The Bandi of Northwestern Liberia: A Study of Change and Continuity in Bandi Society to 1964

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THE BANDI OF NORTHWESTERN LIBERIA: A STUDY OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN BANDI SOCIETY TO 1964

by

Samuel Benedict Ngovo

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
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Advisor: Amos J. Beyan, Ph.D.

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Relying on oral accounts and archival and published sources, this dissertation employed interdisciplinary methodology to examine change and continuity in traditional Bandi systems to 1964. It focuses on traditional Bandi social, religious, economic and political systems that changed and those that persisted as a result of contacts with neighboring ethnic groups, Islam, Christianity, and the Liberian state.

The Bandi of northwestern Liberia are divided into six subgroups. Nevertheless, the six subgroups of Bandi share common traditional values. The Bandi people belong to the Mande-linguistic group and share common traditional values with neighboring Mande speakers such as the Loma and Mende. The Bandi also have a lot in common with non-Mande speakers such as the Kissi, Belle and Gola.

Islam was introduced in Bandi society in the late nineteenth century, and the Liberian state and Christianity made contacts with Bandiland in the early twentieth century. Although they promoted change, Islam, Christianity and the Liberian state also enhanced cultural and social continuity in Bandi society.

Islam introduced new social values such as Ramadan, Muslim education and Arabic names in Bandi society, while the Liberian state and Christianity introduced western values such as formal education, monogamous marriage, legal systems, elections and
taxation. Despite these external influences, aspects of Bandi cultural and social values persisted.

Overall, the study demonstrates that Islam, Christianity, the Liberian state, and Bandi cultural and social systems brought about change and continuity in Bandi society during the period under study.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEC  Archives of the Episcopal Church
DC   District Commissioner
DFMS  Domestic and Foreign Mission Society
HCLM  Holy Cross Liberian Mission
LFF  Liberian Frontier Force
LGD  Liberian Government Document
LNA  Liberian National Archives
OHC  Order of the Holy Cross
RG   Record Group
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines change and continuity in traditional social and economic systems of the Bandi in northwestern Liberia (see Map 1). The study covers developments in Bandi society beginning around A.D. 1500, when the Bandi migrated to their present location. However, the focus is primarily on the period during the early 1900s, when Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity established effective influence in Bandiland and 1964, when the Western Province was renamed Lofa County. Specifically, the study seeks to analyze how Islam, the Liberian state, Christianity, and traditional Bandi systems affected each other during the period under study. It is therefore not a detailed study of Islam, the Liberian state, or Christianity as these topics have been examined elsewhere by numerous scholars. This study shows that despite these external influences, aspects of traditional Bandi systems persisted.

1The name “Bandi” has appeared in different publications as Gbande, Gbandi, Bande and Gbundi. See Benjamin G. Dennis, The Gbandes: A People of the Liberian Hinterland (Chicago, 1972), p. 15; Joseph H. Greenberg, The Languages of Africa (Bloomington, Ind., 1999), p. 8; Barbara F. Grimes, ed., Ethnologue: Languages of the World (Dallas, 1984); George Schwab, Tribes of the Liberian Hinterland (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), p. 23. The word “Bandi” refers to both the people and language they speak. The word Bandi means “hot” in the Bandi language. For sake of consistency, Bandi will be used throughout this study.

Map 1: Liberian Ethnic Groups and Languages


The word “traditional” as used in this study refers to aspects of Bandi religious, social, political, and economic systems that have persisted despite Bandi contacts with influences of Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity. The study examines which aspects of traditional Bandi religious practices persisted despite influences of Islam and Christianity in Bandi society. It also documents why polygyny and arranged marriage practices persisted in Bandi society despite the introduction of the practice of monogamous marriage by Christian missionaries. Furthermore, this study delineates why political and legal systems of the Liberian government did not entirely replace the traditional Bandi political and legal systems. Eric Hobsbawn has argued that while traditions are receptive to change, traditional systems also emphasize values and norms which tend to maintain continuity with the past. This study probes how both external and internal influences brought about change and continuity in Bandi society. It illustrates those aspects of traditional Bandi beliefs and practices that changed and others that persisted during the period under study.

The Bandi people share a geographic region and common social and cultural values with ethnic groups such as the Gola, Kissi, Loma, and Mende. While there have been extensive studies by Liberian and non-Liberian scholars on the Gola, Kissi, Loma, and Mende, there are few studies on the Bandi people. Scholars who have studied the Gola, Kissi, Loma, and Mende have done so primarily from ethnographic perspectives. On the other hand, this study explores developments in Bandi society from historical perspectives. The study examines both external and internal influences which brought about change and continuity in the traditional Bandi political system and leadership,
economic systems and material culture, social and cultural values and norms, and religious beliefs and practices.

A common trend in West African colonial historiography has been that western European cultural influences often dominated traditional African cultural values. This view suggests that African cultural values were destroyed and eradicated and replaced by western cultural values. The view ignored African agency with respect to why they accepted or rejected certain European cultural values, beliefs and practices. However, recent studies of contacts and interactions between western and African cultural systems suggest that relations were often characterized by exchanges, compromises and a blending of cultural values rather than simply the replacement of traditional African cultural systems by western cultural systems.

This study demonstrates that Bandi people were active agents during contacts and interactions with Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity. While they accepted aspects of social and religious practices of Islam and Christianity, and political systems of the Liberian government, Bandi people also retained aspects of their traditional social, religious and political systems. On the other hand, Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity also accommodated certain aspects of traditional Bandi cultural values. In other words, Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity were engaged in relationships that involved tactical compromises with traditional Bandi values.

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The traditional Bandi systems that are examined in this study include political leadership and administration of Bandi towns, economic activities such as rice cultivation and material production, social and cultural beliefs and practices such as polygynous marriage, Poro and Sande schools, totemism and paying homage to spirits of ancestors, soothsaying, and divination. The study probes how interactions of Islam, the Liberian state, Christianity, and traditional systems led to change and also continuity in aspects of traditional Bandi values. The study demonstrates that even though Islam sought to prohibit Muslims from attending Poro school and polygynous marriage was contrary to Christian principles, many Bandi Muslims attended Poro school and polygynous marriage existed among many Bandi Christians. Bandi Muslims allowed their children to attend Poro and Sande schools outside Muslim-dominated areas of Bandiland.

Islam was the first foreign religion that was introduced into Bandi society. Islam came to Bandiland with Muslim traders from Guinea and Sierra Leone in the late nineteenth century. Christianity was introduced into Bandi society during the early twentieth century. Muslim traders, Christian missionaries, and Liberian government policies affected and were affected by Bandi traditional systems. While trade was their main goal in the

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10 For discussions on the first contact between the Liberian state and Bandiland, see Andreas Massing, “Material for a History of Liberia: Kai Lunu, Mbwulume and the Establishment of Indirect Rule in
late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Bandiland, Muslim traders also used their commercial networks to establish political and religious influence in Bandi towns and villages. Bandi elders and chiefs allowed their daughters to marry Muslim traders, who in turn used these marriage relationships to promote Islam in Bandiland. Unlike Christianity, Islam accommodated more traditional Bandi social and religious values, especially divination, polygynous and arranged marriages, extended family system, and payments of dowry. Aspects of these traditional Bandi beliefs and practices persisted among the Bandi of Lukasu, Hasala and Wanwoma despite the dominant Islamic influence among Bandi people in these areas of Bandiland.

In addition to Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity also affected Bandi society. The annexation of the area of Bandiland to the Liberian state in the early twentieth century affected the Bandi political system. The Liberian state’s administrative policies in the interior began during the Presidency of Arthur Barclay (1904–1912). The interior policies affected the traditional Bandi chieftaincies. This study shows how the interior policies empowered chiefs and local government officials and how these officials mani-

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From Fr. James H. Gorham to the O. H. C. Chapter, West Park, New York, quoted in *The Hinterland* (June, 1928), p. 1, The Archives of the Episcopal Church (hereafter AEC), Box 2729, Austin, Tex.

The word “dowry” as used in this study also refers to bride-wealth. In Liberia, dowry is often used rather than bride-wealth as used by anthropologists in reference to money, livestock or material items that are often given by the groom and his family to the parents of the bride during marriage ceremonies.


LGD, “Inaugural Address of President Arthur Barclay” (1907), p.10, Department of State, Africana Library, University of Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia.

From District Commissioner C. H. O. Cassell to Jeremiah Harris, Secretary of Interior, Interior Correspondences, Western Province, Voinjama-Kolahun District, May 19, 1943, LGD, Box 6, File 17, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.
ulated the government policies to serve their own interests rather than the interests of the Liberian state. Furthermore, Bandi chiefs were subjected to governmental policies rather than being responsible to the Bandi people under their rule.

The extension of the Liberian state authority into the northwestern interior led to the creation of the Western Province, that consisted of territories inhabited by the Bandi, Kissi, Loma, and Mende. The government policy of integrating diverse interior ethnic groups into one national polity began during the administration of Arthur Barclay. The government adopted colonial-like policies toward interior ethnic groups. Their policies provided guidelines for administering Bandiland. For example, the policies introduced an election system and taxation in Bandiland. The election system affected the traditional process of selecting chiefs in Bandi society.

The imposition of taxes on individual houses also affected Bandi economic systems which were dominated by agricultural activities. Poll and house taxes were introduced into the interior in 1919. The Poll Tax was levied on adult males, while the house tax was levied on individual houses in villages and towns. While the Poll Tax was cancelled during the administration of President William V. S. Tubman (1944–1971), the govern-

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17 LGD, “Inaugural Address of President Arthur Barclay,” January 1st, 1906, pp. 9–17, Department of State, Africana Library, University of Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia.


ment retained the house tax. Taxation served as source of conflict between the Liberian State and the Bandi and the Gola during the early part of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{21}

In addition to the imposition of the house tax on Liberians in the interior, the Liberian state also enacted laws in 1949 that interfered with the operation of the traditional Poro and Sande schools in Bandiland.\textsuperscript{22} The laws also undermined the authority of elders and zoës, who were the leaders of these traditional schools. This study shows how the government laws made these traditional institutions subject to the authority of the Liberian state rather than the authority of Bandi elders and zoës (sowoi-tenée in Bandi) as practiced previously. As custodians of these traditional institutions, the elders and zoës were also responsible for making laws that governed the operation of these traditional schools.\textsuperscript{23} Even though the Liberian state recognized the Poro and Sande as traditional schools, the operation of these schools was subjected to the authority of the Liberian government.\textsuperscript{24}

The Liberian government enacted laws in 1962 that reduced the number of years for the operation of the Poro and Sande schools.\textsuperscript{25} Despite subjecting the operations of the Poro and Sande to the laws of the Liberian state, this study illustrates that the government was unable to enforce laws in areas not effectively under its administrative control in Bandiland.\textsuperscript{26} This study further shows that the Bandi, Loma, Kissi, Gola, and Mende

\textsuperscript{22}LGD, "Laws and Administrative Regulations Governing the Poro and Sande," Article V, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{24}LGD, "Laws and Administrative Regulations Governing the Poro and Sande," Articles IV and VII, pp. 2–3.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., Article XVIII, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{26}Informant 52, interviewed June 7, 2008, Lehuma Town; Informant 59, interviewed June 10, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town.
relied on the Poro and Sande schools to teach traditional knowledge and a variety of skills to male and female students respectively.\textsuperscript{27} The Poro and Sande students learned skills that enabled them to become productive members of their respective communities.\textsuperscript{28} The knowledge and skills that the Poro and Sande provided to male and female students also helped these students in their roles as future husbands and wives. While the Bandi and other ethnic groups considered the Poro and Sande to be traditional educational institutions necessary for preservation of traditional cultural values, the Liberian government and Christian missionaries considered formal western education the best tool for implementing their “civilizing mission” policy in the interior.\textsuperscript{29}

The Bandi, Loma, Kissi, Mende, and Gola considered the Poro and Sande schools to be the custodians of traditional cultural values, while the Liberian government saw these traditional schools as important institutions for maintaining social order in the interior.\textsuperscript{30} Although they were exerting efforts to introduce western cultural values among the Bandi people, the Liberian state and Christian missionaries also acknowledged and respected some traditional practices that were considered to be an integral part of Bandi society. The missionaries acknowledged the significance of Poro and Sande schools in Bandi society despite their critique of other traditional beliefs and practices. Father Benedict Vani noted that the missionaries encouraged traditional Bandi practices which were not inherently impediments to Christian evangelism.\textsuperscript{31} The leadership of the Liberian

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28}Ibid.
government and Christian missionaries had a common goal with respect to policies toward
the Bandi and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia during the early twentieth
century. Liberian government officials and Christian missionaries cooperated in the
education area to fulfill their policy of planting the seeds of "civilization" in Bandiland.  

The Liberian state and Christian missionaries wanted the Bandi people to accept
Christianity and western cultural values, but they also found it difficult to make "Bandi
elders to do away with their traditional beliefs and practices that have been in existence
from time immemorial." In other words, the acceptance of Christianity and western
education in Bandiland did not mean Bandi elders wanted to abandon their existing tradi­
tional social order. The missionaries were also convinced of the effects of Christianity in
Bandi society. Holy Cross Father Hughson acknowledged the problem associated with
Christian evangelism in traditional Bandi society:

If a chief accepts Christianity it means that he must abandon his authority
and social status [and] it was therefore unfair to ask the chiefs to give up
their socioeconomic power base without disrupting the social and economic
structure of traditional [Bandi] society.  

Thus, the efforts of the Liberian state and Christian missionaries to make Bandi people
accept western cultural values such as Christianity and modern schools were based on the
principle that aspects of the traditional way of life of Bandi people must be respected and
if possible preserved. Thus, the Holy Cross missionaries in Bandiland adopted an evangel­
ical strategy that enabled them to spread the Gospel of Christ among the Bandi and at the

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32 OHC, The Hinterland (May, 1925), p. 3, Box 2729, AEC; LGD, Inaugural Address of President
33 OHC, "Liberia’s Urgent Need Is the Outposts in Back-country," in The Church at Work, Public­
licity Department of the Presiding Bishop and Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, vol. II, no. 4
(1922), p. 3.
35 Rev. Shirley Hughson, OHC Superior, quoted in The Hinterland (December 16, 1922), p. 2, Box
2729, AEC.
same time mitigate the possibility of undermining the core traditional social systems of the Bandi people. This study shows how Islam, Christianity, and aspects of traditional beliefs co-existed in Bandi society. Overall, the study demonstrates that despite external influences of Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity in Bandi society, Bandi traditions and aspects of Bandi social, cultural, political, economic and religious systems persisted.

This study consists of eight chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study as well as examines primary and secondary sources, methodology, and outlines the significance of the study. Chapter 2 analyzes different perspectives regarding Bandi migration and settlement in northwestern Liberia, relations among the Bandi subdivisions as well as their relations with their neighbors such as the Belle, Loma, Mende, Kissi and Gola, with respect to cultural beliefs and practices. Chapter 3 examines the Bandi political system at the time of contact with the Liberian state. It focuses on the establishment and administration of Bandi towns, relations between secular and non-secular authorities, and the persistence of traditional Bandi political leadership.

Chapter 4 explores traditional Bandi economic systems. It analyzes changes in Bandi systems of agriculture, material culture, and domestic servitude, and assesses the overall effect of these changes in Bandi society to the early twentieth century. Chapter 5 investigates the effects of Islamization in Bandi society and the ways in which Bandi Muslims Africanized Islam from the 1890s to 1964. It illustrates how Muslim traders and clerics promoted Islam in Bandiland and how traditional values influenced Islam in Bandi society. Chapter 6 examines the advent of Christianity in Bandiland and illustrates how the OHC missionaries and Bandi evangelists Africanized Christianity in Bandi society.

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from 1922 to 1964. The chapter also analyzes more than forty years of Christianity in Bandiland through evangelism, educational and health services and shows why the missionaries embraced some aspects of traditional Bandi practices and opposed others. It further shows how Christian and traditional Bandi values influenced and reinforced each other in Bandiland.\(^{37}\)

Chapter 7 analyzes the impact of the Liberian government’s authority in Bandi society in relation to the reorganization of Bandi political authorities and the imposition of new social and economic systems of the Liberian state in Bandiland from the early 1900s to 1964.\(^{38}\) It traces factors that led to the decision of the Liberian government to divide the interior into three provinces in 1904\(^{39}\) and explains why the Liberian government merged the different Bandi chieftaincies into a single chiefdom in the 1930s.\(^{40}\) It probes the impact of the creation of a political unit called a “chiefdom”\(^{41}\) on the traditional Bandi political system\(^{42}\) and demonstrates how aspects of traditional Bandi political systems persisted despite the new political arrangement by the Liberian government. It also shows how the Bandi responded to the administrative policies of the Liberian government. Chapter 8 is the conclusion, which provides summaries of the main themes of the study. It highlights the major points of the study and provides perspectives on how

\(^{37}\)For example, how the translation of the Bible into Bandi language aided the propagation of Christianity in Bandi society.

\(^{38}\)For detailed analysis of why the Liberian state adopted the policy of extending its authority in the interior in the early twentieth century, see Yekutiel Gershoni, *Black Colonialism*, pp. 33–48.


\(^{41}\)LGD, “Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations for Governing the Hinterland,” Article 4, p. 2.

Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity influenced or were influenced by Bandi traditional values during the period under study.

Literature Review

Primary Sources

The primary sources for this study consist of Bandi oral narratives and archival documents. The archival documents include correspondence and administrative records of the Liberian state and records of the Order of the Holy Cross (OHC) missionaries in Bandiland. The oral accounts are based mainly on interviews the writer conducted in Bandiland during the summer of 2008. The interviews covered the traditional Bandi political, economic, social, cultural and religious systems, and oral accounts of the Bandi migration to the area that became northwestern Liberia in the twentieth century. The interviews also covered the effects of Islamic, the Liberian state and Christian practices by the Bandi.

Bandi oral narratives, Liberian government records and OHC missionaries’ accounts are important to this study because they respectively represent the perspectives of Bandi people, the Liberian state and the missionaries in relation to change and continuity in Bandi society during the period under study. Meanwhile, the records of the Liberian state, the missionaries, and the Bandi oral narratives are examined in the context of the reciprocal effects of Islam, the Liberian state, Christianity, and Bandi cultural systems in Bandi society. Unlike the Liberian state and missionaries’ records, the Bandi oral narratives do not provide chronological dates of events in Bandi society. However, oral narratives are
useful because they represent the views of the Bandi and also provide alternative as well as complementary perspectives to recorded documents relevant to Bandi society.

Oral narratives and written documents are examined in the context of how they corroborate and complement each other in relation to historical developments in Bandi society during the period under study. For example, the time of arrival of the Bandi in present-day northwestern Liberia is not known in Bandi oral accounts, but oral traditions of Bandi people state that their ancestors migrated from areas in present-day Republic of Guinea. The oral accounts of origin of Bandi people corroborate information provided in the studies of A. P. Kup, Yves Person, Christopher Fyfe, Walter Rodney, and Arthur Abraham, who also suggested that Mande-speakers such as Bandi, Mende, Vai, Loko, and Loma migrated from the savanna region of Guinea highlands toward the forest areas of West Africa in the sixteenth century. These scholars maintained that the mentioned ethnic groups migrated in waves and their movements toward the coast coincided with the demise of the Kingdoms of Mali and Songhai in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, respectively, and the Mane invasions of the Upper Guinea Coast in the sixteenth century. While they believe that their ancestors migrated from the direction of modern Guinea, Bandi people also believe that they are related to Bandi-language speakers known

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45 Ibid.
as the Zialo who live in southern Guinea. According to informants, the difference between the Bandi in Liberia and the Zialo in Guinea is that the Zialo speak a Bandi language that is mixed with the Kissi and Loma languages. However, informants also noted that the Zialo and the Volukoha Bandi of northern Liberia practice similar marriage customs and religious beliefs, and also trade tropical commodities such as palm oil, kernel oil, rice and tobacco with each other across the Makona River. Moreover, the Zialo are referred to as the Bandi of Guinea because they speak a language known as Bandi.

Meanwhile, the information about the Zialo was gathered during interviews with the Bandi of Liberia, mainly the Volukoha Bandi who share a boundary with the Zialo of Guinea. The interviews of informants in Bandiland were conducted by the writer in the Bandi language. Informants were interviewed during two and at times three sessions in order for the writer to compare and contrast various answers so as to be able to critically evaluate the narratives. Even though the interviews were held with male and female informants, there was gender imbalance among the informants interviewed, with most being male.

The writer interviewed twice as many male informants as female counterparts. The reason was that more male informants were willing to give detailed information than

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47 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
female informants, especially about questions relating to traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Bandi. For example, male informants were willing to talk in detail about the men's Poro school, but female informants often declined to talk about the women's Sande school. Women were uncomfortable engaging in conversation with a man about cultural practices that were considered to be the concerns of only women. Moreover, the women did not want to violate sacred Sande law that prohibited women from entertaining a conversation with a man about the women's society. Therefore, questions that were posed to both male and female informants were those that were mutually acceptable to both groups. For example, both groups addressed questions relating to the Bandi migration, traditional economic activities like rice farming and planting of cash crops, and Islamic and Christian influences in Bandi society. On the other hand, only male informants were willing to respond to questions relating to the traditional Bandi political system. Even though there was no customary law that prohibited women from taking part in politics in Bandi society, the men often played the dominant role in traditional Bandi politics.51

As noted earlier, female informants were uncomfortable answering questions relating to women's Sande and female circumcision, especially if the questions were asked by a man. Traditionally, Bandi men are often willing to talk about their activities to other men and not women. Likewise, women are often willing to talk about their activities to other women and not men. Therefore, in order to make women feel comfortable in responding to questions relating to the cultural beliefs and practices of Bandi women, the writer hired a female interviewer to interview the women. This strategy did not make any difference because women who were contacted by the female interviewer declined to

respond to questions posed to them on the grounds that they did want to violate traditions by “exposing the women’s secrets” to men or a non-member of the women’s Sande.  

Furthermore, when it came to questions regarding traditional politics, one female informant said, “The men are the ones you must ask the questions about chief, because they [men] don’t allow women to become town chiefs in Bandiland.” Even though the women claimed that the men would not allow them to assume chieftaincy authorities, women were often consulted when it came to the governance of Bandi towns and villages. The female elders were often consulted whenever male elders met to select new town chiefs.  

Moreover, the senior wives of chiefs and households give in-house advice to their husbands before they attend town and community meetings. It was also customary in traditional Bandi society that a man, whether chief or not, consult his most senior wife before he would participate in meetings that concerned the welfare of the town and community.  

The questions about the Bandi traditional economy and the effects of Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity in Bandi society were posed to both men and women. For example, both men and women were asked why Bandi traditional marriage customs and religious beliefs have persisted in spite of the influence of Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity in Bandi society. Questions were also asked about how the religious influences and policies of the Liberian state affected traditional Bandi social systems. Furthermore, since the Bandi are not a monolithic group, questions addressed how the different Bandi

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53 Ibid.  


55 Ibid.
subgroups responded to the influences of Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity in the twentieth century.\(^5\)

This study attempts to answer the above questions based on both oral and written sources. The study also probes how and why the Liberian state imposed a single paramount chieftaincy in Bandiland, imposed taxes, and demanded labor from traditional authorities and the common people in Bandi society. It demonstrates that even though Bandi society was affected by external agents of change such as Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity, there was also continuity in Bandi traditions due to the resiliency of Bandi traditional socio-cultural systems.

The historiography of African colonial history demonstrates how European colonial administrators, traders, and Christian missionaries served as agents of social change in traditional African societies.\(^5\) This study examines how Muslim traders, Liberian administrators and Holy Cross missionaries affected socioeconomic and political systems in Bandi society during the twentieth century.\(^5\) Bandiland was designated as a chiefdom in 1932 within the Western Province during the administration of President Edwin J. Barclay (1930–1944).\(^5\) A chiefdom was a political unit that was headed by a Paramount Chief. The position of Paramount Chief of the Bandi people was a creation of the Liberian state.

The paramount chief was appointed by the President of Liberia to assist the Provincial

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\(^5\) The different Bandi subgroups embraced either Islam, Christianity or practice these religions alongside the traditional Bandi religious beliefs.


\(^5\) LGD, "Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations," p. 17.
Commissioner in the administration of Bandiland. Even though there were powerful Bandi chiefs in Bandi society, the Bandi people had not been ruled by one Paramount Chief prior to the incorporation of Bandiland into the Liberian state. Bandiland was politically de-centralized. This study shows that although they accepted new political organization by the Liberian state and religious influences of Islam and Christianity, the Bandi also maintained aspects of their traditional political, educational and economic systems, and religious beliefs.

Islamic influences reached Bandiland through Mandingo and Fulani traders from Guinea. The influences of Islam in Bandi society today are more pervasive among three of the six subgroups of the Bandi. The chapter on Islam examines reasons why some sections of Bandi society embraced Islamic influences and other sections resisted. It also probes how traditional socio-cultural systems influenced Islam in Bandi society. For example, why did Bandi Muslims participate in the Poro school even though they believed that Islam does not sanction Poro schooling for Muslims? On the other hand, the chapter on Christianity analyzes why OHC missionaries allowed Bandi converts to participate in the Poro school and why the missionaries recognized the Poro even though it was not a Christian institution. Furthermore, it documents why missionaries invited Poro leaders to participate in annual Christmas festivities within the so-called “Christian colony”

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61 Informants 30 and 31, interviewed June 16, 2008, Kolahun Kolba City.

62 Ibid.
of Bolahun from the beginning of the 1920s. This study answers these questions based on an analysis of missionary records as well as oral sources.

The Liberian state documents consulted include interior correspondence and administrative reports, as well as annual presidential messages and inaugural addresses from 1900 to 1964. The Liberian state adopted administrative policies in the early twentieth century in an attempt to extend its political and socioeconomic control over ethnic groups in the interior. This study illustrates the nature of the government's interior regulations, laws and policies and how they served to maximize and strengthen Liberian state authority in Bandiland. The following documents of the Liberian state were examined in order to demonstrate how Bandi society was affected during the period under study.

In the “Departmental Regulations Governing the Administration of the Interior of the Republic of Liberia, 1913–1921,” the Liberian state outlined the responsibilities of the Interior department [Secretary of Interior] in relation to duties and responsibilities of Provincial Commissioners (PC), and District Commissioners (DC), as well as paramount, clan and town chiefs in the interior. This document illustrates how the Liberian state reorganized the traditional political systems in the interior in accordance with its administrative policies. The document reveals how the president appointed representatives of the Liberian government to implement policies in the interior through the recommendation of the Interior Department. The document outlines the administrative arrangements of the Liberian state and how they were designed to affect change in the social, economic and cultural systems of the Bandi.

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In the “Laws Governing the Commissioners, Officers and Men of the Liberian Frontier Force within Native Districts in the Interior, 1910–1916,” the government described the duties and responsibilities of the Liberian state militia assigned to the interior. These documents outline how members of the government militia were to relate to the people in the interior and what actions of members of the militia constituted abuse of power in the interior.

The “Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations for Governing the Hinterland” was published in 1949 to provide guidelines for Liberian government officials in their administration of the interior. This document contains various articles which outline the division of the interior into three provinces: Western, Central and Eastern. Each province was administered by a Provincial Commissioner appointed by the President. The document also provides administrative regulations that describe the responsibilities of town, clan and paramount chiefs and the limits of their authority.

The Liberian government also published “Laws Relating to the Frontier Force” and the “Manual for the Regulation of the Liberian Frontier Force in 1916.” These documents contain laws and regulations that outline reasons for the creation of the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF). The LFF was the Liberian government militia that was created in 1908 to secure the Liberian borders with neighboring countries and also maintain security in the interior. The document describes the criteria for LFF membership, penalties for violation of laws governing the force, and allowances for the members of the force. The document also outlines rules governing the behavior of members of the militia and roles of the LFF in enforcing government policies in the interior.
The Liberian state’s attempt to administer traditional societies in the interior also led to the need to regulate traditional socio-religious institutions such as the Poro and Sande. Thus, the government published a document entitled “Laws and Administrative Regulations Governing the Poro and Sande Societies in 1962.” This document outlines policies regarding the existence and functioning of the Poro and Sande societies in the interior. The document provides regulations that recognize the Poro and Sande as traditional educational institutions among interior ethnic groups.64 The document also acknowledges the zoës as custodians of these traditional institutions in the interior. In order to regulate the Poro and Sande schools, the Liberian state adopted measures in the 1930s to establish control over traditional leaders and to make them feel like an important part of the national government. The government published “Minutes of Conference for Chiefs” annually based on conferences with interior chiefs to address their grievances and concerns in their respective areas. One such conference was held in 1935 in Kolahun, Bandi Chiefdom.65 That document is essential to this study because it provides information on how the Liberian government provided a forum that allowed presidents and traditional Poro leaders to proactively settle intra- and inter-ethnic disputes that had the potential to undermine Liberian state authority in the interior.

There were constant communications between executive officials on the coast and local government officials assigned to the interior. Most of these communications were published under the title “Executive Presidential Correspondences with Interior Department and District Commissioners, 1909–19” and “Administrative Reports from the Hinterland.”

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65 LGD, “Minutes of Conference for Chiefs held at Kolahun,” Western Province, Feb. 4, 1935, Liberian Collections Project, Box 8, File 5, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
These documents consist of correspondence among successive presidents or secretaries of the Interior and District Commissioners and traditional chiefs in the interior. This correspondence contains executive orders from presidents or Interior secretaries to local government officials such as District Commissioners, commanders of the LFF and tax collectors assigned to the interior. Some of the correspondence also contains complaints from chiefs and common people to the presidents or Interior secretaries. These documents are examined in the context of how policies of successive administrations of the Liberian state affected the traditional systems of Bandi society.

The administrative policies of the Liberian government in the interior were often outlined in annual presidential messages and inaugural addresses from the beginning of the twentieth century. For example, the “Unification Policy” of President William V. S. Tubman was adopted during his first inaugural address in 1944. The study also relies on “The Annual Messages and Inaugural Addresses of Presidents Arthur Barclay, Charles D. B. King, Edwin Barclay and William V. S. Tubman, 1906–1964” because the documents provide important information about government policies that affected the Bandi and other interior ethnic groups.

A policy document, entitled “An Act to Repeal the Aborigines Law and Local Government Law, and to provide for a Local Government Law” was published in 1916. The document is important to this study because it outlines criteria for representation of ethnic groups in the interior in the national government. However, it was not until the

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administration of President William V. S. Tubman that the government initiated measures aimed at increasing the participation of interior ethnic groups in the affairs of the Liberian national government. The Tubman administration set up a commission in 1964 with the power to revise administrative laws and regulations that were promulgated at the beginning of the Presidency of Arthur Barclay in 1904. The aforementioned document is important to this study because it shows how Liberian state policies in the twentieth century led to government intervention in traditional politics in Bandi society.

In addition to these Liberian government documents, this study also examines missionary records relating to the work of the OHC missionaries in Bandi society. These missionary records include the Order of Holy Cross bi-monthly publications, The Hinterland, the Annual Reports of the Episcopal Church in Liberia, The Episcopal News Services and correspondence of Holy Cross missionaries in Bandiland. The Hinterland, which was published bi-monthly by the OHC, contains reports of the daily activities of the missionaries in the areas of education, health, and Christian conversion in Bandiland. However, some of the reports in The Hinterland consist also of personal observations by individual missionaries in Bandi society. The OHC missionaries conceived of Bandiland as a virgin ground for Christianity. Therefore, they saw their work in Bandiland as an opportunity to deliver the Bandi from spiritual darkness and "win them for Christ through the power of the Cross." The missionaries used education, health care, and the church as instruments of conversion in Bandi society.

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69 From Father Hawkins to the Holy Cross Chapter, West Park, New York, quoted in The Hinterland (October, 1923), p. 4, AEC, Austin, Tex.
The reports of the OHC missionaries in *The Hinterland* provide an alternative perspective regarding the administrative policies of the Liberian state in Bandiland. Moreover, reports and personal observations of the missionaries reported in *The Hinterland* reveal how the missionaries’ perceptions of Africans in general influenced their attitudes toward the traditional beliefs and practices of the Bandi. In addition to reports in *The Hinterland*, this study also relied on information from *The Annual Reports of the Episcopal Church*, which was published by the Episcopal Church in Liberia. These yearly reports of the Episcopal Church examine the work of Episcopal missionaries in the operation of schools, provision of health services and teaching of the Gospel in urban and rural Liberia. Accounts documenting methods of conversion of Africans and the growth of the Episcopal Church in the interior are also essential parts of these annual publications.

*The Episcopal News Services* and correspondence of OHC missionaries in Bandiland are important sources that also informed this study. These sources reveal personal observations of OHC missionaries as priests, missionary doctors, and nurses. The stories of conversion and healing of the sick were relayed to other Episcopal missionaries outside Liberia through newsletters and correspondence. These newsletters and correspondence also reveal messages from Bandi converts as well as reactions of elders in Bandi society to the effects of Christianity on their traditional beliefs and practices. These bi-monthly publications, annual reports, weekly newspapers, and the correspondence of the OHC missionaries are essential to this study because these documents provided a better understanding of the effects of twentieth-century Christian evangelism in Bandi society.
Secondary Sources

Studies have shown that contact between two or more societies often results in change but also continuity in the original social systems of these societies. In other words, even though change is inevitable in every contact situation between and among different societies, such change is often characterized by a mixture with social values of the original societies. This study demonstrates that even though influences of Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity were felt in Bandi society during the twentieth century, aspects of traditional Bandi values also affected Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity.

Continuity of traditional systems in African societies after contact with Islamic and European influences has been examined in many scholarly publications on Africa. Among the earliest studies of how European contact with Africa affected traditional African cultural values is the work of William Bascom and Melville Herskovits, entitled Continuity and Change in African Cultures (1958). This edited volume consists of fifteen essays that examined various aspects of African ways of life in relation to continuity in traditional socio-cultural beliefs and practices during and after European colonial rule in

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Africa. Bascom and Herskovits stated in their introductory chapter, "There is no African culture which has not been affected in some way by European contact, and there is none which has entirely given way before it." Their assertion suggests that contact between Africans and Europeans resulted in change as well as continuity in both African and European cultural values. Bascom and Herskovits include as examples the introduction of European legal systems in Africa during colonial rule, which did not completely replace African customary laws in rural communities; also, despite the intense efforts of European Christian missionaries, African traditional religious beliefs continued to exist among Africans. The main argument that runs throughout the various essays in this book is that the colonial and post-colonial African societies were characterized not only by change but also by continuity in African traditional values. This argument may also be found in C. S. Whitaker’s work entitled *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1966* (1970). Whitaker focuses his analyses on the British administration of Muslim-dominated northern Nigeria in the post-WWII period. His work demonstrates how the existence of traditional authorities in northern Nigeria provided the British the opportunity to utilize these positions as part of the governmental structure of colonial administration of northern Nigeria. Whitaker observed that instead of the British committing substantial financial and human resources to the administration of northern Nigeria and possibly encountering opposition from local Muslim leaders to an imposed colonial authority, the British opted for the policy of "indirect rule." Although the policy left intact the essential institutions of traditional government, the traditional authorities

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74 Ibid., p. 3.
were subject to British colonial administrators. Meanwhile, the introduction of the indirect rule policy by the British led to the coexistence of traditional and modern political institutions and influences in northern Nigeria. According to Whitaker, “The traditional system continued [in northern Nigeria] but in a new context and subject to external forces and considerations brought on by the superimposition of representational political forms.”

Whitaker gave descriptions of how the indirect rule policy in northern Nigeria was fostered by the desire of British colonial administrators to fashion an administration based on both traditional and modern institutions of government, which was based on the concept of continuity and change. The concept of change and continuity is used in this study as employed in the studies of Bascom and Herskovits as well as Whitaker. However, unlike the noted works, this study examines how the Bandi people embraced and employed some of the social values of Islam, Christianity and the Liberian state to enhance and reinforce their traditional social values.

Like Bascom/Herskovits and Whitaker, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch examines the effects of European colonial policies in Africa south of the Sahara in the context of social change and continuity in African traditions. In her work, entitled *Africa: Endurance and Change South of the Sahara* (1988), Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch states, “Many features of pre-colonial African politics [and social values] do survive today, more or less incorporated into modern state and society, even if the modern versions have been twisted and deformed.”

Coquery-Vidrovitch examined the nature of African societies in the context of the persistence of traditional socio-political systems despite the penetration of

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75 C. S. Whitaker, Jr., *The Politics of Tradition*, p. 31.
76 Ibid.
influences of Islam, colonialism, Christianity, and western ideals of government. Her analyses provide perspectives on how the indirect rule policy in British colonial territories allowed the continuation of traditional authorities in some areas and yet the British replaced traditional chiefs with hand-picked chiefs in other areas. Her analyses show that although African traditional authorities were not eradicated under the indirect rule policy, the appointment or replacement of chiefs by colonial administrators affected the nature and functioning of traditional authorities in towns and villages. Her study illustrates how chiefs who were appointed during the colonial period became accountable to the colonial government rather than to the people they ruled. Moreover, whether appointed or not, the chiefs during colonial rule were charged with carrying out the wishes and objectives of the colonial leaders who appointed them. However, both colonial and customary laws existed in rural areas under the indirect rule policy of colonial administration. Africans also held on to traditional socio-cultural systems such marriage customs and religious practices in spite of European missionary influences in rural areas of African societies. This study demonstrates not only the effects of Islam, Christianity and the Liberian state on Bandi society, but it also shows how Bandi people embraced external cultural values while also holding on to aspects of their cultural values.

Studies on Liberia reveal the role of the Liberian state as an agent of social and political change in the interior of Liberia.⁷⁸ However, these studies have not specifically examined how the traditional values of the interior ethnic groups and those of the Liberian

state accommodated and influenced each other. This study, on the other hand, examines the willingness and capacity of the Bandi to adapt and modify their traditional values in response to either internal desires or external pressures. Moreover, the study probes how and why the Bandi held on to some traditional beliefs and practices despite external influences that were in opposition to their continuance.

In their respective studies of the Kpelle and Dan ethnic groups, Richard Fulton and Martin Ford also examined the role of the Liberian state as an agent of change in the traditional ways of life of the Kpelle and Dan. In his dissertation, entitled “Kpelle of Liberia: A Study of Political Change in the Liberian Interior” (1971), Fulton examines how the Liberian state’s attempt to incorporate the entire interior on a permanent basis led to the policy of “indirect rule” during the administration of Arthur Barclay.\(^7\) The goal of the policy was to give local autonomy to the interior ethnic groups by allowing the continuation of a traditional authority that would be responsible to the national government. In Kpelleland, the Liberian state recognized the authority of traditional chiefs and the administration of customary laws, but the chiefs and the traditional courts were under the supervision of the Liberian government District Commissioners.\(^8\) Fulton’s study shows that the establishment of Liberian state authority in Kpelleland in the early twentieth century was made possible because of the cooperation of traditional authorities, who became functionaries of the national government among their people. The Liberian state relied on traditional chiefs as representatives of national government in order to establish political control in Kpelleland.

\(^{8}\)Ibid.
Like Fulton’s study, Martin Ford also shows how the Liberian state depended on the traditional Dan chiefs and forged cooperation and partnerships with them in order to establish political authority in Dan society in the northeastern interior. In his dissertation, entitled “Ethnic Relations and Transformation of Leadership among the Dan of Nimba, Liberia, 1900–1940” (1990), Ford examined socioeconomic changes in Dan society during the twentieth century as a result of the penetration of influences of the Liberian state in Dan society. Like Fulton, Ford illustrates how the Liberian state allowed traditional social systems such as customary laws to function in Dan society by applying a policy of indirect rule. The Liberian government recognized and supported the authority of some traditional chiefs, who in turn became enforcers of the policies of the Liberian state in their areas. Both Fulton and Ford examined the role of the Liberian state as an agent of change in the interior of Liberia. However, unlike their works, this study examines not only the role of the Liberian state as an agent of change in Bandi society, but it also shows how some of the Bandi traditional values persisted as a result of compromises between the traditional Bandi systems and those of the Liberian state in Bandiland. This study further illustrates the reciprocal influences of Islam and Christianity and the traditional social beliefs and practices in Bandi society.

The study of the Bandi and their traditional socio-cultural systems was severely limited in Liberian historiography until the publication of Benjamin G. Dennis’ book entitled The Gbandes: A People of the Liberian Hinterland (1972). The main point of his work is that the Bandi are one of the least studied ethnic groups in Liberia and therefore

82 Ibid.
external impacts on Bandi ways of life remained obscured until the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{83}
His study of the Bandi is informed by his personal knowledge and experiences of Bandi society as demonstrated by his detailed analysis of traditional systems of the Bandi people. The significance of Dennis' study is that he employed an insider's perspective to provide extensive ethnographic analyses of Bandi socio-cultural patterns. The similarity between Dennis' work and this study is that both employed ethnographic methodologies to study Bandi society. However, unlike Dennis' work, this study also examines Bandi people and society from an historical perspective, especially in probing the effects of Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity on traditional ways of life of Bandi people up to 1964. This study is also different from Dennis' work in that this study examines the social, economic, religious and other cultural values the Bandi have in common with neighboring ethnic groups such as the Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende. Moreover, while Dennis' study focuses on the functions of traditional Bandi institutions,\textsuperscript{84} this study also probes the role of the Liberian state as an agent of change in Bandi society and how accommodations and compromises were made among the social values of Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity and the social values of the Bandi people.

The study of the role of the Liberian state as an agent of change in the interior is not new in Liberian historiography. In recent years, there have been studies and publications about the impact of the Liberian state and Christianity on changes in ethnic societies in the interior. For example, the effects of the Liberian state in the interior have been examined in the works of Liberianists such as Monday B. Akpan, Yekutiel Gershoni, Svend Holsoe, Warren D' Azevedo, Abeodu Jones, Jane Martin, Harrison Akingbade, Richard


\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., pp. 70–79.
Fulton, Gerald Currens, Robert Leopold, Randolph Stakeman, and Thomas Wrubel. These Liberianists also employed interdisciplinary methodology to demonstrate how external factors affected the social arrangements of ethnic societies in the interior of Liberia. While these studies examine mainly external factors that were responsible for change in the interior, this study examines how the Bandi were active agents who selectively adopted and incorporated new cultural values to enhance their own values.

Among the Liberianists noted above, the studies of Akpan and Gershoni examine the administrative policies of the Liberian state and its intervention in traditional politics in the interior during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.85 In his article entitled “Black Imperialism: Americo-Liberian Rule over the Africans in Liberia, 1847–1964” (1973), Akpan describes how the Liberian state employed the British style of indirect rule policy in their administration of ethnic groups in the interior. This policy enabled the Liberian government to appoint Provincial and District Commissioners who relied on traditional leaders to promote the policies of the Liberian state in the interior.86 The Liberian state was encouraged to adopt the indirect rule policy for the administration of the interior in the early 1900s because of the lack of financial and human resources to directly administer the interior’s vast territory and large population.87 Moreover, the indirect rule policy would not only make it less expensive for the Liberian state to make its authority felt in the interior through the traditional chiefs, but it also made the chiefs become enforcers of the Liberian state’s administrative policies and laws in the interior. Akpan’s argument and analysis are expanded in Yekutiel Gershoni’s Black Colonialism: The Americo-Liberian

86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., pp. 228–232.
Scramble for the Hinterland (1985). Gershoni also maintained that the Liberian state adopted an administrative policy “patterned on the indirect rule system applied in British territories” to govern Africans in the interior. He also argued that the decision of the Liberian state to extend political control in the interior was motivated by British and French colonial expansion in West Africa. For example, the British and French had threatened to annex land claimed by Liberia in the interior unless Liberia established effective control over the claimed territories according to the mandate of the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. However, Akpan and Gershoni did not examine how the indirect rule policy of the Liberian state in the interior affected the relationships between the traditional leaders and the common people and undermined the traditional social order in the interior. This study demonstrates how the Liberian state administrative policy in northwestern Liberia affected the relationship between the common people and the chiefs as well as the traditional social order in Bandi society.

The effects of the Liberian state administrative policies on ethnic groups in the northwestern interior are also central to the studies of Svend Holsoe and Warren D’Azevedo. Relying on ethnohistorical methodology, Svend Holsoe and Warren D’Azevedo examined the history as well as the traditional socio-cultural systems of the Vai and Gola respectively. Holsoe’s study of the Vai of the western Liberian interior is a combination of both historical and ethnographic analyses of factors that led to the transformation of Vai society and the subsequent incorporation of the Vai into the Liberian

88 Yekutiel Gershoni, Black Colonialism, p. 38.
89 Ibid., pp. 34–35.
90 Ibid., pp. 33–36.
state in the early twentieth century. In his dissertation, entitled “The Cassava-Leaf People: An Ethnohistorical Study of the Vai with Particular Emphasis on the Tewo Chiefdom” (1969), Holsoe’s main point is that the socioeconomic transformation of Vai society was the result of influences of European traders from the fifteenth century and Liberian settlers from the nineteenth century.

The arrival of European traders on the coastal area of present-day Liberia enabled the Vai to become an integral part of European trade in West Africa. Prior to the arrival of Liberian settlers in what became Liberia in the early nineteenth century, the Vai played a middlemen role in providing slaves and tropical commodities from the interior to the Europeans on the coast. Holsoe examined transformations in Vai society in the context of commercial interactions between the Vai and European traders prior to the nineteenth century and the Vai-Liberian settlers’ relations from the early nineteenth century to the annexation of Vailand by the Liberian state during the early twentieth century. The commercial interactions between the Vai and European traders led to exchanges of Vai and European cultural values. European goods and languages were introduced into Vai society and European traders were introduced to the Vai language and way of life. Thus, the effects of European influences in Vai society were evident in the presence of European-made goods such as pipes, gunpowder, and mirrors at the time of the arrival of Liberian settlers in West Africa in the early nineteenth century. However, even though the influences of Europeans and the Liberian settlers affected Vai society, the Vai did not

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93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., pp. 103–118.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., pp. 98–111.
97 Ibid.
completely abandon their traditional ways of life. The exchange of socio-cultural values has characterized the interactions and relationships among coastal ethnic groups and Europeans after the fifteenth century and Liberian settlers after the eighteenth century.

Like Holsoe, D’Azevedo examined Gola society in the context of how the Gola related to neighboring ethnic groups, European traders and Liberian settlers, especially their desire to accept other cultural values and at the same time maintain their Gola identity and cultural integrity. In his dissertation entitled “Continuity and Integration in Gola Society” (1962), D’Azevedo examined transformations but also adjustments in Gola society. His main point was that the social relations between the Gola and other ethnic groups were characterized by the desire of the Gola to maintain their own cultural identity and their traditional values. This was essential to understanding how they related to other groups. According to D’Azevedo, the traditional values of Gola society were maintained and regulated by the Poro and Sande societies, which were responsible for defending traditional social order in Gola society. D’Azevedo examined Gola society in the context of continuity and integration because of the willingness of the Gola to accept the influences of other cultures while at the same time fostering the desire to maintain their own cultural identity. Like Holsoe, D’Azevedo traced relationships between the Liberian settlers and the Gola to the territorial and commercial interests of the Liberian state during the nineteenth century and twentieth century. The desire of the Liberian settlers to expand their settlements and create new economic opportunities for trade led to

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100 Ibid., p. iv.
conflicts with traditional authorities of coastal ethnic groups. The annexation and occupation of land owned by the Vai, Dey and Gola in the coastal area and its vicinity served as the main source of conflicts between the settlers and these ethnic groups in the nineteenth century. However, these conflicts did not stop the two groups from interacting and exchanging socio-cultural values. For example, the settlers and coastal ethnic groups shared common social practices such as polygyny. Even though some Liberian settlers claimed to be Christians, they practiced polygyny as did coastal ethnic groups during the nineteenth century. The prevalence of polygynous practice among Liberian settlers was not strange because studies have shown that polygynous marriage was practiced among African Americans before their migration to Liberia. Meanwhile, the marriage relationships between westernized local Liberian women and male settlers created kinship ties between the Liberian ethnic groups and settlers and subsequently encouraged an integration of cultures in Liberian society.

The Liberian state policy of integrating the cultural values of the Liberian settlers and ethnic groups has been examined in detail by Abeodu Jones. In her dissertation entitled “The Struggle for Cultural and Political Unification in Liberia, 1847–1930” (1971), Jones examined the Liberian state’s efforts to encourage accommodations of socio-cultural

\[\text{101}\] Ibid.
\[\text{103}\] Ibid.
values of Liberian settlers and ethnic groups after contact and interactions between the two groups. She notes that the nation-building efforts on the part of the Liberian state led to the policy of cultural and political unification of traditional Liberians in the interior and the Liberian settlers on the coast.\textsuperscript{106} She noted further that the break down in political barriers between the Liberian settlers and the Africans was illustrated by the existence of a unified Liberian state, but there were still socio-cultural barriers which made the different groups in Liberia "owe loyalty first to their respective traditions and lastly to the [Liberian] nation."\textsuperscript{107} However, the breakdown in political barriers between the Liberian settlers on the coast and ethnic groups in the interior began during the administration of President William V. S. Tubman (1944–1971). It was during the Tubman Presidency that voting rights were extended to ethnic groups in the interior, which enhanced their participation in national politics.\textsuperscript{108} However, while the declaration of the Unification Policy in 1944 may have succeeded in incorporating more interior ethnic groups into the national polity and subsequently enhancing political unification, there were still barriers to cultural unification because ethnic groups in the interior showed more loyalty to their different traditions rather than to the Liberian nation.\textsuperscript{109} Thus, the unification of settlers, coastal, and interior ethnic groups into one Liberian national polity was difficult before the late twentieth century because of the lack of a national cultural orientation among the diverse Liberian ethnic groups.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Abeodu Jones, "The Struggle for Cultural and Political Unification in Liberia," p. iii.
In his article entitled "Liberia: The Dynamics of Continuity" (1971), Thomas Wrubel describes the problems the Liberian state faced in its attempt to culturally and politically unify the Liberian settlers on the coast and Africans in the interior before and during the twentieth century.\(^\text{110}\) Wrubel stressed that the Liberian state policy of nation-building was conditioned by political and cultural unification of Liberian settlers on the coast and the ethnic groups in the interior. He noted further that differences in cultural beliefs and practices among Liberian ethnic groups in the interior and their desire to uphold these traditional practices have compounded the problems of cultural unification. For example, studies have shown that the Poro secret society was practiced mainly among the Mande- and Mel-speakers and not the Kwa-speakers.\(^\text{111}\) While the Poro and Sande are considered to be custodians of traditional values and social control among the Mande-speakers, this is not the case among the Kwa-speakers. Thus, an example of the difficulty associated with cultural unification is the fact that the Mande-speakers did not want to abandon their traditional Poro and Sande practices, while the Kwa-speakers did not want to accept the practices of the Poro and Sande institutions. Moreover, among ethnic groups such as the Kpelle, Bandi and Loma, traditional political authorities were subject to the power of the Poro leadership.\(^\text{112}\) The Poro was the main source of social control among


Mande-speakers and it served to preserve and enforce traditional social values among its members.\(^{113}\) Thus, the replacement or appointment of traditional chiefs without the input of the Poro among these ethnic groups “presented the [appointed] chiefs with a conflict between supporting the conservative traditions of their own politically important Poro school and the dictation of the central Government.”\(^{114}\) Moreover, in Kpelle and Bandi societies, there were instances in which traditional political leaders were also leaders of the Poro school.\(^{115}\) Therefore, the Liberian state policies of political and cultural unification as well as the appointment of traditional leaders in the northwestern interior in the twentieth century were not only a recipe for change in traditional societies, but also these policies created a situation in which appointed traditional authorities had to balance their support between traditions and the Liberian state.

Meanwhile, Abeodu Jones and Thomas Wrubel examined change in the context of the breakdown of socio-cultural and political barriers between the Liberian settlers and ethnic groups in the interior. However, unlike Jones and Wrubel, this study demonstrates change in the context of accommodations and compromises between traditional Bandi values and the influences of Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity in Bandi society during the twentieth century. It will also show how and why the Bandi held on to some of their traditional socio-cultural systems in spite of the penetration of different cultural influences into Bandi society.


The influences of the Liberian state as well as religious institutions in the interior of Liberia have been the subjects of study in many publications on Liberia in recent years. While some of the studies treat how the Liberian state and Christian missionaries had coordinated efforts in order to introduce western cultural values among ethnic groups in the interior of Liberia, there are other studies that have attempted to show rivalry between Liberian settlers and Christian missionaries for influence among interior ethnic groups. For example, in her dissertation entitled “The Dual Legacy: Government Authority and Mission Influence among the Glebo of Eastern Liberia, 1843–1910” (1968), Jane Martin examined the rivalry between the Maryland settlers (a mixture of secular and non-secular groups) and Episcopal missionaries for influence among the Glebo people.¹¹⁶ Her study is about the effects of political and social influences of the Maryland settlers and Episcopal missionaries among the Glebo, and not the history of Maryland in Africa.¹¹⁷ Relying on primary and oral sources together with secondary materials, Jane Martin examined Glebo society in relation to social change as a result of the influences of Maryland settlers and Protestant Episcopal Missionaries between the 1840s and early 1900s. She demonstrated in her analysis that even though the common goal of the Maryland settlers and the Episcopal missionaries was to institute change in Glebo society, each took different directions in their attempt to achieve a common goal.¹¹⁸ Martin gives specific examples of how the Maryland settlers wanted to introduce change in Glebo society through gradual political integration, while the missionaries wanted to do the same through Christian education.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.
Jane Martin has noted that the leadership of the Maryland settlers was not pleased with the education the missionaries provided to the Glebo. This was because most of the educated and westernized Glebo who were at the forefront of the petty wars between the settlers and the Glebo in the 1840s and in the early part of 1850s were former students of the mission schools. Moreover, the settlers’ leadership was against the fact that the missionaries sympathized with the Glebo in their conflicts with the settlers over land in the 1850s. Martin further suggests that the disagreement between the Maryland settlers and white missionaries over the forced removal of the Glebo from Cape Palmas, and acquisition of their land, precipitated the Glebo uprising against the Maryland settlers in 1856. During the revolt, the Maryland settlers requested assistance from the Liberian government and the United States Navy. The United States’ intervention subsequently led to the defeat of the Glebo. Shortly thereafter, the Maryland settlers entered into a treaty with the Liberian government that led to the annexation of the Maryland colony to the Liberian state in 1857. Although the Maryland settlers and Episcopal missionaries had opposing views on how to introduce change in Glebo society, their common goal was to make the Glebo adopt “westernized habits” and customs of the settlers and the missionaries. Jane Martin has noted that despite different polices of the Maryland settlers and Christian missionaries toward the Glebo between 1843 and 1910, their common objective was to introduce western cultural values into Glebo society.

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123 Akingbade, p. 95.
Randolph Stakeman has examined the role of Lutheran missionaries as agents of change in Sanoyea Kpelle society. In *The Cultural Politics of Religious Change: A Study of the Sanoyea Kpelle in Liberia* (1986), Stakeman examined how Lutheran Church missionaries influenced change in the traditional systems of the Sanoyea Kpelle in the 1970s. The point of his analysis is that despite the success of the Lutheran missionaries in converting prominent Sanoyea Kpelle elders and chiefs to Christianity, their acceptance of Christianity was not an indication of their willingness to relinquish their traditional beliefs and practices.124 For example, despite the establishment of Christianity in Sanoyea, traditional practices such as Poro and Sande initiations as well as traditional customary laws and polygynous marriage persisted.125 Stakeman’s study is significant because it examines Sanoyea Kpelle society not only in the context of how the Lutheran missionaries affected the traditional values of Sanoyea Kpelle society, but it also demonstrates the resiliency of their traditional social values. However, while Stakeman’s study provides detailed analysis of the effects of Christianity on the traditional socio-political values of the Sanoyea Kpelle, he also examined the economic effects of missionary activities on the Sanoyea Kpelle society. For example, he shows how the introduction of westernized material culture in Sanoyea provided the opportunity for the Kpelle to incorporate some foreign culture and ideas into their way of life.

This study will illustrate not only the religious effects of the OHC missionaries in Bandi society, but it will also show how the adoption of western material culture impacted the traditional way of life of the Bandi people. Moreover, unlike Stakeman’s work, this

125 Ibid.
study will demonstrate how the teachings of missionaries in Bandiland affected the way of life of the Bandi in the areas of traditional agriculture, health, education, and marital relationships. Like the work of Gerald Currens and Robert Leopold about change in traditional economic and social relationships in Loma society after the penetration of Liberian state influences in Lomaland in the twentieth century, this study will examine how the advent of the Liberian state and Christian missionaries in Bandiland in the twentieth century affected the traditional economic, politic and social relationships in Bandi society.

Gerald Currens and Robert Leopold employed ethnohistorical methods to examine the traditional societies of the Gizima-Ziema and Bonde-Wubomai Loma respectively. In his dissertation entitled “The Loma Farmers: A Socioeconomic Study of Rice Production and the Use of Resources among a People of Northwestern Liberia” (1974), Currens describes the techniques of rice production and other related economic activities in Gizima-Ziema society. The main point of his study is that the economics of rice production and related activities depended on the allocation and use of land and labor, which are the two key resources indispensible to every farmer. Relying on oral as well as published secondary sources, Currens showed how land and labor were essential resources to Loma farmers and how changes in the economics of rice and cash crop production in Loma society in the twentieth century were determined by changes that have occurred in the availability and use of these resources. He noted further that the use of land and labor

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127 Ibid.
for the sole production of rice in Gizima-Ziema area of Loma society was affected after Lomaland was connected by motor road to the coastal area of Liberia in the mid-1900s. For example, the opening up of trade routes between Lomaland and the coastal area of Liberia re-oriented Loma farmers to integrate the subsistence cultivation of rice with the production of cash crops for commercial purposes.  

Although Loma farmers continued their traditional rice farming culture after the integration of Lomaland into the Liberian state in the early 1900s, the demand for cash crops such as cocoa and coffee in the Liberian coastal markets led to Loma farmers engaging in the simultaneous production of cocoa and coffee as well as rice.  

Currens' study is significant because it examines the traditional techniques of rice cultivation that are practiced not only by the Loma, but also by their Bandi, Kissi and Mende neighbors. Like Currens' study, this study will also examine the traditional techniques of rice cultivation in Bandi society and how land and labor were indispensible to the economics of rice and cash crop production in Bandi society. However, while Currens' study is limited to the economics of rice and cash crop production in Loma society, this study will also examine how the Bandi integrated traditional manufacturing economics with the economics of rice and cash crop production in the twentieth century. As mentioned earlier, rice culture is traditional and common to the Bandi, Loma, Kissi and Mende ethnic groups of northwestern Liberia. However, cash crop production became a major source of income for these ethnic groups after the Liberian state imposed taxation in the northwestern interior in the early part of the twentieth century. From the 1920s, the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende rice farmers began to produce and sell cash crops such as cocoa and coffee to

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128 Ibid., pp. 26–30.
129 Ibid., p. 4.
Lebanese merchants and other traders in order to pay the house tax imposed on them by the Liberian state. Thus, the external pressure of taxation imposed on the Loma by the Liberian state pushed Loma farmers to engage in commercial activities in addition to their traditional subsistence pursuits.

Currens documents that the change in traditional Loma economic production from subsistence-based to a combined subsistence and commercialized economy in the twentieth century also affected the traditional social relationships that existed between and among kin in Loma society. For example, the introduction of the hut tax among the Loma as well as the Bandi, Kissi and Mende led to an outward migration of men from rural to urban as well as coastal areas in search of wage-labor in order to pay taxes imposed by the Liberian state. The rural-to-urban migration of men and labor affected traditional rural rice farming, which was essentially based on household labor. The support of family members during rice farming in Loma society, as noted by Currens and Leopold, was considered to be an essential part of kinship relationships. In his dissertation entitled "Prescriptive Alliance and Ritual Collaboration in Loma Society" (1991), Robert Leopold examines traditionally prescribed relationships that existed between and among lineage and kinship groups in the Bonde-Wubomai Loma society. His study highlights the relationship between collective imagination and practical action in traditional Loma society. Leopold’s study points out that even though traditional relationships between the family of a bride and the family of a groom as well as an uncle and a nephew are believed to be based on “superior-inferior” status, these relationships are more symbolic than practical.

