



## Critical Analyses of Liberia's Bicentennial Celebration: A Way Forward to a New Historical Narrative and Development Tangibility

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**ABSTRACT:** The land known today as Liberia existed with rich civilizations; well institutionalized tribal governance and political structures that functioned well to meet the political, economic and spiritual demands before the Western Civilization that came along with repatriation of the Americo-Liberians or the settlers in the early 1800s. Before 1822, there were socio-political establishments and institutions, the likes of Condo Confederation of the Mandingo leader, King Sa Bosso Kamara, King Jack Ben of Jumbo Town of Grand Bassa, King Brister, a Dei ruler, King Zolu Duma or Peter Careful as known by European of Gon (the Capital City of his Kingdom on North Lofa River) and others are some of the historical indigenous figures and their leadership ability and kingdoms are illustrations of existing socio-political civilizations before the docking and berthing of the **Elizabeth**; a Ship that brought the first batch of America-Liberians ( Freed Slaves) in 1822 at Dozoa Island ( Providence Island), from North America. Further, this year marks the exact two centuries since the arrival of settlers. The event has been widely celebrated in the midst of incomparable development and economic successes as per the years of the nation's existence; the so-celebrated class (the settlers) governed the State from 1847-1980 under the Republican and the True Whig Parties respectively with the same injustice and socioeconomic apartheid-like of leadership that they escaped from, from the USA, and from 1980-2022 under the so-called majority native people led-admirations, the country stays economically and developmentally bleeding . Thus, there is a dire need to a radically change the State's behaviour by fighting corruption and prioritizing sustainable development and shared economic prosperity that has been compromised over the last 200 years to meet the aspiration of the people (Liberians). Hence, this paper aims at exploring some of the historical ambiguities and factors that led and contributed to incomparability of Liberia's 200 years with her development and economic achievement. Nations' success are measured by their tangible achievement not only how long they have been in nationhood.

**KEYWORDS:** ACS, Bicentennial, Condo Confederation, Liberia, Providence Island, Sao Bosso, Zolu Duma.

### INTRODUCTION

After two centuries elapsed since the first batch of the Americo-Liberians or freed Black slaves from North America to Dozoa Island (Providence Island in Liberia) as argued by some writers and historians such as Sven Holsoe<sup>i</sup>. The bicentennial celebration has been widely publicized by the government and, by referring to Liberia as Land of Return (LoR) instead of Land of Return and Reception. It hosts high-ranked officers and delegations from the White House including Honourable Dana Banks, assistant to the President and Senior Director for Africa and National Security Council, head of delegation. <sup>ii</sup> The Congress' delegation led by Representative Gregory W. Meeks, Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee<sup>iii</sup> Describing Liberia as a land of return only without recognizing the hospitality of the indigenes is mistakenly or intentionally coined as the emblem of the country itself 'The Love and liberty brought us here', a statement that impliedly denote non-existence of the land called Liberia today or ignoring the effort and role of native Liberians with existing civilizations and governance structure before 1822. This is why in 1974, the President William Tolbert's wisdom thought it wise to appoint 51 members to the commission on National Unity as a result of the passage of Legislature of Liberia an act giving authorization to the President to establish a commission to give consideration to possible changes to a number of national symbols, including the national seal and motto 'The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here'. Thus, the Commission (the Deshields Commission) was headed by Mr McKinley Alfred Deshields Sr., The commission recommended to remove divisive and uninclusive aspect of the symbols. The report was submitted on January 24, 1978 and contained among other



things, the change of the motto from ‘The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here’ to ‘Love, Justice Equality’<sup>iv</sup>. It has been a public and intellectual debates in Liberia to reconsider the emblem or the motto, Professor Nvaseke Konneh in his book ‘The Love of Liberty Brought Us Together’ and Professor Joseph Saye Guannu extensively debated this subject<sup>v</sup>. In 2009, Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended to the change the motto to ‘The Love of liberty unites us here’<sup>vi</sup> are some examples of the debate. The motto is an exclusive for the freed slaves; they are the ones who were brought to Liberia and of course they met people on the ground, therefore it must include them as well. It needs to point out that tribal kings, the likes of King Sao Boso Kamara of the Mandingo Kingdom of Condo Confederation, King Jack Ben of Jumbo Town of Grand Bassa, King Zolu Duma (Peter Careful), King Brister, and others received their brethren from segregation, ill-treatment and socioeconomic and political subjugation in the United States. Based on this, the land known today as Liberia must be referred to as land of reception and return as well. The Bicentennial celebration marking the arrival of freed Black slaves in 1822 should not be regarded the beginning of civilizations in Liberia as consciously or subconsciously termed by some writers and historians to debase the rich governance, educational, cultural and religious civilizations that existed before the sailing of the *Elizabeth*, and played a very important role in giving the opportunity to the settlers. Over the last two centuries, Liberia has achieved far less than anticipated of her in socioeconomic development. For instance, upon the declaration of independence, the new comers, the freed slaves were able to control the politics and accumulate almost all the economic dividends for themselves and literally treated other Liberians as they had been treated by their slave masters in the North America, a situation that prompted and fuelled the 1980s radical and revolutionary and progressive movements such as Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) and the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA). Hence, the Coup was staged against Tolbert’s administration and Doe’s because of lack of social and economic injustice. Now, it is time to heal the wounds by solidifying the effort for national reconciliation, correcting or rectifying and righting historical errors by highlighting political and social lives before 1822, and prioritizing sustainable and shared economic and development initiatives for the nation. Two centuries of existence has offered very little, more is needed to be done so that the years and achievement can be simultaneously celebrated years to come.

