The Antecedents to the Mano River Conflict Complex

by

Hadaf Zubi

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Abstract

This thesis examines the antecedents to violence during the early 1990s in Liberia and Sierra Leone (the Mano River region). Rather than examining this violent contestation over resources as ‘civil wars’ confined within national borders, I argue that it is more accurate to view both series of events as parts of a single ‘Mano River conflict complex’ with local and international roots. This case will be presented by examining the interconnected histories of the two countries and displaying the international dimensions of local social identity formation and violence. Rather than focusing on static ‘tribal’ identities, I argue that social identity is much more fluid and contested, moving between various forms of identity across different situations in order to make a claim of ‘ownership’ over various resources.

Map 1: Liberia – Population and Tribal Groups (1973)

Population and Tribal Groups

*Population pattern based on number
of dwellings per square mile*

■ Dense

■ Medium

□ Light

KRU Tribal group

*MANDINGO are widely-distributed
throughout the country*

Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/liberia_pop_1973.jpg

Map 2: Liberia (Political) (2004)

Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/liberia_pol_2004.jpg

Map 3: Sierra Leone – Ethnic groups (1969)

ETHNIC GROUPS

Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/sierra_leone_ethnic_1969.jpg

Map 4: Sierra Leone (political) (2005)

Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/sierra_leone_pol_2005.jpg

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Introduction

This thesis examines the antecedents to the large-scale violence that erupted in the early 1990s in Liberia and Sierra Leone. There already exists a very extensive literature on the violence in the region after the initial period of fighting from 1990-1991. As such, this thesis will deal mainly with the antecedents to the violence and the outbreak of hostilities during the initial phase. Chronologically, my survey will begin with pre-contact conditions and will culminate with the March 23, 1991 invasion of Sierra Leone by rebels originally supported by a Liberian patron in the form of warlord Charles Taylor (Richards 1996: 4). Rather than examining these incidences of sustained violence as internal ‘civil wars’ and examining one history without extensive reference to the other (Ellis 1999; Moran 2006; Reno 1995; Richards 1996; Zack-Williams 1999), I will follow the tack of William Reno’s (1998) “Warlord Politics and African States” and deal with both histories more or less simultaneously. In doing so I am attempting to show the similarities and differences, especially with regards to the manipulation of social identities by various leaders during the large scale breakdown of existing regional patronage and economic networks in the period leading up to what I call ‘the Mano River conflict complex’ near the end of the Cold War and the abandonment of American support for the Liberian dictator Samuel Doe.

This thesis will seek to add to Reno’s (1998) combinatory approach, expanding the examination of how conflict over access to resources was articulated before and during the early stages of the Mano River conflict complex. In particular, this thesis will pay attention to the ways in which various social identities were

historically manipulated by different political actors. These manipulations are an articulation of the conflict for resources, but not its ultimate cause. Large-scale armed conflicts have many causes acting in concert, and so this thesis will deal with political, historical and cultural reasons for the violence of the 1990s. Of the three aspects listed in the previous sentence, cultural causation of conflict is probably the most difficult concept to define due to the complexity of ethnic identity.

‘Ethnicity’ is a cohering category defined discursively from within a group or from without it that serves to create a social label on a level of abstraction beyond the sanguinary connections of the immediate family. An ethnic group can be located at the village, national or international level and is composed of many common characteristics. Cultural traditions, common ancestry and religion are all strong cohering features that when shared across individuals serve to mark the identity of members of an ethnic group. In this thesis I will not be dealing with ethnicity extensively. However, I will be discussing its role in state formation. Ethnicity defined regional ideas about democracy and political stability, was a node through which violence was articulated, and served to delineate local understandings of the relationship between patrons and clients. As such, this thesis would be incomplete without reference to ethnicity and ethno-history.

I am dealing with Sierra Leonean and Liberian history in tandem because I believe that it is more accurate to refer to the series of violent events that began with the 1989 coup in Liberia and led to the exportation of violence from Liberia into Sierra Leone in the 1991 invasion of Sierra Leone as the preliminary stages of a single ‘Mano River conflict complex’. The term ‘conflict complex’ was originated

by Phillipe Le Billon (2005), and I created the term ‘Mano River conflict complex’ (MRCC) as a vehicle through which to discuss the intertwining history of violence in the Mano River region (that river being the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone) that led-up to the 1991 invasion.

Within this history the international dimensions of superficially ‘local’ violence are displayed. ‘Sierra Leonean violence’ had local roots, but also a strong connection to Liberian and international politics. In turn, the apparently ‘Liberian domestic politics’ that shaped ‘local’ conditions were as much shaped by truly local factors as by the international political system – in particular Liberia’s historical relationship with the United States. Historically, both Liberia and Sierra Leone were heavily influenced by the politics of colonialism and by their roles as client states. Once these histories are fleshed out, then, it becomes clear that what at first sight may appear to be ‘regional tribal hostilities’ are actually internationally-shaped conflicts.

In order to validate the statement “recent Liberian and Sierra Leonean societal violence was part of an intimately connected regional conflict complex (with roots in global history) during which social identity was manipulated in order to provide a site of contestation over resources”, an empirical historical study will be presented. This history of the region will deal with the two aspects of the Mano River conflict complex (Liberia and Sierra Leone) in tandem. In order to facilitate this examination that will span about four hundred years of history, the case study will be broken-up into chapters encompassing distinct historical periods. The first chapter of the case-study will deal with the antecedents to large-scale regional

contact between the peoples of West Africa and Europeans and will roughly go from the 1400s to the year 1800. From 1800-onwards the expansion of European and American influence in the region grew rapidly, so this period will be treated as a separate period of history and will culminate approximately in the year 1950. The final chapter of the historical analysis, from 1950 until 1991, is delineated this way because the period roughly coincides with the Cold War. Cold War support of Liberia by the United States was extremely critical to the formation of recent regional history, and the selection of the final chronological period is meant to reflect this. However, before this case study can be executed, the nature of the ‘conflict complex’ and the role of various levels of government in securing access to resources must be discussed in order to provide the analysis through which regional history will be examined.

Chapter One: Analytical Framework

In this chapter the analytical concepts that I will be using to discuss the history of the Mano River conflict complex will be examined. In order to create what I see as a coherent narrative of conflict causation in the region, two major topics will be discussed. The first is the conceptual tool of ‘the conflict complex’. This idea will be defined and elaborated upon so that the audience understands why it is that I am using this vernacular instead of the more common terms for conflict ‘war’ or ‘civil war’. After this is examined, William Reno’s concept of ‘the shadow state’ (Reno: 1995) will be presented as a description of state behavior in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Once the analysis in this chapter is presented, the case study in the next chapter can be looked at with an eye towards displaying the historical roots of the ‘conflict complex’ as a function of the formation of ‘the shadow state’.

The ‘conflict complex’

‘Civil wars’ can be thought of as a ‘conflict complex’ because so-called ‘civil’ wars have local and international linkages that enable the causation and procession of war (Le Billion 2005: 1-18). The use of ‘complex’ instead of ‘war’ is a literary device that suggests the importance of examining the conflict as a whole complex of inter-linked issues as opposed to ‘war’, which might suggest a focus on the act of warfare itself. In this thesis I use ‘conflict complex’ as a more inclusive term than the term ‘civil war’ because it emphasizes a focus beyond local conditions during conflict. Also, in my opinion, ‘war’ is a vague term that has come to lose much of

its descriptive power because of its trivialization due to gross expansion in usage. The conceptual tool of the ‘conflict complex’ seems more germane to the discussion of the related Mano River ‘civil wars’ which, according to the literal definition provided by the term, is domestically-bounded violence. The use of ‘conflict complex’ over other terms is a stylistic preference based on this fact. I feel that ‘Mano River conflict complex’ is an appropriate title because of its ability to make specific reference to violent regional interconnections, something I do not feel the term ‘Mano River War’ or ‘civil wars’ would do as well. The ‘conflict complex’ is a literary device that I am employing to evoke in the audience my desire to relate myriad causal factors. The use of this title is not to suggest, however, that writers operating under the term ‘war’ or ‘civil war’ cannot also focus on international interconnections.

The geographer Simon Dalby (2007) posits that “[p]utting critique and geopolitics together suggests the importance of evaluating those frames and of understanding where is important and where marginal in any political leader’s thinking. So too in academic discussion of world politics where what happens in the capital cities of the great powers are so frequently the primary focus of attention” (Dalby 2007: 104). This comment suggests the importance of not creating a totalistic discourse around locality. Just as urban and rural factors contribute towards conflict, so too do national and transnational factors. From this, it follows that making a fetish of geographic space at any level is tantamount to creating a totalizing discourse that negatively affects analytical accuracy. The ‘Mano River conflict complex’ is a multi-sited examination of violence. In order to eschew totalizing discourses it

examines the local and the global elements of conflict. At the local level, in turn, it cannot be limited to rural or urban locales.

Within anthropology, the idea informing my understanding of the ‘conflict complex’ is similar to the multi-sited ethnography suggested by Sherry Ortner’s “ethnographic refusal” (Ortner 1995). “If the ethnographic stance is founded centrally on (among other things, of course) a commitment to thickness and if thickness has taken and still takes many forms, what I am calling ethnographic refusal involves a refusal of thickness, a failure of holism or density which itself may take various forms” (Ortner 1995:174). Ortner’s comments seem to suggest that limiting conflict analysis to the local level indicates a clear denial of “thickness”. Further supporting the geographically-broad concept of the ‘conflict complex’, Simon Dalby also comments that “A critical geopolitics now works to challenge obvious spatial framings of threats ‘there’ in the wild zones, and endangered virtue ‘here’ in the metropolitan centres of the global economy” (Dalby 2007: 115). Ethnographic thickness through the model of the ‘conflict complex’ can act to counter the tendency of Western writers to engage in the “obvious spatial framing of threats” from the “wild zones”. A famous example of this tendency is Robert D. Kaplan’s 1994 piece “The coming anarchy” published in *The Atlantic*. Kaplan’s article about the break-down of global society as exposed through the microcosm of West Africa seemed to have captured the imagination of the Clinton-era State Department because the article was apparently faxed to every US embassy around the world (Richards 1996: xiv). In addition, the United Nations was called into an emergency session in order to discuss the ramifications of this article

(Richards 1996: xiv footnote). Paul Richards has nicknamed Kaplan's thesis 'the New Barbarism' (Richards 1996: iv), a moniker adopted by others (Moran 2006: 20-22; Ellis 1999: 19-20).

As mentioned, an important aspect of detailed history as a counter to Ortner's idea of "ethnographic refusal" is examination of the role of international affairs in shaping 'local' conflicts and the global connections to the MRCC. In Liberia the international connections were quite blatant. Libyan dictator Muammar Kaddafi was one of the original sponsors to Charles Taylor (as will be elaborated on in Chapter Two), but he was eventually replaced as an international patron in the form of Evangelical Preacher Pat Robertson (Sizemore 1999; King 2001) who justified his investment of ten to fifteen million USD in gold exploration by saying:

The United States gave \$3 million to help the army of Guinea, and I have on good authority that at least two containers of arms were sent by the United States to the port of Monrovia in Liberia to be used by the rebels against Taylor... Guinea is a Muslim country ruled by a capricious and ruthless dictator. If the Taylor government falls, the Muslim rebels are hoping to overrun Liberia, which is a predominantly Christian nation. If they do so, it is feared that a vicious civil war will result leaving the nation bleeding and in chaos. (Robertson 2003)

This linkage between the local and the global is not limited to the Liberian side of the Mano River conflict complex. As another brief example that will be more fully discussed later in the thesis, in Sierra Leone the historic presence of Arab merchants has been an issue that has garnered a lot of academic attention (Smillie et al. 2000; Gberie 2003; Naylor 2007) because of the role of these locally-born merchants in being lightning-rods for national civil unrest due to their influence over the national economy, especially as shop-keepers and diamond-dealers. A famous example of this community is the Lebanese Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri, who was born

in the diamond-mining town of Bo, Sierra Leone and is now the leader of the Lebanese Shi'a party AMAL.

Access to resources

Previously the reasons for my preference of the term 'conflict complex' were given. From this base, we can now move to a more detailed description of the factors at play within the 'complex' itself. In the MRCC, social identity was used as a vehicle through which conflict was articulated. This conflict occurred in order to secure access to economic resources, whether those resources were patronage in the form of government largesse, mining concessions or access to foreign aid. These economic concerns drove the conflict and created a commensurate need for people to identify with one social group or another in order to articulate their economic appeals. The types of these groups varied from economic class, to ethno-linguistic affiliation, to 'the state', or a combination thereof.

Conflict over resources was at the centre of identity formation leading-up to and during the MRCC. Patron-client relationships have existed throughout history and these arrangements do not always involve recourse to a strictly-defined 'state' and this is an issue that should be discussed further. 'The state' is a common vehicle for agitation for resources by clients, but the governing or cohering element can just as easily be a religious or ethnic affiliation. In some cases, local leaders received funds and political favors from the capital city in a manner clearly recognizable as state patronage. In other cases, para-statal organizations like local leaders or warlords

were powerful enough to distribute patronage that they themselves had generated.

In the case of Sierra Leone, the ability of rural patrons to circumvent the capital city's ability to tax revenue from local diamond production meant that a corollary to the government in Freetown existed in the hinterland from the 1960's onwards in the form of local diamond magnates who acted as alternate economic patrons, employing youths and circumventing state controls with their access to international diamond and gemstone markets. In Liberia the post-1989 coup government of Charles Taylor was denied control of the capital city of Monrovia and he was denied international recognition as the leader of Liberia. Taylor was still able to fund his regime based on deals he had personally negotiated with multinational concerns to produce primary commodity wealth from the rural western Liberian interior, which he controlled throughout the early part of the 1990s. Even though the international system of states did not recognize him, Taylor still had the recognition of international business and that fact enabled his regime financially by marketing goods harvested from territories controlled by the National Patriotic Front-Liberia (Taylor's militia) on global markets.

These informal networks make-up what William Reno has famously called "the shadow state" (Reno 1995). Reno elaborates his concept as follows:

The Shadow State is a form of personal rule; that is, an authority that is based upon the decisions and interests of an individual, not a set of written laws and procedures, even though these formal aspects of government may exist. The Shadow State is founded on rulers' abilities to manipulate external actors' access to markets, both formal and clandestine, in such a way as to enhance their power. This alternative manner of rule permits rulers to undermine the formal institutions of government itself. (Reno 2000: 434)

Often, these configurations are not internationally recognized; nonetheless, the local power they wield is quite great and they have the ability to act as a corollary to 'the state' in terms of the fact that they are bodies to which clients can enter into relationships with in order to receive economic benefit. The shadow state is a concept that originally referred to the seemingly 'underground' features of the Sierra Leonean economy that are locally publically-known strategies of wealth accumulation by various social leaders. This is a concept that applies to Liberian politics as well, and Reno (1998) has also performed analysis of recent Liberian history using the paradigm of the shadow state.

The 'ruler' of the shadow state is typically the country's head-of-state. As such, in many cases shadow state leaders in the developing world have had to balance their own accumulation regimes in addition to placating international creditors through adopting financial austerity measures. The down-sizing of bureaucracies in order to appease the demands of creditors has been a common feature of recent international politics (Reno 1997: 505-506; 2000: 454-456). This practice helps the shadow state leader weaken his local rivals by limiting the scope of bureaucratic appointments, which removes certain sources of expected income for local elites. However, this denial of largesse may eventually lead to local rivals taking up arms against their national-level patron (Reno 2000: 448-451). The destruction of existing patronage networks in the late 1980s in Liberia and Sierra Leone weakened the shadow state's ability to oversee patronage and this opened the door for the 1989 coup and 1991 invasion, as will be discussed. In addition to overall bureaucratic reduction, the shadow state may also experience a reduction in military expenditures. This results

in an increase in the role of private military corporations and the formation of security enclaves around the shadow-state leader and the naturally resource-rich areas that fund his regime (Reno 1997: 506). This situation may be a boon to the shadow state leader because armed soldiers from his own country may eventually take up arms against him, whereas foreign security forces would be less likely to.

With the rise of private military firms providing security in the developing world and the global expansion of markets for goods which enables various local leaders to access global buyers, the shadow state is increasingly a product of the international system. The seemingly paradoxical nature of the ‘private’ illicit shadow regime being a matter of public fact in Africa introduces the importance of not being too literal with definitions when discussing the shadow state. Also, Reno highlights the importance of not over-emphasizing the distinction between ‘state’ and ‘non-state’ actors in the Mano River context (Reno 1997: 495). The effect of the shadow state’s ability to blur the difference between the public and private sectors underlies my preference for the semantically open-ended term ‘conflict complex’ which I believe well-suggests the nuance involved in the formation of warfare in the Mano River region.

Janet Roitman’s “Politics of Informal Markets in Sub-Saharan Africa” (Roitman 1990) supports the above statements about open-ended inquiry with her comment that “the primacy of end-point discussion leads to a positive epistemological stance” (Roitman 1990: 675) that “posits the rational decision-making individual as a socially decontextualized entity, ignoring the possibility of contending rationalities” (Roitman 1990: 676). A focus on Western obsessions with legal-rational criteria

obfuscates the fact that the involvement of predatory informal networks (the shadow state) and civil society groups in the state's economic functions is how the 'capitalist state' is meant to be expressed in its African form (Roitman 1990: 677). Roitman does not conceive of rural Africa as peripheral to capital city politics and therefore necessarily autonomous and removed from the state. This integration into the state sphere means that Roitman views the peasantry as a historically constructed element of the system of national production (Roitman 1990: 681), a claim that supports the idea of the 'shadow state' and the importance of local government in securing patronage for local clients in the Mano River region. Since rural West Africa has traditionally been economically integrated with the metropolises, Mano River history has been a competition between 'the shadow state' and local political leaders in order to provide rural patronage.

However greatly financially beneficial it may be to certain individuals, the 'shadow state' arrangement can hardly be described as an ideal system for fostering national economic development or for the enrichment of the mass of the population of a country. Shadow state behavior tends to operate under a temporally brief logic of managing current opposition while maximizing personal gain in the short run. 'Shadow state' rule seldom leads to long-term projects that benefit the mass of the population because of the commitments leaders must make to micro-managing a chaotic system in which planning for the future is almost impossible (Reno 2000: 452-453). In tropical Africa political opposition is usually weak and in disarray (Clapham 1996). This leads to the lack of a check on the behavior of rulers and

results in the ability of 'shadow state' rulers to extend patronage arrangements as they see fit due to weak governmental institutions that cannot stop them.

Exacerbating this political volatility is the fact that the Mano River countries are endowed with portable natural resources which readily enable political rivals to fund violence. Resource-rich countries are beset by a particular host of economic problems which Richard Auty discusses as the "Resource Curse" (Auty 1993).

Central to Auty's "Resource Curse", the hypothesis that the burden of resources is often greater than benefits to the majority of people living within a state's geography, is the idea of positive and negative feedback loops (Auty, 1993: 30).

The implications of national resource possession to a population run the gamut from corruption and mismanagement to the production of tax revenue that is redistributed among the people. Welfare states, for example, would represent virtuous feedback loops because national resource rents are redistributed through social programs and other benefits to citizens. A vicious feedback loop would be a situation where a kleptocratic regime has used existing resource wealth and the promise of future finds to lure foreign investment into the country in order for the governing cadre to fund the social networks they support. This initiation of an ongoing cycle of concentrated capital accumulation is economically detrimental, if not outright physically grievous, to the polity at large who get next-to-none of the benefits of the rents derived from resources developed in their country.

A kleptocratic regime aggravates the already great structural volatility of a resource production-based economy by further limiting the economy's resilience to theft and mismanagement. This weakened economic position is exacerbated in a

resource-based economy by Dutch Disease. Dutch Disease stems from a great imbalance between the relative contributions of the sectors of an economy. When the primary commodity exports of a country drive up that country's foreign exchange rate, the country's other exports become more expensive and domestic inflation raises the prices of imported goods. This further weakens the economy due to job losses in the now uneconomical domestic industries (Black 1997: 131-132). This potential imbalance adds to the inability of the non-extractives sectors of the economy to absorb the pressures of a commodity price downturn. A financially and nationally accountable extraction-based economic regime is already a difficult one to develop steadily because of large global fluctuations in the value and price of primary-stage resource goods. The profits of a mismanaged mining sector cannot be used by the public coffers to mitigate economic downturns associated with these highly variable prices. As agricultural products rise in price due to land scarcity, inflationary pressures impoverish private incomes further and reduce the overall supply of domestic capital available for consumption and investment, further aggravating the national economic crisis. In addition to this inability to mitigate global economic flux, extractive-dependent economies are easily looted for personal gain by government personnel (Renner 2002).

