia Bulletin* [1890], no. 4).

16. Warner had always advocated that, in addition to providing education to indigenous children who lived in settler communities, the government should undertake an intensive effort to establish schools in the surrounding indigenous communities as well. Perceiving settler traders operating in the interior as a source of conflict and agitation, he had proposed to license them in order to regulate what they did there (see Republic of Liberia, *Annual Message*, Dec. 6, 1866 [Daniel Warner]).

17. Davis argued that "no two peoples can live together in the same country and ignore each other. They must either become one by intermarrying or the one must exterminate or subjugate the other" (see *Observer*, Jan. 8, 1880).

18. Until this time, George Moore, a settler merchant who was also popular among people of the indigenous communities near Monrovia, served as an informal liaison between those communities and the Liberian government. Moore's son, H. June Moore, was officially appointed secretary of the interior upon Moore's death in 1892 (see Jones 1962).

19. Jones (1962) reports that each chief was obliged to provide the district commissioner, free of charge, with 125 hampers of rice and two tins of palm oil each month.

20. "Clan," as used in Liberia's hinterland administration, refers to an administrative jurisdiction and not necessarily to a lineage or kinship unit, although the two are often closely related.

21. As a contributory factor in the emergence of autocracy, this issue is discussed in Chapter 10.

22. The British efforts to exert influence over interior and financial administration as well as over the military were no secret. Demands for British control over these areas of Liberian national life were made during many of the negotiations concerning the settlement of the borders and loans (see Chapter 6). It should also be remembered that a few American citizens also served for a period as district commissioners. This arrangement was required under the U.S. Plan of Assistance as well as the recommendations of the League of Nations (see Chapter 7).

23. Massaquoi served as commissioner-at-large and administered the introduction of the hut tax. In 1917, he was called upon to quell the mutiny of soldiers of the Liberian Frontier Force in Monrovia. He later served as secretary of the interior, secretary of war, and postmaster general. Massaquoi was the first Liberian of indigenous background to be appointed to represent the Liberian government abroad. After the First World War, he was appointed Liberian consul general in Hamburg.

24. In a Newport Day address delivered in Monrovia in 1926, Twe stressed the role of educated indigenes: "They are the symbols of what the future Liberia shall be, and they should understand that their highest interest lay in complete identification with the older civilized population and in loyal cooperation with them to carry the living torch of national unity and progress to their people. One cannot forget the rock from which he was hewn nor the pit from which he was dug, but the polish which he has received is an example of what other chips from the old block may become—different in form, but same in substance" (Grimes Collection, reel 2).

25. Discussion of Monrovia and Kru Coast communities has benefited here from the works of Fraenkel (1964, 1966).

26. Council members represented kinship and lineage groups in much the same way as the council of elders of a Kru *dako* on the Kru Coast represented the various *pantons* of the town.

27. Fraenkel (1964) argues that the Liberian government's exercise of close supervision over indigenous ethnic communities during the second decade of the twentieth century can be traced largely to the rise of Kru resistance on the

Kru Coast. While indigenous resistance may have required the Liberian government's intervention, the increase of presidential capabilities with the establishment of the interior administration meant that the president now had the instruments to control rapidly growing urban settings that had been semiautonomous hitherto.

28. Fraenkel (1966) has documented how arduous it was in the Kru Coast community of Grand Cess to adapt to these impositions.

29. The Fernando Po labor scandal was the most publicized instance of abuses of the system of indirect rule and interior administration. This scandal is discussed in the next chapter, as are other labor recruitment abuses reported by the League of Nations.

30. Some of these were reported to the International Commission of Inquiry and were included in the commission's findings (see League of Nations 1930; Jones 1962).

31. In the 1870s a Vai chief, Mannah Sando, complained bitterly about not being treated with respect or given the opportunity to be heard in the legislature. Sando refused to attend further sessions of the legislature as a referee (see Akpan 1968).

32. In pursuit of this objective, Tubman paid official visits to Jamaica, Haiti, and other places in the West Indies in the early 1950s. As a result of his visits, a large number of emigrants from these societies settled in Liberia in the 1950s and 1960s.

33. The education explosion referred to should be considered against the backdrop of previous government initiatives in education as discussed in this chapter, and not in absolute terms. Even at the peak of educational expansion in the 1970s, about one-third of the children of elementary school age had no schools, one-half of those of high school age could not attend high school because of lack of schools, and only about 20 percent of high school graduates could obtain technical training for employment or go on to college (see RL, *Ministry of Education* 1978).

Chapter 9

1. A vivid example of the disruption that developed in such societies can be seen in the case of Dahomey in the mid-nineteenth century. The transformation from slave economy to commodity production precipitated a civil war that ended in political realignment that radically affected authority relations (see Yoder 1974).

2. For an intriguing account of how slavers operated with the assistance of their domestic slaves, hired hands, and other intermediaries on the Guinea Coast, see Conneau 1928.

3. According to Manning 1983, as this transition occurred in East Africa, for example, Mozambican slaves were exported to Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands (including Mauritius and Réunion) up to the 1870s. After this period, they were sent as contract workers both to the islands and to the mines of South Africa.

4. The company received £6 1*s.* 1*d.* for every worker transported to the Caribbean from Sierra Leone; from St. Helena, the fee was 15*s.* 9*d.* higher (Asiegbu 1969; Schuler 1986).

5. The question of French participation in the Atlantic slave trade was raised in a significant way during the February Revolution of 1848; thereafter, French planters, especially those in the Indian Ocean islands, developed indirect methods of continuing the slave trade by temporarily transporting newly acquired slaves to a third country before settling them on plantations in Réunion and Mauritius (see Shepherd 1980; Benedict 1980).

6. In Gabon, French recruiting agents included recaptives of the settlement of Libreville. In the 1850s, these recaptives themselves held thousands of slaves and indentured laborers whom they also made available in a clandestine manner to Spanish slavers (see Patterson 1975; Schuler 1986).

7. Schuler (1986) reports that French recruiters paid three muskets or three kegs of gun powder for each man recruited and that some African chiefs supplied up to 1,800 workers per year.

8. Evidences of open slave trading by agents of Victor Regis in West and Central Africa have been widely reported (see Duffy 1967; Ross 1965).

9. In 1876, the British intercepted the Portuguese ship *Ovarense*, which had already called at ports in Liberia and Cape Coast. The vessel was seized in Sierra Leone and charged with slave trading. Litigation continued for more than four years in British courts (Mantero 1969).

10. As discussed in Chapter 4, the name Kru is used to identify an assortment of related acephalous groups in southern and southeastern Liberia. Because the Kru were well known as mariners, all persons recruited as contract workers from the region were referred to by European traders as Kru. Thus the reference to the "Kru boy" does not necessarily mean that the person in question was ethnically Kru.

11. Schuler (1986:134) has noted that West Indian planters were so interested in recruiting Kru that in the early 1840s, two representatives of planters of British Guiana and Trinidad were sent to Sierra Leone to encourage Kru emigration. In 1844, R. G. Butts entertained 200 Kru to dinner and recruited 100 for British Guiana. Robert Guppy of Trinidad offered a parcel of land near the capital to each Kru headman who was willing to recruit Kru emigrants for Trinidad. These efforts were not successful because of widespread knowledge of abuses suffered by contract workers at that time.

