**ABSTRACT**

Title of dissertation: CHESAPEAKE FREE BLACKS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE LIBERIAN STATE, 1776-1848

Herbert Brewer, Doctor of Philosophy, 2017

Dissertation directed by: Professor Ira Berlin
Department of History

This dissertation examines the phased, uneven, and contradictory development of republican ideas in the political thought of Chesapeake free blacks who migrated to Cape Mesurado, West Africa, between the founding of the Liberia colony in 1822 and Liberia's declaration of independence in 1847, and how their republican ideas shaped the creation of the Liberian state.

A key finding is the extent to which the origin of the Liberian state was specifically tied to the development of an embryonic petit-bourgeois social layer of artisans, small traders, shopkeepers, and aspiring merchants among Christian evangelical small property-holding Chesapeake free blacks whose ideas and actions drove the events, thus linking the formation of the Liberian state to the peculiar history of this group.

The establishment of capitalist property relations was the founding principle of the Liberian state, and although religion and race were of considerable significance, they were, contrary to what much of the historiography has claimed, of secondary importance in explaining the state's

origins. Liberia's Chesapeake free black founders tied citizenship to property ownership as well as to race, thereby rooting the state's origins in a political economy of black identity. The coming into being of Liberian identity was powerfully informed and conditioned by the ideology of property, revealing the tension between the hierarchies intrinsic to the Chesapeake free blacks' property-bound conception of citizenship and the egalitarian impulse behind their anti-slavery views.

The interplay of political and economic events in and around Cape Mesurado during Liberia's founding, and the idea of Liberia as an exclusively black space, was tied to a theory of property ownership and to the exigencies of state formation that entailed absorbing or subordinating local African polities, thereby creating new identities and social hierarchies.

A careful reading of the correspondence between the American Colonization Society in Washington and the Chesapeake free black leadership at Cape Mesurado shows that by December 1823, within months of settlement, this incipient class of free black property-holders had announced its intentions, to the dismay of its ACS benefactors. In doing so, the free blacks set in motion a series of actions that would lead them, twenty-five years after the colony's creation, amid debates reflected in published accounts and polemics by both supporters and detractors, to declare Liberia's independence.

# CHESAPEAKE FREE BLACKS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE LIBERIAN STATE, 1776-1848

by

Herbert Brewer

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2017

Advisory Committee:

Professor Leslie S. Rowland, Committee Chair
Professor Ira Berlin, Advisor
Professor Christopher Bonner
Professor Sharon Harley
Professor Paul Landau
Professor Donald Sutherland

© 2017 by Herbert Brewer

All rights reserved.

**DEDICATION**

To my wife, Erica Rapier

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people over many years made this work possible. I have benefited in life from some very good teachers whom I want to thank. The earliest were my parents, Herbert Brewer and Elizabeth Woods Brewer, who nurtured my intellectual curiosity and first exposed me to the world of ideas. More generally I want to acknowledge not only my large family on both sides of the Atlantic who helped to raise me and have always been there for me but also the working people of Liberia whose hard work and sacrifice allowed me to grow up in a world of exceptional privilege. In elementary school, Daisy Cook Jallah and Adelaide McGill laid a foundation. Samori Marksman in Monrovia and Gregory Rigsby in Washington schooled me in Pan-Africanism. Ian Pincus in London, Jacques Millet in Paris, and Brian MacDougal in Ottawa introduced me to the great variety of socialist ideas.

I have had the great fortune of enduring friendships with people who challenged and sharpened my understanding of the world. Edward "Wardie" Leppan introduced me to South African politics and history which had a profound impact on me. Linden Lewis and I have carried on a conversation about Caribbean and African Diaspora history, political economy, society, and culture for the past three decades. I learned more from Patrick Burrowes and Ezekiel Pajibo than either learned from me. They will recognize their ideas and influence in this dissertation.

Intermittently over several decades at College Park, it was exciting being part of a vibrant community of scholars: Elsa Barkley Brown, Christopher Bonner, Tom Castillo, Rob Chase, Harvey Cohen, Jeff Coster, Art Eckstein, Darwin Fishman, Gary Gerstle, Saverio Giovacchini, Claire Goldstene, Max Grivno, Jodi Hall, Sharon Harley, Thanayi Jackson, Stephen Johnson, Kate Keane, Paul Landau, Ricardo Lopez, Matt Mason, Al Moss, Linda Noel, Stephan Palmié, Leslie Rowland, Don Sutherland, Laura Tabili, Barbara Weinstein, Daryle Williams, Clyde Woods, and especially Winthrop Wright, who guided me as I completed my interrupted undergraduate studies.

My students, and my colleagues - in particular Joyce Nibbs, Annette Palmer, and Glenn Phillips - in the Department of History at Morgan State University in Baltimore, also require mention. I could not ask for a better group of individuals to work with and am eternally grateful to my Morgan State family for their support over the years, as I am to the state of Maryland, in whose flagship institution of higher education I studied and for whom I now work, for its investment in and commitment to public higher education.

I want to acknowledge the importance to this dissertation of Liberia's democratic reform movement of the nineteen seventies and eighties which generated many hours of debate over the years with my friends and colleagues in Liberia and its Diaspora – including those with whom I disagree on key

aspects of Liberian history: Amos Beyan, Elwood Dunn, and Amos Sawyer. My recent collaboration with Bill Allen, George Kieh, Augustine Konneh, Thomas Jaye, Sam Ngovo, P. Bloh Sayeh and the late Alpha Mohammed Bah in the Liberian History Project remains an honor and inspiration.

The most important intellectual debt I owe is to my advisor, Ira Berlin, whose influence is reflected throughout this dissertation. But he was much more than advisor. Over the years, his generosity and example, along with his lovely wife Martha has been a guiding star on my journey. A special word of thanks should also go to two outstanding scholars: Leslie Rowland, who stepped in to serve as chair of my dissertation committee when an unexpected ailment prevented my advisor from performing those duties; and Paul Landau for his advice on the section dealing with the Guinea Coast. Their guidance and support were indispensable to the dissertation's completion.

I was fortunate to receive assistance from the Gilder Lehrman Center in New York and from the Maryland Historical Society (in the form of office space and access to their archives). I also benefited from the availability and free access to scholars of the valuable collections of the Library of Congress, including its rare book collection; the Maryland Historical Society, which holds a complete run of the *Liberian Herald;* the Virginia Historical Society; and Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Collection. All their staffs were always professional and courteous. I am grateful for the courtesy extended to

me by the Gillfield Baptist Church in Petersburg, Virginia which allowed me access to their church archives. The University of Maryland at College Park has the excellent Maryland Room in the Hornbake Library where over the years, along with American University's Bender Library, I made myself at home. Finally, Morgan State University's Earl Richardson Library had some hard to get hold of copies of several nineteenth-century editions. My great regret is that I was unable to use the Liberian national archives. Investing in public archives is important and necessary not just to preserve a record of the past but to advance knowledge and understanding of the present.

My final and most important acknowledgment goes to my wife Erica Rapier, to whom this work is dedicated. Her steadfast financial, intellectual, and emotional support and encouragement kept me on track all these years. She served as both sounding board and critic as we endlessly discussed the details and broad issues addressed in the dissertation. She and our son Aidan have my everlasting gratitude for their love, sacrifice, patience, and understanding.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION....................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDMENTS......................................................................................iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS...................................................................................vii

LIST OF TABLES.............................................................................................viii

MAP……………………….............................................................................ix

LIST OF ABBEVIATIONS………………………………………..……..x

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY.......................................................................xi

INTRODUCTION...............................................................................................1

CHAPTER ONE: The Peculiarities of the Chesapeake and the Rise of Free Blacks in the Atlantic World during the Age of Revolution, 1775-1810………………………..…………………………34

CHAPTER TWO: Counterrevolution and the Making of Chesapeake Free Blacks, 1789-1815…….......................................................68

CHAPTER THREE: "Restless and ambitious men": The 1823 Remonstrance and the Idea of Property and Self-government in the Political Thought of Chesapeake Free Blacks, 1820-1824…………..124

CHAPTER FOUR: "We are the proprietors of the soil": Chesapeake Free Blacks and the Making of the Liberian Colonial State, 1824-1838……......................................................................169

CHAPTER FIVE "This Rising Nation": Chesapeake-Born Liberians on the Road to Independence, 1838-1848……………………….201

CHAPTER SIX: "Liberty Dwelt There": Chesapeake-Born Liberians in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Atlantic World………………….241

CODA...............................................................................................................264

BIBLIOGRAPHY..............................................................................................280

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Free black population of Virginia and Maryland, 1790-1820........38

Table 1.2 Free black population of selected Chesapeake counties and towns in Virginia and Maryland, 1810……………..…..........................................…....42

Table 1.3: Free black population of the United States, 1790 – 1810: Top five states..........................................................................................................43

Table 4.1 Leading Free Black Men in the Liberia colony, 1830s – 1840s …...……………………………………………………………………..190

**MAP**

Figure 1.1 Map of Cape Mesurado and its environs on the coast of
West Africa, 1895……………………………………………………………12

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ACS | American Colonization Society |
| ARCJ | African Repository and Colonial Journal |
| LC | Library of Congress, Washington DC |
| RACS | Records of the American Colonization Society |

## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Chesapeake – region in the United States comprising Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, although for the purposes of this analysis Delaware is excluded; the Chesapeake, together with North Carolina and Kentucky, made up the Upper South and comprised a distinct geo-cultural region dominated by certain common socio-economic and historical characteristics, which separated it from the Northeast, the Middle Atlantic, the Old Northwest, the Low Country, and the Lower Mississippi Valley regions of the United States.

Chesapeake Free Blacks – those populations of African descent (full and in part, following the local custom of designation at the time) who were usually referred to or who usually referred to themselves as "free people of color" and who were legally free and enjoying the status of free persons living in the states of Virginia and Maryland during the last three decades of the eighteenth century and first three decades of the nineteenth century.

Black – The term "black" is used in this dissertation both as a historically constructed identity and as an abstract racial category. I have superimposed a late twentieth-century convention, "black," on a nineteenth-century category. Although "black" was also used interchangeably with "Colored" and "Negro"

in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was not the usual or typical nomenclature attached to people of African descent in the United States, whether enslaved or free. All these terms are somewhat arbitrary. They are convenient analytical categories, imposed by scholars and the subjects themselves in attempts at explanation and analysis. Indeed, the meanings of the terms have been contested and have changed over time.

The Black Chesapeake – refers to all people of African descent, slave and free, who lived in the states of Virginia and Maryland during the aforementioned period. Delaware also had a black population (free and enslaved) which has been excluded for the purposes of this study.

African American, Colonists, Immigrants, and Settlers – will be used interchangeably and unsystematically throughout this dissertation. A more rigorous and critical use of the categories would have required an extended discussion and analysis beyond the purposes of this dissertation.

Liberians – refers strictly to the citizens of the colony of Liberia between 1822 and 1847.

# INTRODUCTION

"Chesapeake Free Blacks and the Origins of the Liberian State" explores the relationship between the origins of the Liberian state and the development of Chesapeake free blacks in the first half of the nineteenth century. It argues that the origin of the Liberian state was specific to the emergence of free blacks in the Chesapeake and the development of their political thought and social opportunities.

After the newly formed West African state of Liberia declared its independence in July 1847, the overwhelming majority of the men who would occupy the upper ranks of the state apparatus hailed from the Chesapeake region of the United States.[1] The state's new president and vice president, and a majority of its cabinet, its elected senators and members of the House of Representatives, and its judges were all born free in either Virginia or Maryland. The militia leadership was composed mainly of Chesapeake-born black men. Chesapeake-born blacks edited and ran the local newspapers, preached from the pulpits on Sundays, and taught in the schools. Moreover, it was Chesapeake-born free blacks who dominated the commerce of the newly forming nation. Liberia was not founded by freed or former slaves from the United States but rather by free African Americans who had lived under the

[1] Although women were crucial and necessary in creating the Liberian state, there were no women in political leadership roles. Women would emerge eventually over the course of the republic's history as self-conscious political actors and independent agents. See Debra L. Newman, "The Emergence of Liberian Women in the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 1984), which remains the only scholarly study focused on women in the early republican period of Liberia.

insecure status of being legally free black men in the United States prior to their departure for West Africa. It would be free blacks from the Chesapeake who more than any other group stamped their imprint on the new Liberian state and played the decisive role in how state power was constituted. However, the circumstances of state formation and the nature of the relationship between the Chesapeake free blacks and the Liberian state were complex. This multifaceted relationship is the subject of this dissertation.

While it is important to acknowledge that many other factors also contributed to the Liberian state's initial formation in the middle of the nineteenth century – for example, two major Atlantic nations, Great Britain and the United States, and conflicting interests both within and swirling around their respective governments; the mostly European merchant capitalists plying their trade along the West African littoral; and last but definitely not least, the West African polities situated along the coastal area that became Liberia – the Chesapeake free blacks were the driving force of the Liberian state's formation.

At the broadest level, the struggle of Chesapeake free blacks to find a home in West Africa shows how the development, embrace, and expression of black racial consciousness in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world was intellectually linked to and shaped by a specific political economy based upon a notion of republicanism and particular ideas about property and citizenship. The development of Black consciousness was also linked to discourses of Christianity and masculinity, although these are not the focus of the

dissertation. In sum, racial identity was shaped by and intertwined with political economy.

In the Liberian context, this is significant because the origin, conceptualization, and constitution of the Liberian state was specific to the linked ideological perspective – republicanism – and social outlook – black nationalist evangelical Christianity – of the Chesapeake free black petty merchants, artisans, and actual or aspiring property-holders who brought ideas of republican political economy with them to West Africa. The shaping of racial identity by political economy is one way to understand and interpret the origin of the Liberian state.

The dissertation's principal contribution, based on archival research, to the interpretation of the history of the origins of the Liberian state and its national identity is twofold. It argues for the importance of time and place in conceptualizing the history of Liberia.[2] First, it argues for the specificity of the influence of the Chesapeake region, the place of origin of the bulk of Liberia's founding fathers, in shaping the ideological foundation of the Liberian state.[3] Second, it argues for the uniqueness of the colonial period in

---

[2] Liberian history has, in the main, paid scant attention to the importance of temporal and spatial specificity in conceptualizing the African American founders of the state. On this problem in African American history in general, see Ira Berlin, "Time, Space and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review* 85 (1980): 44-78.

[3] The creation of the Liberian state can also be seen, from a gender perspective, as an attempt by free black men from the Chesapeake to establish a patriarchy in West Africa. This is a rich area of study that needs exploration. However, that level of analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For the application of a gender perspective to the southeastern region of Liberia from an anthropological approach, see Mary Moran, *Civilized Women: Gender and Prestige in Southeastern Liberia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990). For the theorization of a gender approach in historical scholarship, see Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 1053-1075. For

Liberian history and of the charter generation of Liberians, and explains why it is important not to collapse Liberian history into a timeless, unchanging series of events with no ruptures and significant turning points.[4] The Liberian nation-state was formed in stages, with outcomes that were not preordained. Treating the colonial period as a distinct unit of analysis worthy of separate study – a special period with its own dynamics that do not apply in other periods of time – is a necessity.[5] The dissertation advances an argument that emphasizes the importance of interpreting Liberian history generationally, or through a generational lens with the Chesapeake free blacks serving as a crucial part of Liberia's charter generation.[6]

---

historical models used in the study of black women, see Bonnie Thornton Dill, "The Dialectics of Black Womanhood," *Signs*; 4, 3 (Spring 1979): 543-555. For discussions of the specificity of African American women's history, see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs,*17, 2 (Winter 1992): 251-274, and Sharon Harley and Roslyn Therborg Penn, eds., *The Afro American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1978).

[4] Both Howard Temperley, "African-American Aspirations and the Settlement of Liberia," *Slavery and Abolition* 21 (2000): 67-92, and Tunde Adeleke, *UnAfrican Americans: Nineteenth Century Black Nationalists and the Civilizing Mission* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998), are representative examples of scholarship that fails to carefully periodize Liberian history. They collapse into one whole what are really distinct periods with their own class and race dynamics.

[5] While the category "colonial" and "colony" has been employed throughout this dissertation, it should be acknowledged that it remains highly problematic, especially as applied in the Liberian context. The major participants involved in the creation of the Liberian state employed the terms in their speeches and writings. Some scholars have characterized the entire Liberian project as a case of "black colonialism" or "black imperialism." See for example Yekutiel Gershoni, *Black Colonialism: The Americo-Liberian Struggle for the Hinterland*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), and M. B. Akpan, "Black Imperialism: Americo-Liberian Rule over the African Peoples of Liberia, 1847-1964," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 7 (1973): 217-236.

[6] For elaboration of the idea of a charter generation, see Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 17-28.

"Chesapeake Free Blacks and the Origins of the Liberian State" makes further original contributions that add nuance and complexity not only to the history of the origins of Liberia, but also to the histories of the African American Diaspora and the black Atlantic world of the nineteenth century. It explains that the roots of Liberian national identity were to be found not merely in the free black communities of the Chesapeake, but more specifically in the overlapping worlds of the small property-owning Chesapeake free black artisan, the black Protestant evangelical clergyman, and the small trader republicanism of the early to middle nineteenth century. Furthermore, it shows that the history of the Liberian state's formation is an important part of a larger Atlantic history and more specifically Black Atlantic History. Debates in the Atlantic world shaped Liberia's history in important ways, and the subject of "Chesapeake Free Blacks and the Origins of the Liberian State" should therefore not be seen absent that larger Atlantic context, for it complicates both Liberian history and Black Atlantic history.[7]

Liberian history is filled with references to the Chesapeake free black contribution to the Liberian state's formation but the exact nature of that influence has been insufficiently studied and a reappraisal is long overdue. The vast majority of the literature either collapses the Chesapeake free blacks into larger categories called either Americo-Liberians or black American

[7] On the concept of a black Atlantic, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), which although it offers important insights about Diaspora and hybrid cultures, focuses its analysis of black identity on the latter half of the nineteenth century and on Anglophone North America, Britain, and the Anglophone Caribbean.

settlers.[8] When singled out for special mention, they are subject to cursory treatment and have to share space with other actors, which marginalizes their contribution. They are either not at, or do not remain long at, the center of the analysis. Yet they deserve serious, sustained treatment as people shaped by their specific Chesapeake experience. What were their perspectives, especially their views about the state, which are typically ignored in the narratives of Liberian history in general and the history of the Liberian state in particular? What did the Chesapeake free blacks think they were doing? An entire mythology has grown up around them based on thin historical scholarship. Their perspectives on the Liberian state are generally buried under a mass of documents recording the views of white Americans: clergymen, proponents and opponents of African colonization, abolitionists, Presbyterians, northerners and southerners.[9]

However, the Liberian state was not the product of American benevolence. Indeed, its patron, the American Colonization Society, was not merely or even primarily a philanthropic organization. It was a non-

[8] The Americo-Liberian identity has been under-theorized and insufficiently historicized. One of the few scholarly attempts at a critique is Carl Patrick Burrowes, "The Americo-Liberian Ruling Class and Other Myths: A Critique of Political Science in the Liberian Context," volume 3, Institute of African and African-American Affairs Philadelphia Pa Issue 3 Occasional Paper (Temple University, Institute of African and African-American Affairs, Department of African American Studies, 1989).

[9] The pages of the official organ of the American Colonization Society, the *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, founded in 1824 and first edited by the Reverend Ralph Randolph Gurley, the society's first secretary, mainly reflected the perspectives of the groups who formed the ACS; it has remained the authoritative source for all things pertaining to Liberia's origin, and its contents are rarely subjected to critical appraisal in Liberian studies. In those pages, the voices of the Chesapeake free blacks were marginalized, and the scholarship relying on the *African Repository* for the most part replicates the marginalization of those free black voices.

governmental political vehicle designed to smooth over the deep differences that existed among various factions of the American ruling class of that era primarily but not exclusively over the issue of slavery. This is a key point to keep in mind when discussing the origin of the Liberian state.[10]

"Chesapeake Free Blacks and the Origins of the Liberian State" thus de-centers the role of the American Colonization Society in recounting the history of Liberia's origins. The dominant historical narrative has long located Liberia's origin in the activities of the ACS. As a result, Liberia's founding has been seen almost exclusively as an extension of conflicts among white slaveholders of the United States, or between them and white anti-slavery reformers, and therefore as an adjunct to U.S. national history, a curious sideshow. In the process, the agency of the free blacks who founded the Liberian state, their ideas, plans, and strategies, have been elided, their voices silenced. When their actions have been examined by scholars, it is usually to cast them as passive objects and recipients of the benevolence and tutelage of their white American betters, or to portray them as puppets subject to manipulation by pro-slavery forces in the United States.[11] The evidence is abundant that the black founders of Liberia had an independent agenda – the

---

[10] C. E. Zamba Liberty, "Growth of the Liberian State: An Analysis of Its Historiography" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1977), still remains one of the few studies to give serious consideration to this problem. Amos Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective, 1822-1900* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), is more typical of the scholarship; it sees Liberia as largely a product of the ACS.

[11] The two earliest works in this vein, which have done much to define the first generation of Liberians, were William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832) and Ralph Randolph Gurley's *Life of Jehudi Ashmun, Late Colonial Agent in Liberia* (Washington DC: James C. Dunn, 1835).

implantation of a black state of property-holders with themselves in control; that they consciously entered into a marriage of convenience with the ACS, with which they fought every step of the way over control of the colonization project; and that, as a result, there was constant tension between Monrovia and Washington. The white Agents sent by the ACS to Liberia lasted an average of one year, and this was not principally due to the premature death of the Agents but rather a reflection of the clashing objectives of the ACS and the Liberians.[12]

A re-examination of their history bids scholars to pay closer attention to the ideas and activities of Liberia's nineteenth-century free black founders and to reconsider their political thought, their contributions, and their legacies. They developed a rationale for their actions and sought to enact and implement a program of what they called "civilization" and others would later term "modernization," informed by their unique experiences in the Chesapeake but seasoned by their encounter with West Africa.[13] They had

[12] The ACS-appointed person who held executive authority and who was in theory the head of the colony was called the Agent. This individual sometimes simultaneously held the office of U.S. Government Agent in charge of the repatriated Africans who were seized from slave ships flouting the anti-slave trade law. But the two offices were not the same and occasionally were held by different individuals. The office of Governor was created in 1839, at which point the office of ACS Agent was discontinued. Thomas Buchannan, who was the first, and only white, governor of the colony, died in office. He served as governor for a little over a year. For more about Buchannan, see chapter five below.

[13] The "civilization" problematic in nineteenth-century black thought, especially in the latter half of the century, has been well studied. Wilson Jeremiah Moses, for example, has argued that black intellectuals were both dependent on and discontented with "civilization." See his *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 10. For more sympathetic portraits of the Cambridge-educated Crummell, see Gregory U. Rigsby, *Alexander Crummel: Pioneer in Pan-African Thought*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1987); and W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1994): 133-140. In his *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 98-134, V. Y. Mudimbe examines how another Liberian intellectual, Edward Wilmot Blyden, constructed a discourse

lived in the Chesapeake in precarious circumstances and a hostile environment under the regime of racial slavery. As free people, they tried unsuccessfully to forge a place for themselves in the Chesapeake. Many had embarked on a largely self-financed and independent emigration from North America as options within the United States closed. This is why it is necessary to investigate them on their own terms and to ascertain what they thought they were doing, in the context of their times. It does not advance historical understanding to measure them by the standards of the twentieth century or by what was to become of Liberian history after they departed the scene.

"Chesapeake Free Blacks and the Origins of the Liberian State" asserts the central and decisive role of United States *free blacks*, as opposed to former slaves, in Liberia's founding. The distinction is important. Indeed, the original name of the ACS was the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color. At its inception, the ACS canvassed exclusively among the free black populations of the United States to find recruits willing to join its colonization project. At the same time, it is necessary to emphasize that although the Reverend Robert Finley has been acknowledged as the principal driving force in the founding of the ACS, the colonization idea itself did not originate with him. There were several recorded instances of discussions among white notables in the late eighteenth century of the idea of colonizing blacks in Africa. What is more, free blacks themselves thought about and

---

on Africa. The subjects of this dissertation arrived on the scene while these ideas were still germinating and were precursors to Blyden and Crummell.

acted upon the idea of emigrating from the United States to Africa, Thomas Peters and later Paul Cuffe being among the most successful.[14]

Free blacks were insecure in U.S. society, slaves without masters, free but severely restricted with basic citizenship rights denied.[15] They were generally seen by the planter class as dangerous people who might and did indeed make mischief, undermine the authority of the planters, and disrupt the lives of the slaves. On the one hand, the planter class and its representatives were therefore glad to be rid of the free black population and thereby tighten their grip on slavery; on the other hand, Chesapeake free blacks themselves, straining under the yoke of the planter class, longed for a place of their own where they could be masters of the soil. Once in Liberia, where they arrived before the former slaves, many of these free blacks, a few with some savings, occupied the best pieces of land, got an early start, and set up and took control of the instruments of government. They came with a particular experience and outlook, and with the free black institutions like the churches and the fraternal orders they had created in the Chesapeake.

---

[14] Finley's biographer Isaac Brown first made the claim when he published his *Biography of the Reverend Robert Finley, D.D., of Basking Ridge N.J., with an Account of His Agency as Author of the American Colonization Society* (Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1819). For the pre-ACS African colonization views of Ferdinando Fairfax, Thomas Jefferson, and others, see, for example, George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate over Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). For more recent scholarship on pre-ACS colonization views among African-Americans, see Ousmane Kirumu Greene, "Against Wind and Tide: African Americans' Response to the Colonization Movement and Emigration, 1770-1865" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2007).

[15] See Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, (New York: Random House, 1974).

During the first decade of the settlement of Liberia, a sizable majority of the emigrants from the United States were free, that is, had lived as free persons in the United States prior to their departure for West Africa, and the majority of that number was born free. But as the fortunes of the ACS waned and the African colonization current among free blacks in the United States slowed to a trickle, the ACS modified its strategy and turned to convincing slave owners to release their slaves. A big shift occurred around 1828 in terms of the African American population that left for Liberia. With free people of color committing to remaining in the US, the ex-slave population began to outnumber the free black population among the emigrants.[16]

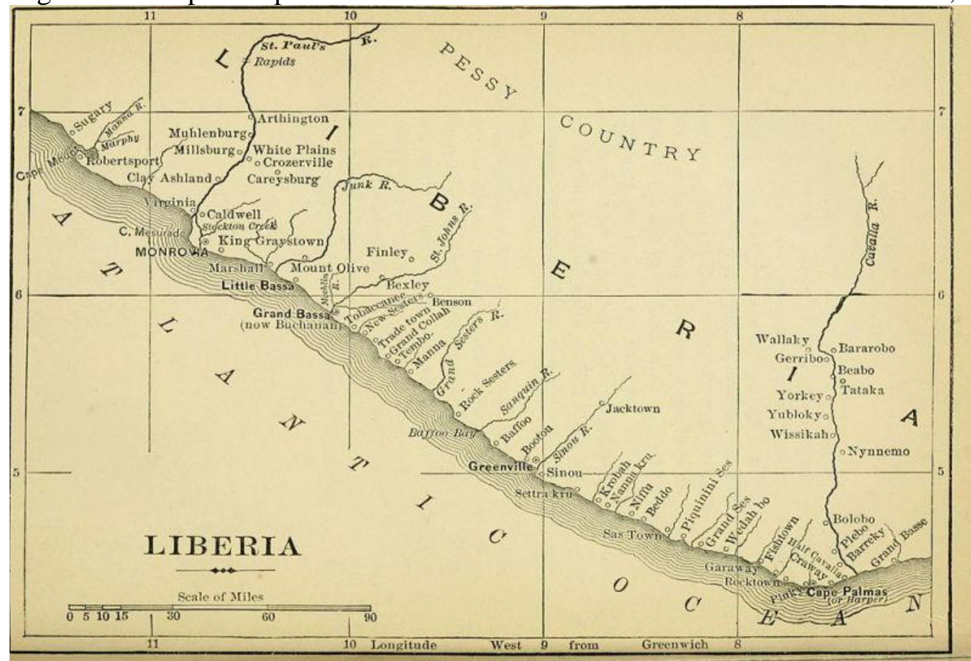
Based on the resources and skills they brought with them from North America – their literacy, property ownership, and artisanal skills – it stands to reason that the Chesapeake free blacks would occupy the commanding heights of the new colony. This does not mean that former slaves did not succeed or otherwise thrive in the colony. What did happen was that Chesapeake free blacks were in a privileged position once they arrived in Liberia. It was their previous life as free people in the United States that gave them an advantage in Liberia. It was their free status in the U.S. that was their defining

---

[16] The changing composition of African American emigrants to West Africa provides yet another example of why the scholarship on Liberia ought to be careful in delineating ruptures in the colonization story. The 1820s represented a major turning point in African American identity formation, brought about in part by the reaction of northern free blacks to what most of them regarded as a deportation scheme under the guise of ACS-led African colonization. James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), partially addresses the role of anti-colonization in the development of African American identity. In addition, as Barbara Jeanne Fields argues in the case of Maryland, non-plantation landowners began to see the benefits of having cheap free black labor available. See her *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 71.

characteristic, not their skin complexion.[17] It so happened that lighter-skinned blacks were disproportionately free – a product of the peculiar history of race mixing throughout the Americas, not just in the U.S. Likewise, the Chesapeake also had the largest free black population in the U.S., so it was not surprising that the lighter-complexioned would be over-represented among the founding generation of colonial Liberia. The Chesapeake free black background of the founders of Liberia thus helps to explain the initial outline of the Liberian state. Chesapeake free blacks dominated the discussion leading up to the state's creation, and they shaped the eventual form the state took.