In short, Dutch Disease exacerbates the negative economic growth in a resource extraction-dependent economy during downwards fluctuations in global commodity prices. Auty's main argument rests on case studies across four geographically close historical cases (Peru, Chile, Jamaica and Bolivia) that mineral wealth can lead to depressed levels of domestic investment (Auty 1993: 60). Although the service

sectors of most global economies have historically been growing to about 50%, these jobs do not contribute as much wealth to the economy as a sectorally diversified historically 'normal' economy with a higher domestic savings rate would. As such, national incomes in non-diversified economies tend to be historically reduced compared to what they could have been in a diversified economic system, in some cases quite significantly. In addition to the overall national economic pressures caused by Dutch Disease, the region in which the mineral wealth is extracted suffers disproportionately more due to local price inflation and the pressures caused by a massive influx of laborers into the region which the existing local infrastructure cannot handle (Mandel 1984: 155). Alfred Zack-Williams notes this exact phenomenon in the Sierra Leonean context when he comments "paradoxically as it may sound, diamond mining has generated underdevelopment in Sierra Leone in general, and in the Kono District in particular" (Zack-Williams 1995: 180). Since rural development schemes are born in the urban capital markets that finance them, there exists an underlying geographic tension between urban demand for commodities and the rural locations that supply them in Sierra Leone (Smillie, Gberie and Hazleton: 2000, 2006) and Liberia (Ellis 1999; Reno 1994, 1998).

Collier (2004: 254) has pointed-out the importance of natural resource rents in funding and extending the duration of conflict. Le Billon adds that the two main factors in resource conflict are scarcity and abundance (Le Billon 2001: 562-565). Neither scarcity nor abundance, however, conclusively causes conflict; they enable it. When social actors decide to act violently, though, easy access to resource wealth

is a convenient source of funds. On this subject Le Billon notes “the spatial distribution and *lootability* of resources are crucial with regard to the opportunities of belligerents to seize or retain control over resource revenues” (Le Billon 2001: 566). Easily lootable resource rents were certainly the case for much of the Mano River region. Collier points out that in cases like this where valuable and very portable resources exist the chances for conflict are heightened because the nature of the resources allows for a quick payoff and a continuing source of funds throughout the conflict (Collier 2004: 268). However, the ability of the shadow state to access this pay-day is a direct result of the increased penetration of international markets into the developing world during the 1980s and 1990s which facilitated easier sale of commodities and purchase of armaments by shadow state actors (Collier 2004: 268). A study of violence in the Mano River region would do well to pay close attention to these international linkages, a fact I am attempting to highlight rhetorically through my use of the moniker ‘Mano River conflict complex’.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, these historical connections add to discussion of the antecedents to recent conflict because “many contemporary wars are inscribed in the legacy of earlier mercantile wars privately financed to serve economic objectives and similarly focusing on resource rich areas and trading posts” (Le Billon 2001: 580-581). As will be shown, the resource rich areas of Sierra Leone and Liberia continued to be foci of conflict over their riches. This local conflict over primary resources was enabled by the presence of West African commercial networks with access to international markets for their goods.

The historian of Africa, Jean-Francois Bayart (2000), has drawn attention to the importance of viewing Africa within the context of the world-system. Africa, he argues, was never the isolated 'dark continent' it has been imagined to be. A comprehensive examination of African history, he makes the case, is informed with reference to Africa's "extroverted" position in the world and the fact that Africa was not an isolated continent that some presented it as (Bayart 2000: 217). The shadow state is dependent on international linkages to markets not in Africa. The ability of local actors in the Mano River region to engage with international business is a key feature of the conflict complex and will be displayed throughout the case study. Since the presence of the shadow state is predicated on international relations, it follows that Bayart's statement about Africa's historical extroversion and commercial gregariousness is congruent with the ideas of the shadow state and conflict complex insofar presented. In the chapter that follows, the ideas presented about shadow states and conflict complexes will be used to analyze a case study of the history of the Mano River region leading up to the recent formation of the violent conflict complex in 1990.

The antecedents of the Mano River conflict complex

In these chapters the historical antecedents of the Mano River conflict complex will be discussed. In the interests of facilitating audience comfort with material to be presented, the case study will be chronologically divided into three chapters roughly coinciding with the pre-contact period (~1400-1800), the period of increasing contact between Mano River indigenes and Europeans (1800-1950), and the Cold War era (1950-1991). Through discussion the origins of the conflict complex will be displayed in a manner that belies the complexity and geopolitical interconnectedness of the region's history and shows the semantic nuance suggested by the term 'conflict complex'.

Chapter Two: Early Regional History ~1400~1800

Since the terrain north of the Mano River (now known as the country of Sierra Leone) was ‘discovered’ and inhabited by a small contingent of Portuguese traders and missionaries in 1482, the written history of the region is well-documented. From this written tradition, historical features of regional culture that have been important elements of social cohesion since pre-colonial times have been established. In this chapter the history of the region before widespread contact will be shown to be one of migration with different emphases on interaction, assimilation, compromise and violent conflict between different groups at different times. In addition to social interactions between different groups indigenous to Africa, the arrival of European and American influence to the region greatly shaped regional history, as will be displayed.

The most salient cultural feature of Mano River societies is the extremely popular existence of ‘secret’ societies. These relatively public bodies were the nodes of local communication and political organization during the pre- and early contact periods. The presence of these societies at the village level was an important feature of regional political organization that shaped political affairs. Amongst Mande-speakers, initiation and membership in these groups was almost a universal feature. The paradoxical secret/public associations were a precursor to the shadow state and were indicative of a vigorous public life by most of the indigenous people of the region.

The most popular of these societies were the male society *Poro* and its female counterpart *Sande*. The Mande brought these traditions with them when they immigrated into the region from the north-west (Holsoe and Lauer 1976: 140-142, 147), but the syncretic nature of culture in the area was such that amongst the Atlantic language speakers in the south this cultural concept caught-on and “secret societies dedicated to protecting the community against sorcery [emerged and] existed, but were not universal in their membership and did not have the initiatory functions of *Poro* and *Sande* to the north” (Moran 2006: 42). A key feature of initiation rites for boys and girls to enter into these societies was the masked performance of its practitioners, the masks acting to build community by fostering a personal anonymity which subsumes individual choice for collective consensus, an important feature of recent Sierra Leonean political identity (Ferme 1999: 161).

The importance of masks is evident from Kup’s examination of first-hand accounts of Sierra Leonean culture at contact with the Portuguese in the 1500s. According to one of the Portuguese writers that Kup cites, the *Funco* (Temne for rice store) was a place of justice where lawyers (called *Solategi* in Temne) “deck themselves ingeniously with plumes and bells, and have their faces covered with grotesque masks for they say that thus disguised they feel more at ease to speak boldly in front of their chief” (Kup 1961: 9). Spiritual disturbances were physically-embodied in the material world by the ritual presence of masked *contuberia* demons (the chief and his *Solategi*, or counselors) who would, on the special occasion of a disturbance in the spirit world, ceremonially roam the streets at night entreating villagers to stay indoors and compelling them to send out any domestic animals that

were making noise from within the huts – which they would then beat to death. They would also, on these occasions, call out brave young men to face the ‘demons’ and these men would be incorporated into the ranks of the *Solategi*. Another key element of this regional practice was sleep-deprivation (Little 1965: 355; Little 1966: 64). In order to increase the impressionability of the pubescent initiates, the elders who would incorporate them into the ranks of the ‘secret’ societies would keep the adolescents awake for days on end in order to lower the initiate’s mental resistance and instill the hallucinatory high associated with sleep deprivation which would make the experience of initiation all the more mystical.

‘Ethnicity’ is an extremely broad term covering many aspects from religion to cuisine. In addition to the widespread cultural practice of secret societies, another salient cultural feature of the Mano River region was language difference. As will be shown, linguistic diversity was more evident in the Liberian than in the Sierra Leonean aspect of the MRCC. Language was used as a site of differentiation in Sierra Leone, but the local history of creolization dampened the ability for local leaders to exploit this site of difference. However, this is certainly not to say that conflict over resources was not articulated through linguistic difference in Sierra Leone, as will be shown; only that its ability to be used divisively was somewhat muted by a local linguistic history of assimilation.

As something of a background to the political scene of pre-contact West Africa, the history of languages of the Mano river region will be examined in some detail in order to provide context for the history to follow. ‘Creolization’, mentioned in the previous paragraph, is a familiar term to anthropologists. It simply means the

combination of two or more languages into a syncretistic system of verbal communication. However, 'dialect' and 'language' are more complex to define. 'Dialect' is the local variations on 'language', which is a system of mutually intelligible dialects (Gregersen 1977: introduction). These terms, though, have a strong element of subjectivity to them and are definitely not set in stone (Gregersen 1977: 15). Particular dialects of language will be discussed as they appear from hereon in, but first the major language families of the region will be delineated as follows in order to give some contextual background.

In terms of millions of speakers, one of the largest language groups in Africa is the Niger-Congo group. Within the group are the Kordofanian, Atlantic/Mel and Mande families (Williamson 1989: 3). Since these language families have been diverging for thousands of years, they are part of the same language group, but are mutually unintelligible and certainly constitute separate languages. Since the Kordofanian languages are found in northeast Africa, only the final two language families are of interest to this thesis. Mande and Atlantic/Mel are the two main linguistic groups of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Commonly, these linguistic divisions are formulated along the following lines: Mande = Bullom, Susu, Yalunka, Loko, Mende, Kono, Vai, Koranko, Gbande; Atlantic /Mel = Limba, Temne, Sherbro, Kissi, Krim, Kru (Richards 1996: 71-78). It is important to not rely too heavily on language groups as bounded entities in this area because of the highly synergistic nature of the Mano River region's history; these delineations provide a general base from which to understand the dynamics of linguistic identity formation. Since the Mano River region is crisscrossed with rivers and mountain ranges, linguistic

differentiation often occurred along the lines provided by physical boundaries. For example, the Kru language is generally thought to be separated between Eastern and Western Kru dialects which are divided along the Sassandra River in southern Liberia (Williamson 1989: 18).

An important point about Mande language is that Mende, the most popular Mande tongue, was used as a regional trade language and as a lingua franca (Sengova 1987: 529). Reflective of the use of Mande as a language of immigrants to the region, it is highly syncretic. Mande is not a heavily tonal language, which means that the use of the vocal register to convey meaning is not as important to the language's ability to convey meaning as it would be in a tonal language¹ (Williamson 1989: 5-6). The languages of southern Liberia are Mel/Atlantic languages that use a more extensive register than their northern counterparts in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Gregersen 1977: 46). Mande languages reflect linguistic syncretism because as the Mande languages go from north to south they increase in tonality from the 'a-tonal' Mende and 2-register systems in the North to 4-register systems in the south as greater historical contact with West African languages caused linguistic adaptations (Williamson 1989: 3-47).

During the colonial periods in Sierra Leone and Liberia the British and American authorities set up 'native authorities' to govern the indigenous populations through a strategy of divide-and-conquer, playing-off one group against the other in the

¹ As an example of tonality, in the English language a higher pitch near the end of a sentence implies the asking of a question whereas a-tonality conveys a declarative statement. Mende, as mentioned before, acted as a regional trade language and eventually lost most of its tonality and now relies not on tonal register but only on pitch accent and word stress, perhaps in the interests of ease-of-communication between speakers of it as a second or third language (Gregersen 1977: 75).

quest for resources (mainly land). This policy was continued by the post-colonial regimes of Americo-Liberians and the assimilated Krio in Sierra Leone, though these ‘native authorities’ were properly called ‘Paramount Chieftaincies’ in their Sierra Leonean context. The creolized linguistic history of Sierra Leone led to a greater inability for political leaders to create the ‘us-versus-them’ mentality mentioned previously. Although Temne, Mende and the English / African-language hybrid Krio have undergone attempts by political leaders to be implemented as official regional languages, state economic poverty and linguistic disarray have led to a lack of overly strong linguistic identities (Sengova 1987: 519-530) with “everyone doing their own thing” (Sengova 1987: 530). The history of linguistic syncretism in Sierra Leone between English, Mande- and Atlantic- languages resulted in no one language asserting dominance over the others and the ad-mixture of the three, Krio, being used as a lingua franca between all local populations (Abraham 1978b: 8-10; Richards 1996: 70-74). However ‘relaxed’ the language politics of Sierra Leone were due to the influences of Mande immigration into the region and the formation of Krio, the opposite was true in Liberia, to which we now turn vis-à-vis the ethnographies of southern Liberia written by Mary Moran (1991, 2006).

Moran’s fieldwork was conducted amongst the Glebo people. The Glebo are speakers of Grebo, which is a language of the West Atlantic family derived from Kru (Holsoe and Lauer 1976: 140). The following passage indicates the potential for the use (or abuse) of language as a device to promote local difference, which can then be used to articulate interpersonal violence against linguistically-different

‘others’. In this specific example, Moran shows the Liberian administration based in Monrovia attempted to use existing linguistic macro-difference to differentiate groups of people who had previously belonged to a political mosaic of social identities. The intended result of this policy was increased ease of colonial administration, but it had the real effect of imposing constructed social identities on groups of people, who in many cases were autonomous and hitherto un-allied with the groups they were forcibly paired with. Moran explains:

“Grebo tribe” was used administratively by the Republic of Liberia to refer to most of the inhabitants of Maryland County, lending to the people of the region an aura of ethnic solidarity that has never in fact existed. Even the term “Glebo” is problematic; the people in question consider themselves to belong to two *dakwe*, or confederacies of towns called Nyomowe and Kuniwe and insist that they speak different “dialects” of the Glebo language. Eager to capitalize on local divisions, the Liberian government created separate “Paramount Chieftancies” for Nyomowe and Kuniwe, which, adding to the confusion, were also designated as “clans”. (Moran 2006: 38-39)

The artificial construction and imposition of the designation “clan” is one way in which the previous example shows how the imposition of new rules of political discourse by the Americo-Liberians upset the existing social orders. Another way in which the example shows the replacement of the existing political order with an ill-conceived alternative arrangement is the apparent lack of distinction by the Liberian administration between the two Grebo confederacies within the “Glebo” dialect. The imposition of ‘Grebo tribe’ as a category of social belonging brought with it a subdivision of dialects; however Moran’s Liberian evidence suggests that the subdivision of dialects was not carried out far enough and was too gross to be locally appropriate in terms of linguistic history. The pitting by Monrovia of the

two confederacies against one another is indicative of an effort by the Americo-Liberian government to keep the colony in political disarray.

Another example of the use of local language being used to articulate claims of ‘ownership’ over a certain piece of terrain in order to access resources is related by Moran in her recounting of the criticisms leveled against the Liberian dictator of the 1980s President Samuel Kanyon Doe by a ‘native chief’ who asserted his presence as the legitimate leader of the local people at a public ceremony in the southern Liberian province of Maryland at which the President was the guest of honor:

[O]ne of the “native” chiefs launched into a scathing critique of Doe and his policies, centering on land appropriations for concession agriculture that threatened the Glebo economic base... Although he delivered his speech in Glebo and used the place name “Gbenelu” in referring to the territory under his jurisdiction, the educated Glebo man translating his words into English consistently rendered “Gbenelu” as “Maryland County”, to which neither the chief, who was perfectly fluent in English, nor Doe, whose first language was the closely related Krahn, objected. In essence, the chief and his translator collaborated to represent him as the legitimate political authority in Maryland County, while the government-appointed county superintendent sat on the stage with the other officials. No one, from either the Monrovia party or the local hierarchy, contradicted this claim. Doe himself took the tongue-lashing with surprising meekness. (Moran 2006: 51)

In the Liberian linguistic context, short-range differentiation between dialects was not only taken as indicative of ‘ethnic’ difference, but they were also used as class and status markers (Moran 1991:15). By speaking in his native Glebo the above mentioned chief conspired to proclaim himself the legitimate leader of the local people at the expense of the assembled politicians, both locally and from Monrovia. Adding to this interpersonal tension over dialect created at the individual and village level, government policies towards the counties were created specifically in

order to foster and promote competitive behavior between political groups by relating access to resources directly to ethnic status:

Terms like Grebo and Kru have been adopted as ethnic labels by the Liberian government and are used in the census and other official publications. In recent years, it has been assumed that these categories follow the arbitrary boundaries between administrative units such as counties and districts; thus, in the official view, all the residents of Maryland County are Grebo, those of Sinoe County are Kru, and Grand Gedeh County is inhabited by a solid block of Krahn... Speakers of the many Kru languages will be referred to collectively as Kru, but it should be kept in that this usage does not indicate a common ethnic identity, except insofar as people have adopted these labels vis-à-vis the Liberian government... Although the Liberian government recognizes two chiefdoms among the Glebo and appoints paramount chiefs for both Nyomowe and Kuniwe, the Glebo *dakwe* do not act as internally coordinated political units. Each town tends to settle its own affairs, alone or with allies of its own choosing from within the dako or from other Grebo-speaking *dakwe*. (Moran 1991: 21-22)

In some cases the articulation of claims over real estate based in appeals to ethnicity, especially in the Liberian context, were strongly related to the boundaries set by dialect differences between linguistic communities.

In addition to linguistic diversity, another feature of local political culture at contact with Europe and beyond was the feature of a regional tradition of meritocracy which the anthropologist Svend E. Holsoe (1974) has extensively documented. Although patrilineal descent existed in all West African societies, these tendencies were balanced by social advancement through meritocratic achievement. Social advancement due to personal merit is one element of western-style democracy, and this element of democracy was present in both the traditional political systems of the Kpelle (Mende-speakers) and Gola (Atlantic-speakers). Since these groups covered a comparatively wide geographic terrain, by proxy one

can surmise that elements Western observers would recognize as meritocratic were the political norms in the Mano River region:

In this system there were two distinct types of leaders. One of these was the owner of the land (*loi-kalorl* in Kpelle), and the other was the war chief (*ko-kallr* in Kpelle). The owners of the land were descendents of the founding lineage which had settled in a particular area. Such a leader based his right to power on his family's special relationship to the land and his ability to trace his position directly to the founding ancestors and thus to presume to act on their behalf. In contrast, the war chiefs, whether locally born or strangers, were not members of the founding lineage and obtained their position by achievement. (Holsoe 1974: 160)

As Holsoe explains, the Gola concept of *bona* acted as a patronage system whereby an individual not imbued with patrilineal hereditary rights (*djewe*) could build up a political base by engaging a number of clients as a patron (Holsoe 1974: 161). Through skilled leadership in wartime, for example, an immigrant could increase his *bona* and gain political power within the community by divvying-up the spoils of war with the young warriors under his command and the hereditary leaders of the community. By placating the traditional leaders and granting patronage to young soldiers war bosses who were born without hereditary political power could elevate themselves within a political system that can only be described as meritocratic. In times of peace these war chiefs would also be active in diplomacy (Holsoe 1974: 165) in order to secure, if possible, a lasting peace by incorporating tributary communities through negotiation and not violence. This ability to secure clients and political status through peaceful means was affected by the British and American invasions of the 1800s.

Stable existing political structures were destroyed by the British and American anti-slaving efforts (which will be discussed in more depth further on) and a

political vacuum was formed. Social violence is historically present in almost every region of the world, but in West African society it certainly was not the historical norm. It would be more accurate to say that the exercise of warfare was a legitimate means of patronage expansion by a governing body in order to secure more access to resources for its clients and to get more clients, but that this tendency for violence was counter-balanced with a tradition of conciliation, negotiation and political coalition-building. Holsoe comments that the coherence of regional pre-colonial political structure was thrown into disarray by the increased intervention of the British and Americo-Liberian armies in Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively. The existing political processes, especially the important organizational and mediatory role played by the local branches of the *Poros* men's secret society, were weakened abruptly and this created a predictable political vacuum with concomitant fractionalization. Holsoe comments

The traditional manner of establishing political control over outlying peoples by diplomacy and warfare was undermined.... With the processes of political expansion thrown into disarray, the multi-clan confederations began to fall apart, fragmenting into individual lineage town clusters, that is, the clans.... It is clear that neither the British nor the Liberians understood the consequences of their political actions. (Holsoe 1974: 166)

Although there is a strong regional tradition of population flux due to immigration, according to their oral tradition the Atlantic-family Bullom people “have no history of migration” (Kup 1961: 123) into the region. They settled along the coast of Sierra Leone originally, but would later experience a history of migrating around the region because of intruders. This claim needs to be taken with a grain of salt because although the Bullom are linguistically connected to the West African language group, Kup (1961: 9) speculates that they may have originally

been Mande-speakers from further west whose language was heavily assimilated with that of the West African Temne people, who inhabited the northern coast of Sierra Leone sometime before the Portuguese arrival. From this event it followed that linguistic syncretism was a prevalent factor through the history of the peopling of the Mano River area (Little 1968; Levitt 2005; Wyse 1989; Kup 1961).