## TOWARDS RENARRATIVE OF LIBERIA’S HISTORY

Times pass and years unfold, historical significance emerges and establishes. Liberia as a nation has had lots of significant and historical relevance before and since the arrival the freed slaves to its shore 200 years ago. In other words, this year 2022 marks the second centennials of the repatriation of freed slaves from the United States of America to the Dozoa Island,<sup>vii</sup> (now providence Island located in the City of Monrovia today, the Capital of Liberia). However, it is historically prejudice and segregation to always begin the narrative of Liberia’s formation by the arrival of repatriated freed black slaves as done by the vast majority who had written on Liberia. Yes, the event formed a great historical milestone, but the movement met people in the land with governance structures, religions and civilizations based on tribal groupings and different settlements or kingdoms. Some historians and writers with a spirit of confirmation bias impliedly regarding the **docking of the Elizabeth; the ship that brought the first batch of the settlers-** the as the dawn of civilization, education and governance in the land known today as Liberia. That is a wrong assumption and perhaps only intended to politically, overshadow the African cultures, traditions and other civilizations far older than the Western’s and Christianity in Land such as Islam with its rich culture and pure African civilizations and leadership systems that perfectly worked for the people based on a collective responsibility and shared obligation. According Kadallah Khafre in his 1978 article ‘Towards A Political Economy in Liberia’ ‘By the time of the North American settlers arrival, the area now called Liberia was already inhabited by many ethnic groups with various social formations, - governance, trading system, religion, education and cultures-,. The groups considered indigenous to the area (relative to the North Americans)<sup>viii</sup>

Furthermore, it has to be noted that Trans-Atlantic slave trade played a major role in shaping the modern formation of Liberia’s history and provide the motivation and inspiration for the establishment of the American Colonization Society (ACS) and as a result, the Colony of Liberia in 1822.<sup>ix</sup> That is, the history of the modern state of Liberia started in 1816 when the American Colonization Society (ACS) received a support from some leading public figures in the United States of America (USA) such as Senators Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, President Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe and others. The movement that worked to establish and found and find a colony in Africa for freed and manumitted slaves<sup>x</sup>. The agenda hit an official operation when the Congress granted \$10000 USD for the repatriation to Africa of persons brought to the States as slaves, following the American abolition of slave trade<sup>xi</sup>. Therefore, within the period from 1822 - 1865 the ACS was able to repatriate 19000 black people, among



whom 4540 freeborn, 7000 manumitted slaves and more than 5700 recaptured from slaving vessels.<sup>xii</sup> This was the beginning of modern State known today as the Republic of Liberia<sup>xiii</sup>. The main objective that was behind the founding of the ACS was to have a settlement for the freed slaves in Africa. Hence, the central of the discussion of this piece is to point out some of the historical significance Liberia after two centuries of laying the foundation of its statehood.

Besides, it is perceived that the ACS emerged as a movement of emancipation, freedom and justice for the Africans that were held in slavery in the United States. Nevertheless, it was mainly intended to reduce the black race in US as they had been regarded as threat. This is why, the so-called ACS should not be blindly celebrated for initiating the repatriation of Africans to Liberia; it was a racist organization that polished itself with glitter of ecclesiastic movement, freedom, emancipation and justice. According to Ms Dana Banks, the Special Assistant to President Joe Biden and the Head of US Delegation to the Liberia Bicentennial Celebration ‘They- freed slaves, the Americo-Liberians- were leaving a country that legalized slavery. They were sponsored, in part, by the American Colonization Society, a **RACIST PROJECT**- supported even by the Great Emancipator himself, President Abraham Lincoln- **with the goal of removing freed black people from America**’<sup>xiv</sup> Notwithstanding, the arrival of the settlers marked a great historical event for the formation of the Nation State known today as Liberia, there has been a very little academic, political and historical efforts to honestly present what was Liberia before Liberia. There were civilizations before 1822; Liberia is not the land of return only as it has been biasedly consciously or subconsciously described by some writers and political analysts. In reality, Liberia is the land of reception and return as well. Let us try to recognize African civilizations before the arrival of the Americo-Liberians in our history books and teaching materials at all levels of education sector. Unfortunately, there is a scarce mention and due recognition traditional people in their leadership narratives in Liberia. There were kingdoms and local governance structures conducting themselves in accordance of the African Civilization before Christianity and the western culture and democracy. For instance, in King Sao Boso Kamara’s Condo Confederation, there were mixed of African and Islamic civilizations. There were written laws, structures of government and learning institutions. Below are some illustrations of political, social and civilizational establishments before 1822 in the land called that is called today Republic of Liberia:

## 1- The Condo Confederation

The Condo Confederation which consisted of several kingdoms headed by the Mandingo King Sao Boso Kamara, the supreme leader. The confederation was also known as Condo Country<sup>xv</sup> currently, Gbarpolu County in northern portion of Liberia. The word Condo etymologically comes from Mo Contu Yuna in Mandingo language meaning ‘We Put our Heads Together’ (We unite ourselves). It was a great Liberian civilization and socio-political establishment. This federation was epitome of civilization in politics, governance, education, trade and diplomacy with other kingdoms and countries including Liberia before it joined the Republic in 1878. There were lots diplomatic engagements between Borpulu, the Capital of the Confederation and Monrovia. Besides, Borpulu was multi-ethnic and multi-cultural settlement, there were Mandingo, Vai (Muslims), Gola, Kpelle and Lorma. According to Abe Kromah, the former Deputy Inspector General in his 2016, article titled ‘Sao Boso Kamara – Story of One of Liberia’s Exceptional Founding Fathers’ while pointing out picturing the demographic composition of Borpulu and the Kingdom of Condo by saying ‘The town had a population of 3,000; the Kingdom had a population of 10,000; the population included Vai, Lorna, Gola, Mandingo, and Kpelle; the principal languages spoken were Vai, Lorma and Mandingo: the people greeted each other by saying, “Yakuneh” in Vai or “Oongah” in Lorna or Boday; Islam was the dominant religion of the Bopulu Kingdom, but was predominately practiced by the Mandingos and Vai; the Koran was widely read’<sup>xvi</sup> Besides, according to Sven Holse in 1971 article ‘A Study of Relations between Settlers and Indigenous Peoples in Western Liberia, 1821- 1847’ ‘The Condo confederation, discussed elsewhere, consisted of a large number of ethnically diverse people who were given the general name of Condo. The capital of this state was located at Bopolo and its ruler during this period was Sao Boso, or as he was called by the Europeans and settlers, Boatswain. The Condo confederation dominated the main trading route from the far interior to the coastal area between the Lofa River and Cape Mesurado’<sup>xvii</sup>

Below are some of the civilizational features of the Condo Confederation.

- **Trade Talks between the Condo Confederation and the Colony (Liberia):** ‘Negotiation between Dr. Joseph Mechlin, a colonial agent who succeeded Dr. Richard Randall, was a very active in having cordial and trade relations with the Mandingo and predominantly Muslim Kingdom of Condo Confederation. In that regard, he had talks with Kingdom as described by Dr. C Abayomi Cassel in his book: Liberia – History of the First African Republic- ‘Michelin continued



negotiation with King Boatswain of Boporo, begun by Randall but broken off by his fatal illness. These concerned the establishment of factory in the King's country; - Condo Confederation-, and the opening of a trade route 150 miles into the interior. Early in 1829 Mechlin, assisted by colonists Frederick James, Reuben Dougly and David Logan went on an exploratory trip into the interior of the area beyond Millsburng, which included Boastwain's country. Their purpose was to open the interior and locate probable sites for new settlements.<sup>xviii</sup>

- **Signing a Treaty between Condo Confederation and the Colony (Liberia):** It has been noted that governance civilization prior to the establishment of the modern-day- Liberia went beyond trade, it included diplomacy and international relations. That is why, after only five years of the arrival of the Americo-Liberians, the freed black slaves, in 1827, King Boatswain expressed the wish to enter into friendly relations with the Colony which became Liberia later on, Condo Confederation had had a treaty with Liberia. According to Dr. Abayomi Cassel, 'He (The King) was chief of the Kondo Country, covering the present-day Boporo, where either his father or himself had established a Mandingo colony. Liberia representatives and envoy of the King's government signed a treaty conferring on the colonial authorities considerable rights over the interior to the North of Cape Mount.<sup>xix</sup> As clearly pointed out by Dr Abayomi Cassel, Condo country had cordial relationship with the Colony before it joined the nation state of Liberia in 1878. However, Dr Cassel's description of Condo country as a Mandingo Colony is not historically appropriate, because the word colony means an occupation of a foreign element of land or territory. And that was not the case of the Condo Confederation, that geographic areas has been the settlement of Mandingo, Kpelle, Lorma, Vai for a time which might not be easy to determine. So, it was a Kingdom like any other African and Liberian Kingdoms, it was never a colony, rather it was a loss confederation of several kingdoms.