Figure 1.1: Map of Cape Mesurado and its environs on the coast of West Africa,1895




[17] Some scholars have made much about the importance of light-skinned complexion among the early Liberian leadership. The claim has its genesis in the crisis that developed after the 1870 Liberian presidential election, a period beyond the scope of this dissertation. Its principal author was Edward Blyden, the St Thomas, Danish West Indies-born intellectual and Liberian politician who fully subscribed to the emerging racial essentialist theories of the mid-nineteenth century. See Hollis R. Lynch's somewhat dated *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan Negro Patriot, 1832-1912* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

Source: Missions and Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Library of Congress, Washington DC

"Chesapeake Free Blacks and the Origins of the Liberian State" argues that there was extensive collaboration between Africans and free blacks in the origin of Liberia. Africans at Cape Mesurado assisted and collaborated with the African Americans from the beginning of the latter's arrival at the Cape. Although it is seldom made and almost never examined, this should not be a controversial argument. Yet the assumption has been that the African Americans and the Africans were always locked in a hostile relationship, based on the further assumption that the Africans whom the Americans met at Cape Mesurado and its environs were singular and static: barely indistinguishable in their interests and unchanging in their thinking and in their lives. The colony of Americans would not have been able to sustain itself without significant African assistance and continuous collaboration between the Africans and the Americans. The Americans depended on the Africans for food and for help in building their homes. The Africans taught that first generation of American-born Liberians about their new environment. They established trade relationships and networks with each other. They learned each other's languages, customs, and more. They became involved in each other's quarrels. In fact, a new language, a distinctive Liberian English, emerged out of this collaboration. As the Americans began to convert some

of the Africans to Christianity, the Africans converted the Americans to various aspects of their cultures.[18]

Evidence of collaboration does not negate the conflicts that occurred between the Americans and the Africans, or the resistance by Africans to the encroachments and chauvinism of the Americans. However, recognizing the collaboration is necessary in order to problematize what has often been presented as unproblematic – the conflict between indigenous Africans and the people who would come to be known as and call themselves Americo-Liberians. An ethnic-determinist scholarship has limited value in explaining the origins of Liberia, especially since the formation of new ethnic identities was an outcome of the arrival of the blacks from the United States and their encounter with Africans at Cape Mesurado. "Chesapeake Free Blacks and the Origins of the Liberian State" represents only a beginning in the necessary work of recovering the complex and reciprocal cultural, political, and social influences that obtained in early Liberia and exploring the historical process involved in establishing and reconfiguring these ethnic constructs.[19]

---

[18] Liberian Studies suffers from many weaknesses, especially from the lack of critical appreciation of Liberia's hybrid culture. For example, there has not been as yet a history of Liberian English, the country's lingua franca. One of the few exceptions to this lacunae in the scholarship, William Ezra Allen, "Sugar and Coffee: A History of Settler Agriculture in Nineteenth Century Liberia" (Ph.D. diss., Florida International University, 2002), 25, provides evidence of the influence of indigenous Africans on the food culture of the American immigrants by the middle of the nineteenth century.

[19] An ethnic-determinist model assumes that identities, with origins lost in the mists of time, are fixed and unchanging, immune to influences or transformation. Furthermore, ethnic identities are assumed to be homogenous – indeed, pure and irreducible – and it is taken as a given that loyalty to this monolithic ethnic identity and action based on that loyalty always overrides all other considerations and explains the behavior of the members of the ethnicity. The essays gathered in Leroy Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), provide good examples of the direction in which historical research on the formation of Liberian ethnicities should be headed.

Even though their ideas about state formation reflected their unique background and circumstances, Chesapeake free blacks did not conceive of the Liberian state in a vacuum. Much of what they conceptualized, though having its origin in Atlantic-wide intellectual currents, was molded or adapted to suit their situation in West Africa. What they thought about state formation came in the context of struggle against various forces – those mentioned above, in addition to those within their own community – and those struggles shaped their developing theories and consciousness.

"Chesapeake Free Blacks and the Origin of the Liberian State" shows that Black Nationalist ideology was central to Liberian national identity as it was constituted in the early to middle nineteenth century. In other words, Black Nationalism, at least as it appeared in embryonic form in Liberia, was constituted as a social identity by a particular class of men and women, in pursuit of a project of accumulation and modernity that they considered a civilizing mission: a goal of racial redemption tied to evangelical Christianity and republicanism. These ideas would appear and develop among the men and women who emigrated from the Chesapeake to Liberia. In the 1820s and 1830s, rhetoric about black nationhood appeared regularly in letters of protest, in statements defending the Liberia colony, in the pages of their newspapers, and in the constitutional documents that enshrined the idea of a territory reserved exclusively for black citizenship. Thus the Liberian state at its very inception was a race-based entity. Its founders self-consciously and explicitly constituted a state based on race and intended to implement a world view that

reflected their experiences as smallholder artisans and petty traders in the Chesapeake.[20]

To understand further why the Liberian state was formed as it was, it was necessary to carefully examine who formed it and how its formation was locally contested. The principal idea driving Liberian state formation was the Chesapeake blacks' agenda of establishing in West Africa a beachhead for "civilization," in the vocabulary of the era. Civilization in that specific context meant the introduction to West Africa of early nineteenth-century capitalism – a market economy and private property. Liberia's founding fathers were eager to establish their rights in private property and enact a legal system that would entrench those privileges. Establishing capitalist property relations became the most significant and enduring component of a civilizationist agenda that included race and Christianity. The pursuit of that goal – establishing capitalist property relations – provided the framework for their activities and shaped the logic of their actions.

---

[20] In the United States, the study of Black Nationalism's roots intensified toward the end of the 1960s. Eugene Genovese, "The Legacy of Slavery and the Roots of Black Nationalism," in *In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), argued that Black Nationalism's roots in the United States were to be located in the slave community, a position this dissertation challenges. Other early contributions to the debate included John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Black Nationalism in America* (New York: MacMillan, 1970); John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971); Robert G. Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship: Africa, Africans, and the Afro-American* (New York: Praeger, 1973); John Henrik Clarke, with the assistance of Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1974); Rodney Carlisle, *The Roots of Black Nationalism* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1975); and Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (New York: Anchor Books, 1978). The debate during the 1960s and 1970s recalled an earlier debate between Melville J. Herskovits and E. Franklin Frazier about the African basis of African American culture. See, for example, E. Franklin Frazier, "The Negro in Bahia, Brazil: A Problem in Method," *American Sociological Review* 7 (1942): 465-478, and Melville J. Herskovits, "The Negro in Bahia, Brazil: A Problem in Method," *American Sociological Review* 8 (1943): 394-402.

The Chesapeake blacks understood that they needed a state to accomplish their goals. Some of the Africans residing at and near Cape Mesurado resisted the formation of that state and in so doing helped to determine the shape the state ultimately took. The Chesapeake free black leadership employed coercion and pressed their military advantage. That was one strategy they used to build a state, but not the only strategy. They also built alliances, some of them durable, with many of their new African neighbors, extending their hegemony northwest and southeast from Monrovia. A twin process of resistance and accommodation by the Africans shaped the outcome of early Liberian state formation. A third strategy in state formation involved defining, classifying, and transforming land into property by introducing the concept of private property and a market in that commodity. The Liberian state turned land into a commodity.

Chesapeake blacks employed a fourth strategy, rhetorical in character, which had three components: a discourse of race, a discourse of evangelical Christianity, and a civilizationist discourse. They used this three-legged rhetorical strategy to explain what they were doing. But beyond that, they used this rhetoric to validate their actions in the eyes of the Western or Atlantic World. They cast themselves as the bearers of modernity, the tip of the modernity spear.

The Chesapeake-born Liberian leadership also had another audience: the immigrant community of the colony. They deployed the rhetoric of race, evangelical Christianity and republicanism to bridge differences within the

community and, by appealing to their experience in North America, to imagine a community of like-minded people brought together by providential design.[21] The rhetoric formed a brotherhood,[22] constructed a community, and called a nation into being "by God's command."[23] It told members of the community to transcend their differences and forge a new national identity. The rhetoric enabled the leadership in its project of nation building. The Chesapeake free black founders used it to gain support from within (the immigrant community) and from without (the Atlantic World) for their agenda: the establishment of the state and their own ascendency within that state.

The 1823 Remonstrance by the colonists to the ACS, for example, expressed and was a reflection of the importance and the paramountcy of property; it revealed that for the Chesapeake free blacks, property and its acquisition were overriding values. It was a subject they returned to again and again. The political economy they attempted to develop was rooted in the

[21] On the pervasive idea of providential design throughout the black Atlantic world of that era, see David Killingray, "The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s – 1920s," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33 (2003): 3-31.

[22] This rhetorical brotherhood excluded women as political actors in the imagined nation. Women were idealized in the men's rhetoric as homemakers responsible for the domestic sphere, although, as Debra Newman has pointed out, some women in the nineteenth century independently owned and cultivated coffee and sugar cane farms. The 1847 Liberian constitution explicitly recognized a woman's right to own land independently. See Newman, *Emergence of Liberian Women*.

[23] The last three words in the Liberian national anthem, which was composed in 1847 by Daniel Bashiel Warner, Liberia's third president, who held the office from 1864 to1868. Warner was born free in Hookstown, Baltimore County, Maryland in 1815 and migrated to Liberia with his family in 1823. See Nathaniel Richardson, *Liberia's Past and Present* (London: Diplomatic Press, 1959), and Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia* (New York: Central Book Co, 1947), Vol. 1.

experiences and aspirations of free black evangelical artisans and craftsmen, petty merchants, shopkeepers, and small property holders in the Chesapeake. Capitalist or private property relations, in the context of the establishment of "civilization," thus became a foundational or core value of the Liberian state and the Liberian identity. Property ultimately trumped all else; it took precedence over Christianity and race, even as allegiance to property was intertwined with both Christianity and race, shaping and being shaped by these other considerations.

For the Chesapeake free blacks who founded Liberia, the desire for property and the need to establish capitalist property relations came before any desire to evangelize among the so-called heathens. Or even if the desire to evangelize burned brighter rhetorically or in theory, it took a back seat in practice. Chesapeake free blacks and their white ACS allies did not stretch out the hand of Christian brotherhood unconditionally to their potential African brethren at Cape Mesurado. Nor did the Chesapeake free blacks stretch out the hand of black racial solidarity unconditionally. In both cases, the Africans they met had to conform first to the logic and dictates of capitalist modernity. They had first to become civilized and throw off the yoke of barbarism.[24]

---

[24] "Heathens" and "barbarism" were typical of the rhetoric used by the Chesapeake free blacks to describe the environment and the societies they encountered at Cape Mesurado and its environs. It was a rhetoric that was common in the Atlantic world of the time. The Chesapeake free black founders have been attacked, not by their contemporaries but by latter-day scholars, for their frequent use of the terms. Some scholars point to it as evidence of a fatal defect in Liberian society, as the germ that led to a century of oppression of the indigenous population. Others see it as evidence of cultural arrogance and lack of understanding and respect for African societies and cultures – indeed disdain and contempt. The argument has also been advanced that such rhetoric was used to justify the imposition of

Citizenship in the new polity was thus restricted to private property owners. The property ownership clause in Liberia's various constitutions appeared from the beginning of the settlement at Cape Mesurado. It was promoted after the Remonstrance and the 1824 Plan of Government adopted after the Crisis of 1823-24, when a colonial assembly cum legislative body was created to provide representation for the Chesapeake free blacks and other Diaspora Africans. Property ownership was the key qualification for citizenship and suffrage, not Christianity or being of African descent. This qualification for citizenship would be carried over to the 1847 constitution.

A property qualification for citizenship and holding office was not unique to Liberia at the time. Property qualifications still existed in the United States and Britain, the two key modern polities in the contemporary Anglo-Atlantic World. In the U.S., where voting requirements were established at the state level, it was only during the Jacksonian era that property qualifications finally disappeared in most jurisdictions. Even then, some states, including Virginia and North Carolina, retained high suffrage barriers into the middle of the century. In Britain, the Great Reform Act of 1834 did away with some property qualifications, but not all. In any case, even when changes were made, influential segments of informed public opinion throughout the Atlantic World continued to oppose universal suffrage

---

colonial/imperial rule over the indigenous people and to exclude them from citizenship and membership in the political community/nation. The two most influential works in this tradition are J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), and Amos Sawyer, *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy and Challenges* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1992). The great flaw in both of these works is the presentism and ahistorical nature of their arguments.

and to link citizenship to property ownership. The new Latin American republics all established various property-owning standards. Property-based citizenship was a common element of contemporary liberal political theory. The Chesapeake free black spokesmen and emerging political actors were therefore firmly in the mainstream of Atlantic political thought.[25]

The modern state under capitalism – and the Liberian state in both its embryonic and full-fledged forms was no exception – did not emerge to develop a country for the betterment of the mass of its population; the primary purpose of the modern state was to protect private property and the unevenly distributed wealth it generated. Securing property took precedence over education or social justice, whether as abstract or concrete subjects. Indeed, modernization and progress were understood by the civilizing agents of the era to mean that protection of property took precedence. The Chesapeake free blacks conceptualized the state in such a way that social goods like education and social justice had to be anchored in private property ownership in order for them to be possible, desirable, and sustainable. Matters of education and social justice could not exist outside of a central framework of private

[25] For the abolition of property requirements in the United States, see Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), Richard P. McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), and Chilton Williamson, *American Suffrage: From Property to Democracy, 1760-1860* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).

property relations. Private property relations had to be secured first, and then the others would follow.[26]

Private property rights were seen by Chesapeake free blacks as the foundation from which social and physical infrastructure development proceeded. From their perspective, lack of modernization was a result of the absence of private property relations. A modern nation could not exist in a world where private property was not the rule. Africans did not seem to have in place systems of private landed property, especially capitalist land tenureship, and that was why Africa was backward or had fallen behind the rest of the world. Africans appeared unprepared for and hostile to the idea and principles of private landed property.

The state's foremost task was therefore to secure and guarantee private property. The betterment of the citizens would be a by-product of the development and institutionalization of private property relations. Property and the accumulation of capital, not social welfare, was the driving force in a nation's development and emergence. Property's entrenchment in the hearts of the people and the laws of the land was the standard by which to judge if a people had succeeded or failed in their efforts to build a modern civilized nation. Furthermore, the betterment of the mass of citizens was defined in a narrow and specific way: the embrace by the people of western education,

---

[26] Classic and influential political science texts on Liberia such as Sawyer, *Emergence of Autocracy,* and Liebenow, *Evolution of Privilege*, either completely miss this element in the Liberian state's origin or treat it as marginal.

including Christianity, respect for private property, and, in Liberia's case, race consciousness, i.e., a modern "black" nationality.

The acquisition and accumulation of property and capital, usually in the form of land, was accomplished with the prior or simultaneous establishment of a state to protect the owners of property and to establish and enforce laws to guarantee that result. In Liberia, the protection of the U.S. Navy's anti-slaving vessels was historically critical. They provided crucial and indispensable support at key moments as the Chesapeake free blacks set up a state and sought to establish their regional hegemony.

Citizenship, that key conceptual tool of modernity and nationhood, was premised on private property ownership. For the theorists, citizenship made no sense if it was not tied to property ownership. The Chesapeake free blacks created a new class of property owners and a state to protect them from the outside and to serve as an umpire among them. From their artisanal, evangelical, and small-shopkeeper backgrounds in the Chesapeake, they became property holding men (and sometimes women) in West Africa. A new class was created, an incipient bourgeoisie, the willing agents of capitalist market relations on the Windward Coast of West Africa.[27]

Documentation of the Chesapeake free blacks in Liberia is limited. Most free blacks in the Atlantic World, including those from the Chesapeake,

---

[27] For a discussion of the roots of republicanism in the Atlantic world, see J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); and also C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

commanded few material resources. Most of them could not read or write. Few had attended primary school, much less had access to advanced or higher education. They did not own libraries or have parents and friends who were literate. Historians who have studied free blacks in the Atlantic World have therefore had to resort to other means of excavation, usually by using the sources of social history – probate records, census figures, police records, newspaper stories – with their attendant limitations. Much of the surviving documentary evidence of the ideas of the Chesapeake free blacks who emigrated to Liberia was produced by others, not by the free blacks themselves, and the categories used to record information about them reflected their status as marginal, powerless people in the Chesapeake society of the time. That is not to say that those sources are worthless, only to say that they are incomplete and often misleading. Much of the documentary evidence is fragmentary, a problem compounded by the unsettled state of the Liberian National Archives, which is currently being restored after years of civil war.

The sources for this dissertation thus presented several challenges. How does a student of a subject, in this case the Chesapeake free blacks' ties to Liberia's founding, explain the historiographical problem of writing with confidence and authority about sources he or she does not have? The dissertation was interested in the voices of the African Americans in general and the Chesapeake free blacks in particular, but the documentary materials containing those voices were often missing, sometimes totally. When those

voices appeared in the archival records, they tended to be incomplete, mostly secondary, creating a problem for those who use and rely on documentary evidence to write history and establish historical facts.

How does one write about sources that are difficult or impossible to find? The 1823 Remonstrance to the American Colonization Society, a critical document written by the Chesapeake free blacks, of which no copy is extant, illustrates the problem. How does one establish the Remonstrance's centrality in its absence? A scholar in such a position would need to review all the possible interpretations and through a process of elimination whittle down the evidence to support the most likely – most logical, most sensible – explanations.

By carefully considering the larger context, closely examining the reactions of the ACS officials, and scrutinizing the new and altered charters, instructions and constitutions of the ACS, one is able, even without the Remonstrance itself, to determine with confidence what had been said by the African American settlers, what made their Remonstrance a seminal document and 1823 a defining moment in the history of the colony, and the decisive role the Chesapeake free blacks played.

The problem of limited or even missing documentation is compounded by shortcomings of the records that do exist. The principal source for this project, the records of the American Colonization Society, although fairly large, are not catalogued or indexed in a thorough or systematic fashion. Meanwhile, potentially valuable records in the Liberian National Archives are

both physically deteriorating and in such a state of disarray that they could not be used for this study.

The structure of the dissertation is chronological, beginning in the Chesapeake during the American Revolution and following the free blacks to West Africa up to the declaration of Liberian independence. Chapter One lays out in broad terms the social, demographic, and cultural changes the American Revolution caused in the lives of Chesapeake blacks, changes that gave the post-revolutionary Chesapeake free blacks a distinctive character. It then examines how the emergence of Chesapeake free blacks occurred not in isolation, but as part of or parallel with a larger Atlantic-wide phenomenon of black abolition and emancipation, to which they also contributed.

The chapter examines the pre-history of the dispersal and resettlement in West Africa of free blacks from the Americas. Free people of African descent, propelled by the crisis of exclusion they faced across the revolutionary and post-revolutionary Atlantic World as they struggled to emerge from the shadows of slavery, continually emigrated during the period from the American Revolution through the British and American abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade by 1810, to the British abolition of slavery in 1834 and the rise of the abolitionist movement in the United States in the 1830s. A key objective of the chapter is therefore to provide a wider historical frame and a longer timeline for understanding the origins of the Liberian state and the ways in which its foundation was tied to the development of free blacks in the Chesapeake. A wider historical frame and a

longer timeline mean developing a fuller understanding of the emergence and growth of the free black population in the Chesapeake. That, in turn, necessitates an understanding of the role of the American Revolution in creating this new group of people called free blacks.

Chapter Two addresses the impact of counterrevolution on the Chesapeake free blacks and concludes with an analysis of why they formed an alliance of convenience with the American Colonization Society.[28] Political, economic, and social relations shaped racial politics in early America. In this context, powerful slaveholders in the new United States were attracted to the idea of removing free blacks to West Africa. The presence of a growing class of free people of African descent in a slave plantation society presented a problem for a planter class whose claims to power rested on notions of equality and democratic citizenship rights among all white people. Division of the population by race allowed the ruling class to maintain power and control by denying blacks citizenship on the grounds of the imagined inferiority of blacks.

In response, the Chesapeake free black population which had few ties to the planter class but strong ties to the slaves, began to forge an Africa-conscious, Christian, and republican identity based on their anomalous

[28] Gerald Horne, *The Counterrevolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), follows Alfred Blumrosen and Ruth Blumrosen, *Slave Nation: How Slavery United the Colonies and Sparked the American Revolution* (Napierville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2005), in arguing that the American Revolution was actually a counterrevolution. Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016) also argues for a counterrevolution (although he does not employ the term) beginning in 1776.

position in Chesapeake society. Major spokesmen of the free blacks, like the Reverend Daniel Coker of Baltimore, made general claims for all people of African descent – free and enslaved – based on the specific circumstances of free black people.[29]

Chapter Three closely examines the 1823 Remonstrance, the first documented expression of the republican values of the Chesapeake free blacks in Liberia. Although the republican ideas of the Chesapeake free blacks originated in America, it was in West Africa that they crystallized and gained concrete expression. The chapter shows that the development of the key republican ideas behind state formation in Liberia was not a one way-process, something imposed by the ACS on the immigrants, but rather was uneven, reciprocal, and contradictory, shaped by the Chesapeake blacks' encounter with the African populations they met and by their previous experience with white Americans in the Chesapeake. The chapter also examines the initial encounter between Africans at Cape Mesurado and the American blacks, and the various interests and motivations surrounding the eventual establishment of the new colony at the Cape. The Chesapeake free blacks' challenge to the authority of the ACS was a seminal event in the colony's formation, for it marked the start of an ongoing struggle for self-government. That struggle clarified a core principle – the entrenchment of private property rights and value in private land ownership – that would become a foundational pillar of

[29] See Coker's *Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister* (Baltimore: Benjamin Eads, 1810).

the embryonic Liberian state, in particular the link between citizenship and property.

Chapter Four extends the analysis by scrutinizing the 1824 Plan of Government, a compromise document that was the outcome of the 1823 rebellion, which set up the framework of the colonial state. The chapter focuses on this document in order to sketch out the beginnings of the colonial state and the implementation of republican ideas in the reality of Cape Mesurado and its environs in West Africa. A major source of contention between the black Americans and some local African polities was the difference in value placed on landed property as opposed to property in persons. The contestation between these two rival property-systems, these two warring ideas or conceptions of property, stood as the central source of conflict between the emerging Liberian colonial state and the African polities surrounding it, and the contestation helped determine the shape of the Liberian state.

These conflicts between competing property systems linked to a global Atlantic capitalism, provided the context for the development of politics in the colony during the late 1820s and 1830s. The rivalry between the competing property systems, coupled with newly successful attacks in the United States on African colonization, obliged the Chesapeake free blacks to clarify their position, better define themselves, and seek support from a broader Atlantic audience.

Chapter Five examines how a social identity's transformation and consolidation was shaped by the business activities and political ideas of a particular group of property-holding free black men from the Chesapeake who were pursuing an economic accumulation strategy rooted in a larger trans-Atlantic historical context in the first half of the nineteenth century. It explores the emergence and increasing confidence of a new petty-bourgeois layer of Chesapeake-born leadership and the challenges they faced, which set them on the road to Liberian independence, a process that took place in stages. The chapter introduces and explains the rise in the colony of Chesapeake free-born black men of small trader/shopkeeper and Protestant evangelical background like Joseph Jenkins Roberts and Hilary Teague, who dominated colonial politics and led the struggle for Liberian independence. It was men like Roberts and the patriarchs of the Teague family – Colin and then son Hilary – who led the establishment and consolidation of petty-bourgeois rule in the colony.

The rise and consolidation of the political, economic, social, and ideological power of this emerging Chesapeake-born petty-bourgeoisie coincided with, on the one hand, the decline of ACS influence and, on the other, an increasing challenge to the colonial state by mainly British but also other European traders. The Chesapeake-born Liberian petty-bourgeoisie responded to the prevailing circumstances by mobilizing support around their project of accumulation. They did so in the form of appeals to black racial unity, the Christian civilizing mission, and republicanism. In pursuit of their

combined goals of racial redemption and republican citizenship, and using Christian civilizationist rhetoric, they came to realize the necessity of an independent state to protect their interests. To that end, they waged war, backed by U.S. military support, against those African polities ideologically opposed to them and allied to European slave traders; forged alliances with other African polities more amenable to their presence; and asserted their hegemony over the region.

Chapter Six critically surveys the accomplishments and failures of the Chesapeake free blacks, from their perspective, in establishing Liberia and investigates the hybrid set of ideas and practices at which they arrived in constructing their state. It provides a close textual analysis of Joseph Jenkins Roberts's valedictory to a meeting of the American Colonization Society in January 1869 in which he explained Liberia's founding purpose and principles. This close-up look examines what the Chesapeake free black founders thought they were doing. In their minds at least, they saw themselves as opening new pathways for expanding black freedom, or "liberty," in the context of their times. This was the standard they had set for themselves.

Subsequent scholarship, however, criticized Roberts and the other Liberian leaders for failing to fully integrate the African populations with whom they came into contact, some scholars going so far as to claim that the American immigrants practiced a form of imperial control over their new African neighbors. Much of that scholarship relied on models of analysis that did not take into account the permeable nature of the practices of the first

generation of African American settlers in Liberia, the reciprocal character of their relations with the Africans they encountered, and the hybrid outcomes that ensued, which over time created a synthesis of practices and beliefs. This conclusion is confirmed by a critical re-reading of the evidentiary base of this scholarship. The re-reading shows that the freedom dreams of the Liberian founders, which were ultimately tied to capitalism, came up against the complexity of West Africa in the Atlantic World of that period to produce an outcome that expanded freedom for some and created new identities for others.

Free black people from the Chesapeake did not necessarily share the same perspective as the later emigrants to Liberia who had been slaves in the United States, or those who hailed from the northeastern seaboard of the U.S., or those who came from the Low-country and the Lower Mississippi Valley, much less the Africans freed from the bowels of slave ships and deposited in Monrovia or the Africans the Americans met at Cape Mesurado. Among the Americans, those who came from rural backgrounds in the United States had a different experience from those who were city folk. Experiences in colonial Liberia caused emigrants to reconsider their ideas and to change and adapt to new circumstances, to embrace new ways of seeing the world, and different ways of defining themselves and those around them. Race and pride in a glorious African past would be held up by Virginia-born Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Liberia’s first president, as a unifying signifier, as a way of bridging the social differences among the emigrants as well as the distance between the

Africans and the Americans, and as a basis for building a republican nation based on racial criteria.