Kup (1961: 121-122) makes the case that unlike the 'Kru' people of Liberia there were no properly 'native' Mande empires in the geographic space that later became Sierra Leone. The first major invasion of the region occurred when the Almoravids, a Berber people from Morocco, underwent a religious revival after their king returned from Hajj in about 1050 (Barbour, 1965: 49-51). Nominally Muslim since shortly after the inception of Islam in the seventh century, the piety of the Moroccan kingdom was questioned by the king as he returned from Mecca and saw more rigorously Islamic communities than his own. He concluded that his people's faith had lapsed and, inspired by hired religious men, raised an army and promptly headed south in Jihad. Kup (1961: 120) speculates that it was this pressure from the Maghreb that forced the Fula-derived (i.e. from modern Mali) Temne south into Bullom territory. The influence of foreign powers on regional history began early and continued throughout the era before widespread contact with Europeans in the early 1700s.

By about 1500 a loose-knit confederacy of refugees, the Sapi confederacy, existed (Abraham 1978b: 5). This group included the Susu, Temne, Limba, Bullom, and Yalunka, who had all (save the Bullom) been pushed into the area by other groups who had previously been invaded. The Temne were dominant in this confederation

of mainly Mel-speakers; only the Susu were Mande-speakers (although, as previously discussed, the Bullom possibly originally spoke a ‘Mande’ tongue before creolization with Temne refugees). The Yalunka were the last group to enter the region, due to the expansion of the Songhai Empire at Gao (modern-day Mali) under Sonni Ali (1464-1492) (Kup 1961: 127).

In 1497 Islam gained a foot-hold in West Africa when the Songhai King did Hajj in that year and came back as Askia Mohamed (soldier of the prophet Mohamed) and went on Jihad, soon forcing the Mandingo, Fulani and Koranko to convert to Islam (Kup 1961: 123). By the turn of the 16th century the Islamic influence on West African society was complemented by the invasion of another Middle Eastern religion – Christianity. Through conversion of kings and alliance-building through church-sanctioned marriage the Portuguese were able to extend their influence over the region well beyond their physical scope, which was always quite limited due to the Portuguese crown’s relative disinterest in Sierra Leone (Kup 1961: 147).

Within two generations the ‘Tengamoas’ (Kup 1961: 12), the illegitimate offspring of Portuguese men (the Iberian mission in Sierra Leone was supposed to be pious, so no women were brought over) and African women, began to agitate for rights and trade on their own accounts. These traders were not as pious as their European forebears, as the clergyman Balthazar Barreira (friend of the Portuguese King Philip III) noted on the 25th of September, 1605: “The Portugals in those parts lived liker Ethnicks than Christians, neither having sacraments nor the Word of God in many years past, so that they had almost quite forgotten them” (Kup 1961: 14).

The Protestant Reformation legitimated the entry of English slavers into Sierra Leonean waters in 1560, but they did not have an easy time navigating in the region because the Portuguese kept their colony a secret and the Dutch intentionally published (if at all) horribly inaccurate maps of the Leonean coast to keep other European powers at bay. By the late 1500s the 'Portuguese' (it was part of the Spanish Castile dynasty at this point) Empire was in decline and the English began a take-over of Sierra Leone (Kup 1961: 142). Since the Portuguese traders quickly depleted local supplies of pepper, gold and ivory, the British focused more on trade in Cam-wood, from which a red dye could be made that still held fast after seven washes (Kup 1961: 25; Richards 1996: 63).

In direct contravention of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty of 1554 which banned English slaving in the area, the English Royal Adventurers into Africa was chartered by Queen Elizabeth in 1562 to pursue the slaving business (with Elizabeth getting 1/3 of the profits). Sir John Hawkins, against Portuguese complaints which were not-so-subtly ignored by the Queen, took 300 slaves the next year. The Portuguese wised-up and by the end of that year, with African allies, they were actively fomenting trouble for English traders. Although Queen Elizabeth was ostensibly displaying her 'sovereign' power by granting royal charters and helping fund expeditions, the reality was that there was no method to prevent Sea-Captains from absconding with 'her' money (Kup 1961: 40). This condition of local economic conduct is a predicate to the patrimonial shadow state in that powerful local actors are able to access patronage from a central power that needs to keep them pacified.

The arrival of English companies to Sierra Leone quickly stimulated the human-trade (a 'clean' phrase for the slaving business) with the Fulani and other groups 'indigenous' to the region. Predictably, the presence of the British Empire stimulated more conflict than that of the Portuguese because the bigger English economy bought far more slaves and was better-equipped (both in terms of as an empire and specifically as a colony) to effect violence. Alliances and counter-alliances with Europeans, initiated in earnest towards the end of the Portuguese presence, became the norm and foreshadowed the widespread involvement of foreign capital in the regional economy as time progressed. This early penetration of predatory European capital into the region foreshadows the commercial networks that would later fund the shadow state with access to foreign capital armaments.

Highly contingent West African political alliances became an increasingly common theme during this period. For example, in 1570 the Loko were driven south from Port Loko on the Great Scarcies River (the river on Sierra Leone's northern border with Guinea) by the Susu, who were also being pushed south by Muslim (Fulani) raiders from the north who were looking to do business with the English. In 1600 the Temne alliance re-took Port Loko from the Susu, and in 1605 the Loko and Susu allied to recapture the port (Kup 1961: 144). As suggested by this incident, a system of arrangements and counter-arrangements based on expediency emerged as the historically-mediated method of conflict and resolution in the Mano River region. The population flux caused by this process of capture and re-capture suggests a highly contingent and flexible system of ethnic identities and confederations in the lead-up to the MRCC.

Further confusing the physical mix of refugees in the region due to the expansion of Islam and the commercial tastes of European Christians was, as stressed, the regional tradition of assimilation and syncretism. As an example, the Mande-speaking Gola of southern Sierra Leone were attacked from the south in 1591 by the 'Kru' from modern-day Liberia. The conquering Kru assimilated elements of the population they captured, as opposed to establishing an apartheid system. As such, the usefulness of the term 'Kru' to refer to a specific population is highly in doubt. In regards to this fact, Jeremy Levitt has noted that "Today those whom we call collectively the Kru people are in fact a mixture of Krus and those who have been assimilated, so that the entire group has become a somewhat miscellaneous designation rather arbitrarily constructed by scholars to hold a number of races which do not seem to fit elsewhere" (Levitt 2005: 145). This instance of assimilation is a good example of the regional practice of cultural syncretism.

The northwards expansion by the Kru was due to the fact that they had been invaded from the Songhai empire at Gao, but only after Gao had been invaded by an expeditionary army sent south by El-Mansur, Sultan of Morocco, earlier in 1591. The main body of the Moroccan forces decided not to return home because they didn't have the resources to do so and set up a permanent community on the north elbow of the river Niger (Kup 1961: 153), further adding to the regional population mix. Following this initial victory, from 1600-80 the 'Kru Empire' overran the Sierra Leonean coast and appointed imported provincial viceroys from the Quoiah ethnic group in order to subjugate the conquered Bullom, Krim and Temne people.

This use of viceroys was typical of the political organization of Mande-speaking peoples (Kup 1961: 146).

According to the Portuguese colonist D'Alameda, the Mande-speaking populations paid a 'maref' tribute to a Mani overlord as a result of the Songhai expansion of the previously-mentioned Askia Mohammed (Kup 1961:129). The Mande felt that their fiscal obligation to the conquering Mani was contingent on the latter party defending the region it had seized, and so the Mande decided to stop paying the tribute after the Kru invasion. Affronted by this act, in 1664 the Mani surrounded and invaded the area now demarcated as Sierra Leone on two fronts: the southern coast and the south-eastern interior. The southern attack failed, but the inland attack succeeded and the Kissi were separated from the Sherbro and forced to move east. This invasion also split the Vai and the Kono (see Map 4: Sierra Leone – Ethnic Groups). Although Richards (1996: 173) agrees with the linguist David Dalby that Vai is a creolized coastal language formed through convergence over time and commercial necessity, a closer examination of the effects of Songhai and concomitant Kru expansions suggests that the role of linguistic divergence due to invasion also be taken into account in this particular case. After re-arming, the Mani successfully re-opened the southern front and, like the Kru before them, went up the coast slaving. The invading Mani eventually stopped when they got to the Susu in the north. Allied with the Portuguese, the Mani had managed to obtain the services of a Portuguese man armed with three muzzle-loading muskets. In order to defend themselves from this threat, the Susu allied themselves with the Fulani to their north and borrowed seven Fulani horsemen. Ironically enough, the Fulani had

a history of encroaching on the Susu. During the ensuing ‘battle’ (it cannot have lasted more than a minute or two), the Portuguese ally loosed his first volley too early and, while he was re-loading, the Fulani cavalry charged the Mani line, breaking it and winning the day for the Susu (Kup 1961:140). The use of the Portuguese mercenary is an example of the hire of foreign private military contractors some 300 years before the shadow state.

West Africa never became a big centre for manufactures because of the mercantilist triangle whereby English traders in London did not want existing factories in South America and the Caribbean to go out of business. As such, slaves were captured in West Africa but sold overseas. The American Revolution (1776-1783) increased the scale of the slave trade (Kup 1961: 60), but ‘indigenous’ factories were never really part of the plan. Few of the slaves bought on the River Sierra Leone (Rokel River) were local; most were sold by the Kru (who marked their faces in order to indicate to Europeans that they were not to be taken as slaves) from further south, or brought to the coast around Christmas by Fulah caravans from the northern interior. By the time Sierra Leone (1806) and Liberia (1822) were officially founded as colonies, West African regional politics were highly fragmented due to the centuries of escalating European political influence in the region. In addition to the role of military invasions previously discussed, the cutthroat (literally) nature of slaving and piracy led to a situation where allegiances and identity were anything but static. Throughout early regional history pirates masqueraded as various royal vessels and forced captives into action “as the only alternative to walking the plank” (Kup 1961: 53-55). Coercion into a life of

violence and raiding was a regional reality far before the recent regional crises where refusing the advances of a pressgang militia was a certain death-sentence. As a reaction to the local power of “interlopers”, from 1700-onwards English traders were allowed to work partly on commission to hopefully mitigate the effects of said “interlopers” (Kup 1961: 77). As we will see during the discussion of the contemporary political economy of the Mano River region, ‘interloping’ by locals of resources was a historically-formed phenomenon that suggests a historical antecedent for the activities of ‘illegal’ diamond miners in Sierra Leone and the shadow state to follow. The historical prevalence of coastal pirates also foreshadows the recent trend of predation by the shadow state.

Emboldened by the formation of successful alliances with natives, by 1728 European and Euro-African private traders and pirates began to openly fight the British Company of Adventurers and Royal African Company (Kup 1961: 107). In October of that year the British trading post at Bunce Island was captured by a band of Africans, slaves and ‘gromottoes’ (mixed-race liveried house servants) who were supplied by three enterprising Afro-Portuguese (Kup 1961: 108). This armed robbery was indicative of the early state of the regional economy and anteceded the economic disarray to come. Regional politics changed greatly in 1772 when the British Parliament declared all slaves landing in England to be free. In order to settle these freed slaves, black Nova Scotians (who found the inclement Canadian Maritime weather lethal), Jamaicans, London blacks, and defeated black loyalists from the American Revolution, Freetown was founded in 1792 and in 1806 the colony of Sierra Leone followed. From 1807-1860 84,000 slaves (mainly Yoruba

and Igbo) were sent to Sierra Leone (Wyse 1989) and by the 1840s inter-marriages were beginning between settlers from the colonies and the liberated Africans. However, this seeming cultural fluidity was contrasted by the far more rigid racial hierarchy of the American colony of Liberia to the south.

The history of shifting alliances and linguistic convergence, divergence, re-convergence and even re-divergence shows a strong syncretistic element to regional social formations. As has been suggested, ethnic identity in Liberia and Sierra Leone is very difficult to discuss as a series of static sodalities because of this history of combination and recombination. The Temne, Mende and Krahn are found north-to-south. However, once the history of these 'sodalities' is deeply examined, purely linguistic definitions are rendered problematic. As Kenneth Little (1967) emphasizes throughout his landmark history on the Mende of Sierra Leone, Mande is not so much a bounded language group as a process of 'Mande-ization' by which the dominant regional culture re-produced itself and expanded geographically through cultural diffusion. This process of linguistic expansion was assisted by Mande's regional prominence as a popular commercial lingua franca.

In an important Liberian case of problematic linguistic differentiation, there is a real trouble with defining 'Krahn' as a distinct population based on a similar spoken language because of the high degree of regional demographic flux (Levitt 2005: 32-33). As such, intra-'Krahn' rivalries exist amongst 'Krahn' speakers from different parts of Liberia. Richards (1996: 74-78), after the pan-African linguist David Dalby, may stress the importance of linguistic convergence, but (as one example) the Kru invasions and uncomplicated regional travel (aided by the fact that the Kru

were master sailors who were popular with the European commercial houses) suggests a strong role for regional linguistic divergence due to multiple population invasions. This does not in any way negate the importance of local lingua franca or the presence of creolized languages, it is only meant to suggest that neither convergence nor divergence is suitable as a totalizing meta-narrative because detailed ethnohistorical examination of the region suggests the role of both.

As evidence supporting this claim, Stephen Ellis (1999: 38-39) makes the point that the Mandingo commonly see themselves as the descendents of the pastoral Fulani; however, many Liberians from different ethnic groups claim that this is an invented tradition and that the Mandingo are really originally forest-dwellers who adopted the identity of Muslim pastoralists only after the Fulani invasion. This example suggests that the 'invented tradition' comes from a desire by the Mandingo to further themselves from a supposedly 'uncivilized' past. These notions relating 'civility' to some form of sedentary existence will be echoed in the coming discussion of Moran's comments about Liberian ideas concerning 'civility' (Moran 1991: 7-14).

Another example of the difficulty of using language as a proxy for 'ethnicity' in the Mano River region is the Krio language / 'people' of Sierra Leone. Although commonly thought of as coming from the word 'Creole', Krio take offence to this categorization because 'Krio' comes from the Yoruba 'akiriyo' – those who go about after church talking to one another (Wyse 1989: 6). Participation in European

religions does not negate involvement with local religious groups and it is not rare to find a Mason² and a churchgoer who is also in a secret society (Wyse 1989: 14).

This practice of cultural syncretism was more prevalent in Sierra Leone and northern Liberia than in southern Liberia because (as mentioned) of the differential levels of power between the region's refugees and the Kru naval empire. This is not to suggest that the naval power of the Kru made them a population bereft of cultural adoption, only that as a population their military might insulated them to a greater degree from the necessity of syncretism than other populations because the military strength of the local population meant that they would be imposing-upon and not imposed-upon, thus reducing the need for cooperation with other peoples.

As Kup summarizes (Kup 1961: 157) "By 1800 new ideas and new blood had been injected... In this vast reshuffle of territory many old alliances were broken and many old enmities forgiven". The chain of events that linked Christian and Islamic religious expansion to local conflicts is indicative of the need for ethno-historians to engage in multi-sited ethnographic analysis in order to affect holistic analysis. In the next chapter of this historical analysis the period from roughly 1800 to 1950 will be examined. With the inland expansion of Americo-European influence during the 19th century, existing social orders were destroyed and rural political vacuums formed. As we shall see, this regional political turmoil greatly enabled the formation of shadow states. As the political units now known as Liberia and Sierra Leone came to being, the existing political orders of the area were

² In the West African context the Freemason orders act very much the same way as their counterparts in the West. They are semi-secretive orders concerned with various rites and rituals, including charitable community services and assisting members in diverse ways.

dismantled and the relative social stability they embodied disappeared as violent conflict increasingly became the only mode of political discourse.

Chapter Three: Colonial History 1800-1950

The period 1800-1950 was one of great social upheaval in the Mano River region. In Liberia the increasing country-wide influence of the United States government and the Americo-Liberian settlers extended over more and more indigenous West African peoples. In 1816 the American Colonization Society (ACS) was founded in the United States by white American men in order to spread the word of Christ, deport those slaves freed through manumission, and reduce the chance of domestic slave revolts (Levitt 2005: 32). In March 1821 the first ship sent to Liberia, the USS Nautilus, could not find a place to land and had to return home. The ACS was not deterred. Undaunted by this early failure to land, the agent in charge of 'buying' the land on which the settlement was to be built, a certain Mr. Mills, wrote to ACS president Bushrod Washington (the first President's nephew) and told him to have faith that soon "Ethiopia [i.e. black Africa] will stretch forth her hands unto God and worship" (Beyan 2005: 41). In September of that year the Americans returned onboard the USS Alligator with 4 whites and 35 freemen. They were guided south, away from the Sierra Leonean coast, by slave traders who were pretending to have the best interests of the Americans in mind. In reality they wanted to use the "curtain" of the Cape Mount mountain range that separates northern Liberia and southern Sierra Leone in order to hide their activities from the ostensibly civil-rights oriented colonists (Beyan 2005: 46).

Unable to make a deal with the local natives, the ACS agent Mills turned the negotiations over to the skipper of the Alligator, US Navy Captain Robert Stockton.

On December 15th 1821 the Captain ‘bought’ land for \$300 from ‘King’ George and five other northern ‘kings’ (Levitt 2005: 40). The ‘kings’ were leaders of their political formations, but whether or not they were aware of the deal the Americans intended to make is not clear. As well, the men the Americans sought to legally legitimate their colony by doing business with did not have the absolute control that European monarchs had, as shown in the discussion of Mande and Atlantic power structures discussed above. This limit on the absoluteness of their powers, whether hereditary or merited, did not allow them to sell the land they governed in the same sense that titled Europeans could. Besides the commonly-asked anthropological question of whether or not the indigenes had a concept of private property and could even sell land, the fact-of-the-matter remains that the indigenes of Liberia were loathe to accept the Americans and their ‘kings’ sold the Americans land only after Captain Stockton pulled a loaded pistol on them (Levitt 2005: 41). Under these conditions of foundation, tensions between natives and settlers were intense and immediately violent. Although ostensibly founded in order to deal a blow to the institution of slavery, Liberia simply reinforced existing local economic systems, supplanting local sources with Americo-Liberian capital. Even as late as 1835-1836 Monrovia businesses were involved in the slave trade, both indirectly by furnishing accessories such as manacles and directly through involvement in trading and the actual taking of captives (Beyan 2005: 63). In addition to the profit motive, the impetus for the colony’s involvement in the shadow economy of slavery had a very strong dimension of cultural and phenotypical discrimination. The Liberian historian Amos Beyan comments

The institutional values and norms of the leading members of the ACS, especially those of its Antebellum Southern prominent members, were not only ideologically introduced to the Liberian colony; they were also practically promoted by the chief representatives of that body... As it was in Antebellum South and even in the England and North Eastern states, light-skinned black settlers in Liberia were more preferred than their dark-skinned counterparts. The antedating practice was a manifestation of prominent ACS members' racism, which stressed that anything closer to white in appearance and in spirit was more appropriate than one that was not. (Beyan 2005: 55)

Further displaying the commitment of the United States government of the time to the success of the colony, on August 8th 1822 the USS Strong reinforced the colony. It must be remembered that the white American colonists, especially Bushrod Washington, were politically well-connected. Unlike Massachusetts, the founding of Liberia cannot truly be thought of as the founding of a colony for persecuted people because of the constant presence of American military power in supporting the extraction of value from the region at the behest of the well-heeled founders and (partly) on behalf of the Americo-Liberian colonists. Although proceeding under the rubric of 'legal purchase', much like many of the instances of land purchase between American colonists and the Amerindians, the coercive nature of the 'legal' relationship between the Americo-Liberian colonists and local populations must be stressed. The local political units called 'tribes' by the Americans (mainly the Dei) that had been disenfranchised by the 'purchase' of Liberia attacked the American settlers on November 11th under the command of 'King' Peter, but cannon and musket fire drove them off. On December 1st the confederacy attacked again, but one-thousand five-hundred warriors were held off by the firearms wielded by the handful of settlers. Three days later the alliance sued for peace after three separate

defeats. 'Kings' Boson and Brister (who got their names from the crafts they practiced on-board European ships) were pro-American and opposed the bellicose 'Kings' Peter and George at the meeting before the decision to go to war with the Americans was made. After the 4th, due to the pressure that Boson (or Botswain) and Brister were able to bring to bear against the anti-American elements due to the military defeats, George was replaced by Peter (even though Peter originally supported the war) (Levitt 2005: 48-49). In order to cement his leadership, Peter announced to potential challengers that he had 'taken George's head'; in reality George was given the option of giving up his head or his position as leader of the confederacy and he chose the latter.

The metaphor that 'King' Peter invoked to cement his leadership was an important indicator of local political practice. Since transmission of early regional dynasties was often linked to the passing-on of a ceremonial cap (the non-metallic equivalent of a crown) (Kup 1961; Little 1968; Abraham 1978), the taking of someone's head is a powerful metaphor not exclusively because of the act of decapitation itself, but because of the legitimating cap attached to his head.