12. Beriberi was the chief killer. Kuhn (1975:47) has stated that this disease resulted from dietary deficiency in thiamine due largely to change from brown rice, which was part of their indigenous diet, to polished rice.

13. In early 1887, the U.S. Resident Minister to Liberia, on instructions from the U.S. State Department, warned the Liberian government that a recruitment team was en route to Liberia from Panama via New York and Hamburg. At that time, the Liberian government was already negotiating the conditions of labor export to Panama through the German firm of Woermann (see USDS, *Despatches*, U.S. Resident Minister to U.S. Secretary of State, June 14, 1887).

14. The use of the term "emigrants" seems to suggest an uncertainty about the status of workers and the further responsibility of the Liberian government to them once they left Liberia.

15. These patterns also occurred among Gola and other societies; however, they have been well documented and were more pronounced among the Vai.

16. Mary Kingsley reported that the Kru usually wore a tattoo on the forehead to distinguish them from others, and therefore to prevent slavers and European traders who needed their services otherwise from taking them into slavery (see Kingsley 1897).

17. Brooks (1972:63) states that men preferred to go abroad to work a few months into their wife's pregnancy and return home in time for the rites of the young infant.

18. A law promulgated in 1912 had authorized the establishment of the Labor Bureau under the Department of the Interior. The act also created the position of labor agents, whose function was to encourage chiefs to furnish labor for farming and industrial enterprises, to ensure adequate wage allowances and appropriate conditions of work, and to maintain proper records pertaining to recruitment and use of labor. The act also required that headmen and chiefs be paid a fee by employers for recruiting labor (see RL, *Acts of the National Legislature*, 1912). Though enacted in 1912, the law was not fully implemented until Firestone plantations were established in 1926.

19. Woermann and other German trading houses had to leave Liberia as a result of Liberia's association with the Allied Powers during the First World War.

20. Despite the expansive mechanism organized for the recruitment of contract workers and the collection of fees from the export of workers, the earnings of the Liberian government from this activity were not as substantial as one would have expected. Although precise figures are not available for this period, there are indications that between 1915 and 1919, the Liberian government received about $10,000 annually from the export of contract labor (Sundiata 1980:26). It could well be that this amount represented only the tax of $4 imposed on the recruitment of each worker. This would suggest the export of about 2,500 workers annually. It is also likely that other exactions were calculated under other tax categories. For example, customs intake for 1913 was put at $486,395.72 and at $392,000 for 1923–1924 by Chaudhuri (cited in Sundiata 1980:172). It is unclear whether receipts from labor exports are included in these figures. What is certain, however, is that funds derived from labor export were under the exclusive control of the Liberian government. Given the record of fraud and abuse, it is not unfair to assume that more money collected for the government from labor export flowed into private uses than into the government's coffers. The important point to be made is that, both officially and through private channels, earnings from labor export constituted a considerable input into the Liberian economy. At the same time, when one considers the failure to develop human resources for more productive purposes, one can see that the opportunity cost was extremely high.

21. According to Sundiata, there were more than 2 million hectares of cultivable land in Fernando Po in 1927. Forty thousand workers were required to work the portion that was already prepared for cultivation. Rio Muni could not supply that amount of labor because of local labor demands from expanding plantations. Sundiata also reports that Rio Muni was experiencing a declining birth rate because of the prolonged absence of men from their families (1980:27).

22. It would seem that the Liberian government's refusal to negotiate new labor agreements with the Spanish was also related to the establishment of new rubber plantations in Liberia by Firestone. The coming of Firestone in 1926

increased the demand and heightened the competition for labor. The introduction of Firestone will be discussed in Chapter 10. The Liberian government insisted on a preferential tariff for Liberian coffee exports to Spain as one of the conditions for the renewal of the agreements (League of Nations 1930).

23. The International Commission of Inquiry of the League of Nations discovered that from 1924 to 1928, operating through district commissioners and the local commander of the Frontier Force in Sinoe, Ross shipped as many as 800 men abroad. Similarly, Vice President Yancy's recruiting company, with the use of the Frontier Force and the interior administrative machinery, raided villages and towns from the early 1920s onward and exported or deployed men on his farm (League of Nations 1930:16).

24. See the account of reports made to the attorney general by Postmaster General Reginal A. Sherman in 1927, the testimony of President King at a special session of the International Commission, and the report of a letter from President King to the district commissioner in Cape Palmas (League of Nations 1930:16-18,29).

25. It was not unusual for the food items brought by workers to be appropriated by the recruiting agents and sold in their private shops—sometimes to the same workers from whom it was taken (see League of Nations 1930:36).

26. Most accounts of Liberia's contract labor problem that have appeared in the history books have given the impression that only a few people who were directly connected with the government benefited from the export of labor. The full scope of the economic infrastructure developed around the export of labor is usually ignored.

27. Sundiata (1980:40-50) has argued that the league's investigations were recommended by the United States government, which was prompted by Firestone. Although a party to the abuses, Firestone also suffered persistent labor shortages because of the increased export of labor to Fernando Po from 1928 onward. Sundiata further argues that officials at Firestone's Akron headquarters and at the U.S. State Department were aware of Professor Raymond Leslie Buell's continuing criticism of the company's involvement in Liberia and feared adverse publicity if a preemptive move were not taken. Buell ([1928] 1965) had undertaken a monumental study of labor and indigenous societies in Africa. Liberia was one of the societies he studied.

The International Commission of Inquiry, as the league's investigating team was called, consisted of three members: Dr. Cuthbert Christy, the chairman, was a British medical doctor who had worked in Africa before; Dr. Charles Johnson, a black American who was professor of sociology at Fisk University; and the Honorable Arthur Barclay, former president of Liberia. The commission conducted hearings at many places in Liberia and submitted a report in September 1930.

28. Regarding failure to fully compensate returning workers, one of the cases documented by the commission concerned a man whose pay slip showed that he was entitled to compensation of $700.00 upon his return from Fernando Po; he only received $26.04. Another man's compensation was so meager that it could only cover the cost of 20 heads of tobacco and a few yards of cloth. The commission heard from workers who had been recruited ostensibly for work at the port of Monrovia or Accra Coast but were sent to Fernando Po or Libreville. Some

men roamed the streets of Monrovia upon their return searching in vain for those who had hired them (League of Nations 1930).

29. The Wedabo Beach incident involved a long-standing land dispute between the Wedabo people and the people of Poo River, two communities on the Kru-Grebo Coast. A new round of skirmishes broke out between the two communities in 1923 and three men from Poo River were killed. Vice President Yancy, then superintendent of Maryland county, instituted investigations and extracted fines and lawyers' fees in excess of £400 from Chief Jeh of Wedabo. The people of Poo River were unhappy with the settlement. There is no evidence that they received any compensation for damages. The chief of Poo River appealed to the president for redress. The president ordered Jeh to Monrovia, fined him £300, and ordered him detained in Monrovia until the perpetrators of the killing were turned over to Superintendent Yancy. Jeh sent a subchief who had accompanied him back to Wedabo to inform the people and raise the money to pay the fine. While Jeh was being held in Monrovia, Superintendent Yancy boarded the Spanish vessel *Montserrat* with a recruiting party that included soldiers of the Frontier Force, traveled to Wedabo Beach, and ordered the capture of men for export to Fernando Po. Three hundred and sixteen men and boys were taken from Wedabo. The president released Jeh and sent him back to Wedabo after the raid (see League of Nations 1930:19–22).