- **Educational Civilization and Pedagogy before 1822:**

Prior to the arrival of the freed black slaves from North America in the first quarter of the 1800 century to Liberia as known today, there were well established educational civilizations, learning centres, libraries and even universities. The Condo Country or Condo Confederation was an epitome of educational civilization, Arabic language was very significant to the Mandingo Kingdom due to her attachment to the Islamic Civilization. Borpolu University of Condo Confederation before 1822 offered what is equivalent of a Bachelor of Arts diploma and training certificate in Arabic Language, trade and commerce as Islamic History, Theology and Jurisprudence. According to Dr. Edward W Blyden in His widely read book '**Christianity, Islam and the African Race**' describing to us the clear picture and characteristics of Educational Civilization of the Condo Country before 1822, ' The boys under their instruction are at the study of book for years. First, they are taught the letters and vowels marks, then they are taught to read the text, without receiving any insight into its meaning. When they can read fluently, they are taught the meaning of the words which they commit carefully to memory; after which they are instructed in what they call the 'Jalaleyn'-; a running commentary on the Koran. While learning the Jalaleyn, they have side studies assigned them in Arabic manuscripts, containing the mystical traditions, the acts of Mohamed....and the young men who intend to be enrolled among the Ulemas (The Scholars) take up history and chronology, on which they have some fragmentary manuscripts. Before a student is admitted to the ranks of the learned, he must pass an examination; ( An Aptitude Test) usually lasting for seven days, conducted by a Board consisting of Imams and Ulemas ( The Scholars). If he is successful, he is led around the town on horseback with instrumental music and singing the following ditty song: **ALLAHUMMA, YA RABBEE, SALLA ALLA MOHAMMEDE, SALLA ALLAHU ALAYHE WA SALLAMA. This was like a graduation ceremony and preparation for a Bachelor's degree.**

After this, candidate is presented with a sash or scarf usually of fine white cloth, of native manufacture, which he is thenceforth permitted to wind around his cap with one end hanging down the back forming the Oriental turban. This is a sort of Bachelor of Acts Diploma.<sup>xx</sup> The above-mentioned description by Dr. Blyden shows to us how the learning centres and institutions were academically and pedagogically managed and how students were trained, examined and qualified for graduation, finally how the graduation ceremony used to be held. What was great civilization! What was an amazing management of educational affairs by Condo country before the Western civilization that arrived and introduced by the arrival of Christianity along with the freed slaves from North America in 1822.! Liberia is very rich in its history and civilizations.



- **Libraries and Resource Centers in Condo Confederation:**

In addition to what have been discussed above about the educational civilization in Condo Confederation, there were also lots of public libraries and resource centres for readers and researchers before 1822. According to Professor. Blyden, 'But the Koran is (was) not the only book they – the people of Condo, the Mandingo and others- read. We have seen, in some of their libraries, extensive manuscripts in poetry and prose. One showed us at Boporo, the Makamat of Hariri-; The English Translation of which is The Assemblies of Al-Hariri; a collection of stories....<sup>xxi</sup>. In 2016, when Sheikh Abubakar Sumaworo, Grand Mufti of Liberia, a renowned Islamic cleric and a scholar, completed the construction of the State-of-the-Art School and Mosque in Borpulu City, the late Professor Dr. Amos C Swayer, the former Interim President of Liberia and astute academic embraced the dedicatory ceremony of the project as a guest speaker. He pointed in his address that Borpulu City is the most significant centre of civilization and education in Liberia's history. It was, according to Dr. Swayer, great commercial route, centre for learning, with well-established political system under the Mandingo King's Confederation (Condo).