The approximately three hundred Americo-Liberian settler families (Reno 1998: 81) and the handful of ACS administrators rapidly began to alienate their 'allies', including 'King' Botswain. However, it must be noted that the Americans were not uniformly obdurate. In one of the few colonial-era instances of Liberian Africans being over-aggressive, Governor Hankinson, a non-violent Quaker, allowed his province to be attacked on the 10th of June 1835 because he refused to accept the defense of troops from Monrovia. He was promptly replaced. On the 12th of

September 1838 Kru fishermen, hired as guides, mangled and killed Josiah Finley, governor of Mississippi (Mississippi and Maryland were provinces of Liberia, 'independent' of Monrovia, named after the American states where the money to fund them was raised) and lieutenant-Governor of the colony of Liberia. In retaliation, the Kru were forced to give up land and pay a \$1000 indemnity (Levitt 2005: 72). This assassination is important to note because it is indicative of the general level of Kru indignation and resistance to the Americans who replaced the Kru as the power-brokers south of the Cape Mount.

By 1847 the American Colonization Society was financially insolvent and the handful of white American administrators had to cede power to the Americo-Liberians in order to limit the financial liabilities of the corporation by giving the Americo-Liberians a constitution, which was not actually recognized by Washington DC at the time. Under JJ Roberts, the first black provincial governor president (1847) the Americo-Liberians seemed eager to right the wrongs visited upon them by visiting the same wrongs on blacks darker than themselves. The legal historian Jeremy Levitt (Levitt: 2005: 5) has suggested that Liberia was a racial hierarchy – whites, black colonists and then emancipated slaves – at foundation. When the whites were taken out of this equation, the black colonists rushed in to take their place and natives now occupied the lowest category in the social hierarchy. The black colonists were known to have taken multiple local women as wives to augment their wives in Monrovia (Beyan 2005: 97), establishing a system of social reproduction that was almost a carbon copy of the slave economy of the antebellum South that they had been 'liberated' from (Gray White 1985). Native

women were not physically coerced into these polygenic relationships and entered them in order to achieve social advancement. In this way, a native woman could achieve 'civility' by being the wife (or even the second or third wife) of a poor colonist, which conveyed more social status than if she was married to a rich native man and lived a domestic life. Eventually the children born of these relationships were incorporated into their father's lineages. Moran comments: " 'Outside children' of repatriate men by their 'country wives' were, over time, merged into official family histories, augmenting the supposedly endogamous group without challenging the myth of 'pure' settler descent" (Moran 1991: 59-60). In this case, as with Sierra Leone, Liberian history displays a tendency towards ethnic assimilation and is a common historical feature.

Though 'Liberia' means the 'land of the free', the legality of the founding conditions would certainly not corroborate this over-optimistic moniker. For example, the "constitution of 1820 was contradictory and authoritarian because it purported to extend certain rights and freedoms to the settlers, but in reality did not" (Levitt 2005: 38). In fact, the purpose of the 1820 constitution was to cede all 'sovereign' Liberian authority to agents of the US government. The black colonists did not seem to realize (or care about) the philosophical-legal irony of their colony's founding and used every excuse to exercise violent coercion over Africans as they expanded their powers of taxation down the southern coast (territory of Kru-speakers) and into the interior. Again, this conflict was especially centered on the resistance of the Kru to Liberian encroachment on their traditional power over the southern coast.

In December 1855 the 1st Grebo war with the Liberian state of Maryland was begun and would continue until 1857 (Levitt 2005: 111). Monrovia gave Maryland (still an independent province of the colony) non-lethal aid and after the war Liberia accepted Maryland as a county. From 1870-74 the Grebo actively resisted residency requirements imposed by Monrovia in order to limit native mobility. An exchange of gifts between the King of the Grebo and the British at Sierra Leone was an attempt to supercede the regional 'sovereignty' of Liberia (by this time Maryland was a province of the colony and no longer independent) in order to cultivate international relations with Britain. Moran notes "the British openly suggested that Monrovia 'stop meddling in the affairs of the Kroo coast' and some Kru and Grebo towns went into outright revolt, requesting protection and even annexation by England" (Moran 1991: 49). The presence of Sierra Leone proved to be something of a nuisance to the government in Monrovia because it offered indigenous groups another local political power to negotiate with contra Monrovia.

During the 'negotiations' between the native Liberians and the British to the north of the Mano River, the British governor of Sierra Leone gave the Grebo 'King' what he literally considered 'trinkets' (such as a cheap telescope and a mirror for the Queen) as gifts. He certainly did not think he was entering into a defensive alliance with the Grebo on behalf of the English, as he simply did not have the power to enter such an arrangement on behalf of the British Empire (Levitt 2005: 112). Previous to this (in 1850) the Kru, as a collective, tried to appeal to the British for help in removing the Americans, to no avail. Sadly, the Grebo started another war thinking they finally had an ally in London. The US government, after a request

from the government in Monrovia, sent the USS Alaska (captained by AA Semmes) off the coast with orders not to shoot, which the Grebo had no way of knowing. On February 3rd, 1876 it anchored off the southern coast and by the 1st of March there was 'peace' when the Grebo saw that their British 'allies' would not materialize. Although the presence of the USS Alaska was purely meant as a visual deterrence, it certainly had an effect on the Grebo without firing a single shell.

During the period approaching the 20th century Atlantic-speaking men, collectively known to the Americo-Liberians as 'Kru', became increasingly incorporated into European merchant operations. This incorporation of African labor by European commercial houses took place in the coastal regions. Although this commercial influence started in the north of Liberia, as the influence of the Americo-Liberians stretched south towards the south at Cape Palmas, so too did the number of native communities affected by the southwards expansion of Americo-Liberian capital. "Although collectively known as Krumen, undoubtedly a large number of these were Glebo- and other Grebo-speakers, since Cape Palmas rapidly became an important center for labor recruitment, with about two thousand men shipped out yearly by 1873" (Moran 1991: 43). As the number of natives recruited as ship-hands increased with the scope of regional commerce, "the 'krooboy' once recruited as deckhands had become essential to the operation of many on-shore operations in the European colonies" (Moran 1991: 48). Ellis contends that the capitalization of the Liberian labor market "tended to undermine the traditional social mechanisms of rural areas, where male elders exercised authority thru their monopoly control of land, trade and women" (Ellis 1999: 49). The Kru-speakers of

the southern coast, of all the peoples of Liberia, probably lost the most power to the Americo-Liberians, as evidenced by their fierce and consistent resistance to Monrovia's unwanted advances. However, Ellis' comments about the 'Liberian labor market' and 'Liberian women' need to be examined more closely. Although seemingly detrimental to a system of patriarchal authority, the introduction of wage-capitalism, in some cases, reinforced patriarchy through the adoption by many southern coast women of the housewife identity as a counter to the encroachments of wage capitalism.

Writing about the highly-politicized Atlantic-speaking area of south Liberia, Mary Moran comments that the influence of the ACS religious missions on the indigenous Kru- and Grebo-speaking peoples appears to have been greater than that of the settlers. Considering their proximity to the missions on the southern coast, as opposed to the commercial centre of Monrovia, this effect on the southern coast is entirely historically reasonable. As such, the people of the southern coast were more concerned with imitating European ideas of civility than engaging in coastal commerce, their traditional occupation. Moran explains: "Glebo women achieve civilized status in much the same manner as men, through formal education and training, yet they remain almost totally economically dependent on male wage earners. Being 'civilized' severely constrains a woman's ability to support herself by limiting her to economic activities in which she must compete (often unequally) with men" (Moran 1991: 7).

This concern with 'civility' is not a class distinction in the usual sense, because of increased economic stability of market women versus 'civilized' women. Being

‘civilized’ is a geographical distinction because the antonym for the Kru word for civilization (*kui*) is the word for rural. Moran cites the results of an essay-writing exercise amongst Kru children where the children associated the concept of ‘*kui*’ with cleanliness, use of machinery, and intelligent behavior (Moran 1991: 3). Another important element of ‘*kui*’ is salaried work, and not the variable income associated with self-employment as a market-seller. Moran quotes one of her interviewees as commenting on the necessity of ‘civility’ to earning a salary and vice-versa: “A salary makes you *kui* and *kuiness* is necessary for a salary” (Moran 1991: 63).

Moran goes on to explain that southern Liberia has a very ‘shallow’ marketing history. Many market women will sell goods in order that their daughters can become educated, but only so that the daughters can marry a man who will allow them to be financially dependent (Moran 1991: 126). Although one market woman was quoted as emphatically asserting her financial independence: “I see, I want something, I don’t go to anyone to give to me. I take my own self money and buy it” (Moran 1991: 128), Moran shows that among many Grebo women the conception of female civility is simultaneously a maintenance of tradition and a rejection of modern western gender roles regarding the gender mainstreaming of labor markets. The effects of capitalism that Ellis theorizes were certainly present in parts of Liberia, but as Moran shows, it is dangerous to over-estimate the willingness of women to free themselves from the shackles of patriarchy by adopting wage labor.

While Ellis' claim is probably more valid amongst the Mande, many women amongst the Krahn actively reject 'bread-winning modernity' as an active form of resistance to the destruction of the Krahn's traditional role in the region by Monrovia's usurpation of power. As Moran points out, many Grebo women would rather make do as a single income family then adopt wage-capitalism (i.e. working as a secretary or teacher) or submit themselves to the vicissitudes of the marketplace. This distinction between 'civility' and 'savagery' based on differential labor roles based along gender lines was an invention of the colonial era. In the Liberian part of the MRCC this colonially-enforced gender distinction was replaced, at times, by a reaffirmation of the traditional gender ambiguity of the Liberian warrior through intentional transvestitism in battle (Moran 2006: 24). This repudiation of colonially-influenced gender roles explains many seemingly "bizarre" (Richburg 1997: 134) actions during the Liberian aspect of the MRCC, including the wearing of wigs, wedding dresses and purses into battle (Ellis 1999: 18-20; Moran 2006: 20-27).

Levitt opines that the Atlantic-speakers he misidentifies as "Kwa-speakers" (linguists separate Kwa from the Atlantic languages; see Williamson 1989: 3-6), fought the colonists more vigorously than Mande-speakers because:

- 1) They were the point of original contact with the Americans and had the longest relationship with them, which gave them more time and reasons to hate the colonists.

- 2) Their position as slavers was threatened by Monrovia.

3) As traders on the coast they were constantly in competition with American commerce, which made them loathe to ceding more power in the form of payment of taxes.

4) The acephalous nature of their 'Kingdom' made resistance fairly easy because the various sub-groups could largely act on their own initiative, flexibly responding to challenges and opportunities without having to coordinate decisions centrally.

(Levitt 2005: 253-254)

During this period the threat posed to indigenous cultural practices in Sierra Leone followed a similar trajectory as in Liberia. As the colonial population increased, a greater degree of economic subordination was demanded from the hinterland. These demands were initially facilitated by the Krio social group who were caught in the middle between rural Sierra Leone and the colonial administrators. As opposed to the American Colonization Society, which limited its liability over debts by transferring their assets to the Americo-Liberian colonists in 1847, the British government installed Protectorate over Sierra Leone in 1898 and did not grant the country full independence until 1967. As in Liberia, however, colonial demands made of the indigenous population proved to be a site of intense confrontation. After the British establishment of the anti-slaving squadron at Freetown in 1807, the Freetown (established 1787) peninsula's population peacefully grew for another three decades before the need to find fertile land forced outwards expansion and violent contact with the interior peoples. The British colony began its thrust inland from the Freetown Peninsula in 1839 because by this

point the colony's Krio (mainly descendants of freed slaves) farmers had exhausted the poor nutrient-retention capacity of the fine-grained soil of the sandy peninsula. With growing population pressure due to organic growth and the immigration of many African repatriates there grew a commensurate demand to expand the colony beyond Freetown (Wyse 1989: 17).

This expansion by the Krio into the Sierra Leonean hinterland continued beyond the Freetown peninsula and across British West Africa. The Christian Krio were put in an unenviable position by their role as the vanguard of English cultural imperialism, earning them both the enmity of the natives they tried to convert and the disrespect of the British who saw them as lackeys. Due to this mechanism of population transfer between British trading centres, by 1865 *Saro* (Sierra Leonean diaspora) made up 20% of the population of Lagos, Nigeria (Wyse 1989: 22). It must be noted that the increased scope of British colonization due to a growing population of repatriated slaves and decreasing agricultural yields was nothing short of a religious crusade which greatly influenced indigenous behaviors, reshaping them in the image of European mannerisms. Amongst the Krio, the self-righteousness associated with their new role as the converters of inland heathens was "manifest in a new rigidity in marriage forms and increasing restrictions on women's mobility and economic independence" (Wyse 1989: 56-57).

In 1882 a conflict over increasing British control over coastal taxation led to a war with the inhabitants of Sherbro Island in the South. Although the role of the Sherbro as leaders in coastal trade north of the Cape Mount was traditionally established, much like the Kru to the south, colonial imposition of control over coastal trade was

the major locus of contention around which conflict arose. In 1903, typical of the colonial administration's attitude, the British historian Crooks opined as to the cause of the 1882-1883 war:

[M]y opinion is, that the outbreak was the result of sudden impulse taking effect among a number of people already predisposed to excitement. Anyone who has had experience in dealings with savages or semi-savages, knows that such people are very prone to act upon sudden impulse and that it is very difficult to discover any precise ground for acts they may commit when there is present some cause for excitement. (Quoted in Abraham 1978a: 73)

Contrary to this point of view, however, a British trader from the offshore trading center of Sherbro Island with over 25 years experience in the area editorialized:

Differences with the natives nearly always arise from the want of knowledge on the part of the British officials. Their usual term of office is so short that they have no time to learn the peculiarities of the neighboring tribes and of British relations with them.... Most of the governors... entering upon their short official career... initiate a policy of their own, frequently the direct opposite of that of their predecessor. The natural result of this want of uniformity in our attitude towards the natives is mistrust, restlessness, and too often risings, which have to put down with bloodshed and burnings as in the present case. (Quoted in Abraham 1978a: 73-73)

The war resolved little or nothing and tensions between coastal natives and British traders continued unabated. In 1888 traders in Sherbro petitioned the colonial government to extend direct control beyond Freetown with the appeal that "savage minds respect power alone" (Kup 1961: 87). A controversial 1893 national Hut Tax resulted in armed rebellion in the Mende southwest in 1896, led by the chief Bai Bureh (Little 1967: 53). Initial military successes against the British well-displayed the powers of organization of local social networks. However, the secret societies that committed this warfare were not accustomed to the temporally extensive nature of protracted colonial warfare as regional warfare was historically focused on short-

term raiding (Little 1965; 1966). As such (like the recent conflict), once the initial violence was over the lack of a well-defined post-conflict political reorganization led to a reversal of initial successes against the government.

Resistance to the Hut Tax of 1893, as Little (1965; 1966) discusses, was largely organized and executed through the West African men's secret society *Poro* or *Purrah*. The training of young men for war (under the conditions of 'kidnapping' by masked, naked men in the middle of the night as discussed previously) and the inculcation in them of ferocity in battle and unswerving loyalty to his elders/military commanders was one aspect of the potential danger posed by *Poro* that made it a target of British rule. As well as the organizational benefits offered by *Poro* itself, the Sierra Leonean tradition of travelling political diviners assisted resistance as "[t]he mobility and networks of itinerant specialists often proved useful to chiefs who opposed the Protectorate, enabling leaders in different areas to organize meetings" (Shaw 1996: 45).

In addition to the use of diviners as spiritual conduits and earthly messengers, in wartime *mori* men (sorcerers) used symbolic violence to psychically fight the enemy and protect friendly forces through the use of various religious charms (Little 1967: 36). As Islam spread throughout the region, its 'universality was localized' (Geertz 1968) through syncretism. Most indicative of this religious collage was that the invocation of *Poro* spirits began to involve the use of charms written in Arabic script (Little 1967: 246). In addition to being a useful tool from which to launch violent resistance, the *Poro* prohibition on selling commonly-held agricultural land was a hindrance to British commercial interests. The Sherbro

District Commissioner, Allridge, had this to say about British attempts to control indigenous institutions: “In short, three institutions were to be guillotined – the slave-trade, ‘the staking of persons’, and that economic nuisance of a ‘Poro’ which ‘from selfish motives’ placed an embargo on palm trees, thus diminishing commerce and causing loss of revenue” (Abraham 1978a: 119). Indeed, indignant British moral concern with banning the institution of slavery pervaded official discourses legitimating English protectorate over the country.

Concerning the need for a protectorate, Governor Cardew had this to say about native ‘industry’:

The more powerful and warlike Chiefs derive their whole revenue from the sale of slaves. They prey on the less warlike, because more industrious, tribes around them until all the neighboring region which is within their sphere of action becomes a desert. In the chief town of each chief, there are traders generally from the Susu country and Futa Djallong whose principal stock in trade are guns and powders which they get from Freetown and Port Lolo. These they advance to the chiefs for the promise of slaves in lieu, often a chief becomes heavily in debt to these traders, and to discharge his debt he sells some of his or what is more generally the case, he organizes a raid on some neighboring tribe. (Abraham 1978a: 116)

Governor Cardew, in his attempts to eliminate slaving, was ostensibly operating under the logic of attempting to civilize the indigenous Africans. However, the Sierra Leonean historian Arthur Abraham notes that as tempting as it may be to believe these ‘noble’ concerns:

The Sierra Leone evidence suggests that the British presence encouraged the political fragmentation of the indigenous states, and quite consciously prevented any political re-organization so as to facilitate the colonial occupation, which was in the economic interest of the Colony. The societies were not on the verge of collapse; nor did Britain intervene to save them. The coastal states,

although in a state of relative decline, were on the verge of internal re-organization which the British halted, while the interior states witnessed a period of political state-formation up to the time of the colonial occupation. (Abraham 1978a: 122).

According to Abraham it is clear that the British were operating a system intended to be detrimental to the autonomy of local political groups and to lead to their decay as sources of resistance in order to facilitate the economic exploitation of the colony's interior. In this example, the history of the Mano River region clearly foreshadows the coming of the shadow state because the idea of no reciprocity between leader and subject was established by the British as part of their indifferent and culturally insensitive system of colonial tenure. It is important to note that Governor Cardew mentions the Susu and Fulani sale of slaves in exchange for money or commodities. He fails to mention that under the Mande institution of wealth-in-people 'slavery' was very dissimilar from the predatory practices he described, which more closely resembled the Kru human-trade in that the prime concern was monetary profit. Unlike the nomadic Fulani to the north or Kru coastal traders, the Mande were agriculturalists who lived in forested areas. As such, population expansion was predicated on agricultural expansion and the act of felling trees was thus central to society. 'Slave' labor was critical to the clearing of forested land for farming (Little 1967: 37-39), and this importance was reflected in a respect for slaves due to their immense social utility, as opposed to value derived from selling them for money. As such, within Mande societies male 'slaves' had many of the same social rights and obligations as freeborn Mande men. In fact, as one expert argues, (Zack-Williams 1995: 34-35), the Sierra Leonean slave industry actually

became more like the brutal American plantation system and moved away from its traditional regional form during the colonial period. The assimilation of slaves into the host society mitigated some of the depredations that existed under the Antebellum Southern slave industry, a nuance clearly lost on Governor Cardew.

Across Mande societies a “culture of industry” existed such that merit was commonly the only prerequisite for social advancement. In this light, a captured ‘slave’ could farm his own land, create surplus agricultural product, and redistribute it in order to gain social capital. Following this technique, Mande ‘slaves’ could eventually develop the clout within the community needed to marry within the group, secure political office, and lead military campaigns against rival populations (Holsoe 1974 158-160, 167). Although this practice was technically population expansion through coercive means, it was nowhere near as damaging to the human spirit as other forms of the institution of slavery (Little 1967: 39-40), and helps to explain the seeming paradox as to why many Mende ‘slaves’ fought and died alongside their ‘masters’ in resisting the British tax and eventual establishment of protectorate.

In response to the Mande resistance to the Hut Tax, Cardew ordered the razing of villages around the offices of the District Commissioners (Little 1967: 182) and ordered the creation of a Frontier Police of freed slaves, which were then sent back to the very districts from which they were rescued, with predictable results. In addition to robbery and murder, the Frontier Police (which paralleled the Liberian Frontier Force discussed below), was notorious for the widespread use of sexual assault, to which the Governor sympathetically responded: “these men have not

their wives here, hence they cannot help the wrong” (quoted in Little 1967: 164). In another foreshadowing of the coming of the shadow state, the corrupt police forces of colonial Liberia and Sierra Leone predicated the widespread future use of official positions for personal gain. This displays an important similarity in the history of the two countries.

Further aggravating this injustice, the Mande (especially the Mende) were thoroughly punished for their role in the uprising of 1896-1898, including the deportation of the Mende chief Bai Bureh, the main political instigator behind the popular movement, to Ghana. The war villages of the Mende were ordered dismantled and the occupants forced to cultivate open spaces accessible by the government, as opposed to forest villages connected by over-grown paths. Mende villages were surrounded by a “living fence” (Little 1967: 50) of forest that was built around large trees and was a growing wall that was constantly being cultivated by the community. As an ecocide retribution, these ‘war fences’ were ordered taken down in order to pacify the Mende (Little 1967: 44).