30. In 1923 and 1925, the president of Liberia held conferences with several chiefs in Suehn and Bopolu and emphasized the government's objection to practices of domestic slavery. The president also listened to grievances concerning abuses in labor recruitment and other administrative malpractices (see Buell 1928).

31. For example, there was the case of Varnai Quai, headman from Baimeh, who, in 1928, was fined £17 5*s*. for road delinquencies and failure to provide porters. Quai had to pawn his two sons for a total of £15. Up to the time of his testimony in April 1930, his children had not been redeemed. There was also Johnny Carr, town chief of Bengonow, fined £17 12*s*. 6*d*. for road delinquencies. He pawned his son and coffee farm to raise the money. Chief Yarkpasuo of Bopolu was fined £317 for tax delinquencies. Pawning many youngsters was one of the several measures taken to raise the money. These are few of the examples brought out in the testimony before the commission (League of Nations 1930:15–16).

32. Other measures recommended by the commission included the formulation of an "open door" economic policy, expansion of educational facilities, encouragement of "American immigrants," and the breaking down of the "barriers between civilized and uncivilized" (League of Nations 1930:84–89).

33. The commission's report indicates that cabinet officials such as R. A. Sherman and some influential Liberians of indigenous background such as former vice president H. Too Wesley, Didho Twe, Nete Sie Brownell, and Professor Francis W. M. Morais had been vocal in their opposition to the practice of exporting labor (see, for example, League of Nations 1930:16–41).

34. Postmaster Ross, the second most senior official directly associated with the export of labor, had died before the league's investigation began.

35. The Juah Nimley uprising on the Kru Coast is the most widely known of these secessionist conflicts. At least nine chiefs were hanged and a number of people were held in military prisons for many years.

Chapter 10

1. The ACS's strict adherence to these instructions was first demonstrated in 1836 when Anson G. Phelps, a white New Yorker, proposed to purchase or lease a tract of land for ninety-nine years to grow sugarcane and operate a sugar mill. The ACS refused to approve the proposal. According to Huberich (1947, 2:1,090), the ACS feared replication of the case in Sierra Leone, where ceding land to white Britons had resulted in the creation of a powerful class of absentee landlords.

2. A curious and interesting account of such individuals can be found scattered through the pages of Karnga's dubious *History of Liberia* (1926).

3. It should also be mentioned that Liberian law provides for the lease of public land to foreign governments for the establishment of diplomatic and related missions.

4. The Stevenson Plan was conceived by a parliamentary committee headed by Sir James Stevenson. It proposed the stabilization of plantation rubber production at levels of probable consumption in 1922. The committee also recommended, among other things, the application of a gradual scale of export duties to vary with the percentage of standard production. As exports exceeded the recommended standard production, the duty imposed was to become more prohibitive (see Buell [1928] 1965:818).

5. The U.S. Congress appropriated $500,000 for investigation of such sources (Sundiata 1980:34).

6. For details of the agreement, see RL, *Acts*, "The Firestone Agreement," Nov. 1926.

7. Other provisions of the agreement required that, after six years, Firestone pay a 1 percent tax on the value of its exports, the value to be calculated at prevailing New York prices; that all products and machinery imported by Firestone be tax exempt; that Firestone pay Emergency Relief Fund tax and vehicle tax, and exercise exclusive rights to construct roads, railways, and waterways for its private use; and that the international communications lines would also be used by the government. It was agreed that when necessary, disputes would be arbitrated by a panel of three persons: one to be chosen by the president of Liberia, a second to be chosen by the Liberian Supreme Court, and a third by Firestone (ibid.).

8. Buell reports that having underestimated the cost of constructing a harbor, Firestone was not prepared to undertake such a substantial capital investment—especially when the Liberian government's obligation in the project was only $300,000 (1928:828–29).

9. After considerable renegotiation, clause K appeared as clause J of article IV of the act.

10. The *Liberian Star* had noted the advantages of Firestone to Liberia as follows: (1) increase of public revenues through receipts from rent, commissions, and duties; (2) construction of ports and harbors and the development of the interior; (3) employment of thousands of Liberians; and (4) the availability of technical assistance in industry and agriculture—especially in rubber—to Liberians (cited in Buell [1928] 1965:829–30).

11. Sundiata (1980:35) reports that Harvey Firestone, the proprietor of Firestone plantations in Liberia, nursed grandiose plans of putting one million acres of land under cultivation and employing as many as 350,000 workers. Obviously, Firestone's estimate of the population of Liberia was exaggerated.

12. The daily wage paid by Firestone in 1928 was one shilling. Imported rice was also sold to workers at the subsidized price of one shilling for 5 pints, which was below market rates. The availability of rice at a price below market rates severely undermined the production of rice in Liberia and created a new taste for imported rice that has since become a drain on the country's foreign currency reserves.

13. It would appear that Firestone, being fully aware that its long-term interest would be better served by an open and competitive labor market, initially resisted the use of government-controlled recruitment procedures. Firestone's resistance was not sustained, however (see Buell [1928] 1965:831–32; League of Nations 1930:77–79).

14. The League of Nations report (1930:79) recounts an incident in which, in 1929, the district commissioner of district number four informed Firestone officials of the availability of 300 persons who could be recruited for Firestone provided a private understanding was reached and an acceptable bribe paid; otherwise, the men would be made available to recruiters to be shipped to Fernando Po. In 1930, Firestone employed about 10,300 workers at its two plantations at Harbel and Cavalla (ibid.:83). It has since maintained about 11,000 unskilled workers at Harbel and a similar number at Cavalla (Clower et al. 1966:161).

15. In 1961, Firestone estimated its annual profits from the plantations at $13 million. This amount constituted a gross return of close to 50 percent on its initial investment of about $28 million (Clower et al. 1966). Firestone relinquished rights to its Cavalla plantation in southeastern Liberia to the Liberian government in the early 1980s. In 1988, Firestone sold its Harbel plantation to a Japanese rubber and tire company and withdrew from Liberia.

16. Some of the other rubber concessions granted by the Liberian government have led to the establishment of the B. F. Goodrich (now the Guthrie) Rubber Company in 1954, the Liberian Agricultural Company in 1959, and the Salala Rubber Corporation also in 1959.

17. Having constrained the Liberian government to accept the $5 million loan and, with it, continuation of the oversight of U.S. financial receivers, Firestone established the Bank of Monrovia. In the 1950s, the bank became a branch of Citibank of New York which had purchased it. For about twenty-five years, the Bank of Monrovia was the equivalent of Liberia's central bank. The Firestone loan was finally retired in the early 1950s.