- **Diplomatic, Mediation Skills and Peaceful Resolution Conflict Practice:**

Peaceful resolution of disputes or conflict is part and parcel of African tribal setting, Liberia is no exception to this rule. Prior to the advent of Islam, Christianity and Anglo-American Judicial System (AAJS) in the Liberian society, there have been ethnic groupings, beliefs, and different rulers, family heads and kings. In such a society the major ADR mechanisms were used to determine the resolution of dispute by applying customary rules and norms as it's done in any primordial society. The system of handling disputes was far away from legal formalities and judicial technicalities.<sup>xxii</sup> According to the Counsellor Christiana Tah, Liberia's former Minister of Justice, 'The ADR is very similar tour cultural practices in Liberia '<sup>xxiii</sup> Based on this, when the settlers and some of the natives had some misunderstandings, King Sao Boso Kamara of Condo Confederation and King Brister of Dei tribal group played their diplomatic skills to mediate between the Americo-Liberians and the natives. This has been by highlighted by the Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Monie Captan, in his book ' Introduction to Liberian Government and Political System' As the colonists began building their settlement on Cape Mesurado, they encountered intense hostility from the local tribes who demanded the return of the their land and proposed to refund the balance of the unused goods provided in the initial land purchase. The Colonists refused to yield the land causing sporadic attacks against their settlement... as per the narration from Jehudi Ashman;- who was the agent of ACS in Liberia from 1822-1828 and was a *de facto* governor of the Colony of Liberia-, the matter was finally settled on April 24, 1822 through the intervention and mediation of King Soa Boso, the leader of the Mandingo Confederation and King Brister <sup>xxiv</sup>. Besides, practicing diplomatic relations was not only between the settlers and the native kings, rather it was also between and among the local tribal kings themselves. For instance, D. W. Whitehurst records that in about 1827 Sao Boso, the ruler of the Condo confederation, held a treaty of friendship and nonaggression with King Zolu Duma commonly known as King Peter or Peter Careful; the treaty probably existed for some time prior<sup>xxv</sup>

**2- Governance Civilization of other native Liberians:**

The Condo Confederation was not the only visible and apparent civilization before 1822 in Liberia. There were other governance structures kingdoms and chiefdoms well- governed and administered. According to Dr. Abayomi Cassel elaborating on the tribal government in Liberia before Western-style of leadership both secular and Christianized 'All government among these tribes was based on a communal pattern with priests, kings (later chieftains), councils, laws, rules and regulations, religious ceremonies and tribunals. The description above of the government of the Grebo tribe is a fair approximation of that existing in each of the other tribes of Liberia, with variations of minor importance. These governments functioned smoothly and effectively, especially prior to the introduction of the Western civilization'<sup>xxvi</sup> These governments and political institutions had council men making laws and regulations and violators of the laws were punished. The followings are some of the leading figures and Kings before and upon the arrival of the Americo-Liberians: King Zolu Duma of Dei tribal group was the most important political figure upon the arrival of the freed slaves. He is at times called King Peter Careful by Europeans, he headed a State which Capital City was Gon on the North of the Lofa River. The power and political influence of the Chief Duma extended to most of the southwestern to north of the River. He had leadership charisma and a system to governance and negotiation with the Europeans.



### 3- Economic Civilization:

Several centuries before the sailing of the *Elizabeth*, the ship that brought the first batch of the freed slaves or the Americo-Liberians, the natives and indigenes were having well-put-together and organized trading system and economic activities between and among different kingdoms within the region and beyond. The major trading route was from the coast where Monrovia and its surroundings are located today to the northern part of Liberia Bopulu, the main city of Condo Confederation to Macenta in Guinea today towards Mali and upwards. However, that strategic trade route in the 1800s was later diverted to towards central region of Liberia, Monrovia-Bong County- Nimba to Guinea Forest Region and to La Côte d'Ivoire that was done either for political or economic reasons. Professor Augustine Konneh, Dean of AME University Graduate School extensively elaborated and studied social and entrepreneurial life of the Liberian Mandingo in his Doctorate Dissertation under the theme: Indigenous entrepreneurs and capitalists : the role of the Mandingo in the economic development of Modern-day Liberia from Indiana University.

### 4- Societal Civilization and Social Life

Before and upon the arrival of the Americo-Liberians in 1822, there were typically two major categories of social life or societal civilizations. The first was, pure and untouched African societal civilization and the second was the combination of African societal civilization and Islamic heritage. As for the untouched and raw African societal civilization, there were both *porro* and *sandee* communities. The *Porro* was for male and the *Sandee* was for female. It has to be noted that these societies were not as depicted by some writers an absolute barbarous institutions. In the *Porro*, young men were educated, mentored and trained over a fixed period of time how to be productive and responsible. On the other hand, the *Sandee* was also providing training to young women in domestic science, arts.<sup>xxvii</sup> Yet, this does not negate the fact that there were some harmful practices as we understand it today. However, they accepted by the people, cultures and civilization at that time. On the other hand, the Islamic civilization mixed with a bit of African social life was mainly practiced by Mandingo and Vai tribal groups due to their adaptation of Islamic religion as a faith long before the arrival of settlers. They had a system of finance, education, trade and other socio-political and economic structures. That could be the reason why mainly the Mandingo did not easily incorporate and embrace the western life-style and education system easily, because they felt they had the one that responded to their social and economic needs those days. Further, the Islamic education has been one the major sources of fighting illiteracy in Liberia alongside with the Western English system According to Professor Konneh in another article of his under theme - Arabic and Islamic Literacy in Twentieth -Century Liberia- 'Historians have conventionally treated Liberia as a state with a single educational system: the Christian English system that supplies candidates for the civil service and professions. A more complete account of education in Liberia must also take into consideration the tradition of Islamic education. Especially in the interior, where Islamic schools have long been a part of Islamic missionary activity, Arabic literacy constitutes a major alternative to English education -and in some areas Islamic schools provide the major form of literacy Training'<sup>xxviii</sup>