# CHAPTER ONE

## The Peculiarities of the Chesapeake and the Rise of Free Blacks in the Atlantic World during the Age of Revolution, 1775-1810

During the spring of 1775, revolutionary storm clouds gathered over Britain's restless mainland North American possessions, and the possibility of war loomed on the horizon. The storm clouds were especially threatening in the Chesapeake region, the colonies of Virginia and Maryland, which held the largest African American slave population in North America. That spring, a delegation of slaves, on their own initiative, met with Britain's colonial governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, at his Williamsburg residence to offer their services in Britain's anticipated fight with the American patriot forces. Made aware of the meeting, the House of Burgesses, speaking for Virginia's plantation owners, quickly registered its disapproval of any attempt "to offer Freedom to our Slaves, and turn them against their Masters." Although Governor Dunmore did not immediately enlist the slaves' support, the meeting had caught the attention of the plantation owners. In April of that same year, Maryland's Governor Robert Eden received a different type of delegation in Annapolis, this one composed of planters who appealed to him to provide them with weapons in case there was a need to squash potential slave insurrections. By the end of the year, the anticipation of war had placed on the agenda the continued existence of plantation slavery in the Chesapeake,

exposing divisions in the society, threatening the control of plantation owners, and creating the possibility of freedom for thousands of black slaves.[1]

While the names of the Virginia slaves who met with Lord Dunmore and those of the Maryland plantation owners who met with Governor Eden remain unknown, encounters of this sort, which took place in the British North American colonies in the months leading up to and immediately after the American colonies declared their independence from Britain in July 1776, formed the small coin of the revolutionary processes that began in North America in 1775. They were emblematic of the primary antagonism that set the context for the sudden and stunning transformation of African American life in the Chesapeake during the last two decades of the eighteenth century: the conflict between the Chesapeake planters and slaves, with the British colonial authorities initially caught between the two. The encounters further illuminated the extent to which the master-slave conflict was enmeshed in the competing agendas of rival imperial states of the Atlantic World during the late eighteenth century, and within an even broader context of a global Atlantic economy in transition from mercantilism, alongside emerging and conflicting ideas about property, citizenship, race and slavery. By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, when the transatlantic slave trade to North America was brought to a conclusion, the rapidly expanding population

[1] Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 22. See also Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), and Gary Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

of Chesapeake free blacks faced greater constraints than their counterparts in the rest of the Atlantic World, causing some of them to turn their gaze to Africa, to begin re-imagining themselves as a distinct people, and to engage in an African American Zionism.[2]

The War of Independence and the American Revolution resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of free people of African descent in the Chesapeake between 1775 and 1810. Thus one outcome of the Revolution in the Chesapeake was that thousands of formerly enslaved black women and men shed their slave status and gained their freedom. War and Revolution had opened the floodgates to black freedom in the 1770s.

Although few in number – around 2,000 – on the eve of the Revolution, some black people had always enjoyed freedom in the Chesapeake, dating back to the first English settlements in the seventeenth century. With the advent of the tobacco revolution in the late seventeenth century, free people of African descent gradually lost their rights over time and thus lived in an increasingly hostile environment.[3]

---

[2] For histories of the revolutionary era in its Atlantic dimensions, see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1962); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988); and Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

[3] For a discussion of free blacks in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake, see for example T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes, *Myne Owne Ground: Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). See also Alan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 23-44. On gender relations in early Virginia, see Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs:*

Chesapeake legislators in both Virginia and Maryland stripped free persons of African descent of rights. Mid-seventeenth-century free blacks like property holder and slave owner Anthony Johnson in Virginia and Mathias Souza in Maryland were no longer possible in the eighteenth century. And yet, as the Chesapeake metamorphosed from societies with slaves to full-blown slave societies during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the region always had free blacks whose lives and struggles provided the nucleus for a self-conscious black community. They welcomed the new additions of free blacks to their numbers and forged alliances with them. The Chesapeake on the eve of the American Revolution had a dim and distant memory of a time when most blacks in the region were free, and faint echoes of that earlier period still exerted some influence, however infinitesimal.[4]

The openness of slavery during the early and middle seventeenth-century Chesapeake gave way to a more rigid slavery as the tobacco revolution took hold at the end of the seventeenth century. The size and proportion of the free black population declined, and free blacks became more marginal to the society. However, in the rest of British mainland North America, as in the Caribbean and Brazil in the wider Atlantic World, divergent paths were followed. As with the case of the complex causes of the revolutions in America and France – ideological, religious, military,

---

*Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), which shows that, as white indentureship ended, enslaved black women were encumbered with field work and that all black women were stigmatized as a result.

[4] See Paul Heinegg's compilation of Virginia and Maryland colonial tax lists, personal property tax lists, census and court records for evidence of free blacks going back to the seventeenth century at www.freeafricanamericans.org.

economic, legal – the impact of the revolutions on black people in the Atlantic World are not any easier to discern. The revolutions, propelled by war, transformed black lives all around the Atlantic world, changing the demography, the economics, the politics, the identities and the institutions that shaped free black life.[5]

The development of Chesapeake free blacks took place under conditions and circumstances unique to free blacks in the Atlantic World. In 1790, with a new government and Constitution finally established, the free black population of the United States stood at 60,000. Virginia at the time had close to 13,000 free blacks while Maryland had 8,000. Twenty years later, the new nation's free black population had increased to 183,000 with 30,000 in Virginia and another 34,000 in Maryland. The free black population of the Chesapeake had trebled in a single generation, between the moment of George Washington's inauguration in 1789 and 1809, the year Thomas Jefferson left office and the Anglo-American trans-Atlantic slave trade officially ended. By 1820, the year the Chesapeake free black emigrants set sail for Cape Mesurado on the coast of West Africa to establish Liberia, the free black population of the Chesapeake and the Upper South was 114,000, with 37,000 in Virginia and 40,000 in Maryland.[6]

---

[5] On the changing nature of slavery in North America, see Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), and Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[6] These figures and the following discussion rely principally on Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*; Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*; Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution;* and Frey, *Water from the Rock.*

Table 1.1: Free black population of Virginia and Maryland, 1790-1820

| | 1790 | 1810 | 1820 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Virginia | 13,000 | 30,000 | 37,000 |
| Maryland | 8,000 | 34,000 | 40,000 |
| United States | 60,000 | 186,000 | 233,000 |
| | | | |

Source: Census of the United States in Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2003), 272-279.

The spectacular growth of the Chesapeake free black population, which reached around 64,000 by 1810, a year after the end of the transatlantic slave trade to North America, was initially propelled by five things: revolutionary war service, flights to freedom, manumission, self-purchase and the filing of freedom suits in the courts.

Blacks' revolutionary war service in the Chesapeake, coupled with the pressures, demands, and unforeseen emergencies of war, obliged Chesapeake slave owners to renegotiate the terms of their domination and to make concessions to their slaves. Enslaved people had enlisted not only with the British, but also with the American Patriot forces in return for promises of

freedom. Both Virginia and Maryland changed their laws to allow blacks to serve in the army.[7]

Enslaved people also took advantage of the turmoil created by war and fled to freedom. Many Chesapeake slave owners lost their slaves to British military raids. Other slaves joined with roving bandits and privateers to engage in pillaging up and down the rivers and creeks of the Chesapeake. It is estimated that some 5,000 blacks escaped from slavery in the Chesapeake during the period of the revolutionary wars, while an additional 5,000 escaped from their owners to resettle in other areas within the Chesapeake and elsewhere in the Upper South.[8]

The egalitarian ideas of the Revolution also exerted influence on Chesapeake slaveholders. A wave of manumissions by slave owners, inspired by the egalitarian spirit of the age, contributed to the increased number of free blacks during the war and the period briefly following, as manumission laws in Virginia and Maryland were briefly liberalized. Furthermore, the religious revivalism that swept North America during this period, the Great Awakening, provided a stimulus to the flood of manumissions, as the influence of evangelical Christianity subverted longstanding ideas about fixed social hierarchies. The most famous case in Virginia involved planter Robert Carter

---

[7] See T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Earl National Maryland* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 35; Nash, *Unknown American Revolution*, 51.

[8] Silvia Frey, "Between Slavery and Freedom: Virginia Blacks in the American Revolution," *Journal of Southern History* 49 (1983): 375-98; Allan Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples: Black Migrants in the Age of the American Revolution, 1790-1820," in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 144.

III, grandson of Robert "King" Carter, Virginia's largest landowner in his day. The younger Carter, influenced by his religious beliefs, manumitted 452 slaves during his lifetime.[9]

From the perspective of Chesapeake slave owners, the long-term decline in tobacco production rendered much of the slave population unproductive and superfluous. The Revolutionary war itself, although led by tobacco planters, unintentionally hastened this decline in tobacco, as wartime production was disrupted. Manumission by slave owners willing to rid themselves of underutilized labor, increased markedly after the Revolution, as did the willingness of slave owners to agree to self-purchase by the enslaved.[10]

The growth of towns in the Chesapeake – Norfolk, Richmond, Petersburg, and Fredericksburg in Virginia, and Baltimore and Frederick in Maryland – further contributed to the free black population increase. Towns became a magnet and a refuge for escaped slaves. Businesses in towns needed cheap skilled and unskilled labor, and runaway slaves found it easier to hide among already-established free black communities in the emerging

---

[9] See Andrew Levy, *The First Emancipator: The Forgotten Story of Robert Carter, the Founding Father Who Freed his Slaves* (New York: Random House, 2005), for a recent biography. Alan Taylor highlights the opposition Carter faced from his family and from the wider planter community. See Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 38.

[10] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves,* 419; T. Stephen Whitman, *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake: Black and White Resistance to Human Bondage, 1775-1865* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2007), 93.

towns of the post-revolutionary Chesapeake. Others became sailors in route to permanently passing themselves off as free men.[11]

Finally, some enslaved persons filed lawsuits to win their freedom. One of the most famous cases of enslaved people in the Chesapeake using the courts to pursue freedom was that of the Butler family in Maryland in the 1770s. Members of the black Butler family went to court to claim descent from a white woman called Eleanor "Irish" Nell, who a century earlier had married an enslaved man named Charles Butler. The success of the Butler family encouraged other Chesapeake blacks to pursue the legal route to freedom and contributed to the development of a practice within Chesapeake black communities of employing the law to overturn slavery, which in turn contributed to the establishment of a larger tradition of judicial abolition.[12]

In the Chesapeake, unlike in the northeastern seaboard of the United States, freedom stopped short of general emancipation. However, there was a sharp decline in slavery as tobacco production continued to fall and a new domestic slave trade gained pace as the plantation system expanded into other areas of the Upper South, the old Southwest, and Lower Mississippi Valley. Between 1790 and 1810, plantation owners moved some 100,000 slaves from

---

[11] On black sailors, see Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[12] Ira Berlin, *The Long Emancipation: The Demise of Slavery in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 55; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake*, 80-82; Michael L. Nicholls, "The Squint of Freedom:' African-American Freedom Suits in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," *Slavery and Abolition* 20 (1999): 47-62.

the Chesapeake to Kentucky and Tennessee. Chesapeake planters also began to sell or transfer their slaves to the Deep South.[13]

In the Chesapeake, unlike in the northeastern seaboard or the Carolina and Georgia Low Country, the majority of the free black population resided in rural areas – farming communities on the south bank of the James River in Virginia and the Eastern Shore of Virginia and Maryland had the largest free black populations. There were also large populations of free blacks, numbering in the hundreds, in key towns. In Baltimore, for example, free blacks formed a majority of the black population by 1810.[14]

Table 1.2: Free Black Population of Selected Chesapeake Counties and Towns in Virginia and Maryland, 1810

| County/Town | Region |
| --- | --- |
| **Free blacks made up 15 percent or more of the black population** | |
| Petersburg | South Side |
| Baltimore City | Baltimore |
| Queen Anne's | Eastern Shore |
| Kent | Eastern Shore |
| **Free blacks made up 11 percent or more of the black population** | |
| Richmond | Richmond |
| Accomack | Eastern Shore |
| Northampton | Eastern Shore |
| Nansemond (Suffolk) | South Side/ James River |
| Alexandria | Northern Virginia |
| Washington City | Southern Maryland |
| Dorchester | Eastern Shore |
| Talbot | Eastern Shore |
| **Free blacks made up 5-10percent of the black population** | |
| Norfolk | James River |
| Henrico | Richmond |

[13] Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples," 143-171. For more recent discussions of the movement of Chesapeake slaves to the Lower Mississippi Valley, see Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

[14] See Richard Dunn, "Black Society in the Chesapeake, 1776 – 1810," in Berlin and Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom*, 62.

| County/Town | Region |
|---|---|
| Dinwiddie | South Side |
| Sussex | South Side |
| Isle of Wight | James River |
| Surry | James River |
| Charles City | James River |
| Fairfax | Northern Virginia |
| Baltimore County | Baltimore |
| Anne Arundel | Western Shore |

Source: Richard Dunn, "Black Society in the Chesapeake, 1776-1810," in Berlin and Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom*, 60-65.

The free blacks of Virginia and Maryland were the most numerous in the nation, the two states accounting for more than a third of the free black population in the United States. Between 1790 and 1810, Virginia and Maryland ranked first and second in the nation in terms of the size of their free black populations.[15]

Table 1.3 Population of Free Blacks in the United States–Top Five States, 1790-1810

| **1790** | | | **1810** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | State | Pop | State | Pop |
| 1 | Virginia | 12,000 | Maryland | 34,000 |
| 2 | Maryland | 8,000 | Virginia | 30,000 |
| 3 | Pennsylvania | 6,500 | New York | 25,000 |
| 4 | Massachusetts | 5,500 | Pennsylvania | 22,000 |
| 5 | North Carolina | 5,000 | Delaware | 13,000 |
| | TOTAL USA | 60,000 | TOTAL USA | 186,000 |

Source: Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 272-279.

Chesapeake free blacks pursued a variety of occupations, serving largely as farm hands, wagoners, boatmen, artisans (blacksmiths, coopers,

[15] See Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone,* 372.

caulkers, bricklayers), and small proprietors. Many of them – mostly women – also survived as petty traders and marketers. Existing in the spaces between slavery and freedom, Chesapeake free blacks took advantage of the few opportunities available to them to accumulate property and establish institutions.[16]

Even as black people gained their freedom, they failed to secure full rights, leading them to agitate and look for new routes to meaningful freedom and what they would have considered as their full enjoyment of their rights, including emigration. Some blacks, long-term residents of the region, remained where they were but as conditions worsened, many others had to escape the Chesapeake to become or remain free. Some Chesapeake free blacks migrated to the northeastern seaboard of the United States and Canada, others went west, and some would try to return to Africa.

A distinctive characteristic of the Chesapeake was the close ties between the enslaved and free black populations. The two groups, to a degree not possible among their counterparts in other regions of the United States, were tightly bound together by family, church, and community connections. Upon gaining their freedom, many Chesapeake blacks remained where they were to be with family members who were still enslaved. They also saved and pooled their resources to purchase the freedom of family members who

---

[16] Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, 219; Tommy L. Bogger, *Free Blacks in Norfolk Virginia, 1780-1860: The Darker Side of Freedom* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997); Luther Porter Jackson, *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1942), 75; Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground,* 37-38.

remained in slavery. When black men or women created their first institution, the black church, free blacks as well as slaves formed an integral part of the membership. Urban blacks not only hid slaves in the free black communities, but also encouraged slaves to run away and join them. Finally, the large influx of newly free blacks into the already existing free black population of the Chesapeake during this period erased lighter skin as a marker of freedom within Chesapeake free black society, which would have been prevalent before the Revolution.[17]

In the Chesapeake, many newly emancipated people adapted to their new circumstances by embracing the political ideology of republicanism, carving out a place as small proprietors, and claiming their rights to property owning citizenship. They would also embrace evangelical Christianity, even while reclaiming an African identity. The newly free black people in the Chesapeake who had taken part in the Revolution had taken the measure of themselves, and, in so doing, helped to transform the Revolution's aims and objectives; grabbing hold of the words of the American Declaration of Independence, they extended the Revolution's meaning and significance by laying claim to two powerful ideas: being God's children and American citizenship.

The emerging beliefs of Chesapeake free blacks were also shaped by the resistance, actions, and decisions of the planter class. Once the leaders of the American Revolution, many of whom were Chesapeake plantation owners,

---

[17] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone,* 277-89; Whitman, *Price of Freedom*, 91.

had achieved their goal of independence from Britain, they attempted to reconstitute the political economy and social fabric of the new nation by retaining some aspects of the pre-revolutionary status quo, which meant consolidating planter power. Since the new Republic that emerged from the Revolution continued to rest on a foundation of slave labor, the new ruling class pursued policies that recouped slavery where it had been threatened by the revolutionary upheavals, which involved restricting the growth of the free black population.

The revolutionary war had, however, undermined slavery in the Chesapeake in profound and unlikely ways. Among the many actions of the newly free people of African descent was to adopt new names and surnames for themselves and their families, thereby psychologically casting off the residue of slavery and asserting new identities as free people. They established families and community networks. They created new fraternal institutions for self-help and a variety of benevolent associations. Most important, perhaps, they began to establish independent religious congregations. They began to call many of these institutions African.[18]

Chesapeake free blacks thus formed independent institutions to defend their new freedom and circumvent restrictions imposed on them. In Virginia, all-black church congregations began to appear by 1790. These congregations

---

[18] Of course, many of the newly freed slaves went in other directions. For the scholarship exploring the complex development of African-American Christianity, see, for example, Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); and Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

generally held schools in the basement of churches. Blacks began publishing notices to comment on public affairs, in the process laying claim to their full rights as Americans. The case that best exemplified this sort of activity in the Chesapeake was that of Reverend Daniel Coker of Baltimore, whose *Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister* reflected an emerging synthesis in black political and social thought that combined evangelical Christianity, republicanism, and a proto-African consciousness.[19]

Another important aspect of the free black Chesapeake was the development of communities of independent artisans, property-holders, small merchants, shopkeepers, petty traders, and marketers who were closely networked around church structures. In Richmond and Tidewater Virginia existed many aspiring free black Baptist or Methodist petty merchants and artisans with republican sensibilities. Throughout the towns of the Chesapeake, from Richmond and Petersburg in Virginia to Baltimore and Frederick in Maryland, they took up new occupations on the docks, in households, and in workshops. They owned property and had aspirations that their new status would be recognized by both whites and blacks. The new free black leadership class came from among their ranks.[20]

These Chesapeake free black property-holding petty merchants and artisans had not only a Christian and republican outlook. They also had an emerging racial identity tied to their African heritage. In confronting the

---

[19] Daniel Coker, *Dialogue Between a Virginian and An African Minister* (Baltimore: Benjamin Eads, 1810).

[20] See Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, 284-315.

contradictory problems of freedom, free blacks in the Chesapeake were faced with a crisis of exclusion from the mainstream which they would spend many decades attempting to resolve. Finding ways out of this crisis of exclusion would consume their efforts during two phases: the first between the time of the American Revolution and the abolition of the trans-Atlantic Slave trade by Britain and the United States in 1810; the second phase, in the 1820s and 1830s, which included the development of a powerful abolitionist movement in the United States and Britain's abolition of slavery. Racial exclusion turned many of them towards an African self-consciousness.

However the route to this African self-awareness and concomitant embrace of blackness was not uncomplicated for free blacks. Identification with Africa among the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations of people of African descent was not automatic. It was uneven and contested. Some of the earliest references to a common African identity in North America came during the American Revolution from blacks in New England protesting subordination based on race, who appealed several times between 1773 and 1777 to the Massachusetts General Court for support to return to Africa. These Boston-based individuals, some of whom were African-born, were led by the Barbados-born Prince Hall, who had formed the first black Masonic lodge. They received their charter in 1787, referred to themselves as African rather than as *Mandingo* or *Wolof* and began to claim a positive African identity. They envisioned a return not to *Mandingo* or *Wolof* society in particular, but to Africa-in-general as agents of Christianity. And while

their Boston-based project of a return to Africa did not succeed, it was a precursor to efforts along similar lines in the Chesapeake.[21]

Differences within the free black population contributed to different political outlooks. The Revolution both highlighted and obscured this differentiation. For example, the leading free black men in the Chesapeake and beyond, as actual or aspiring property-holders in the context of the Revolution expected to gain access to the levers of influence and take their places alongside their white counterparts. Thus Thomas Brown, a free black artisan from Baltimore and a Federalist, ran for a seat in the Maryland House

[21]The 1787 petition by the black Masons read in part: "[W]e, or our ancestors have been taken from our dear connections, and brought from Africa and put into a state of slavery in this country; from which unhappy situation we have been lately in some measure delivered by the new constitution which has been adopted by this state, or by a free act of our former masters. But we yet to find ourselves, in many respects, in very disagreeable and disadvantageous circumstances; most of which must attend us, so long as we and our children live in America. . . . This leads us humbly to propose the following plan to the consideration of this horourable Court. The soil of the native country is good, and produces the necessities of life in great abundance. There are large tracts of uncultivated lands, which, if proper application were made for them, it is presumed, might be obtained, and would be freely given for those to settle upon, who shall be disposed to return to them. When this shall be effected by a number of Blacks, sent there for this purpose, who shall be thought most capable of making such an application, , and transacting business; then they who are disposed to go and settle there shall form themselves into a civil society, united by a political constitution, in which they shall agree. And those who are disposed, and shall be thought qualified, shall unite, and be formed into a religious society, or Christian church; and have one or more blacks ordained as their pastor or Bishops: And being formed, shall remove to Africa, and settle on said lands…The execution of this plan will, we hope, be the means of enlightening and civilizing those nations, who are now sunk in ignorance and barbarity; and may give opportunity to those who shall be disposed, and engaged to promote the salvation of their heathen brethren, to spread the knowledge of Christianity among them, and persuade them to embrace it. And schools may be formed to instruct their youth and children, and Christian knowledge be spread through many nations who now are in gross darkness; and Christian nations churches be formed, and the only true God and Savior be worshipped and honoured through that vast extent of country, where are now the habitations of cruelty under the reign of the prince of darkness." See Petition of African Blacks of the African Lodge to the Massachusetts General Court, 1787, Massachusetts Archives Collection, Massachusetts State Archives, http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arccol/colmac.htm. See also the collection of essays edited by Peter Hinks and Peter Kantrowitch, *All Men Free and Brethren: Essays on the History of African American Freemasonry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). On the problem of transforming African identities in early America, see Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

of Delegates in 1792.[22] At the start of the revolutionary process, it is reasonable to assume that men like Thomas Brown honored social rank over race. As the revolutionary process deepened, and as the post-revolutionary settlement saw free black property-holders relegated to the margins, they used race (the fact that they were black) and gender (the fact that they were men) to buttress their economic aspirations and consolidate their place within free black communities. Some of these property-owning free black men, such as Paul Cuffe, a New England ship owner, and James Forten, a Philadelphia sail maker, who never expected poorer and propertyless white men to gain influence at their expense, would eventually turn their gaze to Africa, to the larger Atlantic world, and to African colonization, where perhaps they too could be masters of their own world, stalwart black Christian republicans.[23]

Black men and women throughout the new American republic aspired to return to Africa during and after the transatlantic slave trade. In North America, these aspirations were manifested in a variety of ways. One recurring pattern involved free blacks petitioning, on the eve of the Revolution, for the right to return or emigrate from the United States to

---

[22] Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 91.

[23] Paul Cuffe published several accounts of his very productive life. See for example, *Captain Paul Cuffe's Logs and Letters, 1808 to 1817: A Black Quaker's Voice from Within the Veil,* ed. Rosalind Cobb Wiggins (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1996). See also Lamont Thomas, *Rise To Be a People: A Biography of Paul Cuffe* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1986); and Sheldon H. Harris, *Paul Cuffe: Black America and the African Return* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972). On James Forten, see Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), also provides a good discussion and examples of the fluidity of the post-revolutionary period and how many of that generation, including free African Americans, reinvented themselves in the wake of the revolution.

Africa. For obvious reasons, those blacks who had gained the legal status of freedom in their communities were at the forefront of these efforts. Hence, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, free blacks became the major advocates of emigration to Africa. This is not to say that the enslaved population did not harbor such sentiments, only that their circumstances circumscribed what they were able to do. Within the United States, free blacks thus became the locus of arguments and activities regarding emigration to Africa.

While free blacks in North America, including those in the Chesapeake, identified with Africa, this cultural identification expressed itself in complex and more often contradictory ways. Free blacks did not all think of Africa or the opportunities emigration may or may not have presented in the same way, since significant differences marked the free black communities of North America and the broader Americas.[24]

Nonetheless, the Chesapeake free black population in particular found itself in an anomalous position. Its circumscribed freedom forced it to be creative in how to access political power. Thus not only freedom but also exclusion transformed free blacks. Current or former slave status, although important in the eyes of the wider society and the black community, necessarily became secondary to a larger and more expansive black racial identity. This necessary unity within these black communities was

[24] See Sidbury, *Becoming African in America,* 189-97.

demonstrated as blacks created institutions for their self-defense and to promote their common interests.

In the Chesapeake, this logic brought forth a black politics that emerged alongside the growth in the population of free blacks to give voice to a new identity. Some scholars have posited the absence of a black politics in the early American republic, pointing to the lack of free black participation in electoral politics, the absence of black voices in the major public debates of that era, and free blacks' total exclusion from state power. However, although barred from formal political participation, blacks nonetheless took part in public affairs – principally through their churches – and can therefore be considered to have engaged in politics if the conception of politics is broadened beyond a narrow definition of electoral politics and officeholding.[25]

The rapid increase in the number of free blacks in the Chesapeake after the Revolution did not occur in isolation. Free blacks occupied critical social spaces throughout New World slave societies and included both people of mixed African, European, and indigenous heritage, who in Spanish-speaking areas came to be called *castas* and in French-speaking regions *gens de couleurs* or free people of color, and those without such mixed heritage. Indeed, during the formative period of the New World plantation system, a

---

[25] For an elaboration of a conception of the politics of non-public people, see Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). For the emergence of a black public space, see Joanna Brooks, "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (2005): 67-92. The conceptualization of a public sphere is borrowed from Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

charter generation of African people, some free, some indentured and some enslaved, was to be found all over the New World societies.[26]

Thus the rise of free blacks in the Chesapeake was connected to larger global events to which the Chesapeake free blacks themselves contributed. Furthermore, free blacks in the Chesapeake functioned within a larger context of people who were also suffering from a crisis of exclusion and who attempted to resolve it in a variety of ways. Chesapeake free blacks served with British military forces in North America and were in the vanguard of black resettlement in the British colonies of Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone. Likewise, global events influenced the path and pace of Chesapeake free black development at home. The growth in influence of intertwined Enlightenment ideas of antislavery, race, and republican citizenship, the emergence of evangelical Christianity and the associated rise of an abolitionist movement in Britain in which free blacks participated, a slave revolt in the French colony of Saint Domingue, and the abolition of slavery in Latin America and the Northeastern seaboard of the United States, all shaped the intellectual and political environment that midwifed the rise of free blacks in the Chesapeake. Taking shape between the start of the American Revolution and the ending of the transatlantic slave trade to North America, this broader Atlantic and North American context illuminated the peculiarities of the Chesapeake and the

[26] On the concept of a charter generation, see Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 17-28.

historical forces that shaped the development of free blacks and gave them their distinctive character.[27]

The American Revolution and the war of independence formed a central part of these interconnected phenomena; its impact was global. The specific events that provoked the 1775 encounters between the representatives of the British Crown, the slaves, and the slaveholders in the Chesapeake flowed from the series of crises Britain faced in managing its empire following the conclusion of the Seven Years War (or French and Indian War as it was called in the North American colonies) during the previous decade, and furthermore were taking place in a historical context shaped by emerging ideas about God and Reason accompanied by newly developing economic practices. Of the latter, the most significant idea circulating around the Atlantic rim was the desirability of a particular set of market relations centered on private property as the basis of self-government.[28]

In 1783, at the end of the American War of Independence and in keeping with the terms of the Peace of Paris, the British evacuated to Nova Scotia the approximately 3,000 newly free blacks who had joined them during the war. Many of them had been in the initial group that responded to Lord

---

[27] For attempts to tease out some of these issues in the broader Atlantic context during the period under study, see Laurent Dubois and Julius Scott, eds., *Origins of the Black Atlantic* (New York: Routledge, 2011). See also Julius Scott, "The Common Wind: Currents of African American Communications in the Era of the Haitian Revolution" (PhD dissertation; Duke University, 1986), and Bolster, *Black Jacks,* both of which speak to the circuits of communications that helped knit together an embryonic black Atlantic world.