\(^{130}\)Ibid., pp. 26–30.
\(^{131}\)Ibid., p. 30.
Leopold maintained that these traditional beliefs and practices continue to be an essential part of lineage and kinship relationships in Bonde-Wubomai Loma society despite the advent of Christianity and the integration of Lomaland into the Liberian state in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, both Currens and Leopold examined Loma society in the context of socioeconomic and culture change as well as continuity in Loma society. Even though this study adopts the ethnographic perspective of Currens and Leopold, the perspective provided differs from that of the two studies in that this study examines the internal as well as the external pressures that led to accommodation or rejection of foreign socio-cultural influences in Bandi society. Moreover, this study analyzes the role of Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity as agents of change in Bandi society.

In analyzing the role of the Liberian state in relation to social change in Bandi society, this study probes how successive administrations of the Liberian state used the Liberian Frontier Force to enforce government policies in the interior after 1908. In his dissertation entitled “The Role of the Military in the History of Liberia, 1847–1947” (1977), Harrison Akingbade described how the Liberian state not only used the Frontier Force to establish effective authority in the interior, but also how the Liberian state employed the Frontier Force to enforce administrative policies such as the collection of hut taxes and recruitment of laborers from villages for government work. The Frontier Force was created not only to protect the frontiers of Liberia, but also to aid the Liberian state in opening up the interior for administrative and commercial purposes. Detailed discussions of the founding and activities of the LFF are examined in Chapter 7. The central argument

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134 Ibid.
135 Ibid., p. 4.
of Akingbade’s study of Liberian military history is that government officials assigned to the interior used the Frontier Force as an instrument of oppression and exploitation for their own gains instead of protecting the Liberian frontiers as it was created to do.\textsuperscript{136} For example, Currens notes that the Frontier Force was used to conscript “porters” for government work projects as well as transport goods and government officials in hammocks in the interior.\textsuperscript{137} This study will expand not only the point made in Akingbade’s work that the Frontier Force was as an instrument of exploitation for government officials in the interior, but it will also illustrate how soldiers and appointed chiefs used the Frontier Force to enhance their personal social status. It further shows how Christian missionaries in Bandiland relied on local government officials as well as the Frontier Force to recruit children from villages to attend the mission schools in order to get a Christian education.

Methodology of the Study

This study adopts an interdisciplinary methodology. It relies on multiple lines of evidence through the use of historical, anthropological, sociological, linguistic, and ethno­historical sources. The study employs the concept of change and continuity from the edited work of William Bascom and Melville Herskovits entitled \textit{Continuity and Change in African Cultures}. Their work provides the conceptual framework for understanding how the influences of Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity affected Bandi society and how they also made tactical compromises with traditional Bandi values. In the introductory chapter of their work, Bascom and Herskovits state: “Where new influences impinge on any society, a student of culture is at once confronted with the problem of

\textsuperscript{136}Ibid.

how much of the pre-existing body of custom and beliefs is discarded, how much is modified, and how much is retained." The purpose of this study is to examine the socio-cultural systems of Bandi society in relation to not only how they have changed, but also how and why elements of Bandi traditions have persisted despite the effects and influences of Islam, Christianity and the Liberian state between 1900 and 1964.

The use of the concept of change and continuity in the study of pre- and post-colonial African societies has dominated African historiography in recent years. For example, C. S. Whitaker adopted the concept of change and continuity in his study of the politics of northern Nigeria during the British colonial administration. In his *Tradition of Politics: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1966*, Whitaker notes that the British administration of northern Nigeria during the colonial period was characterized not only by change but also by cultural continuity. The British did not dismiss the traditional political system but rather allowed it to co-exist with the British colonial authority. Whitaker’s argument is expanded in the work of Coquery-Vidrovitch entitled *Africa: Endurance and Change South of the Sahara*. She also maintained that the African scene during the colonial period was marked by change as well as continuity in African traditions. The works of Bascom and Herskovits as well as Whitaker and Coquery-Vidrovitch adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the study of African societies and social institutions.

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138 For detailed analysis of this approach to the study of African societies, see William R. Bascom and Melville Herskovits, eds., *Continuity and Change in African Culture*, pp. 1–14.
139 C. S. Whitaker, Jr., *Politics of Tradition*, pp. 13–44.
This study employed multiple lines of evidence in analyzing change in traditional African society.\textsuperscript{141} The study relies on oral narratives, published and unpublished primary sources, and secondary sources relevant to Bandi society. Published and unpublished primary sources include administrative records of the Liberian state and accounts of the activities of the Holy Cross missionaries in Bandiland to 1964.

Studies of European colonialism in Africa are replete with analyses of the role of European administrators, missionaries and entrepreneurs as agents of social change in traditional African societies.\textsuperscript{142} This study also relies on secondary sources that examine the effects of the influences of Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity on Bandi society between 1900 and 1964. Recent studies in Liberian historiography show that the Liberian state and Christian missionaries were agents of change in traditional socio-cultural beliefs and practices of ethnic groups in the interior.\textsuperscript{143} This study will show that even though the Liberian state and the missionaries were change agents in Bandi society, Bandi elders and zoes were agents of continuity for the traditional values of Bandi society. This study shows further that the Bandi were active agents of change through selective adoptions of new ideas and material culture, while maintaining aspects of their traditional values.

Oral information on change and continuity in traditional Bandi social values was collected through interviews in Bandiland. The interview protocol was reviewed and approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan Uni-


\textsuperscript{142} Bronislaw Malinowski, \textit{The Dynamics of Culture Change}, pp. 14–26.

versity (see Appendix A). The Bandi who were interviewed included elders, chiefs, traditional religious priests, women, and Bandi Christian and Muslim converts. The informants answered questions relating to the influences of Islam, the Liberian government and Christianity in Bandi society, and why some of the Bandi traditional beliefs and practices have continued to persist. There were multiple and cross-interviews in order to ascertain the plausibility of what had been said by different informants. During interviews, some informants revealed that even though some Bandi elders and *zoes* adopted Islamic and Christian values, they also held on to their traditional beliefs and practices.¹⁴⁴ Missionary records also show that Bandi people maintained their traditional religious practices even though they accepted Islam and Christianity. Moreover, some traditional beliefs and practices of the Bandi were incorporated into the religious practices of Islam and Christianity and the Liberian state policies in Bandi society.¹⁴⁵ In other words, the Liberian government, Christian missionaries and Muslims were engaged in reciprocal relationships that involved tactical compromises with traditional Bandi values. For example, the Hasala, Wanwoma and Lukasu Bandi accepted Islamic and Christian influences such as worshiping and praying in mosques and churches, while the Liberian state, non-Bandi Muslims as well as Christian missionaries accepted Bandi traditional practices such as Poro and Sande societies as well as male and female circumcision. This study examines how sig-


¹⁴⁵ For example, the Christian missionaries in Bandiland learned to speak the Bandi language and also translated the Gospel into Bandi language, which became the main text for Christian evangelism among the Bandi. Christmas celebrations were also indigenized as the missionaries made it a tradition to annually invite the traditional poro “mask dancers” and leadership to participate in the festivities. On the other hand, the Liberian state and non-Bandi Muslims accepted Poro and Sande societies, which were responsible to ensure conformity to traditional social values in Bandi society.
nificant these reciprocal influences were and what foreign influences the Bandi accepted or rejected during the period under study.

Significance of the Study

More historical research has been conducted on centralized societies than on non-centralized groups such as the Bandi. This study helps to fill a gap in the historical literature on non-centralized groups in Liberia and West Africa. Furthermore, there has been extensive ethnographic research on ethnic groups such as the Gola, Kissi, Loma, Mende and Vai in northwestern Liberian, but research on the Bandi is limited. This study provides historical and ethnographic information about the Bandi people as part of the growing literature on ethnic studies in Liberian historiography. The study examines the traditional systems of Bandi people and how these systems affected and were affected by influences of the transatlantic slave trade, Islam, Christianity and the Liberian state from ca. 1500 to 1964. The study illustrates that the Bandi continue to hold on to aspects of their traditional systems despite contact with these external influences. Moreover, there were compromises and blending of traditional Bandi cultural values and the values of Islam, Liberian state, and Christianity in Bandiland. This study shows that Bandi people were active agents in their contacts with Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity as evidenced by the selection and incorporation of foreign ideas and values which were useful for local purposes.

Overall, this study demonstrates that blending of traditional Bandi values and the values of Islam, the Liberian state, and Christianity brought about considerable change and also continuity in Bandi society.
CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BANDI PEOPLE

This chapter examines the historical background of Bandi migration and settlement in present-day northwestern Liberia. The chapter describes the intra-ethnic relations among the six subgroups of Bandi people and their relations with neighboring ethnic groups such as the Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende. Although some accepted Islamic and Christian values during the late-nineteenth century and early twentieth century, respectively,¹ the six subgroups of Bandi share common traditional beliefs and practices. Furthermore, this chapter shows that despite language and ethnic differences, the Bandi and their neighbors such as the Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma, and Mende share common cultural, social, political, and economic systems.

The Historical Background of Bandi Migration to Northwestern Liberia

Bandi people are classified as Mande-speakers.² The time of arrival of the Bandi and other ethnic groups such as the Gola, Loko, Mende, Vai, Loma and Kissi in the region of present-day Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea was in the sixteenth century.³ Between


the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the Bandi, Loma, Gola, and Vai are believed to have settled in present-day northwestern Liberia, while the Kono, and Mende settled in southeastern Sierra Leone. These ethnic groups are reported to have migrated from the savanna region toward the coastal areas of the Upper Guinea Coast, which covers the region between the Gambia and Cape Mount in western Liberia.

While most West Africanist scholars believe that Mande-speakers in the forest region of West Africa migrated from the savanna region, some seventeenth-century accounts state that the Manes came from the Congo River in Central Africa, “setting out on a long trek, some staying behind in one place, some in another, they finally reached Sierra Leone.” While one twentieth century historian, A. P. Kup, presented this view as accurate, Walter Rodney and David Dwyer have noted that the perspective that the Manes came from the Congo view is incorrect. According to Rodney and Dwyer, Mande-speaking Manes are believed to have migrated from the Niger River and arrived in western Liberia and eastern Sierra Leone during the sixteenth century. The Manes arrived in the areas of


4Ibid.

5Ibid.


modern Sierra Leone and Liberia by way of the savanna region of Upper Guinea between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.\textsuperscript{9}

Despite the different perspectives on the origins of the Manes, the consensus among scholars such as Northcote Thomas, Christopher Fyfe, A. P. Kup, Yves Person, Walter Rodney and David Dwyer is that two groups of Manes arrived in the region of pre-Liberia and pre-Sierra Leone from two fronts; one group invaded from the coastal area of the Atlantic while another group invaded from the interior of the Upper Guinea in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{10} Anthropologist Northcote Thomas attempted in 1919 to identify the Mane that invaded the Upper Guinea region of West Africa in the sixteenth century in his article entitled “Who were the Manes?” According to Thomas, the Manes imposed their language on people that they conquered during their invasion of the Upper Guinea Coast.\textsuperscript{11} This view is consistent with what has been suggested by scholars such as P. E. Hair, Yves Person, A. P. Kup, Christopher Fyfe, David Dwyer and Walter Rodney.\textsuperscript{12} The group of Manes that invaded present-day western Liberia and eastern Sierra Leone from the interior are said to have conscripted the Bandi, Loko, Loma and Mende as part of their fighting force.\textsuperscript{13} Rodney and Dwyer also noted that the Manes who came from the


\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.


interior “conscripted the Bandi and possibly the Loma and attacked westward [of present-day Liberia], stopping at what is now Port Loko [in Sierra Leone], where they established a political authority that came to be dominated by the Loko in the sixteenth century.”

Examinations of linguistic, oral sources and Portuguese records by Yves Person, A. P. Kup, and David Dwyer suggest that the Bandi, Loko and Mende are divisions of the same Mande people and language group. They also noted that the time of arrival and settlement of these ethnic groups in the areas of modern northern and eastern Sierra Leone and western Liberia corresponds with the sixteenth century invasion of armies of inland Manes, who “swept westward to the Rockel River and Port Loko.” Yves Person and A. P. Kup noted further that the Loko of Sierra Leone and the Bandi of northwestern Liberia probably had the same ancestors, because both the Loko and Bandi claim in their oral traditions that the Loko left the Bandi at an early date to fight a war in the west and never returned. Furthermore, the Limbas of Sierra Leone still refer to the Lokos as Gbande that came from the west and settled in the area that became known as Port Loko.

Bandi of Liberia refer to the Loko of Sierra Leone and the Zialo of southern Guinea as Bandi people. The Liberian Bandi call the Zialo of Guinea Herelore. The historical linkages between the Zialo of Guinea and the Bandi of Liberia have not been given serious research attention in available Liberian and Guinean historiographies, even though the two groups are known to be closely related in language. The Zialo live in close proximity to the Volukoha Bandi.

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17 Ibid.
with whom they interact, exchange goods and services, and share common socio-cultural values such as marriage customs and farming seasons. The Bandi in Liberia, the Loko in Sierra Leone, and the Zialo in Guinea speak similar languages and share common beliefs and practices, which suggests that these ethnic groups also share common historical backgrounds. Moreover, despite their respective geographical locations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea and their interactions with other ethnic groups, the Bandi, the Loko, and the Zialo have also maintained common cultural practices such as Poro, Sande, and male and female circumcision. With respect to historical relatedness, the Bandi and Loko oral narratives suggest that the Loko left the Bandi to fight a war in the west of Bandiland. These oral narratives are noted in the studies of Yves Person, Kup, Rodney, and Dwyer. Oral and linguistic sources of the Bandi and Loko suggest the historical relatedness of the Bandi of Liberia to the Loko of Sierra Leone. The Bandi themselves believe that they are linguistically and historically related to both the Loko of Sierra Leone and the Zialo of Guinea. Evaluation of Liberian Bandi oral accounts suggests that the Zialo were left behind during the migration of Bandi people toward present-day northwestern Liberia. The Volukoha Bandi refer to the Zialo of Guinea as “the Bandi across the river,” a reference to the Makona River that separates Bandiland in modern Liberia from Zialoland in modern Guinea.

Bandi oral narratives suggest that the Bandi people were separated from the Loko of Sierra Leone and the Zialo of Guinea as a result of a war, which is referred to in Bandi

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19 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
folktales as the kli-kli koi or "rolling war."\textsuperscript{23} The rolling war in Bandi folktales caused the Loma to push the Bandi, and the Bandi to push the Gola, Belle, and Vai toward the coast.\textsuperscript{24} The war was called a rolling war because it caused the movement of large numbers of people like waves of a flowing river. In order to demonstrate that before the rolling war the Gola once lived in towns that became Bandiland, Bandi people often make reference to old town sites that still bear Gola names. The rolling war forced the Bandi to move southward toward the Mende and Gola, who also pushed the Loko to move into Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{25} Even though the time of the rolling war is not remembered in Bandi folktales, Bandi people believe that the rolling war forced the migration and settlement of the Loko in present-day Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{26} Scholars have not been able to establish whether the story of the rolling war in Bandi folktales was the same as the inland Manes invasion during which Bandi and Loma were conscripted by the Manes during the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{27}

A. P. Kup, Christopher Fyfe, Yves Person, Walter Rodney, and David Dwyer have noted the connection between the Manes invasion of the Upper Guinea Coast in the sixteenth century and the migration and settlement of Loko, Loma, Bandi, and Mende in present-day Sierra Leone and Liberia.\textsuperscript{28} Relying on a combination of European accounts


\textsuperscript{24}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{27}For analyses of the Bandi and Loma conscriptions during the Mane invasion of Upper Guinea in the sixteenth century, see the following studies; David Dwyer, "The Mende Problem," in \textit{Studies in Africa Comparative Linguistics with Special Focus on Bantu and Mande}, ed. Koen Bostoen and Jackmy Manjack (Tervuren, Belgium, 2005), pp. 29–42.

\textsuperscript{28}For detailed discussions about the sixteenth century Mane invasion and how it affected ethnic movements and dispersion in the areas of modern Liberia and Sierra Leone, see the following studies: Rodney,
of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as oral sources, these scholars stated that the Manes invasion of the Upper Guinea Coast in the sixteenth century caused the movements and subsequent settlement of the Bandi and Loma in present-day western Liberia, and the Loko in northern and Mende in eastern present-day Sierra Leone. Kup has noted that the Mende were never mentioned by name in any historical accounts until the seventeenth century. Moreover, according to him, the reason why the Mende were not mentioned by name in historical accounts until the seventeen century was not because they did not exist, but because they lived further inland than they do now and Europeans who traded along the coast did not meet them until the end of the sixteenth century. However, Yves Person has noted that while the Bandi, Mende, and Loma were among the ethnic groups that previously lived in the savanna region of West Africa, their movements toward the coast were also caused by other factors and not only the Manes invasion of the Upper Guinea Coast in the sixteenth century.

The movements of the Bandi and other ethnic groups from the savanna region toward the forest areas have been also attributed to the presence of European traders in West Africa during the sixteenth century. European traders introduced goods such as firearms, tobacco, pipes, rum, and mirrors in West Africa and were willing to exchange these goods for slaves, ivory, indigo, and Malaguetta pepper on the Guinea Coast. Thus,

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29 Ibid.
30 A. P. Kup, *The Short History of Sierra Leone,* p. 25.
31 Ibid.
the presence of European traders on the Guinea Coast is said to have attracted ethnic groups from the savanna toward the forest and coastal areas in order to participate in the trade during the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{34} The Bandi, Loko, Loma, Mende, and Vai are believed to have been among the Mande-speakers who migrated toward the forest area of Windward Coast either because of the inland Manes invasion or the presence of European traders during the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{35}

The story of Bandi migration also exists in Bandi oral narratives. Although there is no chronology of occurrences of events in Bandi oral accounts regarding Bandi migration and settlement in present-day northwestern Liberia, there are two perspectives in Bandi oral narratives regarding the origins of the Bandi people. The first perspective in Bandi oral accounts is that the Bandi people migrated and settled in their present location from the Belle country to the east of Bandiland.\textsuperscript{36} This oral account does not indicate the specific time of migration. This oral account is popular mainly among the Hembe Bandi, who live in close proximity to the Belle. The Belle people are classified as Kwa-speakers who live on the northeastern edge of Bandiland.\textsuperscript{37} The Hembe Bandi and the Belle share the same environment, practice inter-marriage and therefore share common cultural values. Furthermore, evaluation of Bandi oral narratives reveals that the Hembe Bandi and Belle share not only the same traditions, but also share common traditional socioeconomic


\textsuperscript{35}Holsoe, pp. 63–67.


activities such as the rice farming season and time of initiation into Poro and Sande schools. Moreover, the Belle and Hembe Bandi farmers that live in the same villages along their common border also speak both the Bandi and Belle languages. Thus, the sharing of a common environment and cultural values such as folktales and languages has made it not only difficult to separate the Bandi traditions from the Belle traditions in villages where they live together, but also the common cultural values they share have influenced the development of a common tradition of Bandi and Belle migration narratives. Furthermore, the evaluation of oral accounts among the Bandi of Hembe shows that the Bandi migration story in this area is similar to the migration story of their Belle neighbors.  

The migration story among the Hembe Bandi does not provide information about the time of arrival of the Bandi migrants to Bandiland. Moreover, the migration story among Hembe Bandi did not state if the Bandi migrants had leaders during their migration and what happened after their arrival in their present location. Even though this view is popular only among the Hembe Bandi, it provides a different perspective and also differs from other oral accounts of Bandi migration history. This perspective on the Bandi migration is not popular among the Bandi of Wanwoma, Tahamba, Hasala, Lukasu and Volukoha.  

The second perspective of Bandi migration, among the Bandi people of Wanwoma, Tahamba, Hasala, Lukasu and Volukoha, states that their ancestors migrated from the region of present-day Guinea toward the area that became Bandiland in present-day

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northwestern Liberia.\textsuperscript{40} This migration story is common in most parts of Bandiland.\textsuperscript{41} The Bandi people of Wanwoma, Tahamba, Hasala, Lukasu and Volokoha not only live in close proximity to the Gola, Mende, Kissi, and Loma, but also share similar folktales and oral narratives. This second oral account of Bandi migration corroborates sources in scholarly publications which state that the Mande-speakers such as the Bandi, Loma, Loko and Mende migrated in waves toward the forest areas in the south from the savanna region of West Africa in the 1500s.\textsuperscript{42}

Arthur Abraham also examined the Bandi migration story in his work entitled \textit{An Introduction to the Pre-Colonial History of the Mende of Sierra Leone} (2003). Based also on oral sources collected from Mende and Bandi informants, Abraham noted that the ancestors of the Bandi are believed to have migrated from the direction of the southern part of the modern Republic of Guinea.\textsuperscript{43} His evaluation of Bandi oral sources maintained that Bandi people believe that their ancestors hailed from a place called Korblima in the area of modern Guinea and migrated southwards into present-day northwestern Liberia, where they settled between the Kissi and the Loma.\textsuperscript{44} While they were moving southward toward present-day Bandiland these Bandi migrants found fertile land where they settled in order

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{43}Arthur Abraham, \textit{An Introduction to the Pre-Colonial History of the Mende}, p. 25. Also, see Sylvester Corker and Samuel Massaquoi, “Lofa County in Historical Perspective,” pp. 11–13, unpublished paper, Monrovia, Liberia, 1972.
\item \textsuperscript{44}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
to practice their agricultural activities.\textsuperscript{45} The Bandi migrants were commanded by brave warriors who built villages and lived there with their followers in a peaceful relationship.\textsuperscript{46}

Thus, many Bandi towns were ruled by traditional warriors or war chiefs prior to the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{47} These traditional warriors were known as \textit{koi-wulubai-te-ne}, while war chiefs were known as \textit{koi-wansangai-te-ne}.\textsuperscript{48} Many famous war chiefs, such as the legendary Mambulu Vojo Yamma, ruled portions of Bandiland before the Liberian government established authority in the area in 1907.\textsuperscript{49}

The historical relatedness and common cultural systems of the Bandi, Loma and Mende in northwestern Liberia are corroborated in both oral and published sources. Even though they understand the Loma and Mende languages, Bandi people considered the Loko of Sierra Leone and Zialo of Guinea to be their closest kinsmen because Loko and Zialo people also speak a language called Bandi.\textsuperscript{50} Volukoha Bandi who live in northern Bandiland (see Map 2) also have strong kinship relations with the Zialo of southern Guinea.

The migrations of Bandi and other interior ethnic groups from the savanna area toward the forest region during the sixteenth century have also been attributed to factors such as population pressure and the lack of fertile land to sustain agricultural activities.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{45}Informant 15, interviewed June 21, 2008, Kpangehimba Town; Informant 73, interviewed June 4, 2008, Fangoda Town; Informant 9, interviewed June 20, 2008, Popalahun Town. Also, Sylvester Corker and Samuel Massaquoi, "Lofa County in Historical Perspective," p. 11.

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{48}Ibid.


Holsoe’s and D’Azevedo’s accounts corroborate oral narratives among the Volukoha Bandi, who believe that the separation of Liberian Bandi from the Zialo of Guinea was certainly due to population pressure and search for sustainable land. As noted, Volukoha Bandi and Zialo are separated by the Makona River, which defines the political boundary that was demarcated by Liberia and France in 1907. Despite their separation by the river, the Volukoha Bandi and Zialo have continued to practice inter-marriage, trade with each
other in common market places, and they practice similar patterns of farming and other agricultural activities.\textsuperscript{52}

In summary, the above analyses based on corroboration of published sources and oral accounts demonstrate that the Bandi people and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia migrated from the direction of the ancient empires of Mali and Songhai, which existed in the fifteenth century and sixteenth century respectively in the savanna region of West Africa. The migration and subsequent dispersion of these ethnic groups were caused by several factors, which included the inland Manes invasion toward the forest region of West Africa in the sixteenth century that led to displacement of ethnic groups, population pressure in the savanna region and the search for suitable land for agricultural activities in the forest region, and the activities of European traders. European traders brought commodities such as firearms, tobacco, rum, pipes, and mirrors to the Guinea Coast in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{53}

Bandiland and Intra-Ethnic Relations

Bandiland is situated on the southern fringe of modern Guinea. It is bounded on the east by the Loma, on the southeast by the Belle, on the northwest by the Kissi, on the west by the Mende, and on the southwest by the Gola (see Map 3). Bandiland was designated as a political unit called a chiefdom by the Liberian state during the administration

\footnote{Informants 15, 17, and 72, interviewed June 21, 2008, Kpangehimba Town.}

Map 3: The Six Subdivisions of Bandiland


of President Edwin J. Barclay (1930–1944).\textsuperscript{54} The Bandi Chiefdom represented the six Bandi subdivisions that settled there before the twentieth century. The six Bandi subdivisions were named according to the six sub-language groups into which the Bandi language was traditionally divided. During the administration of President Charles D. B. King (1920–1930), the Liberian state recognized and treated the six subdivisions as separate chiefdoms, each headed by a Paramount Chief.\textsuperscript{55} However, in an attempt to rationalize the


leadership and population size into reasonable administrative units, the Liberian state renamed each of the six subdivisions as a clan and subsequently consolidated the six clans into one Bandi Chiefdom in the early 1930s. Therefore, the Liberian state designated a Paramount Chief as the administrative head of the Bandi Chiefdom.

Bandiland is sparsely populated. The 1962 population and housing census of Liberia shows that the population of the Bandi was 28,599, while the 1964 census reveals the population of Bandi was 38,548 of about 31.9 persons per square mile. Based on the 1962 and 1964 censuses, the largest and the most populous of the six clans in Bandiland were identified as the Hembe and Hasala clans. The Bandi of the six clans speak the Bandi language with little variation in pronunciation. Moreover, the acceptance of Islam and Christianity among the Bandi has led to the practice of three religious beliefs in Bandi society. While there are Bandi who believe only in traditional religious practices, there are also Bandi Muslims and Bandi Christians.

Even though they are not a monolithic group, the Bandi people are classified as southwestern Mande-speakers. The Bandi have been influenced by the languages and cultural values of neighboring ethnic groups over centuries, and Islamic and Christian influences have also reinforced differences in their religious beliefs. For example, the Bandi who live close to the Mende also speak a mixture of the Bandi and Mende languages.

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
while those that live close to the Loma and Kissi speak a Bandi language that is a mixture of the Bandi, Loma and Kissi languages.\(^{61}\)

The six subgroups of the Bandi are the Tahamba Bandi, Wanwoma Bandi, Hasala Bandi, Lukasu/Ngolahun Bandi, Hembe Bandi and Volukoha/Wulukoha Bandi (see Map 3). The six subgroups are named according to the six subdivisions of Bandiland. However, even though all the Bandi of the subdivisions speak the Bandi language, there are slight differences in the way they pronounce names and words. For example, the Bandi of Tahamba, Wanwoma and Lukasu refer to the leaf of a traditional Bandi food crop as kamatekai. The same leaf, however, is called kamatufa by the Bandi of Hasala and Hembe.\(^{62}\) Furthermore, the Bandi of Hasala refers to “we” in the English word as muwan, while the Bandi of Tahamba, Wanwoma refer to “we” as muyan. Thus, even though the Bandi speak a common language, the differences in pronunciation of words and names as well as religious practices demonstrate differences among the Bandi.\(^{63}\)

The Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia, northern and eastern Sierra Leone and southern Guinea have interacted and exchanged socio-cultural influences for centuries before contact with the Liberian state in the early twentieth century. For example, a comparative analysis of the Volukoha Bandi language and the Loma language shows that the Loma people refer to crocodiles as da’ba’-ga and the Bandi people of Volukoha also refer to crocodiles as da’ba’-gai, and the Bandi people of Tahamba and Wanwoma refer to crocodiles as nda’mba-ngai-ti-ne’\(^{64}\). Also, the Bandi people of Volukoha

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\(^{62}\) Ibid.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) David James Dwyer, “The Comparative Tonology of Southwestern Mande Nominals,” p. 46.
pronounce the word “hello” as *wa' nai* or *ya' nai*, which is the same pronunciation in the Loma language, while the Bandi people of Lukasu and Hasala pronounce the word hello as *a-wa' nai* or *a'-wu-seh*, which is similar in pronunciation to *la 'woseh* in the Kissi language. The Bandi people of Hasala and Lukasu also speak a Bandi language that is mixed with the Mende language, while the Bandi people of Hembe speak the Bandi language that has the influences of languages spoken by their Belle and Gola neighbors. In addition to the similarity between the Bandi language spoken in Hasala and Lukasu and the Mende language, the Bandi people of that part of Bandiland and their Mende neighbors share common religious beliefs such as Islam as well as traditional practices such as divination, soothsaying, and totemism; they also produce and share a diet of food crops such as eddoes, cassava and plantains. Moreover, like the Mende, the Hasala and Lukasu Bandi produce traditional country cloth, baskets, and other tropical commodities such as palm oil, which are sold in the same market places. Despite the language differences, the Bandi in this part of Bandiland and their Mende neighbors are bound by common religious beliefs and also share common socioeconomic systems and material culture.

Meanwhile, an evaluation of oral sources shows that the Bandi language spoken in the Tahamba and Wanwoma areas of Bandiland is said to be the standard Bandi language. Bandi *sowoi-te-ne* or *zoes* in these areas also consider themselves as guardians of the traditional Bandi beliefs and practices. According to one of the leading Bandi Poro *zoes* of the Wanwoma Clan, Elder Sowowala Musa, most of the Poro and Sande schools in Bandiland have not only been in the Wanwoma and Tahamba clans, but also the famous

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66 Informant 8, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town.
67 Ibid.
and reputable Bandi Poro and Sande zoes have always come from these two clans.\textsuperscript{68}

However, the advent of alien religious beliefs such as Islam and Christianity in Bandi society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had also led to differences in religious orientations among the Bandi of Wanwoma and Tahamba. Thus, despite the pervasive influences of traditional Bandi cultural beliefs and practices among the Bandi people of Tahamba and Wanwoma, there are also Islamic and Christian influences in these areas and about 10 percent of the Bandi are said to be Christians.\textsuperscript{69} Unlike Bandi of the Lukasu and Hasala areas, the Bandi of Tahamba, Wanwoma and Volukoha did not abandon traditional Bandi beliefs and practices such as the Poro, Sande, soothsaying, divination, and totemism, despite their acceptance of Islamic and Christian influences. The soothsayers in traditional Bandi society are people who profess to foretell the future and are believed to have the ability to reveal any misfortunes that may be awaiting a household, village or community.\textsuperscript{70} On the other hand, diviners in Bandi society are important because the Bandi believe that they have the ability to interpret dreams, aid chiefs to solve cases in traditional courts, and administer sassy wood (ordeals) to accused persons in order to ascertain their innocence or guilt.\textsuperscript{71} Totemic beliefs are also pervasive in Bandi society. These beliefs prohibited people or particular families from eating certain plants or animals because these plants and animals are said to represent or symbolize an individual,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{68} Informant 59, interviewed June 10, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town.
\item \textsuperscript{69} See Joshua Project website, http://www.Joshuaproject.net. The majority of the Bandi people practice traditional religion.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Informant 59, interviewed June 10, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town; Informant 52, interviewed June 17, 2008, Lehuma Town.
\item \textsuperscript{71} For detailed discussions of the role of diviners and soothsayers in traditional Kpelle society in Liberia, see John Gay and Michael Cole, The New Mathematics and An Old Culture: A Study of Learning Among the Kpelle of Liberia (New York, 1967), pp. 21–27.
\end{itemize}
a family or lineage identity.\textsuperscript{72} The traditional diviners, soothsayers, and custodians of family totems are also considered to be \textit{zoes} with divine power in Bandi society. The presence of these traditional \textit{zoes} in large numbers in the Wanwoma and Tahamba clans has made the two clans to be known as centers of traditional cultural beliefs and practices in Bandiland.\textsuperscript{73}

The traditional Bandi \textit{zoes} are not only considered to be custodians of traditional Bandi cultural values such as the Poro and Sande schools, but they are also believed to possess divine ability to provide spiritual guardianship in villages and communities in Bandi society. Bandi Christians and Muslims also respected the \textit{zoes} because of the tradition that \textit{zoes} have the ability to interpret dreams, relay messages from ancestral spirits, guard living family members, render “unbiased” decisions in traditional court cases, and foretell fortunes or misfortunes awaiting families, villages and communities.\textsuperscript{74} These attributes remain the main sources of power for \textit{zoes} and therefore they command great respect in Bandi society as preservers of traditional Bandi socio-cultural values. As noted, among the Bandi people of Wanwoma and Tahamba, in spite of the pervasive practices of traditional beliefs and practices, there are also Islamic and Christian influences. The first Christian town in Bandiland was established among the Bandi of Wanwoma in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{75} However, Christian influences were not as widely propagated among the Bandi of Tahamba as they were among the Bandi of Wanwoma. The widespread


\textsuperscript{73}Informant 59, interviewed June 10, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town.

\textsuperscript{74}Informant 29, interviewed June 19, 2008, Bondowalahun Town; Informant 5, interviewed June 25, 2008, Manjotahun Town; Informant 57, interviewed July 19, 2008, Bolahun Town. For detailed discussions of the power of traditional \textit{zoes} in other traditional societies such as the Kpelle, see John Gay and Michael Cole, \textit{The New Mathematics and an Old Culture: A Study of Learning Among the Kpelle of Liberia}, pp. 21–29.

practices of traditional Bandi cultural systems and the desire of powerful traditional *zoes* to preserve the traditional status quo made it difficult for Islam and Christianity to have significant effects in the Tahamba area of Bandiland. As teachers in traditional schools such as the Poro and Sande, the *zoes* are considered to be custodians of Bandi cultural values. Even though Mandingo Muslim clerics that settled in Bandiland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries denounced the Bandi Poro school as being un-Islamic, the Bandi who converted to Islam have continued to send their sons to a Poro school. On the other hand, the missionaries accepted the Poro school, but they condemned the Bandi practice of making offerings to ancestral graves. Thus, Bandi *zoes* rejected Islam and Christianity because Islamic and Christian beliefs and practices would require them to renounce their role as leaders of Poro and Sande schools, and would prohibit them from the practice of ancestral offerings that are associated with these traditional institutions.  

The propagation of Islamic influences among the Bandi began with the establishment of the first Muslim town known as Sosomoilahun in Bandiland in the late nineteenth century. The town was established by a Soso Muslim cleric about 15 miles northeast of Bolahun, which was also the first Christian town established in Bandiland by the OHC missionaries in 1922. The Soso Muslim cleric provided spiritual guidance to chiefs and ordinary people in Bandiland by making Islamic charms and amulets that were believed to ward off evil spirits and bring good fortune to the users. His fame and popularity as a Muslim cleric attracted settlers to his town, which became known as the town of the Soso

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77 Informant 31, interviewed June 16, 2008, Kolahun Kolba City. Also, see Rt. Rev Robert E. Campbell, *Within the Green Wall.*
Muslim or *Soso mollay-lahun* in the Bandi language. Islamic influences had reached the Bandi before the arrival of Christian missionaries in the Wanwoma area of Bandiland in the early twentieth century. Although the introduction of Islam and Christianity among the Bandi led to some Bandi becoming Muslims and others Christians, most Bandi continued to practice their traditional religion. However, despite the different religious orientations, the Bandi Muslims, Christians and traditional believers shared common traditional Bandi values and practices such as Poro and Sande schools and permitted intermarriage.

The Bandi Muslims of Wanwoma have close kinship relationships with their counterparts in the Hasala and Lukasu areas of Bandiland because the Hasala and Lukasu Bandi are also predominantly Muslims. The Bandi Muslims share not only common Islamic beliefs, but they also practice the same Islamic tradition of giving Muslim names to their children. While the Bandi Muslims of Wanwoma, Hasala and Lukasu still participate in the Bandi Poro and Sande schools, these cultural practices are not strong in towns and villages dominated by Bandi Muslims because of the strong Islamic influences in these areas. Thus, even though the Poro school has not been eradicated among Bandi Muslims, the practice has declined in Bandi Muslim towns and villages because of the belief that the Koran prohibits Muslims from becoming members of non-Islamic societies. On the other hand, as the custodian of traditional values in Bandi society, the Poro has also hindered the propagation of Islam among the Bandi. Poro and Sande schools have

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
82 Beryl Bellman, *The Language of Secrecy*, p. 15.
continued to be agents for the preservation and reinforcement of cultural ways of life in Bandi society through traditional education. The only traditional Bandi practices that Muslims considered to be requirements according to Islam are female and male circumcision, the latter known among Bandi Muslims as a *gbelee*. While male circumcision is known among Bandi Muslims as *gbelee*, it is known among the non-Muslim Bandi as *kodoi*. Although the traditional Poro school education has declined in Bandi towns and villages dominated by Bandi Muslims, the Bandi Muslim children are often sent to other areas of Bandiland to attend the Poro school, which is considered one of the core traditional cultural requirements among the Bandi people.

Prior to the twentieth century, the Bandi Muslims of Hasala and Lukasu would not allow their daughters to marry non-Muslim Bandi men. The reason was that earlier Bandi Muslims accepted the Islamic belief that Muslim women were not supposed to marry to non-Muslims or “unbelievers” because of differences in cultural beliefs and practices. However, such beliefs have changed over the years as more and more Bandi Muslim girls acquired a western education in schools established by the Liberian state and Christian missionaries in the twentieth century. Most Bandi Muslims, male and female, who acquired a high school and college education tended not to follow the traditional Islamic beliefs of their parents. Moreover, the females tended to marry in church in

84Ibid.
85Ibid.
86For detailed discussions of why Muslims are not supposed to marry non-Muslims, see Pade Badru, *The Spread of Islam in West Africa: Colonization, Globalization and the Emergence of Fundamentalism* (Lewiston, N.Y., 2006), pp. 58–68.
accordance with Christian tradition rather than Islamic tradition. However, whether educated in western schools or not, one common Islamic practice that has continued among the Bandi Muslims is the tradition of giving Muslim names to their daughters and sons. For example, most Bandi Muslims have Islamic names such as Mamadee, Dunor, Kamara, Haija, Konneh, Kanneh, Fatumata, Sekou, and Musa. There is a belief among non-Muslim Bandi that the Bandi Muslims follow this Islamic tradition in order to compensate for their short-comings of not living the true Islamic ways of life like other Muslims. However, even though most Bandi Muslims are descendants of Mandingo Muslims, it is also true that some Bandi Muslims have no Mandingo ancestry and they became Muslims through conversion. Moreover, Bandi Muslims who are known to be descendants of Mandingo Muslims consider themselves to be Bandi rather than Mandingoes. This is demonstrated not only by the use of Bandi rather than Mandingo as a common language, but also by their continuous participation in Bandi cultural practices such as Poro and Sande, as well as male and female circumcision. Thus despite Islamic influences, the Bandi Muslims have not abandoned the core Bandi cultural beliefs and practices. However, the practice of giving Muslim names to children remains one of the main Islamic influences among Bandi Muslims, while traditional Bandi names are rarely found among Bandi Muslims in the Wanwoma, Lukasu and Hasala areas of Bandiland.

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88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
Like the Bandi of Tahamba, the Bandi of Hembe and Volukoha are also strong believers in Bandi cultural systems. The Poro and Sande schools are respected among the Bandi of Hembe and Volukoha. The Bandi of Volukoha also speak the Kissi and Loma languages and practice similar marriage customs with these ethnic groups because they live in close proximity and share the same environment. Likewise, the Bandi people of Hembe speak the Belle language, share the same environment and practice similar marriage customs. The Bandi of Hembe and the Belle have the same farming season, likewise the Bandi of Volukoha and their Kissi and Loma neighbors also have the same farming season. According to oral narratives among the Bandi of Hembe, Bandi and Belle farmers often sought advice from soothsayers before making decisions relating to selecting farm sites during the rice farming season or choosing the right marriage partner, as well as interpreting dreams and exposing witchcraft in their villages and communities. The same relationship exists among the Volukoha Bandi and their Loma and Kissi neighbors in the northern part of Bandiland. According to informants, the zoes of the Poro school in Volukoha often spoke to the Poro students in the Loma language as a way of demonstrating their authority during ceremonies. The sharing of a common environment and interaction means that there are continuous borrowing and exchanges of cultural values across ethnic boundaries among the Bandi and their neighboring ethnic groups.

In spite of varying socio-religious and language influences, the different groups of Bandi believe in the practice of traditional Poro and Sande schools and the preservation

\[91\] For detailed discussions of these beliefs and practices, see Benjamin G. Dennis, The Gbandes: A People of the Liberian Hinterlands, pp. 14–17; also, analysis of similar beliefs and practices among the Kpelle, see John Gay and Michael Cole, The New Mathematics and an Old Culture, pp. 21–25.

of these cultural values has remained a uniting force among the Bandi. Every Bandi has to attend these traditional schools in order to be considered a true son or daughter of Bandiland. In other words, graduation from one of these traditional schools was a requirement that qualifies every Bandi man and woman to be considered a true Bandi. Thus, despite different religious orientation among Bandi Muslims or Christians, the preservation of these traditional Poro and Sande institutions remains paramount among the Bandi people. The Bandi also have a common belief that every true Bandi has to attend and graduate from one of these traditional institutions.93

In addition to the Poro and Sande schools, there are other socio-cultural practices that are common among the Bandi. These practices include traditional methods of rice production and marriage customs. The method of rice production among Bandi rice farmers involves the change of location of rice farms every year, a practice known as shifting cultivation.94 The farmers believe that changing farming sites annually both allows the used land and burned-out forest to rejuvenate, and maximizes the yield of rice planted on new land. The belief among Bandi farmers was that five to seven years should be allowed to pass before farmers could reuse lands that had been farmed previously. This enabled farmers to maximize rice yields. Rice was the staple crop for the Bandi; rice farming dominated their economic activities throughout the year. The variety of rice that the Bandi and other ethnic groups such as the Belle, Gola, Loma, Kissi, Kpelle, and Mende primarily grow is scientifically classified as Oryza glaberrima.95 This rice is primarily grown up-

93 Ibid.
95 For detailed discussions about the variety of rice in West Africa, especially in Liberia, see Edda L. Fields-Black, Deep Root: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora (Bloomington, Ind., 2008),
land, but farmers also plant it in swampland. The Bandi and their neighbors used the same methods in planting rice. They planted both upland and swampland rice by spreading the rice seeds by hand and then turning up the ground with hoes. This traditional method of planting rice in Bandi society is examined in detail in Chapter 4 of this study.

In spite of language and ethnic differences, the rice culture and other traditional practices such as marriage customs and religious beliefs are still common among the Bandi and their neighbors.

The traditional marriage customs among the Bandi and their neighbors require the payment of a dowry by the groom’s family to the bride’s family. The observance of this traditional practice during marriage ceremonies has remained paramount in Bandi society. The Bandi believed that the dowry payment was essential culturally not only because the practice fostered better relations between the groom’s family and the bride’s family, but also because it strengthened kinship ties between the two families. If the groom’s family paid a dowry and it was accepted by the bride’s family, it traditionally signified mutual agreement to the marriage and the subsequent merger of the two families. However, the Liberian state policy of not forcing a woman into marriage against her will has diminished the cultural significance of dowry payment in Bandi society in that the payment of dowry is no longer a pre-requisite in traditional marriage among the Bandi. Although dowry


96 Ibid.


98 Ibid.

payment for a bride before marriage is still respected among the Bandi in villages, the practice has declined among western educated Bandi. For example, Bandi girls who have acquired some level of western education prefer to select men of their own choice rather than accept a marriage arranged by their parents. On the other hand, those Bandi girls who did not go to western school and live with their parents in villages are still subject to the decisions of their parents with respect to the selection of marriage partners.100

Besides the beliefs in a common rice culture and traditional marriage customs, the Bandi also believe in totemic practices or ancestral taboos. As noted earlier, this belief is still prevalent in Bandi society. The Bandi who live in villages still observe the practice that animals or plants that are known to be ancestral totems are prohibited from being touched or eaten.101 Thus, among the Bandi, including Muslim or Christian converts, it is prohibited to touch or eat the meat of animals such as the leopard, deer, elephant, antelope or plants such as kola, piassava, and palm trees and their seeds.102 Although some of these traditional beliefs and practices have been weakened as a result of the advent of alien influences such as Islam and Christianity in Bandi society in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century respectively, these ancestral traditions still exist and serve as a source of socio-cultural unity among the Bandi in northwestern Liberia.103

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100 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.; also, for detailed analysis of how Islam penetrated the Loma and Bandi areas during the late nineteenth century, see Gerald E. Currens, “The Loma Farmers,” pp. 17–22; Christian Kordt Hojbjert, Resisting State Iconoclasm among the Loma of Guinea, pp. 78–88; Ayodeji Olukoju, Culture and Customs in Liberia, pp. 32–35.
Bandi Relations With Other Ethnic Groups in Northwestern Liberia

There are five ethnic groups that share territorial boundaries with the Bandi in the northwestern interior of Liberia (see Map 4). These ethnic groups include the Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende. Other ethnic groups, such as the Mandingo and Fula Muslims, are believed to have settled in Bandiland as traders and religious clerics during the late nineteenth century. Thus, the Bandi consider the Mandingo and Fula Muslims to be

Map 4: The Bandi and Their Neighbors


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104 See Judith Perani and Patricia O’Connell, “Bandi Traditional Weaving” pp 1–3
strangers in Bandiland because they settled among the Bandi as traders and religious clerics. As traders, the Mandingoes are credited for introducing commodities such as silver ear and finger rings in Bandi society in exchange for items such as kola, indigo, ivory, and strips of cotton cloth from the Bandi farmers in towns and villages. The Mandingo traders who settled in Bandi towns and villages as businessmen in the late nineteenth century got married to Bandi women and embraced Bandi cultural values such as dowry payments during traditional marriage, rice farming, and they learned to speak the Bandi language. However, these Mandingo traders also introduced Islamic customs such as Muslim prayers in the mosque, Ramadan festivities, Islamic dress codes and Arabic writings among the Bandi. Thus, the introduction of Islamic influences among the Bandi was a direct consequence of the Mandingo settlement in Bandiland. The intermarriages between the Mandingoes and Bandi led to the emergence of Bandi Muslims who lived in towns and villages in the Wanwoman, Hasala and Lukasu areas of Bandi society. As noted, even though a majority of these Bandi Muslims are considered to be descendants of Mandingo traders and religious clerics that settled in Bandiland during the late nineteenth century, they use Bandi as a common language for daily communication.

Even though there are language differences among the Bandi and their neighbors such as the Loma, Kissi, Mende, Gola and Belle, the main source of unity among them

107 Ibid.; also, OHC, The Hinterland (Sept., 1926), p. 4, Box 2729, AEC, Austin, Texas.
has been their belief in and preservation of common socio-cultural values. These common values include the practices of the Poro and Sande schools, respect for marriage customs such as dowry payment for brides, paying homage to deceased relatives, and making rice farms annually. These cultural practices still exist among the Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups and have also served to strengthen cultural unity among them. However, despite cultural similarities among the mentioned ethnic groups, there are language differences. For example, the Bandi, Loma and Mende have been classified as southwestern Mande-speakers, whose languages are mutually understandable.\textsuperscript{110} On the other hand, the Gola and Kissi are classified as Mel-speakers, even though they share common cultural values with the Bandi and other Mande-speakers.\textsuperscript{111} The Gola and Kissi are geographically separated by the Bandi. The Gola live west of the Bandi and the Kissi live to the east. Even though the Gola and Kissi languages are not mutually understandable, and they are geographically separated by the Bandi, they are classified to be of the same language group.\textsuperscript{112} The Belle people, on the other hand, are classified as Kwa-speakers, but they share common cultural values with the Mande and Mel speakers of northwestern Liberia.\textsuperscript{113}

The dominant traditional practices among the Mande and non-Mande ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia are the Poro and Sande schools. The Poro and Sande provide socio-cultural education relevant to the preservation of traditional values among members


\textsuperscript{111}Ibid. Also, for detailed study of Bandi-Belle relationship, see Andreas Massing, “Materials for A History of Western Liberia: The Belle,” pp. 180–182.

of these ethnic groups. For example, Poro students are taught how to make baskets, rattan and wooden chairs, sleeping mats from palm fabrics, trap animals and birds and fish, learn the names of trees and edible fruits, learn songs and folktales, and resolve disputes. The Poro also played a diplomatic role in negotiating peace between and among these ethnic groups in times of conflict. Among the Kpelle, for example, Richard Fulton has noted that a war between different Kpelle chiefdoms that secular authorities had no way to stop would be ended by the appearance of the ngamu, the spiritual leader and custodian of Poro values in Kpelle society. Moreover, since the authority of the Poro transcended community or ethnic boundaries among member ethnic groups, any decisions taken by the ngamu or ngafui (in Bandi language) during disputes were binding on all conflicting parties. According to leading Bandi Poro zoes such as Sowowala Musa and Dovili Kowo, the Poro in Bandi society remains one of the main sources of cultural unity among the Bandi and also the main institution that served to preserve Bandi cultural values.

Prior to the establishment of Liberian state authority in the northwestern interior in the twentieth century, the supreme authority among the Bandi and their neighbors was vested in the Poro. Therefore, no member of these ethnic groups could hope to occupy a

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116 Fulton, pp. 1229–1230, and Harrison, p. 505.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

political office without first being a member of the Poro.\textsuperscript{120} Loma and Bandi traditions also required that a chief must be a member of the Poro for his authority to be accepted and respected in his village or community.\textsuperscript{121} Thus, in 1937 a group of Bandi chiefs complained that a Bandi Muslim named Jusu Dunor was appointed "Paramount Chief of the whole of Gbandi Chiefdom, when he [Jusu Dunor] was not a poro man."\textsuperscript{122} The Bandi chiefs wanted President Edwin Barclay (1930–1944) to appoint someone who was a member of the Poro to be Paramount Chief. The Bandi chiefs did not want Jusu Dunor, who was a non-Poro member, to dictate to the Poro leadership cultural matters, because traditionally the Bandi considered the Poro authority to be superior to secular authorities and therefore secular leaders were subject to Poro laws.\textsuperscript{123} Furthermore, before the twentieth century, secular authorities in Bandi society had to be members of the Poro because of the belief among the Bandi that in the event of war, the Poro leadership was responsible to invoke the Poro oath to rally its members for battle.\textsuperscript{124} It was customary among the Bandi and their neighbors to invoke the oath of secret societies as a rallying point for uniting members during conflicts with non-members. For example, during the hut tax war


\textsuperscript{121}For detailed discussions of this topic within the Loma society, see George Gordon Parker, "Acculturation in Liberia," Ph.D. diss., Kennedy School of Missions, Hartford Seminary Foundation, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo. (1944), pp. 196–207.

\textsuperscript{122}From Secretary of Interior R. S. S. Bright to Vami Jakema FahnbuIleh, Western Province District Commissioner, LGD, Liberian Collections Project, Box 4, File 2, Dec. 18, 1937.

\textsuperscript{123}Informant 14, interviewed June 7, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town; Informant 59, interviewed June 10, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town. For more discussions on how secular authorities were subject to Poro authority among the Kpelle, see Fulton, "Poro in Kpelle Society," pp. 1227–1228; D'Azevedo, "Kinship Structures in Liberia," pp. 515.

\textsuperscript{124}Ibid.
between the Gola and the Liberian government between 1918 and 1919, the Gola of Kongba organized their resistance against the Liberian state around a traditional secret society called *kanga*, which rallied support of members from ethnic groups such as the Bandi, Vai and Dei.\(^{125}\)

The Poro was also instrumental in regulating trade among its members in times of inter-community and inter-ethnic wars and famine.\(^{126}\) For example, the Poro leaders would make sure that the procurement and distribution of scarce commodities was not disrupted and individuals or groups would not exploit the situation to undermine the stability of society.\(^{127}\) The Poro would also decree in times of scarcity of particular commodities that withholding such commodities was a violation of the Poro oath and violators in some instances would face the ultimate punishment.\(^{128}\) For example, the Poro was instrumental in organizing the Mende Hut Tax war against the British in 1898 and regulating trading activities in the border areas between Sierra Leone and Liberia.\(^{129}\) The Poro used signs to ban the collection and sale of palm products and regulated the prices of other essential food crops from the Mende area in order to avoid a scarcity of palm oil during that conflict.\(^{130}\)

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\(^{130}\) Ibid. Also, Patrick J. Harrington, “The Poro Secret Society: A Study of its Socialization, Political and Social Control Functions among the Mano of Liberia,” p. 75–77. For specific examples of the Poro
The Poro also promoted peace and stability by enforcing traditional values that were common to its members. For example, if there were disputes among members of the Poro from the same or different ethnic groups the traditional council of Poro leaders composed of members from the concerned groups would designate and empower the elders from both parties to resolve the conflicts.\textsuperscript{131} D'Azevedo has noted that warfare between Gola chiefdoms was common before the Liberian government incorporated northern Golaland into the Liberian state in the late nineteenth century, but obedience to the Poro oath was often used to resolve the conflicts before or after they had occurred.\textsuperscript{132} One important responsibility of a council of Poro leadership among the Bandi and their neighbors before the twentieth century was to resolve conflicts among the ethnic groups if the elders failed to resolve the conflicts.\textsuperscript{133} Therefore, the authority of the Poro transcended community and ethnic boundaries before the twentieth century. Moreover, the traditional Poro signs were understood and respected by all members, despite ethnic and language differences of its members. The ascendancy of the Liberian state authority in the interior during the early 1900s and the Liberian government interference in the operation of the Poro led to the decline in the authority of the Poro. The Liberian state subjected the activities of the Poro to the approval of the Interior Department of the Liberian government regulating trade among ethnic groups in northwestern interior of Liberia, see Geo W. Brown, "The Poro in Modern Business: A Preliminary Report of Field Work," \textit{Man}, vol. 37 (Jan., 1937), pp. 8–9.


\textsuperscript{132}Warren D'Azevedo, "Tribal Reaction to Nationalism," pp. 10–12.

and designated Tribal Authority that was constituted by the Liberian government in the
interior during the early part of the twentieth century.

The Poro school had traditionally served as a centralized authority that regulated
and enforced traditional values among ethnic groups in the northwestern interior. The Poro
functioned not only as a government that had the authority to declare war or negotiate peace
on behalf of these ethnic groups, but it also bound members together in what has been
referred to as a “Poro cluster.”\(^{134}\) The Poro regulated relationships among ethnic groups
and constituted a body with inter-ethnic jurisdiction and authority prior to the extension
of Liberian state authority in the northwestern interior in the early twentieth century.\(^{135}\)

Besides the Poro school, there were also other traditional systems that bound
together the Bandi and other ethnic groups. For example, traditional prescriptive relation­
ships that existed among the Bandi, Kissi and Loma provided avenues for resolving dis­
putes among members of these ethnic groups. According to the traditional relationships
among the Bandi, Kissi and Loma, the Kissi people are considered to be maternal uncles
to the Bandi and Loma.\(^{136}\) A Kissi woman is believed to have mothered the Bandi and Loma
people.\(^{137}\) Therefore, the Bandi and Loma are considered nephews to the Kissi. These
traditional relationships forbade the Bandi and Loma from disrespecting or agitating their
Kissi uncles. Thus, the nephew-uncle (\(k\text{iy}\text{a}-\text{njabe}\) in Bandi language) relationships between
the Bandi/Loma and Kissi were used by the Bandi, Loma and Kissi elders not only to

\(^{134}\) D’Azevedo, “Tribal Reaction,” pp. 10–12; D’Azevedo, “The Setting of Gola Society and Culture:
Some Theoretical Implications of Variations in Time and Space,” \(K\text{rober Anthropological Society Papers},

\(^{135}\) Ibid.

\(^{136}\) Informant 34, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 10,
2008, Bolahun Town. For the Loma perspective on this traditional relationship between the Bandi, Loma

\(^{137}\) Ibid.
prevent but also to resolve conflicts among members of these ethnic groups. The respect for and the desire to preserve these traditional relationships and values served to enhance and strengthen kinship ties among these ethnic groups. Despite the Liberian state’s introduction of western court systems for the purpose of resolving disputes among ethnic groups in the northwestern interior in the twentieth century, the use of traditional uncle-nephew relationships to resolve disputes still exists among the Bandi, Kissi and Loma.¹³⁸

The traditional nephew-uncle relationship between the Bandi and Kissi was often used by the former to control the labor of the later. According to Kissi elder James Tamba Keila, the belief among the Bandi was that the uncles have to come to the aid of their nephews in times of difficulty.¹³⁹ For example, during the rice farming season, Bandi farmers sometimes employed the services of Kissi men, who often accepted underpayments because of the traditional uncle-nephew relationship that existed between them.¹⁴⁰ Kissi uncles also served as a source of refuge and security for their Bandi and Loma nephews in times of hardship and trouble.¹⁴¹ These traditional prescriptive relationships, as noted earlier, provided the means through which kinship relationships were strengthened and reinforced among these ethnic groups. Moreover, respect for traditional norms led to preservation of societal values and maintenance of social order within the communities. However, even though traditional practices such as the Poro and Sande schools and the payment of marital dowry still exist in Bandi society, the Liberian government subjected

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¹³⁹Informant 34, interviewed June 12, 2008, Bolahun Town.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid.
these traditional practices to its authority after the incorporation of Bandiland into the Liberian state in 1907.\textsuperscript{142}

In addition to the traditional kinship relationships that exist between the Bandi and their neighbors, there also exist common traditional marriage customs. For example, the dowry payment for the bride by the groom during marriage ceremonies remains a common practice among these ethnic groups. The marital relationships were also indicative of alliances that existed among the Bandi and their neighbors before they were incorporated into the Liberian state in the twentieth century. However, even though intermarriages among the Bandi and their neighbors were common before the Liberian state established authority in the northwestern interior, these ethnic groups did not encourage intermarriage relationships and alliances between families that did not live in the same locality. Intercultural marriages were widely practiced between families that lived in close proximity because marriage alliances served to create networks of relationships which fostered alliances and also provided a sense of security for the groom’s and bride’s families.\textsuperscript{143}

Thus, intermarriages among the Bandi, Loma and Kissi, for example, were encouraged among families that lived in close proximity and often interacted with one another.\textsuperscript{144}

However, prior to the twentieth century, intermarriages between the Kissi and Gola, for example, were uncommon because these ethnic groups lived far apart and were separated by Bandiland. Also, long-distance trade among these ethnic groups prior to the twentieth

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\textsuperscript{143} Informant 37, interviewed June 27, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 73, interviewed June 4, 2008, Fangoda Town; Informant 52, interviewed June 7, 2008, Lehuma Town; Informant 86, interviewed June 12, 2008, Fangoda Town.

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
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The century was limited mainly to men, because nearly all of their socioeconomic activities were controlled by the administrative mechanisms of the Poro.\textsuperscript{145} It was only after the establishment of Liberian state authority in the northwestern interior in the twentieth century that long-distance trade started between Bandiland and the coastal area of Liberia. The advent of Liberian state authority in the northwestern interior paved the way for increased trading activities between the interior and coastal ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{146} Also, inter-ethnic marriages between the Bandi and Kpelle were not common until after Bandi migrant workers began to move to places like Firestone in search of wage labor in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{147} Some of the Bandi migrant workers that settled in Firestone married Kpelle or Bassa women, a practice that was uncommon before the twentieth century. These Bandi workers sent back to Bandiland foreign made materials from Firestone, such as cutlasses, tea kettles, rain boots and coats.\textsuperscript{148} These foreign-made goods imported into Bandi society over the years became not only an important part of the material culture of the Bandi, but also they were representative of influences of foreign cultural values in Bandi society. These new items brought changes in the ways of life of the Bandi people. For example, Bandi farmers no longer depended on blacksmiths to make cutlasses for farming; and rain coats and boots also became part of the dress code of the Bandi people during the farming and rainy seasons. The Bandi people also used the tea kettles to store drinking water and palm oil and to boil water.