### WRITING CIVILIZATIONS

It is recorded that Bassa language was put into written form as back as 1836-40 by Reverend Messrs. Crocker and Clark of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Equally so, the Grebo language was formalized and reduced into writing before 1837. However, prior to these linguistic and intellectual efforts, there were writing civilizations in the land known today as Liberia. For example, the Condo Confederation was using Arabic language as the official communication due to the attachment of its leaders and dominant population to Islam. Besides, the Vai language which majority speakers are also Muslims was reduced into writing by the Vai people themselves without an external factor. In other words, the distinctive aspect of the written Vai language is being one of the few African languages to have a writing system that is not based on the Latin or Arabic scripts or letters. The Vail script is a syllabary invented by Momolu Duwalu Bukele (30 September 1788 – 1 October 1888) around 1833, although dates as early as 1815 have been recorded<sup>xxix</sup>.

### THE FORMATION OF MODERN LIBERIA AND THE MOTIVATION FOR DECOLONIZATION OF AFRICA

Before the founding of Liberia as a nation state, there were lots of African kingdoms some of which were well governed such as the Mali Empire (1235-1600), Sokoto Caliphate (1804-1904), Wassolou Empire of Samori Touré (1878-1898), the Condo Confederation of Western Liberia that was led by King Sao Boso Kamara and King Jack Ben of Jumbo Town of Grand Bassa



County today and others. All most, all of those kingdoms and empires were indications of self-governance features and abilities that show Africans' possession of leadership civilization and governance before the Western Imperialism and the arrival of Americo-Liberians or the freed black people from the United States to the Providence Island in Liberia. Nevertheless, the colonial powers with their greed and selfish geopolitical and economic expansionary agendas let the continent to fall on its knee to the imperialism. However, when Liberia was founded and later as a nation-state in 1847 that set a basis for the struggle against the Western Imperial powers across the continent. Though it took several years and decades before the movement really became fruitful and practical, but having the Lone Star (Liberia) representing the Black leadership at the Comity of Nations with the Europeans, Asians and Americans gave the light, hope, inspiration and motivation to the African capability of self-governance and revolution for emancipation. Nonetheless, it is not an exaggeration and over-wording to note that Liberia is the seed of the Pan-Africanism and Anti-Western Imperialism (AWI). It was the funding member of the League of Nations 1914-1945 and the later on the United Nations 1945. It inspired the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now the African Union in 1963. That is the OAU was the output of a conference in July 1959 in Sanniquellie, Liberia, when the President William V.S Tubman hosted his counterparts; President Sekou Touré of Guinea, and Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana of Ghana. The trio pledged themselves and committed to working together for the establishment of a "Community of Independent African States." Thus, they decided that a special conference should be held in 1960 after Nigeria, Togoland, and the Cameroons had attained independence. It was agreed on several principles to be presented to proposed conference that set as a genesis of the OAU and now the AU 'Africans, like all other peoples, had an inherent right to independence and self-determination' <sup>xxx</sup> And there is no doubt that the formation of the OAU served as an inspiration for other African nations that were under the greedy Western colonial rule to keep struggle going on until they gained their independence.