[28] For more on the discussion of property, slavery and the political economy of capitalism, see Blackburn, *Making of New World Slavery;* Macpherson, *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, 52-69*; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 3-26.

Dunmore's appeal. Others took the initiative on their own to flee to the British ships in New York harbor. Sometime in July, 1783, George Scribens, a free-born black from Craddock's Neck on the eastern shore of Virginia, deserted his master Shadrack Furman, under whom he had been serving out a term as an indentured apprentice in Furman's shop on Broadway. Furman feared that Scribens had left for Nova Scotia. Both Scribens and his father had arrived in New York two years earlier. Another New York slave, Felix, who spoke French, also fled, as did Anthony from Hempstead, Queens, of whom the runaway advertisement said "speaks good English" and "pretends to be a preacher and sometimes officiates in that capacity among the Blacks."[29] Their owners all feared the men had made their way to British ships in the harbor.

When the British eventually evacuated, taking with them the remaining Black Loyalists, that act initiated yet another major vector of black transformation: the re-settlement throughout the Atlantic rim of thousands of Chesapeake blacks, to Nova Scotia and thence to England for some and eventually, for others, to Sierra Leone in West Africa. Recent studies have shown that a few of them went even further afield. This first resettlement in Nova Scotia was followed in the ensuing decades by a few thousand blacks fleeing from the United States to Canada in search of freedom.[30]

---

[29] Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., *Pretends to Be Free: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Garland, 1994), 284-285.

[30] See Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Books, 2006)*;* and Harvey

One of the men fleeing behind British lines was Thomas Peters, who had escaped slavery in North Carolina and joined the Ethiopian Regiment in Virginia, subsequently becoming a leading spokesperson for the Nova Scotia free blacks in their long struggle to acquire land that would allow them to sustain themselves. In 1790, Peters was embraced by the leading English abolitionists after he made a trip to London to press for the Nova Scotians' demands for resettlement in West Africa. In 1808, Peters and the Nova Scotia Black Loyalists, with the support of white British abolitionists such as Granville Sharpe, Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce, succeeded in persuading the British government to establish the Sierra Leone colony, after earlier, mostly private, efforts that had begun in 1787 failed. Peters and the Nova Scotians had pointed to one route out of the crisis that the Revolution and freedom had presented to free blacks in the Atlantic World.[31]

Thomas Peters arrived in Britain, with its free black population of 10,000, at a time when the movement for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade had reached the peak of its influence, a year after the start of the French Revolution and the publication of the former slave and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano's path-breaking and best-selling autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative*. Britain's abolitionist movement, which had received an

---

Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006).

[31] Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), has argued that the "black loyalists" who emigrated to Sierra Leone were not only key players in the "back to Africa" movement, but also a vanguard force for anti-slavery and democratizing activities in West Africa. See also James St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

initial boost at the start of the 1770s with the landmark Somerset judgment, grew slowly at first, but then gained momentum in the 1780s. In 1771, James Somerset, the slave of Charles Stewart, a Boston Massachusetts customs officer, escaped from his owner in London, where Stewart had taken Somerset two years prior. Stewart eventually found, caught, and detained Somerset, with the intention of sending him to Jamaica. Three friends of Somerset took Stewart to court, demanding that Somerset be released. Somerset then sued for his freedom. The court's chief justice, Lord Mansfield, after hearing the arguments, released Somerset and declared him to be free in 1772. The facts of the case are straightforward. However, the significance of the Mansfield decision has been subject to debate and differing interpretations. But there is little doubt that the case, which became a cause célèbre, further advanced a nascent abolitionist movement in Britain that had matured and grown in size and influence by the time of Peters's arrival in England. [32]

The slave James Somerset decided to take action, that is, he escaped. He had developed a community of friends and sympathizers during his two years in London, independent of his owner, but it was he who ultimately made the decision to leave his master. By doing so, he initiated a series of actions with large consequences. Had he resigned himself to his fate, there would have been no opportunity for Lord Mansfield to make his decision. As a

---

[32] Some historians argue that the abolitionist movement had reached its zenith by the time of Peters's arrival in Britain. See Jerome Nadelhaft, "The Somerset Case and Slavery: Myth, Reality, and Repercussions," *Journal of Negro History* 51 (1966): 193-208; Steven Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall: The Landmark Trial That Led to the End of Human* Slavery (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2005); Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

result of the decision, the burgeoning abolitionist movement in England got a great boost to its morale, and by its agitation and propaganda turned what was really a judgment on narrow legal grounds into a great victory for the abolition of slavery. Lord Mansfield narrowly applied his decision to Britain, not to its colonies. The decision did not outlaw slavery in Britain's vast empire, and the plantation system survived the immediate outcome of his action. Although perhaps an abolitionist sympathizer, Mansfield did not intend to strike a blow for abolition, but that was the way supporters of abolition treated the decision. Cases like Somerset's defined the crisis of free blacks in the Atlantic world. Yet the Mansfield decision echoed across the Atlantic to all of England's colonies, including North America and especially the Chesapeake. It gave hope to enslaved blacks and to their free black and white allies, and it was a source of worry to the planter class and its allies.[33]

London had developed into a center of abolitionist ferment among free blacks in the Atlantic World, and a pair of London-based black writers and activists – Olaudah Equiano (Gustavas Vassa) and Quobna Ottobah Cugoano (John Stuart) – resided at the heart of that ferment. Both men, attempting to confront the dilemma of freedom that had been made concrete not only by their own personal histories and experiences, but also by the forces now unleashed by the revolutionary upheavals around them, spelled out their critiques of the conditions blacks faced as well as their vision of a new black

[33] Alfred Blumrosen and Ruth Blumrosen, *Slave Nation: How Slavery United the Colonies and Sparked the American Revolution* (Napierville IL: Sourcebooks, 2005), argue that the Revolution was essentially a pre-emptive strike to prevent the abolition of slavery in North America by Britain in the wake of the Mansfield decision.

identity suited to the requirements of a post-revolutionary world. Equiano published his autobiography in 1789, while two years earlier Cugoano had published his *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery*. Both books were significant interventions, but Equiano's was the more popular of the two. Equiano sought to construct a modern African Christian identity for the times that could be embraced by all free blacks. He held himself and his life up as a model.[34]

Equiano's life encompassed many of the common experiences and influences of thousands and perhaps millions of people of African descent in the eighteenth century: his purported birth in West Africa and trip across the Atlantic in the Middle Passage in the hold of a slave ship; his purchase and sale to various white slave owners; his time laboring on slave plantations in the Caribbean and Virginia; his service as a sailor, including with the British Royal Navy during the Seven Years War; his conversion to evangelical Christianity. Equiano was the exemplary man of the eighteenth-century black Atlantic. What needs to be clarified is the extent to which Equiano's work was in many ways a response to and an engagement with ideas circulating in the Atlantic World at the end of the eighteenth century at whose confluence he stood.[35]

---

[34] See Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting* Narrative *and Other Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin, 1995); Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (New York,: Penguin, 1999). For black London in the late eighteenth century, see F. O. Shyllon, *Black People in Britain, 1555-1833* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, *Black London: Life before Emancipation* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1995).

[35] Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, The African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (New York: Penguin, 2005), has questioned if Equiano was actually born in West Africa.

Equiano was a sometime tenant and collaborator of Thomas and Lydia Hardy, leading figures in the radical London Corresponding Society of artisans and shopkeepers who were sympathetic to the Jacobin currents in revolutionary France, and whose enthusiastic greeting of the publication of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* in 1791 with its popularization of Enlightenment values had brought them to the attention of royal authorities in Britain.[36] Equiano, though he converted to Methodism and evangelical Christianity, based in no small part on the reputation it gained from its early opposition to slavery, was also an admirer of the Society of Friends and cultivated strong and lasting friendships with many Quakers. According to him, especially when it came to his business dealings, Quakers "always appeared to be a very honest discreet sort of people, and never attempted to impose on me; I therefore like them, and ever after chose to deal with them in preference to any others."[37]

Prior to the publication of his autobiography, Equiano became deeply involved in the project to establish a colony of free blacks in Sierra Leone on the coast of West Africa. He served as the project's first Commissary, in charge of acquiring and distributing supplies and armaments. The intended settlers, a little less than one thousand persons, were taken from among the black poor of London, and included a few poor whites as well. The initial

---

[36] Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra,* 334-341.

[37] Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, 132. See also Carretta, *Equiano*; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra.*

project was a voluntary exercise with some government support. The British government signed on to the settlement scheme because its proponents had been advocating for some time that those black loyalist refugees who had come from Canada, and "whose wretchedness the streets of London too plainly bring to view," needed some kind of amelioration of their condition.[38]

Yet another dimension to the emergence of free blacks around the Atlantic World in this revolutionary age was the impact of French and Anglo-Enlightenment ideas. The ideological assault on slavery launched by key sections of the Atlantic intelligentsia had long begun when the French Revolution broke out in 1789. The revolutionary wave that swept across the Atlantic World beginning in North America, then shifting to Europe and back across the Atlantic to the Caribbean, did not leave South America untouched. Finally, the revolutions had a large impact on the Anglophone and other Francophone Caribbean islands.[39]

The actions taken by free blacks throughout the Atlantic World during the Age of Revolution to expand and consolidate their freedom were countered and restricted everywhere by the powerful forces of the planter class. In the United States, although slavery circumscribed the lives of all black people, great variation existed in the ways slavery and freedom were

[38] Quoted in Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 88.

[39] See Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999), a text that greatly influenced the circles in which Equiano moved. For another perspective on the attitude of the Enlightenment philosophers of the period to the idea of race, see Emmanuel Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997).

experienced. The Chesapeake and Upper South (Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri), where the plantation system had matured the most, and where the largest number of slaves resided, were noticeable because of the size and influence of its free black populations. The Chesapeake stood in contrast to the northeastern United States, where slavery had disappeared completely (Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont), had all but disappeared (Connecticut, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania) or gradually died out (New York and New Jersey). It also differed from the Low Country (South Carolina, East Georgia, Florida) and the Lower Mississippi Valley (Louisiana, West Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas), where slavery grew.

Along the northeastern seaboard of the United States, free blacks created churches, schools, and Masonic lodges. They held political (to be precise republican) aspirations and openly advocated for freedom and equality. Boston, New York, Providence, and especially Philadelphia were leading centers of the northeastern free black existence. Even where blacks were free however, they experienced widespread limitations on their freedom including restrictive laws. Indentured servitude in New York, for example, still existed at the start of the American Civil War, and most Northern free blacks were mired in poverty.[40]

---

[40] Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, 21-22.

In the Lower Mississippi Valley, the single most important development was the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, which opened up new lands for cotton cultivation. The cotton and sugar revolution it accompanied fueled the expansion of slavery. Thus for the great majority of enslaved African Americans in that region, freedom never came at all. Instead, what transpired alongside the expansion of slavery in the Lower Mississippi Valley were the development of a paternalistic ethos among the plantation class and the stagnant growth of the free black population, which was clustered in urban areas like New Orleans, Mobile, Pensacola and Natchez.[41]

The period following the constitutional settlement in 1789 saw a spike in slave importation into the U.S., which had declined in the decades leading up to the Revolution. The jump in slave importation contributed to the increase in the slave labor force. In a single generation, the slave population in the United States increased by 60 percent, rising from 717,000 in 1790 to 1,190,000 in 1810, while in the Chesapeake it rose from 520,000 to 810,000 in the same period,[42] providing a powerful reminder that most slaves in the Chesapeake did not gain their freedom in the period immediately following the Revolution.

---

[41] Berlin, *Slaves without Masters,* 108-132; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992). For evidence and implications of paternalism, see Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974).

[42] Figures taken from Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 369-75.

However, this period also saw, alongside the expansion of slavery, the simultaneous growth of the free black population in the Low Country, particularly in the ports of Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, and in the Chesapeake. In the Low Country, strong ties between free people of color and the planter class were the most arresting characteristic. Many in the free black population of the Low Country were of mixed race. They were mostly artisans, urban dwellers, who formed institutions like the First Baptist Church of Savannah or the Brown Society of Charleston. Their ranks would be reinforced after the Haitian Revolution by an influx of mulatto refugees fleeing from Haiti.[43]

Both the American Revolution and the French Revolution had promised but failed to deliver equality for the newly expanding Atlantic communities of free blacks. This failure created a crisis of exclusion for a generation of formerly enslaved blacks in the Chesapeake and elsewhere in the Atlantic World. Once free, yet excluded from citizenship, black people began reconstructing their identities. Constructing new identities was seen by newly free blacks as one way to consolidate their freedom and make other social gains in the face of varying degrees of opposition from the assortment of Atlantic plantation classes. Constructing new identities was also a response to blacks' dispersal and resettlement around the Atlantic rim – a "Diaspora in reverse" – and the founding and settlement of Sierra Leone and eventually

---

[43] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 35-36.

Liberia along the coast of West Africa, was itself a consequence of the revolutionary upheavals of the era.[44]

Free blacks in the Atlantic world responded to the crisis brought on by their exclusion in different ways depending on where they lived. In Saint Domingue, free blacks, joined by slaves, made a revolution and created a black republic, Haiti.[45] Elsewhere in the Caribbean, like Havana and Bridgetown, and in locations like the northeast of Brazil, free blacks transformed themselves into a third caste between black slaves and white slaveholders.[46] Free blacks in Britain and France stood at the confluence of Atlantic-wide events and despite their small size and marginal role in those societies, joined the abolitionist movements in those countries. [47] In the northeastern United States, in cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, free blacks created civic traditions, and various institutions of civil society. They also began to organize themselves politically.[48] Yet in southern North

---

[44] See Nemata Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000).

[45] C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1963), remains the classic account. See more recently, Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[46] David Cohen and Jack Greene, eds., *Neither Slave nor Free: The Freedmen of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); Jane G. Landers, ed., *Against the Odds: Free Blacks in the Slave Societies of the Americas* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1996). From a gender perspective, see David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clarke Hine, eds., *Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

[47] For Britain, see Shyllon, *Black People in Britain.* For France, see Sue Peabody, "*There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Regime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[48] Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 230-244.

American cities like Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans, a free black population with strong ties to the plantation class self-consciously set itself apart from the slave population.[49]

Free blacks in the Chesapeake were different. There, free blacks faced a crisis of exclusion and were unable to carve out and occupy sufficient economic space or organize themselves politically. By the time the transatlantic slave trade to North America came to an end, Chesapeake free blacks generally faced greater constraints – legal, political, social – than their counterparts in other areas of the North American mainland.

The American Revolution opened the door to freedom for thousands of blacks in the Chesapeake. However, their new freedom was tenuous. Their claims to republican citizenship were rejected as the Chesapeake planter classes successfully launched a counterrevolution to reverse many of the democratic gains that blacks had won as a result of the Revolution. This counterrevolution would powerfully shape the development of Chesapeake free blacks.

---

[49] Ibid, 163-230.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Counter Revolution and the Making of Chesapeake Free Blacks, 1789-1815

In July 1810, the Reverend Daniel Coker, a free black Methodist clergyman based in Baltimore, Maryland, published a pamphlet entitled "Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister." In it, he broadly objected to the exclusion of people of African descent from American citizenship. He further objected to the Chesapeake plantation class's justification for excluding blacks from political rights, and cleverly referred to Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* to make his case for the abolition of slavery. "Let the president's plan, (inserted in his notes on Virginia,) be adopted, fixing a period, after which None should be born slaves in the United States; and the colored children to be free at a certain age." Coker challenged the counterrevolutionary practices and the dominant narratives of the plantation class, and his pamphlet wove together various strands of emerging black thought, combining ideas of African identity with ideas of Christian brotherhood, and republican citizenship.[1]

The pamphlet was written in part as a response to the legal and other barriers to black freedom erected by the Virginia and Maryland state legislatures and the justifications for slavery that accompanied the new restrictions. Coker would not be the first Chesapeake free black to challenge the counterrevolution, but his effort would assert black freedom and equality

[1] Daniel Coker, *Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister*, 63.

and press claims to full citizenship.[2] Coker would go on to co-found the African Methodist Episcopal Church and later become a leader of the African colonization project sponsored by the Society for the Colonization of the Free People of Color (ACS).[3]

If the American Revolution opened the floodgates to freedom for thousands of black people in the Chesapeake, the aftermath of the Revolution saw persistent and mostly successful attempts by the Chesapeake plantation owners to construct barriers preventing free blacks from fully realizing that freedom. What the Chesapeake plantation class did was to mount and lead a counterrevolution, a series of practices and narratives that did much to shape the development of Chesapeake free blacks' identity in the post- revolutionary period, during the two and a half decades between the adoption of the U.S. Constitution in 1789 and the formation of the ACS in 1816. The counterrevolution effectively reversed many gains won by free blacks in the years preceding 1789, when the U.S. constitution came into full effect, and therefore had a decisive impact on the way Chesapeake free black demography, racial identity, political economy, and religious institutions

---

[2] An earlier response to Thomas Jefferson which has caught the attention of historians was penned by Benjamin Banneker, a free black Marylander and small property holder in the Patapsco River Valley of Baltimore County. Banneker wrote to Jefferson that blacks "have long been considered rather as brutish than human, and scarcely capable of mental endowments." He had hoped to engage Jefferson over the question of black peoples' intellectual capacity. See Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia with Related Documents*, ed. David Waldstreicher (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002), 208-13.

[3] The name of the Society would later be shortened to the American Colonization Society, hence the initials ACS. For a recent history of the ACS, see Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005).

emerged during the final decade of the eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

The idea of a counterrevolution is a useful way to understand the dynamic of race formation during and after the American Revolution, and a more powerful explanatory model to employ than the model that sees race as a timeless essence.[4] The policy measures, events and rhetoric which, when taken together, constituted the counterrevolution, attempted to roll back what the counterrevolutionaries considered the excesses of the Revolution. Those practices, while not limited to the issue of race and to the place of free blacks in American society, had a large import on the role and importance of race and on how free black people came to be defined. More specifically, the leading voices of the counterrevolution, which ranged widely, used their power and influence to set limits on black freedom. In so doing, they redefined what it meant to be both "American" and "black" and remade race. In the Chesapeake, the counterrevolution set the boundaries and established the framework within which free black life had to operate, thereby shaping the development of free black identity in the early American republic.

Thus the larger context to Daniel Coker's intervention, exemplifying an embryonic Chesapeake free black identity, was the counterrevolutionary tide that began during the American Revolution but gained coherence and grew in the years that followed. The Revolution raised black people's expectations of freedom, equality, and citizenship. From the perspective of

---

[4] For an example of the historical model that treats race as a timeless essence, see Winthrop Jordan's influential *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

Chesapeake free blacks like Coker, the Revolution had promised freedom and equality to all, including enslaved people, and they had expected to share in that promise.[5]

However, the Chesapeake plantation class and its counterparts in other regions of the new nation erected obstacles to black freedom and equality, beginning with the American Constitution itself and continuing with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. The planter class and its allies wrote laws meant to restrict free blacks, in terms of what free blacks could and could not do. Manumission laws in Virginia and Maryland were repealed or tightened to make it more difficult for blacks to gain or, for those who were free, to consolidate their freedom. With the aggressive expansion of the plantation system into the Lower Mississippi Valley, a thriving domestic slave trade from the Chesapeake – and its attendant violence – developed and the threat or reality of sale to the Deep South became a powerful tool in the hands of Chesapeake slaveholders, casting a long shadow over free black communities with deep ties to their enslaved brethren. Even in the North, emancipation was gradual, so that the crisis of exclusion that free blacks faced was national in scope.

---

[5] Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), argues that the efforts at racial exclusion, to define blacks as alien and the U.S. as a white man's country, began in earnest with the Revolution and were neither a mere carryover from colonial slavery nor a product of the early republic. This dissertation argues that the radicalism of the American Revolution and the reactionary policies of the counterrevolution were not mutually exclusive; they were inextricably linked, and they both produced unintended consequences, one of which was proto black nationalism, which developed in opposition to and side by side with white nationalism in that moment when race was being reconfigured.

Chesapeake free blacks fought to build lives in a revivified slave society that was hostile to their presence. The free blacks' struggle against the counterrevolution shaped their development in terms of the ideas they embraced such as African origin, race, republicanism, Christianity, and that they modified to suit their circumstances. Their struggle to protect themselves from the counterrevolution revealed the strategies they pursued and the institutions they built, such as the positive embrace of an African identity, the acquisition of property, and the establishment of churches.[6]

In the Chesapeake during the post-revolutionary years, although there was no final emancipation, or even gradual emancipation as in the North, the size of free black population nonetheless shot upwards. Freedom came through manumission, self purchase, flight, lawsuits, and natural increase. Free blacks in the Chesapeake became the most numerous in the nation. And in contrast to the Northeast and Lower South, Chesapeake free blacks resided mostly in the countryside but were also clustered in key port and riparian

---

[6] The historical literature on the world of the Black Chesapeake in the early American republic, upon which much of this chapter is based, is extensive. In addition to the scholarship of Berlin, see, for example, Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*; Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Alan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake and Low Country* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); T. Stephen Whitman, *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake: Black and White Resistance to Human Bondage, 1775-1865* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2007); Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985); James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia 1730-1810* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Marie Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic: Black and White Virginians in the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

towns like Baltimore in Maryland and Norfolk, Richmond, and Petersburg in Virginia. In the towns, most made their living as laborers, but they also aspired to be artisans and small proprietors. As a group, they were touched by the Revolution's political ideas, in particular republicanism, and by the evangelical Christianity introduced by the Great Awakening. Thus the Revolution's impact on the Chesapeake free blacks involved the free blacks' embrace of both republicanism and evangelical Christianity.

Within the context of the political and religious ideas that had gained currency during and after the Revolution, the Chesapeake free black perspective on life and the world at the time began to be shaped largely by their small proprietorship status and outlook, in other words, by their place in society as small proprietors. They began to develop a perspective that some scholars have called Black Christian Republicanism, which is a useful way of framing the combined religious, political, and social thought that began to emerge at this moment.[7]

The most important democratic gain blacks made during the Revolution was the attainment of freedom by tens of thousands of black people. The change in their legal status from slave to free removed them from under the immediate and direct control of an owner and at least theoretically conferred upon them the rights of republican citizenship, the core value of the Revolution. In the decades following the Revolution, the size of the free

---

[7] See Carl Patrick Burrowes, "Black Christian Republicanism, a Southern Ideology," *Journal of Negro History* 86 (2001): 30-44. This is a concept rich in possibility and in need of more thorough development and theorization, work this dissertation is attempting to undertake.

black population in the Chesapeake exploded, first growing by 300 percent between 1790 and 1810 (from 20,000 to 63,000) and then by 20 percent between 1810 and 1820 (from 63,000 to 76,000).[8] The numbers of newly free blacks were even larger, as the census figures do not account for those Chesapeake-born blacks who had already migrated from the Chesapeake to cities like Philadelphia and New York along the northeast seaboard.

Upon becoming free, Chesapeake free blacks used their freedom to assert their citizenship claims and to press for the freedom of those who remained enslaved, in order to among other things secure their own fragile freedom. In taking this path, these newly free blacks allied themselves with those forces in the Chesapeake – religious groups, abolitionists, and the very few pre-existing free black communities – who had argued for a broader definition of freedom, one in which the boundaries of citizenship were wide enough to include people of African descent. Free blacks pursued strategies to consolidate their tenuous gains, including joining or forming public institutions (fraternal orders and religious organizations), participating in electoral politics, accumulating property, acquiring marketable skills, migrating to towns and cities, and reestablishing family structures. These strategies, along with using the law and appealing to liberal instincts in powerful white people, were a reaction to the limitations free blacks

[8] See Table 1.1 above.

encountered upon gaining their freedom, but by doing so free blacks elicited a further response from the planter class.[9]

From the very beginning of the Revolution, the Chesapeake planter class and allied voices had raised an alarm about the presence and growth of the free black population. From the mainstream planter perspective, free blacks were a dangerous element in the society, an "internal enemy,"[10] a destabilizing force that could and did undermine the maintenance and order of the system of slavery. The planter class therefore consciously pursued policies and engaged in practices designed to roll back the gains blacks had made or at least to limit the damage that black freedom could cause to the system of slavery in the Chesapeake. These counterrevolutionary policies and practices were crucial in shaping the subsequent growth and development of the identities, outlook, and institutions of the post-revolutionary free black communities of the Chesapeake.

The Chesapeake planter class response to free blacks and to the claims they made to republican citizenship can be divided into several categories and discussed at several levels. At the ideological level, the planters and their allies launched an attack directed at free blacks in books and pamphlets, in newspapers and letters, and in speeches and sermons, in all of which free blacks were characterized as unfit or unprepared for citizenship. At a

---

[9] Chesapeake free blacks cultivated white allies, and the two groups developed complex relationships. For several examples of black-white cooperation, see Whitman, *Challenging Slavery,* 45-72, which focuses on the many interracial alliances that were formed in the course of the fight against Chesapeake slavery. See also Sobel, *World They Made Together*.

[10] See Alan Taylor's recent study, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013). The idea promoted by the Virginia plantation elite of the black enemy in our midst was aimed at all blacks in general, but especially at free blacks.

complementary but different level were the laws beginning with the new federal constitution and continuing most importantly with the series of manumission laws passed, tinkered with, and repealed over the course of the 1800s and 1810s. Yet another level of planter class response to free black claims was in the important realm of religious affairs, where pressure was brought to bear on the evangelizing congregations among the white lower social orders to loosen their ties to black communities.[11]

From the perspective of the planter class, the great threat to the stability of Chesapeake society and planter control was the growth of free blacks who, left unchecked, undermined the power of the planter class over the entire society, a power that was based on the maintenance of slavery. Something therefore had to be done about this threat. In the wake of the American Revolution, as a means of consolidating its power, the planter class seized upon the idea of race and African descent and, through its rhetoric and policies, assigned a new social significance to phenotypical differences, which were magnified, overblown, and exaggerated. Black skin became a common and convenient signifier of low status and the basis for exclusion from the political community, thus preserving inequality in a new political nation that claimed to be based upon equality. While excluding blacks from citizenship, the Chesapeake planter class simultaneously hoped to build an alliance with poor whites by offering concessions to the democratic demands of non-plantation owning whites, as part of a general post-revolutionary settlement,

---

[11] For black congregations' efforts to resist attempts of white authorities to control their religious affairs, see Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, and Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 93-95.

allowing them limited access to political power and thus an interest in maintaining the new order. Here then was the general outline of the historical process that reconfigured race in post-revolutionary America and made evidence of African descent a marker for exclusion from republican citizenship.[12]

No Chesapeake planter played a bigger role in marking the exclusion of black people from citizenship than Thomas Jefferson. And no text played a more influential part on the ideological frontlines of the counterrevolution than his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. In 1785, while serving as American Minister to France, Thomas Jefferson published in Paris the first English-language edition of the book. Jefferson wrote *Notes on Virginia* as a reply to a questionnaire from French friends about conditions in the new United States, and he used the opportunity to tackle the question of slavery and speculated at some length on the character of black people. The writer and influential French Enlightenment thinker, the Abbé Raynal, had in 1770 published his *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Establissement et du Commerce des Europeens dans les deux Indes*, which included a blistering attack on slavery

[12] Among the most important recent contributions to the historical debate on race formation are Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race,* Vol. 2*, The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America* (New York: Verso, 1997); and Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010). Earlier contributions include Jordan, *White Over Black*; Carl Degler, *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971); and Oscar and Mary Handlin, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," *William and Mary Quarterly* 7 (1950): 199-222.

and a claim of racial equality between blacks and whites.[13] Jefferson, in publishing his own text, thus intervened in an ongoing trans-Atlantic argument about blacks. "I advance it therefore," Jefferson argued, "as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments of both body and mind."[14] Jefferson's ideas were a cornerstone of the counterrevolution's ideological assault on equality, or rather its attempt to use a redefined idea of race to reconcile the profession of egalitarianism with the actuality of political exclusion and social subordination. For free blacks, Jefferson's ideas represented the nadir in early republican America, and *Notes on Virginia* served as a symbol of loathing. From Benjamin Banneker, who in 1795 wrote to Jefferson to protest its contents, to Daniel Coker, who published his 1810 pamphlet partly in reply to Jefferson's book, to David Walker in his famous jeremiad of 1829, to Joseph Jenkins Roberts who used the book as a background to set out his arguments for the creation of a black republic in West Africa in the 1840s, free blacks, assuming the role of spokespersons on behalf of all blacks, focused on Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* as the object of their ire.[15]

---

[13] Abbé Raynal's full name was Guillaume-Thomas Francois Raynal, 1713-1796. The work, which had several authors and consisted of several volumes, was translated into English as *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies,* Trans. J. Justamond (London: T. Cadell, 1776).