18. As already stated, it was only in the 1970s that the Firestone Agreement was modified to provide for education beyond the elementary level. Moreover, given the low wage structure of agricultural workers and other social factors, plantation employment could become a vicious cycle of poverty and illiteracy in which offspring with four to six years of schooling became rubber tappers themselves, lapsed into illiteracy, and produced offspring who in turn became rubber tappers. There are cases of families that are in their third generation of rubber tappers.

19. Since the establishment of the Department of the Interior and the organization of hinterland administration, every handbook of regulations has assigned to district commissioners and paramount chiefs the duty of ensuring an adequate supply of labor for public works "and other purposes."

20. Using Firestone as an example, Clower and his associates write: "Both [Firestone] plantations have long since built modern power, water, communications, and transportation systems, and are largely self-sufficient in maintenance and repair facilities. There is a sawmill at the Harbel plantation which produced about 720,000 board feet of lumber in the year ending 1961 (all used to meet the company's own needs). Firestone also produces its own building and construction materials, operates its own retail stores, and provides its own welfare and recreational services. Virtually all materials and supplies needed for the operation of the plantations are imported (duty-free) by the company. Most foods and other supplies purchased by Firestone's employees are obtained through USTC [the company's store]. Labor is the only domestically purchased input of significance" (1966:156–57).

21. Except for the numerous enclave villages and towns along the route, rubber plantations border the entire length of the approximately 200-mile northern trunk highway from the outskirts of greater Monrovia to Sanniquelli, near the Guinean border; more than 60 miles of the eastern trunk highway from Ganta through Tappita to Zwedru; and about 40 percent of the major northwesterly highway from Gbarnga to Voinjama (see Schulze 1973). Riddell (1970) has estimated that among the Gbannah Mano, some villages lost about 75 percent of their land with the intrusion of rubber and other concessions.

22. Every major rubber concession provides rations of largely imported rice as part of wages. Thus village production of rice is predominantly for village consumption. Although there is very little surplus, there is, on balance, self-sufficiency in food production in rural Liberia (see Kamara 1987).

23. Johnnetta Cole (1967) has correctly shown that, far from being replaced by them, traditional agriculture (that is, food production) remains the foundation upon which other forms of production, including cash crop production and labor migration, have been organized.

24. In his excellent study of labor migration among the Sabo of southeastern Liberia, McEvoy (1971) has shown how the long-standing involvement of interior peoples of southeastern Liberia in labor migration abroad was basically replaced as of the 1930s by the introduction of Firestone's Cavalla plantation. McEvoy also shows how labor migration abroad and later to Firestone was incorporated into the system of male age-grade training and marriage preparation, and how it induced adaptations in the household as a unit of production and influenced considerations pertaining to the length of the fallow cycle and to cash cropping (mainly cocoa). McEvoy shows how the continuing linkages between villagers who migrate to the concession areas and their home communities are maintained so that participation in wage employment becomes an essential feature in adaptation to village life. The worker, according to McEvoy, "moves from the village sphere where kinship is an important principle of organization to the plantation sphere to which traditional kinship principles have been extended and adapted. By adapting to plantation wage-work various kinship-based social usages which developed

in connection with their pre-Firestone down coast labor migration, the Sabo and others have extended, in a very real sense, traditional tribal kinship organization into the Cavalla plantation, and to some extent into such other employment centers as Monrovia as well" (1971:417–18).

25. Johnnetta Cole (1967) has argued that there are four conditions that tend to reduce seasonal mobility of workers in wage-earning employment. They include: the availability of farmland near or on the job site; the adequacy of wages and wage supplements to support the worker and his family without supplements from traditional occupations; the availability of other male relatives in the household in the home village to perform the tasks of clearing; and the extent to which the worker comes from a culture that is committed to farming.

26. Although plantation concessions were introduced in Liberia in 1926, it was only in the late 1970s that the government granted agricultural workers the rights to organize, engage in collective bargaining, and go on strike.

27. According to Clower and his associates (1966), iron ore mining in Liberia began with the discovery of large deposits of iron ore at Bomi Hills when three American geologists led a team that conducted a geological survey of Liberia at the request of the Liberian government.

28. Even during the construction period of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when unskilled labor was needed in considerable quantities, about 25 percent of the labor force of the mining concessions consisted of skilled labor. This compares with less than 15 percent in the well-established rubber concessions during the same period (Clower et al., 1966).

29. Liberia has had a compulsory education law since 1912 but, despite legal provisions, never had the capability to provide classrooms for most of its young people.

30. See the comments of Karl-Heinz Hassellman transcribed by Jane Martin in "Transcript of Discussion among Group Participants Following the Trial of B. J. K. Anderson, May 1974," unpublished manuscript.

31. From the movement's inception, trade unions have been headed by such individuals as the social secretary to the president, the sons of presidents, and an ambassador-at-large.

Chapter 11

1. This chapter has benefited enormously from the work of Liebenow (1969, 1987).

2. The exceptions are the politically turbulent period from 1864 to 1878, when Warner, Payne, Roye, and Roberts—all of Montserrado—served as president, and the brief tenure of Russell, who completed the unexpired term of Gardiner in 1883.

3. The policy of inclusion should be understood to apply to the members and the communities of the ruling elite.

4. In the case of Roberts, pressure from the rapidly growing black consciousness faction of the ruling stratum forced him from the presidency in 1855. He had faced opposition from this group in 1852 when a ticket of Benedict and Roye was proposed to replace him and Benson, his vice president. Johnson, on the

other hand, encountered stiff opposition to his quest for a fourth term in 1889 from what was called the "antiadministration" faction of the True Whig party. This faction nominated A. D. Williams, Johnson's brother-in-law, to oppose him. Although Johnson did manipulate the nomination process and secure reelection, he was quite aware that his fourth term was his last. He retired from the presidency in 1892 and served as postmaster general in a succeeding government (see *Liberian Herald*, various issues, 1853; USDS, *Despatches*, Apr. 22, 1889).

5. Even the influential President Roberts had problems defending his cabinet appointments in 1874, when upon his reelection, the Senate insisted on submission of the complete list of cabinet officials, including those reappointed from his 1872 cabinet, for its "advice and consent." Roberts's initial refusal to resubmit names previously confirmed in 1872 precipitated a vigorous exchange between himself and the legislature. A compromise was eventually arrived at (see RL, "Senate Communication to the President," Feb. 9, 1874; and the "Reply of the President to the Senate," of the following day). As late as the administration of President Arthur Barclay, it was apparent to the British that the legislature's approval of the "reform package" proposed by Britain was not a foregone conclusion, and that it was important that President Barclay win legislative support for the package (see Foley 1965).

6. Other structures that served to check the authority of the president included the church and the fraternal orders (see Chapter 4).

7. The Constitution of Liberia (as amended through May 1955, art. 5, sec. 5) specified that upon the failure of any candidate to obtain a majority of the votes, the legislature would select the president from among the three candidates with the largest number of votes.