## ASSESSMENT OF LIBERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT 1822-2022

Liberia has been relatively more successful in its international politics and foreign policy over the last two centuries (1822-2022) as compared to its internal policy implementation to effect socioeconomic prosperity. Liberia has a soft spot among the earliest driving forces in the formation of key international organizations and significant international instruments, argued by Mr. John Yormie in his book *Liberia in the Colorful World of Diplomacy*<sup>xxxii</sup>. Contrariwise, She has dismally performed in narrowing the gap between the rich and poor, between masses and elite or bourgeois. She remains, despite her longevity and TWO-CENTURINESS, one of the poorest countries on the world with no even regionally standard infrastructure, healthcare system and unfortunately with no workable programs to address her socioeconomic impediments. There is a dire need for the government and the private sectors along with other partners to realistically consider the socioeconomic impediments that Liberia has been enduring over the last two hundred years. Even during her so-called and acclaimed glorious era of economic boom in the 1960s and the 1970s, the share of that mainly selectively for the political elite and what could termed as silent black apartheid in the West African country. That is, both the economy and politics with their development dividends were mainly in the favor of the minority America-Liberians political class. It offered very little or nothing to the indigenes in the other parts of country outside Monrovia where the political elites were mainly residing. The internal policy implementation was the main cause of segregation against the local people and creating politics of rule and divide strategies (RDS) among the hosts and indigenous people. For example, before the arrival of the freed slaves from the United States in the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were two major religions in Liberia; Islam mainly practiced by the Mandingo of the Condo Confederation led by King Saa Boso Kamara and the pure African traditional religions that were practiced mainly by other indigenes. These two distinct religious people were in a good term with each other for instance, King Zolu Duma (Peter Careful) who was a Bassa-Dei ruler and none Muslim and King Saa Boso Kamara who was Mandingo and a Muslim were political friends despite their respective influence. D. W. Whitehurst records that in about 1827 Sao Boso, the ruler of the Condo confederation, held a treaty of friendship and nonaggression with King Zolu Duma commonly known as King Peter or Peter Careful; the treaty probably existed for some time prior<sup>xxxiii</sup> However, later years, especially in the 1847-1980, there was a systematically brainwashing led to the categorization some citizens of that land today now as Liberia as aliens just because of their resistance to easily accommodate the western civilization and cultures. Though, this is affected other tribes in Liberia in one way or another, Nevertheless, the Mandingoes were the most affected tribes by that historically prejudice and systematically discrimination<sup>xxxiii</sup>. They played a very important role during formative stage of Liberia when settlers arrived. Condo Country or Condo Confederation was a self-governed country under the leadership of King Kamara with highly established civilization and governance structures



and a formidable trade. The King provided courtesy to his brethren from the United States. Besides, the Americo-Liberians, because of failed internal policies and politics at that time, considered themselves superior over the indigenes those who gave them opportunity to be resettled after they were chased out of the United States under the effort of the Racist American Colonization Society as recently described by Dana Banks, the Special Assistant to the US President Joe Biden and the head of His envoy to attend Liberia's bicentennial celebration. George Brown (1941, 125-26) points out how the settlers discriminately excluded the indigenes from citizenship in Liberia: 'The American-Liberians [the Settlers] considered themselves a "superior people;" thus, there was no sense or feeling of oneness with [indigenes]<sup>xxxiv</sup>

## THE FIRST BLACK APARTHEID IN AFRICAN 1847-1947-1980

The Americo-Liberians or settlers (The Freed Slaves) from the North America arrived in the land known today as Liberia and were received by their African brothers and sisters. However, they dominated the politics from 1847-1980 and unfortunately treated the their hosts, the native Liberians with politics of exclusion. According to Jospheh Massad, in his article published in and by the Middle East Eye under the them 'Liberia: The African Settler Colony that Parallels Israel' 'The Americo-Liberians established their independent state with no regard to the indigenous people'<sup>xxxv</sup> In other words, they considered themselves superior to other Liberians in an apartheid-like of governance. This was mainly by the two leading Americo-Liberians Parties: the Republican Party and the True Whig Party. The Republican Party that was early known as the Liberian Party was established soon after the declaration of Liberia's independence in 1848. The first President Joseph Jenkins Roberts along with Daniel Bashiel Warner and James Springs Payne were among the leading figures of the political institution. The Party was dissolved in 1899. The True Whig Party (TWP) which is also known as the the Liberian Whig Party dominated the nation's politics from 1878 to 1980. It is not an exaggeration to point out that, the operation, subjugation, segregation and socioeconomic and political discriminating that inspired some of the Freed Black Slaves to be convinced and repatriated by the racial American Colonization Society were practiced by them in Liberia against the indigenes. According to Julius Okulu in his article 'Liberia: Military Coup and its Aftermath' describes how the few segment of the Liberia population controlled and accumulated both the power and the economy under the governance of Republican and True Whig Parties from 1847- 1980 'The Americo-Liberians (descendants of American slaves who had settled in Liberia), who numbered only 6,452 or less than 1 per cent of the total population in the 1962 census, 'firmly hold the reins of political and economic power, and possess the lion's share of domestically owned wealth' as well as 'maintain tenaciously and apply vigorously certain aspects of their Western-derived culture'<sup>xxxvi</sup> In addition, during the period the Americo-Liberians' role, Monrovia and other few cities that were predominately inhabited by them enjoyed the dividends of the economic activities and development. Nonetheless, the other areas where natives were predominately living were systematically left out. Though **there were some sorts of and relative relaxation of the operation and political segregation from Tubman's era to Tolbert's (1947-1980)**. Besides, the ill-treatment of the locals and indigenous Liberians and policy of selective prosperity in the favor of the Americo-Liberians were still in the system. The situation that gave birth to the progressive movements such as the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) in 1975 led by Gabriel Baccus Mathews along with Nathaniel O Beh, Jesus Swaray, Michael George, Thomas Deyagbo who were students then. in the mid 1970s and 80s. And the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) of Dr. Togba Na Tipoteh, Dr. Henry Boimah Fahnbulleh, Dr. Amos Swayer, Senator Conmany B Wesseh Sr. and others.