[14] Jefferson, *Notes*, 180.

[15] For Banneker, see Jefferson, *Notes*, 209-212. For Coker, see Coker, *Dialogue*, 63. For Walker, see David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World,* ed. Peter Hinks (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). For Roberts, see

*Notes on Virginia* was a decisive document of the counterrevolution. It set the terms of the debate about race and shaped the political terrain into which the free blacks in the Chesapeake entered. In the book, Jefferson defined the new relations emerging in the new republic, and his ideas on slavery and race, reflecting the interests of his class, prevailed in the intellectual landscape of the time. His brand of racial politics became dominant at the turn of the nineteenth century. Jefferson stood at the center of a new political alliance that came to define political life and laws in the new nation. These ideas and the laws they influenced did much to circumscribe the lives of free blacks in the Chesapeake.[16]

After the Revolution, a new racism emerged to go hand in hand with new class divisions in American society. The new racism, a central element of the counterrevolution, served as an organizing principle for the ruling class formation configured in the wake of the Revolution. The counterrevolution consisted of practices whose purposes were the consolidation and conservation of political domination by the new configurations of power. It was aimed at rolling back the gains made by the lower orders during the Revolution; limiting the meaning, application, and realization of freedom and equality by the popular classes who had limited access to power, readjusting the balance of class forces to the benefit of the ruling orders, and taking away

---

speech of Joseph Jenkins Roberts to the Liberia Lyceum, *Liberia Herald* 14, no. 2 (October 5, 1845): 6-7.

[16] For the emerging politics of the Jeffersonian era, see, for example, James Horn, Jan Ellen Lewis, and Peter Onuf, eds., *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002).

or renegotiating the concessions made to the lower orders at the high point of the Revolution.[17]

Anti-black prejudice became the tip of the spear of counterrevolution. Race was thus not merely an ideology but a practice, in the sense that it expressed a relationship of power. An anti-black politics was part and parcel of the counterrevolution. The new racism, heralded in Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia*, underlay the new anti-black politics which was an inextricable element of the counterrevolution.[18]

The counterrevolution provided a context for understanding racial ideas; in particular it provided the context for Jefferson's speculation in *Notes on Virginia,* which should be understood as a key counterrevolutionary text. Some of the book's rhetoric is part of the counterrevolutionary assault on the idea of equality. Perhaps it is unhelpful and counter-productive to frame the issue as if race prejudice were simply an aberration in the entire structure of constitutional government after 1789. It was not an aberration for Jefferson. Race prejudice did not exist in suspended animation, outside the bounds of time and space, floating about and waiting for people to imbibe. Concrete circumstances produced race prejudice. Jefferson the revolutionary also

---

[17] Class dynamics in the American Revolution, though well studied, still disappointingly remain at the margins rather than at the center of the historical analysis. Years ago, Staughton Lynd, *Class Conflict, Slavery and the American Constitution: Ten Essays* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1967), highlighted the class basis of the American Revolution, as did later, Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). See also Edmund Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *Journal of American History* 59 (1972): 5-29, for an insightful discussion.

[18] For exegesis of the historical formation of the racial category in the U.S. context, see Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review*, 181 (1990): 95-118; and Laura Tabili, "Race is a Relationship, and Not a Thing," *Journal of Social History*, 37 (2003): 125-130.

became Jefferson the counterrevolutionary. In that regard he was no different from Napoleon, his contemporary, who led the revolutionary army of France but then subsequently led the counterrevolution in France. Nor should Jefferson's racism be seen as a regrettable but universal aspect of human nature. Rather it should be seen as being shaped by his own circumstances: Jefferson was negotiating and redefining racial categories in an ad hoc fashion. That is why he advanced his speculation about black inferiority as a suspicion. It left him wiggle room to come back and revise his observations. Jefferson wrote *Notes on Virginia* in pursuit of implicit and explicit goals, such as the consolidation of planter power, and in response to events around him.[19]

Jefferson's brief remarks about black people in *Notes on Virginia* sparked a half century-long effort by blacks to contest and refute his calumny. A re-reading of Daniel Coker's "Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister" shows it to be a counter-narrative to *Notes on Virginia* and an example of how the challenge posed by Jefferson's insulting argument helped to shape the development of black identity. In his pamphlet, Coker's African minister sought to enlighten a well-meaning Virginia planter with regard to the mistaken views the planter has about slavery, and by implication, race. The African engaged the fictional Virginia gentleman in a dialogue,

[19] A good historical summary of Jefferson's ideas on race remains Fredrickson, *The Black Image,* 1-5. For a more recent account, see Bruce Dain, *Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

challenged the planter's opposition to the emancipation of enslaved African Americans, and refuted the arguments the Virginian advanced for opposing the emancipation of his slaves.[20]

The Virginia planter advanced eight reasons why he opposed emancipation: It was unfair and immoral to deprive slave owners of their legally acquired property; Africans enslaved and sold their own people; the transatlantic slave trade has been abolished; slavery is biblically justified; St. Paul admonished servants to obey their masters; abolition would cause chaos and mayhem as slaves were not prepared for freedom; intermarriage and race mixing, an unnatural thing to begin with, would take place if slaves were freed; slaves were content and happy with slavery.

In his challenge to the Chesapeake planter class, Coker did not run away from an African identity; he embraced it. In the course of responding to the Virginia planter, Coker evinced an early black African Christian republican sensibility. Aside from putting "an African Minister" in the title of the essay and making an African the major protagonist in the story, Coker placed references to an African identity throughout the essay. At the end of the essay, he provided his readers with a multidenominational list of the names of "African" clergymen in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Annapolis, as well as "African" church congregations in those cities and in Wilmington, Delaware, and Charleston, South Carolina, all of which

---

[20] In important respects, however, Coker's ideas could also stand as a forerunner of subsequent black conservative views. For an examination of the history of black conservatism, see Gayle Tate and Lewis Randolph, eds., *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in the United States: Made in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

reflected a widespread practice among free blacks in this period of claiming an African identity.

The bulk of the essay, however, was a vigorous defense of Christianity as an antislavery doctrine. Coker adroitly parried the defense of slavery based on biblical precedents, which was common at the time. Coker advanced a materialist critique to explain the motivation and interests of pro-slavery clergy, who were mainly responsible for making that argument. Coker had his African minister suggest to the plantation owner that the ministers thought "that if you [plantation owner] should free your slaves, you [the plantation owner] could not afford to pay him [the clergyman] so large a salary."[21]

Finally, Coker proceeded with a discussion of property that was steeped in 'natural rights' rhetoric and the republican ideas of the era. Coker's African minister asked, "does the property belong to him, who claims it from the legislature that had it not to give, or to the original owner who has never forfeited, nor alienated his right?" Coker thus linked freedom with property. "Many years ago, men being deprived of their natural rights to freedom, and made slaves, were by law converted to property. This law, it is true, was wrong; . . . It was, however, a law, and under the sanction of it, a number of men, regardless of its iniquity, purchased these slaves, and made their fellow men their property. But the question is concerning the liberty of a man. The man himself claims it as his own property."[22]

---

[21] Coker, *Dialogue*, 59.

Coker's "Dialogue" revealed a few other things about the Chesapeake free black community, its world, and its knowledge. While it is true that Coker was relatively highly educated (when the Virginia planter asked "where did you study divinity," Coker has the African clergyman reply, "in the school of Christ"), he obviously had access to a wide range of information and public debates. He was also knowledgeable about free black communities and the larger world beyond Baltimore. He was very familiar with the leading trio of African American figures in the Philadelphia black community, Absalom Jones, James Forten, and Richard Allen. He singles out Jones and Forten in the pamphlet to support his anti-slavery message, and Allen's name is prominently highlighted at the end of the pamphlet in the list of African ministers. He mentioned the importance of Petersburg, Virginia, as a slave trading port on the Appomattox River, and his impressions "in travelling through some parts of the state of Virginia."[23]

Coker's pamphlet showed him to be an organic intellectual. An inquiry into the base of knowledge that he drew upon, while beyond the scope of this dissertation, would be an exercise worth pursuing. Coker made references to several texts, and his influences were obviously beyond the bible or biblical scholarship. He referred to Methodist Bishop Asbury and his church's relations with the Native American Seneca people. Among others,

---

[22] Coker, *Dialogue*, 54. See also Andrew Vallis, ed., *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 89-104, for a discussion of Lockean views of property and its relationship to slavery and race.

[23] Coker, *Dialogue*, 62.

he also mentioned the work of Richard Baxter (1615-1691), a seventeenth-century English Protestant theologian and a precursor to the late eighteenth century abolitionists, John Parrish (1729-1807), a Quaker abolitionist, and British naval Captain Philip Beaver (1766-1813), author of *African Memoranda*, an anti-slave trade memoir published in 1805.[24]

Of particular interest is Beaver's publication, which recounts an early unsuccessful attempt to establish a colony in Sierra Leone. In 1820, Coker would serve as leader of the first group of African American settlers that attempted to establish a colony near Freetown, Sierra Leone, under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. What is more important here is that Coker's familiarity with Beaver's book is evidence that Chesapeake free blacks were interested in and knowledgeable about efforts to establish colonies of free blacks in West Africa a full decade before the American Colonization Society was formed. The idea of a "return to Africa" was taking root in their minds, and the shift was tied to the counterrevolutionary turn in the Chesapeake and the changes for the worse in the status and conditions of free blacks.

Paul Cuffe, the New England ship captain whom Coker may have personally known, organized two trips to Freetown, Sierra Leone, on his

---

[24] Philip Beaver, *African Memoranda, Relative to an Attempt to Establish a British Settlement on the Island of Bulama, on the Western Coast of Africa, in the year 1792* (London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1805). John Parrish was a Quaker abolitionist pamphleteer whose most famous work was "Remarks on the Slavery of Black People," published in 1806. For a recent study of the importance of the Quakers to the cause of abolitionism at the end of the eighteenth century, see Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). In his famous map of the streams of abolitionism, Thomas Clarkson highlighted Richard Baxter as a forerunner of the abolitionist movement in England.

vessels, transporting in total some eighty-five African Americas, mostly with his own funds. The plan was for the African Americans to become permanent settlers and to establish a beachhead for Christianity and modern black nationhood. Cuffe's biographers explain that Cuffe spent considerable time in the Chesapeake building up support for his colonization scheme. Indeed, some of the African Americans Cuffe took to Freetown were from the Chesapeake. Cuffe died in 1817, just before the ACS was founded.[25]

Cuffe's attempt at colonization provides further evidence that the idea of African colonization appeared among Chesapeake free blacks both prior to and independently of the American Colonization Society. Free blacks and the Colonization Society may have had overlapping goals with respect to African colonization, but they arrived at the idea from different perspectives, had different conceptions of it, and initially pursued it independently of each other.

The idea of African colonization, though it would subsequently come to be seen as conceived of exclusively by whites, was something to which free blacks had given serious consideration long before the ACS entered the picture. For some Chesapeake free blacks, colonization thus expressed or reflected the possibility of an independent black identity, but it was counterrevolution of the 1810s and 1820s that would turn the idea into an imperative, a realistic necessity in the minds of influential free blacks like Coker.

Coker's influence extended to the creation of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, which officially began operating as an independent

[25] Thomas, *Rise to be a People*, 94; Harris, *Paul Cuffe,* 78.

institution in 1816 but whose germination had been years in the making. Coker's ideas, as expressed in his "Dialogue," shed some light on the background to the AME's intellectual formation. The "Dialogue" exemplified one of the strands of thought that went into the creation of the AME Church, which was one of the first durable independent institutions that sought to consolidate black identity and independence in the throes of the counterrevolution.[26]

In his pamphlet, Coker adopted a moderate tone. The "Dialogue" was not a jeremiad and promised no fire and brimstone. It appealed to biblical as well as scholarly authority, and to reason. That approach might have been a result of Coker's personality. Or, it might have represented awareness on his part of the shadow cast by the Haitian Revolution. The specter of the Haitian Revolution was a key element in the arsenal of counterrevolutionary rhetoric.[27] Coker was careful not to incite his opponents more than necessary, as moderate planters like the "Virginian" in the "Dialogue" were one of his intended audiences, and he hoped they had a reasonable side to which he could appeal. At that point, there was still a glimmer of hope, however faint, for a respite from the pressures of the counterrevolution.

---

[26] Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, and Carol V. R. George, *Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and the Emergence of Independent Black Churches, 1760-1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), provide background to this process, which is discussed in more detail below.

[27] On the impact of the Haitian Revolution on debates about slavery in the early republican and antebellum United States, see, for example, Alfred Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1988); Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

One of the counterrevolution's most effective instruments was the law. The Chesapeake planter class used the law to restrict black people's access to freedom and to republican citizenship, even when they had either always been free or had become free. Any discussion of the legal aspects of the counterrevolution has to begin at the highest legal level with the U.S. Constitution, written and ratified during 1787-1789. The U.S. Constitution place a limit on – and in some cases overturned – the egalitarian and anti-slavery impulses of the American Revolution. It created a framework that recognized the power of the slaveholding class and protected slaveholders.[28]

The U.S. Constitution was a rebuke to the sentiments of equality expressed in the American Declaration of Independence. It instituted a system of "checks and balances" that limited popular power and effectively handed a veto to powerful interests like the planter classes. The Constitution marked a retreat from the commitment to universal republican citizenship. It restricted the definition of citizenship by leaving it to the states to decide issues such as suffrage and slavery. By leaving it to the states to decide on slavery, the Constitution protected slavery in regions like the Chesapeake, where state laws on slavery contradicted the constitutions of other states, most famously those of Vermont, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, that had outlawed slavery.

---

[28] Don Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), argues that the federal constitution was to a great extent neutral on slavery although federal policy in the territories was pro-slavery.

Like the U. S. Constitution (1789), the Northwest Ordinance (1787), the Fugitive Slave Act (1793), and the Louisiana Purchase (1803), were all major policies and events between 1789 and 1815 that appear in a different light if viewed from the perspective of the counterrevolution.[29] The counterrevolution redefined American nationalism. As a result of the counterrevolution, slavery was strengthened and American nationalism became tied to race, with whiteness becoming a core national identity and the new U.S. nation increasingly identified as a white man's country.[30] A central thread that held the counterrevolution together and gave it coherence was the rejection of the idea of equality and citizenship for blacks – in other words, disenfranchisement of free blacks. All the policies pursued by the founders over the twenty-five year period beginning with the U.S. Constitution had the idea of black disenfranchisement embedded in them, hovering over them, or somehow tied to them. The egalitarian spirit and the humanitarianism of the Revolution gave way to the counterrevolution, which retreated from egalitarianism and limited and restricted the meaning of equality and freedom.

The Northwest Ordinance, for example, could be construed as a counterrevolutionary measure. The law, among other things, allowed settlers to purchase title to farmland at affordable prices, thereby enthroning and

---

[29] Other major events, such as the War of 1812, also played important roles in the consolidation of the counterrevolution. See Taylor, *The Internal Enemy*, 398-404, for a discussion of the impact of that war on the discourses of Virginia planters.

[30] For an earlier and still relevant discussion, see Fredrickson, *Black Image*. For a more recent discussion, see Dain, *Hideous Monster*. See also Eddie Glaude, *Exodus!: Religion, Race and Nation in Early Nineteenth Century Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

consolidating market and private property relations in North America. Its intention was to create a class of small-holders who would defend private property as well as the sanctity and supremacy of private property regulated by market forces. The policy's consequence was the growth of a mass of smallholders who could be counted upon to come to the defense of the system of private property relations. This yeomanry provided a mass base of political support to the planters, a social layer in the society in alliance with the planter class that then served as junior partners to the planters in governing the new republic.[31]

The Northwest Ordinance was therefore not as democratic or egalitarian as it is often made out to be.[32] Even if its intentions were democratic – it famously outlawed slavery in the Northwest Territories under its purview – its outcome in practice reinforced anti-democratic forces and interests. It hardened social hierarchies and entrenched social class divisions in the early U.S. under the guise of consolidating and spreading egalitarianism and citizenship. This was so partly because in the context of the time period, the claim of egalitarian republican citizenship could be valid only if blacks, women, and native peoples were excluded from citizenship. The Northwest Ordinance may have outlawed slavery in the newly annexed Northwest lands but it also effectively excluded blacks from access to land ownership, thus

[31]See Sean Wientz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), for a standard scholarly view of the ordinance as a democratic and egalitarian instrument.

[32] Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 639, cites John C. Calhoun's opposition to the ordinance's anti-slavery provisos as evidence of its democratic and egalitarian nature.

contradicting the claim of egalitarian republican citizenship for all. In practice, it was virtually impossible for blacks to acquire land in the new territories, and only a handful of blacks were able to overcome the barriers put in their way. In the end, black land ownership in the Northwest Territories, where and when it existed, was tenuous.[33]

The 1803 Louisiana Purchase strengthened the counterrevolution. The counterrevolution emerged alongside large-scale distribution of land – in effect the expansion of a national gentry and yeomanry – and placed the expanded layers of property-owning men at the center of republican politics. Indeed, it based republican principles on the existence of these social layers. These social layers formed a new electoral majority. Jefferson's election in 1800 represented the ascension of the yeomanry to a share of power, though as junior partners, in a national alliance. It may be argued that Jefferson was the president of the second stage of the counterrevolution.[34]

Seen through the lens of the counterrevolution, the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act had important implications for free blacks and for developing ideas about race, religion, and political economy. One immediate implication for Chesapeake free blacks was entrenchment of the stigma of racial inferiority

---

[33] See Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 186.

[34] According to Wilentz, pro-slavery southerners could rely on support from conservative northern Federalists against radical southern republicans. The key link between the two groups was the defense of private property and its inviolability. Wilentz also sees this period as a time of transition from defense of slavery as necessary evil to justifying slavery as a positive good. One way to make slavery stronger was to eliminate or restrict the rights of free blacks, and one way to restrict the rights of free blacks was to make slavery stronger, expand it, and make it more widespread and more acceptable. See also Horn, Lewis, and Onuf, eds, *Revolution of 1800*.

attached to slavery and its application to them. Especially in the towns where many of them lived, free blacks were often presumed to be runaway slaves – fugitives – outside the law and society. That suspicion prompted white evangelical Christians who had once actively embraced blacks in an egalitarian notion of brotherhood to betray their moral underpinnings in return for a share of state power, influence and a chance to accumulate wealth. That betrayal by the white evangelicals represented the convergence of interests between the Federalists in the North and the gentry in the south (including the Chesapeake). It strengthened the planter class. It also had the effect of not only dividing but also disciplining the labor force since it created a wedge between black and white, enslaved and free. In the Chesapeake, the gap between the black and white worlds would grow into a chasm, while the free blacks were obliged to work very hard to narrow and close the wedge between free and enslaved. The fugitive slave law singled out free blacks as potential fugitive slaves. It effectively announced open season on free blacks. The law was a concrete embodiment of the counterrevolution because it was passed and enforced even in the teeth of opposition. Court challenges and freedom suits became more difficult in that environment. The law was passed to maintain slave owner control of the labor force.[35]

Nevertheless the laws that most exemplified the counterattack on black rights, that gave effect to the general principles in the constitution that

---

[35] For the growing chasm between blacks and whites in the Chesapeake, see Whitman, *Challenging Slavery.* For examples of black unity in the Chesapeake, see Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone.* For court challenges, see Berlin, *The Long Emancipation*.

recognized the power of the slaveholding class, were the laws governing and regulating manumission, the ability of slaveowners to free his or her slaves.

Was manumission a safety valve that had the effect of strengthening slavery, or was it a democratic gain won by enslaved people that undermined slavery? The answer depends on whose perspective is under examination. From the standpoint of the planter class and abolitionist whites who criticized slavery, manumission could be seen as a safety valve for slavery and yet as an instrument of control, a concession granted to the enslaved. However, from the perspective of free and enslaved blacks, liberal manumission was a democratic gain, an incremental step to freedom and republican citizenship, a hard-fought concession won worth fighting to preserve.[36]

In the Chesapeake, the liberalization of manumission in the 1770s and 1780s opened the doors to freedom and brought down old barriers. As part of the counterrevolution, the reform, repeal, and restriction of manumission in 1807 and 1810 closed doors to freedom that had been opened a decade earlier. Hence the counterrevolution shaped the development of free blacks via the types of barriers it placed in their way.[37]

Manumission repeal was yet another instrument of the counterrevolution. Manumission itself was one of the most powerful instruments in the arsenal of the planter class. It was also the ultimate

---

[36] Moses Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), reminds us of the ancient derivation of manumission and sheds light on the differences and similarities between the practice of manumission in ancient and modern slavery.

[37] See, for example, T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997).

freedom paper. Manumission defined and policed the boundaries of racial inclusion and exclusion. It defined freedom for blacks. It defined free blacks. It made you a free black. Repeal made it harder for blacks to buy their families' freedom, made it easier for slave owners to control slaves by dangling the manumission carrot in front of them, confirmed that blacks depended on white benevolence, and served as a disciplinary tool at the master's disposal. Good behavior promised freedom, confirmed racial and social subordination and exclusion, and linked race and subordination by policing racial boundaries.

Manumission repeal was advocated, pursued, and implemented due to a desire of the Chesapeake planter class and slave owners to shift the balance of power between them and the slave population in favor of the planter class. Manumission repeal also strengthened the planter class in relation to all the other subordinate classes in the society, slave-holding and non-slave-holding alike, including, free blacks. There were no benign explanations for the restrictions. Counterrevolutionary practice linked or identified being black with being socially subordinate, while social exclusion included exclusion from citizenship.[38]

As discussed above, another counterrevolutionary practice included the pro-slavery polemics of Thomas Jefferson. Seen from the perspective of counterrevolution, the discussions held by the planter class around the

---

[38] Barbara Fields makes an important observation about "the logic of manumission," in *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, 32, explaining the vicissitudes in manumission policy in Maryland.

manumission issue centered on the character and destiny of blacks, on whether blacks were fit for freedom and beyond that, citizenship. Jefferson's speculation about black inferiority provided rhetorical background for future arguments around manumission, fugitive slave laws, and other legal tools. The counterrevolution thus constructed new racial discourses.[39]

With regard to what would be done with free blacks in the new republic, including those in the Chesapeake, the arguments generated around the counterrevolution eventually produced a new synthesis, namely African colonization. Politicians like Henry Clay, who became a leading advocate of colonization, illustrated the rise in national politics of new men who provided crucial support to the synthesis produced by the counterrevolution. On the one side were men like Clay, who changed his views about slavery after 1800.[40] On the other side of this synthesis was an ambiguous northern hostility to slavery which was both opportunistic and principled. However, a question remains about the precise nature of the relationship between the counterrevolution and the rise of the domestic slave trade. Was it mere coincidence, or was there a more direct and causal relationship? The counterrevolution was neither directly nor indirectly responsible for the growth of the domestic slave trade; however, the counterrevolution provided a framework for the development of the domestic slave trade and its effects on

---

[39] On character and destiny, see Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 113.

[40] Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 221. See also Mason, *Slavery and Politics,* and Rothman, *Slave Country*. For Henry Clay, see "Speech at the organization of the ACS," Jan 1818, *The Papers of Henry Clay*, Vol 2, *The Rising Statesman, 1815-1820,* edited by James Hopkins and Mary Hargreaves (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961): 263-264.

the growth of the free blacks in the Chesapeake. The counterrevolution coincided with the cotton revolution, and adding a counterrevolutionary perspective can also change how the development of the cotton revolution is viewed. The counterrevolution created the enabling conditions, and the state policies and reforms that facilitated economic growth during the first two decades of the nineteenth century.[41]

Free blacks, especially those who lived in the towns and cities of the Chesapeake, lived in extended family households. Churches were their most important community institutions. Property ownership became central to their position and status. Free black communities, with their traditions and customs, and their specific relationship to the law, were held together by a series of relationships, customs, institutions, and ideas.

The counterrevolution's impact on free blacks in the Chesapeake was to construct new barriers to black freedom. These barriers shaped the form and structure of the Chesapeake free black communities. The Chesapeake free black communities did not merely reflect some African past, nor did they simply mimic "white" society. They formed and organized themselves in ways to maximize, consolidate, protect and preserve their tenuous freedom.

As the counterrevolution took hold and as advances towards freedom and citizenship were rolled back, Chesapeake free blacks began to pursue

[41] Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told,* argues that the expansion of slavery drove the modernization of the U.S. but does not place that process, including the violence associated with that expansion, in the larger political context of counterrevolution during the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

strategies of property ownership and embraced a republican identity as a way to secure and consolidate their freedom. In Chesapeake towns such as Baltimore, Frederick, Richmond, and Petersburg, there was a noticeable rise in the number of free black small proprietors – artisans, petit traders, and marketers in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The overall percentage of free-black property owners was small but significant in terms of both the practical and symbolic import. They owned a variety of property including land, houses, and tools. In a society dominated by market relations, it was perhaps logical that free blacks would attempt to accumulate private property.[42] However, they would go beyond mere accumulation of property to embrace ideas about the role of property in civic and political life. In his writing, Daniel Coker, for example, defined his own freedom in terms of property rights. Property ownership was seen as the basis of freedom, independence, and security.[43]

Among those who would emigrate from the Chesapeake to West Africa were some of the region's better-off free blacks. They included the Teague and Payne families from Richmond, the Roberts family from Petersburg, and the McGill family from Baltimore. William Colson, a barber and colonizationist, was one of the wealthiest free blacks in Petersburg in terms of the value of the properties he owned. Shadrach Brander, also from

---

[42] See Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

[43] Coker, *Dialogue*, 51.

Petersburg, was another colonizationist and member of the free black small-holder class.[44]

African colonization sentiment seemed to have been stronger among small property-holding free blacks in the Chesapeake than among free blacks in any other region of North America. However, the majority of free black small property-holders in the Chesapeake would eventually reject colonization, though not with the same level of intensity as would be found in the northern states where freedom came early.

Ascending into the ranks of property-holders created a basis for social differentiation within the Chesapeake free black communities, but this social differentiation was muted by the counterrevolution's harsh treatment of all blacks in the Chesapeake, in contrast with the Low Country and New Orleans. Chesapeake free black property-owners were always in the forefront in forming independent church congregations, and they took the lead in defending their prerogatives as free property-holders entitled to a say in civic life by virtue of their position as property-holders. Typically, they raised funds to buy church property, symbolically and practically setting up potential conflict with their white mainstream co-religionists who controlled the national religious institutions with whom they were affiliated.[45]

---

[44] Schweninger, *Black Property Owners,* 93; Jackson, *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia,* 112. For William Colson, see Douglas Bristol, *Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

[45] Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, 157-160.