8. The provision of pensions and annuities to indigent individuals in the counties was usually the result of recommendations from specific legislators. Such decisions also required the enactment of specific bills by the legislature.

9. In 1848, Roberts appointed his defeated opponent Samuel Benedict as chief justice. In 1865, as conflict between the mulatto and darker-skinned merchants heightened, President Warner appointed E. J. Roye, a major protagonist in the conflict, chief justice. Joseph J. Dossen and F. E. R. Johnson were among the prominent politicians appointed chief justice as a result of their failure to attain the presidency.

10. Samuel Benedict, the first presidential candidate of the darker-skinned protectionists who organized themselves as the antiadministration Whig party as against the True Liberian party of Roberts, was appointed chief justice by Roberts. Stephen Benson, the second candidate of the Anti-Administration faction, was Roberts's last vice president, and E. J. Roye, who later became the first presidential candidate of the reorganized Whig party, the True Whig party, had also served as chief justice in a government dominated by the Roberts faction.

11. Present at the "consultation and advisory meeting of the leading citizens" were "His Excellency W. D. Coleman, Chief Justice Z. B. Roberts, the Honorables G. W. Gibson, R. H. Jackson, A. B. King, Arthur Barclay, J. B. Dennis, T. W. Haynes, D. F. Ware, J. D. Summerville, F. O. Thorne, C. T. O. King, Perry Green, E. L. Parker, J. B. Williams, W. T. Hagan, H. J. Moore, Thomas Roberts, A. H. Diehl, A. J. Butler, W. E. Johnson, and Messrs. W. F. Moore, R. H. Hill,

A. B. Studdlefield, W. H. Adams, J. A. Railey, W. E. Dennis, William Lucas, W. T. Carter, Isaac Moort, E. M. Cummings, P. J. George, G. W. Parker, Jr., J. E. Jones, R. H. Kennedy and others." The Honorable T. W. Howard, chairman of the True Whig party and secretary of the Treasury, presided over the meeting. His son, Daniel E. Howard, who was also secretary of the True Whig party and superintendent of Montserrado County, served as secretary of the meeting. For an account of the meeting, see *Liberia*, Feb. 1902.

12. In 1927, King claimed to have won the elections by 229,527 votes from an electorate of fewer than 15,000 voters. These results were recorded in the 1981 *Guinness Book of World Records* as the most severely rigged elections up to that time.

13. Subsequent recommendations were made in 1931 by the Brunot Commission and in 1932 by the McKenzie Commission, both sponsored by the League of Nations. The Brunot Commission recommended, among other things, the appointment of a foreign legal adviser as head of the Liberian judiciary, the temporary suspension of the jury system of litigation, the appointment of foreign administrators as provincial commissioners in interior administration, and the assignment of foreign military advisers and medical officers for service in Liberia (see Buell 1932). The McKenzie Commission recommended the amalgamation of the jurisdictions of paramount chieftaincies into large jurisdictions. The commission proposed that wide scope of authority should be given paramount chiefs and that they should be held personally accountable for the maintenance of order. The McKenzie Commission recommended the use of "strong measures" to stem unrest on the Kru Coast and elsewhere in the hinterland (see RL, *Annual Message*, Oct. 24, 1932 [E. J. Barclay]).

14. See RL [1932], "Message to the Extraordinary Session of the Legislature"; RL, *Annual Message*, Dec. 1933; both by E. J. Barclay.

15. According to Simpson (1961), the Firestone loan was "an albatross around Liberia's neck"; it became "increasingly an instrument of control as Liberia's economic condition worsened with the depression." By 1932, expenditure connected with the servicing of the loan consumed over 60 percent of total government revenues. Simpson argues that after Firestone, despite League of Nations pressure to the contrary, failed to agree to government recommendations for modification of the loan conditions, the government had virtually no alternative but to implement its package of economic measures. These, he points out, prescribed not only a moratorium on the servicing of the loan but also cuts in domestic expenditure, including the reduction of public sector salaries (ibid.:166–80).

16. Barclay's perception of cooperative societies involved a provision for close supervision and regulation by the government through the office of the registrar of cooperations (see Brown [1941] 1981).

17. In one such effort in 1936, he held a two-day conference with about 400 chiefs and "prominent men of the interior." Present at the conference were the chief justice, members of the cabinet, superintendents of the counties, and district commissioners. Speaking to the chiefs, Barclay stressed the need for unity and hard work in pursuit of a common destiny. He promised to appoint "qualified men with a human touch and human understanding" as officials of interior administration (see *Liberian Patriot*, Jan. 23, 1936).

18. There may have been pockets of muted dissatisfaction, but there was no indication of an emerging force capable of denying President Barclay an extension of his presidency. In 1940, three persons were convicted of plotting to assassinate Barclay. All three were of the indigenous intelligentsia. According to Wreh (1976:62), the anger of this group was directed more at the entire settler oligarchy than at Barclay personally.

19. Simpson's account of the process of selecting a new president in 1943 is revealing of the role played by the influential members of the party or "leading citizens" and the president. According to Simpson, himself a contender for the presidency in 1943, "backstage" discussions about a successor to President Barclay began within small informal groups within the party. Through these discussions, the names of Tubman and Simpson emerged as the popular choices of the leading citizens and partisans. The two men jostled for support among backers of this quality while reaching a "gentlemen's agreement" not to prolong the in-house campaign as soon as it became apparent that a single choice was emerging. Tubman seems to have mobilized substantial support from the coastal counties. The argument in his favor was that it was time for the next president to be a coastal person. Not since President Cheeseman, who died in office in 1896, had a person from outside Montserrado County become president. Sensing that the support for Tubman was unbeatable, Simpson conceded to Tubman. As Simpson put it, "we [Tubman and Simpson] then went to see President Barclay who, on hearing of our decision, said he was happy we had come to an agreement and that he felt it would be a good thing at this time to have a president from the leeward county" (Simpson 1961:237).

More cynical reasons have been given for Barclay's selection of Tubman as his successor. One is that Barclay selected Tubman, a relative outsider, because the latter, who had frequently heaped sycophantic praises on Barclay, seemed manipulable. Barclay had hoped not only to manipulate Tubman but also to return to the presidency after Tubman's term of office expired (see Lowenkopf 1976). Whatever the details, it would appear that the presidential selection process in 1943 was similar to the presidential nomination process of the Institutional Revolutionary party (PRI) of Mexico, a process in which the final decision is made by the outgoing president (see K. Johnson 1984).

20. Of the administration of President King, Charles S. Johnson (1987:161) has written: "Two great mistakes marked his administration. One of these was his unconquerable love of power, which had to be maintained by an increasingly precarious structure of gossips, espionage, and crude reprisals for disloyalty. The other tragic error was political entanglement with men more brazen in their unscrupulousness and less clever in their devices."

21. This is why, in the tradition of the Monrovia establishment, Simpson was the natural heir to the presidency. He had served as speaker of the House of Representatives, as secretary of state, and as general secretary of the True Whig party.

22. Tubman's freewheeling, man-about-town style fitted in with King's "one of the boys" brand of network. According to Charles S. Johnson (1987), the accession of Tubman to the presidency marked a return to crony politics.