\textsuperscript{146} For detailed analyses of how the ascendancy of the Liberian state in the northwestern interior led to increased commercial activities between northwestern interior and coastal area of Liberia, see Gerald Currens, "The Loma Farmers," pp. 13–16; Handerwerker, “Market Places, Travelling Traders, and Shops,” p. 12.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
Before the twentieth century, the Bandi also acquired foreign materials such as enamel pots and spoons through the Mandingo and Fula traders from Sierra Leone and Guinea and the commercial activities of the Bandi were directed to these areas rather than the coastal area of Liberia. The Bandi established long-distance trade relationships with ethnic groups such as the Mende and Temne of the Sierra Leonean towns of Buedu and Pendembu, but the long-distance trade did not result in marital relationships between the Bandi and these ethnic groups before the twentieth century.\(^{149}\)

However, intermarriages between Bandi and Mende families that lived in close proximity in the southwestern part of Bandiland were common and this led to the development of alliances and networks of kinships among these families. The intermarriage relationships bonded together the groom’s and bride’s families and enabled extended members of the two families to count on one another for support in times of crisis. Intermarriages are still practiced among the Bandi and their neighbors and these marriage relationships have served to promote and enhance cordial ties among members of married families from these ethnic groups. Moreover, it was often common in Bandi society to see children of inter-ethnic marriages carry cultural traits of their parents, such as the ability to speak the languages of both their mother and father. For example, children of Bandi and Kissi parentage often aspire to speak the Bandi and Kissi languages in order to be able to live in Bandi and Kissi societies without hindrance of language barriers. Moreover, it was usually easier for a Bandi man to marry a Kissi woman if he could speak the Kissi language or a Kissi man would likely marry a Bandi woman if he could speak the Bandi language. However, the changes that have occurred in Bandi and Kissi societies since the twentieth century include the desire for

\(^{149}\)Ibid.
children to aspire to master foreign languages such as English and French, rather than only the Bandi and Kissi languages. The advent of western education among the Bandi and their neighbors and the teaching of foreign languages such as English and French rather than the local languages have become part of the changing ways of life for not only children, but also for adults among the Bandi and their neighboring ethnic groups. Thus, changes that have occurred in Bandi society since the twentieth century include the decline in the aspiration for children to learn the languages of their mixed parents. The aspiration among Bandi children to speak the Bandi language and preserve Bandi cultural values has continued to diminish as a result of western education and the desire to adopt foreign culture such as speaking foreign languages like English and French, and marrying someone that was not a Bandi or from a neighboring ethnic group.\footnote{Informant 37, interviewed June 27, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 73, interviewed June 4, 2008, Fangoda Town; Informant 52, interviewed June 7, 2008, Lehuma Town; Informant 86, interviewed June 12, 2008, Fangoda Town.}

The Bandi and their neighbors share common marriage customs. For example, they believed in the marriage customs that require the groom to pay a dowry to the family of the bride, and children born from a marriage belong to their paternal rather than their maternal kin. They also shared a common belief that the older son in the family was entitled to inherit authority as head of the household in the event of his father’s death. It was also a common practice among the Bandi, Loma, Kissi and Mende for a man and his wife or wives to live with his parents in the same household rather than establishing a separate household.\footnote{Dennis, The Gbandes, pp. 89–108; also, Informant 34, interviewed June 12, 2008, Kissi Quarter, Bolahun Town.} However, the practice of a man and his wives living in the household of his parents after marriage began to decline in Bandi society from the beginning of the twen-
tieth century. The reason for the decline has been attributed to the growing desire of young Bandi married men to have their own house, kitchen, and rice farm instead of waiting to inherit or share the family properties with his siblings.\textsuperscript{152} Even though siblings of the same household in Bandi society collectively own their parents' properties such as a house, rice farm, coffee and cocoa crops, it was customary that the oldest son of the siblings had more rights over these properties by virtue of primogeniture. Disputes over family properties after the death of the parents were not absent in Bandi society, but such disputes were not common because younger male siblings were always aware that older male siblings often inherited the parental authority in the event of both parents' death.\textsuperscript{153}

The concept of collective ownership of family property such as land still exists among the Bandi and neighbors such as the Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende. The establishment of Liberian state authority in the northwestern interior in the twentieth century did not end the practice of collective ownership of land among these ethnic groups. However, the establishment of the Liberian state authority in the northwestern interior opened the way for younger generations among these ethnic groups to seek adventures and personal freedom in urban centers and embrace the practice of acquiring individual or personal properties there. The advent of Liberian state authority in Bandiland promoted the concept of private property among the Bandi people, because the Liberian government policy of taxation encouraged married men to have their own property such as houses for tax purposes. The establishment of individual houses by married men served to increase the sources of revenue the government was able to generate from the collection


\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
of house taxes. Before the twentieth century, the Bandi people produced commodities such as cotton cloth, gowns, silver jewelry and animal skins, which were sold in the Sierra Leonean market towns of Buedu, Koindu and Pendembu. Bandi traders also began to sell these materials to the Vai, Kpelle, Kru and Bassa ethnic groups on the coast through Bopolu after the 1920s, when young Bandi men began to migrate to coastal areas in search of wage labor and personal wealth to facilitate the payment of government taxes. Without goods or means to acquire money, the payment of taxes imposed by the Liberian government would have been impossible.

The desire among the Bandi and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia to seek wage labor in urban areas during the twentieth century was a direct response to the house tax imposed in the interior by the Liberian state. In addition to wage labor, trade also became one of the main sources of income for payment of the house tax to the Liberian government. Trade relations between the Bandi and ethnic groups such as the Kpelle, Kru and Bassa in central and coastal areas of Liberia were not so common until the twentieth century. According to informants, because of the long distance to the coast and the problem of insecurity for traders along available forest routes between Bandiland and the coast, the Bandi often limited their trading activities to neighboring ethnic groups. Informants also noted that even though the Bandi traded with the Kissi and Mende of Sierra Leone as well as the Mandingoes of Guinea before the twentieth century, trade as such was not frequent and traders from Bandiland often travelled as a

154Ibid.
group and not as individuals.\textsuperscript{158} Moreover, prior to the establishment of the Liberian state authority in the northwestern interior in the early 1900s, long-distance trade among the Bandi was discouraged because of the fear of being caught and sold by slave hunters from the coast.\textsuperscript{159} However, from the beginning of the twentieth century, the increase in commercial activities among Bandi traders and other ethnic groups allowed foreign commodities such as salt, knives, clothes, cutlasses, and shoes to reach Bandi society.\textsuperscript{160} Commercial activities, inter-marriages, and participation in wage labor were among the factors that influenced changes in Bandi society and also led to the integration of the Bandi and their neighbors into the national socioeconomic systems of the Liberian state during the twentieth century.

Relationships between the Bandi and their neighbors up to the 1960s were also characterized by negative ethnic stereotyping. For example, evaluation of Bandi oral narratives shows that Bandi women were reluctant to marry Kissi men because of the belief among Bandi women that Kissi men were not family-oriented husbands.\textsuperscript{161} On the other hand, Kissi men believed that the Kissi women never desired to marry Bandi men because Bandi men were considered to be lazy, pompous and mean.\textsuperscript{162} Bandi women considered Kissi men to be more diligent and better farmers than Bandi men.\textsuperscript{163} Regardless of the accuracy of these ethnic stereotypes, they served to discourage Kissi women from marry-

\textsuperscript{158}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{159}Informants 43, 44, and 78, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town; Informant 46, interviewed June 22, 2008, Hangala Town.
\textsuperscript{160}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{161}Informant 78, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town; Informant 46, interviewed June 22, 2008, Hangala Town.
\textsuperscript{162}Ibid.
ing Bandi men and likewise Bandi women marrying Kissi men. Another negative ethnic stereotype noted by Benjamin Dennis that affected relationships among the Bandi and Kissi was that the Bandi considered a Kissi man to be diligent and brave, but also emotional, and that a Kissi man became dangerous whenever he got angry. However, such stereotyping appeared to be a manifestation of ethnic rivalry in relation to attempts by each group to show the superiority of their own culture and ethnic group over the other. Despite this ethnic stereotyping, the traditional uncle-nephew relationships remained central to defining the relationship between the Bandi and Kissi of northwestern Liberia.

The relationship between the Bandi and Loma, on the other hand, was defined not only by the cultural influences they had on each other, but also by the way in which the Bandi traditionally perceived the Loma as having superior knowledge in traditional herbs for healing. The Bandi and Loma speak related languages and the two ethnic groups have been classified as southwestern Mande-speakers that share common cultural values. The Kissi who live in close proximity to the Bandi and Loma also speak the Bandi and Loma languages. With respect to Loma cultural influences on the Bandi, Dennis has noted that the Bandi hold the Loma in high esteem in the practice of religion, and that the Bandi considered the Loma gifted in the practice of indigenous medicine. Despite the establishment of modern hospitals and the use of modern medicine for treatment of tropical diseases, the Bandi continue to rely on traditional healers for their health needs.

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164 Ibid.
diseases in Bandi society, the Bandi people still consider the Loma *zoes* to be capable of treating certain diseases that they believe cannot be treated by modern medicine.\textsuperscript{169}

The cultural influences of the Loma on the Bandi were also demonstrated by the way in which the traditional Bandi *zoes* often attempted to imitate their Loma colleagues. Among the Bandi, a Poro *zoe* was respected and accorded higher social status among his colleagues if he could speak the Loma language.\textsuperscript{170} In other words, a traditional Bandi *zoe* had to learn the Loma language in order to enhance his social status and prestige among his peers. Furthermore, most of the songs the Bandi Poro students sang during the time of learning were Loma songs. Even though the Bandi, Loma and Mende languages are mutually understandable, the Bandi believed that they were able to understand and speak the Mende language quicker than the Loma language.\textsuperscript{171} However, traditional Loma names are common among the Bandi and the names of places in the Loma language are pronounced in similar ways in the Bandi language. For example, a town chief is referred to as *taa-wansangi* in the Bandi language and *taa-masangi* in the Loma language, while a house is called *pe 'le 'i* in the Loma language and also called *pe 'le 'i* in the Bandi language.\textsuperscript{172} On the other hand, the Mende name for a house is *pe 'e 'i*, while the name for a town chief is *mahei*.\textsuperscript{173}


\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid, 14–21.


Unlike the Bandi, most Mende are Muslims and they are held in high esteem among the Bandi because of the belief that the Mende Muslims have the ability to make charms and talismans for good luck and to protect people against witchcraft.\textsuperscript{174} Dennis has noted that the Bandi admire Mende Muslim men because of their ability to read and write Arabic.\textsuperscript{175} Moreover, the Bandi consider Mende men to be manipulative and cunning, which they tend to reveal through songs.\textsuperscript{176} The Mende and Mandingo Muslims are highly respected among Bandi Muslims because of their knowledge of the Koran and their ability to read Arabic. The Bandi also believed that the use of Islamic talismans and charms made by Mende and Mandingo Muslims from Koranic writings could help to protect people against witchcraft, gain promotion in government, and enable students get better grades in school. These beliefs were dominant in Bandi society until Christian missionaries arrived in the twentieth century. Even though the belief in the use of talismans and charms to induce success declined among Bandi Christians as well as western educated Bandi, the use of talismans and charms in Bandi society still exists, especially among Bandi Muslims and the Bandi who believe in traditional religious practices.\textsuperscript{177}

The belief and use of Islamic talismans and potions to cure illness were prevalent in Bandi society prior to the establishment of western schools and hospitals by the Liberian state and missionaries in the early 1920s. The treatment of diseases among the Bandi was the responsibility of traditional herbalists in Bandi society before the twentieth century. These Bandi herbalists were either taught the knowledge of the use of herbs during the

\textsuperscript{174}Dennis, p. 18. 
\textsuperscript{175}Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{176}Ibid., pp. 18–19. 
\textsuperscript{177}Informant 5, interviewed June 25, 2008, Manjotahun Town; Informant 71, interviewed July 17, 2008, Ndambu Town.
Poro and Sande schools or acquired the knowledge from famous Loma and Gola herbalists who had treated diseases such as glaucoma, yaws and migraine headaches. The Bandi held the Gola in high esteem in the use of herbs in the same way as they did the Loma. However, the reliance on traditional herbs to cure diseases has declined but not been eradicated in Bandi society. Despite modern hospitals and medicine in Bandiland, the use of herbs to treat diseases and illnesses continues to be an important part of traditional medical practice among the Bandi. For example, traditional herbs are still being used in the treatment of sicknesses such as epilepsy and hemorrhoids in villages.

Even though the Bandi were introduced to western education since the early twentieth century, they still believe in traditional education that is relevant to their traditional way of life. The children who attended the Poro and Sande schools were made to learn about herbs that could be used to treat various diseases. It was also a common practice in Bandi society for families not to send all their children to western schools because of the belief that there was a need for some to acquire traditional education in order to preserve traditional beliefs and practices of the ancestors. For example, a traditional Bandi herbalist would like one of the children in his or her household to inherit the knowledge of the herbs he or she uses to cure illnesses. Therefore, besides being introduced to variety of herbs by his or her parents, a child that had been chosen to inherit the knowledge of traditional healing was often sent for training to a famous herbalist inside or outside Bandi society. This practice still exists among the Bandi, despite the acceptance of

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178 Dennis, pp. 18–19.
foreign cultural influences such as Islam, Christianity and western schools. Besides the Bandi, other ethnic groups such as Vai, Dey, Kpelle and Mende also acknowledge the superiority of the Loma and Gola in the use of herbs and in their knowledge of Poro and Sande schools.\textsuperscript{180} According to Benjamin Dennis, the Bandi, Kissi and Mende desire to understand and speak the Loma and Gola languages in order to acquire superior knowledge in the use of traditional herbs.\textsuperscript{181}

The Bandi and Gola who live in close proximity speak the Bandi and Gola languages. The ethnic and language differences between the Bandi and Gola have not become an impediment to exchanges of cultural values. The relationships between these ethnic groups are also characterized by continuity and integration of cultural values. For example, even though the Bandi and Gola languages are classified under different linguistic groups, their sharing of a common environment and interactions between the Bandi and Gola that lived in close proximity have led to exchanges and the integration of Bandi and Gola cultural values.\textsuperscript{182} The Belle people have been classified as Kwa-speakers.\textsuperscript{183} They are surrounded by the Gola, Loma, Bandi and Kpelle. Thus, the geographical location of the Belle has given them the advantage of understanding and speaking the languages of the other ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{180}For detailed discussions of the traditional cultural influences of the Gola on neighboring ethnic groups, see Warren L. D’Azevedo, “Continuity and Integration in Gola Society,” pp. 49–52; D’Azevedo, “Tribal Reaction to Nationalism,” pp. 8–12.

\textsuperscript{181}Dennis, p. 19.


\textsuperscript{184}See Dennis, The Gbandes, p. 21.
Despite the language differences among the Bandi and their neighbors, another traditional belief that they have in common is *ti-yei-ngie* or totemism. As noted earlier, there was a belief among the Bandi and their neighbors that families cannot eat certain animals or plants if they were from the same lineage.\(^{185}\) For example, families from the Bandi, Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende ethnic groups that cannot eat leopard meat are believed to be of the same lineage because they have the same leopard totem, even though they are of different ethnic groups. This belief still exists and is respected among the Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups. The Bandi also believed that having a common totem was more important in identifying their lineage group than belonging to the same ethnic group or speaking the same language.\(^{186}\) In other words, if two families from the Bandi and Kissi ethnic group have the same totem, they are considered to be members of the same lineage group. Among the Bandi, totemism is still an important part of the cultural beliefs that the Bandi elders use to identify relationships between and among families and lineages.\(^{187}\)

Totemic beliefs among the Bandi, Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende transcended ethnic boundaries and served to bind these ethnic groups together into one big family, even though they are of different ethnic groups. Among the Bandi, totemic rules that prohibited the eating of certain animals or plants were binding on families that carried the name of the totem. For instance, if families from the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende ethnic groups were named after a leopard, members of these families were prohibited from


\(^{186}\) Ibid.

eating or touching leopard meat, because the leopard was considered to be their lineage’s
totem.\textsuperscript{188} The Bandi and their neighbors still believe in and revere totemic beliefs. Totems
were considered to be companions, relatives, protectors, progenitors or helpers for families,
and intermarriage among families of the same totem were forbidden.\textsuperscript{189}

In addition to totemic beliefs, the Bandi and their neighbors also share a common
belief in divination and soothsaying. The soothsayers and diviners had great influence
among the Bandi, Loma, Kissi, Mende, Gola and Belle in relation to the traditional socio-
religious and economic lives of these ethnic groups. The soothsayers and diviners were
always consulted for advice before farmers began to plant their rice, before a wedding
was planned, or if a woman was unable to give birth to a child or had a miscarriage.\textsuperscript{190}
Despite the presence of Christian influences in Bandi society, the Bandi that live in villages
have not abandoned the practice of consulting a soothsayer or diviner before making any
important decision. The Christian missionaries that arrived in Bandiland in the early 1920s
criticized the belief in soothsaying and divination among the Bandi as un-Christian. How­
ever, among the Bandi Christian converts, especially those who lived in villages, the
practice of consulting diviners to help interpret dreams or find answers to difficult and
mysterious problems still exists. A soothsayer and diviner in Bandi society was also
referred to as \textit{sowoi} or \textit{zoe}. The soothsayers and diviners in Bandi society are believed to
possess the ability to prophesy about good and evil; they can also assist the chiefs and
elders in making decisions regarding whether a person is guilty or innocent of a crime in

\textsuperscript{188}Informant 34, interviewed June 20, 2008, Kissi Quarter, Bolahun Town; Informant 85, inter­
\textsuperscript{189}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{190}Ibid.
traditional courts. Moreover, soothsayers and diviners among the Bandi and their neighbors were known to have connections with supernatural forces through which they attained their secret knowledge and magical power.

As noted, even though Christian influences existed among the Bandi, especially among the Wanwoma Bandi, Christian Bandi also believed in the traditional practice of soothsaying and divination. Moreover, both Bandi Muslims and Christians in villages continue to believe in the ability of traditional priests to request information from supernatural entities such as ancestral spirits. For instance, a traditional rice farmer in a village first consulted a soothsayer or diviner before he would decide where to make his farm. The soothsayers and diviners also served as spiritual guardians to chiefs and villagers in Bandi society. The soothsayer or diviner in villages made charms that the Bandi believed had the power to drive away evil spirits and invoke good fortune on behalf of the chief and townspeople. Even though Christian teachings against superstitious beliefs have led to a decline in the practices of soothsaying and divination among Bandi Christians, these traditional practices still exist in Bandi society. As is examined in Chapter 6, the acceptance of Christianity in Bandiland did not end beliefs in traditional practices such as totemism, soothsaying and divination in Bandi society.

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194 Ibid.

Besides totemism and soothsaying, the Bandi and their neighbors also practiced divination. Among the Bandi and their neighbors in the northwestern interior, divination was an important aid for chiefs and elders in making decisions.\textsuperscript{196} Chiefs and elders had enormous responsibility as custodians of traditional norms and values in villages and communities. Therefore, they often consulted famous diviners for advice before making decisions that involved cases such as marital conflicts, disputes between farmers over farmland, thievery and murder.\textsuperscript{197} The practice of consulting diviners before making important decisions that involved the welfare of a village or a household has remained an essential part of the socio-religious life of the Bandi and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia. The diviners, like soothsayers, provided spiritual guidance for people in rural villages and communities, where the preservation of traditional values was paramount.\textsuperscript{198} As a result of their socio-religious importance to the traditional way of life of the people, the authority and influence of soothsayers and diviners transcended ethnic boundaries among the Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups. A Bandi chief, for example, often sought advice from a soothsayer or diviner from Mendeland or Golaland before he made important decisions about the welfare of his family or village. Likewise, a Kissi farmer sought advice from a Mende or Bandi soothsayer or diviner before selecting a new farm site. The Bandi and their neighbors continue to be mainly rice farmers and they have maintained these traditional practices in spite of the acceptance of western influences. One responsibility of a diviner in a Bandi village was to help the chief determine whether a person accused of a crime was guilty or innocent by administering sassiwood, which was

\textsuperscript{196}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{197}Informant 56, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town; Informant 80, interviewed June 13, 2008, Hangala Town.

\textsuperscript{198}Ibid.
a trail by ordeal. In some instances, a Kissi chief sought the advice of a Mende or Bandi diviner rather than a Kissi diviner before he made decisions in serious cases such as rape or murder, especially if a Mende or Bandi diviner was famous for his herbal knowledge and power.

The work of soothsayers and diviners also transcended gender boundaries in Bandi society. Even though soothsayers and diviners were mainly males, there were also female soothsayers and diviners in Bandi society. Prior to the advent of Liberian state authority in Bandiland in 1907, the profession of soothsayers and diviners among the Bandi and their neighbors created networks of relationships that fostered mutual interests and inter-ethnic dependencies. These ethnic groups depended on one another for support and advice and even though ethnic consciousness was not totally absent, the preservation of common traditional values among them was more important than the promotion of ethnic ideology.

Besides sharing common traditional cultural values, the Bandi and their neighbors also practiced common traditional economic systems. Rice farming dominated their economic activities annually. Rice has been and continues to be the staple food for these ethnic groups and therefore rice production remains the most important economic activity, even though cultivation of cash crops such as cocoa, coffee and kola became an important part of their economic system in the 1920s. The advent of Liberian state authority in the northwestern interior in the early twentieth century and the subsequent imposition

200Ibid.
202Ibid.
of poll and house taxes on individuals and households among the Bandi, Loma and Kissi gave rise to the need for cash production and trade. The production and sale of cash crops served as the main source of income for farmers to pay their annual poll and hut taxes. Before the construction of motor roads connecting the northwestern interior to the coastal area of Liberia in the 1950s, cash crops that were produced by Bandi, Kissi and Loma farmers were traded in Guinea or Sierra Leone. The construction of roads encouraged farmers to increase production of cash crops such as coffee and cocoa because trucks made it easier to transport these commodities to coastal Liberian markets. The integration of the Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups into the Liberian economy was made possible with the construction of roads connecting the northwestern interior of Liberia with the coastal areas. The roads enabled trucks to move to the northwestern interior in increasing numbers and thereby provided opportunities for farmers to easily transport their crops to markets in Monrovia.

The production of rice and cash crops was determined by the availability of land. Land was and still is a major factor in traditional economic systems based on agricultural production. Even though land was considered to be communally owned among these ethnic groups prior to the 1900s, the land around villages was considered to be owned by the people that lived in these villages. Customary laws prohibited a farmer from a different village from making a farm on land close to another village without consulting or reaching an agreement with the people of that village. Thus, farmers from the Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups often selected sites for farming through negotiation and con-

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204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
sensus among residents of villages that were in close proximity. Moreover, it did not matter if the farmers were from the same ethnic group or different ethnic groups, they all respected the traditions that require them to meet and decide how available fertile lands would be allocated for farming purposes.\textsuperscript{207}

Territorial boundaries between ethnic groups of the northwestern interior were not rigidly defined before the 1930s, when the Liberian state initiated demarcation of boundaries based on ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{208} For example, political units such as chiefdoms did not exist for the Bandi, Kissi, Mende and Loma in the northwestern interior until 1932.\textsuperscript{209} The demarcation of territorial boundaries between ethnic groups by the Liberian state served to reinforce ethnic consciousness in the northwestern interior and undermined the traditional concept of communal ownership of land. While the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende shared common traditional values and the concept of communal land ownership, the demarcation of territories between the Kissi and Bandi served as a source of disputes among farmers from both ethnic groups over boundaries that the Liberian state established in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{210} Land disputes between Bandi and Kissi farmers were not frequent prior to the Liberian government demarcation of land based on ethnic boundaries. As noted, Bandi and Kissi farmers that lived in close proximity often selected farm sites based on mutual agreement. Although the concept of collective ownership of land still exists among farmers in Bandi society, the Liberian state policy of demarcating land


\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{209} LGD, "Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations for Governing the Hinterland," Article 4, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{210} LGD, "The Government of Liberia Report, 1936," Liberian Collections Project, Box 10, File 7, Indiana University, Bloomington.
based on towns and ethnic groups served to foster land disputes that were less common earlier between the Bandi and their neighbors in northwestern interior.

Prior to the early twentieth century, the traditional practice of communal land ownership allowed farmers to make their farms in specific areas during the farming season, but the land usually reverted to community ownership at the end of the farming season. According to informants, the reason why lands reverted to community ownership at the end of the farming season in Bandi society was to avoid disputes between farmers over particular lands that were known to be fertile and productive. \(^ {211}\) Even though conflicts over land among the Bandi and their neighbors were not totally absent before the twentieth century, such conflicts became more frequent after the Liberian state initiated the policy of demarcation of territorial boundaries based on ethnic groups. An example of such inter-ethnic conflict over land that was attributed to the Liberian state policy of land demarcation based on ethnic groups was the boundary dispute between the Gola and Loma in 1918. During the administration of President Daniel Howard (1912–1920), the Gola declared war against the Loma because “they [the Gola] had suspected that a Loma chief named Jalla-Marley had conspired to adjust the boundary of the Gola territory of Kongba.” \(^ {212}\) The boundary between the Loma and Gola was demarcated earlier during the administration of President Arthur Barclay (1904–1912). However, the conflict broke out during the administration of President Howard, who had to order the intervention of the Frontier Force in order to avert possible war between the northern Gola and their

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\(^ {212}\) From Secretary of War John L. Morris to President Daniel E. Howard, Interior Department Correspondence, Monrovia, Liberia, March 12, 1918, LGD, Liberian Collections, Box 4, File 22, Indiana University, Bloomington.
Loma neighbors. The conflict was resolved after the Liberian government identified the Gola as the aggressors in the dispute and warned them that any attack against the Loma would be considered as an attack against the Liberian state.\(^{213}\)

Although analyses of Bandi oral sources show that conflicts over land were not frequent among the Bandi and their neighbors until the twentieth century, there were, however, recurrent conflicts over marital rights.\(^ {214}\) For instance, if a dowry was paid for a bride and she decided to divorce her husband for another man, her family members were expected to ask her to return to her husband or they were under obligation to pay back her dowry to the groom's family. If the bride refused to return to her husband and her family was unable to pay back the dowry, the family of the groom had the right in accordance with customary law to demand the return of the bride or the dowry.\(^ {215}\) Thus, the right to claim the bride or the dowry often led to conflicts between the family of the groom and the family of the new husband. However, the frequency of marital conflicts or the practice of subjecting girls to forced marriage among the Bandi declined after the Liberian government in 1935 decreed that it was illegal for a woman to be forced into marriage to a man against her will.\(^ {216}\) Moreover, the Liberian state stipulated that marital conflicts could only be settled in the government administered courts, thereby taking away the traditional rights of the elders who were previously the arbitrators of marital conflicts in Bandi society. Thus, the practice of subjecting girls to forced marriage has declined among

\(^{213}\) Ibid.

\(^{214}\) Ibid.


\(^{216}\) LGD, “Minutes of Conference Held in Kolahun” (Feb. 4, 1935), p. 8, Interior Department Records, Liberian Collections, Box 8, File 5, Indiana University, Bloomington.
Bandi families, but the payment of a dowry has not been eradicated from Bandi society. According to informants, if a girl chose her marriage partner without her parents' input, the payment of a dowry was unlikely, but if a man expressed his desire for a girl and contacted her parents, it is only then that the girl's parents would demand a dowry payment.\footnote{Informant 42, interviewed June 13, 2008, Massambolahun Town; Informant 41, interviewed June 16, 2008, Gbeilahun Town; Informant 31, interviewed June 16, 2008, Kolahun Kolba City; Informant 85, interviewed June 16, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 75, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town.}

Before the integration of the northwestern interior into the Liberian state, conflicts over marital rights and to a lesser extent land were the main sources of inter-ethnic wars, even though such wars were not frequent. Conflicts over land among ethnic groups in the northwestern interior took on an ethnic dimension as a result of the Liberian state's furtherance of its policy of dividing the land based on ethnic groups for administrative purposes.\footnote{LGD, “Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations for Governing the Hinterland,” Article 4, p. 2.} Marital rights and land conflicts among the Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups were often resolved in accordance with customary laws that involved the elders or leadership of the Poro and Sande. However, the authority to resolve marital and land disputes among ethnic groups in the northwestern interior was taken over by the Liberian state in furtherance of its policy of regulating traditional society.\footnote{Ibid, Article 29, p. 19.}

In summary, relationships between the Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups were defined by shared beliefs in common traditional values and the desire to maintain these values. These shared beliefs were the source of bonds among them prior to the twentieth century. Despite ethnic and language differences, the belief in common cultural values such Poro and Sande schools, male and female circumcision, marriage customs, divination and soothsaying, as well as the concept of communal ownership of land has conti-
ued to be the basis of traditional ways of life. The maintenance of these cultural values has remained central to how the Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups related to one another in spite of the changing effects of the influences of Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity. In other words, their relationships have been defined more by their desire to maintain their traditions and cultural values than by their acceptance of new ideas and cultural influences.

Although new ideas and cultural influences such as western statutory laws, court systems, taxation, wage labor, monogamous marriage, Christianity and Islam were introduced among the Bandi and neighboring ethnic groups in the northwestern interior between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there has been considerable continuity in cultural beliefs and practices among these ethnic groups. In Bandi society, despite influences of Christianity and Islam, the traditional Bandi religious beliefs and practices still exist in villages and rural communities. Furthermore, even though some Bandi became Muslims and others Christians during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, respectively, the respect for common Bandi cultural values has continued to be the source of bonds among the Bandi. The desire to maintain these cultural values also serves to define the relationship between the Bandi and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia.²²⁰

²²⁰For example, the Liberian government has not been able to resolve permanently the conflict between the Bandi of Sosomoiahun and Kissi over farmland divided between Bandiland and Kissiland in the early twentieth century. For a detailed report, see LGD, “Minutes of Conference held in Kolahun” (Feb. 4, 1935), Liberian Collections Project, Box 8, File 5, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
CHAPTER 3

THE TRADITIONAL BANDI POLITICAL SYSTEM

This chapter examines the traditional Bandi political system. It focuses on the origins of Bandi towns and the leadership and composition of the Bandi governing systems. It illustrates aspects of the traditional leadership and governing systems that persisted to 1964.

The Establishment and Administration of Towns in Bandi Society

Prior to the establishment of the Liberian state authority in Bandiland in 1907, the Bandi political system was de-centralized.¹ The Bandi lived in an agrarian society that consisted of kokoi-te-ne (plural) and taa'-te-ne (plural) or villages and towns. The taa' (singular) was larger and more populous than the kokoi (singular). The kokoi or taa' was ruled by a chief, his assistants and council of elders. Some chiefs were more powerful than others. For instance, a masangie or a chief of a town was more powerful than the chief of a kokoi. The kokoi consisted of two or three pe-l-ei-te-ne or houses with ten or fifteen residents, while the taa' had more than ten houses with sixty or more residents.² The authority of a taa' wasangie or a town chief was limited to his village or town. The

town chief was considered a secular leader of the village or town, while the Poro and Sande zoes were considered the religious (non-secular) leaders. The authority of the zoes extended beyond the villages or towns in which they lived. Thus, the Poro and Sande schools were the bonds that held villages and towns together in Bandi society before the Liberian government established control in Bandiland in the early twentieth century. The chief, elders and zoe(s) not only jointly administered the affairs of a village or town, but also jointly conducted relations with neighboring villages and towns. Before Bandiland became a chiefdom in 1932, the primary political unit in Bandi society was a town.3

The Bandi town chief had two assistants called taa' hay-mai or head of the town’s men and taa’ hay-hay-womoi or town crier; the former was also the associate chief of the town.4 Even though a chief was the political leader of the town, he was also responsible to the taa’ mbakolongai-te-nee or town elders. The elders could over-rule decisions made by the chief without their consent.5 However, as is detailed in Chapter 7, the Liberian state marginalized the authority of Bandi chiefs and elders from the early 1900s.6 The establishment of Liberian government control in Bandiland in 1907 marked the beginning of changes in the Bandi traditional political system.7

The taa’ hay-hay wo-moi and taa’ hay-mai assisted the chief in the administration of the town. They performed responsibilities the chief assigned to them. For example, the

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5Ibid.


town crier was usually the main messenger; he announced news to the people of the town from the chief. The town crier would also inform town residents about decisions made by the chief and elders after the taa' wankpoi or the town meeting. On the other hand, the associate town chief carried out errands on behalf of the town chief and also acted as chief whenever the town chief travelled or was sick. While the associate town chief and the town crier played important roles in governing the town, the final decisions regarding the town were left with the chief and elders. The town chief could not decide on major issues without first consulting the elders, because the town elders were respected for their wisdom and experience in Bandi traditional government.

Before the 1900s, the leader of the first settlers of a town usually became the first chief of the town. It was also a common practice in Bandi society for a town to be named after the leader of its first settlers. Before the twentieth century, the founders of most Bandi towns were farmers, hunters or warriors. A Bandi farmer often built a bue-we or a hut in the vicinity of his old farm site after harvest. If one group of farmers settled in the same place and built their own huts after the farming season, the place was often given the name ko-koi-ya or village. If additional groups settled in the same village and built their own huts, the village became known as taa' or town. The leader of the first settlers of the town

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11 Ibid.
became not only the first chief, but also he became known as *taa'wen* or town owner. In the event that the founder of a town or first town chief died or became incapacitated, his position was not automatically inherited by any of his relatives. The position of town chief was usually not inheritable in traditional Bandi society.\(^\text{13}\)

If the first town chief died, his successor was often chosen by consensus among mainly male elders of the town. Female elders were not directly involved in the selection of Bandi chiefs, but their male counterparts often informed them through the *taa wan-kpoi* or town meeting, which was usually attended by men and women of the town. Although the women did not directly participate in the selection of town chiefs, they often indirectly influenced the men in the selection processes. The Bandi tradition required men to consult their wives before deciding on major issues relating to the welfare of families, town and community. Thus, it was not unusual for men to be influenced by suggestions of their wives while making important decisions such as selecting town chiefs. Bandi senior wives played the role of advisers in traditional households, which often enabled them to influence their husbands in making decisions.\(^\text{14}\)

The traditional practice of elders selecting chiefs was altered when the Liberian government imposed an election system in Bandiland in the early twentieth century.\(^\text{15}\) The introduction of an election system in Bandiland led to government interference in the Bandi traditional system of government. The election system subjected Bandi chiefs to

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\(^\text{13}\)Ibid.

\(^\text{14}\)Ibid.

\(^\text{15}\)LGD, "Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations," Article 29, p. 19.
the control of the Liberian government, thereby marginalizing the power of elders to
choose town chiefs as had been the tradition before the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{16}

Besides farmers, hunters also founded towns in Bandi society before the twentieth
century. Like the farmers, hunters also built \textit{ndele-mbo-ma} or a resting place near their
hunting grounds. The resting place would turn into a village after other hunters had estab-
lished similar resting places in the same area.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, hunters also established camps
in the vicinity of areas where they had killed animals such as elephants, leopards, tigers,
lions or bush cows. If a hunter killed any of these animals, the place he killed the animal
was also named after him.\textsuperscript{18} The hunter who killed any of the mentioned animals single
handedly was not only respected, but he also was honored by his colleagues and members
of the community. Such a hunter was given a legendary title \textit{ndoso-volor} or an old hunter
in Bandi society. If a hunter acquired the title \textit{ndoso-volor}, the name \textit{ndosoi} was not only
added to his name, but also the name \textit{ndosoi} became his last name during his life time and
after he died.\textsuperscript{19} Like the farmer, if a hunter’s camp site evolved into a village or town, he
often became the first chief. Moreover, he also became known as \textit{taa ’-wen} or town owner.\textsuperscript{20}

If the owner or founder of a town died, Bandi tradition required that he should be
buried in the center of the town. The burial place of a town founder often became a shrine,
where the people of the town made offerings of food items such as cooked rice and chicken

\textsuperscript{16} Informant 71, interviewed July 17, 2008, Ndambu Town; Informant 64, interviewed June 21, 2008,
Kabalama Town; Informant 60, interviewed June 27, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town.
\textsuperscript{17} Informant 24, interviewed June 6, 2008, Porlorwu Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 10, 2008,
Bolahun Town; Informant 34, interviewed June 12, 2008, Bolahun Town.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Informant 31, interviewed June 16, 2008, Kolahun Kolba City; Informant 51, interviewed June 16,
2008, Gbeilahun Town; Informant 71, interviewed July 17, 2008, Ndambu Town; Informant 7, interviewed
June 22, 2008, Massambolahun Town; Informant 60, interviewed June 27, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town; In-
formant 5, interviewed June 25, 2008, Manjotahun Town.
every year as a way of continuously invoking his protection of the town and people. This practice remained an important part of traditional belief among the Bandi in the Tahamba area, where traditions remained strong among the Bandi. The Bandi in some of the towns in Tahamba also maintained the belief that the spirit of a town founder was capable of providing protection to the town and its residents against misfortune.21

These traditional beliefs and practices were affected by Islam and Christianity, as is examined in Chapters 5 and 6. However, the traditional practices of burying chiefs in the center of towns or offering food items to the spirit of the deceased chiefs have continued not only among the Bandi in Tahamba, but also among the Bandi in parts of the Wanwoma and Volukoha areas of Bandiland. Moreover, acceptance of Islam and Christianity in parts of Wanwoma and Volukoha did not make the Bandi in these areas relinquish these traditional beliefs and practices.22

Farmers and hunters were handicapped while seeking to establish towns and subsequently become town chiefs by the Liberian government in the early twentieth century. The establishment of towns by farmers was handicapped by the Liberian laws that required registration of villages and towns by their founders for the purpose of taxation.23 The Liberian government also prohibited the use of firearms in the interior, which not only undermined traditional hunting but also led to a decline in the traditional hunting profession. One of the laws that affected traditional hunting in Bandi society was passed in 1949. The law ordered that “fire arms in the hands of natives [hunters] must be collected and confiscated by the government. And only rifles that have been duly registered by government

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\[\text{21}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{22}\text{Ibid.}\]
would be allowed to use in the interior for the purposes of hunting and protection of
domestic animals. The decline in traditional hunting made it impossible for Bandi
hunters to rise to traditional political leadership through their role as town founders.
Bandi hunters were respected not only because of their hunting skills, but also because
their profession provided an avenue for them to become political leaders.

Besides a farmer and hunter, a ko-wulu-bai or warrior could also become town
chief before the twentieth century. A Bandi warrior that founded a town also became
known as taa wen. Traditional warriors provided security for towns and communities in
Bandi society before the twentieth century. However, the Liberian government became
the main source of security in Bandiland after 1911, when borders were demarcated
between Liberia and Sierra Leone. The presence of the Liberian government militias in
Bandiland diminished the authority of traditional warriors. Bandi warriors founded towns
and became chiefs not in times of peace but in times of wars. Warriors were usually men
that had displayed bravery in defending their towns and people during the time of intra-
ethnic or inter-ethnic wars. It was a common practice for warriors to establish their own
towns at the end of wars. Warriors who established towns attracted settlers who settled in
these towns for protection. While it was common for warriors to establish towns and

24 Letter from Presidential Secretary R. S. S. Bright to District Commissioner C. C. Dennis, August
30, 1940, in “Executive Presidential Correspondence with Interior Department and District Commissioner of
Western Providence,” LGD, Liberian Collections Project, Box 6, File 14, Indiana University, Bloomington.
25 Informant 71, interviewed July 17, 2008, Ndambu Town; Informant 7, interviewed June 22, 2008,
Massambolahun Town; Informant 60, interviewed June 27, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town; Informant 5, inter­
26 Ibid.
27 President Arthur Barclay’s Annual Message to the Thirty First National Legislature, 1907,
Africana Library, University of Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia.
28 Informant 52, interviewed June 7, 2008, Lehuma Town; Informant 38, interviewed June 7, 2008,
Kombolahun Town; Informant 8, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town.
29 Ibid.
become chiefs, it was also a common practice for people to ask warriors to assume leadership of their towns during the time of wars.\textsuperscript{30}

Thus, Bandi warriors were respected not only because of their bravery during the times of war, but also because of the belief that they had the ability to provide protection for towns and communities in times of war. The decline in inter-community or inter-ethnic warfare after contact between the Liberian government and Bandiland also led to the decline in the authority of traditional warriors in Bandi society. Consequently, after the Liberian government established control in Bandiland at the beginning of the twentieth century, traditional farmers, hunters and warriors lost the means by which they formally became political leaders. However, the traditional practice of naming a town after the founder or leader of the first settlers still exists in Bandi society.\textsuperscript{31}

After the Liberian government established authority in Bandiland in 1907, most Bandi towns continued to be governed according to customs, even though chiefs were subjected to the laws of the Liberian state. Moreover, the imposition of government laws on the chiefs and elders did not make these traditional leaders unable to carry out their responsibility to enforce traditional laws in towns. The elders remained custodians and enforcers of traditional values, even though they lost their traditional power to dismiss and appoint the town chiefs after the Liberian government established control in Bandiland. Even though Bandi chiefs could no longer derive their power from the elders after contact with the government, these chiefs continued to depend on the elders for wisdom and counsel in resolving disputes in towns according to traditional laws. Thus, most

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
Bandi towns continued to be governed according to customs which were enforced by chiefs and the elders rather than the Liberian government.\textsuperscript{32}

Bandi towns before the twentieth century were ruled by men, because Bandi tradition did not allow women to become chiefs.\textsuperscript{33} As noted, even though men were responsible to select the town chiefs, women did influence the selection of chiefs.\textsuperscript{34} The men often selected the town chiefs during the \textit{sei-yan ma-kpoi} or men's meeting. However, women were often informed of decisions that were made by men during the \textit{taa' wan-kpoi} or town meeting, which was often attended by male and female elders of the town. The meeting of male and female elders provided the forum not only to discuss problems relating to the town and the people, but also the opportunity for the men to inform the women about activities such as building hammock-bridges over rivers, constructing roads and clearing brush between towns.\textsuperscript{35} The female elders also used the time of the town meeting to inform the men about what the women had decided during the \textit{nyanha wankpoi} or women's meeting.\textsuperscript{36} Women did not attend meetings solely for men and men did not attend meetings solely for women. Thus, the town meetings usually provided opportunities not only for men and women to discuss important issues relating to the town, but also to discuss problems such as land disputes relating to neighbors from nearby towns.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{32}LGD, \textit{"Administration Regulation Governing the Hinterland,"} Article 25, pp. 15–16.
\textsuperscript{34}Informant 29, interviewed June 19, 2008, Bondowalahun Town; Informant 5, interviewed June 25, 2008, Manjotahun Town.
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37}Ibid.
The decisions made during the meetings of men and women served to guide the town chief in his governance of the town. Even though these traditional arrangements and relations were affected by the Liberian government, the practice of consultations between Bandi men and women regarding mutual interests has continued. The Liberian government's creation of the Tribal Authority composed of chiefs and elders in the 1930s affected the traditional governance of Bandi towns.\textsuperscript{38} Before the twentieth century, male elders were more powerful in traditional Bandi government, but the imposition of the Liberian government laws in Bandiland made town chiefs more powerful than the elders.\textsuperscript{39} While traditional Bandi governmental organization and practice were reorganized after contact with the Liberian state, the Liberian government still allowed towns to be governed in accordance with customary laws. The government-revised laws noted in 1949 that, "It was the policy of Government to administer tribal affairs through tribal chiefs who shall govern freely according to tribal customs and traditions so long as these are not contrary to law, administrative regulations or public interests."\textsuperscript{40}

The establishment of Liberian leadership in Bandiland in the early twentieth century did not change the traditional practice of males and females working together to resolve conflicts in towns. Moreover, the \textit{sei-yan ma-kpoi} and \textit{nyanha wankpoi} are still the traditional fora for meetings of men and women respectively. Before the twentieth century, the selection and dismissal of town chiefs was based on consensus among male elders. If a chief behaved in a way that violated the traditional values of the town, the recommendations for dismissal and replacement were often made during the men's meet-

\textsuperscript{38}LGD, "Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations," Article 26, p. 16. See also Chapter 7.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., Article 24, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., Article 29, p. 19.
ing. However, as Liberian government control became more pervasive in Bandiland, the elders lost their traditional power to select and dismiss chiefs as a result of the government laws that made it illegal for the elders to dismiss chiefs that were elected by the people. The government revised laws of 1949 stipulated further that a town chief would be elected and serve in his position during his lifetime; but he could be dismissed with the approval of the President of Liberia for proved misconduct.41

There were several changes made in Bandi political systems as the Liberian government expanded its control in Bandiland between 1900 and the 1940s. The government created the positions of clan and paramount chiefs in 1932 and allowed the Bandi people to nominate candidates for these positions, but the Liberian government had the authority not only to appoint but also to dismiss these leaders.42 Even though they were considered to be traditional leaders, the clan and paramount chiefs assisted the government in collecting taxes and recruiting workers for government projects.43 The empowerment of chiefs to collect taxes and recruit workers on behalf of the government made these traditional leaders agents of the Liberian government in Bandi society. Consequently, from the beginning of the twentieth century, the Bandi people developed ambivalent relationships with the chiefs because the chiefs acted as government agents that enforced such unpopular policies as tax collections and the recruitment of workers in Bandiland.44

Before the Liberian government established control in Bandiland, the elders and chiefs were respected leaders of the Bandi people. The elders were considered represen-

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41 Ibid., Article 26, p. 17.
42 Ibid., p. 16. Also, see Chapter 7 of this paper.
43 Ibid., Articles 32–34, pp. 19–21.
tatives of the ancestors and therefore refusing to obey their orders was considered dis­respectful of the ancestors. The Bandi believed that such a refusal would invite ancestral wrath that could come in the form of mysterious illness in the family, impotency for a man or barrenness for a woman. However, the advent of the Liberian government’s control in Bandiland changed not only the traditional roles of the elders, but also the people’s perception of the elders as representatives of the ancestors. The Liberian government used the chiefs and elders to implement its policies in Bandiland, even though Bandi towns were to be governed by traditions as long as such traditions did not conflict with the policies of the Liberian state.

The elders had supreme authority in traditional Bandi government. However, while the Liberian government did not want the elders to exercise aspects of their traditional authority such as selecting and dismissing chiefs, the government did see the elders as important allies in governing Bandiland. The government allowed the elders to enforce traditions on the Bandi in towns, but the towns and people were subject to the laws of the Liberian state, including election of chiefs. The election of chiefs and payment of taxes were among changes the Liberian government introduced in Bandiland at the beginning of the twentieth century.

As noted, the chieftaincy position was not inheritable according to Bandi tradition. However, before Liberian state control, the elders could decide that a chief would be

succeeded by his son.\textsuperscript{48} The selection of the chief's son did not guarantee the son's position, especially if his leadership did not serve the people of the town. The selection of the chief's son also meant that the deceased chief had served the people well, and therefore respect should be accorded to his family and memory. If the elders had to select someone from a different family to be chief after the town chief died, the person was usually someone who had proven to be generous, hospitable to strangers, wise, respectful, outspoken, and economically resourceful.\textsuperscript{49} The elders often selected someone whom they believed would preserve the traditional norms and values of the town. The tradition empowered the elders to dismiss a chief if he failed to protect the values and norms of the town and ensured continuity of peace and harmony among the people. Thus, before the Liberian government established control in Bandiland, the selection of chiefs by the elders was often dictated by many factors after careful observation of potential candidates.\textsuperscript{50}

Secular and Non-Secular Authorities in the Administration of Bandi Towns

There were two types of leaders in many Bandi towns before the twentieth century. These were secular and non-secular leaders. The secular and non-secular leaders coordinated their activities while preserving the traditional laws that governed the towns. Some of the laws of Bandi towns were imposed by non-secular leaders such as the officials of the Poro. For example, there were laws that prohibited carrying heads of palm nut


\textsuperscript{49}Ibid.

into town, blowing a whistle at night in town, and walking backward to enter the town. These laws were respected not only by citizens but also by strangers. The town chief was responsible not only to ensure that no one violated the town laws, but also he was responsible to make strangers aware of these laws. The Bandi believed that violation of these secular and non-secular laws would anger the ancestors, who were believed to be constantly protecting the town and people against *kala nga-fua-ngie* or witchcraft and evil spirits. These traditional laws continued to characterize Bandi beliefs and practices in areas such as Tahamba, Volukoha, Wanwoma, and Hembe.

The town chief was responsible for ordering the arrest and detention of violators of laws that maintained the stability of the town. As an executive leader, the town chief also held meetings with chiefs from other towns on behalf of the people. While the chief exercised secular authority in the town, he depended on non-secular leaders for protection of the town and people against misfortune and evil spirits. Non-secular leaders of the town sought advice from diviners and soothsayers and made offerings to ancestors for protection of the town and its people. If the chief was unable to resolve disputes involving secular and non-secular laws of the town, he often referred such disputes to the elders or *zoes*.

However, as is examined in detail in Chapter 7, the re-organization of traditional government in Bandiland by the Liberian government led to the creation and empower-

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51 Informant 86, interviewed June 12, 2008, Fangoda Town; Informant 73, interviewed June 4, 2008, Fangoda Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 5, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 70, interviewed June 9, 2008, Kolahun Old Town. According to Bandi traditions, carrying palm nut heads into a town would cause a man to fall from a palm tree while cutting palm nuts, and blowing a whistle at night or walking backward to enter the town meant imitating and inviting an evil spirit or the spiritual leader of the Poro society to come to town.

52 Ibid.


54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.
ment of clan chiefs to resolve secular and non-secular conflicts in Bandi towns. The secular and non-secular leaders were subject to the laws of the Liberian government. Moreover, non-secular leaders were prohibited from instituting punishment that involved the death penalty for offenders of Poro and Sande laws. Consequently, the Liberian government became involved in making decisions involving secular and non-secular conflicts in Bandiland.

Before the twentieth century, the town elders served as a court of appeal because Bandi tradition assigned them that responsibility. The Bandi believed that the wisdom of the elders in resolving conflicts derived from their vast knowledge of traditional laws. An individual who refused the decisions of elders was considered a social deviant. The responsibility of the elders to function as a court of appeal was reassigned by the Liberian government to the courts that were established in Bandiland in the 1940s. Liberian government laws were applied when cases were judged in the Liberian courts, which made the Liberian state the final arbitrator of disputes in Bandiland.

Before the establishment of Liberian government courts, violators of secular or non-secular laws in Bandi towns were punished after trial by ordeal. The trail by ordeal was administered by a specialist, either an elder or a zoe. They represented secular and

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57 LGD, “Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations of Poro and Sande,” Article 41a, p. 27.
59 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
non-secular authorities respectively in Bandi society. The trial by ordeal was common in Bandi society before the twentieth century. The trial sometimes involved the suspect drinking liquid of the sassiwood bark or herbs. If the suspect threw up after drinking the liquid, it meant he or she was guilty of the crime, but if the person did not throw up, it meant he was not guilty or innocent of the act. The trial by ordeal could also involve the endurance of external pain through the application of hot metal on the body. The belief was that if the suspect felt the pain, it meant he or she was guilty, but the person was declared innocent if he or she did not respond to the pain.

The Liberian government compromised and allowed the continuation of some trials by ordeal for establishing guilt or innocence in Bandi society. However, the government outlawed those trials by ordeal that posed a danger to the life of the suspect. In 1949, for example, the Liberian government ordered that the trial by ordeal that was administered internally by the drinking of liquid from material or herbs was not allowed, but the government allowed trials by ordeal that were administered externally and did not endanger the life of the suspect. The Liberian government required all ordeal specialists to procure a certificate from the Interior Department to determine their competency by the government. The traditional “ordeal doctors” had to be certified by the government because if any traditional doctor administered an ordeal without the approval of the government and endangered the life of a suspect, that person would be guilty of a crime.

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid. Some herbs or sassiwood barks were poisonous that would cause death if not thrown up after drinking or sometimes a suspect would throw up even if he or she was innocent. Since there was no way of knowing whether this traditional court was just or not, the Liberian government decided to outlaw the internal but allowed the external use of herbs to establish the guilt or innocence of a suspect in traditional courts in the interior.
64 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
of misdemeanor and punishable according to the law of the Liberian state. The enactment of the trial by ordeal law in 1949 further subjected the Bandi elders and traditional doctors, who were the custodians of this traditional practice, to the control of the Liberian government.

In addition to preservation of traditional values and social order, the chiefs, elders and Poro leaders were also responsible for formulating strategy and prosecuting wars between the Bandi and their neighbors before the twentieth century. The Poro leaders rallied Bandi men for war by invoking the Poro oath, which was binding on all men that were members of the Poro. The initiation of war by the Poro leaders was not a practice that was limited to the Bandi people. The Poro leaders are said to have also been instrumental in initiating wars among other interior ethnic groups such as the Loma, Kpelle and Gola before the twentieth century. Fulton and D’Azevedo have noted in their respective studies of the Kpelle and Gola that the Poro leaders not only initiated war, but also acted as agents of diplomacy. The Poro controlled the ko-wulu-bai-tenee or warriors, and it could stop hostilities among warring parties. The elders and Poro leaders could select a warrior to serve as town chief during a war. However, the warrior would provide only ad hoc leadership until the end of the conflict, after which the chieftaincy title often reverted

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
to a civilian leader. If the people of a town reached a consensus for the warrior to remain as their chief at the end of a war, such a warrior would continue to serve as town chief.73

As noted, warriors in Bandi society were important because they provided leadership for towns in time of war. They also founded towns and became chiefs of these towns.

There were often conflicts between Bandi towns at the end of the farming season before the twentieth century.74 The conflicts were often triggered by a shortage of food because of a poor rice harvest or as a result of famine, which led to raids on towns that had plenty of food.75 Such conflicts are said to have been common among the Bandi or between the Bandi and their neighbors.76 The fear of attacks by neighbors during times of food shortages often led to building ko bakei or war fences around Bandi towns. The building of war fences was a common practice in Bandiland until the Liberian government assigned militias that served as instruments of security in the northwestern interior in 1909.77

Prelude to the Establishment of the Liberian Government Authority in Bandiland

At the time of the advent of Liberia's control of Bandiland, there were many chiefs who were famous warriors in Bandi society.78 These warriors were brave men who provided leadership for their towns and communities during conflicts among the Bandi or

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73 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
between the Bandi and their neighbors. Many Bandi chiefs were also famous warriors. These warrior chiefs provided security in Bandi society prior to the establishment of the Liberian government’s authority in Bandiland in 1907. In addition to leading their people during the time of conflicts, warriors were also entrusted with protecting the towns’ farmland and hunting grounds. Even though conflicts over land and hunting grounds were not frequent, such conflicts produced famous warriors in Bandi society before the twentieth century.79

The conflict over farmland in Bandiland became more frequent because of the Liberian government’s policy of demarcating boundaries and allocating land among communities and ethnic groups during the twentieth century.80 Frequent conflicts over land among the Bandi or between the Bandi and their neighbors such as Belle, Loma and Gola, led the Liberian government to declare in 1949 that the Liberian state was the sole owner of all territories within its boundaries. However, the government noted that interior ethnic groups were entitled to lands in their vicinity. The government noted further that the traditional practice of communal land ownership among ethnic groups in the interior had to be approved by the government after application by the concerned ethnic groups.81

Thus, the land policy of the Liberian government made the interior ethnic groups become caretakers of lands that they had previously owned and used for farming and hunting. The boundary demarcation between Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1911 was followed by the Liberian state land policy that led to the allocation of lands based on ethnic groups in the northwestern interior. The demarcation of land according to ethnicity was

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
among the early changes introduced in northwestern part of Liberia in the early twentieth century. The government land policy led to increasing conflicts over land among ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia, such as the Loma-Gola war in 1918.\footnote{From Secretary of War John L. Morris to President Daniel E. Howard, in “Interior Department Correspondence,” March–December, 1918, LGD, Box 4, File 22, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.}

While the government land policy became a source of conflict among ethnic groups in the northwestern interior, the policy had a positive effect in Bandiland in that the allocation of land to towns helped reduce conflict over farmland among farmers. Bandi farmers became aware of the limits of land allocated to their towns and this prevented conflict with other farmers from neighboring towns. Land conflicts among ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia were also prevented because of the presence of the Liberian militias. For example, the presence of the Liberian government militia called the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) in northwestern Liberia prevented the prolongation and escalation of the land conflict between the Loma and Gola in 1918. The government ordered the LFF to take action against the party that did not accept peaceful resolution to the conflict. The LFF was organized in 1908 not only to protect the frontiers of Liberia, but also to suppress conflicts among ethnic groups in the interior.\footnote{Liberian National Archives, “Manual for the Regulation of the Liberian Frontier Force,” Monrovia, Liberia (1914), p. 53.}

As is examined in Chapter 7, after the LFF was assigned to the northwestern interior of Liberia in 1909, traditional warriors were no longer instruments of security in Bandi society.\footnote{Examples of some of the most powerful Bandi warrior chiefs that cooperated with the Liberian state in its efforts to establish authority in Bandiland in the early twentieth century were Chiefs Hagba Fala or Kalee and Mambulu Vojo Yamma.} Some of the famous warriors at the time of the establishment of the Liberian government control in Bandiland included Hagba Fala, also known as Chief
Karlee of Kamatahun, Chief Bombo Kollie of Gilima and Chief Mambulu Vojo Yamma of Yomatahun.\footnote{Informant 62, interviewed July 4, 2008, Fangalahun Town; Informant 39, interviewed July 4, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 87, interviewed July 1, 2008, Halipo Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 10, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 34, interviewed June 12, 2008, Bolahun Town.} Chief Mambulu was given the name “Vojo” to personify his military skills and ability, which made him not only respected but also feared by other chiefs. His popularity and influence led to the Liberian government appointing him Paramount Chief of Bandiland in 1910.\footnote{Ibid. Also, for analyses of how Chief Mambulu became an ally of the Liberian government, see Stephen S. Hlophe, \textit{Class, Ethnicity and Politics in Liberia}, p. 118; Rt. Rev. Robert Campbell, \textit{Within the Green Wall}, pp. 232–233.}

Evidently, the presence of many warrior chiefs in Bandi society up to 1907 was an indication that Bandiland had not been ruled by one political leader until the appointment of Chief Mambulu. Before the twentieth century, Chief Mambulu derived his power not only from his military exploits, but also from wealth he had accumulated from his control over many people. He is said to have had many wives, children, livestock, and large farms. As one of the powerful warrior chiefs in Bandiland before the twentieth century, his fame attracted many dependents that worked for him in exchange for protection and material benefits.\footnote{Ibid.}

Before the twentieth century, Bandi chiefs were powerful not only because they controlled many people, but also because they enhanced their status by using their wealth to win support from people and consolidate their power. It was a common practice for Bandi parents to arrange marriage of their daughters to chiefs in order to ensure and guarantee personal friendship with and to demonstrate their loyalty to these chiefs.\footnote{Ibid.} Thus, the large number of dependents, wives and children in chiefs’ households enabled them to
increase their material and political power. One important change introduced to Bandiland by the Liberian government in 1949 was to outlaw the practice of arranged marriage to chiefs for favors or material benefits.\textsuperscript{89}

The Liberian government equated the practice of an arranged marriage of a woman to a man she did not love as a form of enslavement. However, the Bandi elders and chiefs considered the government action as intending to deprive them of rights over their daughters.\textsuperscript{90} Moreover, the Liberian government’s prohibition of arranged marriages led to younger women leaving their older husbands for younger men. The prohibition of arranged marriages in the interior led to young Bandi women refusing marriage proposals from older men and looking for young men to marry. In 1935, a prominent Bandi chief named Memor N’dolleh of Tahamba expressed the frustration of the Bandi chiefs to President Edwin Barclay over the Liberian government’s interference in traditional marriage in the following statement:

\begin{quote}
Now a day, the old chiefs are deprived of their wives in this manner, and they have nothing to say. Most chiefs are leaving the country to reside on the British side [Sierra Leone], because they have lost their wives and cannot reclaim their wives because of the laws considering traditional marriage of women as enslavement.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

The interference of the Liberian government in traditional Bandi marriages in the twentieth century diminished the practice of arranged marriage in Bandi society. The arranged marriage was one of the means by which common people established ties with prominent chiefs to ensure security as well as material benefits. Consequently, on the eve of the

\textsuperscript{89}LGD, “Minutes of Conference held at Kolahun,” 4th February, 1935, p. 8, Box 8, File 5, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.