The impact of the counterrevolution on national evangelical Protestant church congregations, religious practices, and institutions, also shaped the development of free blacks in the Chesapeake. Black Christian communities in the Chesapeake, which had their genesis in the Great Awakening, began to form independent evangelical churches during the first decades of the nineteenth century. These black church communities first existed under the patronage of white congregations. However, the premier Christian evangelical denominations in Virginia and Maryland, the Baptists and Methodists, gradually retreated from their previous strong anti-slavery positions.[46]

Beginning from as early as the middle of the eighteenth century, the Great Awakening, a Protestant evangelical revivalist movement, had played a key role in the development of egalitarian ideas on both sides of the Atlantic and particularly in the British North American colonies. The Great Awakening opened the door to blacks, free and enslaved. In the Chesapeake, the Baptist and Methodist churches were the first institutions in which free

---

[46] The section that follows relies principally on Catherine Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013)*;* Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion;* George, *Segregated Sabbaths;* Nathan Hatch, *The Democratizing of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Charles Irons, *The Origins of Pro-Slavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Luther Porter Jackson, *A Short History of the Gillfield Baptist Church* (Petersburg: Virginia Printing Co., 1947); Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Raboteau, *Slave Religion;* Sobel, *Trabelin' On;* and David Wills and Richard Newman eds., *Apostles at Home and Abroad: Afro-Americans and the Christian Mission from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982).

blacks were allowed to organize themselves.[47] But by the end of the century, these same institutions had undergone a marked shift in policy, retreating from their embrace of black congregants and beginning to institute segregationist practices. Church segregation was the religious equivalent of the counterrevolution. It showed the operation and unfolding of the counterrevolution at the level of church institutions. To understand why and how this shift took place, in other words the impact of the counterrevolution on the Baptist and Methodists and the role played by those late eighteenth century protestant evangelical denominations in the counterrevolution, requires a brief examination of the rise of the Great Awakening and its importance in the development of blacks in the Chesapeake in the post-revolutionary era.

Colonial America passed through major transformations in its social life at the middle of the eighteenth century. One aspect that was touched by this transformation was the role of religion in the colonies. On the one hand, religious ideas and religious institutions prior and up to this period reinforced the hierarchical nature of colonial society. The Anglican Church dominated society in the Chesapeake, and the planter class and the big merchants, the gentry, the men of property and commerce, dominated the Anglican Church. On the other hand, religion (ideas and practice) linked the various competing and antagonistic orders of colonial society together and ameliorated social conflict between these contending social forces. Many disputes over social authority and public controversies took a religious form, as religious practice

[47] Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 39.

was the principal arena of the public square. Religion was the arena, more than politics or war, in which colonial America did public combat, or where antagonism was played out in public: this was true whether in terms of ideas or in terms of organization. The chief content of the early printing presses of colonial America, for example, was religious material.[48]

Most of the social tensions stemmed from the economic growth of the colonies, the expansion and settlement of the West, and the development of commercial relations. Market relations acted like a solvent on old bonds, dissolving semi-feudal relations of mutual obligation. From the point of view of eighteenth-century evangelical religious leaders like George Whitefield, people were too preoccupied with worldly matters. Whitefield, a radical Anglican preacher from Gloucester, England, who was one of the founders of Methodism, is generally credited with providing the impetus for this evangelical movement.[49]

David Hackett Fischer has argued that in colonial Virginia, religion was organized along "ceremonial, liturgical, hierarchical, ritualist" lines that were "very different from New England." The tradition of Liturgical Christianity meant that Virginia was hardly touched by Puritanism. Anglican conformity was the rule. The Church of England was supported by law, and Nonconformists were deported from the colony. Quakers were persecuted. Yet despite the strength of Anglican orthodoxy in Virginia, the Great

---

[48] See Hatch, *Democratizing of American Christianity,* and Irons, *Origins of Pro-Slavery Christianity*.

[49] On Whitefield, see Kidd, *Forging of Races*; and Fischer, *Albion's Seed*.

Awakening made a dramatic breakthrough. In the Chesapeake, the Great Awakening attracted small farmers, people of modest means, and the middle ranks. The rest were predominantly from the lower ranks, rural and agrarian: tenant farmers, unskilled farm laborers, artisans and slaves. Although concerned principally with spiritual matters, the Great Awakening spread beyond religion. It encouraged an "independent frame of mind." Preachers criticized commercial society and put salvation ahead of profit. Evangelical preachers were also generally skeptical about enlightenment rationalism.[50]

Itinerant Methodist and Baptist preachers spoke to mixed congregations all over the Chesapeake, undermining the racial and gender boundaries and hierarchies established under plantation slavery. More importantly, their message also undermined the authority of the planter class. Historians have shown how the Great Awakening, with its claims of equality in the sight of God, contributed to the popular mobilization of the American Revolution. The Great Awakening shattered the male monopoly on preaching, for example.[51]

After the Revolution, however, the Methodists and Baptists retreated in their embrace of their black members. Whereas congregations at the height of the early revivals of the 1760s and 1770s were not segregated, segregation became more and more a feature of worship after the Revolution. The Baptists were the more numerous of the new congregations. They drew their membership from the lower social orders in society. They embraced women

---

[50] Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 205-15.

[51] George, *Segregated Sabbaths*, 98.

and blacks, including the enslaved. Their growth accompanied the First Great Awakening, which had two distinct phases, from 1755 (when Shubal Stearns started the Separatist Baptist revival) to 1770 (George Whitefield's death) and from 1785 to 1789. During the first phase, the Baptists enjoyed explosive growth and were radical egalitarians in their outlook, indeed perhaps the most radical institution in the country. During the second phase, they experienced another growth spurt, but this time their social base or rather their social agenda changed. In 1793, the Baptist General Committee of Virginia revoked the "strong" anti-slavery resolution it had passed just four years earlier in 1789. What happened in the four intervening years? The Baptist leaders did not renounce their old opposition to slavery nor defend slavery. What they did was more subtle. The 1793 resolution basically passed the responsibility for advocating anti-slavery to secular and political institutions, arguing that slavery was a political issue and the church was interested in saving men's souls, not their social condition. Individual Baptists were thus free to decide their individual position on slavery. Each white Baptist was left on his or her own to decide on the matter of slavery, pro or con. Many Baptists continued to be involved in anti-slavery and abolitionist activity after the 1793 resolution, but a new line had been drawn, with large implications.[52]

One faction of the colonial ruling class had formed an alliance with the lower and middling ranks in order to fight against Britain in an anti-colonial revolution. The new order that emerged after the end of the revolution

[52] Based on Sobel, *Trabeling On*, 88-90.

involved the middle and lower ranks coming to an accommodation with the big merchants and planter elites. At the level of the church, it involved the distancing of the Baptists and Methodists from their pre-revolutionary and early revolutionary positions, in particular their outspokenness regarding slavery. They modulated their criticism of slavery in return for more respectability, greater access to power, and an improvement in their social status.

The American Revolution, which had unleashed forces that contributed to freedom for thousands of blacks in the Chesapeake, simultaneously empowered blacks' major social antagonist – the Chesapeake planter class – and drove a wedge between blacks and their erstwhile evangelical allies, the Chesapeake white laboring classes. In the new republic, searching and negotiating for a place, the Baptist leadership grabbed on to the opportunity for a share, albeit a minor share, of power and participation in the political process. The new republic provided opportunities for upward social mobility and for a say in government that were not available to whites lower down the social hierarchy under the colonial dispensation. For middle and lower order white Baptists, their black co-religionists became expendable in those circumstances, especially once pressure began to be applied by the planter class and its representatives. One consequence of American independence was shifting alliances in the society. In the end the Revolution

had given some blacks freedom but it did not give them the equality (full citizenship) that had been the expectation on the part of the blacks.[53]

Why did this particular outcome – the selling out by the white Baptists and Methodists – take place? Obviously the white Baptists had big debates over the issue of segregation and their decision to segregate was never a foregone conclusion. But by 1800, the white Baptists had healed their own major divisions and become a mainstream southern Protestant denomination. The Baptists were an essential conduit in the legitimization of the American political system through their mass appeal. The Baptist worldview permeated religious thought in the South, among both blacks and whites. Chesapeake blacks had embraced, or were attracted to, the Baptists and Methodists for both political and religious reasons. For one thing, "the revivals opened common ground on which blacks and whites could share religious experience." However, blacks were generally not attracted to the Quakers, who denounced slavery, so most likely religious considerations accounted for more than political considerations.[54]

Thus the retreat from robust anti-slavery by the Baptists and Methodists reflected the counterrevolutionary pressures of the period. White evangelical Christian bodies from lower-order religious communities in the Chesapeake played critical roles in the counterrevolution, legitimizing planter rule and helping to forge the planter classes' alliance with non-slaveholding

[53] See Hatch, *Democratizing of American Christianity*; Irons, *Origins of Pro-Slavery Christianity*; Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*.

[54] Sobel, *Trabelin' On*, 98.

whites. Evangelical Christian churches, which had once embraced an egalitarian and humanitarian notion of brotherhood, betrayed their moral principles in return for access to and a share of power and influence. Once counted among the leading opponents of slavery, these churches became during the counterrevolution apologists for slavery or acquiesced to the restrictions placed on black freedom.

The retreat from robust anti-slavery by the Baptists and Methodists, their decision to segregate parishioners by race and to tone down or muffle their criticisms of slavery and their advocacy of equality reinforced the counterrevolution. Baptist and Methodist actions obliged free blacks to establish separate black congregations and prompted free blacks to turn to more racially separatist conceptions. This retreat from anti-slavery by white Baptists and Methodists would subsequently influence decisions by free blacks concerning emigration to Africa.

In Richmond, a group of free blacks formed the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society (RABMS) in 1815, ostensibly to carry the gospel to Africans on the continent, their imagined ancestral homeland. However, they were inspired or motivated by more than a missionary impulse. They were also black Baptist merchants with republican ideas. It is true that they were micro merchants and marketers but they were also property holders or aspiring property holders. As such, they were not typical of most blacks in Richmond and even most free blacks in the greater Chesapeake.[55]

---

[55] Miles Mark Fisher, "Lott Carey: The Colonizing Missionary," *Journal of Negro History* 7 (1922): 380-418.

They were also infused with an idea of African redemption. Otherwise, why did they not endeavor to proselytize in Asia or the Caribbean or among Native Americans? Other people had looked elsewhere, but not these free blacks. They consciously chose Africa as the potential beneficiary of their good intentions. But they simultaneously saw Africa as a potential source of social, economic, and political power. In the leadership of the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society were two artisans, Colin Teage, a saddler, and Lott Cary, a tobacconist, free black small property-holders who were ordained Baptist ministers.

From the perspective of these African Americans in the Chesapeake, they were fulfilling a Christian duty and responsibility to redeem Africa in the eyes of God and of the world. They had a mission to carry the word of God and to convert the people of Africa to a Christian way of life. This Christian way of life had an economic and political dimension to it as well. The Christian perspective they embraced cast the Africans as heathens and savages in need of civilizing.

This small group in Richmond was perhaps the first all-black Christian missionary society in the United States, and its formation reflected a growing new consciousness among free blacks about Africa. Its founding members were all congregants of Richmond's First Baptist Church and under the auspices of the church, the members of the Society attended night classes held by two white men, William Crane and David Roper. Crane was the "first' President and/or Corresponding Secretary of the group only because Virginia

laws prohibited blacks from having organizations and it required white sponsors. Crane gave the Society respectable white cover.[56]

Lott Cary served officially as the recording Secretary, but he and Colin Teage were the acknowledged leaders of the organization. Cary was born on a Charles City County plantation, around 1780, the slave of one William Christian. In 1804, at the age of twenty-four, Cary was hired out as a by-the-year laborer at the Shochoe tobacco warehouse on the Richmond waterfront, apparently the largest in the city. Cary, or so say his biographers, apparently gained a reputation at the warehouse for his use of profanity and his drunkenness. He learned to read and write, starting with the New Testament story of Nicodemus in John 3 in the Bible. He then began a rapid ascent in the tobacco factory where he worked, rising to shipping clerk and handling bills of landing. By 1813, at age thirty-three, Cary had accumulated enough savings to purchase his own freedom. He also owned property.[57]

A hagiography of Cary written by American Colonization Society Secretary R. R. Gurley in 1829 provides the earliest and still one of the few full written accounts of Cary's life. It is not clear to what extent Cary's views reflected an already existing or developing emigrationist opinion or if he shaped opinion among free blacks in Virginia toward emigration. Cary's role

---

[56] Fisher, "Lott Carey."

[57] William Crane to Rev. Obadiah Brown, March 28, 1819, cited in Fisher, "Lott Carey," 391.

in convincing other blacks about the virtues of colonization needs further assessment.[58]

After the formation of the Providence Baptist Church in Richmond by Cary, Teage, and others in 1816 and the entire church congregation's emigration to West Africa, Cary would go on to become the leading black voice of African colonization after the death of Captain Paul Cuffe.[59] Cary and his community embraced missionary work in Africa. The impulse to do missionary work had multiple sources. An element of utopianism pervaded the work of the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society. The gradual retreat of the national Baptists leadership from a strong anti-slavery position also contributed to the turn to Africa. Most of the activities of the Missionary Society were self-financed, although it did receive some funds from the larger national Baptist convention.

Carey and his congregation were supported by its white pastor, John Courtney, and the First Baptist Church in Richmond in enrolling blacks (enslaved and free) into church membership. Cary himself became a member of the church in 1807 and quickly became a lay preacher. Unofficial arrangements allowed for the church to retain a titular white head but with the black congregation in reality running its own affairs. The First Baptist Church had the largest black membership in the city and claimed such stalwart pillars

---

[58] See Ralph Randolph Gurley, *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, March, 1829. Gurley also appended a brief sketch of Carey's life in his *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*.

[59] For Cary's stinging rebuttal to black critics of colonization, which was written and published in 1827, see John Saillant, ed., "Circular Addressed to the Colored Brethren and Friends in America: An Unpublished Essay by Lott Cary, Sent from Liberia to Virginia, 1827," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 104, no. 4 (Autumn, 1996): 494-95.

of Richmond's free black community as Colin Teague and the Payne family as members. Miles Mark Fisher claims it had 1,200 black members in 1815.[60]

It is not clear if Cary's former owner William Christian was a Baptist. Neither clear is the nature of the relationship between the two. If Christian was a Baptist, it might account for why Christian was willing to allow Cary to purchase his freedom. Nonetheless, Christian's actions would not have been untypical of certain slave holders at the time. Another white man, William Crane, also played an important part in Cary's life and trajectory. He was a white member of the First Baptist Church and became an ally of Cary and Colin Teague in their efforts to found the Missionary Society. The contradictory trajectory of Chesapeake free blacks was embodied in the lives and careers of the men, like Cary and Teage in Richmond, and George McGill in Baltimore, who led the black African colonization efforts and eventually set Liberia on the road to independence.

In Baltimore, the history of the black Methodists provided another illustration of this process at work. A Colored Methodist Society was founded in 1787, led by Jacob Fortie. In 1801, upon his return to Baltimore, Daniel Coker took over leadership of the Society. The Society was instrumental in the founding of the African School in 1807. Over the next decade, Coker would lead black Baltimore Methodists through a series of institutional incarnations as they sought to push back at the retreat by the national church hierarchy from anti-slavery, and to establish and consolidate their own status (social, legal, and political) in the society. Coker was instrumental in the

[60] Fisher, "Lott Carey."

formation of the African Methodist Bethel Society, formed in 1815, which became the Bethel Church. Bethel eventually combined with the black Methodists in Philadelphia to form the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816.[61]

The origin, role, and background of the African Colonization Society during this period reflected yet another outcome of the counterrevolution.[62] The ACS was formed by an unlikely alliance of interests. Among its founding members were key figures from the planter class, overwhelmingly from the Upper South states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. Within that group, the Chesapeake voice was most pronounced. To this group should be added northern clergy, in particular but not limited to Presbyterians. The Society also included assorted middle-class individuals who held anti-slavery views. It would count as early sympathizers the likes of the young William Lloyd Garrison, who would go on to become one of the ACS's most determined and ferocious critics. Whig party moderate anti-slavery politician Henry Clay and the Presbyterian clergyman and Princeton University

---

[61] For more on the history of the AME Church, see Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting;* George, *Segregated Sabbaths;* Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); and Paul Polgar, "'To Raise Them to an Equal Participation': Early National Abolitionism, Gradual Emancipation, and the Promise of an African American Citizenship," *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (2011): 229-258.

[62] There is a fairly large body of literature on the American Colonization Society. Among the more recent studies are Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); and Douglas Egerton, "Its Origin is Not a Little Curious: A New Look at the American Colonization Society," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (1985):463-80.

theologian, the Reverend Robert Finley, both came together to form this venture.[63]

Northern blacks, with their own unique circumstances, were hopeful of change, and most did not generally favor the idea of African Colonization. At a famous public meeting held in Philadelphia in 1818, free blacks in that city rejected the entreaties of the ACS to sign up for the African colonization project.

Unlike their northern counterparts, free blacks in the South, including the Chesapeake, were not, as hopeful of change in the United States. The laws and restrictions of the counterrevolution gave them little to expect. The weak and declining abolitionist movement in the South had become almost entirely dormant by the middle of the second decade of the nineteenth century, and the hopeful remnants of an earlier period, manumission in particular, were quickly becoming a faint echo. More importantly, the Chesapeake and Upper South planter class had gained even more national influence in the early republic. There were so many limitations on their freedom that the free blacks of the Chesapeake were not sanguine about their prospects for finding equality. Many of them were looking for a way out. They observed the War of 1812 and the departure of many blacks with the British. When the ACS appeared on the scene and offered a marriage of convenience, it was an offer that some of them were willing to accept.

---

[63] See Henry Meyer, *All On Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St Martin Press, 1998); Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*; Mason, *Slavery and Politics*; and Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Institution*.

Reverend Finley had originally heard of the colonization activities of Paul Cuffe, the free black New England ship owner and captain. He and Cuffe developed a relationship in 1816 and corresponded about the possibility of collaborating on an African colonization project. Cuffe had already made two trips to Freetown, Sierra Leone, in 1811 and 1816, transporting free blacks to that colony. He was an advocate of the idea of establishing a black Christian state in West Africa. His correspondence with free black sail-maker James Forten of Philadelphia shows that a black Christian republican outlook already existed among free property-owning blacks. This outlook indicated a strong element of black independence or separatism.[64]

Through the efforts of Cuffe, Finley also met Forten and the Reverend Richard Allen, the two leading figures of Philadelphia's black community. It was the property-owning free black men's favorable disposition toward the idea of a separate and distinct black Christian nation of property-holders that made them consider joining forces with Finley. That Finley's efforts came to naught was not due to an American nationalism on Forten's or Allen's part, as Julie Winch has argued, or to their lack of an emotional attachment to Africa, or at least to the idea of Africa.[65] The early efforts by Finley to forge an alliance with free blacks in the North were a victim of the opposition of the laboring mass of the free black population in the North. The attractiveness of

---

[64] On Cuffe, see Thomas, *Rise to be a People*. For the correspondence between Cuffe and Forten, see Wilson J. Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 136.

[65] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color,* 71.

African colonization among free blacks in the North was disproportionately centered in the upper echelons of the propertied layers of northern free black society. Matters were made worse when it became apparent that Finley's scheme relied heavily on the support of Chesapeake planters.[66]

In the Chesapeake, Finley achieved more success. There a marriage of convenience would be struck between planter-class representatives like Henry Clay, Bushrod Washington, and Robert Goodloe Harper, and groups of free blacks who were representative figures in the free black population. The Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color came into existence just at the moment, shortly following the end of the War of 1812, when the Chesapeake planter class had consolidated its dominance of the new nation. Earlier colonization plans put forward by the likes of Thomas Jefferson had faltered. New circumstances, namely the growth of a property-holding class of free blacks in the context of a successful counterrevolution, now made this unlikely alliance possible.

In the Chesapeake, many of the free blacks who forged an alliance with the ACS and emigrated from the United States to West Africa had pursued a series of occupations and many of them survived as petty traders and marketers who owned very tiny amounts of property. Existing in the spaces between slavery and freedom, they took advantage of the few opportunities available to them to accumulate property and found institutions.

---

[66] See Newman, *Freedom's Prophet,* 206-207; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color,* 187-193; and Sidbury, *Becoming African in America.*

One such free black family was that of Joseph Jenkins Roberts. Roberts, a Norfolk free-born African American who was raised in Petersburg, Virginia, was not only the last colonial governor of Liberia but was elected that republic's founding president in 1847. A quick look at Roberts and his family – remarkable in their time – including his mother Amelia, a successful Petersburg small businesswoman/small trader and his brothers Henry, who became a medical doctor, and John, who became bishop of the Methodist Church in Liberia allows for a close-up examination of the social and political ideas of a property-holding Chesapeake free black family in the first half of the nineteenth century, particularly as they relate to the intersection of black race consciousness, evangelical Christianity and republican citizenship. The Roberts clan was prominent in the free black community of Petersburg, Virginia, prior to their self-financed emigration to West Africa in 1829. Roberts ran a flatboat hauling cargo on the Appomattox and James rivers. Roberts and free black Petersburg barber William Colson established a firm, Roberts, Colson and Company, to trade between Virginia and Liberia, where Roberts would subsequently become a successful merchant prior to his entry into Liberian politics. The Robertses were Methodists, and they and several other members of their Petersburg congregation migrated to Liberia together.[67]

---

[67] See the J. J. Roberts obituary in *African Repository*, April 1876, 58. See also Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic,* 136, and Luther Porter Jackson, "Free Negroes of Petersburg." *Journal of Negro History* 12 (1927): 371-372. Roberts donated his property in Monrovia, including his adjacent farm, to the Methodist church in Liberia upon his death. See Papers of Joseph .Jenkins Roberts, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, for a copy of his will.

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, before their departure for West Africa, free blacks like Roberts in states like Virginia were shut out from access to power and citizenship. The more they encountered these barriers, the easier it became for them to turn their gaze out to the Atlantic, in contrast to their fellow free blacks in the northern states. Indeed, the politics of racial exclusion in early republican America, which had helped produce the colonization idea – and the American Colonization Society – had enmeshed the free black populations, north and south, in an argument amongst themselves about colonization and their black identity.[68]

The appearance of the ACS caused free blacks to split into pro- and anti-colonization factions, and many remained ambivalent about colonization, as can be seen in the sometimes strained relationship between those who left for Africa and those who remained in the United States, as well as in the careers of those who spent time on both sides of the colonization divide. Two famous examples of ambivalence towards colonization by prominent black figures in the early 1800s were James Forten and John Brown Russwurm. Forten, a Philadelphia sail-maker who before 1817 was sympathetic to colonization, became hostile once the ACS was formed. He had written once to his good friend Paul Cuffe, a Massachusetts ship-owner and prominent black colonizationist, before Cuffe's death in 1817, that blacks "will never

---

[68] Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, provides a useful exploration of the issue of black identity formation in this period and the impact of the formation of the American Colonization Society on the ideas of leading figures in free back communities.

become a people until they come out from amongst the white people."[69] Russwurm, on the other hand, switched from being a fervent anti-colonizationist as the founding editor of the New York black newspaper *Freedom's Journal* to being the founding editor of the *Liberia Herald,* embodying in one person the uneven and transatlantic nature of the process of black identity formation during this period.[70]

In the aftermath of the American Revolution, the free black communities that formed in the Chesapeake at the turn of the nineteenth century would produce Liberia's founders. Men like Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Colin Teague and his son Hilary Teague, Lott Carey, Colston Waring, John N. Lewis, Francis Payne, and a few hundred others, either born free or gaining freedom in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, were part of a generation of Africa-descended people caught in the great transformation of Chesapeake slave society in the wake of the cotton revolution in the United States. These men became Liberia's founding fathers and constituted the leadership of its independence movement and its leading intellectuals, military leaders, and merchants. They grew up at a time and in a society where tens of thousands of enslaved blacks were being shipped south from the Chesapeake to work the new cotton lands of the Lower Mississippi Valley. A few thousand slipped into the growing towns of the Chesapeake and mingled among the free black population, shaking off their slave identities. While on

---

[69] Forten to Cuffe, cited in Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism,* 134.

[70] For Russwurm, see Winston James, *The Struggles of John Brown Russwurm*: *The Life and Writings of a Pan-Africanist Pioneer* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

the one hand, the free black communities in the Chesapeake were the largest and most prosperous in the United States, on the other hand, their hold on freedom grew increasingly tenuous as legal and other constraints were placed on them. These early experiences shaped the world view of Roberts and his compatriots. African Americans from the Chesapeake thus dispersed not only to the Deep South to work in cotton but also across the Atlantic. Some like Joseph Jenkins Roberts and his family, already free, went willingly, while others were given freedom on condition of emigration to West Africa.[71]

Over time, the crisis of exclusion which free blacks in the Chesapeake faced impelled them to form institutions of their own for survival, in order to defend the very few democratic gains they had made during the Revolution. Self-reliance and autonomy became their watchwords, ideas that reinforced their way of existence. Yet, when free people of African descent like Roberts left Virginia and Maryland, they took with them different experiences. The Chesapeake cohorts that constituted the largest number of the earliest emigrants to the Liberia colony reflected the social divisions that obtained in early nineteenth-century black Chesapeake society. Due to the particular nature of race relations in the Chesapeake however, social divisions among the emigrants were muted since black-mulatto unity in the Upper South had long been an imperative in Maryland and Virginia, unlike in New Orleans, the Carolina Low Country, and the Caribbean, where mulattos were a distinct

[71] Ira Berlin refers to those born and growing up in this period of African American slavery as the migration generation. See Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves* (Cambridge. MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 159-244.

class with close ties to the planter class. This experience of unity in the Chesapeake provided the basis for a certain amount of cohesion when the emigrants arrived in the Liberia colony.[72]

The counterrevolution validated the end of the transatlantic slave trade by Great Britain in 1808 and by the United States in 1809 and reshaped events in the Atlantic. In North America, it brought an end to the importation of Africans and hence provided the opportunity to consolidate the U.S. as a white man's country. The end of the transatlantic traffic also removed a source of competition for the Chesapeake slave owners who, with the decline of tobacco cultivation and the rapid expansion of cotton and sugar cultivation in the Deep South used the opportunity to sell or transfer their slaves from the Chesapeake to the Deep South. In the new North American republic, earlier ideas about removing the free black population also regained currency among important sections of the planter class. Free blacks, in response, began taking tentative steps towards consolidating or claiming a distinct racial or social identity that fit across the social antagonisms of free and enslaved people of African descent who were now all to imagine themselves simply as people with a

---

[72] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone,* 256-290, makes a convincing case for black-mulatto unity in the Chesapeake region in the aftermath of the American Revolution. For the Caribbean and its very different path to racial identification among free blacks during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see, for example, Hilary Beckles, *History of Barbados* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2005); Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783-1962* (London: Heinemann, 1996); Elsa Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969); and Franklin Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974).

common African past, leading some of them to advocate and organize immigration to West Africa.[73]

Having glimpsed the gap between what was possible for men of their talent, drive, and ambition and the actual experience of restricted freedom and property-ownership in the United States, free black men from the Chesapeake such as Lott Carey, Colston Waring, Colin Teage, John Lewis, Nathaniel Brander, Anthony Williams, Samuel McGill, Stephen Benson, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, and John Day made the choice during the 1820s to go to West Africa where they eventually became the political rulers of the colony. They arrived in West Africa intent on establishing themselves in a society different from the one they left behind, free of disparagement on account of race, where they could be not only black and proud but also successful bourgeois. Yet, they established in West Africa a society that reproduced the class relations they left behind in America and disparaged the Africans they encountered. On both sides of the racial divide, the dominant paradigm of American politics in the early decades of the nineteenth century was racial politics. Both whites and blacks saw politics first and foremost through a racial lens.[74]

---

[73] Sidbury, *Becoming African in America,* Glaude, *Exodus!*, and others more recently, and an older scholarship including Harris, *Paul Cuffe,* and Floyd Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), have identified some of the issues in need of deeper exploration regarding the turn to Africa but have not analyzed the link between the counterrevolution of the period and the developing African consciousness among free blacks.