By uprooting the Mende ecological relationship to the land, the British took a large step towards destroying existing Mende culture, which was based around the geographical security given by the forest and the cultivation of the forest-people relationships that resulted from the creation and tending of these animate barriers. I would imagine that there was an adverse psychic effect that the order to kill the living fences had on the Mende villagers due to the reversal of a culturally-definitive quotidian practice. As Melissa Leach has reported based on her fieldwork with the Mande-Speaking Gola of northern Liberia and southern Sierra Leone

“[v]illage life revolves around a particular kind of forest-derived ‘resource’” (Leach 1994: 46), and this indicates something of an intimate connection to the land, at least, amongst some Mande-speaking groups. Since the ‘living fence’ would have required a large human labor input to maintain, it stands to reason that the cultivation of these fences was an important aspect of village life and social cosmology. The destruction of these fences was tantamount to environmental warfare and was another way in which existing cultural practice was disrupted by the activities of the colonial state in its efforts to manage social groups in order to make their resources more amenable to commercial exploitation.

The massive disruption of the original social order of the Mano River peoples by this colonial intervention set the stage for the shadow state because it established the concept of the state as a predatory being. The Hut Tax, a historically new request in 1893, was an unprecedented request based on illegitimate authority whose rebuff caused even more tumult and social disruption. As already mentioned, the British had a commercial pre-occupation with eliminating the secret societies, which led to official legal sanction in the wake of the 1896-1898 Hut Tax Rebellion in the form of the ‘*Poro* Ordinance of 1897’ (Little 1967: 580). The weakening of indigenous political structures by the British also had the effect of weakening the attached cultural structures and established a negative feedback of governance where the polity expects poor governance from a callous leader at the head of a predatory government.

Upon reading published complaints of his hard-hearted and heavy-handed approach towards the indigenes, especially the Mende, Governor Cardew

complained to Lord Chamberlain in a letter written on May 28th, 1898 (Wyse 1989: 132-133) that the limited freedom of press granted to Sierra Leonean journalists was a terrible idea because it gave 'license' to criticism of the administration and the unpopular Hut Tax. In the letter, Cardew extols French colonialism for keeping their ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity domestic and not exporting the spirit of revolution (or justified criticism, as the case was) to their African colonial subjects. In order to crush the organization of the indigenes, Cardew appointed Paramount Chiefs to act below District Commissioners. To make these figures especially effective at not being able to organize resistance, the British appointed marginalized tribesmen and women to the post of Paramount Chief. They also made the twelve Chiefs equal, quashing the existing power balance between ethnic groups (as with the Kru in Liberia) in an attempt to eliminate the existing native political organization (Little 1965: 349-365; 1966: 62-72).

The appointment of the Paramount Chiefs was a major step in the creation of the patrimonial state in Sierra Leone because it established benefits to ethnic inclusion and enabled local patrons to deliver access to resources to clients. This system was exactly like the artificial imposition of 'tribal' identities in the Liberian case. In both cases cultural boundaries and systems were imposed upon the colony by the capital cities in an attempt to make the rest of the national population more amenable to management.

In order to justify the wisdom of the Hut Tax, Cardew blamed the rebellion on the Krio, who somehow did not properly convince the natives of the beneficence of the British. As well, many Mande (and others) blamed the Krio for the 1898

establishment of the Protectorate, so the Krio ended up bearing much of the fall-out from the events of 1896 and 1898. Inland Krio were not physically well-protected, as opposed to those in Freetown and became the targets of ethnically-motivated attacks (Wyse 1989: 28). In this period of tension the practice of sending rural children into the cities to live as foster-children was begun, the most notable of these children being the second elected President and later dictator, Siaka Stevens (Wyse 1989: 70) who extolled the virtues of the program. However, his positive experience was rare considering that in most historic cases as Wyse points out that most of the adopted children received severe and frequent corporal punishment and were treated as servants.

The lack of an intermediary group like the Krio in Sierra Leone meant that the colonial powers in Liberia were forced to deal with the indigenous population directly. By 1894 Monrovia demanded that treaties be signed by each of the indigenous populations they considered to be 'tribes', to which the Kru groups predictably said 'no'. In November of that year (Levitt 2005: 133) the Liberian government gunboat *Gorronammah* (Levitt 2005: 130) was sent south to bombard the town of Serra Kru and to sink Kru ships on the coast. As the power of the Liberian Navy grew, the ability of the coastal Kru to maintain resistance to colonial policy and engage in the unfettered economic activity that they had traditionally enjoyed shrank. For all the talk of the American 'civilizing' mission, control over coastal trade informed conflict with the Atlantic-speakers of the coast more so than with other indigenous populations. Levitt (2005) theorizes that by 1900 the three-tiered racial hierarchy of original conditions had been replaced with a new three-

tiered political hierarchy that reflected the Americo-Liberian efforts to subdue and control the interior and the southern coast. The head of this hierarchy was the President in Monrovia, who was elected by the propertied male Americo-Liberians. The President appointed powerful District Commissioners at the county-level and, unlike the Sierra Leonean model of English District Commissioners (DCs) at the provincial level, the DC's in Liberia were black Americo-Liberians. Lastly on this list came the 'native kings', who only received 5-15% of the hut, poll and education taxes collected from their area. The expansion of Monrovia's sphere of influence into the hinterland and the southern coast brought with it new opportunities for native employment within the growing government bureaucracy needed to govern the increasingly large colony. "In addition to the expanding economy, the expansion of the Liberian state created new, if still limited, opportunities for educated Glebo. Indirect rule as a method of hinterland administration was initiated in Maryland County in 1904, creating positions as interpreters and clerks for illiterate native chiefs" (Moran 1991: 62). The expansion of the Liberian state brought with it government patronage and economic opportunities to the hinterland in an effort to stave-off competition. This certainly foreshadows the economic activity of the patrimonial state to some.

In 1904 an aggressive Americo-Liberian from Monrovia named Arthur Barclay was elected President and he did not hesitate to form the 'Frontier Force' militia on June 21st, 1906 in order to counter threats of 'annexation' by the British or French (Levitt 2005: 133). In reality the militia was the first step in the final push to extinguish native rights and entrench the Americo-Liberian clique of Monrovia as

masters over the whole of the country. The Force, after all, was mainly comprised of interior Africans who were acrimonious towards the Kru who had, before the Americo-Liberians came along, enslaved and sold them to Europeans (Wyse 1989: 46). In response to Barclay's aggressive stance, the Mandingo, Kru and smaller groups allied against Monrovia in order to maintain coastal rights to traditional trade. In 1909 the government bought a used patrol boat from Great Britain and used that ship to further their imposition of 'gunboat' taxes. The Kru began to openly rebel, raiding any European ships they could find along the coast and continuing the local tradition of violent protest to European encroachment on traditional economic activities.

The threat to English commerce posed by Kru banditry, especially around the towns of Grand Cess, Sasstown, and Garraway caused the British Navy to intervene and initiate a naval blockade of the colony. This led to Monrovia being forced to negotiate (as opposed to dictate which they originally tried) a customs union with the Kru, with a Kruman as chief customs collector. In a sense, the Kru rebellion of 1909 got the British support denied them in 1850 and 1874. By attacking British commercial shipping on the coast, the Kru seemingly realized that the only way to get the British to intervene against Monrovia's destruction of their traditional role as 'kings of the coast' was to attack the British. Once again, the history of the Mano River region has shown the limits of exploring the history of the Mano River area without reference to international affairs. Although the Kru were not an internationally-recognized body, they managed to use their local influence to force Monrovia to recognize them vis-à-vis the appointment of the Kru customs collector.

By using naval war to threaten international shipping the Kru were patronized by Monrovia and in some ways acted as antecedents to the local political leaders of the shadow state.

In August 1909 (Levitt 2005: 150) Frontier Force troops under District Commissioner Sherman killed the King of River Cess and raped and killed many of his people. The Monrovia government could not find any justification for this particular act so, in a rare act of contrition, paid \$1000 in reparations to the survivors of the raid. After this outrage, the Grebo were agitated to the point where by the next year they were beginning to foment and agitate against the government. Fearing another war that Monrovia could not win with their single-ship Navy, President Barclay appealed to Washington for symbolic deterrence (Levitt 2005: 155). Though no shells were fired, the presence of the USS Birmingham and Des Moines parked off the coast committed enough symbolic violence (once again) to convince the Grebo to cease their efforts at independence.

From 1915-1916 Monrovia went to war again with the Kru. “The failure of the government to institute sound control mechanisms on the Kru coast greatly inhibited its ability to exercise its sovereign functions” (Levitt 2005: 173). In this case, the ‘sovereign function’ of Barclay’s government was the exercise of absolute power in order to control the coastal economy and impose taxes on coastal peoples without giving them any real benefits. As was previously indicated, the ‘Lion’s Share’ of revenues gotten at the local level were funneled by the predatory state to the political elites of Monrovia, much to the consternation of those who paid the taxes.

The history of the ‘conquering’ and resistance of the Atlantic-speakers is critically important to understanding the causation of regional conflict in recent times, as we will soon see. As Moran (Moran 2006: 30) indicates, the history of Liberia is largely written from a “Mande-centric” stance, which I have tried to counter with an extensive discussion of the forced incorporation of the ‘Kru’ naval-based empire into the Liberian political fold remotely-controlled by the Americo-Liberians in Monrovia. A ‘thick’ ethno-history of Liberia necessitates an examination of the ‘Kru’s’ traditional economic role on the coast and the historical forms of their resistance. As a summary of the social tensions characterizing Liberian history during the period, Moran comments

The effect of European racism in the West African colonies (including Sierra Leone which did not become independent until the 1960s) seems to have discouraged members of the educated class from completely breaking ties with their families and communities. Because “passing” into the white colonial elite was physically impossible, educated Africans emphasized their common interests, rather than differences from, the masses of the people. In Liberia, however, independence was declared in 1847, and the white presence before that time had consisted of a few ACS agents and missionaries. Members of the repatriate elite could not base their claims to superiority on biological difference from the surrounding people, nor could they contend that blacks were incapable of becoming civilized, although early political struggles between mulatto and ‘true black’ factions may have represented some attempt in this direction... [F]or the most part, however, repatriate elites had to rely on group endogamy and an almost obsessive concern with individual genealogy to maintain their political and ideological superiority. They also controlled such “gatekeeping” institutions as schools, churches, Masonic lodges, and other secret societies to restrict class and status mobility. (Moran 1991: 59)

In 1920 Charles DB King became President of Liberia and in 1930 a League of Nations report indicated that the President had been active in enabling the

compulsory recruitment of native labor for the American Firestone Rubber Company and the offshore Portuguese fruit plantations on the island of Fernando Po. As an indication of the ‘thinness’ of the Liberian economy at this point, the deal with Firestone transferred no money to the economy-at-large. The ‘deal’ allowed Firestone to do as it pleased in terms of labor and environmental conditions at their plantation and factory, and in exchange the Liberian government would receive five million dollars (Somah 1995: 47), which they then promptly handed over as a debt repayment to their main foreign creditor, the US government. In 1944 William Vaccanarath Shadrach Tubman became President until his death in 1971. Tubman’s True Whig Party continued King’s policy of the economic exploitation of the country at the whims of Americo-European capital under the 1944 ‘Open Door’ policy (Ellis 1999: 185). The ‘Open Door’ policy was an economic plan enacted in order to encourage foreign capital into Liberia by lowering operating standards for labor so as to cheapen Liberian labor. This made the country very attractive to investment by European and American corporations who could more easily maximize profits from operations in that country. Tubman made no efforts to reform the military and police, who remained “brutally corrupt” (Ellis 1999: 142). In 1946 Monrovia extended ‘democracy’ to all adult hut-tax payers under a national unification policy. However, this was a sham democracy. In 1951 when disenfranchised settler and native elites formed the United People’s Party, the only alternative at that point to the True Whigs, their status as an official party was blocked by Tubman.

Vice-President William Tolbert Jr. (VP from 1952-on) was appointed president-in-waiting by decree of Tubman. On Tubman's death in 1971 the weak Tolbert assumed power until a military coup in 1980. The Tubman period was important in further radicalizing the Liberian people by exposing their government as "a corrupt and ramshackle neo-colony managed on behalf of the US government and the Firestone Rubber Company" (Ellis 1999: 50). The traditional power of the Kru in Liberia was further historically undermined by the patronage-appointing system of the True Whig Party, which gave limited patronage access to members of mainstream churches and Masonic lodges (Ellis 1999: 48). Since the means of social advancement was through association with organizations that were in direct competition with the traditional authority of Kru socio-political leaders, many Kru were alienated from Monrovia.

For many Sierra Leoneans, widespread colonial contact began with the enlistment of indigenous troops into the British Army to fight in the First World War. The soldiers returned from overseas demanding increased rights and this led to the 1917 Syrian Riots. The riots were a contestation over war bonuses and rice prices, which were commonly thought to have been manipulated by the Syrian wholesalers and merchants that were predominant in the economy. These were roles that were later adopted by Sierra Leoneans of Lebanese descent in the diamond sector. In addition to the foment of inter-ethnic tensions (Wyse 1989: 77), during the 1918 influenza pandemic, the interior of Sierra Leone (everything other than the Freetown peninsula) was particularly ravaged because of negligence by the colonial administration in healthcare provision. This maltreatment was commonly seen as a

blatant aggravation of the spirit of the concept 'Protectorate' (Wyse 1989: 76-80). The Railway Riots on January 14th 1926 (Wyse 1989: 83) were a widespread phenomenon of resistance against the protectorate authorities, though the British officials blamed the acts against the railroad (the physical and symbolic link between rural Sierra Leone and the modern world) on isolated rascals. The presence of community banking (*Esusu*) amongst indigenous Sierra Leoneans lends towards the hypothesis that the secret societies led to very close inter-village bonds of trust and that a great deal of social practice took place through these institutions. As in the Liberian case that Moran examined, women as well as men were educated, but 'civilized women' did not work because being a market-seller had the negative stigma of 'country' attached to it (Wyse 1989: 40). By the 1930s resistance was visually expressed through fashion. The colonially-influenced wearing of hot British clothes entirely unsuitable for a tropical climate, like woolen overcoats and top-hats, had passed as a fad (Wyse 1989: 52) due to the efforts of proponents of traditional African garb, such as the Dress Reform Society.

By the 1930s the discovery of mineral wealth in Sierra Leone had changed the economy drastically and became a major point of contention between the government and World War 1 veterans-turned-'interlopers' (Naylor 2005: 1-10). Whereas the National Geological Survey unearthed nothing of significant value from 1918-21, a decision to re-start the project in 1926 led to the discovery of economically-viable deposits of iron, platinum and gold (Zack-Williams 1995: 45). As mining and agriculture cannot readily be reconciled because land is finite, the increase in national economic dependence on mining caused agricultural prices to

rise commensurately due to a reduction in the amount of arable land and laborers available to work said land (Mandel 1984). Adding to the already heady and volatile mix of the resource suite discovered in the Protectorate, on January 29th, 1930 (Zack-Williams 1995: 50) the diamond potential of the area was exposed, further straining the agricultural infrastructure of the country and concentrating GDP to the extractives sector. This exacerbated the ‘resource curse’ and disproportionately adversely affected the economy of the diamond-mining locale, Kono District (Zack-Williams 1995: 180).

As history has shown, the colonial metropolises, brave declarations of the civilizing mission aside, were almost exclusively concerned with extracting wealth from their colonies. The British made no bones about this fact in their dealings with the Protectorate and as a response to the discovery of this mineral potential the Colonial Development Act of July 1929 was enacted “for the purpose of aiding and developing agriculture and industry in the colony or territory and thereby promoting commerce with or industry in the UK” (Zack-Williams 1995: 49). The predatory nature of this decree helped set a negative political tone in Sierra Leone which eventually manifested itself as the shadow state. The elements of shadow state formation were set historically, especially the polity with low expectations after the political abuse of centuries of economic exploitation. The term ‘conflict complex’, in my mind, is a stylistic preference that better evokes an examination of the complex history of international relations that lead to localized conflict than the term ‘civil war’.

In order to exploit the newfound diamond potential, in 1934 the London-based Consolidated African Selection Trust was granted leases to mine the diamonds originating from the Koidu kimberlitic diatreme³ near the town of Koidu and the Tongo kimberlitic diatreme near the town of Yengema, both in Kono province in the south-east corner of the country near the border with Guinea (Zack-Williams 1995: 51). This license was exercised through the corporation's local subsidiary, the Sierra Leone Selection Trust. Although diamond mining soon became an issue of great contention, in the early days of the industry the Selection Trust had a virtual monopoly on the diamond fields.

Foreshadowing the conflict to come in the diamond-mining sector, in 1944 the gold-mining sector was re-organized under the rubric of the Artisanal Gold Mining Scheme (Zack-Williams 1995: 48). Since tropical soils are extensively weathered by the local climate, equatorial mineral deposits are a lot easier to mine than if they were located in un-weathered host rock. The presence of this eroded, or lateritic, rock enables artisanal mining⁴. For example, this sort of low-tech mining of Ghana's lateritic goldfields produced 8% of the country's gold output in 2001. That 173 610 oz (Eshun in Marker et. al 2005: 65) of gold is currently worth about US 156,240,000\$ on the world market (@~\$900/oz). As the example shows, there is serious money to be made in picking up a spade and sieve and becoming a miner. As European businesses could not keep 'interlopers' off the easily-mined Leonean gold fields, the Artisanal Gold Mining Scheme was legislated in order to attempt to bring this sort of activity under government control.

³ A diatreme is the subterranean geological structure thru which diamonds are transported to the surface of the Earth.

⁴ The term 'artisanal mining' refers low-tech mining mainly done by hand.

As expected by the fact that they are competing over economic gain from the same finite sources of mineral wealth, the relationship between artisanal miners and the governments of Africa is “poor” (D’souza in Marker et. al 2005: 95-121) and information-collecting and regulation is spotty because of mutual mistrust, since artisanal miners have historically operated largely in the periphery of state control. As mentioned, although mining is physically capital-intensive in most cases, in situations where capital is not really required (the most germane example of which on Earth is probably the diamonds of Sierra Leone) tensions arise between the interests of the domestic elites who act as patrons and the diggers who are their clients over profits stemming from mineral sales. Clients who feel wronged can abscond with diamonds found with the patrons funding. The portability of diamonds, as discussed, also leads to the ability of local political leaders to fund violent activities and the general portability of resources in both Liberia and Sierra Leone particularly enabled the existence of local shadow states.

Learning from the inability of the gold industry to capture rents due to the activities of artisanal miners (Zack-Williams 1995: 52), the Sierra Leone Selection Trust established a system of diamond-mining royalty payments for local residents which were to be administered by the local chiefs. This action resulted in the traditionally geographically mobile Sierra Leonean society of refugees becoming more static because of the desire by chiefs to exclude newcomers from their territory in order to maximize benefits to locals derived from the royalties. This system of royalty payments administered by local chiefs clearly contributed towards the formation of local identities based on access to resource rents. In this way local

residence identities superseded national, ethnic, or linguistic identities in order for the community local to the site of resource wealth to capture resource rents. This history of geographic exclusion reinforces the importance of discussing the process of identity formation in the geopolitics of conflict over resources. In many cases the presence of residence restrictions placed on commercial actors necessitated appeals to social identities in order access resources.

During the period 1800-1950 both Liberian and Sierra Leonean politics were shaped by the influence of the inland expansion of Monrovia and Freetown. As these colonial centres expanded their local spheres of influence existing political structures were destroyed in order to facilitate colonial administration. Although the residency requirements created in Sierra Leone were centered on the extractives industries and the residency categories imposed in Liberia were focused on ethnic definitions, the similarity between the two systems of administrations is evident. Centrally-imposed definitions of ‘who is from where’ were alien to the Mano River region due to its history of population assimilation and integration. Although it cannot be said that social violence was unknown in the region prior to colonial contact, it is clear that the divide-and-conquer systems of administration imposed by Monrovia and Freetown made negotiation a more difficult tool for conflict resolution because of the pitting of local identities against one another in order to secure access to resources. By 1950 the region’s peoples were highly fragmented due to the actions of the Mano River governments. This resulted in slim chances for the continuance of the local history of assimilation and migration

Chapter Four: History 1950-1991

During the period following the diamond bonanza the most salient historical feature of Sierra Leonean politics was the creation of a one-party dictatorship under the second President, Siaka Stevens. The Stevens regime, funded almost entirely through the mining operations of the 'shadow state' and foreign aid, effectively destroyed what was left of functional democratic processes and institutions. During this period the traditional Mende political process of mediated consensus (*ngu hite* or 'hanging heads' in Mende) was enforced by the junta in Freetown as a system of coerced deference to the regime in the interests of 'national political stability' (Ferme 1999: 161).