## CONCLUSION

The land that later became known as Liberia had had well-established civilizations, systems of education and political dynasties that responded to the need of and functioned well for the indigenes before the arrival of the settlers or the Americo- Liberians in the 1820s. The Condo Confederation or Borporo Country as it was sometimes called was one of the visible manifestations of existing sociopolitical and economic civilizations of the native people. The supreme leader of the Confederation, King Sao Bosso Kamara of Mandingo ethnic group, King Brister of Dei tribe, King Zolu Duma (Peter Careful) of Bassa tribe and others had had civilized engagements with the settlers upon their arrival and among themselves. For instance, historical record shows that the first trade and diplomatic treaty that Liberia had was signed between the Settlers (colony) and the Condo Confederation of Sao Bosso Kamara in 1827. According to Dr Cassel 'He (The King) was chief of the Kondo Country, covering the present-day Boporo, where either his father or himself had established a Mandingo colony. Liberia representatives and envoy of the King's government signed a treaty conferring on the colonial authorities considerable rights over the interior to the North of Cape Mount'<sup>xxxvii</sup>. The main conclusions of the work are numbered below:





1. It would seem that the political systems that the settlers found upon their arrival at Cape Mesurado in the early 1820s had existed at least since the turn of the century. The two dominant individuals were Sao Boso Kamara of the Mandingo Condo Confederation and Zolu Duma or King Peter Careful as known in the European Literature, who were in friendly terms with each other. Both had some influence over the Dei area where the colonists would settle, but neither dominated<sup>xxxviii</sup>
2. Let historical recognition of Liberia be inclusive and not systemic biased as opined by Professor Augustine Konneh ‘I suggest that we have a celebration that is inclusive of the other African groups to be named “The Return of the African.” Also, I ask that we revisit or redefine our national symbols that are outright exclusive, divisive, and diametrically opposed to the process of unity and patriotism. According to Professor George Kieh, jr.,” the national symbols of Liberia need to be rethought and redesigned so that they can embody and reflect and represent the collective and shared cultural and historical experiences of all of the stocks and ethnic groups that constitute the Liberian state.”<sup>xxxix</sup>
3. Liberia’s rich cultures and traditions before 1822 should be preserved, recognized, dignified and honored along with what was brought by the settlers. This will greatly help to further unite the people of Liberia and solidify the effort of national reconciliation. Thus, creating a concerted energies for national growth and development.
4. The bicentennial-celebration of the arrival of the settlers is a great historical event, where the indigenes decided to host their brothers and sisters who were subjected to segregation, discrimination and inhumane treatment in USA. However, from 1822-2022, there have been incomparable economic achievements per the year of the so-called existence of Liberia. Notwithstanding, Liberia is endowed with rich resources, the abject poverty rate is skyrocketing, infrastructures are very deplorable, healthcare system is nearly zero and the list goes on and on. The greatest lesson to learn from the bicentennial event, is to change our behavior as a state in order to address the economic and development failure in the last 200 years, fighting systematic corruption, nepotism and bad-governance.
5. There is a dire need for a genuine reconciliation void of cosmeticizing the process as it has been the years. This effort must be led by sociopolitical and religious institutions of the land: the government, the Church, Mosque, traditional institution, academia, media and civil society organizations.
6. The educational institutions bear greater responsibility of rewriting the Liberian history through academic research papers and publication to learning materials.
7. Liberia over the last 200 years, have relatively achieved and scored more in her diplomacy, foreign relations and implementation of the foreign policy mainly. Nonetheless, the internal policy implementation has been dismally poor as evidenced by poor economic and development indications and performance as it supposed to be. Also, deeply division among the Liberians is the result of the poor performance of internal policy achievement.
8. Liberia is a beautiful country with a great potential to grow and thrill if the leadership puts the public interest above any other interest.
9. For the Liberians really enjoy their country as it supposed to, politics should not be the only mains, they should not give up on the private sector as it seems to be for the foreigners or else, the future their children and children’s children will be worst then what had happened in the last 200 years.

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*Cite this Article: Dr. Mory Sumaworo (2022). Critical Analyses of Liberia’s Bicentennial Celebration: A Way Forward to a New Historical Narrative and Development Tangibility. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 5(4), 897-906*