[74] Daniel Coker's *Dialogue* exemplified the racial straight jacket all sides – but the blacks in particular – found themselves in, unable to escape from the history imposed upon them and remake themselves as free people. Coker was imprisoned by the very racial categories which he castigated, maybe out of necessity.

The counterrevolution following in the wake of the American Revolution decisively shaped the formative experiences and founding institutions of the Chesapeake free blacks. The turmoil of the American Revolution had made possible the freedom of thousands of blacks in the Chesapeake. In its most radical phase the American Revolution had raised the prospect and promise of freedom and equality for all, including enslaved blacks.[75] This revolutionary and egalitarian spirit was further fuelled by the radical humanitarianism of evangelical Christianity which was also Atlantic-wide in scope. However, this egalitarian ethos was met in the Chesapeake with a formidable resistance, and there arose in the midst of the Revolution a fierce counterrevolution, a backlash to these egalitarian and humanitarian impulses. If the American Revolution had expanded the vista of freedom and the realm of the possible, for free blacks in the Chesapeake, the counterrevolution severely restricted and constrained it.

Black identity in the post-revolutionary Chesapeake, defined as 1789 to 1815, was to a large extent shaped by whites, that is, by the constitution of a white racial identity and the exercise of racialized power. Powerful whites established rules targeting free blacks during the counterrevolution, to which free blacks had to respond. The creation of an explicitly white power/identity

[75] For other perspectives on the Revolution, see Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Foner, *Tom Paine*; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); and Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1991).

during the counterrevolution influenced the development of a free black identity in the Chesapeake.

The counterrevolution contested the idea of equality for all and freedom for blacks. The economic and political power of the Chesapeake planter class stood behind the counterrevolution. Its desire to forge and cement an effective alliance with non-slaveholding and non-property-holding whites drove the counterrevolution. The U.S. market economy's need for expansion, for land and labor, also drove the counterrevolution. So did evangelical Christianity, especially from religious communities and institutions among the lower orders that played a critical role during the counterrevolution in legitimizing the rule of property. In sum, the interplay of race, religion, and political economy were instrumental in shaping the circumstances that remade black identity. Late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century counterrevolutionary policies defined the space occupied by free blacks in Chesapeake society. The obstacles free blacks would face as they began to contest and accommodate themselves to the counterrevolution influenced subsequent decisions by those free blacks concerning emigration to Africa.

The analysis in this chapter addressed three areas that illustrated how the counterrevolution shaped black identity: counterrevolution and the re-making of race through the laws; counterrevolution and the birth of the black church; and counterrevolution and the political economy of republicanism. A series of restrictive laws aimed at curtailing the freedom of free blacks and

embedding the idea of race into the law were created in the post-revolutionary period. The laws linked being black or of African descent to being disqualified from citizenship or access to power in the new nation. The laws made race a criterion for full citizenship and equality. It empowered the state to discriminate against and exclude blacks. The new laws established new boundaries and social hierarchies based on race. Some free blacks turned to African colonization as a solution to this crisis of exclusion.

## CHAPTER THREE

### "Restless and Ambitious Men": The 1823 Remonstrance and the Idea of Property and Self-government in the Political Thought of Chesapeake Free Blacks, 1820-1824

During the first half of the nineteenth century, several hundred free black men and women emigrated from the Chesapeake region of the United States to Cape Mesurado, West Africa, eventually establishing the Liberian republic. In West Africa, the Chesapeake free blacks' conceptualization of the Liberian state, rooted in their republican ideas of property-ownership and citizenship, advanced over a twenty-five year period in several stages. The stages in the evolution of their republican ideas and practice were reflected in four major documents: their 1823 Remonstrance to the American Colonization Society; the Colonization Society's 1824 Plan of Government written in response to the Remonstrance; the 1839 Liberian Commonwealth Charter; and the 1847 Liberian republican constitution.

Although the origin of the Chesapeake free blacks' ideas of republicanism lay in the land they left, it was in West Africa that they crystallized and gained concrete expression. The uneven, reciprocal, and contradictory process of the establishment of the Liberian state did not begin in 1847 when Liberia declared its independence. The form the new state took was neither imposed directly from the United States, nor was it merely an imitation of what had obtained in the United States. The form the state took in 1847, conceptually and otherwise, was the result of a set of unique circumstances, including the twenty five years of struggle that it took the

Chesapeake free blacks to realize their dream, utopian in many respects, of creating a black state in republican form in West Africa.

However, the earliest published histories of the origins of Liberia, beginning in the 1820s, assigned the major responsibility for Liberia's founding to American benevolence, in particular the activities of the American Colonization Society and particularly one man, Jehudi Ashmun.[1] Subsequent scholarship claimed a central and autonomous place for the 1847 republican constitution, either without reference to or downplaying the previous struggles between the first black arrivals from the Chesapeake and the American Colonization Society over the nature, shape, and content of the state.

The scholarship assigned authorship of that constitution – and thus the driving intellectual force behind the Liberian state's conceptualization – to Harvard University professor Simon Greenleaf, even though he was far removed from both the ACS and events in Liberia.[2] At the end of the century, the prolific apologist for British imperialism in Africa, Sir Harry Johnston, would still refer to the Liberian state as an American experiment.[3] In the

[1] See Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*, Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*, and Alexander, *A History of Colonization*, for the earliest nineteenth century narratives that paint Liberia's founding as exclusively an ACS-driven affair, though with different motives in mind. Garrison, taking the leadership of a growing abolitionist movement in the U.S., sought to delegitimize the ACS. Gurley and Archibald, in defense of the ACS, relied on Jehudi Ashmun's account of the founding, *History of the American Colony in Liberia, from December 1821 to 1823* (Washington DC: Way & Gideon, 1826), for their evidence. Their portrayal of Ashmun's role, following his premature death, turned him into a saint-like figure. Very little of the scholarship has critically examined the claims made in these early narratives.

[2] Robert Brown, "Simon Greenleaf and the Liberian Constitution of 1847," *Liberian Studies Journal* 9, 2 (1980): 51-60.

[3] Sir Harry Hamilton Johnston, *Liberia*, 2 volumes, (London: Hutchinson & Co.,1906).

middle of the twentieth century, the eminent American legal and constitutional scholar Charles Henry Huberich, in a different set of circumstances, supplied additional authority to this same interpretation.[4] Despite its many weaknesses and limitations, this Colonization Society-centered perspective remains the dominant lens through which Liberia's origins continued to be interpreted which has led to a one-dimensional understanding of Liberia's origins and a distorted view of the role Chesapeake blacks played in its founding. Rather than in the ACS, the origins of the Liberian state can be found in the struggles to achieve independence and citizenship on the part of the artisans, small traders, shopkeepers, and aspiring merchants among Chesapeake free blacks in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century.[5]

The occasion that precipitated the 1823 Remonstrance by the Chesapeake blacks and others was a series of decisions by Jehudi Ashmun, the American Colonization Society Agent, concerning the allocation of land in the colony. From the perspective of the Chesapeake blacks, the land policy

---

[4] Charles H. Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia*, 2 volumes, (New York: Central Book Company, Inc., 1947).

[5] For ACS-centered histories, see for example Sawyer, *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia*, which presents the Chesapeake free blacks as either acting at the will of the ACS and lacking agency of their own or as too American (in particular the America of the planter class of the antebellum Deep South) in their outlook and therefore incapable of conceptualizing an authentic African national identity. Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State,* argues along similar lines. More recent versions of this interpretation are Claude Clegg, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2004), although his focus is on black immigrants from North Carolina, and James Ciment, *Another America: The Story of Liberia and the Former Slaves Who Ruled It* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013). Their ACS-centric views have a long history, beginning with Isaac Brown, *Biography of Reverend Robert Finley, D.D., of Basking Ridge N.J.*, (Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1819); and Gardiner Spring, *Memoirs of the Rev Samuel J Mills*, (New York: Evangelical Missionary Society, 1820).

was the final obstacle in what had been an escalating set of conflicts that pitted them against the ACS. The dispute could be traced to the odd marriage of convenience that was forged between the Chesapeake blacks and the ACS in the years leading up to their departure from the United States. The Chesapeake blacks who left for West Africa were familiar with the composition of the ACS. After all, the pros and cons of African colonization had been well ventilated among free black communities along the eastern seaboard of the United States ever since Henry Clay's 1816 inaugural speech to the ACS was given widespread coverage. Clay and Virginia congressman John Randolph had made it abundantly clear that the ACS would not be in the business of ending slavery in the United States. Using standard ACS rhetoric, Clay denounced free blacks in the U.S. as "a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population." Blacks in Philadelphia had held several mass meetings condemning the ACS in 1817. Free blacks in the Chesapeake did not go that far, but their previous enthusiasm for colonization cooled. Nonetheless, some of them decided to embrace the offer to migrate to West Africa, just as would a few blacks in Philadelphia and New York.[6]

On February 6, 1820, when the *Elizabeth*, the first ship travelling under the auspices of the ACS, left New York City for West Africa, it included among its eighty-six black passengers, the Reverend Daniel Coker of

---

[6] *National Intelligencer*, December 24, 1816. For the views of Philadelphia free blacks at the time, see Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, and Louis Mehlinger, "The Attitude of the Free Negro Towards African Colonization," *Journal of Negro History* 1, 3 (July 1916):176-201. Much has been made about free black attitudes toward African colonization, most of it ahistorical. The attitudes changed over time and were never unanimous. There were important regional differences as well. In an otherwise fine biography of Philadelphia free black notable James Forten, Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, downplays Forten's earlier strong Black Nationalist and proto Pan-Africanist views.

Baltimore's AME Church, who served as the leader. Robert Finley, the New Jersey Presbyterian moral reform clergyman and co-founder of the ACS, had been able to convince them to sign-up for the initial voyage. The others accompanying Coker were all free-born blacks and hailed from New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and various parts of Virginia. The eighteen families on board had been engaged in a range of occupations such as seamstress, tailor, smith, nurse, potter, hatter, carpenter, turner and shoemaker. Slightly over half of them were men, and a third of them were children or young adults. About a fourth of them would die within a year of their arrival in West Africa, and ten would return permanently to the United States.[7] More than half of this group were literate. In addition to Coker, they included Edward Wigfall, a Philadelphia apprentice sailmaker who got into a fight on the ship with a member of the ship's crew; Nathaniel Peck, the apprentice Baltimore millwright who would return to Baltimore and keep the emigrationist fires burning by later leading yet another party to Haiti; and the Philadelphia carpenter Frederick James, who led the vanguard that established the first beachhead onshore at Cape Mesurado in West Africa.

Elijah Johnson, a veteran of the Anglo-American War of 1812, who would organize and lead the defense of the colony in its many battles with local African rulers and warlords, headed one of the more remarkable families on board the *Elizabeth* and created one of the founding dynasties of the future Liberian nation. The thirty-year old Johnson travelled with his wife Mary and

[7] For a broader analysis of mortality among African Americans in colonial Liberia, see Antonio McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot: The Mortality Cost of Colonizing Liberia in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

their three children. Mary died shortly after their arrival. Their eldest daughter, Elizabeth, would marry John Roberts, future bishop of the Liberian Methodist church and younger brother of Liberia's first president. Elijah himself would re-marry to Rachel Wright, and their only son, Hilary Richard Wright Johnson, would become the first native-born Liberian president.[8]

The free blacks were accompanied by three ACS officials, Dr. Samuel Crozier, the Reverend Samuel Bacon, and John Bankson, and a Letter of Instruction, subsequently formalized as the "Constitution for the Government of the African Settlement," which is sometimes referred to as the Elizabeth Compact. The Elizabeth Compact, which sketched out the framework of a state, had been drafted in Washington by the ACS. Historians of Liberia's formation have pointed to the Elizabeth Compact as the first document outlining the organization of the proposed colony in West Africa. This first constitution assigned all authority to an Agent who would serve as chief executive and chief justice and who reported to the ACS. It gave extraterritorial rights to the U.S. government, stipulated that English common law would operate in the colony, and bestowed freedom and citizenship rights similar to those in the U.S. upon all immigrants who entered the colony.[9]

The Elizabeth Compact gave no formal political recognition or role to the black colonists, although the whole purpose of the exercise was to assist

---

[8] See U.S. Congress, Senate, U.S. Navy Department., Tables Showing the Number of Emigrants and Recaptured Africans Sent to the Colony of Liberia by the Govt. of the U.S. A Census of the Colony, (Sept., 1843: Senate Document No. 150, 28th Cong., 2nd Session, 1845), (hereafter *The Census*). See also Shick, *Behold the Promised Land*, 56.

[9] See the "Constitution for the Government of the African Settlement," July, 1820, RACS, Series II, Outgoing Correspondence (hereafter ACS Correspondence).

with the establishment of a colony in West Africa. The Compact, for example, did not require the Agent to consult with the Chesapeake blacks before taking decisions. Yet even if it did in theory, the ACS could not and in reality did not direct the action on the ground in Liberia. Nonetheless, according to the ACS records, the emigrants agreed to abide by the terms of the Elizabeth Contract. However, what usually occurred for a great part of the initial establishment of the colony, including at critical moments, was that the ACS, if only because of distance and the frequent and prolonged absences of white Agents sent to manage the colony, often found itself playing catch up to de facto decisions made by the blacks themselves. The evidence not only points to this interpretation as being more accurate, but also suggests that for the most part, both the ACS and the Chesapeake blacks understood it that way. Despite the occasional misunderstanding of some ACS officials who believed to the contrary and who then had to be reminded who and what was driving the process, there is little doubt who were the prime movers.[10]

The *Elizabeth* arrived in Freetown on March 9, 1820, accompanied by the USS *Cyane*, after a month at sea. The authorities in the British West African colony gave them a cool reception. The unpreparedness of the ACS quickly became apparent, as the location identified as the new home for this group of Chesapeake and other black Americans, Sherbro Island, fifty miles down the coast, southeast of Freetown, was completely unsuitable. Not only were there no facilities and little access to fresh water, the local African

[10] Or that is what some historians, for example, Huberich, *Political and Legislative History*, 234, have insisted. See also ACS Correspondence.

authorities had no intention of ceding any territory to the Americans. Furthermore, the local ACS contact, John Kizzel, a former South Carolina slave who had fought with the British in the American War of Independence and who had returned to his birthplace via Nova Scotia, fell out with the ACS. This level of disarray and disappointment led many of the Chesapeake blacks to question further the ACS's sincerity and competence, and they rejected Coker's leadership, especially after the three white ACS white agents all suddenly died from malaria. The colony effectively disintegrated, and the Chesapeake and other African Americans abandoned Sherbro Island and moved closer to Freetown. [11]

The arrival in Freetown of the second ship, the *Nautilus*, on March 8, 1821, brought thirty-three more immigrants, this time all from Virginia and Maryland. The new arrivals, almost all of them literate and free-born, included twice as many men as women and fewer children.[12] Four of them died within a year of arrival, and none returned to the United States. This new batch included Daniel Coker's wife Maria and their two children, Daniel Jr. and Samuel, and the rest of the family of Nathaniel Brander, who came on the *Elizabeth* and would become one of the leaders of Liberia. It also included carpenters, ditchers, farmers, coopers, caulkers, a seamstress, a tobacconist, and a saddler. The last two respectively, the Reverends Lott Carey and Colin

[11] For a history of John Kizzel's troubled relationship with the ACS, see Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of West Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[12] Two of them Lott Carey and R. H. Sampson, had purchased their freedom many years prior to the trip.

Teague, were to play large roles in the establishment of the embryonic Liberian state. They also posed a serious challenge to ACS authority because their church congregations in Richmond, not the ACS, financed their trip to West Africa. The arrival of the *Nautilus* added to the disarray in Freetown and further undermined whatever remaining authority Daniel Coker had tried to maintain.

The arrival in Freetown later that year of U.S. Navy Lt. Robert Stockton in the USS *Alligator*, accompanied by a new ACS Agent, Dr. Eli Ayers, saved the day for the Chesapeake blacks and their fellow African Americans, who were still firm in their intention of establishing a colony. Lt. Stockton and Dr. Ayers, surveying the situation they met, and after discussions with the African Americans, decided to travel down the coast in search of a more suitable location. Two hundred miles southeast of Sherbro Island, they came upon Grand Bassa, where three rivers emptied into the Atlantic Ocean. Stockton and Ayers commenced negotiations with the local ruler, who agreed to cede territory on condition that there be no interference with the slave trade but they rejected the agreement. Stockton and Ayers improvised, retraced their steps and cruised northwest along the coast again until they came upon Cape Mesurado and commenced negotiations for land with another local chieftain; known to the Europeans and Americans as King Long Peter. What happened next is still lost in a fog of dispute. Lt. Stockton claimed to have put a gun to the head of King Long Peter and forced him to

sign a treaty acknowledging sale of the land at and surrounding Cape Mesurado to the ACS.[13]

A larger historical context and longer historical trajectory framed the transactions that took place at Cape Mesurado between Lt. Stockton and Dr. Ayers on the one hand and King Long Peter and his allies on the other, and the subsequent relations between the Liberian state and the Africans at Cape Mesurado and its surroundings. As the emerging scholarship on West Africa has begun to illustrate, nineteenth century coastal West African polities were deeply enmeshed in a complex web of multifaceted relationships with the Atlantic World. These polities were an integral part of that world, shaping and being shaped by it. Thus the arrival of the Chesapeake Free Blacks at Cape Mesurado was in one sense, merely the latest stage in the development of an uneven and reciprocal process of transatlantic influence that could be traced back to the middle of the fifteenth century with the arrival in the area of Portuguese mariners and adventurers.[14]

---

[13] There are several accounts, but see *A Sketch of the Life of Com Robert F. Stockton* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1856) which is the original source of the information which was never corroborated. In any case, there are many problems with the narrative of 'sale of the land' since the Dei people, of whom Long Peter was a ruler, practiced a different system of land tenureship. In addition, according to the accounts, Stockton and Ayers were the only two Americans present at the negotiation. What prevented Long Peter and his men, themselves armed, from attacking or killing the two Americans when Stockton allegedly pulled out his gun? Instead, things ended peacefully and Long Peter put his 'X" on the sheet of paper that Stockton gave him. Stockton said he bought the land with rum, cloth, beads and other trinkets.

[14] The growing body of new research and scholarship on West African coastal societies and their connections to the Atlantic world includes for example Walter Rucker, *Gold Coast Diasporas: Identity, Culture, and Power* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); Randy Sparks, '*Where the Negroes Are Masters': An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Toby Green, ed., *Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in Pre-Colonial Western Africa* (New York:

The unraveling of the Mali Empire precipitated large scale migrations of waves of people from the Niger River basin towards the Atlantic Ocean between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. The peopling of the area under study was a consequence of that unraveling, as the Mande speaking peoples would come to comprise more than half of the population of what would become Liberia. Person characterized the Mande expansion southward from the Niger basin as "one of those movements of peoples that have shaken whole regions of the continent," while Brooks has argued that the Mandingo movement within that southward expansion set off a chain reaction.[15]

There were political, economic and cultural forces at play in the displacement and migration of these populations and their resettlement between the forest zones and the coast. The decline of the power and influence of imperial Mali coincided with the arrival of the Portuguese and later the Dutch, English and French. A new transatlantic trading system supplanted and eventually eclipsed the millennial trans-Sahara trade in

---

Oxford University Press, 2012); and Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade,* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2011). J. Lorand Matory, "The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yoruba Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, 1 (January 1999): 72-103, advanced a critique of the essentializing models employed to explain West African ethnic identities and opened new pathways of analysis that account for fluidity and reciprocity in the formation and transformation of cultural identities in the broader Atlantic context. Scholars studying Liberia's history could also learn much from Boubacar Barry's *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998) for its analysis of the historical forces that propelled the unity and division of the Senegambia region and its peoples.

[15] Brooks uses the nomenclature Malinke but I will follow the common Liberian usage of "Mandingo" in reference to that same Malinke ethnic identity. See George E. Brooks, Jr., "Ecological Perspectives on Mande Population Movements," *History in Africa: A Journal of Method* 16 (1989): 23-40; and Yves Person, "States and Peoples of Senegambia and Upper Guinea," in *General History of Africa, Volume VI: Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880s*, ed. J.F. Ade Ajayi, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989): 636-661.

importance and impact on the economies and societies of that sub-region of West Africa. The change brought the retrofitting and repurposing of old trade routes and relationships even as it birthed the rise of new players and the decline of others.[16]

One major long term consequence of the fraying of imperial Mali was the embrace and development of an Islamic jihadist tradition by various Mandingo forces who, displaced from positions of power in Mali, attempted to recoup their political, economic and social losses. This they accomplished through conquest and the forcible conversion to Islam of those who they conquered. In so doing they sparked a centuries-long movement and rearrangement of peoples and reconstitution of ethnic identities in the region. One outcome of this process was the development of political and cultural institutions such as the *poro* societies which served as a kind of pan-ethnic anti-Islamic body which provided protection against the jihadists.[17]

The arrival of the Europeans on the coast, and with that arrival the creation of new trading prospects, provided another opportunity for the Mandingo forces to recoup their losses. But the European arrival resulted in more than just new opportunities for the Mandingo traders to resume their old roles as middle men in the trade of slaves and other commodities such as ivory,

---

[16]Boubacar Barry makes an argument about Senegambia that can be extended to the rest of the Upper Guinea Coast and its hinterland, where fragmentation and unification, or in his words "dismemberment and consolidation," were a concomitant process, tied to the dissolution of older African structures, the expansion of Islamic political power, and the growth and impact of the Atlantic trading system. See Barry, *Senegambia*, xv.

[17] See Warren L. d'Azevedo, "The Setting of Gola Society and Culture: Some Theoretical Implications of Variation in Time and Space," *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 21, (Fall 1959): 43-125.

pepper, kola and salt. The European arrival also marked the beginning of the transatlantic trade in human flesh, which developed into an enterprise of a different scale and size, and with this region emerging as one of its principal suppliers.[18]

The new transatlantic commerce produced new interactions that had an impact on the politics and cultures of the region. Polities were reconstituted and new men tied to the transatlantic trade emerged to take power. In the process new identities were formed. The Frenchman Jean Barbot, writing about the people he met at Cape Mesurado in the late seventeenth century, mentions that some of its residents "explain themselves in Dutch and some in Portuguese, mixed with French." At Cestos, a bit further down the coast from Cape Mesurado, he came across some who spoke "a little Dutch or English."[19] Other African rulers, to signify status, gave their children European names. European words, especially Portuguese ones, began to enter local African languages. Portuguese became something of a lingua franca as a trading language. In the Liberian vernacular, words like *pekin* and *palaver* trace their origin to this period. Even the renaming of the landscape reflected the European influence. Liberia's main rivers, the St Paul, the St John, the Cestos and the Cavalla were all named by Portuguese mariners and those names

---

[18] According to the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, over three hundred thousand people were sold and shipped from the Windward Coast which includes the area between the Mano River (Cape Mount) and the Cavalla River (Cape Palmas), the territorial limits of today's Liberia. See also Adam Jones and Marion Johnson, "Slaves from the Windward Coast," *Journal of African History* 21, 1 (1980): 17-34.

[19] P.E.H. Hair, ed., *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712*. Vol. 1, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1991): 240-273.

adopted by the locals. Cape Mount, Cape Mesurado and Cape Palmas were all renamed by the Portuguese and those names used by the local people.

New foods, such as cassava, were introduced into the region from the Americas. The Vai people for example ground and cooked in palm oil the leaf of the cassava plant and called it *gbassajamba*, which they adopted as a symbol of their identity.[20] The Bassa boiled and pounded the cassava and called it *domboy,* which became a staple and part of the national cuisine. Another part of the transatlantic trade was the supplanting of traditional African cloth with imported textiles, and the development of a local market for rum, tobacco and other items manufactured elsewhere. Food, clothing, names, and language were some of the new things that accompanied the transatlantic trade in humans.[21]

Various brokers emerged to constitute and service these circuits of connectivity.[22] The area that became Liberia was no exception to the existence of brokers who were found throughout West Africa. Such

---

[20]Svend Holsoe, "The Cassava-Leaf People: An Ethno-Historical Study of the Vai-People with a Particular Emphasis on the Tewo Chiefdom" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University 1967), was unaware at the time of his research of the New World origins of the cassava plant. Alfred Crosby's *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), which made that knowledge more widespread, was first published in 1972. A major flaw in Holsoe' work was the assumption that the Vai identity was pure, fixed and unchanging. According to Vai tradition, they are descended from Dyula traders. They were the first of the Mande migrants to reach the coast of what would become Liberia. See Ivor Wilkes, "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest," in Nehemiah Levtzion and Randall Pouwels, eds., *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2000).

[21] On Liberian food history, see Allen, "Sugar and Coffee," 125.

[22]For sophisticated and insightful explorations of the broker concept in West African history, see the collection of essays in Toby Green, ed., *Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in Pre-Colonial Western Africa,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

individuals had emerged all along the coasts. When the Chesapeake Free Blacks arrived at Cape Mesurado, they found an early ally in a man called John Mills. John Mills is usually overlooked in the history of the settlement of Monrovia but his role was crucial. He was the son of an Englishman and an African woman. He spent some time as a youth in school in England and was a trader in slaves and other commodities for a time. When the Americans arrived, he was already established on what would become Bushrod Island. He welcomed the Americans and lent them assistance, providing them with introductions, intelligence and water.[23]

Other brokers dotted the landscape. One would be Zolu Duma, a Vai chieftain who, according to Vai tradition, had visited Europe and spoke European languages. Another would be Sao Boso Kamara, leader of Condo, a multi-ethnic but Gola-dominated polity, whose mixed Mandingo-Gola lineage reflected the complex identities of the African people who resided in the area that was to become Liberia. According to Gola oral tradition (the Gola are an ethnicity close to the Kissi), when the Gola speaking people, who are generally acknowledged as the first to inhabit the inland forest region of Liberia as far back as the fifteenth century, arrived on the coast during the sixteenth century, they encountered the Kuwaa, Dei and Bassa, all Kru speakers. According to the tradition, "the Dei gave them permission to establish towns such as Zodi, Todien and Sugbulum. Other Gola moved even

[23] See Mills' obituary in the *African Repository and Colonial Journal,* June, 1825.

further south and placed themselves under the protection of old trade partners, the Vai and Dei, at Cape Mount." [24]

Relations between the various polities along the coast were characterized by cooperation but also rivalry over control of the trade, in particular the slave trade, with the Europeans. It was a situation of shifting alliances. The main players when the Americans arrived included Sao Boso and the Condo. Other important players included the Vai, Gola, Bassa and various Dei clans and groups. Many of these outfits were multi-ethnic affairs in their composition. They were very loose alliances which formed and broke up and reformed depending on the specific situation. Evanescent relationships were the order of the day and there would have been a substantial amount of insecurity on the part of the warlords, including King Long Peter who now faced the Americans.[25]

The rivalry King Long Peter and his forces formed part of were of an economic, social, and military nature and those considerations all reinforced each other. The rivalry was both among the Dei and between the Dei and their various Vai, Gola and Bassa neighbors who also lived along the coast. The rivalries had their genesis in a combination of the Islamic push led by various Mandingo forces to re-seize control and extend influence in the region, and the appearance of Europeans at the coast. Control of the Atlantic trade was its main objective. The commerce on the coast was the slave trade although it was supplemented by the export of ivory, pepper, and palm oil. In

---

[24] See D'Azevedo, "Gola Society," 53-55..