\textsuperscript{91}LGD, “Minutes of Conference of Chiefs Held in Kolahun,” p. 8. Also, see Chapter 7.
establishment of Liberian government control in Bandiland, prominent Bandi chiefs such as Mambulu Vojo Yamma and Bombo Kollie were easily recognized by the Liberian government because they had many wives and dependents, and controlled material resources, which allowed them to dominate the traditional political system in Bandiland.92

Chiefs Mambulu, Bombo Kollie, and their allies entrenched themselves as political leaders because they controlled many people and had tremendous material resources. However, by the 1930s the Liberian government’s decision to merge the various Bandi political chieftaincies under one leadership posed a threat to the power of many of these chiefs.93 After the boundary demarcation between Liberia and British Sierra Leone in 1911, the Liberian government took measures to make its authority felt in all chieftaincies on the Liberian side of the border.94 Thus, various Bandi chieftaincies were merged into six political units called clans, which were further consolidated into a larger political unit called chiefdom in 1932 under the leadership of a paramount chief.95 Thus, even though the various towns in Bandi society were still ruled by traditional chiefs, the Liberian government politically centralized Bandiland for the purpose of effective administration.

The Bandi maintained their traditional political system based on town government. However, the introduction of new socioeconomic and political systems such as the elected

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92 For the Liberian government involvement in the political rivalry between Chiefs Mambulu and Bombo Kollie in Bandiland, see Acting Secretary of Interior, M. Massaquoi’s report entitled “Statements and Evidence: Given in the Case of the Capture of Chief Mambu by Chief Bombo Kollie,” April 6, 1913; courtesy of Dr. John C. Yoder of Withworth College, Spokane, Washington State.

93 The Bandi chiefdom was created out of the traditional six subgroups into which the Bandi language is divided. The six subgroups were designated as six clans by the Liberian government in the early 1900s.


95 LGD, “Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations,” Article 4, p. 2.
chiefs, payment of hut and poll taxes, as well as the use of wage labor affected the authority and influence of traditional chiefs and elders in Bandi society. The new policies of the government subjected Bandi chiefs to the authority of the Liberian state. In order to preserve their traditional social status and influences, some of the Bandi chiefs formed alliances with the Liberian government authority in Bandiland. Prominent among these chiefs were Kalee of Kamatahun and Mambulu Vojo Yamma of Yomatahun. They entered into agreements with the Liberian government in 1907. The support of these chiefs helped the Liberian state establish its authority in Bandiland.

In summary, the impact of the Liberian government on traditional Bandi political systems in the first decades of the twentieth century was characterized by change as well as continuity in Bandi traditions. The Liberian government changed the traditional process of selecting chiefs from consensus of the elders to election by the people. The government also merged various Bandi chieftaincies into a single political unit called a chiefdom and transformed the chiefs into government representatives in Bandiland. Moreover, while the Liberian government allowed chiefs to govern Bandi towns in accordance with traditions, the chiefs and traditions were subjected to the government’s laws and authority in Bandiland.

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97 Ibid.
CHAPTER 4

TRADITIONAL BANDI AGRICULTURAL, MATERIAL
AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS

This chapter examines traditional Bandi economic and social systems together
with the effects of their contacts with the Liberian state. It specifically analyzes tradi­tional agricultural, material, and domestic slave systems of the Bandi people. The overall
effect after contacts with the Liberian state is the central theme of this chapter.

The Traditional Bandi Agricultural System

Although they were primarily rice cultivators, the Bandi also planted other crops
such as corn, cassava, peanuts, potatoes, eddoes, cocoa and coffee. In addition to agri­cultural production, the Bandi were involved in other economic activities such as crafting,
manufacturing and trading. The Bandi and their neighbors such as the Belle, Loma, Mende,
Kissi and Gola cultivated rice before the arrival of European in the sixteenth century, and
before the area became part of Liberia in the early nineteenth century. 1 Rice was the staple
crop for the Bandi and their neighbors. Studies show that the species of rice called Oryza
glaberrima was domesticated in West Africa along the Niger River before Europeans

1For detailed discussions of rice cultivation in present-day Liberia and Sierra Leone in pre-Euro­pean period, see Edda L. Fields-Black, Deep Roots: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora
(Bloomington and Indianapolis, Ind., 2008), pp. 26–32; Svend Holsoe, “Economic Activities in Liberia in the
Liberian Area: The Pre-European Period to 1900,” in Essays on the Economic Anthropology of Liberia and
Sierra Leone, ed. Vernon R. Dorjahn and Barry L. Isaac (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 66–76; Gerald E. Currens,
10–11; Earl P. Hanson, “An Economic Survey of the Western Province of Liberia,” Geographical Review,
arrived in the fifteenth century. Bandi rice farming was and still is based on the practice of shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation is also practiced by the Loma, Kissi, Gola, Mende and Belle farmers. The practice enhanced the productive capacity of the land because it helped the used farm land rejuvenate and regain the nutrients it had lost due to the cutting and burning of trees.

Bandiland is covered by forest in the northwestern interior of Liberia. Bandi farmers made rice farms on ka-sey-ngie-ya or uplands and gbe-tei-ya or swamplands. The varieties of rice the Bandi and their neighbors cultivated have been classified as *Oryza glaberrima*. Farms were made in areas where the clearing of land was often difficult. Rice farming began in March and the rice was harvested in December for the Bandi and their neighbors.

The making of a rice farm was dictated by the dry and rainy seasons, and the size of farm depended on the size of a household’s labor force. Adequate rainfall was essential to the growing of rice on tropical land. Farmers would, for example, delay planting rice if the weather conditions did not assure them that rain would be forthcoming. The time it took to complete various tasks relating to the farm depended not only on the size of the farm, but also on the efficiency of the labor force and the nature of the land where the farm

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was made. Upland farming was common among the Bandi and their neighbors because there are more uplands than swamplands in northwestern Liberia.  

Rice farming began after the farmer had selected the farm site and made the site known to the *pe-le-njei*, who was the most senior of his wives. The senior wife was responsible to inform the junior wives. If the man had one wife, he would consult her before making a final decision about the farm site. After the man has informed members of his household about the farm site, he would then inform other farmers in his village and neighboring villages about the selected site. The Bandi believed that a farmer has a right to a particular farm site if he was the first to mark the site. The claiming of a farm site was intended to discourage disputes over potential farming areas. Like Bandi farmers, the Loma farmers made claim of anticipated area of farming by wedging a tree and placing leaves between the wedged trees; or hanging a bunch of leaves on a tree about shoulder height at the sites.  

The mark symbolized that a claim had been made on an area for the forthcoming farming season. While the selection of a farm site was the responsibility of the husband as head of the household, the size of the farm depended on the cooperation of his wives and the size of his household’s labor force. If several households planned to make farms in the same general area, there were consultations and discussions among the husbands and wives of these households about what to do at the beginning of the farming season. Bandi farmers selected farm sites that were not very far from their villages. This

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7 Even though they also cultivated swampland, the Bandi are mainly upland farmers.

8 For details of how the Loma farmers select farming sites, see Gerald E. Currens, “The Loma Farmers,” pp. 69–71. This is also based on my discussions with Amos J. Beyan, June 12, 2009, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Beyan’s information derives from his personal experiences with rice farming from 1957 through 1967 near the Loma towns of Killiwu, Zorzor, and Yella in Lofa County, Liberia.

reduced their walking distance during the farming season.\textsuperscript{10} A rice farm was often made in an area where people had not made a farm for about seven years.\textsuperscript{11}

Bandi rice farmers performed religious rituals as part of their preparation for the farming season. For example, farmers often consulted the spirits of their ancestors before they began the process of selecting the farm site. Their offering of rice and chickens to the spirits of their ancestors was a way of asking them for guidance in regard to the rice farming.\textsuperscript{12} The husband was responsible for making the offering on behalf of the household.\textsuperscript{13}

Rice farming was often labor intensive. One of the reasons traditional Bandi men desired to have several wives was to have many children who would increase the labor force in their households.\textsuperscript{14} The presence of a large labor force in the households helped the leaders of those households to carry out the many tasks associated with rice farming and other economic activities.\textsuperscript{15} However, Bandi households that had a small labor force made farm-work easier by joining a \textit{taa' puma\textsc{ii}}, which was a group that worked together to maximize each member's farming interests. Bandi farmers also employed \textit{taa' puma\textsc{ii}} system to cultivate crops such as cocoa and coffee.\textsuperscript{16}

Membership in a \textit{taa' puma\textsc{ii}} was voluntary. However, participation in \textit{taa' puma\textsc{ii}} became mandatory in Bandiland after the Liberian state introduced what became known

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid}; also, see Dennis' \textit{Gbandes}, pp. 23-24.
\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{14}Informant 34, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 3, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bondowalahun Town; Informant 36, interviewed June 25, 2008, Manjotahun Town.
\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}
as the “government farm” in northwestern Liberia in 1949. The Liberian government reinforced the use of traditional *taa’pumai* in Bandiland to make villagers perform public services such as making government farms, building homes for local government officials, and constructing roads. The government empowered town chiefs to impose a fine on anyone who refused to participate in a *taa’pumai* on government farms in the villages. As is detailed in Chapter 7, the existence of a *taa’pumai* in Bandi society enabled the Liberian government to recruit workers to build public roads in the interior and recruit laborers for the Firestone Rubber Company in the 1920s. While the building of roads and working for the Firestone Company would be considered new forms of labor systems the Liberian government introduced into Bandi society, the reliance of the government on the use of *taa’pumai* to carry out such tasks represented the continuity of a traditional Bandi system of labor.

Bandi men and women worked together in the *taa’pumai* system to plant and harvest rice. However, while weeding in the rice farm was mainly carried out by women *taa’pumai*, the brushing, burning and clearing of land were done by men’s *taa’pumai*. Even though clearing the bushes and cutting the trees were considered the men’s tasks, the women also provided support to the men. The main responsibilities of women while the men were clearing the bushes and cutting the trees included cooking food and providing drinking water.

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18. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
The Bandi, Kissi and Loma employed similar methods of rice cultivation, but some of the responsibilities of men and women varied by ethnic group. For example, while Bandi tradition allowed men and women to jointly plant and harvest rice, Loma and Kissi traditions allowed only Loma women and Kissi men respectively to plant rice. In Bandi, Kissi and Loma traditions, men were responsible to clear the bushes and women were responsible to weed the farm; the practice has continued up to today.

Although it enhanced the effectiveness of farm work in Bandiland, *taa' pumai* encouraged dependency among farmers. For example, households that had few family members often made large farms while relying upon the *taa' pumai* system to help them complete their tasks on time. Bandi households that had two or three family members often found it difficult to complete numerous farm tasks without help from the *taa' pumai*.

Rice farming was broadly divided into four stages: clearing the bushes and cutting the trees and clearing the land after the branches of cut trees have been burned; planting the rice, weeding, and harvesting. Clearing the bushes and cutting the trees were considered the most difficult parts of rice farming, especially when the upland and swampland were covered with thick bush. If the swampland was not dried, it would be difficult for farmers to burn the cut grass and trees. However, farmers usually burned the grass and cut trees on the upland and semi-dried swampland.

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Ibid. Despite differences in certain farming tasks for men and women among the Bandi, Kissi and Loma, these ethnic groups use basically the same methods of rice farming.

Ibid.


Ibid.
Farmers often began planting rice in swampland during the rainy season in June. The heaviest rainfall in Bandiland is usually in the months of June and July. The rainfall often helped farmers by discouraging birds from destroying the planted rice seeds. Moreover, rainfall often minimized the task of chasing birds from the swampland farms.26 Upland and swampland farming was usually difficult if the land had not been cultivated for over ten years, because the trees would have become overgrown and therefore more difficult to cut.27

Bandi farmers waited for about two to three weeks to burn trees they had cut on upland and semi-dried swampland. This was done to enhance the clearing and productivity of the land.28 Clearing partially burned wood from the land before hoeing was another difficult task. The common method Bandi farmers used in planting rice in the upland and swampland was to first toss the rice seeds before they hoed the soil.29 Rice farming in Bandiland continues to be based on such traditional methods until today.30

Bandi farmers often planted rice together with corn, cotton, okra and beans; they also planted cassava in the rice fields. Beans and cassava were planted mainly around ant-hills or tree trunks in different parts of the farm. Even though the Bandi considered corn and cassava to be food crops, they were considered to be secondary to rice. While the corn and rice were planted together, the corn was harvested earlier and provided food for Bandi farmers before rice was ready for harvest. Corn was prepared as food in a

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27 Ibid.


29 Ibid.

variety of ways. It was boiled, roasted or parched, and pounded in mortars into maize and served as food.\textsuperscript{31} Corn was among the food crops the Portuguese introduced to West Africa in early 1500s.\textsuperscript{32}

In addition to corn, Bandi farmers also planted cassava. Bandi people ate the cassava leaf and the \textit{manioc}, which is the root of the cassava plant. The root was cooked and prepared as food called \textit{fufu} or \textit{dum-boy}.\textsuperscript{33} Like corn, cassava was also among the food crops that Europeans introduced to West Africa in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{34} Corn and cassava were introduced to Bandiland from the coast by coastal ethnic groups and by the Bandi and other interior ethnic groups who had been to the coast in the sixteenth century. While rice cultivation continues to be the main agricultural activity in Bandiland, the incorporation of cassava into Bandi food production represented sixteenth-century European influences on the food and agricultural systems of the Bandi and other ethnic groups in this area of pre-Liberia.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{35}Ibid.
Bandi rice farming was not the sole responsibility of adult men and women. Bandi elders and teenagers also played important roles in rice farming. Young Bandi boys kept birds from destroying the planted rice in June and the rice that was ready for harvest in November and December. They also brought drinking water to men and women working on the farms. The elders who were unable to travel to the farms or do physical work served as child care givers. Such a division of labor enabled entire families to carry out the various farming tasks.

The responsibilities and obligations of men, women, elders and teenagers during rice farming drew upon the education acquired during the Poro school for males and Sande school for females. The males learned about their responsibilities as future husbands and females also learned their responsibilities as future wives. The teaching of social and cultural values and norms in the Poro and Sande schools enabled their graduates to understand not only their moral and ethical obligations, but also their work responsibilities in Bandi society. Bandi cultural practices and beliefs served not only to enforce responsibilities, but also to enhance farming activities. Thus, the Bandi invoked the

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
spirits of the ancestors before the beginning of each farming season.\textsuperscript{43} Bandi farmers believed that the spirits of the ancestors were constantly watching and protecting the living. Therefore, farmers showed their appreciation to the ancestors by offering them the first rice of the new harvest.\textsuperscript{44}

Like the Bandi, rice is the staple food for the Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende and therefore rice farming continued to be the main economic activity in northwestern Liberia.\textsuperscript{45} Moreover, rice farming by these ethnic groups continues to be dominated by traditional methods of slash and burn of trees and the planting of rice with hoes. Although they previously used farm tools that were made by traditional blacksmiths, Bandi farmers also began to use western farm tools such as the cutlass, axe, and knife, which were introduced into Bandiland by Mandingo and Lebanese traders in the 1920s and 1930s. The use of western farm tools by Bandi farmers represented the incorporation of foreign technical knowledge into Bandi rice farming.\textsuperscript{46}

Material Production and Other Economic Activities in Bandi Society

Bandi economic activities were not limited to rice farming. Other economic activities of the Bandi included crafting, manufacturing, and trading. Bandi craftsmen and craftswomen made not only rattan baskets, mats, hammocks, and chicken coops; they also served as potters, leatherworkers, blacksmiths, weavers, and carvers.\textsuperscript{47} Even though they

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{46}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{47}Informant 37, interviewed June 10, 2008, Bolahun Town; also, see Judith Perani and Patricia O'Connell, “Traditional Bandi Weaving,” conference paper presented at the Eighth Annual Meeting of the
used most of the materials they produced, the Bandi also bartered some of the materials to neighbors such as the Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende. For example, Bandi exchanged their rattan mats, baskets or chairs for soap and salt produced from dried palm branches by the Kissi and Mende.\textsuperscript{48} The Bandi also made and sold household utensils such as wooden spoons, bowls, plates as well as machetes and clay pots to their neighbors. The barter system was commonly used by the Bandi and their neighbors, but they also used iron bars as a medium of exchange; iron bars were the dominant currency in Bandiland and in other areas in northwestern Liberia up to the 1920s.\textsuperscript{49}

Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage have shown through the use of archaeological evidence that blacksmiths were involved in iron-smelting and the production of iron bars and household goods such as needles, knives and razors, fishing hooks and musical instruments like bells in areas of pre-Liberia and pre-Sierra Leone before European traders began the importation of iron bars and tools to West Africa in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{50} J. E. Flint and Denis Williams have attributed the decline in the traditional iron-smelting industry in West Africa to European technological competition from the mid-seventeenth century, when European traders introduced iron bars and tools in West Africa to augment local supplies.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid.

of iron in West Africa. Evaluation of Bandi oral narratives also shows that the Bandi and their neighbors such as the Kissi, Loma and Mende had the knowledge of iron-smelting; they produced not only farming tools such as cutlasses and axes, but also iron bars that were used as money and iron weapons such as spears and knives, which were used for hunting and defense after they settled in their locations in about 1500. Moreover, S. L. White’s study of iron smelting in the interior of Liberia shows that iron bars were used as a medium of exchange in present-day northwestern Liberia before European traders introduced European iron bars in West Africa in the mid-seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. Iron bars were widely used by the Bandi, Kissi, Mende and Loma to buy goods and services before the Liberian government established control over northwestern Liberia in the twentieth century. Iron bars were the main currency in Bandi society until the early twentieth century, when the British pound was introduced in Bandi society as result of trade between Bandiland and the British colony of Sierra Leone. The iron bars were used in Bandiland not only for commercial purposes, but also for payment of dowry and debts. The Bandi

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55 Ibid.

also used the iron bars to buy products such as bead necklaces and ear and finger rings from Mandingo and Fulani traders up to the 1920s and 1930s.\(^{57}\)

The use of iron bars and the British pound helped to transform commercial activities in Bandiland and other areas in northwestern Liberia. The use of these currencies increased trade not only within Bandiland, but also between the Bandi and their neighbors, because traders had options to either exchange goods for goods or use currency to buy the goods they wanted. The British pound sterling reached Bandiland as result of trade between Bandi people and Lebanese traders who settled in the Sierra Leonean towns of Buedu and Pendembu near the Liberian border, after the British connected these towns with a railroad in 1908.\(^{58}\) The presence of Lebanese and other traders in these towns encouraged trade between Bandiland and the British Colony of Sierra Leone. Bandi traders sold tropical products such as palm kernels and palm oil to Lebanese merchants, and they bought foreign materials such as zinc, nails, kerosene, lanterns, gunpowder, wire and iron traps.\(^{59}\)

Despite the introduction of foreign currency and materials in Bandiland during the early twentieth century, the Bandi continued to make and use traditional materials.\(^{60}\) Bandi potters produced \textit{feto} or pots and \textit{fei} or water storage jars from clay, while leatherworkers produced \textit{kovai} or shoes and \textit{toko koloi} or hand gloves from animal skins. The blacksmiths produced machetes, hoes, knives and mini cannon, while the weavers produced traditional

\(^{57}\)Ibid.


\(^{60}\)Ibid.
cotton shirts, short pants, gowns, hats and blankets. While the use of British pounds and foreign materials such as zinc, lanterns and kerosene represented changes in the material culture of Bandi society during the early twentieth century, the production and use of traditional materials alongside these foreign materials represented continuity in Bandi cultural systems.

Bandi carvers made spoons, plates, bowls, chairs and benches from tropical wood. Although the production of these traditional materials has not ceased in Bandi society, there has been a considerable decline in traditional crafting and manufacturing activities among the Bandi during the second half of the twentieth century. The decline in traditional crafting and manufacturing among the Bandi has been attributed not only to the lack of interest of among young Bandi to learn the skills, but also because of an increasing interest in foreign materials. For example, the introduction of enamelware in the 1920s and aluminum products in the 1960s into Bandiland led to a decline in the production of traditional household products such as clay pots, wooden spoons and bowls. The lack of interest among young Bandi to learn from the elders skills of carving, leatherworking, blacksmithing, and pottery-making has led to the decline in the preservation of traditional skills and knowledge in Bandi society. Moreover, the growing interest in western materials such as clothes and shoes among younger generations of Bandi during the twentieth century led to the decline in traditional knowledge of weaving and leatherworking. Young Bandi men

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62 Ibid.
64 Informant 8, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town; Informant 38, interviewed June 7, 2008, Kombalahun Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 10, 2008, Bolahun Town.
and women considered these professions to be obsolete and therefore less important to learn from their elders.\(^6^5\)

Traditionally, Bandi craftsmen also made baskets, mats and hammocks from fibers they extracted from rattan and palm tree branches. The baskets were used to store food or transport food items. Although traditional baskets are still produced in Bandi society, the use of imported materials such as bags, synthetic rubber barrels, aluminum buckets and pans have become the main means of transportation and storage in Bandi society.\(^6^6\)

Bandi women used mainly clay pots for cooking and heating water until aluminum pots were introduced into Bandiland in the 1960s. My evaluation of Bandi oral narratives did not establish when the knowledge of pottery work was introduced in Bandiland.\(^6^7\) Recent studies show that pottery work existed in the savanna area of Ancient Mali, from which the Bandi, Loma, Mende, Kissi migrated from during the 1500s.\(^6^8\) It could therefore be inferred that the Bandi and mentioned ethnic groups were already well familiar with the skills of pottery-making before they arrived in the area of pre-Liberia.\(^6^9\)

Anthropologist John H. Atherton has noted the similarities between pottery that was common in the Western Sudan and the pottery found in pre-Sierra Leone and pre-Liberia, which suggests the movement of people together with their material culture after

\(^{65}\)Informant 38, interviewed June 7, 2008, Kombalahun Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 10, 2008, Bolahun Town.

\(^{66}\)Ibid.

\(^{67}\)Informants 8 and 56, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town; Informant 38, interviewed June 7, 2008, Kombalahun Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 10, 2008, Bolahun Town.


the decline of the ancient Sudanese empire of Mali in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{70} Similarities of clay pots common in the savanna area of Western Sudan and those found in Bandiland suggest the existence of pottery knowledge among the Bandi before they settled in present-day northwestern Liberia in the 1500.\textsuperscript{71} Moreover, ethnic groups in present-day Sierra Leone and Liberia were also familiar with skills of making rattan baskets, wooden spoons and canoes before the second half of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{72}

Although studies show that the Bandi migrated to their present location with the knowledge of pottery in the sixteenth century, Mende, Mandingo and Fulani potters are said to have introduced new kinds of ceramic pots to the Bandi through trade during the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{73} The new ceramic pots are said to have been made with loop handles and tripod legs, which were different from the round-bottom type of pots that were previously made in Bandiland. The Bandi potters exchanged ceramic pots for kola nuts, indigo, hides, cotton cloth and other tropical products.\textsuperscript{74} Archaeological study in northwestern Liberia also indicates that pottery works existed near the Bandi town of Kolahun in the sixteenth century,\textsuperscript{75} which supports suggestions that the Bandi migrated to their present location with the knowledge of pottery work. Bandi potters near Kolahun are said to have produced \textit{feto}, which are the round-bottom type of cooking pots.\textsuperscript{76} They also produced \textit{nja hei} or water vessels and \textit{bala bollorgie} or ceramic bottles.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{70}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71}Ibid. Also, see Dennis, \textit{The Gbandes}, pp. 196–197.
\textsuperscript{72}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73}Dennis, pp. 196–197.
\textsuperscript{74}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76}Ibid.; also, see Svend Holsoe, "Economic Activities in the Liberian Area," p. 66.
\textsuperscript{77}Informants 8 and 56, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town; Informant 38, interviewed June 7, 2008, Kombalahun Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 10, 2008, Bolahun Town.
Pottery work continued in Bandiland until foreign pots, which the Bandi called *mbé-ngie*, were introduced into Bandiland in the early twentieth century. As noted, western pots were introduced into Bandiland by Lebanese and European traders that lived in the Sierra Leonean towns of Buedu and Pendembu. The use of these foreign pots together with the traditional ones through the first half of the twentieth century shows that the Bandi were selective in the goods they chose to incorporate into their material culture. The continued use of traditional pots alongside imported ones represented continuity in aspects of the traditional systems in Bandi society.

Bandi pottery was not made by potters of a specific gender. While Frank’s study shows the Mende and Mandingo women were the main potters in Sierra Leone, Mali, Gambia and Guinea, Bandi potters consisted of both men and women. The male potters in Bandiland specialized in making large vessels for storing drinking water, while women potters specialized in making cooking pots and bottles. As noted, the women produced ceramic bottles called *bala bollorgie*, which were used to store peanut butter, clean rice, palm oil or liquid from herbs that was used for medicinal purposes.

While Bandi potters were respected for their skills, Bandi leatherworkers and blacksmiths were respected more than the potters because the skills of leatherworkers and blacksmiths were more essential to Bandi farmers. Leatherworkers produced shoes and

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78 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
gloves, while blacksmiths produced hoes, machetes and axes that enhanced agricultural activities. Leatherworkers and blacksmiths were also respected more than potters in Bandi society because the professions of leatherworking and blacksmithing took more years to learn than did the pottery profession.  

Leatherworking and blacksmithing required seven years of apprenticeship before a man could qualify as a respected leatherworker or blacksmith in Bandi society. The trainees of these professions worked for their trainers during the seven years of apprenticeship. The trainers provided food and lodging. The blacksmiths were also zoës and their skills and authority were usually inherited by family members, but they could also train non-family members to become blacksmiths. The blacksmith could transfer his skills and authority to one of his sons, who would carry on the profession on behalf of the family. However, the profession and respect for blacksmiths began to decline in Bandi society in the early twentieth century when foreign tools became widely available. The making of traditional farm implements such as machetes, hoes, axes, knives and spears began to decline because of the use of western tools in Bandiland. The introduction of

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85 Ibid.
western tools to Bandi farmers, such as machetes, hoes, knives and axes, made young Bandi men unwilling to learn the skills of traditional blacksmiths in Bandi society.  

The leatherworking profession was also important in Bandi society before the twentieth century. The leatherworkers were respected because they produced materials such as ko-vai or shoes/sandals for chiefs, mbo-wai la-ngie or knife sheaths, and bue or pouches for hunters and toko koloi or hand gloves for farmers. The leatherworkers also produced for blacksmiths fue-lae or bellows from goat, sheep or deer skin. The blacksmiths used the bellows to heat charcoal so that they could smelt iron. The blacksmith hammered the red-hot metal into various machetes, hoes, axes and knives.

While the Bandi leatherworkers did not possess non-secular authority like the blacksmiths, the leatherworking profession could also be inherited or learned through apprenticeship. Examinations of Bandi oral narratives show that skills of leatherworking have been part of the cultural values of the Bandi people. The Bandi used animal skins to decorate their traditional musical instruments such as ta-nde-ngie and sa-mkpai-ngie or drums, which they have used since they settled in their present location in the sixteenth century. Bandi men used animal skins as part of the regalia for landai, the spiritual leader of the Bandi Poro. The use of animal skins by Poro spiritual leaders suggests that a knowledge of leatherworking existed in Bandiland before the twentieth century. While leather materials that the Bandi produced were mainly used in Bandiland, a variety of leather materials made by the Mandingo, Mende, and Fulani were also sold in Bandiland.

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90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.; also, see Frank, *Mande Potters and Leather-workers*, pp. 56–78.
from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. Mandingo and Fulani leather-workers produced amulets, necklaces, sandals, and knife sheaths that were sold to the Bandi and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia. Frank’s study suggests that the knowledge of leatherworking was part of the cultural influences that reached the forest people of West Africa from the savanna in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. However, the use of leather materials on traditional musical instruments and other material objects of the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende suggests that these ethnic groups had a knowledge of leatherworking since they arrived in their present locations in the sixteenth century.

Leather materials that were produced in Bandiland were used locally. However, the Bandi also acquired leather products such as amulet necklaces, sandals, and knife sheaths from Mandingo and Fula traders from present-day southeastern Guinea during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Leatherworkers among the Bandi and their neighbors in the forest area of West Africa are said to have also acquired horse skins from Mandingo and Fula traders from the savanna region in exchange for kola nuts and indigo during the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. In 1870, an African American traveler, Benjamin J. K. Anderson, reported about trading activities that included items such as animal skins, leather amulets, wallets, necklaces, knife sheaths and belts in southeastern Guinea. Even though Bandi leatherworkers produced some of the mentioned leather items, they perfected their skills through incorporation of new skills

from the Mende, Loma, Kissi, Mandingo and Fula leatherworkers. There were also reciprocal exchanges of leatherworking skills between the Bandi on the one hand and these ethnic groups on the other. Thus, while leatherworking was indigenous to Bandi society, informants also noted that Bandi leatherworkers acquired new skills of making leather shoes of different designs and sizes through contacts with other leatherworkers among the Mende, Mandingo, Fula, Loma, and Kissi of northwestern Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.\(^{97}\) For example, the Bandi leatherworkers made sandals from skins of deer killed by Bandi hunters, but they also learned how to use horse skins to make leather shoes through their interactions with the Mandingo and Fulani from southern Guinea.\(^{98}\)

Bandi leatherworkers made a variety of leather products that were sometimes exchanged for labor.\(^{99}\) For example, if a man or woman wanted a pair of shoes, he or she would volunteer to work on the leatherworker’s rice farm or cocoa/coffee plantation for a day for a pair of shoes. The Bandi leatherworkers made leather products for farmers, chiefs and for non-secular uses. For example, antelope and deer skins were used to make gloves for farmers, sandals for chiefs and regalia for Poro spiritual leaders such as \textit{yan gbai} and \textit{lani boi ey}.\(^{100}\) Leather products from the savanna areas became popular among ethnic groups in the forested areas of West Africa in the early twentieth century. Leather products from the savanna were made from the hides of horses and camels, while leather

\(^{97}\text{Informant 14, interviewed June 7, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town; Informant 81, interviewed June 6, 2008, Massambolahun Town; Informant 86, interviewed June 12, 2008, Fangoda Town.}\)

\(^{98}\text{Ibid.}\)


\(^{100}\text{Ibid.}\)
products from the forest areas of West Africa were made from the hides of animals such as deer, antelope and leopard.  

Some of the leather items that were produced in Bandiland were exchanged for other products made by Bandi neighbors such as the Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende. For example, Bandi leatherworkers would exchange some of their leather items such as knife sheaths, sandals and bags for palm oil, rice, kernel oil and soap. Before the twentieth century, it was a common practice for specialists such as leatherworkers and blacksmiths to exchange materials they made for labor or commodities that were in demand. For example, a farmer would barter some of his rice or labor for machetes that the blacksmith produced or a leatherworker would produce a hunting bag that a hunter would exchange for meat. The practice of exchanging labor for money became common in Bandi society during the early twentieth century, when the Liberian government and Christian missionaries established themselves in Bandiland. As examined in Chapter 7, the practice of labor for cash was encouraged among the Bandi as a result of the introduction of the hut tax in Bandi society by the Liberian government. However, the traditional practice of working for specialists such as leatherworkers and blacksmiths for materials they produced has continued in Bandi society.

Bandi leatherworkers and blacksmiths were important to the development of other professions. For example, warriors and hunters depended on blacksmiths for knives, swords

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and the repair of guns. The leatherworkers produced sheaths for swords, pouches and sandals for chiefs, warriors and hunters. The blacksmiths also produced farming tools such as mbolobai or machetes, ko-norngie or axes, mbo-wai or knives, and ka-lee'or hoes. The Bandi farmers and their Belle, Loma, Kissi, Mende and Gola counterparts used machetes to clear the land before planting the rice. The hoes were used to break up the soil, but the women also used the hoes during weeding. The farmers used knives for harvesting rice, but blacksmiths also made special knives that were used for hunting and shaving.

In addition to making iron tools for farming and other activities, Bandi blacksmiths also began to make silver jewelry such as finger rings, earrings and bracelets from silver materials that are said to have reached Bandiland through trade between the Bandi and Mende-Mandingo traders in the late nineteenth century. Based on examinations of oral narratives on silversmiths in Bandiland, O'Connell noted that silverwork skills may have come from outside Bandiland because silver materials such as bracelets, ear and finger rings were made mainly by the Mende and Mandingo traders and silversmiths that settled in Bandiland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, Mende silversmiths such as Momo Kebbe settled in Bolahun in the 1930s and became famous for making silver rings and bracelets. Moreover, the French five franc silver coins called kani kolengi were first traded in Bandiland in the late nineteenth century from

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104 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., p. 50.
Guinea and the coins were melted and made into jewelry.\textsuperscript{110} Bandi blacksmiths made a variety of iron tools and household utensils, but they learned the skills of silversmithing after Mende and Mandingo silver workers settled in Bandiland in the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{111}

Bandi blacksmiths produced not only farming and hunting instruments, but they also produced cannons that were fired to announce the beginning of festivities such as funeral services or the Poro and Sande schools.\textsuperscript{112} Bandi blacksmiths and leatherworkers were often exempted from \textit{taa' pumai} during rice farming season because of the services they rendered in making tools for farmers.\textsuperscript{113} The professional services blacksmiths and leatherworkers rendered through the making of agricultural and other implements made them indispensable to farmers and other professional groups in Bandi society.\textsuperscript{114}

Bandi blacksmiths were often respected by leaders of the Poro and Sande schools.\textsuperscript{115} In addition to their secular duties as makers of tools that were used by other professional groups, Bandi blacksmiths also performed tasks that were known only to the \textit{zoes} and members of the Poro and Sande. They performed tasks as a spiritual or an invisible person when they were in the Poro and Sande schools to initiate students into membership in these institutions.\textsuperscript{116}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{110}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116}Ibid. The blacksmith profession could also be revealed to a woman in a dream, but Bandi traditions did not permit women to become blacksmiths. Moreover, a woman was not allowed to know about
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Blacksmiths were also knowledgeable about traditional herbs that could heal people from different illnesses such as men’s impotency and women’s barrenness. Such skills also existed among blacksmiths of the Mende, Loma, Kpelle, Belle and Gola ethnic groups. C. Magbaily Fyle’s study of Mende blacksmiths shows that the blacksmiths displayed their non-secular authority as a zoe through the use of iron implements and related materials that are believed to provide elements of social control or to have healing powers. For example, if someone offended another and refused to accept responsibility, the victim could seek the help of a blacksmith in his capacity as a zoe to invoke the spirits that cutlasses and other iron tools symbolized to punish the offenders; the punishment could come in the form of deformity, death or other calamity as retribution.

The fear of being harmed by a cutlass and other tools during farming or related agricultural activities often led offenders to admit to their wrongdoings to victims. Similar beliefs also existed among the Bandi and the threat of a victim invoking spirits of evil on an offender would make the latter admit to his or her wrongdoings. The Bandi also believed that blacksmiths had the ability to invoke or destroy the spirits of evil and witchcraft. Besides blacksmiths, there were male and female diviners and soothsayers that specialized in foretelling misfortunes as well as identifying and destroying witchcraft.

the Poro in Bandi society, but only a particular woman with the title of porkpai that was allowed to know about the Poro school. However, her inherited title made her to be considered a man rather than a woman.

120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
Recent studies of ethnic groups such as the Mende, Kpelle and Loma also show that blacksmiths possess knowledge of traditional herbs relating to the Poro and Sande schools. For example, the Bandi believed that a blacksmith could prepare *njor-voi* or potions from the bark and leaves of a sassa wood tree and used the potions to drive away an evil spirit from a woman that had a miscarriage of pregnancy. Blacksmiths among the Bandi, Kpelle, Loma and Mende were highly respected not only because of the importance of their skills, but also because they were often elders that had vast knowledge of traditions. Their knowledge of the traditions of the towns and communities and their professional skills often attracted both old and young men who benefited from their services and learned from their knowledge.

While there are still blacksmiths in Bandiland, Bandi farmers today do not solely rely on them for farming tools because of the introduction of foreign tools in Bandiland since the 1920s. Such tools reached Bandiland from the Sierra Leonean towns of Buedu and Pendembu, where Bandi traders sold palm kernels and kola nuts to Lebanese traders and bought goods that included cutlasses, hoes, knives and tea kettles. Lebanese traders from Freetown followed the route of the new railroads connecting Freetown and the Sierra Leonean towns of Buedu and Pendembu and established trade links with the Bandi, Kissi and Loma on the Liberian side of the border. Some Lebanese traders settled in Bandiland during the 1950s, when the Liberian government constructed roads linking the

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124 Ibid.

northwestern interior to coastal areas of Liberia. The importation of cutlasses, hoes and knives into Bandiland from Sierra Leone in the 1920s and from the coastal areas of Liberia during the 1950s undermined the work of blacksmiths. Some of the foreign cutlasses were made from steel, which was stronger than iron cutlasses that were made by blacksmiths in Bandiland. Thus, influences of blacksmiths among Bandi farmers diminished because of the interests of farmers in foreign rather than traditional tools.

The Bandi also specialized in the production of cotton cloth. The women spun the cotton to produce thread and the men wove the thread into a konde kulai or country cloth. Bandi tradition did not allow women to weave or men to spin cotton. If a man or woman violated the tradition, he or she was required to give about 100 pounds of clean rice and a gallon of palm oil as a fine for the first offense; the punishment for the second offense was that the violator was chained to a log at the center of the town for a month. Spinning and weaving of cotton cloth often began at the end of the farming season, because Bandi farmers prioritized rice farming.

Cotton was often planted on a limited scale in Bandi society. During the time of rice harvesting, women picked the cotton and stored it in baskets pending the time for spinning. Bandi weavers produced konde-kulai or country cloth, which was widely

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127 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
used in Bandiland before the twentieth century. The women produced thread from the cotton through spinning, and the men wove the thread into cotton strips. The women used iron needles produced by blacksmiths to sew the strips with their hands, because sewing machines and needles were not introduced into Bandiland until 1923 when American and English missionaries introduced the first sewing machines to Bandi school girls in Bolahun. The introduction of sewing machines made the production of country cloth easier in Bandiland. However, since the sewing machine was limited to women at the Christian missions, women in other areas of Bandiland continued to use their traditional method of making cloth through the 1940s. Bandi weavers produced cotton cloth that included *kodei ndomangie*, *jo-gbo-ngie*, *mbor-loi*, *kpa-hai* and *ngelema-gula*, or country shirts, gowns, hats, head-ties and lap robes.

Unlike blacksmithing and leatherworking, the production of cotton cloth did not require formal training. Bandi men and women learned the cotton weaving and spinning respectively through observation and practice. Before the twentieth century, young Bandi men and women learned the techniques of weaving and spinning respectively from their elders. Between 1910 and 1920, many young Bandi men fled to Sierra Leone to escape the collection of the hut tax imposed by the Liberian government. Many of these young men returned to Bandiland with skills for making different designs of traditional gowns. They had acquired the skills from Mende and Kissi weavers in Sierra Leone.

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134Dennis, pp. 54–60.
135Ibid.
137Ibid.
The planting of cotton has declined in Bandi society, but weaving has continued because Bandi weavers used imported thread rather than thread that was spun from cotton planted in local rice farms. The increasing interest of the Bandi in foreign-made clothes and the availability of foreign thread undermined the making of traditional cloth. Moreover, western-educated Bandi believed that wearing foreign-made clothes was an indication of advanced civilization and those who wore traditional styles of clothes were uncivilized. Consequently, while the acceptance of western clothes would be an indication of change in the dress code of the Bandi people, the production of traditional cloth did continue in Bandi society. However, such cloth was sold to foreigners or given as gifts to government officials and foreign leaders that visited Bandiland.

The Bandi also practiced wood carving. The wood carvers in Bandi society were mainly men. Before the twentieth century, blacksmiths produced most of the tools that the Bandi carvers used for their work. Wood carving was indigenous to Bandi society as evidenced by different kinds of wooden objects such as spoons, plates and bowls that were used in households before the twentieth century. Bandi carvers also made canoes for transport and fishing, wooden drums and masks for entertainment. Moreover, Bandi

140 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
carvers made wooden doors for traditional homes. Wooden doors were used in villages before Bandi carpenters learned to make modern-style doors in the 1920s.\footnote{143}{Ibid.}

The carpentry profession became attractive to the Bandi after missionaries introduced the modern-style of building in Wanwoma in the central part of Bandiland in the 1920s. The missionaries' importation of building tools such as hammers, nails, zinc sheets for roofs, and levels, attracted many Bandi men to the carpentry profession. Bandi considered the carpentry profession to be a kwi or civilized profession, because most of the tools used by carpenters were western-made.\footnote{144}{Ibid.}

Bandi carvers were also attracted to carpentry because this new profession brought social and material prestige to them in the 1920s. For example, the use of foreign tools and the change from traditional to modern styles of building houses encouraged young Bandi men to give up carving for carpentry. The Bandi interest in western houses began in the 1920s, when missionaries in Bolahun began to construct the church, hospital and schools with cement, zinc sheets and nails, which were imported from Sierra Leone.\footnote{145}{Rt. Rev. Robert E. Campbell, Within the Green Wall, pp. 90–93.}

The desire of Bandi men to acquire modern knowledge undermined the profession of traditional carving. The sale of wooden tools and artifacts had served as a source of income for Bandi men for payment of hut taxes imposed by the Liberian government in 1916.\footnote{146}{See Section 2, in “An Act Levying Hut Tax Among the Uncivilized Aboriginal Inhabitants Within the Republic of Liberia,” Oct. 20, 1916, Liberian National Archives (LNA), Monrovia, Liberia. The Act also repealed the much hated Poll tax, which was imposed on every male citizen of the interior two years earlier.} Bandi carvers today are mostly elders, who produce wooden items mainly for sale
to foreigners. Even though they embraced foreign tools, clothes, and materials for farming, wearing and storage, Bandi blacksmiths, leatherworkers, weavers, potters, craftsmen and craftswomen have maintained the practice of producing goods for local use and for sale.

Domestic Slavery and Pawnship in Bandi Society

The Bandi practiced domestic slavery that they called *nduwor-la*i before the first group of African slaves was taken from the Windward Coast in 1518. The Bandi referred to a slave as *nduwoi* and two or more slaves were referred to as *nduwoi-te-ne*.

Slaves of a chief were known as *massa nduwoi te-ne*, while slaves who were acquired through wars were referred to as *ko luwoi-te-ne*.

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Slaves were an important part of the labor force in the households of Bandi chiefs before the transatlantic slave trade reached the coastal area of pre-Liberia in about 1518. In addition to being an important source of labor for the indigenous Bandi elite, a slave in Bandi society was also considered and treated as a member of the household of his or her owner. The mistreatment of a slave was uncommon among the Bandi because of the possibility that such an action would encourage escape. The Bandi live in the forest region and that made it easier for slaves to escape if they were mistreated. Moreover, Bandi society did not have centralized political structures to control slaves and individual Bandi chiefs maintained only four or five slaves that were an important part of the labor force in their households. The chiefs chose to treat their slaves fairly to discourage the slaves from seeking to escape. However, the Bandi had ways to restrain slaves or individuals who posed threats to society. For example, a slave or an individual with mental illness was often restrained by chaining him or her to a log that was unmovable. Such an action was often the last measure used as punishment until the effects of the transatlantic slave trade reached the coastal area of pre-Liberia in the early 1500s.¹⁵³ Before their involvement in the transatlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century, Bandi chiefs used their slaves not only to work on farms like other members of households, but also as porters and messengers.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ The traditional slave system on the Windward Coast was transformed mainly as a result of the effects of the transatlantic slave trade. Unlike the Vai as suggested in Holsoe’s study, the tendency for Bandi, Kissi, Loma, Gola and Kru leaders to use oppressive methods against slaves is said to have been attributed to influences of the transatlantic slave trade. The slavery practiced by these ethnic groups was less oppressive until contact with the transatlantic slave trade. For detailed perspective on the transformative nature of indigenous slave system in the coastal area of Pre-Liberia, see Beyan, “Transatlantic Trade and Coastal Area of Pre-Liberia,” pp. 758–759; also, see Basil Davidson, African Slave Trade (London, 1961, reprinted in 1980), p. 41.

While slaves in Bandi society were considered members of their leaders’ extended family, these leaders took care of the needs of their slaves and other family members. Such needs included protecting the slaves and other family members against people who might want to take advantage of them in the community, resolving disputes on their behalf, providing them food from their farms and paying dowries for their brides.\textsuperscript{155} Even though Bandi slaves provided services for their leaders, the main objective of chiefs and other Bandi leaders before the sixteenth century was not to profit from the labor of slaves as in the ways that were practiced among Islamized ethnic groups in West Africa.\textsuperscript{156} In other words, Bandi slavery was not designed to maximize profits from the labor of slaves and minimize cost of production for Bandi leaders. However, this did not mean that Bandi slavery was free of oppression because Bandi chiefs punished their slaves and other dependents for disobedience or refusing to perform assigned tasks. Such punishments included denial of food or refusal to cater to their personal needs and welfare.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{155}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{157}Informants 47, 48, and 75, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town; Informant 34, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 64, interviewed June 21, 2008, Kabalama Town.
Slaves and other members of the chief’s family made rice farms and also performed other economic activities such as cutting palm nuts, hunting and fishing.\textsuperscript{158} The rice produced on the chief’s farm was used to feed the chiefs’ immediate and extended family members such as uncles, nephews and in-laws; the chiefs also provided food for strangers that visited his town. Among the main reasons Bandi chiefs made large rice farms was because chiefs were expected to provide a greater share of food during festivities, such as Poro and Sande schools.\textsuperscript{159} The practices of a chief being responsible to feed strangers and provide a greater share of food during festivities have continued in Bandi society up to today.\textsuperscript{160} The practice of town residents and extended family members of a chief working on his farm are aspects of the Bandi political system that have continued up to today, though their work was earlier supplemented by that of slaves.\textsuperscript{161}

Bandi tradition allowed chiefs to exercise control over members of their households, including the rights to control their labor. On the other hand, the chief’s household members, including slaves, wives and children, have the right to food and protection from the chief. The rights of a leader over the labor of his immediate and extended family members and rights of these members to support and protection from the leader in traditional African societies have been described as kinship rights-in-person.\textsuperscript{162} The rights-in-person allowed leaders to make members of their households work for them, while the leaders


\textsuperscript{159}Informants 47 and 75, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town; Informant 34, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 64, interviewed June 21, 2008, Kabalama Town.

\textsuperscript{160}Informant 34, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informant 64, interviewed June 21, 2008, Kabalama Town; Informants 48 and 75, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town.

\textsuperscript{161}Ibid.

were obligated to ensure that members of their households were housed, fed, supported materially and protected against abuse and mistreatment by other residents in their communities. In Bandi society, a chief would ask his slaves and extended family members to work for him and they would not question his authority because they considered him to be the head of their family. Bandi tradition also demanded that ordinary people take orders from their leader and young men and women were to respect their elders. Therefore, slaves and dependents in a household of a chief were not to refuse his order because he had the right to exercise control over their labor.

The Bandi slave system allowed integration of outside slaves into Bandi society and also allowed slaves to own property and become leaders in their communities. Moreover, even though Miers and Kopytoff have characterized pre-European African slavery as based solely on outsiders, slaves in Bandi society were not limited to outsiders because Bandi chiefs also enslaved ordinary Bandi up to the early twentieth century. For example, Bandi chiefs such as Mambulu and Bombo Kollie acquired most of their slaves through wars with other Bandi chiefs, but also strangers became their slaves by voluntarily attaching themselves to the households of these chiefs as dependents.

Even though it was common for African slaves to lose kinship status in their societies of origins, they were also integrated into their new societies through a process that Miers and Kopytoff have referred to as ‘slavery-to kinship continuum.' When

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166Ibid.
slaves became integrated into their chief’s family in Bandi society, the slaves became extended family members of the chief. In other words, once integrated into their chief’s extended family, the slaves were no longer considered outsiders but were members of the chief’s kinship group. The practice of incorporating slaves into the chief’s kinship group allowed the slaves to have rights that would enable them to rise to high positions of authority in Bandi society. The incorporation of a slave into a leader’s kinship group as an extended family member and the elevation of a slave to a position of authority was only one of many differences between the domestic slave system as practiced by the Bandi and the transatlantic slavery that existed in the Americas.\textsuperscript{168}

The practices of treating slaves as family members and allowing them to get married, own property and live in their own households were part of the Bandi slave system before the effects of the transatlantic slave trade were felt in Bandiland during the seventeenth century. These practices were also allowed among the Bandi’s neighbors including the Belle, Gola and Loma. In his study of traditional Gola society, D’Azevedo has noted that Gola slaves were allowed not only to have their own farmlands but to marry and have children who also became dependents of the chiefs.\textsuperscript{169} The practice of allowing slaves to marry and own property gave the slaves not only a sense of responsibility but it also enabled the slaves to have a sense of self-esteem and respect in the communities that enslaved them.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{168}Ibid., p. 24.
\textsuperscript{170}Ibid., pp. 67–68.
Like the slaves in Bandi society, the slaves in Gola society were considered and treated as extended family members of *gbe di sa* or the chief's household.\(^\text{171}\) Also like the Bandi slaves, Gola slaves worked for their leaders, who in turn treated the slaves as members of their kinship groups. However, the advent of the transatlantic slave trade in the coastal area of pre-Liberia in the sixteenth century and the involvement of the Gola elite in the slave trade affected the Gola slave system.\(^\text{172}\) For example, the advent of the transatlantic slave trade in the coastal area of pre-Liberia in the sixteenth century encouraged the indigenous Gola elite to sell their extended family members as well as slaves and pawns to European enslavers.\(^\text{173}\) Like in Bandi society, slaves and pawns were important in Gola society. They increased the number of the chief's family members and his labor force; it was a large labor force that brought both material and social prestige to such a leader.\(^\text{174}\)

While the Bandi slave system was similar to the one practiced in Gola society, it was different from the slave system that was practiced in Vai society. Unlike in Vai society, a slave class did not exist in Bandi and Gola societies and Bandi and Gola chiefs regarded and treated their slaves as members of their kinship groups.\(^\text{175}\) On the other hand, Holsoe's study of the Vai slave system shows that in addition to using slaves as a mode of production, the Vai also confined slaves as a separate social class.\(^\text{176}\) For example, Vai leaders kept their slaves in separate houses and the slaves were not allowed to eat with

\(^{171}\) D'Azevedo, “Continuity and Integration in Gola Society,” p. 54.
\(^{172}\) Ibid.
\(^{173}\) Ibid.
\(^{174}\) Ibid., pp. 54–56.
\(^{175}\) Holsoe, “Cassava-Leaf People,” pp. 103–104.
\(^{176}\) Ibid., pp. 32–34.
Vai slaves also consisted of Vai as well as outsiders from neighboring ethnic groups such as Bandi, Kpelle, Gola and Belle. However, unlike the Vai, the Bandi and Gola never confined their slaves as a separate social class. Nevertheless, the Bandi and Gola chiefs also became involved in the sale of slaves as a result of the demand of the transatlantic slave trade in coastal area pre-Liberia during the sixteenth century.

Like Bandi society, slavery in other societies in the forest region of the Upper Guinea Coast became more oppressive after contact with the transatlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century. In his study of African slavery on the Upper Guinea Coast before contact with Europeans in the fifteenth century, Rodney's analyses of Portuguese reports and correspondence showed that indigenous African leaders had slaves before the advent of transatlantic slave trade in West Africa. However, slavery in West African societies before the sixteenth century should not be equated with the one introduced by the transatlantic slavery because indigenous African leaders neither sold nor used their slaves to maximize profits; slaves were treated as members of the extended family and household of their leaders. The advent of the transatlantic slave trade in West Africa in the sixteenth century modified the indigenous slave system because the slave trade encouraged African leaders to procure and hold slaves for the purpose of sale to European enslav-

177 Ibid.
178 Ibid., p. 33.
ers.\textsuperscript{182} According to Rodney, with the incentive of European goods, the transatlantic slave trade encouraged individuals among ethnic groups in West Africa to specialize in slave raiding to service the slave trade.\textsuperscript{183}

In the coastal areas of pre-Liberia the demands of the transatlantic slave trade led to the rise of a social class that became slave hunters among ethnic groups such as the Vai, Gola, Dey, and Kru in coastal area of in the early sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{184} This social class not only played the middleman role in the slave trade, it also raided as slave hunters or local \textit{gampisas}\textsuperscript{185} that specialized in the supply of slaves from the interior of pre-Liberia. The transatlantic slave trade in the areas of the Gallinas and the coastal area of pre-Liberia also led to the emergence of Afro-European families such as the Tuckers, Rogers, and Caulkers who played a significant role as middlemen between Europeans and the African elite from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{186}

The emergence of an Afro-European elite and a social class that specialized in slave hunting and selling in areas such as Sherbro Island, the Gallinas, Cape Mount and Cape Montserrado affected both the coastal and interior ethnic groups of the Windward Coast from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. There emerged a social class that included members of coastal ethnic groups such as the Kono, Loko, Kru, Gola and

\textsuperscript{182}Walter Rodney, \textit{History of the Upper Guinea Coast}, pp. 108, 290.
\textsuperscript{183}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185}Rodney, \textit{History of the Upper Guinea}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{186}Christopher Fyfe, “Peoples of the Windward Coast,” p. 157; Rodney, \textit{History of the Upper Guinea}, p. 107.
Vai who specialized in slave raiding among the Bandi, Belle, Loma, Kissi and Mende in the interior of the Windward Coast up to the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{187}

The demands of the transatlantic slave trade and the rise of a slave hunting class in the coastal area of pre-Liberia encouraged chiefs and other leaders among the Bandi, Belle, Kissi, Loma and Mende to sell their slaves and pawns for profits to European enslavers.\textsuperscript{188} The demand for slaves during the peak of the transatlantic slave trade in the 1700s also led to some West African leaders creating conditions that encouraged their followers to incur debts that could be paid by giving family members as collateral or pawns, who the leaders then often sold into slavery.\textsuperscript{189} During the height of the transatlantic slave trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, West African chiefs were also encouraged to sell extended family members to European enslavers.\textsuperscript{190}

While historians of West Africa agree that domestic slavery existed among West African ethnic groups before contact with the transatlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century, there have been debates regarding factors that prompted the participation of indigenous West African leaders in the slave trade. For example, while Rodney has argued that the demands of the transatlantic slave trade and the incentive of European goods encouraged coastal West African ethnic groups and their leaders to participate in the slave trade, J. D. Fage has argued that the existence of slaves in pre-European West


\textsuperscript{188}Rodney, History of the Upper Guinea, pp. 261.

\textsuperscript{189}Ibid., pp. 261–264.

\textsuperscript{190}Ibid.
African societies led to their leaders' participation in the slave trade. Moreover, while Fage argued that slavery existed as an institution in West African societies before the advent of the transatlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century, Rodney, Jones and Hawthorne have noted that buying and selling of slaves were not dominant economic activities of the Upper Guinea, especially the Sherbro and Gallinas territories, until the demands of transatlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century. The transatlantic slave trade encouraged wars among coastal and interior ethnic groups to acquire slaves purposely intended for sale in areas of pre-Sierra Leone and pre-Liberia.

The hunting and holding of slaves among the Bandi and their neighbors became part of their system of slavery as a result of the demand of the transatlantic slave trade on the Windward Coast. Until the advent of the transatlantic slave trade in the coastal area of pre-Liberia in the sixteenth century, the absence of centralized political authority among the Bandi, Belle, Kissi, Loma and Mende, and their locations in the forest region were conditions that made it difficult for these ethnic groups to maintain control over large number of slaves. Before the transatlantic slave trade, the Bandi chiefs and their neighbors desired to keep slaves in order to increase the size of their households, but their involvement in procuring and holding slaves for sale to slave hunters from the coast was a direct result of the transatlantic slave trade that was felt in this part of West Africa during the sixteenth century.

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192 Fage, p. 78.
As on the West African coast in general, the demands of the transatlantic slave trade in coastal areas of the Windward Coast encouraged Bandi chiefs and their neighbors in the interior to sell their debtors, criminals and war captives to slave hunters.\textsuperscript{195} Before contact with the transatlantic slave trade in the early sixteenth century, criminals, debtors and war captives worked on farms and performed other services for chiefs.\textsuperscript{196}

The transatlantic slave trade affected the Bandi slave system after the sixteenth century, because the Bandi chiefs blended their slave system based on the extended family with the commercial slave system of the transatlantic world. The interests of Bandi chiefs in procuring and holding slaves were no longer about keeping the slaves to increase the labor force of their households, but also about their desire to sell slaves to slave hunters and buyers that travelled to Bandiland from the coastal area of pre-Liberia. In other words, the transatlantic slave trade encouraged Bandi chiefs to participate in the commercial networks that allowed chiefs to sell some slaves to hunters, even though the chiefs also maintained other slaves as part of their traditional kinship and extended family systems. The transatlantic slave trade also encouraged slave raiding and wars among ethnic groups such as the Vai, Kru, Gola, Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende on the coast and the interior of the Windward Coast for the purpose of selling their war captives to European enslavers.\textsuperscript{197}

The transatlantic slave trade on the coast and in the interior of pre-Liberia also encouraged

\textsuperscript{195} Grace, \textit{Domestic Slavery in West Africa}, p. 16.


chiefs to enslave not only outsiders but also members of their own ethnic groups for material benefits from European enslavers and their African slave-hunting allies.\textsuperscript{198}

The transatlantic slave trade transformed war captives and individuals that were held by chiefs for various crimes such as rape, stealing and failure to respect town norms into commodities that were sold for material benefits.\textsuperscript{199} Although the exportation of slaves from the Windward Coast began in the early sixteenth century, ethnic groups such as the Bandi, the Mende, the Loma, the Mano, the Kpelle, and the Dan were not among slaves exported until the early nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{200} Adam Jones’ and Marion Johnson’s study of Portuguese records of the coastal area of pre-Liberia also shows that slaves that were recaptured from ships on the southeastern coast of Liberia in the 1840s included the Bandi, Mende, Loma, Mano, Kpelle and Dan.\textsuperscript{201} Furthermore, Philip D. Curtin’s study of slave exports from the coastal area of Liberia during the 1830s and 1840s shows that slaves exported included the Mende, Bandi, Loma, Kissi, Mano, Kpelle and Dan.\textsuperscript{202} The number of slaves exported from the Windward Coast between the sixteenth and the late nineteenth centuries was approximately 337,000.\textsuperscript{203}

\textsuperscript{198}Ibid., pp. 8–11, 15–18.
\textsuperscript{199}Fyfe, “Peoples of Windward Coast,” p. 158.
\textsuperscript{201}Jones and Johnson, “Slaves From the Windward Coast,” pp. 20,33; Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade, pp. 253, 292.
\textsuperscript{202}Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade, pp. 253, 292.
The foregoing explanations clearly illustrate that the export of slaves from coastal areas of West Africa from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries affected the slave system in Bandi society. However, the end of the transatlantic slave trade in 1888 did not end the exportation of slaves from Bandiland because Bandi chiefs continued to sell slaves until the early twentieth century. Moreover, the creation of Liberia on the coast of West Africa in 1822 did not end the slave trade among Liberian coastal ethnic groups such as Vai, Kru, Bassa and Gola. The slave trade continued in Bandiland up to the early twentieth century.