Following the collapse of the British Empire after WWII, London granted Sierra Leone a constitution in 1947, increasingly relying on the guidance of Sir Milton Margai, the 'old man' of Sierra Leonean politics during the transitional period from the granting of the constitution in 1947 to formal independence from England in 1961. Sir Milton Margai was elected President at independence in 1961 and wanted government to operate for the universal benefit of Sierra Leoneans. This attitude increasingly came into conflict with the ambitions of his younger brother Albert, who wanted to increase the power of the Temne minority in the north through a one-party state. Sir Milton died in 1964 and during the Presidential election to choose his successor in 1967 the Sierra Leone People's Party lost to Siaka Stevens of Albert's All People's Congress. The divisive APC President was deposed by the head of the army, Brigadier-General David Lansana, but in 1968 a counter-coup by

Lansana's assistant, a supporter of the APC, re-installed Stevens. "Although the (Lansana) coup was designed to establish a tranquil political atmosphere, it gave junior army officers a license to mount a coup whenever they disagreed with the public policy of their seniors. This happened in 1968, when junior army officers intervened to install the head of the APC, Stevens, as prime minister" (Ndumbe 2001: 91-92). Using the Sierra Leone People's Party 'threat' (which he quashed by making the party illegal in 1973), Stevens increased the APC's power partly through resort to rigged elections, legal re-drawing of boundaries (Gerrymandering), and physical violence against opponents of the regime (Ndumbe 2001: 92).

The 'threat' of opposition is frequently used in African politics by incumbents to harass or otherwise hamper any counters to their political strength. Clapham comments

Since long before the advent of colonial rule, the maintenance of stable political institutions in the fragile and generally resource-poor environments of tropical Africa had presented peculiar problems. Solutions were found in a variety of mechanisms, ranging from autocracy through various consensual devices to the minimalist provision for the regulation of conflict found in what have been termed 'stateless societies', but political authority was generally too fragile to permit explicit challenge. Insofar as a characteristically African approach to the dilemmas of opposition can be discerned, this was found not in 'voice' but in 'exit'. African history is replete with cases of disaffected subordinates striking out with their supporters to establish independent kingdoms of their own. (Clapham 1997: 543)

The presence of rivals who threaten to hive-off and oppose a leader is an old phenomenon in politics. The potential for the opposition SLPP to depose the APC through democratic means existed, so the APC reacted, as Clapham would predict, by banning the SLPP so that it could not gain strength. The fragility of control over

stateless societies that does not allow leaders to permit 'explicit challenge' is a historical condition that shapes the recent conflict complex. According to Clapham, this inability to allow opposition constrains political actors into making choices that limit political opposition as much as possible and force it into submission, rebellion or flight (Clapham 1997: 556). These options for opposition do not bode well for social stability because the chances for mediation and compromise are negated in favor of increasingly absolutist rule. In the social vacuum created by the imposition of new ways of political conduct on the indigenous people of the Mano River region the traditional option of negotiation between rivals became increasingly rare and autocratic rule by the capital cities furthered this as a political option. The potential payoffs to violence increased as new sources of wealth made violent opposition a more affordable political option. This weak tradition of political opposition in tropical Africa that Clapham (1997) discusses enables the formation and continued existence of shadow states because of the complete and utter lack of a system of checks and balances that effective opposition provides against the excesses of shadow state rulers.

In 1956 the Alluvial Diamond Mining Scheme was instituted in order to reflect the growing impatience of Sierra Leoneans with the high capital-input mining technique of the Sierra Leone Selection Trust that excluded locals from the diamond-mining economy due to the presence of foreign workers and the extensive use of machinery that limited local opportunities for employment by creating an enclave of capital. Pressure from the growing nationalist movement prodded Sierra Leone Selection Trust to allow the small-scale mining of some of the marginal and

depleted parts of their leases. This led to a phenomenon known as the “Kono crunch” (Zack-Williams 1995: 140) as throngs of unemployed young men flooded into the province looking for diamonds. This flood of mainly destitute men led to problems with inflation and crime, leading to the commonly-held opinion that Kono province was the “Wild West” of Africa (Zack-Williams 1995: 139-145).

In an attempt to mitigate the damage caused to Sierra Leonean society caused by diamond mining, Sir Milton Margai implored SLST and their minority partner, De Beers, to create a Sierra Leonean diamond-processing industry in order to diversify the economy. Although he was successful in his appeal, the limited scope of the project resulted in it largely being economically ineffective. According to Zack-Williams (1995: 84- 85) this venture was nothing more than a public relations exercise since it did not diversify the economy away from primary commodity extraction in any noticeable way. Due to the early exhaustion of surface diamonds (Zack-Williams 1995: 147), by 1963/64 the patron-tributor system was in place, as indicated by the formation of the Alluvial Diamond Mining License Holders Union in Kono. This system was one by which a team of miners would be recruited by a rich or middle-class patron who would provide them with technology such as earth-moving equipment, automatic jiggers and water pumps in order to facilitate the exploitation of deeper deposits. Although this system did transfer some wealth to the miners, private savings rates did not increase and national economic growth did not result from the investment of these savings. This lack of private savings growth may have been influenced by mistrust caused by the actions of banks during the colonial period where “banks were willing to accept deposits from Africans, but

bank loans were confined mainly to the large expatriate firms” (Zack-Williams 1995: 42). In addition to this historical mistrust by the banks, there is also the fact that much of the wealth gained by the miners was simply frittered away on items of conspicuous consumption like imported cigars and whiskey (Zack-Williams 1995: 150).

The royalty system paid to local chiefs previously was carried through to the Alluvial Diamond Mining Scheme. In order for a joint-stock (tributor-patron) company to be formed in order to mine a lease, one of the partners in the firm had to be native to the district in which the mining was to take place. Since the diamond fields of Sierra Leone are concentrated in Kono province, the importance of local identity in this region was further emphasized. Since all firms had to have at least one partner who could be vouchsafed as a local resident by the chief (Zack-Williams 1995: 160- 161), “native firms” tended to have a very short lifecycle. Once the lease was exhausted, the capital partner(s) would often shift operations to another area and start a new partnership with a new ‘local’ denizen. Much like the royalty system, the traditional migratory fluidity of the country was replaced by an artificial system of ‘local’ population.

Many patrons during this period (and into the present) were wealthy Lebanese-Leoneans who were even more greatly resented than before because of their increased commercial control over the economy. Their influence over the diamond-mining industry, already considerable due to their historical role as diamond merchants, was added to by the fact that “the Lebanese were able to obtain credit from the banks, the large expatriate firms, and from wealthy relations” (Zack-

Williams 1995: 44), whereas native firms usually had little or no access to these capital markets and were at a great competitive disadvantage. The influence of this commercial group was exemplified by their involvement in one of the largest diamond robberies in history when in November 1970 a SLST diamond delivery party was attacked by armed men “allegedly led by a group of Lebanese diamond dealers” (Zack-Williams 1995: 198). The transnational networks that brought the Arabs to West Africa and enabled them to become local elites and then export mineral wealth were a perfect example of the foundational conditions of the shadow state. With transnational networks in place, rebel leaders were able to fund violent activities from the spoils gleaned from the diamond-rich regions that they occupied by selling looted wealth to the agents of global diamond concerns. The importance of these transnational networks to the operation of the shadow state is clear. Without these channels the appropriation of resource rents by domestic political actors would be impossible because the markets for the sale of these goods are not in Africa and local leaders wouldn’t have the transportation infrastructure in place to ship their products abroad.

During the Stevens regime diamonds remained at the fore of Leonean political economy. The Siaka Stevens-Albert Margai junta, known as the National Revolutionary Council, quickly established themselves as the supreme national authority over the diamond-mining industry when “NRC Decree No. 49 of 1967 made it absolutely clear that the responsibility for issuing licenses ‘rests fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the (Mines) Division, with no reference now necessary to chieftdom authorities’” (Zack-Williams 1995: 190). In this way, the chiefly ability

to capture some rents from the diamonds unearthed in their district was superseded by the APC dictatorship and the geopolitics of control over the diamonds of the country shifted away from the minor power granted to the chiefs by the SLST and entirely into the hands of the Freetown shadow state regime and their Lebanese-Leonean supporters. Because gold and diamonds/gemstones are almost universally exchangeable and Leonean diamonds are so highly profitable and easy to dig- up, national controls on rents derived from these resources are made almost impossible as many have noted (Grant 2004; Even-Zohar 2005; Temple and Levin 2005; Dietrich 2003; Gberie 2003, 2004).

The one-party state that Albert Margai and Siaka Stevens envisioned lasted until August 1985 when Stevens died and Vice President Joseph Saidu Momoh took over. In 1987 a coup against Momoh was thwarted (Richards 1996: 40-41). Francis Minnah, the Vice President, was hanged in 1989 for his involvement in the March attempted coup. Minnah, a popular Pujehun (south-west province) politician, was revenged by the *Ndoboyosi*⁵ movement (Ferme 1999: 182). The popular Mende uprising was put down violently by the state, but displayed a clear modern example of *Poro* organizing resistance. This movement foreshadowed the coming prominence of the various *Kamajor* (initiates into Mande hunting societies) movements across West Africa (Hoffman 2007).

Like Tolbert in Liberia, Momoh was a Vice President who, following the original post-colonial dictator's death, assumed a lame-duck presidency that eventually led

⁵ *Ndoboyosi* refers to the bush-devil of Mande mythology. Like the bush-devil, which used hit-and-run attacks to keep its victims terrorized and unable to react, the quick raiding tactics used by the anti-Momoh forces were similar to the strategies employed a century earlier by the *Poro*-organized Hut Tax Rebellion.

to his overthrow in 1992 by a junta calling itself the People's Reconciliation Committee. During this transition from colonial rule to 'independence', De Beer's involvement and subsequent withdrawal from diamond mining was intimately connected to Stevens' efforts to secure personal powers (Reno 1995; Zack-Williams 1999). Increasingly, the shadow state ruler Siaka Stevens channeled the resources monopolized by the nationalized mining company (nationalized in the early 1970's from the Leonean assets of De Beers' British-appointed colonial trusteeship corporation, The Selection Trust) to his clients, led by the country's most prominent businessman, JS Mohammed (of Lebanese descent), a tradition which Momoh continued. De Beers, as well as having technical issues with first-generation sorting-machines that were quite insensitive (thus indicating that reserves were lower than they actually were), was quite literally 'undermined' in their extractive efforts by armed gangs of 'interlopers', given sanction by Stevens to mine as they pleased (Ndumbe 2001; Zack-Williams 1995).

In this way, Stevens eliminated pressure coming from competing patrons by denying them access to clients. This practice of small-scale mining by unemployed, underemployed, or adventure-seeking urban and semi-urban men became quite prevalent with the return of combat veterans from WWII (Naylor 2007). Ibrahim Abdullah states that "Sierra Leone has a history of political conflict and the artisanal nature of diamond-mining here lends itself towards conflict" (Abdullah 1998: 204). As the economy began to become increasingly dominated by diamond-mining, Stevens' replacement's (Momoh) weakness as a source of patronage became exposed. Momoh eventually resorted to making appeals to ethnic corporatism,

aligning himself with his ‘people’, the northern Limba group (Zack-Williams 1999: 160).

The Leonean economic historian, Ibrahim Abdullah, has written conclusively on the role of international politics in shaping the conflict in Sierra Leone (Abdullah 1998). Abdullah creates a narrative of the Sierra Leone aspect of the MRCC that describes the considerable influence of Libyan capital on the MRCC as “(the) Libyans entered Sierra Leone in the mid-1970s and began to make in-roads into civil society by using religious as well as nonreligious channels to establish a presence” (Abdullah 1998: 213). Libyan military intelligence generally “criss-crossed the Ghana-Burkina Faso-Libya ‘revolutionary’ triangle” (Abdullah 1998: 215). Because of this easy access to revolutionary capital, Libyan-sponsored ‘national’ leaders, such as Ahmed Tejan Kabbah (the leader of the Liberian Muslim Mandingo Ulimo-K), the Liberian Charles Taylor and his junior partner Foday Sankoh all had access to foreign capital and did not have to cultivate any of the ‘street credibility’ that Richards (1996) ascribes to Sankoh. This relationship between Libyan capital and African ‘revolutionaries’ directly challenges assumptions about the isolation of African ‘domestic’ politics and emphasizes the interconnectedness of African political processes with global geopolitics. Revolutionary credentials, Ibrahim points out, were only used so far as to curry Libyan favor amongst ambitious sub-Saharan men who were looking to raise a militia. It appears the recruitment of revolutionary foot-soldiers into Libyan camps had little to do with ideology. The Pan-African Union (PANAFU), a properly pan-African revolutionary movement (Abdullah 1998: 225-227), would not lend its

name to Libyan-supported venture into Sierra Leonean politics so the pan-African and ideologically sophisticated Revolutionary United Front (RUF) that Richards theorizes as led by ‘excluded intellectuals’ and a romanticized Foday Sankoh, who had the main planners of the RUF executed in order to consolidate his personal power (Abdullah 1998: 226).

The seemingly ‘popular’ movements founded by these ‘revolutionaries’ were patronage networks for the distribution of Libyan largesse, access to which was made via appeals to socialist populism. The securing of patronage for national leaders as a result of their varying abilities to draw on international networks is a key part of Mano River history. We will soon see that much of the recent violence stems from the exploitation of opportunities for rebellion and usurpation of power enabled by the inability of national leaders to secure funding after the breakdown of existing patronage distribution networks by 1990. In this instance, the funding provided by Cold War patrons to local leaders, such as Doe in Liberia and Momoh in Sierra Leone fell through and this weakened state provided a window for rebellious actions by aspirant shadow states.

During this period of high labor input artisanal diamond mining, Sierra Leonean families became increasingly ‘extended’ (Richards 1996: 88-89), with both parents potentially working in the isolated diamond fields and children being raised by grand-parents in villages and towns. It was this semi-employed reserve army of youth labour that provided much of the violence, at the behest of their patron the Revolutionary United Front, during the war in Sierra Leone. “While attacking the exploitative classes, the RUF sought a broad coalition of the *déclassé* elements in

society... [I]n this respect the political emergencies in Sierra Leone did not assume the ethnic and/or religious dimensions of other crises, such as those in Liberia / Sudan” (Zack-Williams 1999: 148). Although there were definite elements of ethnicity to the conflict north of the Mano, in Liberia the situation was more-so about ethnicity because of the historical role of the Kru ‘empire’ and the fact that Sierra Leone had no native ‘empires’ (Kup 1961), or overwhelmingly powerful tribes.

Another aspect of the political economy of Sierra Leone (or Liberia, for that matter) is the relationship between ‘the politician and the diviner’ (Shaw 1996). There is a “widespread idiom in contemporary West Africa (especially its urban centers) in which impoverishment, corruption and political domination are represented as forms of terrible enchantment... in which detrimental forms of European trade have been understood in terms of very similar tropes of extra-human malignancy” (Shaw 1996: 30-31). Ferme (1999: 180-181) observed this ‘extra-human malignancy’ during her fieldwork in Sierra Leone when she noted that after a political victory rally that had been disturbed by a swarm of killer bees “[f]ew doubted that this attack had been the work of witches” (Ferme 1999: 181) who were supporters of the candidate that had just lost a recent local election.

Although the Portuguese reported local stories of Mande cannibalism (Shaw 1996: 46; Kup 1961), it was as part of a religious ritual, not as a supermarket. The high volume of European slave purchases convinced the Mande that the Europeans must survive on a diet of human flesh, because what group could be so pious as to require such a volume of human sacrifice?

Political violence has always been an element of Sierra Leonean history. One diviner Shaw interviewed commented “although ‘you can be in the government without killing’ (and claimed that he had enabled some to do so) the government (*an-komt*) was itself the cause of ritual murder for medicines of power and enrichment: They didn’t kill people before the government came. It was different, different. The first time, they didn’t kill because the chief (*0-bay*) would name his successor. The competition brought the killing” (Shaw 1996: 44). Temne rulers seem to have historically coveted the magic imported by Fulani (Mande) invaders, and seem to have encouraged itinerant religious specialists to settle in their villages by offering them wives (Shaw 1996: 44). In this way the ‘victims’ of organized violence seem to have come to the conclusion that military prowess and magic were related enough that it was worth their while to attempt to incorporate religious specialists from an ‘enemy’ people into their own political organizations.

The relationship between *conturbeia* (the spiritual disturbance described earlier by D’Alameda that required the murderous intervention of the *Solategi* to ‘solve’) and ritual murder is also discussed by Rosalind Shaw. In reference to increasing expansion of colonial power outwards from Freetown, Shaw notes: “In the second half of the nineteenth century, accounts of a form of ritual murder multiplied. These accounts described actions which the colonial authorities placed under the general label of ‘cannibalism,’ as well as in the more specific categories of ‘human alligator,’ ‘human baboon’ and ‘human leopard’ attacks” (Shaw 1996: 49). Richards describes this same phenomenon in terms of the breakdown of existing patronage arrangements. He describes these sorts of attacks, ascribed to super-natural

malignancy as “the belief that weak patrons under pressure sometimes changed to, or disguised themselves as, chimpanzees, Nile crocodiles or leopards (the only three animals in the Upper Guinea forest that kill humans in unprovoked attack) to murder children (the weakest members of society) in order to make a magic medicine that would revive flagging political fortunes” (Richards 1996: 80).

This phenomenon of political unease necessitating human sacrifice was displayed through an increase in ritual murders in Liberia before the Christmas 1989 invasion by Taylor’s NPF-Liberia. Towards the end of 1989, as popular murmurs of the coming invasion began to circulate in Liberia, the town of Tappita in Nimba county (Ellis 1999: 73) was the site of the nationally-reported ritual killing of a 14-year old girl by a ‘human leopard’ - she was eviscerated and left in the middle of the main road where she would have the most symbolic impact. As mentioned, violence in the West African cosmology is often symbolically constructed as due to ‘spiritual invasion’ by the leopard, the most deadly and murder-inducing animal in the ‘forest triad’ of apes, leopards and snakes both because it attacks without provocation and from the rear (Richards 1996). Although the proximal cause of ‘human-animal’ killings is the ‘human-animal’ itself, the ultimate distal cause, as discussed in the Sierra Leonean context, was the failure of patronage networks and the social anarchy associated with that breakdown.

In addition to this murder, a popular story in Monrovia circulating weeks before the invasion was that a ‘demon’ baby had been born in the Monrovia hospital. The baby exited its mother’s womb speaking fluent English, much to the astonishment of the doctors and nurses (and, one would presume, the mother) and announced to

the shocked onlookers that on December 25th a “deadly rain” would fall on Liberia. After making this statement, the baby opined that it did not want to live in such a world, and promptly died (Ellis 1999: 75)⁶.

The importance of the human-animal towards explaining violence is critical to understanding regional politics. Whereas western commentators would categorize a murderer as mentally insane and the regional violence as bizarre (see especially Richburg 1997) and attributable to “a belief in juju spirits” (Kaplan 1994: 2), in the West African trope a murderer is a normal human being who is violent only by dint of a temporary possession by an animal spirit. In this way, killers can be re-integrated into their communities without the attachment of pejorative stigma. As well, since ritual violence is socially beneficial in that it aims to protect or enrich the entire community, the necessity of avoidance of community sanction towards the perpetrator of the sacrifice is essential.

Towards explaining why the civil violence ‘imported’ from Liberia took hold in its northern neighbor, Zack-Williams (1999) concisely summarizes that the ‘breakdown’ of the Sierra Leonean state was actually a long-established ‘state’ tradition that cannot easily be understood by Western observers who are used to a more ‘evenly’-distributed system of state patron-client relations:

First, there was the long-established political legitimacy of patrimonialism.... Second, after expatriate-owned mining of iron ore and diamonds ceased, mining of alluvial diamonds by informal pre-industrial methods emerged as the main source of wealth in the

⁶ In addition to this bizarre ‘birthday party’, the headless bodies of Mano and Gio Monrovia were beginning to surface across the city. The United States Embassy in Monrovia admitted that these decapitations were likely the work of Doe’s Israeli-trained Praetorian Guard. These decapitations prompted morbid Monrovia to humorously greet one another with the phrase “glad to see you’ve still got your head!” (Ellis 1999: 76). The trend of be-headings (as in present-day Iraq), continued throughout the war.

economy. This is a type of economic activity that lends itself extraordinarily well to patrimonial politics, depending very much on quiet deals, ad hoc licensing arrangements and political protection from ‘on high’ (Zack-Williams 1999: 160-161).