23. Among those brought into higher echelon public service by Tubman were McKinley DeShield, a Monrovia shoe repair artisan and apprentice lawyer who

became general secretary of the True Whig party, replacing Simpson (who was Tubman's vice president until 1951); Richard Henries, a regional supervisor of schools who became speaker of the House of Representatives; and William Tolbert, who became Tubman's vice president in 1951 after serving as disbursing officer and a member of the House of Representatives.

24. The most significant was the appointment of Momolu Dukuly, a Mandingo, to the position of secretary of state in 1954. Dukuly served as acting secretary of state for more than a year before he was confirmed in the position in his own right. He was replaced in 1960.

25. The Women's Political and Social Movement, organized by Tubman's supporters, became one of the most influential support groups of Tubman's presidency.

26. Very little is known about the Reformation party before its cooptation by Didwho Twe, Nete-Sie Brownell, Francis Morais, and others of the indigenous intelligentsia.

27. Twe had previously fled the country when, in the early 1930s, he was pursued by President Barclay for his opposition to the pacification campaign that followed the contract labor scandal.

28. The chairman of the Independent True Whig party, Samuel D. Coleman, son of former president William D. Coleman, and his son John Coleman were killed in a security manhunt. Several other leaders of the party were sentenced to long prison terms under conditions of hard labor and torture.

29. In 1980, the Progressive Alliance of Liberia, an amorphous group of young people, succeeded in registering the Progressive Peoples' Party (PPP). Shortly after its registration, the party was banned and its leaders arrested and charged with treason. They were released from prison as a result of the military takeover in April 1980.

30. Three of the most celebrated sedition and treason trials of the 1960s were the case of E. K. Sherman and a group of students in 1961, the D. Y. Thompson alleged plot of 1963, and the Henry B. Fahnbulleh alleged plot of 1968. Each of these trials ended in conviction of the accused, sentencing to long prison terms with hard labor, and torture.

31. Hysteria about being overthrown had so thoroughly overtaken the Tubman regime by the mid-1960s that Tubman's eldest son, a "liberal-minded" government official at the time, is reported to have written to his father, who was vacationing in Switzerland, disclosing the uncovering of a plot led by the vice president (father-in-law of the younger Tubman) and two of his brothers (see Dunn and Tarr 1988). Vice President Tolbert, who became president upon the death of Tubman, was often known to have recounted his bitter experiences at the hands of Tubman's secret police. Wreh (1976) has reported that even within Liberia's expanding Lebanese community, which controlled retail trade, Tubman maintained Lebanese informants who reported the "antiadministration views" of other Lebanese. Wreh also discloses that on one occasion, an entire class in economics at the University of Liberia was taken to the executive mansion for questioning regarding the ideological orientation of the lectures they received. On another occasion, a bathroom door at the university was unhinged and taken away by security forces so that the anti-Tubman graffiti on it could be analyzed and culprits apprehended.

32. As one of only two independent African countries and despite its enormous problems with the League of Nations, Liberia's voice was raised in the league against Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and South African repression in southern Africa. A founding member of the United Nations, Liberia continued to oppose South African control over Namibia, and to advocate decolonization and independence for colonial Africa. In the 1950s, Liberia was an active participant in several Pan-African solidarity conferences. In 1959, for example, it hosted the Sanniquelli Conference of Ghana, Guinea, and Liberia, which searched for a strategy for speeding up the process of decolonization and enhancing cooperation among African countries. In 1961, the Monrovia Conference, attended by about twenty African heads of state and government, was one of the crucial meetings leading to the formation of the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1963 (see Azikiwe 1934; Liebenow 1969; Dunn 1979; Fahnbulleh 1985).

33. See Dunn and Tarr (1988) for an example of Tubman's use of graft and patronage to secure the support of chiefs.

34. Lowenkopf (1976:131) has reported that public sector employment grew at an annual rate of 10 percent in the early 1960s.

35. In 1925, for example, total revenue intake was $943,000. About 50 percent of this amount accrued from customs and 33 percent largely from hut taxes (Buell 1928:724). Having reached the million-dollar mark in the late 1920s, government revenue intake fell sharply thereafter as a result of the world depression. By 1934, government revenue intake was less than half the 1925 collection. Still, customs receipts accounted for about 43 percent and hut taxes for about 38 percent of government revenue intake (Brown [1941] 1981:184–85). Government revenues rose to more than $10 million annually in the early 1950s with corporate income payments from Firestone accounting for about 30 percent of the intake (Clower et al. 1966:134).

36. As a result of a tremendous increase in direct payments to the government by Firestone, government revenues shot up from $3.8 million in 1950 to $12.8 million in 1951 (van der Kraaij 1983, 1:62).

37. By 1956, Firestone and LMC together accounted for 50 percent of total government revenues (Clower et al. 1966:134). As was the case with the establishment of Firestone, the introduction of LMC was not universally popular among Liberians; indeed, many of them perceived the 1946 agreement with LMC as a giveaway. Tubman's "friendship" with a U.S. Army officer who, after a tour as part of the U.S.-sponsored geological survey team, became the principal proprietor of the Liberian Mining Company, was said to have influenced the "selling" of the ore for a pittance (see Porte 1965).

38. Following Lowenkopf (1976), Dunn and Tarr (1988) have divided Tubman's twenty-seven-year rule into three periods: the period of political consolidation (1944–1955); the period of modernization (1956–1966); and the period of "retrenchment" (1967 to his death in 1971). If such periodization was meant to suggest emphasis on changing priorities, it is difficult to discern a period—especially from 1955 onward—when repression and the maintenance of personal control were not major priorities.

39. Whether at the executive mansion or elsewhere, Tubman's attendants always included a valet who carried a briefcase of money from which, on Tubman's instructions, specified sums would be handed out.

40. The failure of the Open Door policy to stimulate local entrepreneurship has been noted by several sources, including international agencies (see, for example, International Labor Organization 1972).

41. In an insightful analysis of the food question in Liberia, Kamara (1987:32) has shown that the indiscriminate granting of "concessional import rights" to foreign firms for the importation of food under the Open Door policy was, in fact, nothing more than government subsidization of imported rice for these firms. The net effect of such subsidization was to drive down the price of locally produced rice, thus destroying the incentives to farmers—hence the stagnation of local production of rice, Liberia's staple crop.

42. Liebenow has also noted that Tubman's practice of scrutinizing every voucher of more than $250 further strengthened his hand as president (1969:150).

43. When forced to demonstrate their loyalty to Tubman in 1968, students of the University of Liberia, with a tinge of sarcasm, chanted praises indicating that they owed their future, education, and even their births to Tubman.

44. For a provocative discussion of the evolution of the national celebrations of Tubman's birthday, see Porte 1965.

45. In the final years of Tubman's presidency, the practice of celebrating Mrs. Tubman's birthday as a significant national occasion had also been introduced (see Wreh 1976).

46. As birthday gifts to Tubman, presidential rest lodges were built in many counties. The Tubman Military Academy was one of his last birthday gifts.