Another effect of the transatlantic slave trade on Bandiland was that it encouraged warfare among Bandi chiefs, with war captives often sold as slaves. Moreover, the effect of the transatlantic slave trade in Bandiland after the 1600s was illustrated by the exported slaves from the coastal of Liberia that included Bandi, Kissi and Loma. While slaves and pawns remained important parts of the labor force among the Bandi and other ethnic groups in the interior of the Windward Coast after the sixteenth century, the selling of slaves and pawns by the Bandi and their neighbors became common because of the demand of the transatlantic slave trade. In Bandi society, for example, even though chiefs maintained aspects of the Bandi slave system, they also adapted to new situations created by the transatlantic slave trade. As noted, while some Bandi chiefs maintained slaves as dependents to perform a variety of tasks on rice farms and other economic activities, they

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205 Ibid.

206 Jones and Johnson, “Slaves From the Windward Coast,” p. 33.

207 Ibid.
also sold their slaves for material benefits. Evaluation of narratives provided by Bandi Paramount Chief Nyandibo and other Bandi informants in 2008 showed that some Bandi chiefs continued to use slaves on their farms as well as sell slaves to slave hunters from the coastal area of Liberia until the Liberian government declared slavery illegal in the interior in the 1920s.

The practice of giving material things or a family member to a chief to guarantee a credit or the payment of debts existed among the Bandi before the effects of the transatlantic slave trade were felt in Bandiland in the sixteenth century. The practice continued in Bandi society until the Liberian government abolished it in the 1930s. The practice allowed a town chief to impose fines on an individual that violated traditional laws or norms such as blowing a whistle or pounding rice at night in the town. The fines for an individual for violating such laws included payment of a gallon of palm oil and fifty pounds of clean rice, but punishment for violating such traditional laws was no longer limited to fines after Bandi chiefs became involved in the slave trade. The sale of violators of traditional laws, debtors and pawns to slave traders became common in Bandi society when the Bandi chiefs became involved in the slave trade from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century.

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209 Ibid.


century. The continued demand of the transatlantic slave trade in the Sherbro, Cape Mount and Montserrado areas of West Africa in the 1800s also led to the rise of slave markets in the Gallinas. Portuguese slave traders such as Theodore Canot and Pedro Blanco were major suppliers there to Spanish purchasers during the late 1820s and early 1830s.

The existence of a slave market in the Gallinas encouraged Bandi chiefs such as Mambulu and Bombo Kollie to acquire slaves through wars against other chiefs to sell to the Vai, Gola, Mende and Kono slave hunters. While Bandi war slaves were often sold to slave hunters from the coast, Chief Mambulu also kept war captives in his household as dependents until the Liberian government established authority in Bandiland in 1907. The Bandi slave system became more oppressive as a result of the involvement of Bandi leaders in the transatlantic slave trade. For example, instead of making their slaves work on farms or perform other tasks as punishment, slaves that posed a threat to the peace of towns or communities were often sold to slave traders.

Moreover, while the practice of chaining criminals and mentally-ill individuals onto logs was common in Bandi society, the Bandi chiefs began to use shackles to restrain slaves, which was an example of the

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effect of the transatlantic slave trade in Bandiland after the sixteenth century. The practice of shackling and selling slaves continued in Bandiland up to the early twentieth century. For example, the British Consul-General Braithwaite Wallis described in his article what he observed in the Bandi town of Jenneh in Hembe during his tour of Bandiland in 1908:

While in this town [Jenneh] I saw seven slaves, who were secured by the leg in wooden ‘stock.’ They have been in that position for some months. One of them told me through the interpreter that he had been kept thus for two years. He was a man of poor physique, and a purchaser could not therefore be easily found for him.  

Wallis’ description above is in contrast to the Bandi system of slavery, which used physical restriction of a slave as the last measure for punishment only for a slave that posed a threat to the community. However, restriction as punishment for a slave in the Bandi slave system would not often last for months as described by Wallis, because Bandi slaves were an important part of the labor force of households in Bandi society, and they were also treated as extended family members of the chief’s kinship group. Thus, Wallis’ descriptions showed that the Bandi were still involved in the sale of slaves and individuals who committed crimes up to the twentieth century, even though the transatlantic slave trade ended in 1888.

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Another example of how the transatlantic slave trade transformed the Bandi slave system was that in spite of the end to the transatlantic slave trade, Bandi chiefs continued to acquire slaves through wars and sell them to slave buyers from the coast. For example, Chief Mambulu of Yomatahun enslaved captives during wars against other Bandi chiefs in the Hembe area of Bandiland during the early twentieth century. However, the number of war slaves held by Chief Mambulu up to the early twentieth century was not more than ten. O’Connell’s evaluation of Bandi oral narratives showed that some Bandi elders proudly identified themselves as former slaves of Chief Mambulu in the early twentieth century. From the traditional perspective of the Bandi, being a slave of a famous chief was not considered to be demeaning but rather a privilege because a slave of a chief was often considered to be a member of the chief’s family. Moreover, Bandi tradition required that respect given to a chief by his people should also be extended to his immediate and extended family members. Thus, if a man identified himself as a slave or former slave of a famous chief, he had also identified himself as a relative of the chief.

Wars for supremacy among Bandi chiefs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often produced captives that Bandi chiefs either kept in their households to enhance their social status or sold to slave hunters to maximize their economic interests. Such wars and the enslavement of captives continued in Bandi society until the Liberian

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government established control in Bandiland in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{223} War slaves that were held in Bandi society during the early twentieth century were freed by the Liberian government; they were never returned to their places of origins but remained in their host communities.\textsuperscript{224}

While the international slave trade ended with the abolition of the Brazilian slave trade in 1888,\textsuperscript{225} slavery and the sale of slaves continued in Bandiland up to 1907.\textsuperscript{226} Bandi chiefs continued to acquire slaves through wars and pawnship and used the slaves not only for agricultural and related activities, but also sold them to Vai and Gola slave hunters that came to Bandiland from the coastal area of Liberia. The need to have a large number of dependents and control over a large labor force often encouraged Bandi chiefs to desire slaves. The chiefs also increased the labor force in their households by encouraging their male slaves to marry. While the wives and children of these slaves were not considered slaves, they helped to increase the number of the chiefs’ dependents and extended family members. The practice of a chief paying the dowries for the brides of their male slaves and other dependents remained part of the Bandi slave system until the Liberian government outlawed slavery in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{227}

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\textsuperscript{224}Informant 52, interviewed June 7, 2008, Lehuma Town; Informant 38, interviewed June 7, 2008, Kombalahun Town; Informant 8, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town. \\
\textsuperscript{227}Ibid.
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The advent of Liberian government control in the northwestern interior and the subsequent abolition of slavery in Bandiland in the early twentieth century made Bandi chiefs devise other ways of increasing their labor force. For example, a Bandi chief would create conditions that would make one or two of his wives want to commit adultery so that the men involved could be caught and then would have to work for the chief as punishment. The chief would demand that the men that had an affair with his wives work on his farm as way of resolving the "woman palaver." The chief often maintained control over the labor of men that had had an affair with his wives by making each man work on his rice farm, coffee or cocoa plantation for two or three days.\textsuperscript{228} The practice of polygyny by chiefs and ordinary Bandi men enhanced their social prestige and also enabled chiefs and ordinary Bandi men to have many children that enlarged their labor force. Having a large labor force in the chief's household allowed the chief to make a large farm that would produce more food to feed not only his immediate but also extended-family members and town residents that would be in need of food.\textsuperscript{229}

The participation of Bandi chiefs in the transatlantic slave trade reinforced the practice of polygyny in Bandi society, because most of the slaves that were sold by the chiefs from the peak of the trade in the 1700s up to the end of slavery in Bandiland in 1923 were men. The wives of men that were sold into slavery became dependents, relatives and sometimes wives of the chiefs.\textsuperscript{230} The chief allowed the wives of men sold into slavery to remarry, but the men that married these women also became part of the labor

\textsuperscript{228}ibid.

\textsuperscript{229}For discussions of how polygyny was related to labor force in African farming societies, see Helena Chojnacka, "Polygyny and the Rate of Population Growth," Research Bulletin, no. 78/05 (Lagos, Nigeria: University of Lagos, 1978), pp. 2–11.

force in the chief’s household. If a chief died, his slaves were allowed to continue to live in his household like other family members; the slaves were also allowed to marry any of the chief’s widows. Such practices continued in Bandi society into the early twentieth century. Thus, while the buying and selling of slaves in Bandiland would be attributed to the effect of the transatlantic slave trade on Bandi society, the practice of former slaves marrying the widows of their deceased leaders was an example of the Bandi slave system that persisted up to 1923. Another aspect of the Bandi slave system that continued into the twentieth century was the right of a slave to rise to a position of a town chief. Despite the involvement of Bandi chiefs in the transatlantic slave trade through the sale of slaves in the interior of the Windward Coast, the slaves in Bandi society could still rise to a position of high leadership.

Bandi chiefs such as Mambulu continued to sell slaves to Vai and Gola slave traders from the coastal region of Liberia up to 1907. Although he was one of the notorious slave dealers among the Bandi chiefs, Mambulu also maintained slaves that

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231 Ibid.
rendered him services until the Liberian government pressured him to release all slaves in 1910.\textsuperscript{238} However, the old Bandi system of slavery did not end until the government outlawed all forms of involuntary servitude in the interior of Liberia in 1923.\textsuperscript{239}

Even though it outlawed slavery, the Liberian government allowed the practice of pawnship to continue among the interior ethnic groups. The government’s approval of the practice of giving human beings as collateral for debts in the interior during the administration of President Charles D. B. King (1920–1930) reinforced the pawnship system that had been practiced in Bandi society.\textsuperscript{240} The Liberian government allowed the practice of pawnship to continue among ethnic groups in the interior for the purpose of paying taxes. The government declared that “a man could pawn anything, including his wife and dependents, for any amount that he [could] get to pay his taxes.”\textsuperscript{241} However, the government required that “pawns be accompanied by a token, such as the ring placed on the finger; earring, leopard tooth, or bracelet on the arm or any domestic article of value.”\textsuperscript{242} The material identification of a pawn was necessary in order to assure local government officials that the person was not a slave and to ensure that he or she would be redeemed after the family had paid their debt to the creditor.\textsuperscript{243}


The advent of the transatlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century transformed or modified the form of slavery practiced by these ethnic groups on the coast and interior of pre-Liberia. For detailed discussions of this transformation, see Amos J. Beyan, “Transatlantic Trade and the Coastal Area of Pre-Liberia,” pp. 758–759.


\textsuperscript{240}Ibid., p. 291.


\textsuperscript{242}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{243}Ibid.
The Liberian government’s attempt to generate revenue in the interior led to the imposition of an annual hut tax on each hut within the provinces in the interior in 1916.\textsuperscript{244} The amount of the tax was a dollar per hut, but many rural residents could not afford to pay because of their limited resources. Failure to pay the tax often led to humiliation or imprisonment until the tax was paid. Thus, many of these rural residents who were unable to pay their taxes on time resorted to bribery of revenue agents in order to avoid humiliation or imprisonment. Taxation encouraged the practice of pawning in Bandiland. Chiefs or town residents often gave not only items such as cotton gowns and shirts or palm oil but also girls and women to local government officials in order to either evade payment of hut taxes or to avoid excessive fines.\textsuperscript{245} Government officials such as the District Commissioner and Frontier Force commanders also encouraged and accepted bribes from chiefs. If a chief had to collect food items such as rice, palm oil and meat from residents of his town to give to a commissioner or revenue agent in order to avoid humiliation or excessive fines for failure to pay the tax on time, such a chief often collected more items from ordinary people than required in order to keep some of the items for himself.\textsuperscript{246} The imposition of the hut tax in Bandiland also encouraged corruption among Bandi chiefs and exploitation of their people, as observed by District Commissioner Varney Jakema Fahnbulleh in 1936: “One thing I have been anxious about is the wholesale extortion the chiefs

\textsuperscript{244} LNA, “An Act Levying Hut Tax Among the Uncivilized Aboriginal Inhabitants, Section 2.”


themselves are carrying on among their people, because no chief could account for so much cows, [traditional] gowns and money they have, except from direct taxation of their people.\textsuperscript{247}

The taxing policy encouraged Bandi clan and paramount chiefs to demand goats, cows, palm oil and rice from ordinary Bandi. The practice of extortion by chiefs tended to undermine Bandi people's respect for their chiefs, who were considered to be the embodiment of traditional values in Bandi society. The chiefs often collected food and non-food items under the pretext that they would give them to the tax collector and District Commissioner as taxes, but the chiefs instead took these items for themselves. The chiefs also became enforcers of government authority in Bandiland and used this power to enrich themselves. Taxation made chiefs in Bandiland and other parts of the interior become accustomed to bribery of government officials to avoid humiliations such as being sent to prison for failure to enforce collection of government taxes from their people. Ford gave an example this when he noted that a Dan chief gave livestock and one of his daughters to District Commissioner Sandimannie in order to avoid humiliation for his failure to collect the required taxes.\textsuperscript{248} Moreover, Commissioner Sandimannie also used his power to exploit the ordinary Dan and Mano people. For example, between 1917 and 1919 the Commissioner gave $113 to his messenger, Sherman Coleman, to obtain eight pawns [girls and women] from the Dan and Mano of Nimba to send them to Monrovia.\textsuperscript{249} Women

\textsuperscript{247} District Commissioner Varney Jakema Fahnbuleh to President Edwin Barclay, Executive Correspondence with the Interior Department, District Commissioner and Chiefs of Western Province, Voinjama-Kolahun District, 1936–1937, LGD, Box 6, File 10, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

\textsuperscript{248} Ford, "Indirect Rule and the Brief Apogee of Pawnship in Nimba," p. 287.

\textsuperscript{249} Ibid., pp. 287–288.
and girls who were taken from the interior were often sent to Monrovia where they worked as servants in the homes and on the farms of Liberian government officials.  

There were other initiatives of the Liberian government that would have significant impacts on the Bandi people. For example, the government decision to abolished human pawnship in 1930 affected the ability of Bandi chiefs and people to pay their taxes. The abolition of human pawnship was opposed by chiefs and ordinary folks because it posed a threat to one of their main sources of income. Money received from the practice helped chiefs and others pay taxes to the Liberian government. The government’s decision to outlaw pawnship in the interior was prompted by the 1930 reports of the League of Nations Commission headed by Cuthbert Christy. The Commission reported that the pawning of girls and women was no different from slavery.  

Thus, the Liberian government outlawed human pawnship in the interior in 1930, but it allowed the continuation of pawning material things or items for payment of fines. Consequently, the practice of pawning material things to guarantee payment of debts or fines did continue in Bandiland.  

In 1939, the Liberian government also introduced por-lor-tor or a porterage system in the interior that was no different from forced labor. The Porterage system required chiefs to provide people that would take government officials in hammocks or transport food items such as bags of rice and tins of palm oil for these officials from one village to another.

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250 Ibid.
another. The government ordered that "the system of head porterage as presently obtaining at various points in the hinterland shall continue until roads have been constructed in order to facilitate vehicular transport services."\textsuperscript{255} In addition to the porterage system, the government also directed chiefs to provide workers for government projects such as the construction of bridges and roads. The government labor laws of 1949 noted that "all male citizens are liable for compulsory labor for public work projects and any chief who ignores the request of the government to provide labor for public work will be fined or suspended for first instance and removed from office for second instance."\textsuperscript{256}

The Liberian labor system that was introduced into Bandiland in the early twentieth century was a blended form of Bandi slavery and government forced labor services. The labor laws required chiefs to provide workers to meet the required government labor quota for the Firestone Rubber Plantation.\textsuperscript{257} The recruitment of laborers to work on the Firestone Rubber Plantation began in 1926, when the Liberian government signed a concession agreement with the Firestone Rubber Company. Laborers from interior ethnic groups were sent to Firestone because the rubber company was the highest taxpayer to the Liberian government during the 1920s.\textsuperscript{258}

Even though the Bandi did not like the forced labor system, it did bring some benefits to Bandi society. The forced labor system provided Bandi recruits with an effective means of earning money to pay the government-imposed hut taxes. Moreover, Bandi recruits often sent money to their relatives not only to assist in paying taxes, but also to conduct

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{LGD255} LGD, "Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations," Article 35, p. 21.
\bibitem{LGD256} Ibid., Article 29, pp. 20–21.
\bibitem{LGD257} Ibid., Article 29, pp. 20–21.
\bibitem{LGD258} Sawyer, The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia, pp. 249.
\end{thebibliography}
businesses such as buying and selling cash crops like coffee and cocoa.\textsuperscript{259} Additionally, sending Bandi recruits to Firestone helped to expose Bandi people to the wage-earned economy system, while also enabling them to expand their agricultural knowledge and production beyond rice farming. For example, the production of cash crops such as coffee and cocoa became part of the agricultural production of Bandi farmers during the 1920s.\textsuperscript{260} Even though Bandi recruits who worked for Firestone brought some benefits to Bandi society, the recruitment of Bandi farmers as laborers also adversely affected rice production in Bandiland. For example, the recruitment of Bandi farmers to work for the Firestone Plantation in the 1920s and 1930s undermined rice production in Bandiland because the recruits were also the main rice farmers.\textsuperscript{261} This continued into the 1940s when recruitment of Bandi rice farmers for the Firestone Plantation led to a further decline in the production of local rice in Bandiland. That, in turn, resulted in Bandi families’ dependence on imported rice such as parboiled rice that was either sold by Lebanese traders or issued to Bandi workers by Firestone.\textsuperscript{262}

The government forced labor system also encouraged bribery and exploitation among the Bandi and other ethnic groups in the interior. For example, a villager would rather pawn his livestock or allow his daughter to marry a chief, who was the labor agent, than to abandon his rice farm and go to Firestone as a laborer.\textsuperscript{263} The chiefs who recruited


\textsuperscript{260} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{261} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{262} Ibid.

for Firestone on behalf of the government got only half a cent for each day's work by a worker from their village.\footnote{Sawyer, p. 249.} Therefore, chiefs accepted brides because the rewards the government offered to them were insignificant.\footnote{Informant 60, interviewed June 27, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 27, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informants 15, 17, and 72, interviewed June 21, 2008, Kpangehimba Town.}

In addition to its porterage and labor recruitment policies, the Liberian government also introduced the \textit{taa}'-loi or "tartuah" system in the interior in 1940.\footnote{Ibid.} The \textit{taa}'-loi was also a compulsory government service that required each village to make available a number of men that would stay in a village during the day. The \textit{taa}'-loi service was intended to facilitate the porterage system. The men who stayed in a village were required to transport goods and local government officials such as the paramount chief, military officers or the District Commissioner that often toured Bandi villages.\footnote{LGD, "Executive Presidential Correspondence of President Edwin Barclay," (July–November, 1941), p. 11, Box 6, File 15, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.} The men were expected to remain in their assigned village for two to three weeks or until they were replaced by a new group.\footnote{Ibid.} The \textit{taa}'-loi duty did not affect only men. It also affected women. Women were also required to stay in villages to prepare food for expected government officials.\footnote{Ibid.} The town chief required individuals to supply meat, rice, palm oil and other food items for this purpose. However, the practice was characterized by abuses such as heavy fines or beating of villagers for failure to comply with the government orders. The enforcement of the \textit{taa}'-loi caused many young men to move to Monrovia, Firestone and Sierra Leone in the early 1940s and late 1950s. During his tour of Bandiland in 1941, Interior Secretary A. Holder observed that "large towns that once had about
500 huts have now reduced to less than 400 as indicated by broken spots of huts; these people have migrated due to the “tartuah [taa’-loi] service imposed on them.”

The taa’-loi service in Bandiland corrupted the Bandi chiefs because it made it possible for them to promote their material and labor interests at the expense of ordinary Bandi people. It is also reasonable to say that the compulsory labor systems such as porterage and taa’-loi services imposed by the government in the interior were not much different from services such as pawnship and slavery that were outlawed among ethnic groups in the interior. Thus, while the Liberian government declared pawnship and slavery illegal in the interior, porterage, labor recruitment for Firestone and taa’-loi became modified forms of involuntary servitude that were imposed and continued in Bandiland.

The porterage and taa’-loi services continued to be mandatory in Bandiland until the early 1960s, when the northwestern interior was connected with the new network of automobile roads. The construction of motor roads made it easier to transport goods and government officials in Bandiland and other areas of the northwestern interior. The practice of recruiting workers for government projects such as the construction of bridges and roads and making of government farms continued in Bandiland up to the 1960s.

The foregoing analysis illustrates that even though some traditional Bandi economic and social systems, such as blacksmithing, leatherworking, pottery, carving, crafting, domestic slavery and pawnship have declined or were abolished, other aspects of traditional Bandi systems, such as pumai, methods of farming, divisions of labor for adult

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270 Ibid.
men and women, elders and teenagers in rice farming, the belief in honoring spirits of the ancestors before the beginning of the farming season and totemism have continued in Bandi society. In other words, despite the effects of foreign practices, such as the transatlantic slave trade, western education and material culture, Islam and Christianity on traditional Bandi practices, knowledge and material cultures, the Bandi have continued to hold on to aspects of their traditional values. Moreover, while Bandi interests in and accommodation to foreign practices, skills and material systems brought about changes in traditional Bandi systems, continuities were also enhanced in aspects of Bandi social, cultural and material systems because of similarities the traditional Bandi systems had with the newly introduced ones.
CHAPTER 5

ISLAMIZATION OF BANDI SOCIETY AND
BANDI AFRICANIZATION OF ISLAM

This chapter examines how Islamic and Bandi institutional values influenced each other from the late 1890s to 1964. It specifically analyzes how Muslim traders and clerics promoted Islam in Bandiland and how the Bandi shaped Islam to blend with existing traditions. The interactions and blending of Islamic and Bandi social and religious values constitute the central themes of this chapter.

Muslim Traders and the Promotion of Islamic Values in Bandiland

Islam has been characterized as a religion that suited mainly traders in the savanna but was unattractive to farmers of the forest regions because of the belief that Islamic practices such as fasting and visiting Mecca were unsuited to farmers in forest societies. ¹ The Mandingo and Fulani traders and clerics who settled in Bandiland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also had the belief that Islam was not attractive to the Bandi because the Bandi were mainly rice farmers and not attracted to trade. ² However, after the Mandingo and Fulani traders and clerics had lived among the Bandi for years, some Bandi farmers embraced Islam and other Mandingo and Fulani Muslim traders and clerics also embraced the Bandi rice farming culture.

¹Fyfe, “Peoples of the Windward Coast,” p. 162.
The Bandi who accepted Islam sometimes found it difficult to observe the fasting month of Ramadan, which was one of the main practices Islam required of all Muslims.\(^3\) Like other Muslims in Africa, it was also difficult for Bandi Muslims to observe the Islamic practice of making a pilgrimage to the Muslim Holy city of Mecca due to the lack of financial resources to cover the costs associated with such a trip.\(^4\)

Studies have shown that Islam extended to farmers in the forest regions of West Africa mainly through individual merchants or mercantile groups in the nineteenth century.\(^5\) Mandinka and Susu Muslim traders were mainly responsible for promoting Islam in the savanna area of West Africa during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,\(^6\) before the Sokoto Jihads or holy wars of Uthman dan Fodio in the eighteenth-century Hausaland and the Tokolor Jihads of Al-hajji Umar Tall in the nineteenth-century Senegal area affected the savanna region.\(^7\) Studies of Islam in West Africa show that Muslims that settled in the forest region of West Africa easily embraced and adjusted to some of the African traditional values that also existed in Islam.\(^8\) For example, Mandingo, Susu and Fulani Muslim traders embraced African polygynous marriage, divination, making of

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\(^4\)Fyfe, “Peoples of the Windward Coast,” p. 162.  
charms and the belief in the existence of good and evil spirits, because these beliefs and practices also existed in Islam.\textsuperscript{9}

Mandingo and Fulani Muslim traders and clerics introduced Islam into Bandiland during the late 1800s and early 1900s.\textsuperscript{10} Mandingo and Fulani traders established commercial networks in Bandi villages and towns and they used those networks to promote Islam in Bandi society. However, the Bandi who accepted Islam did not completely abandon traditional Bandi beliefs and practices. The Bandi Muslims blended Islamic and traditional Bandi beliefs and practices.\textsuperscript{11} For example, Bandi Muslims used their traditional African and Islamic religious prayers when they officiated at ceremonies such as the naming of a child four days after birth and as rice farmers making offerings to the spirits of the ancestors before the beginning of the farming season.\textsuperscript{12}

The Mandingo and Fulani Muslim traders and clerics that settled in Bandiland in the late nineteenth century are said to have come from areas of the present-day Republic of Guinea and lived in Bandi towns as “strangers.”\textsuperscript{13} They sold items such as ear rings and finger rings, bracelets, and charms as well as \textit{kpengai kpengai sale’} or medicine that was made of herbs, which they claimed would cure maladies such as women’s barrenness.


\textsuperscript{12}Dennis, \textit{The Gbandes}, pp. 93–96.

and men's impotency. Trading among the Mandingo, Fulani and Bandi traders in the late nineteenth century was by barter. Mandingo and Fulani traders exchanged their trade items for local products such as kola nuts, indigo leaves, ivory, cocoa and coffee. As they established commercial networks in Bandi society, Mandingo and Fulani traders also established personal ties with Bandi chiefs and ordinary folks in villages. The Mandingo and Fulani traders that settled in Bandiland in the late nineteenth century were mainly single men and therefore most of them married Bandi women.

By the early 1900s, most of the Fulani traders had resettled mainly in the Kissi towns of Foya in Liberia and Koindu in Sierra Leone, while Mandingo traders settled in Bandi towns mainly in northern and southwestern Bandiland. The Mandingo traders introduced Islam to Volukoh in northern Bandiland as well as to Wanwoma, Hasala and Lukasu in southwestern Bandiland (see Map 3). They introduced Islam in the mentioned areas through the establishment of commercial networks with chiefs and residents of villages and towns. The Bandi who embraced Islam as children of Mandingo and Bandi parentage are known in Bandiland today as the Bandi Muslims.

Bandi Muslims are mainly rice farmers rather than traders. Like other Muslims, Bandi Muslims pray publicly, which is an identifying practice. Bandi Muslims also observe other Islamic beliefs and practices, such as fasting during the month of Ramadan and

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14 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
pilgrimage to Mecca. However, some of the Bandi Muslims sometimes found it difficult to adhere to these Islamic practices. Like other Liberian or African Muslims, the lack of money often made it difficult or impossible for Bandi Muslims to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Moreover, since most Bandi Muslims were rice farmers, the farm work sometimes made it difficult for them to fast during Ramadan, because rice farmers needed to eat and drink while working on their farms in order to be able to work throughout the day.  

Some Bandi Muslims who were involved in farm work started their fast during the second week of Ramadan in order to become part of the celebrations at the end of the fasting month. Bandi-Muslim farmers considered the month of Ramadan to be a severe ordeal, especially when they had to fast and at the same time work on their farms. However, Bandi Muslims who were small traders in large Bandi towns like Kolahun often tried to observe all the days in the fasting month of Ramadan. Bandi Muslims comprise approximately ten percent of the Bandi population and most have remained rice farmers rather than becoming traders.

Even though Mandingo and Fulani traders introduced Islam into Bandiland, the Mende of eastern Sierra Leone also helped to spread Islam in southwestern Bandiland. Recent study shows that approximately one-third of the Mende of eastern Sierra Leone and western Liberia are Muslims, and about 10,000 of them live in close proximity to the

20 Ibid.
Bandi of Lukasu and Hasala in southwestern Bandiland (see Map 5). Like the Bandi Muslims, the Mende Muslims also practice an Islam that is blended with Mende traditions. The presence of a considerable Islamized Mende population in eastern Sierra Leone and western Liberia encouraged earlier Mandingo traders to settle in southwestern Bandiland in the late nineteenth century. These Mandingo traders founded towns such as Popalahun

Map 5: Lukasu Bandi and Towns


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and Kamatahun, which became important market centers in southwestern Bandiland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\(^\text{25}\)

The establishment of market towns in Bandiland enabled Mandingo traders to simultaneously expand their commercial networks and to promote Islamic values in Bandi society.\(^\text{26}\) These market towns became centers for exchange of commodities as well as Islamic and traditional Bandi social and cultural values during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\(^\text{27}\) For example, the Mandingo traders sold Islamic talismans, amulets, silver jewelry and introduced Islamic practices such as Ramadan and prayers to Bandi traders, while the Bandi also sold rice, palm oil, paper, and herbs and introduced traditional religious rituals such as making offerings to spirits of the ancestors and totems to Mandingo traders. Thus, while commercial interests seemed to have brought Mandingo and Bandi traders together in market towns in Bandiland, their relationships were also characterized by accommodations of Islamic and traditional Bandi cultural values.\(^\text{28}\) Moreover, the commercial activities of the Mandingo in Bandiland enable Bandi Chiefs and their people to acquire foreign goods from Mandingo traders who settled in their villages and towns.\(^\text{29}\)

From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, Mandingo traders used commercial goods such as ear rings, finger rings, medicinal herbs, \textit{papa} or wrapper and leather sandals to attract Bandi men and women to Islam. The Mandingo traders accepted

\(^{26}\)Ibid; also, see T. J. Alldrige, "Wanderings in the Hinterland of Sierra Leone," p. 131.
\(^{27}\)W. Penn Handerwerker, p. 4.
kola nuts, ivory, indigo and rice in exchange from their local Bandi hosts. However, it was a common practice for a Bandi chief to show hospitality to a Mandingo trader under the false pretext of embracing Islam in order to have access to credit opportunities in Mandingo goods. Thus, many Bandi chiefs that claimed to be Muslims continued to maintain their traditional Bandi values such as using traditional herbs to treat diseases and making offerings to spirits of the ancestors and totems. Some Bandi claimed to be Muslims because of the material benefits they gained from Mandingo traders and not because they were attracted to Islam. Mandingo traders often gave material gifts such as mirrors, pipes, tea kettles and leather hats to chiefs and ordinary Bandi who showed willingness to accept Islam in order to strengthen personal ties with them. In addition, Mandingo traders also gave gifts to the head wives of chiefs in order to win their support.

Bandi chiefs who allowed Mandingo traders to settle in their towns during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also became attracted to Islam. Nevertheless, the chiefs also maintained traditional Bandi religious practices because the chiefs, elders and zoes are considered the custodians of traditional values in Bandi society. Relationships between the Bandi chiefs and Mandingo traders during the late nineteenth century were centered on trade because the latter were interested in products such as kola, ivory and indigo in exchange for commodities they brought to Bandiland. The Mandingo traders rarely accepted kolui, or iron bars, which had been the dominant medium of exchange in Bandiland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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30 Ibid.
The Mandingo traders preferred kola and indigo instead of iron bars because these tropical products were important for peoples in the savanna region who ate kola nuts and used kola and indigo to dye cotton products. Kola also served as a source of caffeine and glucose that provided energy for traders and travelers in the savanna region. The interests of Mandingo traders in kola during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided an opportunity for the Bandi to gather and prepare kola nuts for export. Kola became the leading export commodity from northern and southwestern Bandiland until the 1960s.

The Bandi used kola not only for trading purposes, but also to relieve hunger and to keep awake. They also gave kola to visitors to show hospitality. Moreover, diviners and zoes used kola by tossing it and explaining the actions to foretell the future or help people make important decisions regarding issues relating to families and communities. The values associated with kola were among the main reasons why Bandi people often planted kola trees around towns and villages. Despite a decline in the Mandingo traders' demand for kola in the 1960s, traditional uses for kola among the Bandi persisted. Kola was also valuable in Bandi society because the presence of kola trees in many areas of Bandiland signified not only that towns or villages once existed there, but also Bandi elders often determined the history of a town or village based on how long the kola trees

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had existed in that area.\textsuperscript{38} Although the interests of Mandingo settlers in the kola trade in Bandiland declined after most of them became rice farmers by the 1960s, kola remained an important commodity in Bandiland because of its social and religious significance.\textsuperscript{39} The Mandingo that settled in Bandiland and married Bandi women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries abandoned the kola trade and became rice farmers.\textsuperscript{40}

From the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, Mandingo traders and clerics settled and have become influential in northern and southwestern Bandiland. Many of them married Bandi women and some became chiefs in towns such as Popalahun, Massambolahun, Kamatahun, Porlorwu, Sosomoilahun and Nyandemoilahun, where they established Mosques and Koranic schools.\textsuperscript{41} Although they married Bandi women and practiced rice farming, the Mandingo clerics and chiefs in these towns maintained Muslim dress codes and wore Muslim garments during prayers.\textsuperscript{42}

The practice of non-Muslim Bandi women embracing Islam through their Muslim husbands began when Mandingo Muslim traders and clerics first settled in Bandiland in the late nineteenth century. Mandingo traders that married Bandi women often made their wives accept Islam.\textsuperscript{43} Moreover, Bandi chiefs and other notables established marriage alliances with Mandingo traders by forcing their daughters to marry them in order to gain


\textsuperscript{39}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40}Informants 8 and 56, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town; Informant 29, interviewed June 19, 2008, Bondowalahun Town.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid

\textsuperscript{43}Informant 82, interviewed June 17, 2008, Mawuyansu Town; Informant 9, interviewed June 20, 2008, Popalahun Town; Informant 32, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bondowalahun Town.
material benefits. Furthermore, as noted later in this chapter, the Mandingoes also enhanced their influence in towns by becoming spiritual guardians for chiefs or officiating at traditional ceremonies such as the naming of Bandi children. They also participated in religious ceremonies such as making offerings to the spirits of ancestors to protect the towns against misfortune and blessing chickens or goats before they were slaughtered during funeral services. These activities enabled the Mandingoes to blend Islamic and traditional religious values in their host communities. By participating in traditional Bandi ceremonies such as funeral services and the naming of children, the Mandingo clerics were able to use such occasions to promote Islamic and traditional Bandi religions through the offering of prayers that the Bandi believed had power to ward off misfortune or witchcraft.

Islamic influence has been dominant in four of the six subdivisions of Bandiland, but as noted, only about ten percent of Bandi are Muslims. Bandi Muslims have lived mainly in the towns of Hasala, Lukasu, Wanwoma and Volukoha, while Islamic influence has not been strong in Tahamba and most of the Hembe areas of Bandiland. Wanwoma has two large towns that are dominated by Islamic influence. These towns are Massambolahun and Sosomoilahun. Even though Massambolahun was established by the Bandi, the town is today dominated demographically, politically, economically and religiously by Bandi Muslims. Most of the Bandi who did not want to become Muslims moved out

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of Massambolahun and established their own town called Fangoda. Sosomoilahun, on the other hand, was established by a Susu Muslim cleric in the 1800s, but the town is dominated today by Bandi rather than Susu Muslims.

By the early twentieth century, some Bandi Muslims became prominent Muslim clerics in Bandi society. Many of the Bandi Muslim clerics became wealthy because they had many Muslim students who stayed with them to learn the Koran. These Muslim students established large rice farms as well as coffee and cocoa plantations for their Muslim cleric masters. Some of the Bandi Muslim clerics used their material resources to expand their social status by marrying many Bandi women and attracting more dependents. The polygynous practices in the traditional Bandi marriage system encouraged Bandi Muslim clerics to maintain the practice of polygynous marriage in their own Islamic marriage system. In addition to marrying many wives, some Bandi Muslims used their material and financial resources to work their way into political leadership in Bandiland. For example, Fofi Jorkor Konneh of Massambolahun and Favander Mollay of Sosomoilahun were two Bandi Muslims who became chiefs for the Bandi of Wanwoma during the early twentieth century. The two Bandi Muslim clerics had Bandi wives and used their wealth from rice farming, coffee and cocoa plantations and trade to become politically influential in the broader Bandi society.

The rise to prominence of Bandi Muslim clerics such as Mollay of Sosomoilahun and Fofi Konneh was also made possible through providing religious help to Bandi men.

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and women who in turn gave them money and materials. Mollay was appointed in 1913 as chief of the Bandi of Wanwoma by the administration of President Daniel E. Howard (1912-1920). He was the first descendant of Mandingo settlers in Bandiland to become a chief among the Bandi people. However, his old age apparently made him unable to effectively carry out his responsibility as chief of the Bandi in Wanwoma. This led to his replacement in the same year by another Mandingo descendant, Fofi Jorkor Konneh of Massambolahun.

The rise of Fofi and Mollay to political leadership in the Wanwoma area of Bandiland was not principally because they were Muslims, but because of their control of large human and material resources that helped to enhance their social status in Bandiland. While serving as chief of the Bandi of Wanwoma, Fofi was appointed representative of the Liberian government in Bandiland after the death of Chief Mambulu Yamma in 1913. In addition to his political appointments, Chief Fofi Konneh was also instrumental in making it possible for the Order of the Holy Cross missionaries to establish the first Christian Church in Bandiland in 1922. Even though they were Muslims, Fofi and Mollay were among the first people in Bandiland to allow some of their children to attend the Christian schools in Bolahun. Some of their children also became Christians. Chiefs Fofi and Mollay told the missionaries that “they wanted their children to learn the ‘white man book’ and adopt new ways of life, since they were now too old to adopt any new ways

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54 Rt. Rev. Campbell, Within the Green Wall, p. 40.
brought by the [white] Fathers.” 56 One of Mollay’s sons was given the name Herbert Munyah. He later became a Christian evangelist in the Muslim-dominated town of Sosomoilahun. 57 Even though Mollay remained a Muslim and preserved aspects of Islamic and traditional Bandi values such as polygyny and the belief in the use of charms to ward off evil spirits, Mollay’s son not only became a Christian but also renounced the practices of polygyny and the use of traditional medicine. 58

The actions of Fofi and Mollay to provide land for the OHC missionaries to establish the first Christian Church in Bandiland and also to become the first Muslim clerics to allow their children to become Christians illustrate that they were more open minded than leaders elsewhere who participated in the traditional religious rivalry between Muslims and Christians. Moreover, the desire of the children of these Bandi Muslim leaders to become Christians meant that younger generations of Bandi Muslims who embraced western education were less inclined to maintain the beliefs and practices of their Muslim fathers and forefathers. Although the Bandi Muslim clerics such as Fofi and Mollay refused to become Christians, they did not force their children to maintain their own Islamic faith. However, they encouraged their children to respect and maintain the traditional Bandi practices such as Poro and Sande. 59 Bandi Muslim children who embraced Christianity also failed to commit to Islamic beliefs and practices such as non-consumption of alcohol, fasting during Ramadan, visiting Mecca, not committing adultery and fornication, and attending daily prayers in the Mosque. While Christian missionaries

56 Quoted in The Hinterland (June, 1928), p. 2, AEC, Box 2729, Austin, Texas.  
57 Ibid.  
58 Ibid.  
did not support the practices of drinking alcohol, adultery and fornication, the unwillingness of Bandi Muslims’ children who became Christians to commit themselves to some of the Islamic practices was partly attributed to adoption of western values such as individual rights and freedom that were promoted by Christianity and western education that came to Bandiland during the early twentieth century.  

As noted, Islamic and traditional Bandi beliefs and practices were blended in Bandiland. For example, Islam prohibited Muslims from being initiated into the Poro school. However, a significant number of Bandi Muslims did receive Poro education. Moreover, the traditional Bandi practice of making offerings to the spirits of their ancestors continued to be respected among Bandi Muslims, even though such a practice is said to be against Islamic values. Thus, Bandi Muslims and non-Muslim Bandi have Africanized Islam through the blending of Islamic and traditional Bandi values. Furthermore, continuous intermarriage among Muslim and non-Muslim Bandi encouraged accommodations of Islamic and traditional practices in Bandi society. Islamic practices have continued to decline in Bandiland because of the decline in the settlement of new Mandingo-Muslim immigrants from Guinea to Bandiland since the 1960s. The decline in the settlement of Mandingo in Bandiland has been attributed not only to the decline in the kola and indigo trades, but also Bandi chiefs and ordinary Bandi no longer want to invite Mandingo Muslim clerics to settle in their villages as spiritual guardians. Moreover, the interests of the younger generation of Bandi men and women in western and Christian values have undermined the possibility of maintaining values associated with Islamic and Bandi traditions. However, one aspect of Islamic practices that has persisted among Bandi

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
Muslims has been the naming of children in accordance with Islamic practice. For example, Bandi Muslims still give Muslim names such as Mohammed, Alhaji, Sheriff, Abu, Ibrahim, Musa, Konneh, Dukuly, Fatima and Haja to their children, even though some of the children have become Christians and are westernized. \(^{62}\) Like other Liberian Muslims, Bandi Muslims who acquired western education also rejected Islamic and traditional Bandi practices such as polygyny, even though some maintain concubines. \(^{63}\)

Although trade was one of the major factors that promoted Islam among the Bandi, the main economic activity in Bandiland remained rice farming. Mandingo and Fulani Muslim traders introduced Islam in Bandiland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but these traders also embraced the Bandi rice farming culture after settling in Bandiland. Mandingo Muslim traders promoted Islam in Bandi society through establishing trade and marriage relationships with chiefs and other notable Bandi families. Bandi men and women who embraced Islam did not become traders, but continued to be rice farmers. Moreover, they maintained many aspects of Bandi cultural values despite their acceptance of Islam. Bandi Muslims and non-Muslim Bandi shared common beliefs in polygynous marriage and the use of Islamic and traditional Bandi charms. They also shared a belief in the use of charms that are assumed to have magical power for protection against evil spirits. Thus, polygynous marriage, dowry payments for brides and the use of charms were among Islamic practices that attracted Bandi to Islam because these practices also existed in traditional Bandi society. \(^{64}\)

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\(^{62}\) Ibid.


\(^{64}\) Informants 30 and 31, interviewed June 16, 2008, Kolahun Kolba City; Informant 69, interviewed June 15, 2008, Lehuma Town.
The Accommodation of Islamic and Traditional Bandi Marriage Systems

The traditional marriage system in Bandi society was based on polygynous marriage and every groom was required to give a dowry to his bride’s family before marriage. Islamic marriage systems also allowed polygynous marriage and the payment of a dowry to a bride’s family. The similarity between Islamic and traditional Bandi marriage systems with regard to polygynous marriages and dowry payments encouraged some Bandi chiefs and elders to accept Islam. While Bandi Muslims believed that Islam allowed polygynous marriages in order for a man to have many wives and thus to avoid adultery and fornication, the Bandi believed that polygynous marriages allowed a man to have many wives and children in order to increase the labor force in his household and enhance his social and material status. Among Bandi Muslims and traditionalists, a monogamous marriage was often considered to be an indication of a man’s poverty and low social status.

In the traditional Bandi marriage system, a married woman who was unable to conceive children for her husband could allow her younger sister to marry her husband in order to have children for him. Bandi Muslim women maintained this tradition of allowing their younger sisters to marry their Muslim husbands. Mandingo Muslim traders that settled in Bandiland in the late nineteenth century married many Bandi women using traditional Bandi marriage practices. By the early 1900s, Mandingo men had married many women from notable Bandi families, but Mandingo men did not allow Mandingo

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66Dennis, *Gbandes*, p. 89.
68Ibid.
women to marry non-Muslim Bandi men.\textsuperscript{69} According to Islamic tradition, Muslim women were not allowed to marry non-Muslim men because of the belief that children born out of such a union would not embrace Islam.\textsuperscript{70} Non-Muslim Bandi men resented this practice of Mandingo women not being allowed to marry them because they were not Muslims. Non-Muslim Bandi men referred to such a practice as Mandingo discrimination against non-Muslim Bandi.\textsuperscript{71}

Not all Mandingoes came to Bandiland as traders and clerics. Some Mandingoes came to Bandiland in the early 1960s in search of work such as brushing bush for rice farms or cocoa and coffee plantations.\textsuperscript{72} Although some of the Mandingoes returned to their homes after they had worked and received pay from Bandi farmers, other Mandingo workers established themselves in villages and married Bandi women.\textsuperscript{73} As noted, since the main economic activity in Bandi society was rice farming, Mandingo traders, clerics and workers who settled in Bandiland and married Bandi women also became rice farmers. The Mandingo traders, clerics and workers who became farmers also embraced traditional Bandi values such as making charms and giving offerings to the spirits of the ancestors.\textsuperscript{74} Mandingo men who married Bandi women made their wives become Muslims, but some of their children became Christians after Christianity was introduced in Bandiland in 1922.\textsuperscript{75}

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\textsuperscript{69}Judith Perani and Patricia O'Connell, “Traditional Bandi Weaving,” p. 2.
\textsuperscript{71}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73}Rt. Rev. Robert E. Campbell, \textit{Within the Green Wall}, p. 225.
\textsuperscript{74}Informants 30 and 31, interviewed June 16, 2008, Kolahun Kolba City; Informant 69, interviewed June 15, 2008, Lehuma Town.
\textsuperscript{75}Rt. Rev. Campbell, \textit{Within the Green Wall}, p. 172.
Another traditional Bandi marriage practice that was similar to marriage practice in Islam was the payment of a dowry. In Bandi and Islamic marriages, a groom is required to pay a dowry for a bride. However, in the Islamic marriage system, the Muslim groom and his parents were required to pay the dowry to the bride herself. In the Bandi marriage system, the groom and parents were required to pay the dowry to the bride’s parents. Bandi who became Muslims maintained the traditional Bandi practice rather than adopt the Islamic practice of dowry payment. According to Bandi tradition, the dowry should be paid to the bride’s parents as a way that the groom demonstrates not only his respect for them but also as an acknowledgement of their parental right to their daughter. The practice of giving a dowry for a bride has continued among Bandi that live in villages and towns outside the dominant influence of the Liberian government and Christianity.

In spite of the similarities between Islamic and traditional Bandi marriage systems, there were also differences with respect to how they responded to marital offenses. For example, while adultery and fornication were not socially sanctioned in the traditional Bandi marriage system, there were no traditional laws that specified punishments for such marital offenses. On the other hand, not only did the Islamic marriage system sanction adultery and fornication, there were also Islamic laws that specified punishments for such marital offenses. However, while Islam specified punishments such as public humilia-

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78 Informants 10 and 81, interviewed June 6, 2008, Massambolahun Town; Informants 8 and 56, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid, pp. 72–73.
tion or stoning to death of individuals that committed adultery and fornication, the Bandi Muslims and other Muslims in West Africa have not implemented these Islamic laws. In addition to polygynous marriage and dowry payments, Islamic and Bandi traditions allowed the practice of an arranged marriage system, which allowed parents to choose a man for their daughter to marry. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mandingo traders and clerics married daughters of Bandi chiefs and other notable Bandi families through arranged marriages. The practice of arranged marriages began to decline in Bandi society after Christian missionaries and the Liberian government denounced the practice during the early twentieth century. The Christian missionaries that settled in Bandiland in 1922 condemned the arranged marriage practices among the Bandi and encouraged Bandi girls attending the mission schools to practice monogamy. However, in spite of the efforts of the missionaries and the Liberian government to end arranged and polygynous marriage practices among the Bandi under the marriage laws of 1949, the practices have only declined rather than eradicated from Bandi society.

Islam was attractive to traditional Bandi chiefs and elders because many of the beliefs and practices that existed in Bandi tradition also existed in Islam. The amalgamation of Islamic and traditional Bandi marriage systems such as polygynous and arranged marriages as well as dowry payments and giving gifts to family members of a bride during wedding ceremonies made Islam attractive to traditional Bandi men. However, Bandi

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81 Pade Badru, p. 74.
82 Informants 10 and 81, interviewed June 6, 2008, Massambolahun Town; Informants 8 and 56, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town.
83 Ibid.
Muslims practiced a brand of Islam that was influenced in many ways by aspects of traditional Bandi values.\(^\text{85}\)

**Muslim Clerics and Traditional Bandi Beliefs**

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mandingo and Fulani Muslim clerics settled in Bandiland.\(^\text{86}\) Bandi chiefs invited these Muslim clerics or molly-wen-te-ne to settle in towns and villages to serve both as spiritual advisers and predictors of the future. The clerics also made charms that the chiefs believed would help them become victorious when they went to war over land or for supremacy against neighboring chiefs.\(^\text{87}\) These Muslim clerics, who settled mainly in towns in the Hasala, Lukasu, Wanwoma and Volukoha areas of Bandiland, were also receptive to aspects of traditional Bandi beliefs and practices.\(^\text{88}\)

The Muslim clerics were respected in Bandiland because they demonstrated their ability to read the Koran and also claimed to have sale' or medicine that would protect people against evil spirits and also heal sicknesses.\(^\text{89}\) Even though Bandi chiefs believed that there were traditional Bandi zoes and specialists that could make sale' that would work like the Islamic medicines, the Bandi chiefs also wanted sale' made by the Muslim clerics in order to reinforce the ones that were made by the Bandi zoes and specialists.

\(^{85}\)Ibid.

\(^{86}\)Informant 31, interviewed June 16, 2008, Kolahun Kolba City; Informants 10 and 81, interviewed June 6, 2008, Massambolahun Town; Informants 8 and 56, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town.

\(^{87}\)Informant 81, interviewed June 6, 2008, Massambolahun Town; Informants 30 and 31, interviewed June 16, 2008, Kolahun Kolba City; Informant 31, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town.


\(^{89}\)Informant 31, interviewed June 16, 2008, Kolahun Kolba City; Informants 10 and 81, interviewed June 6, 2008, Massambolahun Town; Informants 8 and 56, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town.
Like the Muslims, the Bandi also believed in the existence of both good and evil spirits. On account of their common belief in the existence of evil spirits and witchcraft, the need for self-preservation led them to take certain preventative measures by procuring protective charms. Therefore, Bandi chiefs and their people used both Islamic and traditional Bandi *sale* to protect themselves against witchcraft as well as to protect their farms, families, towns and communities in times of war. Bandi chiefs also used Islamic herbal charms and Koranic writings to reinforce traditional Bandi herbal medicine to ward off evil spirits and predict the future.

While the use of herbal charms was common among the Bandi before the arrival of Muslim clerics in Bandiland in the 1890s, the use of Islamic and traditional charms increased in Bandi society during the Samori Toure and French war from 1882–1898. The French military campaign against Samori Toure and his Sofa warriors, known by the Bandi as the *mollay-koi* or Muslim War, posed threats to Bandi chiefs in northern Bandiland. The presence of large numbers of sofa warriors in Kpandemai in Lomaland created pandemonium among Bandi chiefs, who feared that the war would reach their towns and villages. The atmosphere of fear and anxiety that existed among Loma and Bandi chiefs during the Samadu or Samori Toure War of 1898 was later described by Captain Braithwaite Wallis during his tour of northwestern Liberia in 1908:

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90 Ibid.
On the following day we arrived at Jenneh, in the Gorahun [now Lukasu] chiefdom of Bande country. Here the paramount chief resides, and by him we were well received. He complained bitterly about the war, with which, he stated, his towns and people were constantly being threatened. He spoke about the large war-town of Pandeme [Kpademai], in Bunde country, which, he said, harboured thousands of fighting men known as Sofas. The place is a terror to the surrounding country, and is believed by the natives to be impregnable. It is supposed to be guarded by spirits, and to possess a very powerful devil, who always renders victory assured, either in attacks or defenses, to the warlike inhabitants.\(^{94}\)

The Sofa warriors not only occupied Kpandemai, but they also raided the Bandi and Kissi that lived south of Lomaland. In order for the Sofa warriors not to raid and destroy their towns and to divert the *mollay-koi* or Muslim war reaching their areas, some Bandi chiefs invited Mandingo Muslim clerics to settle in their towns and make medicine for protection against the war.\(^{95}\) The French campaign against Samori Toure and his warriors in the Guinea Highlands in 1882 forced Mandingo clerics to migrate toward Liberia and some of these clerics settled in Bandiland. Like their commercial counterparts, the Mandingo and Fulani Muslim clerics also settled in Bandiland as individuals and married Bandi women. Some Bandi chiefs forced their daughters to marry Muslim clerics as incentive for these clerics to settle in their towns and serve as spiritual advisers.\(^{96}\)

Some Bandi chiefs and their people were attracted to Islam as a result of spiritual and other services they received from Muslim clerics that lived in their towns. For example, chiefs and villagers who embraced Islam often benefited from spiritual counsel and received material support from Muslim clerics.\(^{97}\) Bandi chiefs who benefited from the

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\(^{94}\)Ibid.


\(^{97}\)Ibid.
services of a Muslim cleric often sent one of their sons to live with the cleric as a student. Before the Liberian government and Christian missionaries established schools in Bandiland in the early twentieth century, Muslim clerics had introduced Islamic schools that provided Koranic education in towns such as Nyandemoilahun in Volukoha, Popalahun and Kamatahun in Hasala as well as Massambolahun and Sosomoilahun in Wanwoma sections of Bandiland.  

The introduction of Islam among the Bandi enabled Bandi Muslims to learn some basic Islamic skills such as learning to read the Koran and producing charms from verses of the Koran. Bandi Muslims learned how to make Islamic charms and talisman from Mandingo Muslim clerics. The ability of some Bandi Muslims to read the Koran helped to reinforce their belief that they had the power to prepare Islamic charms from the Koran that could protect people and predict the future. Although they learned passages of the Koran in Arabic and knew how to make Islamic charms, Bandi Muslims mainly spoke Bandi rather than the Arabic language, which illustrates continuity in traditional Bandi values.

The Mandingo and Bandi Muslim clerics made Islamic charms by selecting Koranic verses, which were written on papers; the papers were wrapped in leather, which chiefs, warriors or ordinary people wore on their waists for everyday protection. Even though chiefs and ordinary Bandi continued to use traditional charms made by Poro and Sande zoes and other traditional specialists for protection, they also used Islamic charms because of the belief that the Islamic and traditional charms would protect them. The use

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99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
of Islamic and traditional charms by chiefs and ordinary Bandi was an illustration of accommodations of Islamic and traditional values in Bandi society. Bandi Muslims believed that Islamic charms made from Koranic verses were more powerful than traditional charms that were made from herbs, but they did not abandon the use of traditional charms. The chiefs and ordinary Bandi continued to depend on the use of Islamic and traditional charms for their protection, and for prediction and interpretation of mysterious dreams.\(^{102}\)

In southwestern Bandiland, Muslim clerics became famous for their ability to read the Koran in the Arabic language, interpret dreams and prepare charms from Koranic verses.\(^{103}\) Islamic charms were used not only by Bandi Muslims, chiefs and ordinary Bandi, but they were also used by Bandi politicians who believed that the use of Islamic charms would enhance their political power. Moreover, Bandi farmers held the belief that the use of Islamic charms would make their farms yield more crops, while traditional warriors also assumed that the use of Islamic charms would empower them militarily. During the 1950s and 1960s, Bandi students used *nesi* or liquid charms prepared from Koranic verses, because of the belief that the *nesi* would enhance their ability to secure better grades in school. The belief that the use of Islamic charms would enhance their success in every aspect of their activities attracted chiefs and ordinary Bandi to Islam, even though they still maintained the use of traditional charms. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Muslim clerics who were famous for producing what was believed to be

\(^{102}\)Ibid.

powerful magical charms were given wives and land by Bandi chiefs so that these “holy men” would settle in their towns as spiritual advisers.\textsuperscript{104}

Some Muslim clerics also claimed to have the power to make charms from herbs that would help a barren woman to have children. Thus, Bandi women that were barren became clients of these Muslim clerics and hoped that by using the herbs they would be able to have children. On the other hand, some Bandi women married these Muslim clerics because of the belief that being married to these clerics and using the medicinal herbs would make the medicine drive away the evil spirits that had made them unable to have children. Bandi women who married Muslim clerics also promoted Islam by encouraging young Bandi women to marry their Muslim husbands, and the women who married these Muslim men often embraced Islam.\textsuperscript{105}

Muslim clerics used their knowledge of the Koran and the spiritual services they rendered to people to gain influence and accumulate resources such as rice, palm oil, cotton cloth and money from their clients. Such resources were used to establish marriage alliances with local notable Bandi families, which helped to enhance the social prestige of the Muslim clerics in Bandi society. However, the main source of respect for Muslim clerics in Bandi society was their spiritual services, which they provided to both the chiefs and ordinary Bandi.\textsuperscript{106}

Until the establishment of western schools in Bandiland in the 1920s and 1930s, Islamic schools provided the only means of formal education in Bandiland. The ability to

\textsuperscript{104}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{105}Ibid.

read the Koran in Arabic made chiefs and ordinary Bandi respect Bandi Muslim clerics, who were often referred to as *mollywalai* or big Muslims.\textsuperscript{107} The title *mollywalai* was respected in Bandi society because it was associated with Muslim clerics who were known to have magical power to produce both Islamic and traditional charms and had the ability to predict the future.\textsuperscript{108} As noted earlier, even though there were traditional Bandi diviners and specialists who were believed to have powers to make charms and predict the future, the use of the Koran by the *mollywalai* to make charms and predict the future was an example of how Islamic and traditional values accommodated and reinforced each other in Bandi society.\textsuperscript{109}

During the early 1900s, prominent *mollywalai* that lived in Bandi society included Fofi Jorkor Konneh of Massambolahun, Favander Mollay of Sosomoilahun, Mamadee Dukuly of Pasolahun, Mollaywala Sirleaf Satu of Kamatuhun, Ahalji Mohammand Kanneh of Kolahun and Jusu Dunor of Popalahun.\textsuperscript{110} Mamadee Dukuly of Pasolahun was known in southwestern Bandiland for charms and amulets that he made for Bandi politicians, educators and students to help them succeed in their work. *Mollywalai* Dukuly also made charms from the Koran and traditional herbs that would help fulfill prayer wishes for farmers who wanted their farms to produce more rice.\textsuperscript{111}

From the 1940s to the early 1960s, it was common for Bandi chiefs who wanted to remain in power or win chieftaincy elections to go to *mollywalai* to prepare sale 'or

\textsuperscript{107}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111}Ibid.
medicine that would help them succeed.\textsuperscript{112} The medicine \textit{mollywalai} often made for students who wanted to perform brilliantly in school or get a scholarship to further their education was called \textit{nesi}, a magical charm or potion.\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Mollywalai} Dukuly was also known for making charms for men and women with illnesses such as impotency and barrenness. The charms Dukuly and other \textit{mollywalai} produced were often a mixture of Koranic verses and traditional herbs, which were used by their clients that included both Bandi Muslims and non-Muslim Bandi.\textsuperscript{114}

Favander Mollay was another famous Bandi Muslim cleric that lived in the town of Sosomoilahun in the Wanwoma area of Bandiland during the early twentieth century. As noted, Sosomoilahun (\textit{Soso-mollay-lahun} in Bandi language) was a Muslim town that was established by a Susu Muslim man who migrated from an area of the present-day Republic of Guinea and settled in the Wanwoma area of Bandiland in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{115} As a Muslim cleric, this Susu Muslim is said to have provided spiritual services to a prominent Bandi chief called Momo Hena of Nyokolitahun in Wanwoma.\textsuperscript{116} This Susu Muslim cleric also became a mentor to Favander Mollay, who also became famous not only as a Muslim cleric in Sosomoilahun, but he also became chief of the Bandi of Wanwoma section of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{112}Informant 9, interviewed June 20, 2008, Popalahun Town; Informant 32, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bondowalahun Town.
  \item \textsuperscript{113}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{114}Informant 78, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town; Informant 9, interviewed June 20, 2008, Popalahun Town.
  \item \textsuperscript{114}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{115}Informant 9, interviewed June 20, 2008, Popalahun Town; Informant 32, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bondowalahun Town.
  \item \textsuperscript{116}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Bandiland in 1913. Sosomoilahun became one of the towns that was known for Islamic education before Christianity was introduced into Bandiland in the early 1920s.