He also notes:

the institutional fragility of the state and the inability of the governing class to secure compliance from subordinated groups to their rule. The result was that violence was an important tool for legitimization. We also pointed to the role patron-client relationships played in political legitimization in Sierra Leone. Those who were not part of the ‘shadow state’ were coerced into silence or forced into exile. The latter group constitutes the vanguard of the RUF. (Zack-Williams 1999:159)

The ‘weak’ Sierra Leonean patronage network was in contrast to the situation found on the Liberian political scene due to Liberia’s position as a recipient of American aid and the largesse available to political patrons in Monrovia by dint of Liberia’s position as the world’s largest register of commercial shipping. In contrast, the Sierra Leonean leaders were dependent on humanitarian, not military, aid and Stevens and Momoh “did not enjoy lavish subsidies from a single Cold War ally, which left them without the political leverage to manipulate a single wealthy patron such as the Liberian dictator Samuel Doe had enjoyed with the U.S. government. Instead, they received resources from many patrons by virtue of their poverty rather than the country’s strategic importance. This broader-based dependence made them less vulnerable to a sudden cutoff of resources” (Reno 1998: 114).

In Sierra Leone “The independent capabilities of strongmen rendered dangerous any attempt either to reform bureaucracies (in which many strongmen held offices) or to threaten them with private security forces” (Reno 1998: 116). In addition to

this inability of Freetown cliques to rein-in rural governments, the large-scale immigration of Middle-Eastern businesspeople to Sierra Leone from the early 1900s onwards allowed rural political leaders to seek sources of income outside of the single-patron model available in Liberia. In light of this reality and their comparative national poverty, the government in Freetown was forced to make increasing appeals to the ‘shadow state’ for support. The most telling example of this reliance on the ‘shadow state’ (and Momoh’s reaction to it) was perhaps in 1988, in the face of triple-digit inflation, when an Israeli businessman involved in construction and mining concerns named Nir Guaz “allegedly paid a portion of Sierra Leone’s arrears to creditors, helping to put debt negotiations with the IMF back on track in late 1989.... Guaz sought local influence by giving gifts to Momoh’s allies and rivals alike.... Momoh had Guaz arrested for ‘economic sabotage’ on Christmas Eve 1989” (Reno 1998: 120). The nature of this case highlights the importance of Reno’s previously-discussed admonitions against placing political actors in the roles of ‘state’ or ‘non-state’, ‘private’ or ‘public’, in the Mano River region.

During the breakdown of civil society after the 1991 invasion of Sierra Leone, emigration by said businesspeople caused more disruption to the national economy than would have been the case in Liberia, where the Levantine commercial presence was far less prevalent. Since the local Lebanese patrons “receiving protection from on high” were far more numerous in population and more intimately involved in the national economy than in Liberia, Reno (1998: 128) states that “RUF attacks on diamond traders of Lebanese ethnicity also differed from the situation in the

Liberian conflict. Lebanese traders had overseen many mining operations on behalf of political patrons, providing access to commercial networks in return for a cut of the profits.... This commercial disruption (emigration) left control of mining up for grabs more so than had been the case in Liberia”

The operation of business concerns in Sierra Leone involved more private military corporations than in Liberia and national politics were shaped by foreign military contractors to a greater degree than Liberia. In regards to the role of one such company, Executive Outcomes (EO), in facilitating security for the shadow state Reno comments: “The company (EO) drafted local initiation and hunting societies that were armed for self-defense (*Kamajors*).... Provided with better weapons and training, the societies were powerful allies for cultivating local acceptance of a foreign, private military” (Reno 1998: 130). Reno summarizes the economic situation in Sierra Leone by saying that a good analogy for the political situation “is found in Michael Doyle’s concept of ‘imperialism by invitation’ in which he views the arrival of foreign groups as the outcome of efforts by local elite factions to recruit outside help to deal with local rivalries they cannot handle alone” (Reno 1998: 133). This invitation to foreign parties to participate in local political processes has many precedents in local history, such as the example of the lone Portuguese gunner given earlier.

A prevalent fact involved in the manifestation of the MRCC north of the Mano was the fact that “up-country Sierra Leone had a small educated ‘creolized’ elite to challenge the Freetown-based political classes” (Richards 1996: 38). These local elites were able to agitate for political power more than in Liberia because local

groups in Liberia were more dependent on Monrovia for patronage because of the influence of American aid and the centralized source of state income that the national shipping registry gave Monrovia. In Sierra Leone local indigenous rural power-brokers and Sierra Leonean business men of Middle-Eastern (mainly Lebanese) extraction were able to agitate for local authority because of the weakness of the Freetown elites due to their country's poverty relative to Liberia. These economic facts made the rural elites in Sierra Leone far more powerful than aspirant rural governments in Liberia. In Sierra Leone rural elites entrenched themselves as local rural patrons, taking economically-poor youths en masse as clients and employing them as diamond-diggers. The surfeit of youth labor was a result of the 'extension' of the Sierra Leonean family due to diamond-mining, as discussed by Zack-Williams in the previous chapter. This splitting of families due to economic opportunities in remote rural communities that necessitated children being raised by grandparents or other relatives was a direct result of the influx of capital from multinational and national corporations into the commercial development of Sierra Leone's diamond fields. The 'extended family' was not a phenomenon seen to the same extent in Liberia. However, the hiring of otherwise unemployed 'lumpen' youth labor (Abdullah 1998: 234) by local patrons in order to further the patron's economic ambitions through violence was common to both aspects of the MRCC. This ability for local patrons to employ many clients was a direct result of the geological happenstance that 'blessed' Sierra Leone with high-grade gemstone deposits.

In contrast to the situation in Sierra Leone where local strongmen were able to act as rural patrons before and during the violence, in Liberia Libyan and Franco-African military aid initially funded the rebels who overthrew the Monrovia government once that government's main patron, the United States government, stopped aid to that country in 1988. United States involvement in a military coup in Liberia in 1980 was followed by the rapid deterioration of Liberian domestic politics into national government-influenced tension between ethnic groups. Much like the situation in Sierra Leone, where the weak dictator Joseph Saidu Momoh took over from Siaka Stevens and resorted to appeals to ethnic corporatism to maintain his tenuous grip on power, the dictator Samuel Doe increasingly relied on social fractionalization in order to preserve his regime. The reason he was able to execute a successful military coup and assume power was entirely due to the support of the United States Department of State, which wanted a weak dictator in place in order to maintain an American military and intelligence presence in the region.

While conceding to American-imposed structural reforms, William Tubman's personally selected successor, William Tolbert, earned the enmity of the United States government as well as his own people. Monrovia was the West Africa headquarters of the CIA and also contained a satellite-tracking facility. The Americans wanted to boost their presence in the region, but contrary to the desire of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US Rapid Deployment Force was personally not allowed to bunker at Roberts Airfield by Tolbert himself (Ellis 1999: 52). On the 14th of April 1979 'rice riots' gripped Monrovia, as a result of Tolbert's structural

reform-influenced decision to cut rice subsidies to policemen and the army as part of the austerity measures. As previously discussed (as in Liberia), rice was imported into Sierra Leone in large quantities, especially with the growth of diamond-mining wage labor after the 1930 discovery of Kono's diamonds which reduced the amount of arable land because of diamond-mining. This structural inability to accommodate both extractive industry and farming on the same limited land (Mandel 1984) raises agricultural prices as a consequence of the 'resource curse' (Auty 1993). The importation of rice, previously contested in Sierra Leone during the 'Syrian' riots under British control, was re-introduced as a point-of-contention in Mano River domestic politics during the 1979 Liberian 'rice riots'.

The Tolbert regime caused anxiety in the region because of the bloody and highly public executions immediately following the rice riots of 1979. Fearing further executions on the one-year anniversary of the riots, early the next April (the 12th) a group of young officers (all less than 30 years of age) calling itself 'The Peoples Redemption Council' led by the Gio General Thomas Quiwonkpa (from Nimba County) led a coup against Tolbert (Ellis 1999: 54). "Quiwonkpa hailed from Nimba County, as did many enlisted troops; Doe came from Grand Gedeh County, where Doe would later rally supporters to battle his Nimba County rivals. Quiwonkpa attracted a considerable following, commanding considerable respect for his refusal to give up his Honda Civic for a luxury automobile or to move into a lavish home when many of his government colleagues had done so" (Reno 1998: 85). Quiwonkpa and the main group of coup-plotting officers went to Tolbert's office to kill him, but he was not there. Instead, the secondary group, led by

Liberia's next dictator, Samuel "Kanyon" Doe, found Tolbert hiding in the Executive Mansion (Ellis 1999: 53) and hacked him to pieces with machetes. In the June of 1980 Tolbert's son (the Ivorian President Felix Houphouet-Boigny's god-daughter's husband) was kidnapped from the French embassy and killed by Doe's faction.

President Felix Houphouet-Boigny had an understanding with Quiwonkpa that his 'god-son-in-law' would not be harmed, so obviously this killing was quite personally offensive to him and caused him to hate the Doe regime. In order to get revenge on Liberia, he gave the Charles Taylor invasion invaluable logistic support throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Doe, partly due to the fact that he was a 'king killer' (his group literally stumbled across Tolbert, who was supposed to be Quiwonkpa's kill), assumed the interim presidency on the back of his newfound popularity and maintained power through support from the State Department, which eventually 'fed' him the intelligence required to locate and kill his only real popular rival, the 'monastic' Thomas Quiwonkpa (Ellis 1999: 59).

Charles Taylor, a Massachusetts-educated economist and incorrigible kleptomaniac, was hired as the director of the Liberian General Services Agency, which oversees government purchases. Unlike the ultra-controlling President Tubman, President Doe was "almost illiterate" (Ellis 1999: 55) and was in no condition to monitor Taylor's rampant kleptomania. Taylor, hired as the director of the government purchasing organ (General Services Agency), married a close relative of Thomas Quiwonkpa (Ellis 1999: 57). Taylor is Americo-Liberian and Mande-speaking Gola by birth. He married into the Atlantic-speaking Gio people in

order to get protection from that group due to the Gio ‘ethnic’ status he had obtained through marriage (Reno 1998: 57). The year after he was appointed director of the General Services Agency, Taylor managed to amass an impressive USD \$922,382 in embezzled government funds from 1981-1982 (Reno 1998: 92). Embezzlement detected, Charles Taylor fled back to Massachusetts in 1983, where he was promptly arrested on charges from Liberia. He spent 15 months in a Massachusetts jail (Plymouth County Correctional Facility) before suspiciously buying into an escape plan that other prisoners had devised. Ellis (1999: 67) questions this ‘official’ narrative, suggesting that the US Government ‘detained’ Taylor in order to give him access to criminal networks in order that he could fund his 1990 invasion. Ellis mentions the fact that after escaping to Ghana from Massachusetts (Ellis 1999: 68), Charles Taylor befriended a pan-African group that ‘ratted him out’ to the US authorities in that country, who suspiciously did nothing and allowed Taylor the jailbird to go on his merry way to Cote d’Ivoire.

In order to control Quiwonkpa’s military and draw some authority away from a very credible challenger, Doe gave his senior civilian officials (drawn from his allies within the Krahn population) commissions in the army and instructed them to appear in public wearing uniforms (Ellis 1997: 58), thus militarizing the ‘ethnic’ identity of those select ‘Krahn’ (an Atlantic language) villages allied to his person (mainly from the Grand Gedeh county). Like Momoh to the north, Doe entirely abandoned the idea of linguistic coalition-building and focused on only those Krahn that he was related to, mainly found in the population of his home-county of Grand Cedeh (or ‘Gedeh’ or ‘Jedah’). The cultivation of this ‘base’ isolated 14 of the 16

‘Krahn’ ‘tribes’ (geographically-clustered lineages) and represented less than 5% of the total population of Liberia.

Other ‘Krahn’ populations were literally ‘left out to dry’, and this inter-‘Krahn’ power-struggle indicates the fallacy of describing the conflict in Liberia along exclusively ‘ethnic’ (as opposed to linguistic-geographical) lines. Also, Levitt’s prior criticism of ‘Krahn’ as a definite ethnic category must be re-invoked at this point. Doe was half Gboro and Konobo (Krahn village confederacies or ‘tribes’) by birth and married a Niabo (another dialect group of the ‘Krahn’) woman. He was at least safe from these groups within the ‘Krahn’ because of proscription against killing fellow ‘tribesmen’, or those related to you by marriage.

Reno describes Doe’s efforts at painting the Americo-Liberians in Monrovia as an exclusionary elite as thwarted by the results of the incorporation of the ‘extra-marital’ children of “country wives” into Monrovia socio-political cliques: “Doe tried hard to redirect the benefits of state power to new beneficiaries, but Americo-Liberians and other elites held onto their customary privilege, which included holding a stake in state power. In addition to the approximately 300 settler families, most of the elite came from assimilated ‘tribal’ elites who had adopted Americo-Liberian culture over the years. Because of this diversity and the depth of local ties, this group was not the exclusive ethnic elite Doe claimed it was” (Reno 1998: 81). This assimilation was reflected in Moran’s discussion of the children of ‘country wives’ being included in official settler genealogies.

“Doe’s critical vulnerability lay in his incapacity to control the regional trade networks in portable products such as logs and diamonds” (Reno 1998: 90). This

weakness caused him to rely increasingly on his American sponsors for support and this reliance necessitated he at least pay lip-service to democratic reforms. Doe hinted at elections in late 1983, but demoted the popular Nimba General Quiwonkpa, who fled to Guinea with his aide, Prince Yormeh Johnson and others. Doe promised the USA ‘elections’ in return for continued funding of his regime, which he rigged in 1985 with 50.9% of the popular vote, even though his ‘Krahn’ support was only ~4% of the Liberian population (Levitt 2005: 201). Clearly, Doe imagined a ‘good-looking’ number that confirmed him as leader without resort to the ridiculous charade that confirms dictators with 99.9% of the vote. On the 6th of January, 1986 Doe unilaterally extended the term of office of Liberian President, installing himself as dictator-for-life. In order to justify their aid to him, US officials focused on “the positives” of Doe’s regime and ignored the up to 300 million USD he may have stolen from the Liberian people in his 10 years in power on the strength of his US and Israeli-trained praetorian ‘Special Anti-Terrorist Force’ (Ellis 1999: 63). As long as Doe was able to maintain his personal security and marginalize potential rivals, the State Department seemed to have no qualms supporting him.

Doe had the dubious distinction of being the first Liberian head of state to totally exclude factions, especially the Mano-Gio of Nimba County (Ellis 1999: 65), against which his forces launched pogroms from ‘Camp Terror’ in Nimba County. Nimba County, as we shall see, became the focal point of resistance to Doe because of its population of excluded ‘Krahn’ and its prominence as an iron-producing area. The presence of an economic resource in the region caused Doe to exercise

totalitarian rule over the county because any lapse in his control over the area might result in a closure of the iron mine, which would result in a denial of funds to him and would weaken his ability to deliver patronage and stay in power. The mass-murder was especially prevalent in the years 1983, 1985 and 1990 (Levitt 2005: 207) and corresponded to Doe's first purge after taking power, his 'post-election' purge, and the purge following the December 1989 invasion. Ellis (1999: 66) quotes a 'Krahn' farmer as saying in 1986: "There will have to be revenge. We know that something is in the making. When it explodes, then God have mercy on all of us". These purges in the iron-rich Nimba county were apparently conducted with the State Department's implicit support of the US mining firm operating in the region giving communications equipment to help Doe's security chief, Charles Julu, coordinate the Nimba county massacres (Reno 1998: 89).

The rightful winner of the 1985 Liberian Presidential Election (Ellis 1999: 59) was a man named Jackson Doe (no relation to Samuel Doe), a former house-boy from Nimba county. In the wake of Jackson Doe's 'defeat' at the rigged presidential election (on the 12th of November, 1985) the exiled General Thomas Quiwonkpa 'secretly' returned to Monrovia from abroad with his entourage in order to organize resistance against the Samuel Doe dictatorship. American intelligence informed Samuel Doe of this troop movement, and the President popularly ascribed this information to 'God's intervention'. In order to maintain his fragile position as the ruler of the shadow state and the chief Liberian patron President Doe had his soldiers arrest and kill the popular General Quiwonkpa (Ellis 1999: 60). His body was paraded thru Monrovia in a wheelbarrow as Doe's soldiers chopped-off body

parts as souvenirs, with some soldiers apparently eating body parts. In retaliation for Quiwonkpa's deceit and provincial support of Jackson Doe, Samuel Doe had his security chief (the feared Charles Julu) conduct another raid on Nimba County with troops from 'Camp Terror'. Also, Doe began an effort to co-opt the local Mandingo ethnic minority to 'run' Nimba County, and in 1986 'Mandingo' was recognized as a Liberian ethnic group (Levitt 2005; Ellis 1999). As prior discussed, Mandingo Mande and Krahn are macro-processes of identity-formation (re: Little's 1968 discussion of the 'Mande-ization' of Sierra Leone), and not bounded and distinct 'traditional ethnic groups'. The 'Mandingo' (which was more a class-based term to refer to 'Islamacized' traders) always had commercial rights in Liberia, but the ability to receive commissions in the government was an invention of Doe's. Unfortunately for Liberian democracy, the US government in the 1980s gave more foreign aid to Doe's Liberia (per capita) than any other Sub-Saharan African state (Ellis 1999: 63).

In the wake of General Quiwonkpa's grisly and extremely public killing, his aide Prince Johnson ('Prince' is not a royal title) became more involved in foreign politics at the bidding of Felix Houphouet-Boigny. Due to this connection, he ended up killing Thomas Sankara in October of 1987 (Ellis 1999: 69 footnote), leader of the military quartet running Burkina Faso at the time. This enabled another member of the quartet, Blaise Compoare, to become President. Compoare was related to Felix Houphouet-Biogny by marriage, clearly showing the role of Liberian exiles in creating a Francophone sphere of influence in West Africa. A focus on Prince

Johnson as a 'Liberian' obscures the regional inter-connections informing the Mano River complex-conflict and leads to incomplete accounts of the violence.

Although Muḥammad Kaddāfi had clashed with France over their support of Chad and was generally anti-Francophone, the US air raids in 1986 that killed his adopted baby daughter caused him to ignore 'French imperialism' and cooperate with French West Africa even further in order to 'stick-it' to the USA, as evidenced by his extensive involvement in Liberia and Sierra Leonean politics (as theorized above in relation to 'the revolutionary triangle'). Although eventually supported by Kaddāfi, Taylor may have originally sought support for his invasion of Liberia from Joseph Saidu Momoh in Sierra Leone, but may have been out-bid by Samuel Doe (Ellis 1999). This is a clear instance of a shadow state ruler (Doe) marginalizing potential opposition through distribution of economic resources.

As the Cold War wore down the Americans began to tire of his corruption. Congressional inquiries led by Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina resulted in tighter controls on Doe's operations and the eventual cessation of the all-important American aid. "Official support for Doe finally ended in 1988, with the failure of the Operating Expert (Opex) scheme. Doe's U.S. supporters had proposed that U.S. experts oversee Liberian government finances to reduce corruption and respond to congressional criticism of the misuse of U.S. aid to Doe. The seventeen auditors identified many corrupt officials and practices among Doe's associates. But in the end, the state officials and other officials found numerous ways to get around the new controls" (Reno 1998: 87-88). This elimination of great-power support for Doe's regime left the door of Liberian politics wide open for the Libyan-sponsored

‘revolutionaries’ to step-in. Doe’s over-reliance on American support came to a head when its withdrawal eliminated Doe’s ability to run a patrimonial state and keep political rivals at bay.

By mid-1989 the Libyan stable of continental revolutionaries included, along with the Liberians and Leoneans, none other than the future Congolese dictator Laurent-Desire Kabila (Ellis 1999: 71). In order to secure funding for the coming invasion, in Ouagadougou Blaise Compoare introduced Taylor to a series of French businessmen and officials interested in securing a supply of diverse national forest products (such as timber and rubber) and iron from Nimba County (Ellis 1999: 72). On the eve of the invasion, Charles Taylor was not known to Liberians or popular within the NPFL (Ellis 1999: 74). On Christmas Eve 1989 about 100 NPFL fighters entered into Liberia at Butuo, in Nimba County, from Cote d’Ivoire. On New Year’s Day 1990 Charles Taylor used the satellite phone that Houphouet-Boigny had personally given him (and not the NPFL) in order to give an interview to the popular BBC program ‘Focus on Africa’ on ‘behalf’ of the NPFL. This grand-standing was enabled by Taylor’s English skills and personal relationship with Houphouet-Boigny and Compoare, who wanted to see him in charge of the movement so that Liberia’s resources could be exploited by their French sponsors. Taylor’s behaviour was not appreciated by his comrades, and within one month Prince Yormeh Johnson had broken off to form the Independent-NPFL (Ellis 1999: 77).

During this period of rapid power-loss the government in Monrovia opened up the army’s armory and gave out guns to anyone who wanted one, filling the ranks of

the Armed Forces of Liberia with decidedly non-professional (and unprofessional) '1990 soldiers' (Levitt 2005). Soon the 'Armed Forces of Liberia' looted Mandingo shops in Nimba County as a form of 'revenge'. In much the same way that 'colonial cooperation' had put the Krio between a rock (Leoneans) and a hard place (Britain), the Mandingo were hated for their previous cooperation with Samuel Doe's regime in Nimba County (Reno 1998: 97) and could, clearly, no longer count on the support of the army: "Taylor depicted Mandingos as collaborators with Doe's Krahn-dominated security network. Vulnerable Mandingo traders thus made easy targets for fighters eager to grab their share of profits from Liberia's informal market transit trade...NPFL attacks on Liberian Mandingos and then on Sierra Leone constituted a more ambitious attempt to replace a vulnerable minority group and foreign traders as intermediaries and directly conduct commerce for the benefit of NPFL fighters" (Reno 1998: 98). This phenomenon of soldier-rebels, or 'sobels', looting became a very salient feature of the Mano River conflict complex.