47. In a rather superficial analysis, Lowenkopf (1976) tries to portray the Tubman era as a period of "political modernization" based upon the levels of education, family connections, and regional representation in the cabinet and the legislature, and the inclusive character of the security forces, the bureaucracy, and other national agencies. But when his recounting of the facts leads to an admission of enduring regulation and repression, the analysis flounders and the conclusions become vague and pointless. When his analysis is examined in the light of further developments such as the military takeover and the instant demise of the social and political institutions that, according to Lowenkopf, were being "institutionalized" under Tubman, the poverty of his analysis becomes apparent.

48. See note 30, above.

49. By 1978, for example, unemployment had risen to 23 percent nationally and to 39 percent in Monrovia. Prices that rose at an annual rate of 6 percent in 1977 reached a rate of 14 percent in 1979. Food prices in particular rose by 15 percent in 1979. The Ministry of Planning reported in 1974 that 50 percent of total household income was going to 5 percent of Liberia's families (see RL, *Annual Reports*, 1971–1979; RL, *Economic Surveys* 971–1979; RL, *Monrovia Price Index and Household Survey*, 1974).

50. It would appear that Tolbert's administrative approach was similar to that of Edwin Barclay; his personal predispositions, however, became a serious intervening factor. The contradictions to which these personal qualities contributed will be discussed below.

51. The social welfare scheme organized by Tolbert's government involved a pension plan and annuity payment authorized under previous legislation as well as through the current retirement scheme operated by the National Social

Security and Welfare Corporation. Despite the new welfare scheme, support of relatives remained the chief source of security for the aged and disabled.

52. Until this time, the Liberian military was usually drawn from the ranks of the peasants of certain portions of the hinterland. Many joined the military voluntarily or at the prodding of local chiefs and district commissioners when that body was known as the Frontier Force. Needing very little in the way of military skills or technique, most of these soldiers served as valets, messengers, and guards to government officials.

53. The replacement of aging untrained soldiers with poorly trained young men, recruited largely from among the ranks of the urban unemployed, proved to be a recipe for disaster. It was the ranks of this group of soldiers that supplied the leaders of the April 12, 1980 military takeover. For a discussion of the character of the post-coup military, see Sawyer 1987a.

54. As of 1973, he began discussions with the joint venture concessions for accelerating the training of Liberians for managerial and technical positions in the mining industry (Coale 1978).

55. In pursuit of this objective, the small- and medium-scale enterprises division was established in the National Investment Commission. This agency was charged with providing technical assistance—improving skills in maintaining accurate records, for example, and opening lines of credit to Liberian businesses. Also, the division of Liberianization was established at the Ministry of Commerce, in order to, among other things, protect Liberian entrepreneurs from unfair competition and to prevent "fronting" using a Liberian facade as the mask for an enterprise.

56. Tuition fees were substantially reduced and, in some cases, eliminated altogether as students were adopted by Tolbert as his "precious jewels." The Liberianization program encouraged the formation of the so-called Liberian Caucus within the Chamber of Commerce. Salaries of public service employees, including those of university staff, were increased, in some instances by as much as 30 to 40 percent.

57. One of the amazing adaptations introduced by Tolbert was the use of the informal "safari suit" as acceptable dress for business and formal occasions. This mode of dress stood in stark contrast to the highly formal tail coats and top hats worn at formal ceremonies under Tubman.

58. According to Dunn and Tarr (1988), rumor had it that, convinced of Tolbert's inability to control after the 1979 rice uprising, members of the old guard who were entrenched in the legislature and the Supreme Court had commenced secret consultations regarding impeachment of the president.

59. For example, workers of the iron ore mining companies disaffiliated from the national union secretariat and organized their own union. The independent union secretariat of the National Seamen's Ports and General Workers Union was also established.

60. Questions related to the bidding procedures for government contracts, the use of discriminating tax and investment incentives, and the granting of import licenses were among the issues publicly debated by the caucus.

61. The Liberian National Student Union, which had been dormant for about a decade, was revitalized and became a voice for student rights and advocate of

democratic freedoms. Student government at the University of Liberia and at Cuttington College took on national importance because their elections were contested along student party lines that reflected national divisions.

62. In Voogbadee, Sinoe County, Putu, Grand Gedeh County, and elsewhere around Liberia, local units of collective action were formed and operated by their members independently of the government. Many of these were organized as alternatives to government-sponsored local organizations or others organized to promote the political ambitions of local influentials.

63. Noted among these publications were the *Revelation*, the *Voice*, *Apfa-Fanga*, and the *University Spokesman*.

64. Albert Porte was a public school teacher and publicist from the St. Paul River settlement of Crozierville. Until his death in 1986 at the age of 80, he tirelessly crusaded for press freedom and other civil liberties that are specified in the constitution. Beginning with President King in the early 1920s and despite several lawsuits and terms in prison, Porte criticized the excessive authority of all presidents and spoke out against corrupt practices in government.

65. In 1979, MOJA was a prime pillar of the author's candidacy for mayor of Monrovia.

66. Leaders of the PPP were released from detention by the coup makers shortly after the deposition of the Tolbert regime in April 1980.

67. He stressed that as president, he did not want to be "a leader of sheep." In 1973 he accepted membership in MOJA.

68. For example, as a private farmer, Tolbert won first prize in a national rice contest organized by the government.

69. He did promise to compensate the government for the multimillion dollar development scheme. See Dunn and Tarr 1988 and Liebenow 1987 for details concerning Tolbert's conflict of interest.

70. Tolbert also failed to release to the public or comment on the report of the committee he had established in August 1979 to recommend a "code of conduct for public officials." For details of the reports of the commission on national reconstruction and the committee to devise a code of conduct, see Boley 1983.

71. After the rice riots, Tolbert appointed his son-in-law minister of state in charge of security and replaced the commanding officers of the military.

72. For an account of the Sawyer-for-mayor campaign, see Liebenow 1987. I have also written an account of my campaign from my diary, newspaper reports, and my recollection (see Sawyer 1980).

73. Doe was a twenty-eight year old Krahn who was born in a Grand Gedeh village but lived with relatives and kinsmen in Zwedru, the county seat, and in several urban communities outside Krahn country while growing up. In Grand Gedeh, he hails from a lineage that straddles both sides of the Liberian-Ivoirien border, with the larger segment resident in Côte d'Ivoire.

74. Recruitment of such individuals for the military was part of Tolbert's efforts to replace aging, illiterate soldiers with younger, literate men who were capable of absorbing technical and professional training.

75. Within five years, only five of the original seventeen members of the People's Redemption Council were still members of the Liberian leadership. Six were executed, one died in an automobile accident, one fled for his life, and four

were involuntarily retired from the military upon their release from prison on charges of treason. Throughout military rule, hundreds of soldiers were killed as a result of allegations of conspiracy or attempts to overthrow the military government (see *Liberia Research and Information Project* 1985).

76. For a detailed account of the atrocities perpetrated by the government after the attempted coup of 1985, see Lawyers Committee for Human Rights 1986.