Besides Favander Mollay, another famous Bandi Muslim cleric was mollaywalai Sirleaf Satu, who lived in Kamatahun in southwestern Bandiland in the early 1900s. Mollaywalai Sirleaf Satu was known to have provided spiritual services for the legendary Bandi Chief Hagbe Falla, otherwise known as Chief Kalee of Kamatahun. Chief Kalee was one of two Bandi chiefs that aided the Liberian government in establishing its authority in Bandiland in 1907. While their Islamic knowledge and the spiritual advice they provided aided the spread of Islamic values in southwestern Bandiland, Muslim clerics such as Dukuly, Satu, Fofi, Mollay and Dunor also respected and maintained traditional Bandi values such as the Poro, Sande and the use of traditional herbs. Although they maintained Islamic practices (such as prayers in the Mosque), observed the month of Ramadan, and wore Muslim attire, these Bandi Muslims did not renounce traditional Bandi practices such as Poro and Sande schools but rather blended Islamic and traditional Bandi values.

In spite of their acceptance of the Poro, Sande and other traditional Bandi values, the Bandi Muslim clerics rejected the hosting of a Poro school in towns where Bandi and non-Bandi Muslims were in the majority. The Muslim clerics considered themselves as

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118 Ibid.


120 Ibid, pp. 34–35.

custodians of Islam, which prohibited Muslims from becoming members of non-Islamic societies.\textsuperscript{122} Bandi Muslim leaders, such as Amah Kamara and Jusu Dunor of Popalahun and Mamadee Dukuly of Pasolahun in southwestern Bandiland, refused to host a Poro school in their towns because the residents of these towns were mainly Muslims.\textsuperscript{123} Despite their refusal to host the Poro school in their towns, Bandi Muslim leaders such as Kamara, Dunor and Dukuly did not reject the idea of their children attending the Poro school in other towns in Bandiland.\textsuperscript{124}

Muslim clerics that provided spiritual services in Bandi society were paid in cash, but they also received livestock such as goats or cows as well as labor. As noted, Muslim clerics used their financial and material resources not only to acquire political titles and social positions, but also to enhance their polygynous marriages. For example, Fofi Jorkor Konneh and Jusu Dunor became famous for their material wealth in Bandiland and they also used their wealth and influence to gain favor from the Liberia government. As one of the Bandi Muslim clerics that had many dependents and possessed large material resources in Bandiland in the early twentieth century, Fofi Jorkor Konneh often extended hospitality to the officials of the Liberian government that visited Bandiland. He was subsequently appointed chief of the Bandi of Wanwoma in 1913. Another Bandi Muslim leader, Jusu Dunor, was appointed Paramount Chief of Bandi Chiefdom during the administration of President Edwin Barclay (1930–1944). Dunor was subsequently selected to serve in the Liberian House of Representatives for Kolahun District, which consisted of Bandi, Mende and Kissi chiefdoms, during the administration of President William V. S. Tubman (1944–

\textsuperscript{122}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123}Informant 78, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town; Informant 9, interviewed June 20, 2008, Popalahun Town; Informant 32, interviewed June 20, 2008, Bondowalahun Town.
\textsuperscript{124}Ibid.
1971). Fofi and Dunor portrayed themselves as Bandi chiefs rather than Muslim chiefs and the Liberian government also referred to them as Bandi chiefs.

Although Islam was their religion, Bandi Muslim clerics were also influenced by traditional Bandi beliefs and practices as illustrated by their participation in traditional Bandi beliefs and practices. For example, they performed Islamic prayers before they would kill an animal during burial ceremonies, but they also maintained the traditional Bandi practices of making offerings to the spirits of their ancestors and honoring the traditional te’-ai-ngie or totemic laws of their family. Bandi Muslims maintained traditional Bandi laws that prohibited a family member from touching or eating a plant or an animal that was identified with the spirits of their ancestors.

As noted, many Islamic and traditional Bandi practices were compatible. These practices included polygynous marriage, the extended family system, making charms for protection, and the belief in the existence of good and evil spirits. The common beliefs and practices in Islam and traditional Bandi systems aided the Africanization of Islam in Bandiland and Islamization of Bandi society. One specific example of a common practice in Islamic and Bandi tradition was the making of charms for protective purposes. The parallel practices of Muslim clerics producing charms for protection and serving as spiritual advisers and the traditional Bandi practices of traditional Bandi diviners and zoes

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125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
producing charms and serving as spiritual advisers served to promote Islam but also enhance continuity in traditional values in Bandi society.131

Most Bandi Muslims, including the clerics, were not very knowledgeable in reading and writing the Arabic language and therefore they were not well versed in reading the Koran, which was written in Arabic. Bandi Muslim clerics that had acquired some level of Koranic education were the ones that often prepared Islamic charms and often officiated during Islamic and traditional Bandi religious ceremonies in Bandi society. Thus, the brand of Islam practiced in Bandiland has been one that involved accommodations to both Islamic and traditional Bandi values. Bandi Muslim clerics distinguished themselves from ordinary Bandi Muslims during prayers by wearing Islamic garments and turbans or headdresses. While attending Islamic prayers was a manifestation of their acceptance of Islamic values, Bandi Muslims also showed their preservation of traditional Bandi values by their participation in traditional Bandi religious ceremonies such as honoring the spirits of the ancestors in accordance with traditional Bandi religious beliefs.132

Although aspects of Islamic and traditional Bandi values accommodated each other, Islamic influence was not accepted in all parts of Bandiland.133 Mandingo and Fulani Muslim traders and clerics that settled in Bandiland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were unable to attract Muslim converts in areas that had the dominant influence of leaders of traditional institutions such as the Poro, Sande, soothsayers and diviners.134 According to Bandi Muslim informants, the dominant influence of the Poro in

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131Ibid.
133Ibid.
134Ibid.
Tahamba, upper Wanwoma, lower Volukoha and eastern Hembe areas of Bandiland discouraged Muslim clerics from settling in these areas.\textsuperscript{135} There was resistance to Islam in these areas of Bandiland because of the presence of leaders of mentioned traditional institutions, who were custodians of Bandi tradition and also responsible for preserving traditional values, practices and ceremonies. However, while about two-thirds of the Bandi in these areas practiced traditional religious beliefs, a third of them considered themselves Christians by 1960.\textsuperscript{136} Some Bandi are said to have rejected Islam for Christianity during the twentieth century because of what the latter offered them in terms of health care, western education and material benefits. While some Bandi rejected Islam and embraced Christianity, they also acknowledged that Islam and Bandi traditions shared more common values than Christianity and Bandi traditions. Moreover, the Bandi also acknowledge that unlike Muslim traders and clerics who did not attempt to change aspects of traditional Bandi values such as polygyny, making charms and offering to spirits of ancestors, Christian missionaries sought to eradicate these beliefs and practices in Bandi society.\textsuperscript{137}

The analysis of this chapter has shown that relationships between Islamic and traditional Bandi values were characterized more by accommodation, because aspects of Islamic beliefs and practices such as polygynous marriage and the belief in the magical power of charms also existed in traditional Bandi beliefs and practices. Mandingo and Fulani Muslim traders and clerics that settled in Bandiland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also institutionalized their relationships with chiefs and ordinary


\textsuperscript{136}Ibid.

Bandi through intermarriage and serving as spiritual advisers. Mandingo traders and clerics were mainly responsible for spreading Islam in Bandiland and the Bandi who embraced Islam blended Islamic and traditional Bandi beliefs and values, which served to promote both Islam and Bandi tradition. Children of Mandingo fathers and Bandi mothers also promoted Islamic and traditional Bandi values in that while they maintained their Muslim names, they also maintained Bandi cultural values such as Poro and Sande. Although they were Muslims and some of them were descendants of Mandingoes, Bandi Muslims preserved their Bandi identity by the continuous use of the Bandi language rather than the Mandingo language. Like non-Muslim Bandi, Bandi Muslims also performed traditional Bandi religious rituals and made offerings to the spirits of the ancestors. It is therefore evident that Islam and Bandi traditions interacted and accommodated each other in Bandiland. The effects of these interactions were felt by the Bandi people and Muslim traders and clerics who settled in Bandiland. For Example, Muslim traders and clerics introduced the new religion of Islam to the Bandi. This led to the emergence of Bandi Muslims. The Muslim traders and clerics in turn embraced and adopted traditional Bandi systems such as rice farming, Poro and Sande schools, and religious rituals. It is therefore reasonable to say the Islamization of Bandi society occurred at the same time as the Africanization of Islam in Bandiland during the period under study.

138 Ibid.
CHAPTER 6

CHRISTIANIZATION OF BANDI SOCIETY AND BANDI AFRICANIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY

This chapter examines the advent of Christianity in Bandiland and how the Order of the Holy Cross (OHC) missionaries and Bandi Christians Africanized Christianity from 1922 to 1964. Specifically, it analyzes how they blended Christian and traditional Bandi values to promote Christianity through evangelism, formal education and health care services. The reciprocal effects of Christian and traditional Bandi values constitute the main focus of this chapter.

The Advent of Christianity in Bandiland

The first group of American missionaries arrived in Bandiland on February 22, 1922. The missionaries were members of the Order of the Holy Cross (OHC), a monastic community of the Episcopal Church of America located in West Park, New York City. The Episcopal Church of Liberia assisted the OHC in securing permission from the Liberian government to establish a mission station in Bandiland. The OHC missionaries depended mainly on American donations to support their work in Liberia. In 1924, the missionaries established St. Athanasius Monastery and St. Mary’s Church in Bolahun in Wanwoma (see Map 6). The missionaries lived at the monastery and served as priests for

2Ibid.
St. Mary’s Church. The missionaries’ initial goal was to recruit and train local people to become evangelists and monks. The church and schools the missionaries established in Bolahun in the early 1920s marked the beginning of the promotion of Christianity in Bandiland.³

The first group of OHC missionaries arrived in Bandiland in 1922 under the leadership of Father Herbert Hawkins.⁴ The Africans who assisted the missionaries during their

travel to Bandiland included six Sierra Leonean porters, a school teacher, a Kissi caretaker and a Liberian Vai priest from Cape Mount.\(^5\) The missionaries reached Massambolahun by way of Sierra Leone because no modern transportation system connected Monrovia to Bandiland before the 1950s. The school teacher who came with the missionaries to Bandiland was the Sierra Leonean Mr. Stephen E. Manley, a resident of Sherbro Island, where he had worked as a teacher for the United Brethren in Christ Mission School. He was knowledgeable in the Mende language, which was also spoken in Bandiland.\(^6\) His background as a teacher and his knowledge of the Mende language made Manley a valuable asset to the missionaries because he helped them promote their religious mission in Bandiland.\(^7\) Another Sierra Leonean who came with the missionaries to Bandiland in 1922 was an elderly Kissi man called Salifu, who was later given the Christian name James.\(^8\) A Liberian Vai priest called Rev. James Dwalu was also among the first Africans who helped the missionaries learn about Bandi social and cultural systems.\(^9\)

The choice of Bandiland for the work of the OHC missionaries was not an accident. Before coming to Liberia, the missionaries' goal was to introduce Christianity among ethnic groups that had not been exposed to the Christian faith.\(^10\) The missionaries considered Bandiland as an ideal place because it enabled them to counter the spread of Islam in that part of Liberia.\(^11\)

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\(^6\)Ibid., p. 175.
\(^7\)Ibid.
\(^8\)Ibid, p. 228; Milligan, *Bolahun*, p. 43.
\(^9\)Campbell, p. 175.
\(^10\)Ibid.
The missionaries settled first in the Muslim-dominated town of Massambolahun after they arrived in Bandiland in 1922. The Bandi Muslim Chief Fofi Jorkor Konneh welcomed the American missionaries to settle near his town.\textsuperscript{12} Chief Fofi was also one of the Bandi Muslim clerics who had many wives and a large number of dependents who worked for him.\textsuperscript{13} He was also known for providing religious guardianship to people and food to strangers who visited the Wanwoma area of Bandiland. Moreover, he was the clan chief of Wanwoma, which made the missionaries consider him an important asset in their quest to establish a mission station in that part of Bandiland.\textsuperscript{14}

Although Chief Fofi welcomed them to Wanwoma, the missionaries needed official permission from the Liberian government before they could build a church in the area because the Liberian law prohibited white men from owning land in Liberia.\textsuperscript{15} Without permission from the Liberian government, the missionaries would face the prospect of expulsion if they had established a church on Liberian soil. The Liberian government would have considered such a venture by the missionaries as an affront to the sovereignty of the Liberian state, especially at the time when the Liberian government had accused the British and the French of encroaching upon Liberia’s claimed territories.\textsuperscript{16}

President Charles D. B. King issued an official permit to the OHC missionaries in early October 1922 to establish a mission station in Bandiland. This permitted the missionaries to lease the land to establish church and school buildings.\textsuperscript{17} The missionaries did not

\textsuperscript{12}Campbell, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{13}Perani and O’Connell, “Traditional Bandi Weaving,” p. 2.
\textsuperscript{14}Campbell, p. 225.
\textsuperscript{15}See Article 22a of the Liberian Constitution, 1986, Monrovia, Liberia.
\textsuperscript{17}\textit{The Hinterland}, vol. 1, nos. 2 and 3 (1922), p. 2, Record Group (RG) #2729, Domestic and Foreign Mission Society (DFMS), Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
own the land, but they were permitted to occupy and use it for the purpose of Christian work in Bandiland.\textsuperscript{18} Father Hawkins signed the lease agreement on behalf of the OHC, while Commissioner James Ledlum of Western Province signed for the Liberian government and Chief Fofi signed for the Bandi of Wanwoma.\textsuperscript{19}

The missionaries were to use the land in Bolahun to promote religious and secular education among the Bandi and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia. They were to give the land back to the local people and the Liberian government at the end of their work. Thus, the OHC established a Christian mission station in Bolahun on March 27, 1923, about a mile away from Chief Fofi’s town of Massambolahun.\textsuperscript{20} Even though he was a devoted Muslim, Chief Fofi helped to promote Christianity in Bandiland. The OHC missionaries established the first church in Bolahun on October 11, 1923.

Bolahun is about 250 miles from Monrovia.\textsuperscript{21} Another reason why the establishment of the mission station in Bolahun was unique was that the town was located between the two big Muslim towns of Massambolahun and Sosomoilahun. The dominant influence of Islam among the residents of Massambolahun and Sosomoilahun made missionary work in Bolahun unique because the Christian education that was provided in Bolahun challenged the Islamic education that was provided in these towns by Bandi Muslim leaders such as Fofi Konneh of Massambolahun and Favander Mollay of Sosomoilahun. In their reports to the OHC Chapter in New York in 1922, the missionaries noted:

\textsuperscript{18}Rev. Campbell to OHC Chapter, 1924, West Park, New York, RG #72, DFMS, Box 4, Order of Holy Cross Records (OHC Records), AEC, Austin, Texas.

\textsuperscript{19}Father James Gorham to OHC Chapter, June 15, 1929, RG #27, DFMS, Report of Holy Cross Liberian Mission (HCLM), June 1928–June 1929, Box 5, AEC, Austin, Texas.

\textsuperscript{20}Campbell, p. 58.

\textsuperscript{21}The Hinterland, vol. XIII, no. 6 (December, 1935), pp. 1–10, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, Austin, Texas.
Islam was a force that threatens to engulf the whole of the Liberian hinterland. Thus, only the establishment of power centers of Christian influence [Christian colony of Bolahun] in advance of it can prevent the Islamization of the people of northwestern Liberia.22

The OHC missionaries wanted to promote the gospel in Bandiland by establishing churches and schools and providing health care services to people in villages and towns. The means to accomplish these goals included: translating the Bible into the Bandi language so that people in the villages and towns could be taught the gospel in their own language,23 providing Christian education to young Bandi men and women which would enable them use their acquired knowledge to spread the message of Christ and Christian ways of life, and training Bandi medical assistants who would apply their medical knowledge for physical as well as spiritual healing of the sick.24

The Accommodation of Christianity to Traditional Values in Bandi Society

Even though they used English to introduce Christianity in Bandiland, the missionaries increasingly made use of the Bandi language to promote the gospel in Bandiland. The training of Bandi evangelists to teach the Christian faith in their own language in villages and communities was one of the primary goals of the OHC missionaries. The blending of Christian and traditional Bandi values was said to be necessary if the missionaries were to succeed in attracting the Bandi to Christianity. As head of the OHC mission in Bolahun, Father Alan Whittemore re-emphasized the vision of the OHC in Bandiland in the early 1940s by noting that there should be a blending of African and western values,

22Father Herbert Hawkins et al., “Six Weeks in Liberia’s Hinterland,” in The Living Church (Dec. 3, 1922), p. 265, RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
23Campbell, p. 142; The Hinterland, vol. VII, no. 5 (October, 1934), p. 3, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
24Campbell, p. 184.
instead of destroying the former.\textsuperscript{25} The OHC vision of Christianity in Bandiland was not aimed at western cultural imperialism or intended to entirely replace Bandi cultural values with western cultural values, but to reconcile aspects of Christian and local practices in order to make Christianity attractive to the Bandi and their neighbors.\textsuperscript{26}

The missionaries had envisioned that Christianity would not be localized in Bolahun but be promoted in all areas in Bandiland. The blending of Christian and traditional values would therefore enhance the work of extending the gospel to both the Bandi and their neighbors. As such, it was necessary to train and rely on local people who knew the local languages and terrain to work as evangelists and agents of Christianity outside Bolahun. Speaking the same language would enable local evangelists to share the same mode of thought with their own people and to alleviate the fear that embracing Christianity would undermine all aspects of their traditional beliefs and practices.\textsuperscript{27} The belief that Christian teachings would undermine traditional beliefs and practices did in fact exist among the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende chiefs and elders as well as the \textit{zoes} of the Poro and Sande schools. For example, the Christian teachings about monogamous marriage and renunciation of traditional practices such as making offerings to the spirits of the ancestors and totems were seen by the chiefs and \textit{zoes} as attempts to undermine their traditions.\textsuperscript{28} To mitigate this fear, the missionaries decided to train Bandi evangelists through whom the Gospel would be promoted in Bandiland. This was to be done by translating the Bible into Bandi and other local languages such as Kissi, Loma and Mende; teaching the gospel in

\textsuperscript{25}Father Alan Whitemore to OHC, November 8, 1947, West Park, N.Y., RG #27, DFMS, HCLM, Box 5, AEC, Austin, Texas
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27}Campbell, pp. 160–161.
\textsuperscript{28}Ibid.
the Bandi language represented the first attempt to blend Christian and traditional Bandi values.\textsuperscript{29}

To enhance the translation of the Bible from English to Bandi, the missionaries decided to learn Bandi and other local languages. This strategy was laid out in a report to the OHC headquarters in West Park, New York in 1926. The missionaries suggested that they would be able to exert tremendous influence among all age-groups in Bandi society if they spoke Bandi.\textsuperscript{30} Their knowledge of the Bandi language enabled the missionaries to teach the gospel as well as read sermons and sing hymns in Bandi during church services in Bolahun and the surrounding villages.\textsuperscript{31}

The missionaries also noted that they would respect those traditional Bandi beliefs and practices that they believed did not conflict with the teaching of the gospel.\textsuperscript{32} For example, the missionaries accepted the practices of the Poro and Sande institutions and allowed mission students to leave school in order to attend these traditional institutions.\textsuperscript{33} The missionaries also suggested that they would sponsor families to operate Poro and Sande schools in Bolahun, if the zoes or leaders of these traditional schools agreed to shorten the length of time of their schooling in order to allow males and females to also attend the mission school in Bolahun.\textsuperscript{34} The missionaries decided to sponsor the Poro and Sande schools in Bolahun as part of their goal to attract the Bandi and other ethnic groups such

\textsuperscript{29}HCLM, p. 9, 1928, RG #27, DFMS, Box 5, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{30}The Hinterland (May, 1926), p. 4, RG #2729, DFMS, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32}The Hinterland (Jan., 1926), p. 2, RG #2729, DFMS, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{33}HCLM Statement of Policy (1923), p. 9, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid.
as Kissi, Loma and Mende to Christianity through accommodation of aspects of their traditional practices.\textsuperscript{35}

From the Bandi perspective, the missionaries' respect for the Poro and Sande schools was essential if they were to secure cooperation from the chiefs, elders and \textit{zoes} in Bandiland because these schools were significant in teaching and preserving traditional Bandi values.\textsuperscript{36} The missionaries were also aware that it would be counterproductive to oppose the Poro and Sande because these institutions were traditionally respected among the Bandi and their neighbors. Furthermore, the missionaries' respect for the Poro and Sande would help to minimize fear among Bandi evangelists, who did not want to distance themselves from their own communities by giving up such important traditional Bandi beliefs and practices. The missionaries' willingness to sponsor Poro and Sande schools in Bolahun and allow aspects of traditional Bandi practices such as totemism among Bandi Christians did not undermine their desire to promote Christianity in Bandi society. For instance, the missionaries allowed Christians in Bolahun to uphold their totemic beliefs of not eating a certain animal or plant, but Christians were not allowed to make sacrifices to totems. Bolahun was to serve as a center of Christian life and a place from which Christianity would be promoted in other areas of Bandiland.\textsuperscript{37} However, the vision of the missionaries to maintain Bolahun as a model for creating a Christian community in Bandiland was hindered by the fact that the town was surrounded by villages whose people continued to preserve their traditional belief systems. The mission workers such as carpenters, masons, sawyers, cleaners and gardeners came from villages where

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36}Informant 60, interviewed June 27, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town; Informant 37, interviewed June 27, 2008, Bolahun Town; Informants 15, 17, and 72, interviewed June 21, 2008, Kpangehimba Town.
\textsuperscript{37}HCLM Statement of Policy (1923), p. 9, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas.
they lived in accordance with their traditional beliefs and practices. Although they worked for the mission and attended church services, these workers continued to hold onto aspects of their traditional systems such as rice farming, polygynous marriage, and paying homage to totems and spirits of the ancestors. The workers also preferred to live in their villages rather than in Bolahun, where they would be required to live in accordance with Christian principles that included attending Sunday prayers, practicing monogamy and refraining from drinking alcohol.38

The missionaries considered traditional Bandi beliefs and practices such as polygynous marriage, arranged marriage, and paying homage to totems and spirits of the ancestors as obstacles to the promotion of Christianity in Bandiland. The missionaries tried to make Bandi farmers attend church services in Bolahun. This was a challenging task for those who lived several miles away.39 Despite their difficulty in attracting people from villages to attend church services in Bolahun every Sunday, the missionaries were optimistic about their work in Bandiland as noted by Rev. Father James H. Gorham, Priest-in-Charge of Bolahun Mission, in his report in 1932. He noted that even though they had not seen a popular movement toward Christianity among the Bandi and they have not yet established strong Christian influence in towns in the vicinity of Bolahun, they were still sure that “the spiritual tone was good and encouraging” in Bandiland.40 The difficulty in attracting Bandi farmers outside the vicinity of Bolahun during the early days of Christian work in Bandiland was among the reasons why the missionaries decided to expand their evangelical work to nearby villages. However, the missionaries were cautious about

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Father Gorham to OHC Chapter, June 13, 1929, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
this because a number of them held the view that the chiefs and elders would welcome
the missionaries for material benefits and later drive them out of their villages. The mis­sionaries provided clothes, shoes, cooking utensils, malaria and headache pills to new
Christians in towns and villages in order to encourage them to remain in the fold of Chris­tianity. However, there was also suspicion among the missionaries that a number of Bandi
chiefs were not committed to embracing Christianity but were only interested in material
things from the mission. Robert Campbell, one of the first missionaries that arrived in
Bandiland in 1922, reported in 1924 that the chiefs were willing to receive shillings, clothes
and material things, but not the Christian religion.41 Despite such skepticism, the mission­
aries were able to establish churches among the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende in 1927.42

The establishment of such churches provided the opportunity for the missionaries
to test the willingness of the people to hear the gospel.43 The missionaries were aware
that the economic activities of villagers were dominated by rice farming, which meant that
farmers were often out of their villages during the day to work on their farms. Thus, the
visits of missionaries and Bandi evangelists in villages were subsequently programmed in
accordance with the farming months of the people.44 For example, the missionaries never
visited villages from March to December, because farmers were often very busy during
this time and it was not possible then for men and women to hear the gospel in their vil­
lages.45 Those who were often left in the villages during farming season were the very

41 Rev. Campbell to Father Hughson, March 11, 1924, RG #72, DFMS, Box 4, OHC Records, AEC,
Austin, Texas.
42 Campbell, Within the Green Wall, p. 162.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 The Hinterland, vol. XIII, no. 6 (Dec., 1936), p. 2, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin,
Texas.
young and old people, who were often small in number and unwilling to hear the gospel. The missionaries did not carry out evangelical work from June to October either because the heavy rains during these months often caused rivers and streams to overflow. Therefore, the missionaries programmed their trips to villages during the dry season months from late December to early February, when most farmers had completed their rice harvest and customarily spent most of their time in their villages.46

While farming and rainy season months were not appropriate for evangelical work in Bandi villages, the missionaries also did not want evangelical work to disrupt the farm work because farmers were required to supply rice to students and workers of the OHC Bolahun mission.47 From the 1920s to the late 1950s, the missionaries depended on the chiefs and their people to pay tuition and fees for students from their villages in rice and palm oil, which were used to feed the mission workers and students. Therefore, the missionaries encouraged traditional rice farming in Bandiland in order to maintain a continuous food supply to the mission.48

The missionaries usually visited villages outside the vicinity of Bolahun after they had learned about traditional African etiquette. The traditional African etiquette was prepared by friends of the OHC in 1947 in the form of a manual entitled “Jungle Etiquette,” which the missionaries were expected to know before they visited villages in Bandiland. Among the main lessons that were taught from the manual was how a missionary was to behave in order to establish a personal friendship with a chief and ordinary people while visiting a village outside Bolahun. The manual’s main points were as follows:

46Ibid.
47Father Gorham to OHC Chapter, vol. XXXIV, no. 1 (Feb., 1956), p. 4, RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
48Ibid.
If you plan to spend a night in a village, it is courteous to send word ahead (a day in advance, if possible) so as to give the chief a chance to get the town and its approaches cleaned up for a distinguished visitor—not to mention his best hut for your accommodation. If you barge in unexpectedly you catch him unprepared and 'make him ashamed.' When you reached the village, go first to the chief or his representative to pay your respects and let him show you to your quarters. (The suggestion is to have with you a supply of some harmless pills—cascara, for example). There are sure to be one or two people with real or imagined ailments and they will expect a white man to cure them. Probably plain sugar pills would produce wonderful results through the power of suggestion. Be a bit careful with aspirin. It won't hurt most people. But I knew a white man who almost killed a chief that happened to have a weak heart.49

The manual also had the following advice for the missionaries about the first things to do before talking to the town chief about the gospel:

When you have business to do with a chief (as, for example, a request for laborers or supply of rice), don’t start right in with the subject the moment you see him. Only uncouth westerners do that sort of thing, being always in a rush. Instead, after greetings and finger-snapping have been exchanged, sit and talk with him about everything under the sun—his town, his rice-farms, his father and mother (for personal questions are signs of interest and not bad manners). Then, just before you leave, you may bring up casually the subject you have in mind. In general, don’t try to rush things. Africa has its tempo. Many white men (including Napoleon and Julius Caesar) have tried to speed it up, but Africa always wins.50

Even though they were advised to wait for an invitation by a chief before they visited his village, the missionaries often initiated contact with Bandi chiefs if such an invitation was not forthcoming.51 However, if they received permission from a chief to begin evangelical work in his village near Bolahun, the first duty of the missionaries was

49Emily Post, “Jungle Etiquette” (1947), p. 2, RG #72, DFMS, Box 153, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
to send someone along with a Bandi interpreter for a visit during the evening, when people had returned from their farms. 52

African etiquette guided the missionaries while dealing with Bandi chiefs and their people. A missionary and his interpreter were required to first go to the chief, who would ask his assistant to invite the people to meet in the town hall to hear the gospel. The Bandi interpreter assisted the missionary in explaining to the people what Christianity had in common with Bandi religious beliefs, such as the belief in the existence of a Supreme Being. The idea was to make the Bandi people understand the views Christians held about God were not so different from those of the Bandi. For instance, Christians and the Bandi believed that God was a spirit and that he was the creator of everything on earth. Moreover, the Christians' belief in life after death resonated with the traditional Bandi religious belief that family members who had died are actually still alive as spirits, which also reinforced continuity in Bandi religious practices like honoring and making offerings to the spirits of their ancestors. 53

The initial visits of the OHC missionaries and their interpreters to villages around Bolahun often lasted for three to four weeks, during which time the names of those that regularly attended meetings to hear the gospel were taken and they became the first group of expected Christians in their villages. 54 Once a core group of hearers had been identified in villages, the villages that were near Bolahun were visited once a week, while those that were several miles away from Bolahun were visited once or twice a month. 55 While

52 Ibid.
53 Informant 85, interviewed June 28, 2008, Bolahun Town.
54 Ibid.
scheduled meetings to hear the gospel were often respected in villages, sometimes these meetings were disrupted by other business. For example, if there was a Poro or Sande school in a village and the *zoes* called for a meeting for men and women, or Liberian government officials were in the village for a meeting, the meeting to hear the gospel was usually cancelled or rescheduled.56 The missionary also would allow his interpreter to attend a Poro meeting if such a meeting was called during their visit to a village.57

The responsibility to teach the gospel in villages outside Bolahun was left with Bandi evangelists after the missionaries had identified a core group of hearers in these villages.58 The missionaries taught Bandi evangelists to explain stories and verses of the Bible to their people in Bandi, rather than in the English language.59 Hearers who regularly attended meetings to hear about the gospel in villages became catechists after two years of instruction, which included teaching about Christian prayers, belief in monotheism and monogamous marriage.60 Villagers who attended instructional meetings for two years often became candidates for baptism, which was the last step toward becoming a Christian convert.61 Baptism usually took place in Bolahun, where all candidates from the surrounding villages were required to assemble the night before the date of baptism. Candidates were brought together in Bolahun in order for them to get final instructions about their commitment to Christian ways of life before baptism.62 The missionaries

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Father Gorham to OHC Chapter, October 16, 1929, West Park, N.Y., quoted in Holy Cross Magazine (Dec., 1929), p. 1, RG #72, DFMS, OHC Records, Box 151, AEC, Austin, Texas.
60 HCLM Statement of Policy (1923), pp. 2–5, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas.
61 Ibid.
62 The Hinterland, vol. XIV, no. 3 (1936), p. 3, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
considered the baptized people to be Christians, who were also allowed to receive communion.\textsuperscript{63}

There was enthusiasm among younger Bandi men and women in Wanwoma and Tahamba about becoming Christians as noted in one of the earlier OHC reports from Bolahun. An OHC Superior, Father Leopold Kroll, noted in 1940 that proof that young Bandi men and women wanted to become Christians was illustrated by their willingness to leave their homes and farm work and spend a fortnight at Bolahun at their own expense in order to receive [Christian] instruction.\textsuperscript{64} Father Kroll further noted some of them came from distances which required nearly two days of walking, which showed the zeal and faithfulness of these Bandi converts.\textsuperscript{65}

Bandi people who became Christians were required to live an exemplary Christian life both inwardly and outwardly. The new Christians were given a wooden cross, which they wore to distinguish them from non-Christians. Moreover, they were required to make certain promises such as to attend mass on Sundays, keep one wife, never to go to a diviner nor use traditional charms for protection, and avoid offerings to spirits of ancestors or totems. They were however allowed to decide whether or not to eat certain plants or animals as long as they did not make offerings to them.\textsuperscript{66} In order to weed out people who they suspected of being insincere about living the new Christian life, the missionaries often waited for two years after baptism before they would give a cross to a new convert. One of the main reasons why the missionaries waited for two years before

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{63}HCLM Statement of Policy (1923), p. 5, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{64}\textit{The Hinterland}, vol. XIV, no. 3 (1936), p. 3, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{65}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66}\textit{The Hinterland}, vol. XIV, no. 6 (Dec., 1936), pp. 1–2, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\end{footnotes}
giving the cross to new converts was to test the will of the new Christians in turning away from the mentioned traditional practices that were considered incompatible with Christian ways of life. Moreover, by setting a timeline to wear the cross, which symbolizes the belief in the death of Christ, the missionaries ensured that only the most committed and faithful Bandi would take the steps forward toward becoming true Christians.67

While young Bandi men and women tried to maintain the Christian principle of monogamous marriage; monogamy made recruitment of faithful Christian believers among Bandi elders difficult. Monogamous marriage was not received well by Bandi chiefs and elders because it negatively affected their social prestige and economic power, which were dependent on the number of wives and children they had within their households.68 Another requirement in Christian marriage that was unattractive to Bandi chiefs and elders was the practice that married couples secure a government marriage license before such a marriage would be recognized. This meant that only a marriage license and not traditional dowry payments would be a requirement for a marriage to be considered legitimate among Bandi Christians.69

The missionaries’ demand for monogamous marriage and a marriage license for Bandi Christians undermined the desire of many Bandi chiefs and elders to become Christians.70 Although they welcomed Christian missionaries in their villages, some Bandi chiefs and elders were unwilling to accept Christianity themselves because it would also

67Ibid., p. 2.
mean accepting monogamous marriage and low social status in their communities. As a result of the missionaries’ demand for Bandi Christians to practice monogamous marriage and secure marriage licenses, the missionaries could count only six Christian families in Bolahun in 1936 after fourteen years of missionary work in Bandiland.\footnote{The Hinterland, vol. XIV, no. 6 (1936), p. 3, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.}

However, the expansion of missionary work beyond Bolahun allowed the missionaries to attract more converts among other ethnic groups such as the Kissi, Loma and Mende. From 1927 to 1950, the OHC missionaries established six churches and five schools in villages among the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende. These churches and schools were staffed mainly by Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende students from the Bolahun mission schools. However, the viability of the churches and schools in villages depended on the support of the local people. The lack of support from local people often forced the missionaries to withdrawal from such areas. For example, the missionaries were forced to close a school in Porluma in Kissiland in 1929\footnote{Father Gorham to OHC Chapter, June 13, 1929, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, OHC Records, Box 151, AEC, Austin, Texas.} as well as the church and school in Gondolahun in 1956 due to a lack of support from the local people.\footnote{Father Joseph Parsell to OHC Chapter, July 1, 1956, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 9, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.} Some of the chiefs and elders in Bandiland found monogamous marriage and prohibitions against honoring spirits of their ancestors to be too extreme and therefore rejected Christianity, even though they allowed the missionaries to establish Christian churches and schools in their villages.\footnote{The Hinterland, vol. XI, no. 5 (1933), p. 4, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.}

Thus, after forty years of Christian work in Bandiland, the OHC missionaries recorded 1,500 persons as registered Christians in 1962 and only a few of them became
priests and monks. Moreover, in spite of translating the Bible from English into the Bandi language, learning the Bandi language, and teaching the gospel in the Bandi language, the OHC missionaries could only attract mainly younger Bandi men and women rather than the elders who lived in villages outside Bolahun. Young Bandi men and women embraced Christianity because they associated Christianity with western civilization and knowledge. Moreover, young men and women who became Christians had access to educational and material benefits from the missionaries. For instance, the missionaries offered materials such as clothes, shoes, plates and spoons as well as tuition waivers for young Bandi men and women who became Christians and were active in school and church activities. The missionaries also encouraged young Bandi men and women that became Christians to get married in order to avoid adultery and fornication. However, formal education that the missionaries provided young men and women was among the enduring effects of Christianity in Bandiland after more than five decades of work of the OHC.

The foregoing examinations show that Christianity brought some changes in Bandi society with respect to introducing new Christian beliefs and practices such as attending church services on Sundays, Christian education and prayers as well as monogamous marriage. However, while the OHC missionaries accommodated and encouraged aspects of traditional Bandi practices such as rice farming, Poro and Sande, belief in one God and the practice of not eating specific animals or plants, the missionaries also failed to eradicate other traditional Bandi beliefs and practices that they considered contrary to Christian values. Bandi Christians and the non-Christians that lived in towns and villages continued

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to hold onto aspects of traditional beliefs and practices such as paying homage to totems and the spirits of the ancestors, dowry payments, and polygynous and arranged marriages, even though these traditional systems were contrary to OHC Christian beliefs.  

Promoting Christian and Traditional Values Through Formal Education in Bandi Society

Like other European missionaries during the colonial period in Africa, the OHC missionaries established schools in Bandiland with the hope that providing formal education would be one of the principal means of promoting Christianity among the Bandi. Rt. Rev. Campbell, who was one of the first OHC missionaries that arrived in Bandiland in 1922, noted that “it would be through the schools that the mind and character of future [Bandi and Liberian] leaders would be molded and these young men would build a new society based on Christian civilization.” However, the missionaries did not want the kind of education that would make young Bandi men and women to be attracted to urban life and end up abandoning their local communities. Thus, Rev. Campbell noted further that agricultural and vocational education was needed more for the development of traditional [Bandi] society than mere academic training. The goal of early OHC missionaries was to provide vocational rather than academic education for the students because of the belief that vocational training would provide the opportunity for trained students to use their acquired skills as carpenters, masons and agriculturists to transform their own com-
munities, while academic training would make them attracted to urban centers to swell
the ranks of office seekers and clerks.  

The missionaries established the first school for young males in Bolahun in 1923
and named it St. Philip’s Elementary School. It was built with mud walls while the roof
was made of palm thatch. The missionaries made use of local resources because western
materials such as cement, zinc and nails were not available in Bandiland until the 1950s.
The furniture used in classrooms included wooden chairs and tables, while the first group
of dormitory students used grass and rice straw in mattresses on their beds. The students
also used traditional cotton cloths as bed sheets and blankets, which they provided for
themselves.  

The students were also required to bring food items as part of their tuition before
registering for school. Courses offered in the mission school during the early 1920s
included Christian education, arithmetic, history, English and general science with an
emphasis on agriculture. The first students who enrolled in the schools were also ex-
pected to become evangelists in Bandiland.  

The tuition and fees before 1935 were paid in rice, palm oil and dry meat, which
were also used to feed the students while in school. The students were also required to
wear traditional clothes as uniforms, because western clothes were too expensive for

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80 The Hinterland, vol. 1, no. 2 (Oct., 1922), p. 4, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
81 Brother Edward, “Plenty How-do” From Africa: Letters and Stories From the Liberian Bush
(West Park, N.Y., 1941), p. 3.
82 Ibid.
83 HCLM Statement of Policy (June, 1928), p. 2, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas.
86 Rev. Campbell to Rev. Shirley Hughson, March 11, 1924, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 4,
OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
students. The supply of rice was critical to the work of the mission in general and there­fore the missionaries encouraged rice farming in Bolahun. The students and mission workers also depended on a constant supply of rice from the surrounding villages. A shortage of rice at the mission sometimes led the missionaries to seek the help of local Liberian government officials in Bandiland to enforce the cooperation of the chiefs to supply rice to the mission.

Among the first students who were accepted in the mission schools was Fodi. Fodi Konneh was a Muslim boy and a relative of Fofi Konneh, a Bandi Muslim chief who had earlier welcomed the missionaries to establish Christianity among the Bandi people of Wanwoma area of Bandiland. The academic years were divided into two semesters and students were allowed vacations for Christmas and Liberia’s Independence Day on July 26. The Christmas vacation also allowed students to assist their parents in various tasks such as harvesting rice before returning to school in March. The July vacation also provided the opportunity for students to help their parents with tasks such as weeding and fencing the rice farms and also to get their supply of rice before school re­opened. Each student was required to bring six hampers or baskets of rice as tuition for a year. Among the main reasons why the missionaries encouraged rice farming in Bandiland was that they could not afford to import rice and other food items to feed the students.

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88 Father Gorham to OHC Chapter, June 15, 1929, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
89 Campbell, Within the Green Wall, p. 172.
90 Brother Edward, “Plenty how-do,” p. 35. Five hampers of rice was equivalent to one bushel, which was equivalent to 45 pounds (estimate by Francis Janga, former student of Bolahun Mission School, 1960s).
and mission workers. Therefore, students who returned to school without their six hampers of rice were often sent back to their villages to secure their rice.⁹¹

In addition to receiving formal education, the students had to adjust to time schedules for daily activities. The missionaries encouraged time and work discipline among the students. For example, the missionaries made sure that students got up from bed at 6:00 a.m. every morning at the sound of a police-like whistle for breakfast and went to the nearby stream for a morning bath.⁹² By 7:00 a.m. the students were to be in church, where the morning Mass was held from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Students were required to wear their traditional cotton short pants and gowns in church and school.⁹³ Morning classes lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.⁹⁴ At 12:00 noon, students had lunch for an hour-and-a-half and then returned to classes from 1:30 p.m. until 3:00 p.m., when classes were dismissed for the day.⁹⁵

Besides their adjustment to scheduled hours for church and school, the students were also allowed time to take care of their personal hygiene. For instance, the students were allowed on Thursdays to leave classes at 10:30 a.m. so that they would go to the stream to wash their clothes for 30 minutes. They were also taught to make vegetable gardens; working in the garden was the last activity for the students before the end of the day. The students worked in gardens that produced crops such as egg plants, peppers, eddoes, onions, and potato greens, which provided food for the students, the mission

⁹¹Ibid, pp. 35-36.  
⁹²Ibid, p. 36.  
⁹³Ibid.  
⁹⁴Ibid.  
⁹⁵Ibid.
workers and missionaries.\textsuperscript{96} The evening activities for the students included an evening bath at 5:00 p.m., dinner at 6:00 p.m., and study time from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The evening prayer services were held at 8:00 p.m. and the students would then return to their dormitories for the rest of the night till the next morning.\textsuperscript{97} The adjustment of students to the various scheduled times for school, church, washing clothes, bathing, gardening, studying and sleeping was important because they were part of the goal of the missionaries to introduce students to western concepts of work and time discipline. The work and time discipline not only affected the lives of the students while in school, the students were also encouraged to program their study and work during vacations in the villages.

Instruction in the mission schools during the 1920s and 1930s was aimed at transforming the mind and character of Bandi men and women in a way that they would serve as promoters of Christian values in their communities. Even though the school curriculum included subjects such as math, science, Bible studies, and social studies, it mainly emphasized agricultural and industrial skills. Instruction in personal hygiene, church services, work and time discipline and agricultural activities helped to enhance students' ability to accept new ideas and values while at the same time maintaining and reinforcing aspects of values associated with their traditional communities. The school curriculum also required students to make gardens and work on school rice farms,\textsuperscript{98} which also reinforced values associated with the rice farming culture in Bandi society. During the 1920s and

\textsuperscript{96}Ibid, pp. 36–37.
\textsuperscript{97}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98}From James L. Sibley to Rev. Father J. O. S. Huntington, Superior OHC, N.Y., March, 15, 1927, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas. Sibley was adviser for agricultural education to the Bolahun mission schools. He prepared a pamphlet entitled “Agricultural Mission in Liberia,” which encouraged agricultural training for mission school students as a factor for self-supporting indigenous churches.
1930s, the students received not only formal and Christian education that changed their character and world views, but they also received training that was aimed at improving the social and economic life of the students and communities. For example, in addition to arithmetic, science, Bible, and agriculture, the schools also taught carpentry and masonry, which helped students construct houses for the mission and their own communities.

The students of Bolahun mission schools were often recruited from the surrounding villages during the 1920s and 1930s. The missionaries relied on the chiefs to recruit unspecified numbers of children from their villages to attend the mission schools. Recruitment of children to live at the mission often created problems for Bandi families, because children played important roles as part of the labor force during the rice farming season in Bandi society. The children performed tasks such as chasing rice-eating birds away from the farm during the time of planting or before harvesting the rice. Therefore, recruiting children from villages to stay at the mission weekdays meant a loss to the labor force of their households. Superior Father James Gorham reported in 1926 that sometimes the students went home for vacation and refused to return to school, because their parents needed them to help with the farm work. In some instances, farmers who did not want their children sent to the mission during the week often faked their children’s illness by rubbing them with ointment so that they would not be selected to go to Bolahun for

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99 Ibid.
100 Rev. Campbell to Rev. Shirley Hughson, July 1, 1923, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 4, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
101 Father Gorham to OHC Chapter, 1926, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
school. However, the importance of mission education in Bandi society was that it empowered students socially and materially.

The chiefs who were responsible to recruit children from their villages to attend the mission schools often did not send their own children because of the need for a labor force, while parents who did not want their children selected would rather bribe the chiefs so that their children would not be sent to the mission. Therefore, during the 1920s and 1930s, the missionaries depended on District Commissioners and members of the Liberia Frontier Force to enforce the recruitment of students for the mission schools if the chiefs failed to recruit children from their villages. For instance, during the years 1928 and 1929, the missionaries appealed to District Commissioner E. Sam Garnett to make Bandi chiefs recruit young males and supply rice from their villages for students and workers at the Bolahun mission.

The attitudes of the chiefs and elders in refusing to send their children to the mission schools began to change in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The reason was that the first group of students that graduated from the mission schools began to demonstrate the benefits of formal education by reading and writing English and serving as interpreters and clerks for missionaries and government officials in Bandiland. By the late 1950s, many chiefs and ordinary Bandi began to voluntarily send young males to the mission schools after they realized that it was important to have someone who could understand,
speak and write the English language in their villages.\textsuperscript{106} The desire to have someone in the family with the ability to read and write the language of the missionaries became the source of inspiration for many Bandi families who sent their children to the mission schools in Bolahun during the early and late 1950s.\textsuperscript{107} Bandi interest in the values of formal education did not mean prohibition of traditional education of the Poro and Sande schools, but rather they became receptive to formal education in order to enhance and empower themselves social and materially and be able to cope with the increasing westernization of Bandi society.

When the missionaries established the first school in Bolahun in 1923, many chiefs and ordinary Bandi did not at first understand the long-term benefits of western education and therefore they declined to send their children to the mission. Moreover, there was a belief among the chiefs and elders that sending their children to the mission to get western education and become Christians meant that they would give up all traditional beliefs and practices, thereby detaching themselves from their communities. On the other hand, the missionaries wanted the young males to attend the mission schools because they would become future leaders whose Christian life would set an example of social change in their communities and Bandi society in general.\textsuperscript{108} The missionaries believed that the gospel would better be explained to the Bandi in their own language rather than English, as Father James H. Gorham in his communication to the OHC Chapter in New York:

\begin{quote}
Young Bandi evangelists speaking to their own people about the Gospel in their own language would be more effective in the conversion of the Bandi people. Never use a white man where a native can do it well. An itinerant
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{106}The Hinterland, vol. XXIX, no. 4 (1951), pp. 1–2, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{107}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108}OHC Magazine (Dec., 1929), p. 6, RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
preaching can be done better by the native. He knows the language and the people.  

The missionaries saw the use of the Bandi language to teach the Bible as an effective tool for attracting Bandi people to Christianity. The missionaries hoped that the training of young Bandi males as evangelists would lead to their parents' conversion. However, the elders were more reluctant to accept the new religions than the children because they were unwilling to give up their traditional beliefs and practices. Thus, in his report to the OHC Chapter in New York in 1929, Father James Gorham noted, "We have plenty of children in the church, but [we] find it hard to touch their elders so far as religion was concerned[ed], though all are friendly."

As noted, the difficulty in getting Bandi elders to accept Christianity derived partly from problems associated with some aspects of Christianity such as monogamous marriage and renunciation of traditional practices like making offerings to spirits of ancestors. The Bandi elders firmly believed in these traditional beliefs and practices. Chiefs and elders in Bandi society believed that polygynous marriage was part of the traditional Bandi systems and therefore they were not enthusiastic about accepting monogamous marriage. Accepting Christianity would mean that Bandi chiefs and elders would have to practice monogamous marriage. The chiefs also believed that monogamous marriage would have the effect of diminishing the base of their social status and authority. On the other hand, the missionaries also did not want to disrupt the social life of the chiefs and elders by making them abandon their polygynous practice. Therefore, the missionaries saw the

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109Father Gorham to OHC Chapter, 1924, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC Austin, Texas.  
110Quoted in OHC Magazine (Dec., 1929), p. 6, RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
young Bandi male as the best hope in making Christianity take root in Bandi society. In his report to the OHC in New York in 1922, Father Herbert Hawkins noted that young Bandi Christians would serve as examples in a new social order in their villages.\textsuperscript{111} The missionaries envisioned a new social order in Bandiland that would allow Bandi Christians to participate in aspects of traditional beliefs and practices and still live in accordance with Christian principles. For instance, Bandi Christians would participate in the Poro and Sande schools and also hold onto their totemic beliefs as long as they did not make offerings to the totems.\textsuperscript{112} The missionaries’ interest in preserving traditional Bandi practices that were not inconsistent with Christian principles was consistent with their goal of encouraging accommodation of Christian and traditional values in Bandi society.\textsuperscript{113}

One traditional Bandi value that the missionaries encouraged was the speaking of the Bandi language by students in school and during church services. The missionaries also learned and spoke the Bandi language. For instance, Fathers Joseph Parsell and Lawrence Lynn learned the Bandi language and the former was able to translate the Bible into Bandi by 1937.\textsuperscript{114} Father Parsell also prepared a Bandi manual containing prayers, hymns and verses from the Bible, which inspired several Bandi elders to attend Bandi Bible classes and listen to Biblical stories in Bandi language.\textsuperscript{115} Bandi elders who attended the Bandi Bible classes also became priests in their villages, even though they continued to practice polygyny and other traditional Bandi beliefs. The translation of the Bible and Biblical stories from English into the Bandi language enabled Bandi Christians

\textsuperscript{111}Father Herbert Hawkins et al., “Six Weeks in Liberia’s Hinterland,” in The Living Church (Dec. 3, 1922), p. 2, RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{112}Campbell, Within the Green Wall, p. 162.
\textsuperscript{113}HCLM Statement of Policy (June, 1928), pp. 7–9, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{114}Campbell, Within the Green Wall, p. 139.
\textsuperscript{115}Informant 85, interviewed June 28, 2008, Bolahun Town.
to better understand how the Christian concept of one God or monotheism was not different from the traditional Bandi concept of one God known as N’gele wala-ngala. The concept of one God in Christianity and Bandi religion was an example of similarities in aspects of Christian and traditional beliefs in Bandiland. In addition to noting similarities between Christianity and the Bandi religion, the missionaries also used their knowledge of the Bandi language to better explain the gospel to Bandi Christians, especially those who could only understand the Bandi language. The speaking of the Bandi language on the part of the missionaries helped to reinforce continuity in Bandi cultural values. The missionaries also acknowledged in 1926 the advantage of not only learning the Bandi language but also translating the Bible from English to Bandi:

The reason for the need to learn the local language was that the translation of the Gospel into the Bandi language would provide an advantage in the process of conversion, because knowledge of the language would enable us to establish the process of making differences into similarities. Moreover, the suspicions of the Bandi people that Christianity was intended to undermine their traditional beliefs and practices would be mitigated if the white Fathers succeeded not only in translating the Bible from English to the Bandi language, but also explaining the meaning of the Gospel to the people in their own language. Speaking the same language would provide the means for sharing the same mode of thought with the Converts and alleviate the fear of subversion among the traditional leaders.116

Even though English was the medium of instruction and communication in the mission schools, the missionaries took an interest in making the students continue to speak their local languages. The missionaries considered Bandi and other local languages as important tools for teaching the gospel to elders in villages. Therefore, the missionaries wanted young Bandi students who attended the mission schools to maintain their Bandi language and use it to teach their elders the gospel, but Bandi students were more inter-

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116 The Hinterland (March, 1926), p. 4, RG #2729, DMFS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
ested in speaking the English language because they associated civilization with the ability to speak and write English rather than Bandi. The desire of young Bandi students to speak English rather than Bandi was in contrast to the expectation of the missionaries who wanted the mission students to teach their parents the gospel in local languages. On the other hand, Bandi elders also took pride in seeing their children speaking English rather than Bandi while they were on vacation in their villages because of the belief that the ability of a student to speak the English language meant that he had acquired some level of formal education from the missionaries. The first group of Bandi students graduated from the mission school in Bolahun in 1936. The school also became the center of Christian education. Bandi and non-Bandi students that graduated from the mission school married in accordance with Christian tradition.

Early Christian education in Bandiland focused mainly on young Bandi males until the first group of women arrived from England as missionaries in Bolahun on April 22, 1931. The arrival of these missionary women led to the establishment of a school for young female students that became known as St. Agnes' School in 1932. Unlike the male students, female students were not to be trained as evangelists. According to the missionaries, St. Agnes' School was established for female students in order to transform them into modest, literate Christian women who would be like women such as Deborah, Ruth and Judith in the Bible. The young female students were to be trained to become not only Christians, but also to become wives of Christian husbands and mothers of

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117 Informant 85, interviewed June 28, 2008, Bolahun Town.
118 The Hinterland, vol. XIV, no. 3 (1936), p. 3, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
119 Ibid.
120 Campbell, Within the Green Wall, p. 102.
121 Ibid., p. 110.
122 Ibid., p. 111
Christian children. While the recruitment of boys was difficult during the early years of the mission in Bolahun, the recruitment of girls to become students proved to be even much more difficult. The problem was partly due to the cultural significance attached to women in traditional society as Superior Rev. Robert E. Campbell noted after he visited Bandi and Loma villages in 1932 to recruit young females to attend their school in Bolahun:

The [girls’] parents feared that when they had learned to speak English and thus become civilized they would want to marry men of the same attainments. This would mean that no dowry would fall to their parents, which would thus upset the family balance....

Rev. Campbell’s personal observation above represented one important difficulty missionaries often encountered in their attempt to recruit female students for the new school in Bandiland. However, with the help of local Liberian government officials, the missionaries were able to recruit the first six girls who enrolled in St. Agnes’ school in 1932. Female students were taught not only to speak and write English, but they were also taught to perform household tasks such as how to set a table for dinner, bake bread, wash dishes, make up beds, sew clothes, cook food on a kerosene stove, and plant tomatoes and eggplants for the mission students and workers. The missionaries had early wanted to operate separate schools for males and females, but they realized later that the costs of operating such schools would be too expensive. They therefore made St. Agnes the first co-educational institution for males and females in Bolahun in 1935. The school was discontinued in 1941, but reestablished in 1946. The school had classes on the main

123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., p. 110.
126 Campbell, Within the Green Wall, pp. 197–204.
127 Moore et al., Missionary District of Liberia, p. 759.
campus for male and female students from first through fourth grades and classes for boarding female students from fifth through eighth grades.\textsuperscript{128}

The enrollment of students in the mission schools in Bolahun was 200 in 1945 as more Bandi and non-Bandi children were sent by their parents to the missionaries for Christian education.\textsuperscript{129} Many Bandi and non-Bandi families had also realized that they too stood to benefit from the skills their female students would acquire from the missionaries, such as sewing clothes on machines and baking bread. The female students who learned to sew and bake bread were allowed to take some of the sewn clothes and baked bread to their parents.\textsuperscript{130} The students also took plates, spoons and kerosene lanterns to their villages whenever they went home for vacation.\textsuperscript{131} The missionaries saw material support as necessary in order to keep young male and female students within the fold of Christianity.\textsuperscript{132} The missionaries’ practice of allotting household items such as clothes, plates, spoons, shoes and bath soap to students that attended the mission schools served to attract young Bandi males and females to the mission schools and Christianity.\textsuperscript{133}

The increase in the enrollment in the mission schools in the 1940s and the desire of the missionaries to keep graduates in local communities led to the establishment of St. Augustine High School in Bolahun in 1946.\textsuperscript{134} Before the establishment of a high school in Bolahun, graduates from the mission schools in Bolahun were sent mainly to St. John’s

\textsuperscript{128}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129}Campbell, p. 180.
\textsuperscript{131}The Hinterland, vol. XXIX, no. 4 (Aug., 1951), pp. 1–2, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133}Informant 85, interviewed June 28, 2008, Bolahun Town.
\textsuperscript{134}Moore et al., Missionary District of Liberia, p. 759.
High School in Cape Mount for secondary education. The practice of sending graduates of Bolahun schools to Cape Mount for high school education was contrary to the missionaries’ vision of training young Bandi males and females who would remain in their communities to promote Christianity. The establishment of a high school in Bolahun was also important because it was expensive for the missionaries to send large numbers of students to Cape Mount for their high school education. The high school in Bolahun helped to keep graduates in Bandiland and also enabled the missionaries to use Bandi high school graduates as Christian evangelists among their own people.\(^{135}\)

Although Bolahun was considered to be the center of Christianity in Bandiland, churches and schools were also established in other parts of Bandiland. The missionaries also established churches and schools in Foya Dudu and Porluma in Kissiland, Kpademai and Vazela in Lomaland and Vahun in Mendeland. In Bandiland, the missionaries did establish churches in villages such as Boawolohun, Kpangeihemba, Yengbelahun, Nyokolitahun, Ndambu, Kolahun, Dowodowo and Korworhun (see Maps 6 and 7). Schools were also established in some of the mentioned villages so that students who were unable to go to Bolahun for school and church services would be taught the gospel in Bandi and English simultaneously in their villages. Most of the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende students who graduated from these schools were assigned as evangelists and teachers in their home villages. They were told that prayer services should be held in English as well as in local languages.\(^{136}\)

\(^{135}\)Ibid.

\(^{136}\)Campbell, *Within the Green Wall*, pp. 181–182.

Although Bolahun remained the center of Christianity in Bandiland, Christianity in Bandiland was challenged by Islam which had existed in Bandiland since the 1890s.137 Small community churches and schools that had been established among the nearby Mende were also challenged by Islam.138 Despite the rivalry with Islam, missionary reports showed that the number of students who registered in Christian schools in Islamic areas of

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137 Publicity Department of the Presiding Bishop and Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church (PEC), The Church at Work, vol. II, no. 4 (1922), p. 3, AEC, Austin, Texas.
138 Campbell, Within the Green Wall, p. 180.
Bandiland in 1950 was about 350.\textsuperscript{139} The reports also showed that mission schools in Bolahun enrolled 520 students in 1960.\textsuperscript{140}

Among the OHC mission schools that made lasting impacts both within and outside Bandiland were the schools in Bolahun, because the missionaries invested most of their resources in Bolahun schools rather than the ones elsewhere. Most of the schools outside Bolahun ceased to exist after the 1960s because of the lack of financial and human resources to maintain them. Moreover, the missionaries also realized by then that Christian education as they envisioned it was ineffective in producing Christianized adults as evidenced by the persistence of traditional beliefs and practices such as making offerings to the spirits of ancestors, totems and polygyny in most Bandi villages. This showed that there was continuity in most Bandi social and cultural systems in spite of changes brought about by Christianity in Bandiland.\textsuperscript{141}

Promoting Christianity Through Health Care Services in Bandi Society

Provision of health care services to the Bandi and their neighbors was one of the main accomplishments of Christian missionary work in Bandiland. The Bandi and other ethnic groups such as the Kissi, Loma and Mende considered the establishment of a hospital in Bolahun in the early twentieth century to be a blessing. Missionary doctors treated many tropical diseases that had long affected the Bandi and their neighbors before the arrival of the OHC missionaries in Bandiland.\textsuperscript{142} The medical services that were pro-

\textsuperscript{139}Father Ralph T. Milligan, \textit{Bolahun}, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{140}HCLM Report to OHC, August 4, 1961, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\textsuperscript{141}Informant 85, interviewed June 28, 2008, Bolahun Town.
\textsuperscript{142}Campbell, \textit{Within the Green Wall}, p. 189.
vided in Bolahun also helped attract Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende to Christianity. For instance, the treatment of hernias and diseases such as yaws, malaria, elephantiasis, tuberculosis, and sleeping sickness attracted patients to Christianity. The effectiveness of modern medicine in the treatment of such diseases encouraged patients who were treated successfully to then settle in Bolahun. Doctors became important agents of Christianity in Bandiland because they not only provided medical services but also served as teachers of the gospel.\textsuperscript{143}

The OHC missionaries established the first medical clinic in Bandiland in 1923.\textsuperscript{144} The missionaries were unable at first to hire and pay trained medical doctors who would carry out medical services because their work was financed mainly through donations from individuals and charity organizations. Early medical services in Bolahun were provided by Father Allen, who was not a trained doctor but had received first aid training in tropical diseases and had also learned to dress sores and dispense drugs at Livingstone College in London.\textsuperscript{145} Father Allen did not have a MD but he was often referred to as “doctor” by patients because he could extract teeth and dispense drugs for treating malaria and sleeping sickness.\textsuperscript{146} The treatment of toothaches, headaches, malaria, tuberculosis and dysentery at the mission clinic made Bolahun a place attractive to patients, who previously depended only on traditional herbs. While some Bandi continued to use traditional herbs to treat toothaches, headaches and dysentery in spite of the modern clinic in Bolahun.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{141}Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{144}Ibid., p. 188.
\textsuperscript{145}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146}Ibid.
\end{flushright}
hun, the greater effectiveness of modern drugs in treating these sicknesses at the mission clinic convinced a number of Bandi to accept Christianity.\(^{147}\)

The clinic did not have a trained medical doctor until Dr. Edgar Maas arrived in Bolahun in 1926. His arrival was significant because he treated tropical diseases and also performed surgery, which led to the transformation of the mission clinic into a hospital that became known as St. Joseph’s Hospital.\(^{148}\) As an ex-German military physician who served in World War I, Dr. Edgar Maas made the hospital in Bolahun a center of medical services for patients not only in northwestern Liberia, but also from Sierra Leone and Guinea.\(^{149}\) The advantage of Bolahun hospital was that it allowed doctors to apply western medicine to treat diseases that were either difficult or impossible to treat with traditional herbs.