Much of the Mandingo population of Nimba fled to Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire where, as with many refugee populations, they were heavily recruited as fighters (mainly by elements of the group ULIMO). In Nimba County, the retaliatory 1990 Armed Forces of Liberia genocide caused Gio men to join the NPFL en-masse. Men from the other main ethnic group in that province, the Mano, joined as well, but only under force of social coercion following an NPFL appeal to their tribal elders (Ellis 1999: 78). Charles Taylor summarized the appeal of the NPFL thusly: "as the NPFL came in we didn't even have to act. People came to us and said 'give

me a gun. How can I kill the man who killed my mother?” (quoted in Ellis 1999: 78).

Upon the eve of invasion the NPFL had three main ‘commanders’. Elmer Johnson (no relation to Prince Johnson), was a former US Marine who had lost an eye in the Grenada invasion and was the organizations main military strategist. Taylor, as mentioned, was the figurehead with business connections and the support of Compoare and Houphouet-Boigny. Lastly, Prince Johnson (who had received training as a military policeman in South Carolina) was the military trainer. At this point I would remind the reader that Prince Johnson was not related to Elmer Johnson, and that Jackson Doe and Samuel Doe were not related either. Much like the fractious nature of political life during the Doe regime, the groups that replaced his rule almost immediately began to vie for control over economic resources. This in-fighting is typical of both the weak opposition and political fragmentation predicted by Clapham (1997) and of the predilection towards armed conflict that easily lootable resources enable (Collier 2004).

Taylor began receiving reports that Elmer Johnson was upping discipline amongst NPFL troops in an attempt to make them a more effective fighting force. Taylor took this rigor to mean that Johnson was planning something against him and on June 1st 1990 (Ellis 1999: 82) Taylor tipped off the AFL as to Johnson’s whereabouts and, as a direct result of Taylor’s chicanery, Johnson’s troops walked into a waiting ambush and Elmer Johnson was killed. At this point, the NPFL was divided between Prince Johnson and the regular forces, and Charles Taylor and his brigade of Burkinabe regulars (supplied by Blaise Compoare) and ‘Small Boys

Unit' (an army of drugged-up orphans). By mid-1990, perhaps because of increasingly limited viable options due to constant internal warring, the Liberian exile community began to warm-up to Taylor. The support he received included controversial moral support from the current Liberian President, Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson (Ellis 1999: 83). Diaspora populations, important in many national projects, were especially important in the Liberian case because of the close historical links between with the United States. This diaspora connection allowed Charles Taylor's NPFL to grow marijuana, which was then imported to the USA by boat and distributed out of the New York-New Jersey area by Liberian-American criminal groups which, perhaps, Taylor had been introduced to while incarcerated in the USA (Ellis 1999: 113).

Early in 1990 Jackson Doe, the exiled probable winner of the 1985 'election' re-entered Liberia with Cooper Teah, an NPFL commander who had not entered Liberia with the main force. Teah's division was held in reserve at their staging point in Guinea because of an innocent 'miscommunication' with the rest of the NPFL. Taylor saw things differently because of the suspicious condition of entry into Liberia with a popular domestic politician in tow. As predicted by Clapham (1997), Taylor had Teah and Jackson Doe killed and may have been brought a vial of Doe's blood, which he drank (Ellis 1999: 85).

In April 1990 Charles Taylor's world rapidly began to fall apart. Besides the setback of Prince Johnson's defection, Taylor's NPFL controlled 90% of the country and was threatening to take Monrovia. That month, in light of this Francophone-supported success, the Nigerian dictator Ibrahim Babangida announced that

ECOMOG (read Nigerian) troops would be deployed to ‘stabilize’ the situation in Liberia. Taylor (as quoted in Ellis 1999: 87) publicly called Babangida ‘black Hitler’ and questioned why Babangida was all-of-a-sudden concerned with peace and stability. As much as the Nigerian political scientist Adekeye Adebajo has tried to put a positive face on the Nigerian invasion, even he had to conclude that Lagos’ desire to counter-act Francophone regional political influence informed the invasion as much as ‘genuine’ concern (Adebajo 2002: 9-14). On 7 August ECOMOG (Nigerian) troops entered Liberia without any support from any of the Francophone countries in ECOWAS and on the 24th of August they invaded Monrovia by sea, installing a corrupt puppet government ‘led’ by Professor Amos Sawyer. A Liberian writer (Sesay 1996: 412) has commented: “[r]umours that Sawyer purchased a house in the United States worth almost \$5 million ... [was] widely cited in Monrovia as compelling evidence of official corruption, incompetence, and unreliability.”

If Taylor had captured Monrovia, he probably would have gained international recognition and, after a few purges of leading politicians, would have gone about thieving as much as he could get his hands on, which was par-for-the-course for Liberian leaders up to that point. Instead, the Nigerian invasion caused the prolongation of civil war and countless ‘avoidable’ deaths (Ellis 1999; Levitt 2005). The collusion between high-ranking Nigerian officers and anti-Taylor forces to mine diamonds and rape and murder throughout the war suggests a Nigerian commercial interest in Liberia, as opposed to any sort of ‘humanitarian concern’ (Ellis 1999: 108, 174-175). Reno corroborates Ellis by writing “Taylor’s original

goal was to capture the executive mansion for himself. Had Taylor done so, he, too, would likely have tried to assemble his own patronage network with resources from his position as the head of a sovereign state....The intervention...effectively partitioned the country into two zones” (Reno 1998 92-93). The effect of this intervention was the sectioning of Liberia into the Nigerian-controlled port city of Monrovia and an NPFL-controlled enclave called ‘Taylorland’ because “ECOMOG’s intervention and its denial of sovereign authority to Taylor were decisive in shaping political authority in Taylorland.... Unlike Doe, Taylor’s only option was to acquire resources by controlling local accumulation and regional markets to finance his own military rather than using foreign aid to counterbalance local strongmen” (Reno 1998: 93).

On the 9th of September, 1990 (Ellis 1999: Introduction; Levitt 2005: 208), the Nigerians allowed Prince Johnson and his soldiers to enter the ECOMOG compound in Monrovia where Samuel Doe was meeting with the Nigerian General Quainoo. This, in all likelihood, was premeditated. Doe’s men were ordered to disarm upon entering the compound, so when Johnson’s men showed up they had no trouble slaughtering Doe’s entourage in an hours-long butchering that ECOMOG did nothing to stop. By this point in 1990 Doe (Ellis 1999: 6) claimed that he had survived thirty-eight coup or assassination attempts; however Prince Johnson was determined to put an end to this uncanny streak. Johnson had the events of the day recorded by a Palestinian television journalist, the video of which is still a best seller in West Africa and has not hurt Johnson’s political career, as he is currently a serving member of the Liberian Senate. Throughout the video (as

reported from Stephen Ellis' 1999 book that cobbles together different Liberian accounts) Johnson is seen getting progressively drunker on the most American of beers, Budweiser. As he gets more intoxicated he berates Doe with more and more invectives until finally his patience with the dictator is through and he orders his men to cut off Doe's ears, one of which he then eats in order to assume some of the 'magic' that had enabled Doe to survive the almost forty assassination and coup attempts against him prior to that day. Shortly after having his ears cut off, Doe was shot by one of Johnson's men (Ellis 1999: 11).

In retaliation for Johnson's defection and probable collusion with the Nigerians, Charles Taylor had members of Prince's family killed, including his mother who was popularly attributed as the source of his 'juju'. Guilt over causing his mother's death caused Johnson to have a mental breakdown. Partly for this reason, and from fear of further retaliation by Taylor's forces, he accepted shelter in Nigeria in 1993 until the end of the war (Ellis 1999: 112). The fact that Nigeria would allow the man who killed Samuel Doe under 'their watch' to seek asylum in that country suggests some prior collusion between the I-NPFL and Lagos. In much the same way that Samuel Doe took credit away from Thomas Quiwonkpa by butchering Tolbert (who was supposed to be Quiwonkpa's kill), the Nigerians allowed Prince Johnson to steal some of Taylor's 'thunder' by allowing him to be the one associated with killing Samuel Doe, and not Taylor.

'Krahn' resistance to Taylor came mainly from Grand Gedeh County (Ellis 1997: 89) and was, in the early stages of the war, limited to that area. Since those 'Krahn' that Doe had acted as a patron to mainly came from the Grand Gedeh region, they

were the first targets of anti-Krahn violence. However, as the war progressed more and more Kru-speakers became victims of violence, even those ‘tribes’ that had nothing to do with the clique in Monrovia. As the farmer quoted above stated, Kru-speakers subsumed under the catch-all linguistic group ‘Krahn’ were going to become victims, not just the 2/16 groups that Doe doled out patronage to. As the indiscriminate violence continued, the ‘Krahn’ became further polarized against the NPFL. Throughout the 1990s Taylor used his position as the de facto state of most of the country in order to maintain the obligations he negotiated in Ouagadougou and cultivate new deals which, as an economist, he negotiated one-on-one (Ellis 1999: 90).

On March 23 1991 the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (Foday Sankoh had met Taylor in Libya) and “some of the toughest units of his (Taylor’s) armed forces” (Ellis 1999: 92) entered Sierra Leone from Liberia and began marching towards the diamond fields at Koidu. Thus, a ‘second front’ of the Liberian war was opened up in Sierra Leone and eventually turned into a situation where Nigerian soldiers and Liberians were mining Sierra Leonean diamonds and exporting them through Guinea to fund conflict in Liberia (Even-Zohar 2005; Gberie 2006).

Focusing only on ‘the war in Sierra Leone’ or ‘the war in Liberia’ is not a holistic technique of examination, though it admittedly simplifies the incredibly complex and inter-twined history of the region. This engagement with history is warranted, as the predations of the shadow state or the raiding of ‘sobels’ are facets of the MRCC historically anteceded with the exploitation of the colonial state or the

looting of pirates. In this chapter the antecedents to the MRCC have been presented in some detail. Clearly, constraints relating to length do not allow for a 'complete' discussion of regional history. I have tried to expose some of the more salient features in order to present what I feel is a cogent explanation for the large-scale violence that terrorized the region from 1990 onwards. Most importantly, I think, the shadow states of recent times must be treated as part of a historical continuum. During this historical process, a regional political history that included both violence and negotiation as tools of conflict resolution was violently replaced by a system in which the overwhelming military might of colonial forces negated negotiation. The political vacuum that the colonial encounter established in the Mano River region was a direct forbear of recent violence. The shadow states that arose out of this milieu of social violence were predicated on the historical predations of pirates and colonial powers, a direct result of contact with Europeans. The Mano River region was not a pacific haven prior to contact, but the historical record shows that the tendency towards violence was counter-acted by local traditions of conciliation and assimilation. With the emergence of regional colonial powers, these traditions were subsumed under a rubric of politicization and polarization of ethnic identities in order to facilitate the enrichment of the colonial powers and the shadow states that replaced them.

Conclusion

As war raged in Liberia 'ethnic' identity became an increasingly popular tool for politicians to use in order to further their ambitions of wealth and power accumulation. The politicization of the 'Krahn' identity and the role of the Mandingos (as with the Krio in Sierra Leone) as go-betweens between Monrovia and the Liberian hinterland are two examples of the use of social identity as a polarizing tool to divide and conquer that we have previously explored. The passage of time also brought with it further violence linked to the hiving-off various aspirant shadow states in Liberia that Clapham (1997) predicts. Shortly after the invasion of Sierra Leone the immediate payoff of capturing a diamond field became an increasingly popular option for political actors to attempt. On the 21st of February 1991 the 'Movement for the Redemption of Muslims' was founded by Alhaji Kroma, a 'Mandingo' journalist who was born and raised Catholic (and was married to a Christian woman) but who had converted to Islam in adulthood (Ellis 1999: 94-98). Kroma, as previously explained, had Libyan support (like Taylor) but was not indigenously popular. A Krahn General named Albert Karpeh had put together a Krahn and Mandingo refugee army, the support of which he offered to the government of Sierra Leone in battling Taylor's forces and the 'RUF' (which, at this point, really wasn't militarily independent from the Liberians). Karpeh and George Boley (a prominent Krahn politician) and Kroma formed the multi-faith ULIMO (United Liberation Movement), a temporary 'marriage of convenience' which predictably soon fell apart. Kroma was the spokesman, reflecting his

journalistic background. However, he used his skills of persuasion to sell himself as the legitimate Mandingo leader in Liberia. He stole many Mandingo refugee fighters from Karpeh in this way (Ellis 1999: 96). Karpeh was not impressed, and indicated this to Kroma, who had Karpeh killed on June 1st 1992. Kroma's forces almost finished off Karpeh's influence among the Krahn, but Karpeh's deputy, a schoolteacher named Roosevelt Johnson (no relation to the other two Johnsons mentioned so far), managed to escape the Karpeh assassination that was also meant for him. Roosevelt Johnson took the Krahn out of ULIMO and formed ULIMO-Johnson, in competition with the Mandingo fighters of ULIMO-Kroma. ULIMO-J's first act was to kill Solomon Kamara, a senior Mandingo military commander and local Nimba celebrity (for his soccer prowess) when he refused to cross-over from ULIMO-K to ULIMO-J. Kroma went to Guinea, where he got government support for his group in a meeting with officials in the city of Kankan (Ellis 1999: 96).

Once again, a Liberian politician was able to act as a broker-in-exile and negotiate his own foreign affairs because of the inter-twined nature of regional politics. The economic situation in Liberia was, by the point of the ULIMO split, in shambles (Ellis 1999: 97). Existing JJ dollars (named after the first black president of Liberia, JJ Roberts) and Liberty dollars (printed by the Nigerian-sponsored Interim Government of National Unity) were largely worthless. Since Taylor did all his deals in US dollars, the 'hard' currency that he brought into the country was the only readily-exchangeable source of money, a fact which played into his hands. However, early NPFL economic successes from the Sierra Leonean front were soon reversed when the RUF was forcibly removed from Koidu (Ellis 1999: 98) by a

coalition of ULIMO-J and ECOMOG, who then proceeded to continue mining diamonds. Although ULIMO-J and the Nigerian elements of ECOMOG were ‘in cahoots’, that did not stop the Deputy Field Commander of ECOMOG, a Ghanaian Brigadier-General named John Addai, from commenting in 1992 that “Ulimo (K) is posing more problems than the NPFL by creating mass graves of both fighters and the civilian population” (as quoted in Ellis 1999: 102).

A Liberian writer named Max Sesay summarized the political situation that has developed in Liberia since the early 1990s as follows:

There is a growing chorus of criticism against the politicisation of ethnic identities and the consequent polarisation of society. Most of the warlords still preside over ethnically-based factions, a phenomenon which, although not new in Liberian politics, has become nightmarish and reminiscent of the most terrible excesses perpetrated in earlier years.... Voting for the warlords is viewed widely as tantamount to creating a kakistocracy, a government by the worst citizens of the state. On the other hand, many who claim to have a deep understanding of African 'realpolitik' focus on the weaknesses of civilian politicians, and they reckon that what will really matter in any post-war elections in Liberia is money and resources for campaigning and entertainment. In view of the destructive and disruptive effects of the war, it follows that the candidates most able to offer material inducements to a pauperised population are likely to be hailed as 'redeemers'. Hence the contention that it is probably those who have been engaged in much of the asset-stripping of rural Liberia, namely the warlords, who will be best placed to offer patronage on a scale that is likely to attract a considerable following. (Sesay 1996: 404- 405)

As Stephen Ellis points out “the great flexibility of stateless societies means that small groups which normally guard their autonomy quite jealously tend to combine when faced with some overwhelming threat from outside”. (Ellis 1999: 33) This goes to great lengths towards explaining the driving logic behind much of the factionalization that Clapham (1997) predicts. Ellis goes on to theorize that

“[m]odern ethnicity has been formed largely in response to political and administrative incentives and opportunities, even when this was not part of the central government’s intention” (Ellis1999: 36). Even though Liberia was a mainly rural nation, ethnic identity tended to coalesce in the hot-bed of rural immigration that was Monrovia. The identity formed by rural immigrants working in Monrovia was only partly that of a ‘modern bureaucrat’. Links to ‘home’ and ‘ethnicity’ were always stressed and economic remittances by Monrovia’s politically-appointed bureaucrats became “a central point of public morality” (Ellis1999: 35). Much as in Sierra Leone, ‘long-standing tribal hatreds’ in Liberia (when closely examined) reveal a flexible process of ethnic identity formation that is centered on access to economic resources. This patronage-based ‘ethnicity’ was very much shaped recently in an Africa populated by dynamic individuals with abundant personal agency and not a stultified ‘dark continent’ immured by ancient rivalries and static, monolithic social formations that can easily be described because they are so well-bounded.

As this thesis has made the case, the Mano River conflict complex was a historically-formed political situation in which international sponsors and global geopolitics conspired to destroy indigenous democracy. The Mano River countries were characterized in pre-colonial times by meritocracy, relative peace and a certain degree of gender equality. In recent times the historical tendency for populations to negotiate and assimilate has been replaced by an internationally-fueled understanding of politics by which “violence and democracy are not conceptually opposed in Liberian political discourse but are aspects of the same understanding of

legitimacy” (Moran 2006: 6). This legitimating process had antecedents in the pre-colonial actions of war chiefs, but so too did negotiation and conciliation. With the destruction of pre-existing societies by British and American interventions from the 1800s onwards, local differences were manipulated by political leaders in order for them to secure clients in their own personal struggle to access resources. With the colonial destruction of Mano River societies, predatory commercial networks replaced the existing local economies and social disarray led eventually the right-to-rule being legitimated only through recourse to violence. The patron-client system in which “ammunition and guns, which ULIMO-J (for example) sold to the fighters, established the young fighters’ right to engage in this commerce, set up roadblocks to collect tolls, or loot local farms” (Reno 1998: 105) was not related to over-population or deforestation or ancient rivalries. The cause of the implementation of this system can be found entirely in the workings of great-power politics and a history of foreign intervention in local politics.

In Liberia the American-dependent military leader Samuel Doe was the sole recipient of foreign aid and main national distributor of patronage (by dint of having control over the capital city of Monrovia). In Sierra Leone dependence on a single superpower patron was not the case, and the ‘shadow state’ was a far more important mechanism for distribution of patronage. These foreign-aid distribution differences were a result of foreign aid disbursements caused directly by decisions made in the metropolises of the West. In contrast to isolated ‘wild zones’ in which local histories of anarchy and political chaos can be imagined as the cause of social violence, the societal violence in the ‘wild zones’ of Liberia and Sierra Leone were

clearly practiced by local residents with definite connections to the international system. This thesis has shown that the Mano River conflict complex echoes Bayart's idea that Africa is not an isolated continent and that international flows of capital and foreign government influence clearly affect regional political outcomes.

Be it through dispersal of foreign-aid monies, support by foreign leaders looking to foment pan-continental social revolution (Kaddafi) or support by an American Christian leader looking to counter the perceived growth of regional Muslim influence (Robertson), the violence 'out there' in the Mano river conflict complex had as much to do with international politics as it did with local political processes. Existing regional political structures that used negotiation as a corollary to organized violence were abruptly replaced by Americo-Liberian and British interventions in order to serve the needs of elites in Freetown, Monrovia and London. In the chaotic vacuum that followed, the antecedents to the outbreak of large-scale warfare in 1990 were formed as a result of this foreign supplanting of the traditional political order that had developed over centuries of assimilation.

This history of political chaos due to foreign interventions had its most salient machination in the manipulation of regional identities by local political leaders in order to foment violence to secure economically aggrandizement through access to resources. This thesis has delineated the international causation of this violent system of patronage and has located its roots within global geopolitics and the creation of a local power-vacuum by European and American commercial and geopolitical interests.

The idea of a historically-formed complex suggested to me by the term ‘conflict complex’ is a preferable descriptor of the violence in the Mano River region when opposed to a discussion of separate ‘civil wars’. A holistic study of conflict in the Mano River region should take history and both local and great-power geopolitics into account in its analysis, explaining what is happening in ‘the wild zones’ with reference to what is happening in the global economic core and periphery simultaneously. As well, it is essential that in conflict studies rural-metropolitan relationships be viewed as a symbiotic affair that affects both locales mutually, as has been shown in the colonial and post-colonial histories of Sierra Leone and Liberia. It is only through not making a fetish of time or space that analysis of violent conflict can avoid totalistic discourse and the commensurate inaccurate description.

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