77. Among those executed after the military takeover were the Speaker of the House of Representatives, who was also chairman of the Monrovia branch of the TWP; the chairman of the TWP, who had recently served as minister of state for presidential affairs; the senior senator from Montserrado and brother of the president; and the chief justice, who was an inactive member of the TWP. All these individuals were important members of the old Tubman network.

78. For the first time in Liberia, a Liberian citizen was banned from all forms of social, political, and economic intercourse within the society and a penalty imposed on anyone who dared associate with him. W. Conmany Wesseh, member of the constitution commission and a citizen from the Grebo section of Grand Gedeh County, was so punished because he dared to make a suggestion that was preferred over one made by Doe at a meeting of Grand Gedeh citizens. Wesseh was labeled a "confusionist" and banned without a hearing. He was later detained. He fled Liberia shortly after his release.

79. Many of the detained former officials of government were released after payment of ransom to individual members of the military junta.

80. From 1980 to 1983, the number of people on the government's payroll rose from 18,000 to 56,000 (see Dunn and Tarr 1988).

81. Dunn and Tarr (1988) have stated that between 1980 and 1983, for example, the gross domestic product dropped by an average of 4.4. percent. When considered against the annual population increase of 3.4 percent, this statistic describes a drastic deterioration of standard of living.

82. The increased importation of U.S. parboiled rice under Public Law 480 as made possible by USAID has saved the country from a severe shortage of rice and relieved the military government of a potentially dangerous problem.

83. It was not unusual for an official of government to demand a personal honorarium in cash, hundreds of gallons of gasoline, and even airline tickets for international travel.

84. For example, between 1980 and 1985, there were at least three ministers each at the ministries of Finance, Planning and Economic Affairs, and Commerce, and at least three chairmen of the National Investment Commission. Regarding economic policy measures, in 1981, for example, the government imposed a new export tax on rubber, withdrew it in 1982, and reimposed it in 1983. In 1981, it imposed invoice entry fees on transshipments, reduced the fees in 1982, but raised them again in 1983 (see Dunn and Tarr 1988).

85. Among the questionable investors were a Nigerian "millionaire," an Indian "maharajah," and a Belgian "count."

86. By August 1980, the new leaders had wrecked almost fifty Mercedes-Benzes that had been purchased by the Tolbert government when it hosted the conference of the Organization of African Unity in 1979. (Tolbert was chairman of the OAU when he was killed in the April 1980 coup.) Several scandals in which

the leaders of the junta were said to be involved in the conversion of confiscated property to personal use, the making of private deals regarding the manufacturing and sales of ammunition, and outright robbery became well known within a few months of military rule.

87. The date of return to civilian constitutional government was later revised to 1986 as part of Doe's calculations to become the new government's "president."

88. Appointed by the People's Redemption Council, the National Constitution Commission, as the committee was called, consisted of twenty-five persons drawn from all the counties and covering a cross-section of disciplines, professions, and occupations. I was appointed chairman of the commission. For accounts of the commission's activities, see Sawyer 1987a, 1987b; Liebenow 1987; and Dunn and Tarr 1988.

89. In this respect, the draft constitution limited the presidential term of office to four years with the possibility of reelection only once. It also required the president to appoint a superintendent from a panel of candidates to be recommended to him by a committee of leaders in each county. The superintendent's performance was to be reviewed annually by the committee. The draft constitution also attempted to protect the integrity of judges, the Civil Service Commission, the office of the auditor general, and the Elections Commission (see RL [1983], *Draft Constitution of the Republic of Liberia*; Sawyer 1987b).

90. It eliminated a provision stipulating that a candidate for the president must be a civilian and not a member of the military. It removed the provision entrenching the two-term tenure of the president, and it eliminated all provisions designed to safeguard the civil service, judiciary, and the Elections Commission from government interference. It also increased the term of office of the president from four to six years (see RL [1983], *Approved Revised Draft Constitution of the Republic of Liberia*).

Chapter 12

1. Tordoff (1984:5) describes "presidentialism" as follows: "Not only is power to be centralized in a single party, but . . . personalized in the hands of the party leader, who becomes state president. This meant . . . the heavy concentration of powers in the president's own office, to the detriment of other ministries, the virtual monopoly of policy-making by the president, without adequate consideration of alternative policies, and the erection of the president's own thought into the official ideology."

2. Nyong'o (1987:17) has graphically described the failure of the African state in this respect: "At the very bare minimum, a large number of African states cannot even maintain and reproduce their own bureaucracies: civil servants are often not paid for months, armies and policemen rely on highway extortion to obtain their monthly wages, government offices are falling apart, water and telephone systems do not work, and national airlines cannot even respect their own tickets. . . . [The fiscal] crisis begins to manifest itself more dramatically when heads of state accept as valid currency only those legal tenders emanating from the industrialized world, and treat with contempt banknotes bearing their own heads."

3. A *susu* is an indigenous loan association to which members contribute and from which, in turn, they are eligible to borrow.

4. Amin (1980) does argue, however, that the concept of civil society is peculiar to capitalism because it is only under capitalism that the link between economic and political relations is so disguised that the economic sphere is seen to be autonomous. Amin asserts that in precapitalist states—African states for example—it is meaningless to talk about democracy in view of the absence of economic life that is autonomous in relation to state power. The merging of property and authority relationships is the defining attribute of patrimonial societies. In contrast, the possibility of self-governance requires explicit distinctions between material conditions and rule-ordered relationships.

5. Elinor Ostrom (1990:14) has correctly observed that, in the approach I am criticizing, "One set of advocates presumes that a central authority must assume continuing responsibility to make unitary decisions for a particular resource. The other presumes that a central authority should parcel out ownership rights to the resource and then allow individuals to pursue their own self-interests within a set of well-defined property rights. Both centralization advocates and privatization advocates accept as a central tenet that institutional change must come from outside and be imposed on the individuals affected."

6. The peoples of Nimba County have felt the brunt of the predation and repression of the despotic military regime and its civilian disguise, and have had to develop ways of coping with their plight. In some parts of the county, the local people have had to develop alternative schools, community watch teams, alternative trading mechanisms and routes, and stronger linkages with kinsmen across the border in neighboring countries.

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Most of the historical documents used in writing this book are listed together in the Bibliography under "Republic of Liberia," abbreviated in citations as "RL." Major collections and archives in which these papers are located are also given entries in the Bibliography. The C. Abayomi Cassell Collection is made up entirely of newspapers, and the Grimes Collection comprises newspapers and personal and official documents. Both collections are in private hands. *Despatches from United States Consuls in Monrovia* are documents of the United States Department of State, abbreviated in citations as "USDS," held in the National Archives of the United States. *Despatches* may be cited by year and number, or by full date, according to the information available for each document. Not listed under "Republic of Liberia" are documents of the American Colonization Society, abbreviated in citations as "ACS." The best and most comprehensive collection of ACS papers is in the United States Library of Congress. Most of the ACS materials held in various private and historical collections are duplicated there. For information on the ACS documents, see Staudenraus 1961:305–7. Archival copies of Liberian newspapers are scattered, but some can be found in the Africana Collection of the Indiana University Library, Bloomington, or in the collection of the Institute for Liberian Studies, Philadelphia.

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