The medical services that were provided in Bolahun helped to improve the quality of life of the Bandi and their neighbors. The doctors treated diseases such as malaria, yaws, sleeping sickness, dysentery and tuberculosis and also performed surgery on patients with hernias and diseases such as elephantiasis, glaucoma and hydroceles.\(^{150}\) Patients from Sierra Leone and Guinea who were treated at the Bolahun hospital settled in Bandiland instead of returning to their homes.\(^{151}\) For instance, Mende, Fulani, Kissi, Mandingo and Lebanese from Sierra Leone and Guinea settled in Bolahun between the 1920s and 1940s because of the mission hospital and schools.\(^{152}\)

\(^{147}\)Informant 85, interviewed June 28, 2008, Bolahun Town.
\(^{148}\)HCLM Statement of Policy (1928), p. 6, RG # 72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas; Campbell, *Within the Green Wall*, p. 189.
\(^{149}\)Campbell, p. 186.
\(^{150}\)Ibid., pp. 186–193.
\(^{151}\)Ibid., p. 186.
\(^{152}\)Ibid.
By the 1940s, the number of patients receiving treatment at Bolahun hospital on a daily basis had increased considerably, which led to the erection of new buildings for in-patients and outpatients. The expansion of the hospital and the increase in the number of patients and cases led to the need to train local people to serve as medical assistants. Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende medical assistants were trained to perform services such as giving injections, dispensing drugs, dressing sores as well as helping doctors do surgery and amputations. The training of Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende medical assistants enabled the missionaries to send these medical assistants to provide medical services to their own people in villages, which were several miles away from Bolahun and Bandiland.

One way the missionaries promoted Christianity through health services was that patients who got admitted at the hospital were made to abide by the hospital rules that included Christian prayers in the morning and evening. Moreover, pregnant women who delivered at the hospital were expected to stay in the children’s ward for at least a week, during which time the mothers and babies were not only administered to spiritually, but also they were prepared for baptism before they were allowed to return to their homes or villages. The mothers were also required to attend church services in Bolahun or in their villages every Sunday for prayers for them and their children, which meant that the missionaries were combining physical and spiritual healing in their promotion of Christianity in and outside Bolahun.

The work of the health specialists was an important part of Christian evangelism in Bandiland because the missionaries considered physical healing as another way by

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153 Ibid.
154 Ibid., p. 190.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid., p. 193.
which Christianity would be promoted among the Bandi and their neighbors.\footnote{Ibid.} Rt. Rev. Campbell of the OHC in Bolahun noted the importance the missionaries attached to the use of medical services to attract people to Christianity in Bandiland:

> When they realize that our interest in their welfare is both for this world and yet to come, the natives [will] listen to our message with profound respect and attention. Exactly how many have been brought to Christ through hospital ministrations we have no record, though we know that conversions have been numerous. It has happened at time that some men have been unable to make up their mind and the medical relief given at the St. Joseph's [Hospital] has supplied a little push needed to settle their determination to heed the Christian call.\footnote{The Hinterland, vol. XXVIII, no. 5 (Oct., 1950), p. 3, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.}

Medical services that were provided in Bolahun also attracted some Muslims to Christianity. The treatment of diseases like elephantiasis, dysentery, malaria, fever, yaws and sleeping sickness by the missionary doctors encouraged some Bandi Muslims to embrace Christianity, because Islamic clerics were unable to provide treatment for these diseases.\footnote{The Hinterland (June, 1928), p. 3, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.}

In 1928, a Muslim Chief called Mollie was taken to Bolahun hospital for treatment and after he got well, the Fathers were gratified and at the same time surprised to see him attending church services on Sundays.\footnote{Ibid.} The conversion of Muslim Chief Mollie to Christianity was an event that convinced the missionaries that the provision of free health services in Bolahun would make it possible for the missionaries to attract Muslims and non-Muslims in Bandiland to Christianity.\footnote{Ibid.}

The existence of tropical diseases among the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende at the time missionaries arrived in Bandiland made the hospital in Bolahun an important
asset for promoting Christianity. For instance, yaws was one of the tropical infectious diseases that was widespread in Bandiland. Yaws caused skin eruptions followed by the destruction of the skin and bones of the patients. The treatment of yaws among the Bandi and their neighbors became one of the major objectives of the missionaries, because most yaw patients who were treated at the Bolahun hospital also became part of the congregation that attended services on Sundays at St. Mary’s Church in Bolahun. After five years of existence in Bolahun, the hospital records showed there were over 2000 cases [of yaws] treated at Bolahun hospital in 1928 but only 10 people who got treated became Christians. 

Besides yaws, other diseases that were widespread among the Bandi included sleeping sickness, malaria, elephantiasis and leprosy. These diseases were also treatable at the Bolahun hospital. The trained local medical assistants from the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende were sent to villages to identify patients who were brought to the hospital for treatment. The medical assistants were also trained to perform surgery on hernias, hydroceles and do amputations and most of the patients they treated lived in Bolahun as yard cleaners, gardeners, carpenters and masons for the missionaries. Prominent among the Bandi medical assistants who did not have a medical degree but was trained to perform surgery in Bolahun was Patrick Siafa. The Bolahun hospital depended on Patrick Siafa and other medical assistants to provide medical services to patients after Dr. Maas left in 1930. The Bolahun hospital had six interim doctors between 1930 and 1951, some

163 Ibid.
164 The Hinterland (Feb., 1929), p. 2, RG #2729, DFMS, Box 153, AEC, Austin, Texas.
165 HCLM (Dec., 1947), p. 6, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
of whom could not work for long because of ill-health, while others left early because the missionaries simply could not afford to pay $10,000 a year for the upkeep of each resident doctor.168 As noted, the OHC missionaries in Bolahun were not supported by the Episcopal Church of America and Liberia, but depended mainly on donations from charity organizations and individuals for their work in Bandiland.169 In spite of their limited resources, the missionaries’ training of local medical assistants and the medical services they provided in Bolahun had positive impacts on the treatment of diseases in Bandiland, even though they were unable to eradicate the use of traditional medicine among the Bandi and their neighbors.170

The use of health specialists to promote Christianity was part of the earlier vision of the OHC missionaries in Bandiland. The provision of medical and spiritual services simultaneously was central to the policy of the missionaries to attract the sick to Christianity in Bandiland.171 From the 1930s to the early 1940s, health specialists played important roles in promoting Christianity in villages in Bandiland. These health specialists or medical assistants visited villages to treat people that had malaria, fever and other minor illnesses, but they also served as evangelists. Besides the medical assistants, missionaries such as Fathers Joseph Parsell, Allen, Lynn and Sisters such as Manita Finger who visited villages several miles from Bolahun also took with them pills to treat villagers who were

168Campbell, p. 191.
169Ibid. The OHC missionaries found it difficult to get donations from organizations and individuals to pay doctors during the 1920s and 1930s because of the Great Depression in the United States during this period. Donations were the main sources of support for the work of the missionaries in Bolahun.
171HCLM (December, 1947), p. 6, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas.
sick and needed emergency treatment before regular medical services could be obtained in Bolahun.\textsuperscript{172}

Another disease that was mitigated in Bandiland through the work of the missionary doctor was sleeping sickness. The arrival of a Firestone-paid doctor, E. P. Veatch, to work at the hospital in 1941 brought relief to people who were sleeping sickness patients from within and outside Bandiland. A native of Texas in the United States, Doctor Veatch provided medical services at the Bolahun hospital for three years. He was able to bring sleeping sickness under control, which was one of the deadly diseases that was widespread at the time of the arrival of the missionaries in Bandiland.\textsuperscript{173} The reduction in the cases of sleeping sickness improved the quality of life of the residents of Bolahun and its environs and attracted patients to Christianity. According to Doctor Werner Junge, who also worked at the Bolahun hospital in the 1950s, some of the patients who were treated of sleeping sickness settled in Bolahun and worked as home keepers, yard cleaners and gardeners for the missionaries.\textsuperscript{174}

After he served for three years as the only doctor at the Bolahun Hospital, Veatch left in 1944. Bolahun hospital did not have a medical doctor for seven years after the departure of Doctor Veatch. This meant that medical services at the hospital were provided for seven years mainly by medical assistants from the Bandi, Kissi and Mende ethnic groups. However, another doctor called William B. R. Beasley and his wife came to

\textsuperscript{172}HCLM Statement of Policy (1928), p. 6, RG # 72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas; Campbell, Green Wall, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{173}HCLM (Dec, 1947), p. 7, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas; Junge, African Jungle Doctor, pp. 83–86.
\textsuperscript{174}Junge, African Jungle Doctor, pp. 40–41.
Bolahun in 1951.\textsuperscript{175} Doctor Beasley was an Episcopalian and a native of Memphis, Tennessee. He had taken special training in tropical medicine at Tulane University, New Orleans, and also worked at the United States government leprosy settlement in Carville, Louisiana.\textsuperscript{176} He and his wife decided to go to Bolahun in response to an appeal by the OHC missionaries for a Christian doctor, who would combine physical and spiritual healing while treating patients at the hospital.\textsuperscript{177} The arrival of Doctor Beasley not only furthered the effectiveness of treatment for diseases such as sleeping sickness, malaria and elephantiasis, but he also led the establishment of the first leprosy town called \textit{Mbalotahun} or healing town in Bandiland in 1951.\textsuperscript{178} The leprosy town was established not only to host patients afflicted with leprosy, but it was also established to serve as a “Christian colony,” where patients who lived there would also be taught to live in accordance with Christian principles. The doctor visited the leprosy town twice a week to dispense the needed drugs for the treatment of lepers and also to teach patients about sanitation and the Bible.\textsuperscript{179}

The leprosy town in Bandiland attracted leprosy patients not only from the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende, but it also attracted leprosy patients from Sierra Leone and Guinea.\textsuperscript{180} The settlement of different ethnic and linguistic groups in the leprosy town made the place one of the first multi-lingual Christian settlements in Bandiland. Leprosy patients from different ethnic groups such as the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende who lived

\begin{footnotes}
\item[175] Ibid., p. 192.
\item[176] Campbell, p. 192.
\item[177] HCLM, p. 192.
\item[178] Campbell, p. 192.
\item[179] Ibid.
\item[180] Father Gorham to OHC Chapter, June, 1928, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
\end{footnotes}
in leprosy town could neither understand nor speak English and therefore the missionaries learned to speak and translated the Bible into their languages.\textsuperscript{181} The missionaries made the leprosy patients at Mbalotahun not only embrace Christianity but also adopt western life styles such as sitting at the table to eat with plates and spoons and also to bury their dead in a cemetry outside the leprosy settlement. The missionaries also made the leper patients grow crops such as eddoes, potatoes, pineapples, banana and plantains to feed their families and sell some in local markets in order to secure other food items, clothes and other household necessities.\textsuperscript{182}

The treatment of leprosy patients in Mbalotahun by the missionaries helped to change the beliefs and perceptions of the Bandi that people who had leprosy were involved in witchcraft and therefore their condition was a punishment from God. Such a belief and the lack of traditional medicine to treat leprosy in Bandi villages made leprosy patients to be demonized and stigmatized by their own family members. However, the treatment of leprosy patients at Mbalotahun made Bandi people change their belief that leprosy was a curse and could not be treated. Moreover, leprosy patients in Mbalotahun cultivated their own eddo, potato and pineapple gardens and sold the produce in Bolahun market. Their ability to plant cash crops and earn their own money convinced the Bandi and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia that leprosy patients could live and support themselves as members of the human community. The treatment of leprosy in Mbalotahun was one of the positive effects of Christianity in Bandiland, because it led to a change to the traditional belief among the Bandi that leprosy was a curse. It was only after the missionary doctors began to treat leprosy patients in Mbalotahun that the tradi-

\textsuperscript{181}HCLM Statement of Policy, p. 2, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas
\textsuperscript{182}Campbell, p. 192.
tional belief of associating leprosy with witchcraft began to diminish in Bandi society. Also, the belief that leprosy was a curse began to diminish when leprosy patients who became Christians began to teach the gospel in Bandi villages and attend church services in Bolahun.\textsuperscript{183}

In addition to the treatment of leprosy and other tropical diseases mentioned, the mission hospital also treated tuberculosis, which was difficult to treat with traditional medicines. The treatment of tuberculosis with western drugs attracted many patients to Bolahun, where some of the patients embraced Christianity but others maintained their traditional religious practices.\textsuperscript{184} There were Bandi Poro and Sande\textit{ zoes} who received treatment at the Bolahun hospital but they declined to embrace Christianity because of their traditional roles in Bandi society. Becoming Christians would have meant denouncing their role as Poro and Sande\textit{ zoes} and thereby violating established traditions and the values of their ancestors.\textsuperscript{185} There were also instances whereby people who became Christians occasionally attended church services and some who were treated at the mission hospital promised to attend church services but changed their mind after they returned to their villages.\textsuperscript{186} However, despite the backsliding by some of the patients who claimed to be Christians, the mission hospital did not reject any sick person that went to the hospital for treatment. In addition to diseases, the hospital treated people that had gunshot wounds, snake bites, and dog bites, for which the modern medicine was more effective than traditional medicine. Thus, the mission hospital became a referral place for

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{183}Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{184}HCLM (Dec., 1947), p. 2, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas. \\
\textsuperscript{185}Campbell, pp. 192–193. \\
\textsuperscript{186}HCLM (Dec., 1947), p. 2, RG #72, DFMS, Box 27, AEC, Austin, Texas.}
treatment of a variety of diseases that could not be easily treated by traditional medicine for the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende of northwestern Liberia.\textsuperscript{187}

In addition to the treatment of various tropical diseases, the hospital also provided other medical services that tended to challenge some traditional beliefs and practices among the Bandi and their neighbors. For example, the new practice of a male doctor or medical assistant helping women to deliver babies at the hospital was not embraced by female elders and zoes, because of the traditional belief that the delivering of babies was the responsibility of women and not men. Traditionally, mid-wives in Bandi society were often female elders.\textsuperscript{188} Even though men were not completely ignorant of how babies were delivered, the knowledge was often kept secret among women. Bandi tradition also forbade men from being on the scene when women were about to give birth to babies.\textsuperscript{189} According to Bandi tradition, when a woman was ready to give birth she must be taken to the home of a female elder or to nearby banana groves on the outskirts of the village.\textsuperscript{190} The establishment of a hospital in Bolahun in 1923 provided the opportunity for pregnant women who lived in Bolahun and its vicinity to give birth to their babies at the hospital. In spite of the hospital and the presence of medical doctors in Bolahun, most Bandi women continued with the traditional practice of giving birth in homes or in banana groves.\textsuperscript{191}

Although the missionaries encouraged Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende women to go to the mission hospital for delivery, the traditional belief held by these ethnic groups

\textsuperscript{187}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{188}Dennis, \textit{Gbandes}, pp. 7–9.
\textsuperscript{190}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{191}Dennis, \textit{Gbandes}, p. 8.
that knowledge and secrecy surrounding the delivery of babies should not revealed to men made Bandi women unwilling to go to the mission hospital for delivery of babies. The belief was that if they were to go to the hospital and men helped them deliver, it would be against tradition and the consequence would be the death of the child and/or the mother. Thus, if pregnant women were forced to go to the hospital for delivery, they would often demand that only women and not men should be in the delivery room. However, the hospital did not have female nurses to assist with the delivery of babies. Thus, in order to encourage pregnant women to go to the hospital for delivery, the missionaries agreed to employ traditional mid-wives in the late 1920s and early 1930s until women were trained as nurses to replace the traditional mid-wives.192

In order to respect the traditional Bandi practice of allowing women to deliver babies and also to encourage females in the health profession, the missionaries decided to train female students as nurses. The students would serve as mid-wives not only at the hospital but also in villages where the missionaries had established churches and schools. However, the initial attempt to have women trained as nurses to serve as mid-wives in the hospital in the 1920s and 1930s was hampered by the lack of a nursing school in northwestern Liberia.193 However, by the mid-1940s, the traditional opposition to men delivering babies in Bandi society began to change after missionary doctors began to use the cesarean section operation to help pregnant women with complications to give birth at the mission hospital.194 The use of a cesarean section to help pregnant women with complications to deliver their babies helped to change the long held belief and perception among

192Ibid., p. 9.
194Dennis, p. 7.
Bandi women that those babies who were bridged in the stomach of a pregnant woman were put there by evil spirits or witchcraft.  

The cesarean section also helped to minimize the death of children and their mothers, which was frequent in Bandi villages because of risks involved in using traditional methods to deliver babies. The delivery of babies through cesarean section by the missionary doctors and medical assistants also helped to change the traditional belief among Bandi women that not only women but men could also deliver babies. In addition, the application of modern medical knowledge such as cesarean section at the mission hospital helped to save lives and also attracted women to Christianity. The pregnant women who gave birth to babies at the mission hospital also became hearers of the Christian faith, because the missionaries involved them in prayers and church services during and after their maternity stay at the hospital. Thus, the mission hospital was used not only to give people physical healing, but it was also used as an instrument of Christianization, as the OHC missionaries had envisioned before they arrived in Liberia:

The [missionary] doctor will use his medical knowledge as a means to an end, and that end will be to draw the souls of men and women to Him who alone can recover them from mortal sickness of the soul. As he [doctor] exercises his healing art he must be ready to point his patients to the Great Physician, God.  

As noted above, one of the main responsibilities of a missionary doctor was to combine his medical knowledge with spiritual knowledge to attract his patients to Christianity. In the process of offering both physical and spiritual healing to the sick, the missionary doctor was also transforming the way of life of the people by changing some of

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197 HCLM (1921), p. 8.
their beliefs and practices that were considered to be impediments to the spread of Christianity. Thus, in addition to using modern medicine to change some of the traditionally held beliefs among women in Bandi society, the missionary doctor also used his knowledge to change some of the traditional beliefs among Bandi men. For instance, there was a belief among Bandi men that only men could perform kondoi or male circumcision in the kondoi loboi or circumcision bush.\textsuperscript{198} Traditionally, male circumcision in Bandi society was often performed by the male specialists. Women were not to be around during male circumcision, and men were prohibited from discussing the procedure with women.\textsuperscript{199}

However, the belief about circumcision among Bandi men also began to change after missionary doctors began performing circumcision of boys at the mission hospital in Bolahun in the 1940s. The missionaries also taught Christian families about the risks associated with the circumcision of their children in the Poro bush with unsterile instruments. The presence of the hospital and doctors in Bolahun made Christian families prefer the hospital rather than the use of kondoi or traditional methods of circumcision. The preference for western methods of circumcision for Christianized and educated Bandi men showed how Christianity and westernization affected traditional practice in Bandi society. The traditional practice of circumcision was not totally eradicated among Bandi Christians. Thus, while the practice of male circumcision in the presence of women represented change in traditional Bandi practice, the persistence of traditional methods of male circumcision in Bandi villages and towns showed continuity in traditional values in Bandi society.\textsuperscript{200}

\textsuperscript{198}Dennis, pp. 143–144.
\textsuperscript{199}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{200}Ibid., pp. 143–144.
The training and use of medical assistants from the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende enhanced the provision of medical services in areas outside Bolahun and Bandiland.\textsuperscript{201} As noted, medical assistants from Bolahun were sent to Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende villages where the missionaries had stations to treat sick people who were unable to go to the mission hospital.\textsuperscript{202} From the 1950s to early 1960s, the missionaries sent women from Bolahun to Zorzor to acquire a nursing education from the Curran Lutheran Hospital and School of Nursing, which was established in 1921.\textsuperscript{203} Female graduates of the Curran Hospital School of Nursing worked at the Bolahun hospital, but the missionaries also sent some of them to work as mid-wives in villages in and outside Bandiland. The female nurses also trained traditional women in medical knowledge relating to mid-wifery and childbirth.\textsuperscript{204}

Most of the medical assistants and nurses (who were Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende) were sent to their own villages and communities where they provided medical services, but they also taught the Bible in their own languages. The provision of medical services and the teaching of the Bible in local languages attracted ordinary Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende to Christianity, even though they did not abandon their traditional beliefs and practices in their villages. In spite of the Christian teachings and provision of medical services, aspects of traditional Bandi systems were also maintained in villages as illustrated in activities such as making offerings to ancestral spirits, bathing in water mixed with herbs, preserving totemic beliefs, polygynous marriage and the payment of dowries. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that even though Christianity was accepted in Bandi-

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{203} Joseph Conrad Wold, \textit{God's Impatience}, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{204} Dennis, pp. 7–9.
land, the Bandi who became Christians also maintained their interest in traditional beliefs and practices such as Poro and Sande education, paying homage to ancestors, holding on to totemic beliefs and polygynous marriage. Moreover, the lack of commitment among older Bandi Christians to uphold some of the core Christian principles such as attending church services every Sunday, monogamous marriage, and payment of tithes and offerings showed that they became attracted to Christianity mainly because that would enable them to have access to benefits such as jobs, materials and medical treatments that were provided by the missionaries and not because they were desirous of becoming committed Christians. Consequently, there were men and women that called themselves Christians in Bandi towns and villages but also continued to hold onto traditional beliefs and practices.  

The promotion of Christianity in Bandi towns and villages encountered difficulties in areas that had the dominant influence of other religions such as Islam in southwestern Bandiland. The presence of a large Bandi Muslim population in southwestern Bandiland made it difficult for missionaries to promote Christianity in towns and villages in the area. However, the Bandi were more receptive to Christianity than Islam even though the latter had existed in Bandiland since the late nineteenth century. One main reason for the popularity of Christianity in Bandiland was that Islam simply could not compete with all that Christianity had to offer spiritually, physically and materially.  

The treatment of hernias and dreadful diseases such as yaws, sleeping sickness, tuberculosis, and elephantiasis at the mission hospital led to Christianity commanding greater respect than Islam among the Bandi and their neighbors. Furthermore, the missionaries also provided job opportunities

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205 Ibid., p. 180.
that enabled ordinary people to work and earn money to pay their taxes, which attracted both Muslims and non-Muslims to Christianity as noted in one of the missionary reports from Bolahun:

On Friday we were greatly surprised to see quite a congregation gather for service. It was composed chiefly of our hired men, most of who profess to be [Muslims] Islam. After service, one of them came next day to me seeking [religious] instruction and Christian Baptism.207

The medical services and the job opportunities provided by the missionaries attracted Bandi Muslims to the Bolahun mission, where only Christians or those wanting to become Christians were allowed to settle until the 1960s.208 Bandi Muslims and non-Muslim Bandi who wanted to live in Bolahun and work for the missionaries or attend the mission schools prior to the 1960s would have to embrace Christianity. While there was no organized resistance to Christianity in Bandiland from the Muslims, there was “silent opposition” to Christian evangelism in Muslim-dominated towns such as Massambolahun and Sosomoilahun (see Map 6). These towns had large Mosques and Muslim schools that provided Islamic education for children of Bandi Muslims, which made it difficult for missionaries to establish and promote Christianity among the residents. In addition, most of the Bandi Muslim leaders lived in these towns and the influence of these Muslim leaders made it difficult for missionaries to attract people to Christianity. One main reason why Bandi Muslim leaders would not openly show resentment or opposition to Christianity was that they too benefited from the work of the missionaries in the area of medical services at the mission hospital.209

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207Rev. Campbell to Hughson, July 1, 1923, OHC Chapter, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 4, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
208Wold, God’s Impatience, p. 90.
209Father Gorham to OHC Chapter, June 1928, West Park, N.Y., RG #72, DFMS, Box 151, OHC Records, AEC, Austin, Texas.
The provision of medical services, especially the treatment of diseases such as yaws, leprosy and sleeping sickness, was among the enduring effects of Christian work in Bandiland. The mission doctors did not discriminate against non-Christians but treated all sick people who visited the hospital, which became a source of inspiration and attraction for people to Christianity. The medical report of the mission hospital showed that after twenty-two years of Christianity in Bandiland, the hospital had treated more than 50,000 patients and missionary doctors succeeded in mitigating sleeping sickness among the Bandi.\(^{210}\) In spite of the modern medical services introduced in Bandiland for more than five decades, the use of herbs and other traditional medicine for treatment of diseases would continue among the Bandi, especially in villages far away from modern hospitals in westernized areas like Bolahun and Kolahun.\(^{211}\)

The foregoing explanations show that Christianity brought about changes such as the promotion of the gospel of Christ through teaching Christian beliefs, formal education and providing western medical services in Bandi society. However, the OHC missionaries’ attempt to promote Christianity among the Bandi through evangelism, Christian education and medical services also led to Africanization of Christianity, which tended to engender continuity in traditional Bandi systems. Specific examples of the continuity of traditional values in Bandi society as a result of the efforts of the missionaries and Bandi Christians included the use of the Bandi language in mission schools and churches in Bandiland, reading the gospel in the Bandi language, preserving the Poro and Sande schools, respecting totemic beliefs and hosting the annual Christmas festivals that in-

\(^{210}\)Campbell, pp. 186–194.

volved the spiritual leaders of the Poro. The missionaries encouraged the survival of traditional Bandi values by supporting these beliefs and practices among Bandi students and Christians. The speaking of the Bandi language in schools and churches and the translation of the Bible from English to the Bandi language enabled young Bandi men and women to preserve their Bandi language and also traditional Bandi values. Furthermore, the use of the Bandi language by the missionaries, Bandi evangelists and Bandi medical assistants in Bandi towns and villages served to enhance continuity in Bandi traditions. The missionaries encouraged monogamous marriage among Bandi Christians, but they were reluctant to enforce the eradication of polygynous marriage among the Bandi chiefs and elders because of the fear that doing so would disrupt Bandi social and economic systems. The missionaries also encouraged continuity in traditional Bandi beliefs and practices by promoting rice farming, sponsoring students to attend the Poro and Sande schools, and allowing Bandi Christians to respect the totems of their families as long as they did not make sacrifices to them. Thus, while the missionaries were opposed to traditional Bandi practices that conflicted with Christian principles, they also encouraged other traditional Bandi practices that promoted Christian and traditional values in Bandi society.
CHAPTER 7

THE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES OF THE LIBERIAN STATE IN RELATION TO CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN BANDILAND

This chapter explores how the administrative policies of the Liberian state enhanced change and continuity in traditional Bandi systems. Specifically, it analyzes the establishment of Liberian state authority in Bandiland, the reorganization and regulation of traditional Bandi political and social systems, the roles of the Liberian District Commissioners (DC) and Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) in the administration of Bandiland, and the Bandi revolt against the authority of the Liberian state between 1907 and 1919.

The Establishment of Liberian State Authority in Bandiland

The Liberian state was mainly confined to the coastal areas and extended only 40 miles inland until the administration of President Arthur Barclay who served from 1904 to 1912. The Barclay administration adopted a policy that led to the expansion of the authority of the Liberian state into the interior.¹ The policy was designed to govern the interior ethnic groups through traditional chiefs. The chiefs would be supervised by Liberian government-appointed commissioners.² The chiefs were to assist the commissioners to administer the interior according to Liberian and customary laws. For instance, the chiefs were to assist the commissioners to enforce the Liberian law that prohibited

arranged marriages in Bandi society, but the chiefs were also to ensure that customs relating to polygynous marriage were respected in their areas. The chiefs were to assist commissioners in maintaining law and order in the interior and in enforcing government policy relating to collecting taxes from residents of towns and villages. The interior policy of the Liberian state during the administration of Arthur Barclay (1904–1912) was patterned on the indirect rule policy developed and practiced by the British in northern Nigeria and in other British West African colonies such as Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast.³

In 1909, President Barclay sent Major William D. Lomax and Acting Commissioner John W. Cooper to the northwestern interior to secure land treaties with Bandi, Kissi, Mende and Loma chiefs.⁴ Major Lomax and Cooper were also mandated to ensure that the British respected the agreement of 1903 that defined the boundary between Liberia and Sierra Leone north of the Mano River.⁵ The British colonial government in Sierra Leone had recognized Liberia’s claims to the town of Kailahun in 1903, but no officials of the Liberian government had visited the town since the demarcation of the boundary. The absence of Liberian authority in northwestern Liberia provided the opportunity for the British to maintain not only soldiers and custom officers in the town of Kailahun, but British traders and solders also encouraged the Mende, Kissi and Bandi chiefs on the Liberian side of the border to disobey the laws of the Liberian government. The British first attempted to annex the town of Kailahun after British Commissioner Thomas J. Alldridge had signed a land treaty with the leading Kissi chief called Kailondo in 1890.⁶

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³Ibid.
⁶Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone, p. 490.
Based on the Alldridge-Kailondo Treaty, the British decided to assign soldiers and customs officers to Kailahun in 1902. However, the Liberian-British boundary agreement of 1903 made Kailahun a Liberian town. The British refusal to recognize Liberia’s claim over Kailahun was based on the inability of the latter to effectively control the area. Nevertheless, the Liberian government considered the British soldiers’ occupation of Kailahun as a violation of its sovereignty. Against this background, President Arthur Barclay sent Lomax and Cooper to northwestern Liberia in 1906 to examine and report on the situation regarding Kailahun and the upper regions of the Liberian-Sierra Leonean frontier. Major Lomax and Cooper were also mandated to meet Bandi, Kissi, Mende and Loma chiefs and sign land treaties with them, thereby ensuring the ceding of their lands to Liberia.

The Liberian government and the British concluded several agreements between 1903 and 1908 regarding the boundary between Liberia and Sierra Leone, especially in areas inhabited by the Bandi, Mende and Kissi. However, with the help of the United States government, the Liberian and British governments established a joint Liberian-British boundary commission that signed an agreement in 1911 that made Kailahun part of Sierra Leone. The British gave the Liberian government $400 and ceded the uninhabited and less fertile region between the Mano River and Morro River to Liberia. The 1911 agreement divided the Mende and Kissi between Liberia and Sierra Leone, but the Bandi

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remained mainly on the Liberian side of the border. A subsequent boundary agreement signed between Liberia and France in 1907 divided the Bandi between Liberia and Guinea, where the Bandi are referred to as Zialo.

Before the arrival of Lomax and Cooper in Bandiland in 1907, the British Commissioner, Alldridge, had toured parts of Bandiland, Lomaland and Mendeland in 1898 in a quest to secure land treaties with chiefs. He was, however, unable to secure treaties with Bandi, Loma and Mende chiefs to give their lands to the British colonial government in Sierra Leone. Almost a decade after the visit of Alldridge, Lomax and Cooper arrived in Bandiland and Lomaland where they secured an agreement with Bandi chiefs Hagbe Kalee Falla of Kamatahum in Hasala and Mambulu Vojo Yamma of Yomatahun also in Hasala in 1907 (see Map 8). These agreements allowed the Liberian government to establish its authority in Bandiland. Lomax and Cooper subsequently appointed Chief Mambulu Yamma of Yomatahun as Paramount Chief of Bandiland. As is examined later in this chapter, many Bandi chiefs refused to recognize the appointment of Mambulu as Paramount Chief, which led to the arrest and execution of eight other chiefs. The deaths of those chiefs subsequently led to a revolt against the Liberian government in Bandiland in the early twentieth century.

The Liberian government sent soldiers of the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) in 1909 to help Lomax and Cooper establish authority in Bandiland. The Liberian government

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11Bah, Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone, p.37.
16Ibid.
17Ibid.
Map 8: Hasala Bandi and Towns


was able to establish the first administrative posts and military barracks in Bandiland in the towns of Kamatahun in Hasala and Kolahun in Tahamba in 1911. The Liberian government modeled its administrative system in Bandiland on the indirect rule policy that the British practiced in Sierra Leone and Nigeria in the nineteenth century. The Liberian government appointed District Commissioners (DCs) to administer Bandiland through the chiefs, some of whom were appointed by the government for administrative purposes. Some old chiefs were removed from power if they were unwilling to cooperate

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18Ibid.
with the DCs. The Liberian government in Bandiland sought to preserve and encourage traditional social and political systems that were not contrary to Liberian laws and to change those that were considered to be incompatible with the policies and laws of the Liberian state. The administrative policies of the government in Bandiland and other parts of the interior were designed to make sure that relations between the DCs and the chiefs would be the DCs serving as advisers to the chiefs and also the chiefs implementing government policies such as the collection of taxes and recruitment of laborers for government projects. District commissioners in Bandiland regularly interfered in the affairs of Bandi chiefs. The Liberian government policy of indirect rule directed that Bandi chiefs owed allegiance to the Liberian state through DCs and soldiers who were responsible to enforce government laws and regulations in Bandiland.  

The Liberian government’s policy of indirect rule in Bandiland was similar to the British indirect rule policy in Sierra Leone and Nigeria in that the Liberian and British governments ruled the ethnic groups through their chiefs and traditional institutions. Meanwhile, the Liberian government’s administration of Bandiland was not a classical colonial administration as practiced by the British in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. For instance, unlike the Liberian system of administration in Bandiland, the British colonial system in West Africa was characterized by exploitation of African land and labor and repatriation of profits to Britain. The establishment of the Liberian government authority in Bandiland was not primarily motivated by economic interests, but dictated by the encroachments of the British and French on Liberia’s claimed territories.

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20 Akpan, “Practice of Indirect Rule,” p. 78.
In both Liberian and British administrative systems, the chiefs owed loyalty to the central governments. In Bandiland, even though the commissioners were black, the misuse of authority and display of superior attitudes towards the Bandi were not different from those of the white British commissioners in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Like the British, the Liberian government found itself in a position of having to establish administrative control over large indigenous populations in Bandiland. The indirect rule policy enabled the Liberian government to rule Bandiland through its traditional chiefs including Mambulu, Fofi Konneh, Memor Ndorlleh and Jusu Dunor, who helped the government implement its polices in Bandiland. Although these chiefs were allowed to govern their people in accordance with Liberian and traditional Bandi laws and values, Bandi chiefs were required to be loyal to the Liberian government.

The Reorganization and Regulation of Bandi Political and Social Systems

The appointment of John W. Cooper by President Arthur Barclay (1904–1912) as Provincial Commissioner (PC) of the Western Province in 1909 marked the beginning of the establishment of Liberian state authority in Bandiland. President Barclay sent Cooper as an administrator of the Bandi, Kissi, Mende and Loma areas. Cooper and Lomax administered the areas of these ethnic groups until 1912. They were recalled as result of their

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22 Ibid.
involvement in the death of eight Bandi chiefs and their order to LFF soldiers to raid and burn Kissi villages in 1911.\textsuperscript{25}

After the removal of Commissioner Cooper and Major Lomax from the Western Province, President Daniel E. Howard (1913–1920) appointed Didhwo Tweh in 1913 as commissioner to administer the Bandi, Kissi and Mende.\textsuperscript{26} Tweh had previously served on the Liberian-Sierra Leonean boundary commission and he was aware of the resentments among the Kissi and Bandi against the Liberian government’s policies of taxation and forced labor by LFF soldiers. Kissi resentments led to the 1912 Kissi Revolt. Although Tweh was mandated by President Howard in 1913 to resolve the crisis in Kissiland, he failed to put down the Kissi revolt and he was subsequently removed as commissioner of the Western province.\textsuperscript{27} In order to establish effective control in the interior and discourage conflicts among ethnic groups, the Liberian government divided the interior into five districts in 1915 and appointed civilian as well as military personnel to administer these districts. The areas of the Bandi, Kissi, Loma and Mende in northwestern Liberia were designated as Voinjama-Kolahun District. The district was administered by a District Commissioner (DC). The DC was assisted by local chiefs who demonstrated their allegiance to the Liberian government.\textsuperscript{28}

In 1932, the Liberian interior was further reduced to three provinces that became known as the Western, Central and Eastern provinces.\textsuperscript{29} Each province was administered by a Provincial Commissioner who was appointed by the president. The government

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{25}Akpan, “Practice of Indirect Rule,” p. 135; Massing, “Materials for a History of Liberia,” pp. 103–104.
\item\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 127.
\item\textsuperscript{27}Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{28}Charles A. Clarke, “Administrative Centralization and Its Impact,” p. 41.
\item\textsuperscript{29}LGD, “Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations,” Article 1, p. 1.
\end{itemize}
further divided the provinces into districts and the districts were divided into chiefdoms.\textsuperscript{30} While districts were administered by the DCs, the chiefdoms were administered by Paramount Chiefs, the clans were administered by the clan chiefs and towns were administered by the town chiefs. The chiefs were expected to be loyal to the Liberian government.\textsuperscript{31}

The DC in Bandiland was appointed by the president. However, the Paramount Chief of Bandiland was selected by a council of Bandi chiefs but subject to the approval of the Liberian president.\textsuperscript{32} Besides the paramount chief, individuals who were selected as clan chiefs in Bandiland had to be approved by the government. Thus, the chiefs became functionaries of the Liberian state in the administration of Bandiland. The clan chief was second in authority to the Paramount Chief in Bandiland. The chiefs who had previously ruled were allowed to remain in power as long as they would help the government collect taxes and maintain law and order in their towns.\textsuperscript{33} The paramount chiefs, clan chiefs and town chiefs were also allowed to govern their people in accordance with local customs, provided that such customs did not conflict with policies of the Liberian government.\textsuperscript{34}

The PC of the Western Province was responsible to supervise the activities of the DC in Bandiland and also investigate all complaints of paramount chiefs and subordinate chiefs against the DC.\textsuperscript{35} Additionally, the PC was to visit each district in his province at least once in a year in order to reinforce government policies and keep himself informed of the social and economic activities of the people.\textsuperscript{36} The chiefs ruled according to Liberian and

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., Articles 1–4, pp. 1–2.
\textsuperscript{31}Akpan, "Practice of Indirect Rule," p. 135.
\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., Article 22, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{33}Gershoni, Colonialism, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35}LGD, "Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations," Article 5, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid.
customary laws, which meant that they promoted change and helped to maintain continuity in Bandi society.\textsuperscript{37}

According to Bandi tradition, town elders were responsible to select town chiefs based on consensus. Bandiland was not ruled by one chief until the appointment of Mambulu in 1909, but some Bandi chiefs had been more powerful than others. For instance, warrior chiefs or individuals who became chiefs as a result of being warriors were more powerful and feared by other chiefs. Although there were many warrior chiefs in Bandiland, none was so powerful that he became supreme ruler of Bandiland. Thus, the appointment of Mambulu as ruler of Bandiland by the Liberian government represented a marked change in the traditional Bandi political system. Even though Mambulu was appointed Paramount Chief of Bandiland in 1909, the different subdivisions of Bandiland were not united as a single political entity called the Bandi Chiefdom until 1932. The merger of the six subdivisions of Bandiland into one chiefdom also changed the political dynamics in Bandiland. The town chiefs were subjected to the authority of the Paramount Chief who became the political leader of the Bandi Chiefdom. However, the Paramount Chief was not appointed by the Liberian government. Instead, he was selected by consensus among a council of chiefs that consisted of clan chiefs and town chiefs. The new arrangement represented the Liberian government’s policy to enhance effective administration of Bandiland through the chiefs.\textsuperscript{38} While the Paramount Chief was the highest ranking traditional political leader of the Bandi Chiefdom, he was subject to the orders of the DC.\textsuperscript{39}

Only the President of Liberia and not the DC had the authority to approve or disapprove

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{37}] Akpan, “Practice of Indirect Rule,” pp. 133–135.
\item[\textsuperscript{38}] Ibid., Article 21, p. 13.
\item[\textsuperscript{39}] Ibid., Article 22, p. 14.
\end{itemize}
the individual selected as paramount chief of Bandiland. The PC and DC were responsible to ensure that an individual selected as a Paramount Chief remained loyal to the Liberian government and to enforce its policies in Bandiland.

In order to further reorganize and reinforce its authority in the Western Province, the Liberian government divided the province into four districts. The Bandi, Kissi and Mende chiefdoms were designated as District Number Two in 1942. Although the Western Province was divided into districts, the position of the PC remained until 1964 when the Liberian government under the administration of William V. S. Tubman transformed the Western Province into Lofa County. The creation of District Number Two also meant the separation of Kolahun District from Voinjama-Kolahun District, which had existed since the division of the interior into five districts in 1915. The Bandi town of Kolahun became the headquarters of District Number Two, which also became known as Kolahun District, consisting of the Bandi, Kissi and Mende Chiefdoms. The creation of Kolahun District led to the appointment of a DC that was responsible for governing the Bandi, Kissi and Mende Chiefdoms. The DC of Kolahun District was subject to authority of the PC of Western Province until the area became a County in 1964.

The DC served as chief executive, commander of the LFF and chief justice of the Kolahun District. He was appointed by the president and responsible to him through the secretary of the interior. The DC was responsible to enforce both government and cus-
tomary laws in his district. The DC and chiefs were to recommit themselves to the collection of taxes in Bandiland. The commissioner was also required to have a conference of Bandi chiefs at the district headquarters. The conference was to review and reinforce administrative and tax policies of the government. The taxes that were collected from towns and villages were to be transported to Monrovia by the revenue agent and soldiers of the LFF assigned to Bandiland.

Although chieftaincies existed in the traditional Bandi political system, these chieftaincies were empowered by Liberian government laws that made the chiefs representatives of the government in Bandi society. While the clan chiefs and the paramount chief were Bandi, the DCs were not Bandi. However, Bandi chiefs became part of the Liberian government’s structure of administration as evidenced by their roles as enforcers of the government’s administrative and tax policies in Bandiland. Although the collection of government taxes was the official responsibility of a revenue agent, the agent often left such responsibility to Bandi chiefs. The chiefs were required to recruit men and occasionally women to carry out tasks such as the making of government farms, and the construction of public roads and dwelling places.

The DC was responsible to relay government orders to the Paramount Chief, who in turn would send an order to the clan chief and to the town chief. A clan was a political unit the Liberian government introduced into Bandiland. The government divided Bandiland (same as Bandi Chiefdom) into six clans. These included the Volukoha Clan,

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47}LGD, “Revised Laws,” Article 29, pp. 7, 29.
\item \textsuperscript{48}Ibid., Article 22, p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{49}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{50}Ibid., Article 36, p. 23.
\item \textsuperscript{51}Ibid., Article 22, p. 14.
\end{itemize}
Tahamba Clan, the Wanwoma Clan, the Lukasu Clan, the Hasala Clan and the Hembe Clan, which corresponded to the six subdivisions of Bandiland. One of the responsibilities of the clan chief was to make a monthly tour of towns within his clan to hear people’s complaints or grievances against their town chiefs. The clan chief was also empowered to review complaints in cases that were not settled by the town chief. Such an arrangement was contrary to what was practiced in traditional Bandi government in which the elders were the court of appeal in cases involving the town chief and the people of his town. Moreover, in traditional Bandi government, secular and non-secular matters that were beyond the jurisdiction of the town chief were often referred to the elders and zoës of the Poro. These represented major changes in Bandi society. The Liberian government allowed Bandi towns to be governed by certain aspects of customary laws such as not entering the town with a bundle of wood on the head and not pounding rice in a mortar in town at night. According to Bandi tradition, entering a town with a bundle of wood on the head was equated to imitating the carrying of a dead body on the head and thus inviting misfortune in the town, while pounding rice in a mortar at night meant inviting witchcraft to town for festivities. The preservation of Liberian and customary laws in Bandi towns meant change and continuity Bandi society. The Liberian government’s empowerment of clan chiefs to settle secular and non-secular cases also represented a departure from Bandi tradition because chiefs and zoës were traditionally responsible to settle secular and non-secular cases respectively.  

Another change the Liberian government introduced into Bandiland was the way justice was administered to people who violated government and customary laws. The

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52Ibid., Article 24, p. 15.
laws of the Liberian state superseded the customary laws of Bandiland. However, the government maintained Bandi customary laws as long as they promoted peace and stability in Bandiland. The courts of the town chiefs, clan chiefs and paramount chief were allowed to apply customary laws to settle cases involving traditional marriage, divorce, personal injury and violation of norms of the town, but cases that involved different ethnic groups, murder and government officials were referred to the court of the DC.

Moreover, if soldiers of the LFF, revenue and sanitation agents violated customary laws while on tour in Bandi towns, these officials were to be investigated in the joint court of the DC and paramount chief. If such a joint court was held in a village, customary laws would be applied to settle the case. However, the government did ignore some of the local customs and practices in their administration of justice in Bandi towns. For instance, the Liberian government empowered chiefs to impose monetary fines on people found guilty in customary courts, which was a departure from traditional practices in which the courts of the chiefs and elders often imposed fines on guilty people in material terms such as rice, palm oil and meat. Bandi chiefs relied on the wisdom of their elders and the authority assigned to them by the Liberian government to govern the people. Their reliance on traditional values and Liberian government laws to settle cases in Bandi towns was another example of change and continuity.

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53 Ibid., Articles 38, 39, 40, 41, pp. 25, 26, 27.
54 Ibid.; Buell, Native Problem, p. 745.
56 LGD, “Interior Department General Instruction,” 1904, Monrovia, Liberia, Box 9, File 13, p. 3; Liberian Collection Projects, Indiana University, Bloomington.
Another change the Liberian government introduced into Bandiland was the election of leaders. The right of Bandi adults to elect their leaders was introduced into Bandiland during the administration of President William V. S. Tubman (1944–1971). This initiative, introduced in 1946, was part of Tubman’s policy to politically integrate ethnic Liberians. Before the Tubman administration, a council of chiefs would recommend someone to the President to serve as a chief of the Bandi people. The recommended individual became chief if the President approved the recommendation.⁵⁸ The 1949 revised laws governing the interior administration required town chiefs to be elected by permanent residents of their towns, clan chiefs elected by residents of the towns within the clan, and a paramount chief elected by residents of his chiefdom.⁵⁹ The laws also provided that elected chiefs would serve in their positions for their lifetime. However, they could be dismissed for proved misconduct, but such a dismissal had to be approved by the President.⁶⁰ Although a law such as chiefs serving in their positions for their lifetime was not put into practice, the election of Bandi chiefs, however, was an example of a change the Liberian government introduced into Bandiland in the 1940s.⁶¹

Although the Bandi were allowed to elect their chiefs after the 1940s, they were not allowed to remove them from office without the approval of the Liberian government. The government paid the chiefs a commission from taxes they collected in their areas.⁶² Thus, while the government considered the elected chiefs to be leaders of the people, the new roles of the elected chiefs such as collecting taxes and recruiting laborers for the

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⁵⁹Ibid.
⁶⁰Ibid., Article 27, p. 17.
government made the people consider these chiefs as agents of the Liberian government. In Bandiland, the people saw the clan chiefs and paramount chiefs as allies of the Liberian government. The complaints of exploitation and abuse of power by DCs and paramount chiefs in Bandiland became widespread after the Bandi, Kissi and Mende chiefdoms gained district status as a result of the separation of Voinjama-Kolahun District in 1940.\footnote{Presidential Secretary R. S. S. Bright to District Commissioner C. Cecil Dennis, September 16, 1940; Executive Presidential Correspondence with Interior Department and Commissioners of Voinjama-Kolahun District, Western Province, Jan.-June, 1941, Box 6, File 14, LGD, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.}

The complaints of the Bandi people clearly demonstrated that they strongly disliked some of the policies of the Liberian government in Bandiland, especially those that interfered with aspects of traditional Bandi practices. For instance, the government’s prohibition of the traditional practice of arranged marriage in Bandi society was disliked by the Bandi people. The practice involved parents choosing a man for their daughter to marry. However, the administration of President Edwin Barclay declared in 1935 that it was against Liberian law for a woman to be forced to marry a man who was not her choice.\footnote{LGD, “Minutes of Conference Held in Kolahun,” 1935, Box 8, File 5, p. 8.} President Barclay’s declaration created problems for chiefs and ordinary people in Bandiland. For example, the declaration made it possible for young girls in Bandiland to divorce their older husbands with the justification that their parents made them marry the man against their will. Thus, during President Barclay’s meeting with Bandi, Kissi and Mende chiefs in Kolahun in 1935, Bandi Paramount Chief Memor N’dolleh informed the president that, Some of the girls were given into marriage by their parents to chiefs and they used the laws to break the marriage, leaving their parents sometimes in huge debt because of the dowry and other gifts the parents of these girls have received from the chiefs.\footnote{Paramount Chief Memor N’dorlleh to President Edwin Barclay, quoted in “Minutes of Conference,” pp. 7–8.}
The Bandi considered the prohibition of arranged marriages as government interference in traditional practices. They also viewed it as an attempt to deprive parents of their traditional rights over their daughters. Chief N’dolleh told President Barclay that some of the chiefs and elders of Bandiland had decided to move and settle on the Sierra Leonean side of the border because they had lost their daughters and young wives as a result of the government marriage laws.66

One of the main reasons the government gave for prohibiting arranged marriage practices was that they violated the rights of women to choose men they wanted to marry. Although it prohibited the arranged marriage practices in Bandi society, the government approved the traditional practice that required a groom to pay a dowry to the bride’s family. In its 1949 revised laws regarding traditional marriage among interior ethnic groups, the Liberian government noted that dowry payments by the groom to the bride’s parents that was practiced by ethnic groups such as the Bandi, Belle, Gola, Kissi, Loma and Mende would continue.67 The regulations further stated that if the bride had no parents alive or no proved relative to receive her dowry, she would be considered a ward of the town chief and the elders would receive the dowry.68

The government also approved the practice in which if the bride decided to divorce her husband, her family was required to refund the dowry paid by the groom and his family. Although these government regulations encouraged continuity of this aspect of the traditional Bandi marriage system, there were also other government regulations that changed aspects of traditional Bandi marriage practices. For example, instead of making

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66Ibid.
68Ibid.
dowry payments in material things such as traditional cloth, gowns, mats, rice, chickens and palm oil, the government ordered dowries to be paid in dollars and that the amount would not exceed $40.00.\textsuperscript{69} Even though the $40.00 was less than what was required traditionally, the government order posed problems for Bandi men because many of them could not afford the cash to pay the dowries and found it difficult to marry. The government also issued the following laws that modified traditional Bandi marriage practices:

It is illegal to pay dowry for a girl that has not reached the age of 15 years. And if a man pays $40 as dowry to the parents of his wife and the wife abandoned him without proved reason of cruelty on the part of the man, the family of the woman must pay $100 as damages in addition to the $40 refund to the man. No man would abuse or mistreat his wife to confess her lover’s or lovers’ name to him. If a man takes a virginity of a girl who was at the age to be dowry but was not dowry, that man would pay $48.00 to the parents of the girl. Moreover, the man would marry to the girl if the two agreed to such marriage. If a man knowingly has an affair with a married woman and wean her baby, that man would be compelled to pay all expenses made by the child’s father from the time of birth of the child and additional $10.00 for damages to the child’s father.\textsuperscript{70}

The above government laws served to prohibit certain marriage practices that Bandi tradition approved. For instance, Bandi traditions allowed a man to pay 

\textit{nya-ha hor-wen} (woman price) or a dowry in advance to a pregnant woman and her husband with the hope that if the woman did give birth to a girl child, that girl would become his future wife. The practice of a man paying a dowry to the parents of his future wife was intended to stop other men showing interest for the girl after she was born. If the parents of this future wife-to-be accepted the dowry, the practice was also considered to be an arranged marriage in Bandi tradition. The government marriage laws failed to stop such a traditional Bandi marriage practice. Another marriage practice that the government laws

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., p. 34.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., pp. 34–35.
were not able to enforce in Bandi society was fines for a man who had an affair with a girl that was engaged but not yet married. For instance, the monetary fine of $48.00 imposed by the government law on a man who had an affair with another man’s wife was not enforced. While such government laws were meant to discourage practices such as under-age marriage for girls, adultery, fornication and marital conflicts among the Bandi and other interior ethnic groups, the government’s inability to enforce these laws led to continuity in these marital practices in Bandi society. Government officials such as the DC and soldiers were unable to visit towns and villages to enforce these marriage laws; Bandi chiefs were equally unwilling to enforce these laws in their areas.^{71} Therefore, some aspects of traditional Bandi marriage practices continued. Another aspect of traditional Bandi practices that the government neither encouraged nor prohibited was polygyny. Polygynous marriages were widespread in Bandi society, and the government did not prohibit them because they did not conflict with Liberian government policies. Even Liberian government officials such as DCs, soldiers, revenue and sanitation agents had more than one wife while they served in Bandiland.^{72}

The Liberian government regulation of traditional practices also extended to the Poro. The Poro and Sande had significant social, cultural and religious effects on the Bandi, Dei, Vai, Gola, Loma, Kissi and Mende peoples of western and northwestern Liberia. The leaders of the Poro had a dominant influence among these ethnic groups because they guarded and enforced secrecy, obedience and discipline among the mentioned ethnic groups. The dominant influence of the Poro leaders among the Gola, Belle, Dei and Vai

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^{72}LGD, “Revised Laws,” Articles 42 and 46, p. 27.


The Poro was culturally significant to the majority of interior ethnic groups because it maintained peace and enforced stability and respect for leaders among its members. Therefore, the Liberian government reconsidered its decision to ban the Poro indefinitely. The government also wanted to use the Poro to legitimize its own authority in maintaining peace and security in northwestern interior.\footnote{LGD, “Laws and Administrative Regulations Governing the Poro and Sande,” p. 1.} Thus, leading government officials such as President Tubman not only decided to become members of the Poro, but he also influenced the Liberian state’s recognition of the Poro and Sande in 1949.\footnote{Ibid.}

Although it recognized the Poro and Sande, the Liberian government formulated laws in 1949 to regulate the activities of these institutions. Except the Mandingo Muslims, who believed that Islam prohibited Muslims from becoming members of non-Islamic societies such as the Poro, most of the ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia practiced and respected the Poro. The Bandi, Belle, Gola, Loma, Kissi and Mende practiced the Poro. The chiefs and elders of these ethnic groups also attended the Poro school and they were required by tradition to obey its laws. The male and female **zoes**, who were the
leaders of the Poro and Sande respectively, formulated and enforced laws governing the Poro and Sande schools.\footnote{Informant 70, interviewed June 9, 2008, Kolahun Old Town; Informant 75, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town; Informant 41, interviewed June 16, 2008, Gbeilahun Town.}

The chiefs in Bandiland were subjected to the authority of the \textit{zoes} in matters relating to the Poro school. The Poro provided traditional education that enforced obedience to and respect for leaders, discipline among members, and peace and stability in societies. These Poro values resonated with the Liberian government policies as well as the religious values of Islam and Christianity with respect to maintaining peace, stability, and discipline among ethnic groups in the interior and obedience and loyalty to authority. However, provisions in Liberian government laws governing the Poro and Sande affected aspects of the practices of these traditional institutions and the authority of their leaders in Bandiland. For instance, the Liberian government law of 1949 ordered that the Poro and Sande schools would not operate unless their leaders had obtained permission from the DC.\footnote{LGD, “Laws and Administrative Regulations,” Article IV, p. 2.}

This served to undermine the authority of the Poro and Sande \textit{zoes}, elders and chiefs who previously had the power to decide when and where to establish the Poro and Sande schools.\footnote{Informant 59, interviewed June 10, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town; Informant 52, interviewed June 7, 2008, Lehuma Town; Informant 14, interviewed June 7, 2008, Nyokolitahun Town; Informant 38, interviewed June 7, 2008, Kombalahun Town.} Moreover, the reduction in the number of years students were to spend in the Poro and Sande schools from seven to three years in 1949 and later to eighteen months in 1960 served as examples of how the Liberian government changed aspects of traditional practices in Bandi society.\footnote{LGD, “Laws and Administrative Regulations of the Poro and Sande,” Article V, p. 2.}
Although they were intended to influence the Poro and Sande practices, the Liberian government laws were only enforced in those areas that the Liberian government and Christian missionaries effectively controlled in Bandiland. For example, government laws that regulated the Poro and Sande schools were enforced in the government headquarters of Kolahun in Tahamba and the OHC mission station at Bolahun in Wanwoma. The establishment of formal schools in these two towns made it necessary for the government and missionaries to enforce the Poro and Sande regulations in order that the Poro and Sande schools would not conflict with the operation of formal western-style schools for male and female students.\(^{81}\) On the other hand, Bandi villages and towns that were beyond the control of the Liberian government and OHC missionaries often held the Poro and Sande schools for three or four years rather than eighteen months as ordered by the government.\(^{82}\)

The advent of western values and systems such as government, laws, formal education and Christianity in Bandiland diminished aspects of traditional Bandi political and social systems. For instance, the power of chiefs and zoes as well as arranged and polygynous marriage practices were affected as a result of the Liberian government regulations, Christianity, westernization and the unwillingness of young Bandi men and women to learn and preserve traditional skills and ideas. However, despite external influences of Christianity, western education, and the intervention of the Liberian state, the existence

\(^{81}\)Ibid.

of arranged and polygynous marriage practices and Poro and Sande schools shows continuity of traditional values in Bandi society.  

Liberian District Commissioners and the Frontier Force in the Administration of Bandiland

The District Commissioner was superior to the commander of the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF), even though both were charged to jointly administer Bandiland. The LFF was created in 1908 in response to British and French complaints that lawlessness among ethnic groups in the western interior of Liberia was being extended to their colonial territories. They also said that unless the Liberian government established a military force to maintain security and order in the interior, they would be forced to occupy portions of Liberia.  

The Liberian government also recognized that organizing a military force to police the interior was important to the security of the country.  

The LFF was assigned in the interior as an agency of civil authority in maintaining peace and security for the interior administration. The Force was also responsible to secure the borders of the Liberian state. Initially, members of the LFF were mainly recruits from Sierra Leone because the Liberian government did not have experienced military personnel to organize the force as a strict military organization. The government appointed some British officers to organize the force on the model of British West African Frontier

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85 Ibid.

Force in Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{87} Captain R. Mackay Cadell, a British military officer, was appointed commander of the LFF in 1908. However, he was accused of deliberately recruiting Mende and other ethnic groups from Sierra Leone into the LFF.\textsuperscript{88} Major Cadell was later forced to give up his command of the LFF after he was suspected of encouraging mutiny among the soldiers in 1909.\textsuperscript{89} The dismissal of Cadell led to the reorganization of the LFF under the command of Liberian officers, which subsequently led to the recruitment of mainly interior ethnic groups such as the Loma, Kpelle, Bandi and Kissi into the force. Government officials thought that ethnic groups in the interior would be more loyal to the government than the coastal ethnic groups who had been hostile to the government.\textsuperscript{90} Moreover, the lack of financial resources to train professional soldiers also made the government rely on recruits that had little or no formal education and western influences like the coastal ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{91}

Officers of the LFF were armed and actively involved in the administration of Bandiland. While the DC was the civilian administrator of Bandiland, officers of the LFF assisted him in maintaining order and enforcing government regulations and policies within the district. Although Kolahun District included the Bandi, Mende and Kissi Chiefdoms, Bandiland was the largest and most populous of the three chiefdoms. Moreover, the Bandi town of Kolahun became the headquarters of the Liberian Commissioners and officers of the LFF assigned to Kolahun District (see map 8). Like the commissioners, the officers of the LFF were paid and also enjoyed a relatively higher standard of living than

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89}Akingbade, “Role of the Military,” p. 140.
\textsuperscript{90}Ibid.
the chiefs in Bandiland. In spite of being paid for their services in Bandiland, the DC and officers of the LFF enjoyed other privileges in Bandiland, such as being carried in hammocks through the villages and provided food, accommodations and other benefits by the chiefs and their people without payment. These privileges were often abused as demonstrated by frequent harassment and sometimes beating of chiefs for failure to meet the demands of commissioners and soldiers.\textsuperscript{92} It was a common practice for commissioners and soldiers to ignore government laws that prohibited the acceptance or soliciting of bribes or gifts from any persons within their assigned areas because the lack of modern roads made the interior relatively isolated from Monrovia and therefore commissioners and soldiers ruled arbitrarily.\textsuperscript{93}

In order to discourage the misuse of power, President Edwin Barclay initiated a policy of occasional dialogue with the chiefs in the interior. He was the first Liberian President who visited Bandiland. It was in 1935 during a meeting he held with Bandi, Kissi and Mende chiefs in the town of Kolahun that President Barclay told them that “whatever is to be said to the president should be done in council [in the meeting] and not through the district commissioner.”\textsuperscript{94} During the meeting with the president, Paramount Chief N’dorlleh of Bandi Chiefdom used the occasion to remind President Barclay that the rumors that the Bandi, Kissi and Mende chiefs did not want the Liberian flag on their lands, were not true. Chief N’dorlleh assured the loyalty of the chiefs to President Barclay as follows:

\textsuperscript{93}LGD, “Revised Laws,” Article 20, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{94}President Edwin Barclay to Bandi, Kissi and Mende Chiefs, quoted in the “Minutes of Conference, 1935” p. 1.
I herewith present these cloths, chicken and eggs as our token of our continuous loyalty. We are glad to have you in our country. We are near the British and French boundary, but we are not for them. If you should hear this, consider it a lie. Since the days of our fathers, we have been Liberians and we will ever be so.  

The chiefs wanted to assure their loyalty to the president because he had received reports that some Bandi, Kissi and Mende chiefs had fled to the Sierra Leonean side of the border as a result of unauthorized taxation and mistreatment by soldiers of the LFF. The flight of these chiefs to Sierra Leone automatically made them British subjects and therefore they were not obligated to pay taxes to the Liberian government. Taxes were important sources of government revenue and one of the sources of income that allowed the Bandi people to pay their taxes included selling palm kernels, cocoa, coffee and rice in market towns such as Pendembu and Buedu in Sierra Leone. However, the Liberian revenue agents and custom officers assigned to Bandiland also levied taxes on goods leaving or coming into Liberia. Responding to the policy of government custom officers taxing goods imported by his people, Bandi Chief N’dorlleh complained to President Barclay in the following statements:

We import things from the British and French territories so we can sell to pay our taxes, but custom officers followed us even to our houses to make us pay taxes on these items. We are not satisfied, but we are powerless. Now that you are here, we [are] asking for your help.  

In addition to unauthorized taxation of the chiefs and ordinary people in Bandiland, the commissioner, revenue and sanitation agents, and soldiers also misused their powers when it came to carrying out government policies such as recruitment of laborers for government projects, enforcement of government sanitation rules, and communal

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95Ibid., p. 7.
96Ibid., p. 8.
farming in Bandiland. For instance, the Liberian revenue agent was charged with the responsibility to collect taxes and the DC, Paramount Chief, clan chiefs and town chiefs were only to assist in enforcing the collection of taxes.\textsuperscript{97} Revenue agents were authorized to collect taxes only on habitable houses that town chiefs submitted to them and the DC. However, in 1940, District Commissioner C. Cecil Dennis began to collect taxes not only on houses but also on agricultural products such as cocoa and coffee and also livestock such as cows and goats. He used the money for himself.\textsuperscript{98} Moreover, he introduced a system in which anyone leaving Bandiland to travel to the coast or the British and French side of the border had to obtain a pass for 3 shillings.\textsuperscript{99} In addition to imposing unauthorized taxes on the people, DC Dennis was also accused of requesting chiefs to provide laborers for road construction but instead using these laborers for private enterprises such as working on his farm and making rattan chairs and hammocks and leather shoes which he sold in markets across the border in Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{100}

Although the complaints of unauthorized taxation in Bandiland were mainly against the commissioners and the revenue agents, some of the chiefs also exploited their own people while helping to collect government taxes. Some chiefs were accused of doubling any amount the government required as taxes from their people and converting the extra money to their personal use. The chiefs also imposed fines under the pretext of

\textsuperscript{97}LGD, "Revised Laws," Article 36, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{98} Presidential Secretary R. S. S. Bright to Secretary Holder, September 16, 1940; Executive Presidential Correspondence with Interior Department and Commissioners of Voinjama-Kolahun District, Western Province, Jan.–June, 1941, Box 6, File 14, LGD, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.

\textsuperscript{99} "Secretary Holder to President Edwin Barclay, Nov. 21, 1941," Executive Presidential Correspondence with Interior Department, July–Nov., 1941," Box 6, File 15, LGD, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.

\textsuperscript{100} "Secretary Holder to President Edwin Barclay, "Executive Presidential Correspondence with Interior Department, Jan.–June, 1941," Box 6, File 14, LGD, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington."
enforcing government laws. For instance, Chief N’dorleh, who had early accused DC Dennis for misusing power, was accused of illegally dismissing Clan Chief Watson of Hembe for the latter’s refusal to collect gifts and extra money for him rather than only the required taxes.\(^{101}\)

Bandi chiefs and people continued their modified practice of giving gifts to commissioners and soldiers for fear of humiliation and to gain favor from them in spite of government prohibition. The government prohibited interior commissioners, revenue and sanitation agents and soldiers from taking bribes. However, while the local government officials and chiefs were involved with the practice of bribery, the president of Liberia also acted similarly. For example, Bandi chiefs were induced to give gifts to President Barclay for the privilege of visiting him in Monrovia. Bandi Paramount Chief Jusu Dunor bribed President Barclay through DC G. P. Conger-Thompson in order for the chief to visit the president in Monrovia in 1940. Commissioner Conger-Thompson testified to this as follows:

> I have the honor most respectively to transmit herewith one native cloth from our Paramount Chief Jusu Dunor of the Gbande Chiefdom, with his request that your Excellency might be good enough to accept this gift as Christmas present. It is the desire of Paramount Chief Jusu Dunor to visit the capital with view of paying respect to your Excellency and for this cause he has kindly asked me to solicit permission from your Excellency before doing so.\(^{102}\)

The DCs liaised with the president on behalf of the Bandi chiefs because they directly represented the President in Bandiland. Even though they were politically superior

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\(^{101}\) Bandi Chiefs of Hembe Clan to President Barclay, “Government Reports from the Interior, 1936,” Box 10, File 7, LGD, Indiana University, Bloomington.

\(^{102}\) District Commissioner Conger-Thompson to President Barclay, “Interior Department Correspondence with the Executive Office, Jan. 6, 1940,” LGD, Jan.–June, 1940, Box 6, File 11, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.
to the chiefs, the DCs were not authorized to appoint or dismiss the chiefs. Only the President had the power to approve or dismiss government officials in Bandiland. However, the DC could recommend to the President the dismissal of any of the chiefs who disobeyed the Liberian laws. In any case, however, the chiefs always tried to win the favor of the DCs and the President as a way of securing and guaranteeing their positions. However, relations between the DC and the Paramount Chief could become strained, especially if the DC favored someone else for the position of Paramount Chief. It was a common practice in Bandiland for a chief to flee to Sierra Leone if relations between himself and the DC became strained because of fear of humiliation by the soldiers on the order of the DC. For instance, Chief Gondor Ballah of Gondonlahun and some of his people fled to the British colony of Sierra Leone in 1941 because he refused the directive of DC Dennis to pay fines to Clan Chief Amah Ngafua of Hembe Clan. The flight of Bandi chiefs to Sierra Leone embarrassed the Liberian government because the British saw their flight as an indication of the Liberian government’s mistreatment of its people or inability to peacefully govern its people.

The enforcement of Liberian government mandates in Bandiland was the responsibility of representatives of the government. In addition to enforcing the payment of taxes, the soldiers also enforced the government labor recruitment and sanitation policies in Bandiland. The government labor laws of 1949 stated that all males were liable to com-
pulsory labor for road and other projects of the government. However, the government also noted that no one was required to provide public service for more than fifteen days, unless in the case of an emergency and sanctioned by the department of interior. While the labor law was new in Bandiland, the rendering of public services for men such as building hammock bridges and clearing bushes on roads was not new to the Bandi. While the government relied on soldiers to enforce its labor laws in Bandiland, the chiefs, zoes and elders used persuasion and customary laws to make men render public services. The Liberian government labor laws of 1949 empowered the chiefs and government officials to use soldiers to enforce the recruitment of laborers for government projects. The policies of the Liberian government for governing the interior were designed in such a way that chiefs were subordinated to the soldiers. In Bandiland, soldiers enforced government sanitation laws. The laws required town residents to maintain public roads and keep town drinking-water wells clean. The government laws for maintaining public roads and cleaning towns and water wells reinforced continuity in customary laws that previously governed Bandi towns, but the use of soldiers and the imposition of monetary fines to enforce sanitation laws represented change in customary practices in Bandi society. The government sanitation laws empowered the clan chiefs to impose fines on town chiefs who failed to make their people obey government orders. The soldiers sometimes imposed fines or humiliated chiefs for not enforcing the sanitation laws in their areas.

105 LGD, “Revised Laws,” Article 34, p. 20.
106 Ibid., p. 21.
107 Ibid., Article 57, pp. 35–36.
108 Paramount Chief N’dorlleh to President Barclay, “Government Interior Reports, 1936,” LGD, Box 10, File 7, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.
Among the labor services the Liberian government introduced to Bandiland was the *taa’ loi* service. This practice required each town in Bandiland to select a number of men and women to stay in town during the day for government service. While the men were required to transport goods and government officials such as the commissioner and military officers, the women were responsible to prepare food for these officials. However, it was a common practice for the commissioner and soldiers to visit villages without prior notice to chiefs about their visit. Such visits violated the government law that prohibited local government officials from touring villages without prior notice to the chiefs, especially during the farming season. The government’s interior policy of 1949 stipulated that no local government official was to tour towns and villages during the farming season, except in cases such as to settle inter-community or inter-ethnic conflicts.\(^{109}\) The policy further noted that there would be no court proceedings in towns and villages during the farming season, except in criminal cases such as murder.\(^ {110}\) These policies were intended to prevent government officials from disrupting rice farming, which the government encouraged in Bandiland. Government officials such as DCs and soldiers were empowered to enforce government provisions in Bandiland. Nevertheless, they misused these laws. Thus, President Edwin Barclay ordered in 1936 that all DCs were to submit annual reports of their activities in the interior and the reports should also include activities regarding rice farming in their districts. The delay in submitting reports of rice farming in Bandiland in 1936 led to the President notifying DC Jude F. Reeves of Bandiland that the government

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\(^{109}\) LGD, "Revised Laws," Article 49, p. 29.

\(^{110}\) Ibid.
had not received information on rice farming in Bandiland and the number of farms that were made in the current year.\footnote{111}

The prohibition of DCs and soldiers from touring towns and villages during the farming season in Bandiland was necessary in order to avoid the demands on farmers to transport government officials and food items from one village to another, which had the potential to disrupt farming activities. However, a group of LFF soldiers often made an unofficial tour of various Bandi towns. Chiefs who did not provide the necessary services such as offering food and assigning porters to soldiers were either fined, humiliated or both.\footnote{112} For instance, Chief Momo Hena of Nyokolitahun town in Wanwoma Clan was imprisoned in Kolahun for failing to provide food for the soldiers that visited his town, delaying the collection of government taxes from his people and being in possession of medicine that he allegedly used for human sacrifice.\footnote{113} However, government policy regarding soldiers assigned to the interior made it clear that soldiers were to treat the people of the interior with kindness and justice and do nothing that would provoke conflicts.\footnote{114} The policy also encouraged LFF officers to learn the local customs and language of the people in order to create mutual trust and confidence and no soldier was allowed to accept gifts from any villager without reciprocating the same in equal value.\footnote{115}

All the government laws that were intended for interior administration were misapplied by local government officials and soldiers in Bandiland. For instance, the soldiers

\footnote{111}{Secretary R. S. S. Bright to District Commissioner Jude F. Reeves, July 21, 1936, “Interior Department Correspondence with Western Province, Voinjama-Kolahun District, 1936,” LGD, Box 6, File 9, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.}
\footnote{112}{Ibid.}
\footnote{113}{Ibid.}
\footnote{114}{LNA, “Manual for Regulation of the LFF,” p. 53.}
\footnote{115}{Ibid.}
on tour imposed their own fines on chiefs who failed to clean their towns. It was a common practice for the soldiers to impose fines on chiefs who did not provide food for them while passing through their towns. The fines included livestock such as chickens or goats as well as food items such as palm oil and rice. If a chief failed to pay the fines, he was either beaten or imprisoned in his own house for the duration of the soldiers' stay in town.  

Mistreatment by the DCs and soldiers in Bandiland was not limited to men. Women were also mistreated and exploited. For example, in 1941 it was reported that DC Cecil Dennis ordered Bandi chiefs to recruit women in order to form a cooking committee that would cook for men working to construct the road between Kolahun and Voinjama. However, senior government officials later found out that the women were used not only for cooking, but they were also used for planting rice, weeding a farm, spinning cotton, fishing and making palm oil for DC Reeves. Moreover, some of the women were also exploited sexually by government officials. For example, the action of Commissioner Dennis that got the attention of Interior Secretary Holder and President Barclay was reported as follows:

District Commissioner Dennis is reported to have forced a Gbandi Mandingo girl into bed in spite of the fact that the girl has been given into marriage to another man and dowry paid to her parents. After the incident, the girl was reported to have fled to the French side [Guinea] of the border, but the Commissioner ordered for her parents to be detained until the girl would return. The girl was later brought back and the Commissioner took her as his wife; the girl's mother was so overwhelmed with anger and depression that she died a few days later. The behavior of the Commissioner had the attention of the white missionaries in Bolahun and they have re-

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116 Clan Chief Watson of Hembe Clan and paramount Chief Jusu Dunor of Bandi Chiefdom to Secretary Holder, "Interior Department Correspondence with Western Province," Jan. 4, 1941, Box 6, File 12, LGD, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.

117 Secretary Holder to President Barclay, Nov., 1941, "Interior Department Correspondence with the Executive Office," LGD, Box 6, File 12.
counted the story to foreigners in Firestone and in British and French territories outside the border.\textsuperscript{118}

The action of DC Reeves was typical of how government officials in Bandiland and other parts of northwestern Liberia abused their authority in disregard of government policies which they were supposed to enforce. There was also a law that prohibited DCs from marrying a woman from the district under their control, but the law was not enforced. The intent of these laws was that DCs should impartially carry out their responsibilities regarding administering justice and enforcing government laws and policies in their districts.\textsuperscript{119} The DCs in Bandiland not only failed to abide by government laws and policies, but they also got involved in traditional practices such as polygynous marriage. This affected the ability of DCs to impartially enforce government laws in Bandiland. For example, a chief who allowed his daughter to marry the DC often received preferential treatment. Such was the case in the complaints by Bandi chiefs against DC Varney Jakemi Fahnbulleh in 1936. During his investigation of the chiefs’ complaints against DC Fahnbulleh, acting Interior Secretary H. R. Holder found out that Fahnbulleh often “granted extraordinary privileges to Clan Chief Sarguelleh and a man called Charlie during tax season because he had received from each of them a wife.”\textsuperscript{120} Government officials such as DCs Dennis and Fahnbulleh practiced polygynous marriage while serving in Bandiland, which in a way served to promote traditional values in Bandi society.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{118}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119}Acting Secretary H. R. Cooper to District Commissioners of Western Province, “Interior Department Correspondence with Western Province, December 28, 1934,” LGD, Box 5, File 5, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.
\textsuperscript{120}Ibid.
The DCs and LFF soldiers were powerful government officials in Bandiland not only because they represented the authority of the government, but also because they used their authority arbitrarily and they were rarely punished for misconduct. Bandiland and other parts of northwestern Liberia were only occasionally visited by higher officials of the Liberian government such as the Secretary of the Interior and President until the 1960s when the authority of DCs was subordinated to a newly created political entity called a Superintendent. The indirect rule policy was also officially replaced by the direct rule policy through the appointment of a superintendent that had an affinity with local ethnic groups.122

In 1964, the Liberian Legislature passed an Act that created four new counties that included Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Bong and Lofa out of the former three provinces in the interior. Each county was administered by a Superintendent that was appointed by the President. The PCs and DCs from descendants of Liberian settlers or from ethnic groups on the coast were thereafter changed and replaced with Superintendents, attorneys and magistrates who were appointed from among local ethnic groups such as the Bandi, Loma, Kissi and Mende.123 Although the positions of DC, Paramount Chief and Clan Chief were maintained in Bandiland, the creation of a county in the Western Province in 1964 enabled the Liberian government to enforce its policies of integration and unification during the administration of President William V. S. Tubman (1944–1971). The Tubman administration initiated the construction of roads linking the coastal areas to the interior in the 1950s, which helped to enhance communications and interactions between local govern-

ment officials in the interior and higher government officials on the coast. Before the 1950s and 1960s, northwestern Liberia was far from the center of national power on the coast and therefore commissioners and LFF officers ruled Bandiland arbitrarily. Exploitation and misuse of powers by these government officials, and the numerous complaints brought against them by chiefs and ordinary people led the Liberian government to frequently change DCs and to rotate soldiers in Bandiland and other parts of northwestern Liberia. Thus, between 1940 and 1964, Bandiland was governed by nine DCs that included Jude F. Reeves, Verney Jakama Fahnbullleh, E. Sanesee Freemen, G. P. Conger-Thompson, C. Cecil Dennis, Robert Taylor, James Ledlum, James Gbarbea and Alfred Kollie, who were mainly descendants of Liberian settlers, Kru, Kpelle, Vai and Loma.124

The Liberian government's interior policies simultaneously increased the power and privileges of the new chiefs by allowing them commissions on taxes collected from their areas and empowering them to enforce government laws in their areas. Although aspects of the government's interior policies served to enhance the power of chiefs such as Mambulu, N'dorlleh and Dunor in their respective areas, some of the policies also undercut the customary power of Bandi chiefs by shifting their allegiance to the government and away from their own people. Moreover, while Bandi chiefs were allowed to use customary laws in governing their towns, the chiefs also owed loyalty to Liberian government laws and officials such as DCs and LFF officers. Some aspects of the government's interior policies such as the collection of taxes and the recruitment of laborers for government projects weakened the ties between chiefs and their people in Bandiland by making

the chiefs agents of the government rather than leaders of their people. However, despite
the changes introduced in Bandiland such as new political entities like the six clans and a
chiefsdom as well as the polices such as election of chiefs, collection of taxes, recruitment
of laborers and prohibition of arranged marriage practices, the Liberian government also
encouraged continuity in traditional Bandi beliefs and practices by allowing the use of
customary laws to govern towns and villages, and by recognizing the Poro and Sande
schools and polygynous marriage practices in Bandi society.

Factors That Led to the Bandi Revolt Against the Liberian Government Authority

The Bandi Revolt against Liberian government rule between 1907 and 1919 was
caused by several factors. These factors included the Liberian government’s imposition
of Mambulu Yamma as Paramount Chief over Bandiland against the wishes of chiefs
who hated him; the involvement of Mambulu, Lomax, and Cooper in the execution of
eight Bandi chiefs for alleged opposition to the establishment of Liberian government’s
authority; imposition of taxes on individual houses; and gross abuse of power by Liberian
government officials in Bandiland.125

The appointment of a Paramount Chief as traditional political leader of Bandiland
in 1909 was part of the Liberian government’s policy to enhance their administration of
Bandiland. The goal of the government was to identify one traditional leader through
whom the government would channel its administrative laws and regulations for govern-
ing Bandiland. The government policy to appoint a chief to rule Bandiland was not em-

125 Interior Secretary Holder to President Edwin Barclay, Nov. 26, 1941, Executive Presidential
Correspondence, pp. 3–7, July–Nov. 1941, LGD, Box 6, File 15, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana
University, Bloomington.
braced by many Bandi chiefs because traditionally the political authority of Bandiland was not vested in one person. The chiefs resented the idea of one chief ruling over them because accepting this arrangement would mean that they would have to be loyal to one chief. As noted earlier, Bandiland was traditionally governed by many chiefs, even though all the chiefs did not have equal power. Traditionally, the authority of a town chief was often limited to his town. The authority of a chief would extend beyond his town only during the times of wars over farmland, hunting grounds or against other chiefs for supremacy. During times of instability in Bandi society, chiefs usually formed alliances. Chiefs of smaller towns often formed alliances with chiefs of bigger towns or warrior chiefs for mutual defense. Such alliances would last as long as the conflicts existed. The alliances were usually dissolved once the conflicts ended. While some Bandi chiefs were more powerful than others, a strong centralized authority did not exist in Bandiland until contact with the Liberian state. Since centralized political leadership did not exist in traditional Bandi society, the Liberian government's attempt to establish a centralized authority by appointment of a Paramount Chief of Bandiland was resented by other Bandi chiefs during the early twentieth century.126

The chieftaincy title in traditional Bandi society was associated with prestige as well as possession of human and material resources. The chief usually owned the largest farm in the town because he had large numbers of dependents and an extended family whose labor the chief used to make farms and perform other tasks for him. Having large numbers of dependents in the households of the chiefs served to enhance their authority. If a chief subordinated his authority to a powerful chief, he had to be loyal to that power-

ful chief and his prestige would also diminish. The Bandi believed that if a chief gave up his authority, he had also given up his prestige and honor. Town chiefs in Bandi society were selected by consensus among town elders and therefore the government’s policy of appointing a chief was a departure from tradition. The appointment of Mambulu in 1909 as Paramount Chief for the whole of Bandiland by the Liberian government was a factor that contributed to resentment against government authority in Bandiland. Mambulu’s appointment as Paramount Chief of Bandiland was based on the advice Cooper and Lomax had given to President Arthur Barclay. In 1909, President Barclay invited Mambulu to Monrovia to discuss with him the Liberian government’s plan to build a military barracks in his hometown of Yomatahun in Hasala; Mambulu agreed to the request without consulting other chiefs in his area and the government subsequently established their first military post in Bandiland.\(^\text{127}\)

After the meeting with President Barclay, John W. Cooper and Major William D. Lomax decided to appoint Mambulu as Paramount Chief of Bandiland. His appointment was opposed not only by chiefs from his homeland of Hasala but also opposed by chiefs from other subdivisions of Bandiland. Before the Liberian government and missionaries arrived in Bandiland in the early twentieth century, Mambulu was a small trader that sold traditional cloth, palm kernels and oil, rice as well as slaves to European traders in the Gallinas and to Mende, Vai and Loko traders in Sierra Leone.\(^\text{128}\) Although he was a respected trader, Mambulu also became a famous warrior as a result of his display of

\(^{127}\text{LGD, “Minutes of Cabinet Meetings, March 25, 1909, Monrovia, Liberia”; Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington; Akpan, African Resistance in Liberia, pp. 11–12.}\)

\(^{128}\text{Informant 70, interviewed June 9, 2008, Kolahun Old Town; Informant 75, interviewed June 21, 2008, Mbaloma Town; Informant 41, interviewed June 16, 2008, Gbeilahun Town; Informants 8 and 56, interviewed June 8, 2008, Mawuyansu Town; also, see Akpan, “Practice of Indirect Rule,” p. 129.}\)
bravery as a fighter for Bandi Chief Fabanna Gali of Hasala. As a warrior, Mambulu took the title “Vojo,” which denoted his fearlessness in battle. As a trader, Mambulu was able to learn several languages such as Mende, Mandingo, Loko, Belle, and he also understood a little bit of English, likely as a result of his interactions with European traders in the Gallinas and the British colony of Sierra Leone during the late nineteenth century.

The exposure of Mambulu to different societies and cultures as a trader and his ability to speak different languages were assets that made him attractive to Cooper and Major Lomax. As noted earlier, President Arthur Barclay sent Cooper and Lomax to negotiate and sign land treaties with the Bandi, Mende, Kissi and Loma chiefs. Cooper and Lomax arrived at Hasala by way of Cape Mount. Chiefs Mambulu of Yomatahun and Hagba Falla of Kamatahun in Hasala signed the land treaty with Copper and Lomax in 1907 that ceded Bandiland to Liberia. Chief Mambulu was appointed to the position of Paramount Chief of Bandiland in 1909 as a reward for signing the land treaty and his demonstrated allegiance to the Liberian government. His appointment as Paramount Chief of Bandiland was made official by President Howard on June 10, 1912. In his letter to District Commissioner Didhwo Tweh, President Howard wrote:

I am more than glad to hear of Mambu’s [Mambulu] loyalty to the government. I am Enclosing a letter to him and his commission as our paramount chief, and also a draft on the Bank of B. W Africa for £50; out of this amount you will give Chief Mambu £40 as coming from the government

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131 Ibid.
to show our good heart toward him. I know of no big Man [in Bandiland] but him.\textsuperscript{132}

Mambulu's chieftaincy was opposed by some chiefs because they felt that the Liberian government had not respected Bandi traditions. For example, Chief Bombo Kollie of Gilima in Hembe considered Mambulu to be his nephew by virtue of Mambulu being his sister’s son.\textsuperscript{133} In Bandi tradition, Chief Bombo Kollie was an uncle to Mambulu and also an older chief, which meant that he expected Mambulu to have consulted with him and other older chiefs before accepting the chieftaincy appointment from the Liberian government. Bombo Kollie and other chiefs of Hasala and Hembe also expected Mambulu to have referred Cooper and Lomax to them and they should have made the decision regarding the request of the Liberian government to establish authority in Bandiland. They should have called a council of chiefs and elders to decide who to recommend to the government for the paramount chieftaincy in accordance with tradition.\textsuperscript{134} The chiefs of Hasala, Hembe and other parts of Bandiland also disliked Mambulu because he was a notorious slave trader who sold young Bandi men and women into slavery in the Gallinas.\textsuperscript{135} Moreover, some Bandi chiefs hated Mambulu because he was a Muslim and often considered non-Muslim Bandi as unbelievers or \textit{kafulee}. Mambulu's Islamic background led many Bandi chiefs who were not Muslims to consider him a Mandingo rather than a Bandi man.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{132}President Howard to District Commissioner, June 11, 1912, “Executive Mansion Correspondence to District Commissioner of Western Province, 1909–1913,” LGD, Box 6, File 7, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.


\textsuperscript{134}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{135}Campbell, p. 231.

It is also said that Mambulu's father, called Kaifa, was also a Muslim, which may have also contributed to the strong opposition against his chieftaincy by mainly non-Muslim Bandi chiefs of Tahamba and Wanwoma. In spite of being a Muslim, Mambulu sold Muslims and non-Muslim Bandi into slavery. Therefore, he was hated by many chiefs and ordinary Bandi who lost relatives to slave traders before the Liberian government established authority in Bandiland. Although Chief Bombo Kollie of Gilima considered Mambulu to be his nephew, the slave trading activities and growing political ambition of Mambulu made Bombo Kollie dislike him and he therefore opposed his leadership of Bandiland. Thus, Bombo Kollie rallied chiefs from other areas of Bandiland to reject Mambulu's appointment as Paramount Chief in 1909.

On the other hand, Chief Mambulu convinced Cooper and Lomax that his uncle, Chief Bombo Kollie, had connived with other chiefs to oppose the Liberian government's attempt to establish authority in Bandiland. Mambulu became a collaborator of the Liberian government by using LFF soldiers to collect rice and other provisions during their visit to Bandiland. Thus, Cooper and Lomax considered all chiefs that opposed Mambulu to be against the idea of Bandiland becoming part of Liberia.

By 1910, Bandi chiefs were virtually divided into two groups: those who supported Mambulu and the authority of the government and those who hated him and shared the same views as Chief Bombo Kollie. Cooper and Lomax never understood that the

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137 Campbell, p. 231.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
hatred some Bandi chiefs and their people had for Mambulu was based on several factors that included his slave trading activities, his Islamic views of other Bandi chiefs he considered as kafulee, and his collaboration with government soldiers in Bandiland. Nevertheless, the opposition to Mambulu's leadership among Bandi chiefs was viewed by Cooper and Lomax as an attempt by the chiefs to oppose the Liberian government. Therefore, the two Liberian government officials resorted to drastic measures that included ordering soldiers to burn villages of chiefs they perceived to be against the Liberian government. In 1911, Cooper and Lomax ordered LFF soldiers to go to Chief Bombo Kollie's town of Gilima to arrest some dissident residents.

In addition to burning villages and harassing chiefs who were considered to be enemies of the Liberian government, Cooper and Lomax decided to arrest some of the chiefs that they believed opposed the Liberian government's authority in Bandiland. The arrest of those chiefs became a second factor that escalated the conflict between the Bandi people and the Liberian government. The chiefs were arrested during a meeting that was called by Cooper and Lomax in Kolahun in 1910. Cooper and Lomax had called the meeting under the pretext that they wanted the town chiefs to assure them that they were not plotting to take up arms against the Liberian government. Chief Bombo Kollie had earlier declined to attend the meeting because of his fear that he and the chiefs who supported him would be arrested and mistreated. However, Mambulu, Cooper and Lomax promised Chief Bombo Kollie that none of the chiefs would be arrested. Thus, Chief

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143 President Arthur Barclay to Cooper and Stewart, Feb. 22, 1911, “General Presidential Correspondence, 1905–1912,” LNA, Monrovia, Liberia.
144 Chief Bombo Kollie, “Statements and Evidence in the Case of the Capture and Murder of Chief Mambulu, April 6, 1913,” p. 3, Kolahun, Bandiland.
145 Ibid.
Bombo Kollie was able to convince 18 chiefs to attend the meeting in Kolahun. After the chiefs arrived their weapons, which included knives and bows and arrows, were taken away. Chief Bombo Kollie and the chiefs were detained by soldiers on the orders of Mambulu, Cooper and Lomax. The chiefs were accused of treason for their opposition to the authority of the Liberian government.\(^{146}\) Bombo Kollie and five other chiefs escaped at night and took refuge in Sierra Leone.\(^{147}\)

President Arthur Barclay received information about the arrest of the Bandi chiefs and the flight of Chief Bombo Kollie and some of his supporters to Sierra Leone so he invited Bombo Kollie to Monrovia in December 1911 in order to ease the tension in Bandiland. He also promised the chief that President Daniel Howard, who was about to succeed him, would send a representative to Bandiland to investigate the arrest of the chiefs.\(^{148}\) However, while Bombo Kollie was in Monrovia waiting for President Howard to take office, Mambulu, Cooper and Lomax decided to execute eight of the chiefs in 1911 (see Appendix B).\(^{149}\) Sources elsewhere had reported that the number of chiefs executed was higher than eight. For instance, OHC missionary Rev. Robert Campbell’s examination of oral sources provided by some Bandi elders of Bolahun shows that 11 chiefs were executed.\(^{150}\) Momolu Massaquoi, who represented the Liberian government in Bandiland in 1913 and investigated the execution of the chiefs and the death of Mambulu, stated that

\(^{146}\)Ibid., p. 5.
\(^{147}\)Ibid., p. 6.
\(^{148}\)Ibid.
\(^{150}\)Campbell, p. 232.
eight chiefs were executed in Kolahun. Also, reacting to the report of the execution of the chiefs based on eyewitness accounts, the British colonial Governor of Sierra Leone reported that eight chiefs were executed in Kolahun. Governor E. M. Merewether transmitted the following information about the death of the chiefs to the Secretary of Colonial Affairs in London:

I have the honor to transmit, for the information of Secretary Harcourt, copies of certain documents which I have recently received from Sierra Leone relating to the alleged execution of eight native chiefs at Kolahun, in Liberian territory. Some of the statements are based on hearsay, and, as is usual with natives, the accounts of the different witness vary in certain particulars, but taking the statements as a whole, there is good ground for believing that cruel and cold blooded murder was committed, and Colonel Lomax and Mr. Cooper were present and connived at it, even if the former did not take part in it. In view of such proceedings it is not surprising that the chiefs and people on the Liberian boundary are in a perpetual state of revolt against the Liberian government, under which such atrocities are possible.

The British colonial government in Sierra Leone, aware of the abuses of the Liberian soldiers and officials in Bandiland, received and treated all Bandi chiefs that fled to Sierra Leone as political refugees. Most of the Bandi chiefs who fled to Sierra Leone refused to return to their homes and asked President Howard (1912–1920) to investigate the death of their fellow chiefs and punish those responsible. President Howard subsequently removed Cooper and Lomax from Bandiland and charged them with murder. Cooper and Lomax were tried but acquitted on the grounds that they acted in self-defense, although President Howard indicated his administration’s disapproval of the death of the chiefs.

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152 Governor Merewether to Honorable Colonial Secretary Harcourt, June 3, 1912, Colonial Office #879/110, LNA, Monrovia, Liberia.
In 1912, President Howard sent Abayomi Cole to Bandiland to investigate the death of the chiefs and to resolve the conflicts between chiefs Mambulu and Bombo Kollie.\textsuperscript{154} Cole’s investigation of the chiefs’ murder did not end the crisis in Bandiland. The chiefs who supported Bombo Kollie had vowed to remove Mambulu from the paramount chiefship position so that Bombo Kollie would become paramount chief. They also wanted Cole to punish Mambulu for his involvement in the death of the eight chiefs. Cole neither removed Mambulu nor punished him because Cole was said to have fallen in love with Mambulu’s stepdaughter called Yoko Makka and also received a traditional gown from Mambulu.\textsuperscript{155} Cole was not able to resolve the conflicts in Bandiland because he was accused by Bombo Kollie and other chiefs of supporting Mambulu. President Howard invited Chief Mambulu to Monrovia in March 1913. While on his way to Monrovia, Mambulu and some of his supporters were ambushed and killed on March 10, 1913 near the town of Gilima for their involvement in the death of the 8 chiefs in Kolahun. Mambulu was killed by supporters of Chief Bombo Kollie and some relatives of the dead chiefs.\textsuperscript{156}

The Liberian government reacted to the death of one of its loyal chiefs by sending a new batch of soldiers to Bandiland under the command of Lt. James B. Howard to arrest those that were involved in the death of Chief Mambulu. However, before Lt. Howard and his soldiers arrived in Bandiland, Bombo Kollie, Fagbanna Gali of Hasala and other chiefs that supported them had fled to Sierra Leone in 1913.\textsuperscript{157} The soldiers resorted to raiding and burning villages of the chiefs that had fled to Sierra Leone. The actions of the

\textsuperscript{154}Chief Bombo Kollie, “Statements and Evidence in the Case of the Capture and Murder of Chief Mambulu, April 6, 1913,” p. 8, Kolahun, Bandiland.

\textsuperscript{155}Ibid., pp. 7–8.


\textsuperscript{157}Annual Message, President Daniel Howard, Dec. 17, 1913, LNA, Monrovia, Liberia.
soldiers had an adverse effect on the Liberian government’s ability to peacefully govern Bandiland. The raiding of villages, looting, killing and eating of chickens and goats, and humiliation of chiefs suspected of being disloyal to the government were factors that also reinforced the Bandi in their determination to resist the Liberian government’s rule. In Chief Bombo Kollie’s hometown of Gilima and neighboring towns such as Konnehun and Mbalorma in the Hembe area of Bandiland (see Map 9), the chiefs organized the Bandi and Gola men and under the cover of darkness staged attacks against Liberian soldiers under the command of Captain Samuel L. Smith.158 The soldiers burned towns in Hembe and arrested more than 100 men and women, who were mainly wives of chiefs that were considered to be part of the resistance.159 The conflicts came to an end after the government sent reinforcements of LFF soldiers to Bandiland. Some Bandi and Gola fighters were captured and taken to Monrovia, while others fled to the British colony of Sierra Leone.160

The flight of Bandi chiefs to Sierra Leone and Guinea to escape harassment and humiliation by soldiers became another way the Bandi resisted the Liberian government. Robert G. Lee, as representative of the Liberian government on the Liberian-Sierra Leonean Boundary Commission, travelled to Sierra Leone in 1919 and met a group of Bandi chiefs who had taken refuge in the Sierra Leonean town called Nyandehun. The chiefs told him that they would not return to Bandiland because the soldiers had beaten them, plundered their villages, and taken their wives.161

158 Akpan, Resistance, p. 28.
161 Ibid., p. 13.
Factors which culminated in the Bandi Revolt in the early twentieth century included hatred for Mambulu as a slave trader and also for not being a true Bandi and yet being appointed Paramount Chief of Bandiland, Mambulu's involvement in the execution of 8 chiefs in Kolahun and humiliation of chiefs suspected of anti-government activities by LFF soldiers. The revolt between 1907 and 1919 made it impossible for the Liberian government to effectively administer Bandiland. Like other ethnic resistance to the Liberian government, the resistance in Bandiland led the government to take measures aimed at reforming its administrative policies in the interior. Government policies of
deploying soldiers in Bandiland, rotating commissioners, and having dialogue with the chiefs occasionally were aimed at pacifying the Bandi, Kissi and Mende ethnic groups. The territorial expansion of the British in Sierra Leone and the French in Guinea and their subsequent encroachment on territories claimed by Liberia in the late nineteenth century led to the Liberian government instituting reforms in its interior policies. The reforms enabled the Liberian government to establish effective control over the Bandi and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia. Even though the Liberian government subsequently defeated the Bandi and established their authority in Bandiland, the Bandi Revolt had an adverse effect on the Liberian government’s attempt to administer Bandiland. The government was unable to collect taxes in Bandiland during the course of the conflict, because many chiefs were unwilling to cooperate with the government in collecting taxes from their people. Thus, in order to resolve the conflict and make rebellious Bandi chiefs and their supporters and sympathizers cooperate with the government, President Howard called for a conference of Bandi, Loma, Kissi and Mende chiefs in December 1919 at Robertsport, Cape Mount. Chief Bombo Kollie and a group of Bandi chiefs in Sierra Leone refused to return to Liberia to attend the conference. The Bandi chiefs who attended the conference acknowledged the authority of the Liberian government in Bandiland. Chief Bombo Kollie lived in Sierra Leone until his death in 1918. In order to encourage Bandi chiefs who had fled to Sierra Leone to return to Liberia, the administration

\[162\text{Ibid.}\]
\[163\text{Ibid.}\]
\[164\text{Fr. Benedict S. Vani, “Echos From Bandiland.”}\]
of President Edwin Barclay promised not to impose taxes and government labor on returning chiefs and their people for a period of one year in order to allow them to resettle.\footnote{O. S. Norman of the Interior Department to District Commissioner E. Senesee Freeman, Voinjama-Kolahun District, Sept. 7, 1939, LGD, Box 6, File 7, Liberian Collections Project, Indiana University, Bloomington.}

In summary, the foregoing examination shows how the administrative policies of the Liberian government brought about change and also facilitated continuity in traditional systems in Bandiland. The changes the government introduced into Bandi society included the creation of new political entities such as the six clans and the single chiefdom in Bandiland, imposition of modern court systems, marriage and sanitary laws, election of chiefs, taxation, and formal schools. The government and Bandi retained aspects of traditional systems in Bandiland, including customary laws, courts and the authority of chiefs. Even though they were allowed to maintain aspects of their customary laws, the Bandi chiefs were also required to enforce government mandates such as the collection of taxes, and recruitment of workers for government projects and other services. Although the government allowed some aspects of traditional Bandi practices to continue, the government regulated these practices through laws it imposed. For example, the government allowed continuation in the Poro and Sande schools, but reduced the number of years for students to stay in schools, especially in government administered towns. As noted, the government reduced the seven years that were traditionally required for the Poro and Sande schooling to four years by the 1960s in order to enable males and females to attend western schools. Moreover, while traditional polygynous marriage practices and dowry payments were allowed and rice farming was encouraged by the government, these practices were also subjected to government regulations. The government also prohibited
arranged marriage practices and required that dowries should be paid in dollars rather than material items as was previously practiced in the traditional Bandi marriage system. These laws and regulations were however enforced mainly in towns where government officials resided, but the government was unable to enforce the laws and regulations in towns that were far from its effective control. The inability of the government to enforce its laws in all areas of Bandiland enabled Bandi people to maintain some of their practices and beliefs in accordance with tradition. Government officials, including DCs, revenue and sanitation agents, as well as military officers were unable to enforce the government laws throughout Bandiland. There was one major threat to the Liberian government’s control over the Bandi. This was the Bandi Revolt between 1907 and 1919. The revolt was engendered by the government’s ignorance of Bandi political and social systems, the creation of new chieftaincy positions contrary to Bandi traditions, the LFF mistreatment of chiefs, extortions, and vandalizing of towns.

The establishment of Liberian government authority in Bandiland in 1907 led to changes in traditional Bandi society as demonstrated by the creation of six clans and one chiefdom in Bandiland and the introduction of new policies and laws such as an election system, collection of taxes, recruitment of laborers for government projects, and prohibition of arranged marriage practices. Similarly, government recognition of customary practices such as polygynous marriage practices and the Poro and Sande schools also bears testimony to continuity in Bandi society. Thus, while the administrative policies of the Liberian government introduced changes in Bandi society, some of the policies also supported continuities in aspects of traditional Bandi systems.
CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation examined the traditional Bandi social, religious, economic and political systems to 1964. It illustrates aspects of traditional Bandi systems that changed and those that persisted as a result of and in spite of interactions with neighboring ethnic groups and contact with the transatlantic slave trade, Islam, the Liberian state and Christianity. It also shows that internal and external factors played roles in change and continuity in Bandi society.

The Bandi share many customs but they are not a monolithic ethnic group. There are six subgroups that include the Volukoha Bandi, Tahamba Bandi, Wanwoma Bandi, Hasala Bandi, Lukasu Bandi and Hembe Bandi. Each of the six subgroups of Bandi speaks a Bandi language that slightly varies, especially in its use of words. Nevertheless, the six subgroups share common social and cultural values such as Poro and Sande schools, polygynous marriage, divination, totemic beliefs and paying homage to the spirits of the ancestors. Rice cultivation by the six subgroups also illustrates their sharing of a common agricultural system.

The Bandi are classified as Mande-language speakers. Other Mande-language speakers in western and northwestern Liberia include the Mandingo, the Mende, the Loma and the Vai. Bandi has a lot in common with the Loma and the Mende languages. The Bandi, the Loma and the Mende languages use similar names for animals such as...
deer and crocodile and similar words for house, spoon, medicine, chief and uncle. The Bandi, Loma and Mende also share common beliefs and practices relating to Poro and Sande schools, divination, soothsaying and polygynous marriage as well as rice cultivation which bears testimony that they share common traditional social and cultural systems. The Bandi also share common cultural values with nearby non-Mande-speakers such as the Belle, Gola and Kissi because the Bandi share common environments with these ethnic groups.

Although it was decentralized before 1907, Bandi society always had a few leaders who were powerful. Evidence of this was the dominant role played by chiefs such as Mambulu in Bandiland up to his death in 1913. The establishment of Liberian state control in Bandiland in 1907 modified the traditional Bandi political system. Liberian government laws increased the authority of traditional chiefs such as Mambulu, N’dorlleh and Dunor, especially from traditional patterns of leadership during crises to new patterns of ongoing authority. The Bandi chiefs’ reliance on Liberian and Bandi customary laws to administer Bandiland clearly demonstrates change and continuity in Bandi society.

Even though the Bandi adopted new crops such as corn, cassava, peanuts, potatoes, eddoes, cocoa, and coffee, the main Bandi agricultural activity remained rice cultivation. Traditional agricultural activities in Bandi society were enhanced by control over an enslaved labor force. The existence of such involuntary labor in traditional Bandi society is evidenced by the presence of slaves and pawns in chiefs’ households. This unfree labor system was modified by the transatlantic slave trade which was introduced on the coast of pre-Liberia in about 1518. The sale of domestic slaves, pawns, war captives and debtors by Bandi chiefs to European enslavers on the coast of pre-Liberia bears testimony to this.
The demographic impact of the transatlantic slave trade in Bandi and other societies is evidenced by the exportation of approximately 337,000 slaves from the coast of pre-Liberia between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Bandi chiefs practiced domestic slavery and an aspect of the transatlantic slavery that was also practiced by other ethnic groups such as the Vai and the Gola after the 1500s. The end of the transatlantic slave trade in the late nineteenth century did not end the practice of domestic slavery in Bandi society, as demonstrated by the continuous use of slaves on the farms of Bandi chiefs up to 1907. The Liberian state continued aspects of unfree labor in Bandiland by introducing and promoting involuntary labor such as porterage and taa’ loi services in 1939 and 1940, respectively. Even though the Bandi practiced involuntary labor, the Liberian government’s introduction of taa’ loi and porterage services reinforced involuntary labor services in Bandi society.

Islam also brought about changes in Bandi society. For example, Bandi Muslim and Islamic names became more common in Bandi society in the late 1800s. Elements of Islamic and Bandi social and religious beliefs and practices also accommodated and reinforced each other. The practice of polygynous marriage and the belief in the magical power of charms in Islamic and Bandi traditions are examples of aspects of Islamic and Bandi social and cultural values that accommodated each other in Bandi society. Bandi and non-Bandi Muslims introduced Islamic practices such as Ramadan, pilgrimage, and worship in the mosque in Bandi towns and villages. Traditional Bandi beliefs and practices such as totemism, Poro and Sande schools, and paying homage to the spirits of ancestors were also maintained by Bandi Muslims. Bandi Muslims demonstrated their Bandi identity by holding on to some traditional Bandi beliefs and practices.
Like Islam, Christianity also assisted change and promoted continuity in Bandi society. This was evidenced by the Order of the Holy Cross missionaries’ promotion of Christianity, western education, medical services and other values using both English and the Bandi languages. The teaching of the gospel in English and Bandi bears testimony of promotion of both Christian and traditional values in Bandi society. The missionaries introduced change in Bandi society by teaching English to male and female students at the mission schools. On the other hand, the translation of the Bible from English into the Bandi language served to modify an aspect of the Bandi value systems because the translation enabled Bandi people to read and write their language. The missionaries promoted Bandi cultural values by encouraging rice farming and sponsoring ceremonies related to the Poro and Sande schools. Another change the missionaries introduced in Bandi society was the practice of monogamous marriage among young Bandi Christians. However, the missionaries also accommodated traditional Bandi values by accepting polygynous marriage among Bandi chiefs and elders who embraced Christianity. Thus, the advent of Islam and Christianity in Bandiland did not eradicate traditional religious beliefs and practices among the Bandi as evidenced by continuing practices such as totemism and paying homage to spirits of ancestors.

The Liberian state encouraged change and also allowed continuity in Bandi society by promoting aspects of western and traditional values. An example of how the Liberian state encouraged change and continuity in Bandi society was the promotion of Liberian and Bandi political systems and laws. The new political and legal systems of the Liberian state reinforced the traditional political and legal systems in Bandi society. Furthermore, the Liberian state’s reliance on chiefs and customary laws in their administration of
Bandiland bears evidence of continuity in aspects of traditional Bandi political and legal systems. The Liberian state policy that provided for designating the six subdivisions of Bandiland as the six clans of the new Bandi chiefdom also bears testimony to how the Liberian state relied on existing traditional arrangements in Bandi society to implement its administrative policies. Furthermore, the Liberian state’s recognition of traditional secular and non-secular laws governing Bandi towns encouraged the continuity of traditional values in Bandi society.

The Liberian state’s recognition of and support for the Poro and Sande schools enhanced continuity of these traditional institutions in Bandi society. However, the government laws of 1949 and 1962 that reduced the number of years for males and females to spend in the Poro and Sande schools, respectively, were among changes introduced into the practices of these traditional institutions in Bandiland. The prohibition of arranged marriages and the provision for husbands to pay dowry for their brides in dollars rather than traditional materials were also among changes the Liberian government introduced into traditional practices in Bandi society.

The rearrangement of leadership in Bandiland in the categories of District Commissioners, Paramount Chief, Clan Chief and Town Chief was an example of changes the Liberian government introduced into the Bandi political system. Other changes the Liberian government introduced in Bandiland were the collection of taxes and recruitment of laborers. The empowerment of chiefs to enforce government laws also enhanced continuity in traditional authority in Bandi society. The reliance on government laws and security forces by chiefs to enforce their authority turned the chiefs into collaborators with the government rather than solely leaders of their people.
This study illustrates that while aspects of Bandi social, political, economic, cultural and religious systems changed during the period under study, other aspects of these systems remained unchanged. Overall, despite social and cultural interactions with neighboring ethnic groups and the impacts of the transatlantic slave trade, Islam, Christianity and the Liberian state, the developments in Bandi society from 1500 to 1964 were characterized by both change and continuity.
Appendix A

HSIRB Approval Letter
Date  October 8, 2007

To  Bruce Haight, Principal Investigator
    Samuel Ngovo, Student Investigator for dissertation

From  Amy Naugle, Ph D Chair

Re  HSIRB Project Number  07-07-20

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "The Bandi of Northwestern Liberia: A Study of Social Change and Continuity in Bandi Society, 1900-1964" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination  October 8, 2008
Appendix B

Names of Bandi Chiefs Executed in Kolahun in 1911
Chief Kuyah Bolay .................. Menditahun Town
Chief Gbessie Wole .................. Fangalahun Town
Chief Gbayan ........................ Nyawolehun Town
Chief Mando .......................... Yengbelahun Town
Chief Ngessa ........................ Wohomba Town
Chief Dovili Malee ................... Ngehima Town
Chief Janga Moiba ................... Nyokolitahun Town
Chief Jarwen Manjoe ................. Yengema Town
Appendix C

Bibliographical Essay
Bandi Oral Sources

Oral sources have become more useful to African historians who seek to write the history of peoples with limited archival and published sources. Africanist and non-Africanist historians agree that critical and analytical examination of oral sources provides useful information for reconstructing historical knowledge. Historians have also suggested that researchers should strive toward critical examination of both oral and published sources in order to be able to reconstruct historical knowledge from these sources.

Bandi oral sources are important to this study because they represent the Bandi people’s own views of the past and their society. Bandi oral sources were recorded through interviews of informants in Bandiland. The oral interviews were conducted in the months of June and July 2008. Most of the informants interviewed were between the ages of sixty-five to seventy, while eight of the informants were about ninety-five years old. The informants included farmers, chiefs, blacksmiths, leatherworkers, potters and zoes, Christians and Muslims. The interviews covered stories of Bandi migration, the six sub-groups of Bandi and their relations with neighboring ethnic groups, rice farming, traditional educational institutions, the political organization, kinship relationships and marriage, Islam and Christianity and traditional religious belief systems. Informants were asked to discuss the way of life of the Bandi in relation to interactions with neighboring ethnic groups and contacts with the transatlantic slave trade, Islam, Christianity and the Liberian state.

There were twice as many male informants interviewed as female informants and most informants were individually interviewed. Some informants were interviewed once, while others were interviewed twice. The reason why there were more male informants interviewed than female informants was because men were more willing to give detailed
information than women about questions relating to traditional Bandi beliefs and practices such as the Poro, Sande, totemism and the political system. Traditionally, women in Bandi society are often uncomfortable in engaging in conversation with men, especially about activities such as the Sande school. Female students from the Bolahun mission school who were asked to assist were not able to get detailed information from women informants about questions relating to women society. On the other hand, the men were willing to answer questions about aspects of the Poro school. All interviews were conducted in the Bandi language.

Although Bandi traditions did not prohibit women from taking part in politics, men had often dominated politics in Bandi society system. Bandi women were reluctant to answer questions relating to traditional politics and blacksmithing because chieftaincy positions and the blacksmith profession were exclusively for men. However, women did answer questions about leatherwork and pottery, even though the former profession was exclusively for men and latter profession reserved mainly for women. Out of the 120 informants contacted for interviews in Bandiland, 95 men and women were interviewed. While 75 men were interviewed, only 20 women agreed to be interviewed. Most of the informants interviewed were individuals and only two interviews were conducted in group of ten to fifteen informants. Group interviews were often difficult because most of the men and women contacted for interviews were rice farmers who were always busy with farm work. Among the 20 women informants, 15 were interviewed one time, while 5 were interviewed two times. On the other hand, among the 95 men informants, 85 informants were interviewed two to three times, while only 10 informants were interviewed one time.
Archival Research and Associated Problems

The archival sources for this dissertation were collected from three archives. These include the Archives of the Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, and the Liberian Collections Project at the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University, Bloomington, and the Liberian National Archives (LNA) in Monrovia, Liberia.

The Archives of the Episcopal Church (AEC) has large collections of missionary records relating to the work of the Order of Holy Cross (OHC) missionaries in Bandiland. The records include a bi-monthly journal entitled *The Hinterland, Annual Reports of the Episcopal Church in Liberia, The Episcopal News Letter, Policy Statements of the OHC*, and “Correspondence of OHC Missionaries.” The *Hinterland* and other OHC published sources are labeled Domestic and Foreign Mission Society (DFMS), Record Group (RG) #2729 and Box 153. The OHC reports, correspondence and other unpublished sources labeled DFMS, RG #s 27 and 72 and boxes 4, 5, 27 and 151. The OHC missionary records of Christianity in Bandiland covered from 1922 to 1985.

*The Hinterland* publications contain reports of the activities of the OHC missionaries in the areas of education, evangelism and health. These publications are important because they revealed the perspectives of the missionaries about the Bandi and their traditional beliefs and practices. These publications provide only vague ideas from the Bandi perspective and focus mainly on the views of the missionaries. Some of *The Hinterland* publications have dates and years, which are important for understanding the chronology of missionaries’ activities in Bandiland. However, there are some *Hinterland* publications with only years and months; dates are not noted, which creates a problem of trying to arrange the publications in chronological order.
Like *The Hinterland*, the *Annual Reports of the Episcopal Church* and OHC Records and consists of reports and correspondence of mainly OHC missionaries. While the reports are mainly based on observations of the OHC missionaries, the correspondence consists of letters from the missionaries and local Christians of Bandiland to OHC headquarters in New York. Despite the shortcomings, the records of the OHC missionaries relating to Bandiland at the Archives of the Episcopal Church are important to this study because they provide information about the impacts of Christianity in Bandi society.

In addition to the OHC records, this dissertation also relies on Liberian government documents (LGD) held in the Liberian Collections Projects at the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University. These include Liberian government documents such as Departmental Regulations Governing the Administration of the Interior, Revised Laws Governing the Commissioners, Officers and Men of the Liberian Frontier Force, Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations for Governing the Hinterland, Revised Laws and Administrative Regulations Governing the Poro and Sande Societies, Executive Presidential Correspondences with Interior Department, Administrative Reports from the Hinterland. These documents covered the period from 1949 to 1964. The documents are important to this dissertation because they provide detailed information about the administrative policies of the Liberian state toward the ethnic groups in the interior and how these policies affected traditional social, economic, political and cultural systems of the Bandi and other ethnic groups in northwestern Liberia. The mentioned Liberian government documents at the Liberian Collections Projects are important to this dissertation because they provide important information that is examined in the context of how the government policies provided for change and continuity in traditional Bandi systems up
to 1964. Although the Liberian Collections Projects has large collections of Liberian
government documents that are important to understanding policies relating to interior
administration of the Liberian state, the main problems are that these files and documents
are not organized chronologically.

Other archival sources used in the study were found in the Liberian National
Archives. These include Annual Messages and Inaugural Addresses of Presidents Arthur
Barclay, Charles D. B. King, Edwin Barclay and William V. S. Tubman, Legislative Act
Levying taxes among aborigines of the Hinterland, Manual for the Regulation of the
Liberian Frontier Force and Laws Relating to the Liberian Frontier Force, published by
the College of West Africa Press in 1914 and 1916, respectively, "Minutes of Conference
for Chiefs," The Liberian Star and The Liberian Age. These documents covered the period
from 1904 to 1964. The annual messages and inaugural addresses provide important in-
formation relating to the way in which various administrations of the Liberian government
initiated and formulated policies for the governance of the Bandi and other ethnic groups
in the interior. The Legislative Act levying taxes provides information about the govern-
ment’s policy of imposing taxes on the homes of individuals in the interior. This document
is important to this dissertation because the policy subjected the Bandi to taxation and the
subsequent resentments against taxation in Bandi society. The executive correspondence,
reports and minutes of conferences are also important to this dissertation because they con-
tain communications between national and local government officials as well as between
government officials and Bandi chiefs relating to government policies in Bandiland. The
mentioned documents in the Liberian National Archives provide valuable information
relating to the policies of the Liberian state in Bandiland.
One problem encountered during my research visit at the Liberian National Archives was that their holdings were not well organized. Archivists found it difficult to locate materials in the archives because they are not organized in boxes and files. The materials are also not arranged chronologically and dates and years on some of the documents are not readable because of poor maintenance, which often makes it difficult to accurately cite sources. Despite these problems, the Liberian National Archives provided important sources that directly informed this dissertation.

Secondary Sources That Informed the Concept Used in This Study


Bascom’s and Herskovits’ edited book, *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, consists of fifteen essays. The introductory chapter entitled “The Problem of Stability and Change in Africa Culture,” provides a central theme that runs through the rest of the essays. The main theme of the book is that traditional African systems have been affected in some way by contact with outside influences, but these African systems have not
completely given way to change. This work provides a concept of change and continuity that informed this dissertation. Bandi society experienced changes but also elements of continuity as a result of contact with external forces, such as the transatlantic slave trade, Islam, Christianity and the Liberian state.

The concept of change and continuity is also employed in C. S. Whitaker's book, *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1966*. The central theme of Whitaker's book is that the British relied on traditional authorities as well as their own administrative system to govern Northern Nigeria after World War II. This book is important to this dissertation because it provides an analysis of concept of change and continuity that informed this study. Like the British in Northern Nigeria, the Liberian state also utilized the existing traditional authorities and its own administrative system to govern Bandiland.

In addition to books by Bascom/Herskovits and Whitaker, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch's book, *Africa: Endurance and Change South of the Sahara*, provides an important analysis of the effects of Europeans' contact with traditional societies in Africa south of the Sahara. The book examines traditional African systems in the context of continuity in aspects of these systems despite the advent of external factors such as Islam, Christianity, and ideas of new government. This dissertation also draws on the method of analysis as used in Coquery-Vidrovitch's book to examine traditional Bandi systems in the context of how aspects of traditional Bandi values persisted despite the impact of external factors.

is that the social and cultural beliefs and practices of the Bandi people remained unknown (p. xiv) in Liberian historiography until the publication of this book. Dennis’ book is important to this dissertation because it is the only book-length study so far that focused on the social and cultural way of life of the Bandi. His study of the Bandi and their traditional beliefs and practices is important to this dissertation because it raised the question of what aspects of traditional Bandi systems have changed and persisted as a result of internal and external influences to the mid-twentieth century. Research for the book was conducted in the 1960s. It provides anthropological and sociological perspectives about the traditional social and cultural systems of the Bandi. This dissertation, on the other hand, provides an historical perspective on the Bandi people and how aspects of their social and cultural systems have changed and also persisted during the period under study.

Bronislaw Malinowski’s *The Dynamic of Culture Change* examines contact between western and African cultural systems with respect to European influences and surviving African institutions and traditions before World War II. European colonial administrators, missionaries, educators and workers were all agents of western cultural influences in Africa, but the dynamics of African institutions are demonstrated by the surviving African institutions. Malinowski’s study informed this dissertation in that it also provided analysis of culture change in the context of contact between African and European cultural values.

In addition to the mentioned oral, archival and published sources, other sources that directly and indirectly informed this dissertation are subsequently listed in the bibliography.
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