[25] D'Azevedo, "Gola Society," 57 and 63.

turn, rum, brandy, textiles, guns, tobacco, salted cod and smoked herrings were imported.[26]

The longer trajectory of events was Islamic state formation and the impact was for the non-Islamic societies to push deeper into the forests belt and eventually to the coast, forming and reforming alliances among themselves and with European capital; and for the Islamic formations to extend their control over territory and to supply the transatlantic slave trade, in competition with non-Islamic societies. Kpelle oral tradition, for example, states that the Kpelle migrated from the north to today's central Liberia in the sixteenth century to get a piece of the coastal trade and to flee forced conversion to Islam, although they remained vulnerable to slave raiding.[27]

Another long term impact of Mandingo and other Mande speaking hierarchical societies moving from inland to the coast was to impose new hierarchies on previously non-hierarchical societies and to thereby transform them; to reinforce already existing hierarchical societies; and to make hierarchies appear normal or natural, which in the latter part of the nineteenth century would be employed to the benefit of the Liberian state.[28]

The Mandingo had a reputation among the African Americans as being a people of civilization and the African Americans spoke much of developing

---

[26] Warren d'Azevedo, "A Tribal Reaction to Nationalism," *Liberian Studies Journal* 1, 2 (1969): 99-116.

[27] See Richard M. Fulton, "The Kpelle of Liberia: A Study of Political Change in the Liberian Interior," (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1979).

[28] For a discussion of Mandingo relations with the Liberian state, see Augustine Konneh, *Religion, Commerce and the Integration of the Mandingo in Liberia* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996).

a systematic trade connection with Mandingo kingdoms further inland. They had heard stories of Musardu, Macenta and other such places in the Futa Jallon region. Unlike the non-Islamic Africans, the Americans did not fear the Islamic societies but rather saw them as potential trade partners. This may be because Islamic state expansion did not reach in the direction of the nascent Liberian state, and that the non-Islamic societies in the forest region served as a buffer between Liberia and the spread of Islam.[29]

New hierarchies were formed and reconstituted themselves. Warlords like Sao Boso Kamara of Condo, for example, emerged to claim lineage and representation from founding lineages or founding families. Spurred by the possibilities of wealth from the lucrative slave trade, figures like him rode roughshod over traditions or older practices. They built up patronage-client networks, gathered and centered power in the hands of individuals, and enforced that power through violence. By many accounts, the coast was a very violent place and wars and kidnapping were a regular feature of life.[30]

In the context of these ever shifting alliances, and cultural exchanges, nomenclatures changed as well. The Dan people were called Gio (meaning slave) by their captors and the name stuck. The Loma were called Buzzi after the name of a powerful chieftain and the Kuwaa were called Belleh after the town where they had first gathered. The Klao and Glebo on the coast, more

[29] See James Fairhead, Tim Geysbeek, Svend Holsoe, and Melissa Leach, eds., *African American Exploration in West Africa: Four Nineteenth Century Diaries* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 136. Also see Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Islam, Christianity and the Negro Race* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994).

[30] S. Jangaba M. Johnson, “The Warrior King Sao Boso” in Doris Banks Henries, ed., *Liberian Writing* (Tubingen:Horst Erdman Verlag, 1970).

fully exposed to European traders and Atlantic commerce, assigned different names and identities to Klao and Glebo speakers further inland.[31]

Previous exposure to Islamic traders informed some of the ways Africans on the coast interacted with the new European traders. Previous practices and preferment were sometimes transferred from the Islamic traders coming from the north to European traders on the Atlantic coast. The Vai King Zolu Duma appeared to be equally at home negotiating with Islamic traders to obtain slaves or with European traders to sell slaves.[32]

King Long Peter and others were tied to foreign capital. He had European slave traders regularly calling on him for their cargoes, and delivering European goods. The cases of European slave traders Theodore Canot and Pedro Blanco were only the most notorious. Various factories were set up all along the coast. And King Peter was not alone in this regard. The Vai oral tradition, which is unambiguous about their participation in the transatlantic slave trade, also recounts how Zolu Duma once tricked a group of young women onto a slave ship – they were sent there (or so they were made to believe) ostensibly to perform a dance - after he had collected his payment in advance.[33]

With regards to King Peter's specific case, he was part of a loose alliance of Dei, Vai and Gola warlords who exercised a kind of joint

---

[31] Holsoe, "Cassava Leaf People," 10-15.

[32] See Adam Jones, "Who are the Vai?" *Journal of African History* 22 (1981): 159-178.

[33] Holsoe, "Cassava Leaf People," 13.

sovereignty over the Cape. Borrowing from Boubacar Barry's phrase, the people of the region were "a people without frontiers,"[34] which is not to say that they did not have an identity or ideas about power, or unifying principles around which to bond. It means that there was a longstanding history of migration and that permanent identification with or tie to a specific piece of land took a back seat to control of labor as a means of establishing power, influence and wealth in a context of great insecurity.

The insecurity bred fear and powerful men like King Peter were constantly figuring out ways to insure his own protection midst the constant jockeying for power. He would have immediately seen the Americans as a threat to the power he exercised in the region. Unfortunately for him, the Americans were able to forge an alliance with Condo, with whom Peter was in competition. Peter would have thus seen the need to forge even closer alliances with his European business partners to insure protection.

The transatlantic slave trade destroyed old patterns and networks since the scope of the trade was vaster than what had obtained in the pre-Atlantic era. Old trade routes and networks were utilized but new people, more ruthless, and more knowledgeable of the Atlantic World, came to predominate. One such new formation was Condo. The precise date of the formation of Condo is unknown. It is possible that it emerged in the wake of the Mane invasions. Condo was a trade entity but it also had a military component. Because it was multi-ethnic, it co-existed with several other entities.

---

[34] Barry, *Senegambia*, 1.

Nevertheless, Condo was not only a trading or military entity. Most of the people living in Boporu, its capital, were engaged in farming.[35]

One important feature of this region was that the Condo entity for example was not contiguous. Various settlements/villages/towns comprising people of different ethnicities lived between each other. They had independence but adhered to the longstanding "landlord" and "stranger" practice which provided labor and security to the "landlord," in this case, Condo. This type of land holding system, seen in the light of the idea of "people without frontiers," contrasted with what the Chesapeake Free Blacks would bring to Cape Mesurado, with their fixed ideas about private property holding and the value they placed on inalienable property rights. The rise and preponderance of slavery and servile labor on the coast, and the belief that control of labor was the surest way to accumulate and maintain wealth, power and prestige, added another dimension to the competing ideas about wealth and property held by the Africans and the Americans, and this would shape their relations going forward.[36]

The free blacks, shaped by the experience of their Chesapeake origins, and the ACS had a contentious relationship. The two parties had some objectives that overlapped and some that did not. They also had views that were in conflict with each other. As such, the relationship always contained

---

[35] d'Azevedo, "Gola Society," 45.

[36] For more on the 'landlord' and 'stranger' idea, see George Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in West Africa, 1000-1630* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).

some antagonism even while the two sides cooperated with each other to further the overlapping objectives they held. The very nature of the relationship meant that there was constant tension between the two. It was a relationship of convenience, but this is not meant to be a negative characterization. The Chesapeake blacks saw the ACS as a convenient vehicle for furthering their political economy aims. A good indicator of the complex and evolving relationship between Chesapeake free blacks and the ACS was the several iterations that the constitution of the colony underwent.

The Elizabeth Compact provided the legal basis for the Liberia settlement, but its legitimacy remained weak. Technically and in a narrow legal sense the initial group who migrated to West Africa from the United States in the winter of 1819-1820 was supposed to be employees of the United States government. The U.S. Congress, after many maneuvers by supporters of the American Colonization Society and a sympathetic President James Monroe, authorized the allocation of $100,000 for the establishment of a U.S. naval station on the coast of West Africa.[37]

The ostensible purpose of the station was to serve as a point of disembarkation for Africans who had been freed from the holds of slave ships by U.S. naval vessels in the anti-slavery patrol, which plied the waters off the coast of West Africa in pursuit of slaving ships that were operating in contravention of the U.S. ban on transatlantic slave trading. The U.S. Navy over the two decades beginning in 1820 would liberate some 5,000 Africans

---

[37] See U.S. Congress, Senate, Act of Congress Relative to the Slave Trade, approved March 3, 1819.

from intercepted slave ships and delivered the freed or "recaptive" Africans to the port of Monrovia.[38]

The tension between the ACS and the Chesapeake blacks that had grown in Sierra Leone showed that their relationship was at best an expedient arrangement. The Chesapeake blacks' objectives did not fit together entirely with those of the ACS. Chesapeake blacks departed from the United States and travelled to West Africa with the primary idea of creating a new state that they would operate in their interests. As free blacks in the Chesapeake, they had – as adherents to the Methodist and Baptist faiths – created their own self-governing religious bodies as they sought to secure their tenuous hold on freedom. In Africa, they sought to establish an independent black Christian state that would be organized and governed in accordance with republican principles. The anti-slavery reformers within the ACS, itself an unlikely alliance of disparate forces in the United States, had both Christian missionary and gradualist abolition motives as their primary objectives. However, the pro-slavery forces within the ACS had the preservation and strengthening of slavery in the US as their main objective – all contradictory objectives. The early accounts of the relations between the Chesapeake blacks and the white men sent by the American Colonization Society to serve as Agents of the

[38] See *The Census*. No full scholarly history has yet been written about the Africans freed by the U.S. Navy and deposited in Liberia during those years.

colony make it clear that the strain in their relations quickly turned into hostility and that the long enmity crossed the Atlantic with them.[39]

When Lt. Stockton and Dr. Ayers returned to Freetown after their *palaver* with King Long Peter, the Chesapeake blacks were relieved to learn that they had found suitable land and had negotiated a treaty that would finally secure their long-sought rights. The Chesapeake and other blacks then formed an advance party to take possession of the land, while Stockton returned to the U.S. On January 7, 1822, the party sailed from Freetown and arrived on Dozoa Island, an islet in the mouth of the Mesurado River at the foot of Cape Mesurado. They were immediately met with resistance from King Long Peter, who disputed that he had sold the ACS or anyone else the land. Dr. Ayers advised the black Americans to abandon their plans. They disagreed and refused to return to Freetown. Ayers decided to return to the U.S. The decision to stay at Cape Mesurado and not abandon the project was a decision of the black Americans, not the ACS. The blacks took Ayers's departure as a sign that they were on their own and had to rely on their wits and (in their mind at least) God or divine providence, as they saw it, and the goodwill of the U.S. Navy. They renamed the islet Perseverance Island. The decision to remain was a decisive turning point.[40]

---

[39] Historians have either sought to play down the hostility or elide it. See the pioneering accounts of Gurley, *Life of Ashmun*; and Alexander, *History of Colonization*. Huberich *Political and Legislative History*, relied primarily on these two accounts as his sources when he treated with the subject.

[40] For American arrival dates on Dozoa Island in the mouth of the Mesurado River, see Richardson, *Liberia's Past and Present*. The islet was subsequently renamed Providence

Two original passengers from the *Elizabeth*, Elijah Johnson, the War of 1812 veteran, and Frederick James, the Philadelphia carpenter, emerged as leaders. Johnson was reputed to have said that "for two long years I have sought a home. Here I have found one, and here I shall remain."[41] James took charge of the small band of men who, with the crucial assistance of other local Africans opposed to King Long Peter, including Long Peter's many rivals, crossed the Mesurado River on April 25th and began building the colony's first structures on the mainland. Their actions infuriated Long Peter and his allies, who were minor players in the transatlantic slave trade, and set the stage for future conflict.[42]

Not for the last time, the Chesapeake and other blacks had rejected the orders of ACS functionaries. The black Americans who arrived at Cape Mesurado in the decade between 1822 and 1832 had lived as free people in the Chesapeake. Some of them, like Amelia Roberts, who hailed originally from Norfolk and then Petersburg, were free for the half century going back to the American Revolution. [43] Like Mrs. Roberts, four out of five of all the

---

Island. See also Ernest Jerome Yancy, *Historical Lights of Liberia's Yesterday and Today* (London: H. Jaffe, 1954).

[41] The quote is attributed to him and once upon a time was required learning for every Liberian school child. It appeared in the country's history textbooks. Its origin and accuracy however has never been definitively established. See Abayomi Karnga, *History of Liberia* (London: D. H. Tyte, 1926); and Abayomi Cassell, *Liberia: History of the First African Republic* (London: Fountainhead, 1970), two of Liberia's earliest amateur historians, whose writings contributed much to the legend.

[42] See Huberich, *Political and Legislative History, 179*; and Alexander, *History of Colonization*, 66, for accounts of the initial landing.

[43] There is no written history of Amelia Roberts but she does appear in the municipal court records of Virginia. See Paul Heinegg, *Free African Americans of North Carolina, Virginia and South Carolina: From the Colonial Period to about 1820*. Volume 1, 5th Edition,

emigrants going to Liberia in that decade came from Virginia and Maryland. Of that group, over two-thirds had lived as free people in the United States. Most of them lived in the tidewater area of Virginia and the environs of Baltimore City. These were not people who were slaves on the region's tobacco plantations. Many of them were small or aspiring property-holders. They were already engaged in a range of occupations in the Chesapeake including working as tailors, seamstresses, shopkeepers, cooks, barbers, carpenters, and mechanics.[44]

Their long experience in freedom, their aspirations to improve themselves, their ownership of real property in Virginia and Maryland, their antagonistic relationship to the slave-owning Chesapeake planter class, had shaped not only their outlook but also what was possible in a slave society. The laws of Virginia and Maryland had, since the time of Jefferson's presidency, gradually closed the door to manumission and citizenship and denied their rights as free men and women. Yet many of the Chesapeake blacks were literate, and were familiar with or even engaged in the debates and discussions of ideas about citizenship circulating in the contemporary Atlantic world. Ideas of race and Christianity would also play an important role in shaping their consciousness as a people, as specifically black people

(Baltimore: Clearfield Company, 2005). Also see Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 117.

[44] See *The Census*. See also Diane Barnes, *Artisan Workers in the Upper South: Petersburg Virginia, 1820-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

and children of Africa, and as a Christian community, and they would embrace those ideas and apply them to their situation.

A key to understanding the world they wanted to create in Africa was the appeal of republicanism, in its early nineteenth-century variant. Republicanism to them meant self-government and citizenship based on property-ownership. Republican ideas had become attractive to the free black artisans and shopkeepers – small traders – property-owning Protestant evangelicals of the Chesapeake port and river towns.

Many of the ideas Chesapeake blacks took with them to West Africa had been forged in the process of establishing institutions as they practiced republicanism in their communities in the United States. The free blacks who hailed from Richmond, for example, were among the main activists in the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society. They helped establish it in 1815 with the objective of migrating to Africa to pursue their utopian project of creating a black Christian state based on republican principles under the leadership of property-owning citizens. In that endeavor, they had been joined by free blacks from Petersburg who had formed the Gillfield Baptist Church. These ideas were also found among the people who formed several autonomous black Methodist institutions in Baltimore during that same decade.[45] These are the people who arrived on the shores of Cape Mesurado in West Africa in the crucial formative decade between 1822 and 1832.

---

[45] See Luther P. Jackson's *A Short History of the Gillfield Baptist Church of Petersburg Virginia* (Petersburg,: Virginia Printing Company, 1937); and Phillips, *Freedom's Port,* 140.

In the months between the landing at Cape Mesurado in April and the arrival of the *Strong* on August 8, Frederick James, Elijah Johnson, and Lott Cary, among others, organized the transport of the remaining immigrants from Freetown to the Cape. They went to work cutting down forest on what they would call Crown Hill, and building dwellings and the first streets in what was, in 1824, to be named Monrovia. They were the ones who built the first stone structures in the new town, like the Providence Baptist Church – founded in 1820 in Richmond, Virginia. They were the "restless and ambitious men" with whom the white Agents sent by the ACS had to contend.[46]

The Chesapeake and other free blacks from the United States had contended with much more difficult and powerful foes than the ACS Agents when they lived in the Chesapeake. Free blacks had built a store of knowledge about white Americans and had acquired expertise on how to deal with the white people who disliked or were contemptuous toward them. Chesapeake blacks felt they understood white people very well: what white people in general thought about black people in general and about black people's capacities, not only intellectually, but also in terms of blacks' capacity to govern themselves. It would be highly unlikely, for example, that the free blacks who migrated to Liberia were not aware at the time that the leading lights in the ACS had heaped slander and rained insults upon them.[47]

---

[46] ACS Correspondence, Answer to the Petitioners, April 1824.

[47] Most of the leading spokesmen of the ACS were fond of prefacing their remarks about free blacks with a statement about free blacks as dishonorable and degraded people. Mia Bey, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African American Ideas about White People 1830-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14, argues that by 1830, African American

The free blacks of the Chesapeake had experience with white people placed in titular roles in black institutions. They anticipated such a model in Liberia, but they did not accept them in Virginia and Maryland and were determined not to accept white dominance on the west coast of Africa. In Richmond, the First Baptist Church had a white clergyman who played the official and ostensible role of pastor of the affiliated black congregation. In reality, however, it was the black assistant pastors and lay preachers who ran the church along with the black deacons. The white pastor was there to provide cover, to meet the white public expectation, to allay fears of and criticism of independent black institutions. The Virginia ruling class had established laws that made it difficult for independent black churches to operate on their own. They required the congregations to have a white pastor who would keep an eye on the black congregations, but also provide and maintain the public symbolism of black dependency. The Baptist churches had reached a tacit accommodation with black converts and adherents, a kind of unwritten understanding, that the blacks would manage their own affairs but would need a white person to lead them. That experience showed how they could maintain their independence within their own institutions and informed the free blacks' expectation of their relationship with the white ACS Agents.

Once the colony began to take shape on Cape Mesurado, fundamental differences between ACS and the Chesapeake blacks gained illumination and

---

intellectuals, including no doubt those from the Chesapeake, had a well developed repertoire of responses to claims of their inferiority.

clarity. The arrival of the *Strong* at Cape Mesurado on August 8, 1822, brought thirty-seven immigrants, mostly from Maryland and a few from Philadelphia. The ship also brought seventeen Africans liberated from slave ships by the U.S. Navy and Jehudi Ashmun, a twenty-eight year old white missionary from Champlain, New York, accompanied by his wife.[48] The ACS had hired Ashmun to assist Eli Ayres, although Ashmun also had personal mercantile ambitions for his stay in Liberia. But because Ayres had already left for the United States, Ashmun had no one to report to and assumed the office of Agent. Taking control of a fluid situation, Ashmun mistakenly thought that the Chesapeake blacks, including men much older and more experienced than he, would automatically accept his leadership. He later lamented that his "expectations were to end in bitter disappointment."[49] An unprepared Ashmun had unexpectedly walked into a new order that the blacks had been painstakingly building.

By the time Ashmun arrived at Cape Mesurado, the Chesapeake blacks had already established a small foothold on the Cape, even in the teeth of strong military resistance from King Long Peter. In this, the Chesapeake blacks gained from the crucial assistance of the U.S. Navy, but more importantly, they benefitted from the backing of several of the other rival African polities in the region. Their key ally was King Sao Boso of the Condo

---

[48] Ashmun's wife, the former C.D. Gray, died four months after their arrival. See Jehudi Ashmun, *History of the American Colony in Liberia* (Washington City: Way and Gideon, 1826), 7.

[49] Ashmun, in a speech to the residents of the settlement at Cape Mesurado, March 22, 1824, in ACS Correspondence. Also, Huberich, *Political and Legislative History*. 378.

entity, who calculated that the presence of the Americans was to Condo's benefit. Long established African communities adjacent to the Cape but operating independently and outside of Long Peter's authority also provided information, water, knowledge, and other types of support to the Chesapeake blacks, who by the time of the *Strong's* arrival had begun to cut down the forest, build paths and roads, and construct housing and other dwellings.[50]

The Chesapeake blacks were determined to assert their independence, especially as it related to property. They had already divided the land on the Cape among themselves prior to Ashmun's arrival. According to a version of the story, while they were still in Sierra Leone, before leaving for the Cape, the free blacks had worked out among themselves criteria for land distribution. Ashmun's sudden arrival challenged the freedom and independence they had exercised in the absence of an ACS Agent. Thus they resented his attempt to assert his authority and re-distribute the town plots, ostensibly to accommodate recent arrivals.[51]

Ashmun suffered from chronic bouts of malaria, which weakened his effectiveness. Early during his tenure as Agent, he was bedridden for long stretches of time. According to Ashmun himself, he was "so debilitated in body and mind, as to be nearly incapable of motion" for the entire month of October 1822, during crucial early military battles against the resistance of

---

[50] A close reading of Ashmun's history of the colony confirms that the infrastructure at the Cape was being built before his arrival. Ashmun also called his *History* a memoir.

[51] Ashmun's version of events, recalled in his memoir, seems like an apology and justification for his behavior.

Long Peter and other local rulers. He was ill again from December 1822 to the middle of February 1823. During those times, Elijah Johnson, Frederick James, Lott Carey and other leaders of the free blacks took over the management of the colony.[52]

Conflict extended beyond which colonist was entitled to what parcel of land, the perceived fairness or unfairness of the land distribution, or even Ashmun's feebleness. Ashmun had violated a cardinal principle: that land ownership and possession gave the colonists the rights of citizens. It gave them authority. Indeed, it made them the ultimate authority. It established the basis of their self-government. As new possessors or owners of the soil, neither Ashmun nor the ACS had the right to tell them where their land was, how much land, or whether or not they had a right to land, especially not without their consent. In other words, even if they were willing to acknowledge the authority of the ACS, the ACS had also to consult them and gain their confidence and consent.

The tension grew towards the end of 1823, slightly over a year after the first permanent settlement of what was to become Monrovia, and it exploded in rebellion. Chesapeake blacks, who made up the overwhelming majority of the population of the settlement, rose up in opposition to the administration of the ACS. According to Ashmun, there was a violent attempt to overthrow him. His orders were disobeyed; his office and person were disrespected; weapons were seized by the rebels, and he was threatened with death; the public warehouse was broken into by a mob; and peaceful residents

[52] Ashmun *History*, 22, and again on 39.

were dissuaded from following his orders. That was his version of the confrontation.[53]

The triggering incident for the rebellion was Ashmun's decision to deny rations to those who refused to obey his orders. No lives were lost in the melee, but it was not a minor conflict. It was the key event that shaped the formation of the Liberian colonial state over the next two decades. It centered on a difference of opinion about the purpose of the enterprise of establishing Liberia. Eli Ayres's return to Cape Mesurado later in the year calmed matters between Ashmun and the blacks. However, dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the settlement remained, and the Chesapeake blacks who had emerged as the leaders, the Reverend Lott Carey and six others singled out by Ashmun, were most likely the authors of a Remonstrance to the leaders of the ACS in Washington detailing their general and specific grievances. Ayres

---

[53] See Ashmun's January, 1824 Report to the ACS Board in ACS Correspondence. Hilary Teague remembered the events completely differently. According to Teage, there was no violence and nothing as dramatic as Ashmun had made it out to be. An impasse had been reached as the people of the settlement refused to obey the Agent's orders and the Agent refused to compromise with them. At that point, "while things were in this state, Mr. Ashmun called upon them to cut the line for the new allotments. The call was disregarded and he at once cut them off from their rations. The people met together declared Mr. Ashmun's conduct arbitrary and inhuman, and determined to take the management of matters into their own hands until they should hear from the board. They applied to Mr. Cary in whom they had the highest confidence. Apprehensive that they might proceed to personal violence he [Cary] prevailed over them to wait and assured them that their grievances should be redressed. A few days afterward while Mr. [Elijah] Johnson the commissary was engaged in serving out the rations to those who had not incurred the agent's displeasure Mr. Cary went to the already open store house weighed off in the presence of the commissary the regular rations of those men who had been cut off and retired. All this was done quietly in open day and in the presence of the commissary and others." Teage to Taylor, April 12, 1849, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (Box 60). Teague was replying to Taylor's request for comment on claims the ACS Secretary, Reverend Gurley, had made about the incident. I would like to thank Carl Patrick Burrowes for sending me a copy of this letter.

took the Remonstrance with him to Washington when he departed the colony for good in December 1823.[54]

The Remonstrance criticized the political arrangements spelled out in the Elizabeth Compact and raised four basic issues: The plots of land allocated were too small; the time allotted to establish ownership was too short; the ACS Agent was dictatorial, arbitrary in his actions and disrespectful to the African American colonists; the ACS had effectively abandoned the colony, leaving the Chesapeake and other blacks on their own, although the project was supposed to have been a joint partnership between free blacks and the ACS. Based on the ACS official reply to the Remonstrance, it can be surmised that the Remonstrance might have also claimed that the lack of promised ACS support was part of a racist plot to get rid of free blacks in the U.S. with the implication that perhaps the ACS's critics in the U.S. were correct. The Remonstrance demanded that land also be distributed to the

---

[54] Several subsequent mentions were made about Cary's role in fomenting the rebellion. After Cary's sudden death in 1827, the ACS rebranded him into a peaceful, quiet, almost docile black, grateful for the help that benevolent white people provided him so that he could go and carry the gospel of Christ to his benighted brethren in darkest Africa. But another perspective cast doubt on the ACS's view, especially in light of Cary's record of opposition to the ACS and his consistent stance about the need for black self-government. Cary was a founder of the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society and the Providence Baptist Church which was relocated to Monrovia from Richmond. One of the more famous quotes attributed to Cary was his remark, while living in the United States, that: "I am an African and in this country [U.S.], however meritorious my conduct and respectable my character, I cannot receive the credit due to either. I wish to go to a country where I shall be estimated by my merits - not by my complexion; and I feel bound to labour for my suffering race." See ACS Secretary R.R. Gurley's character sketch of Cary that appeared in his biography of Ashmun, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*, 186, in which he claims that Lott Cary later apologized for leading the rebellion and for his role in writing the Remonstrance. Carey quoted in Sobel, *Trabelin' On,* 227; also see Fisher, *Lott Carey*.

Ayres's own history probably did much to undermine the confidence that Chesapeake blacks had in ACS Agents. Ayres had left them to their own devices one year earlier and had advised them to abandon the Cape. When he returned after a year, he met a vibrant little settlement.

widows and orphans of those who had been killed in the several battles they had fought with King Long Peter and his allies, that Ashmun be recalled, and that his land distribution plan be scrapped.[55]

The conflict was not simply a dispute between a few disgruntled black colonists and Ashmun over the allotment of land on Cape Mesurado. Much more was at stake. The Chesapeake blacks meant to assert their ownership of the project, its goals, and its objectives. They came with a particular vision of what they hoped to establish in Africa. Their vision did not include submitting in such a blatant and obvious way to the dictates of white men, even an idealist like Ashmun. If Ashmun saw himself as a fervent critic of slavery, perhaps free from racial prejudice, the blacks saw Ashmun as just another variety of white power. Even if Ashmun's objectives were noble and disinterested, the blacks did not see it that way.[56]

When the "restless and ambitious men" who wrote the Remonstrance put pen to paper, they did not do so to metaphorically complain to massa about how unfairly they were being treated by the overseer, although it might be argued they were doing that too. No, the Remonstrance of 1823 was an embryonic form of the new state envisaged by the free blacks, and it might be considered the first draft of the Liberian Declaration of Independence and the

---

[55] This reconstruction of the Remonstrance, with no extant copies, is based on the lengthy reply that the ACS Board was obliged to write. See ACS Correspondence, March 1824; and Huberich, *Political and Legislative History* 208-14.

[56] Ashmun, whose defenders were legion, and whose version – reflecting the official perspective of the ACS and nineteenth century white American colonizationist conventional wisdom – has in the main, dominated the historical interpretations of these events, had a point of view informed and shaped by his experiences and position, but so too did the Chesapeake free blacks.

Constitution of 1847. The Remonstrance demonstrated how they thought about the kind of nation-state they wanted to build.

The refusal by the Chesapeake blacks, the Reverend Lott Carey and others committed to independence from the ACS, was rooted in their notion of what a future state run by black people should look like. When they objected to the idea that the Agent had the power to arbitrarily allocate land, they were asserting certain republican principles. They condemned Ashmun's action as capricious because under the Elizabeth Compact, there was no formal mechanism of consultation in place, no representative body chosen by the residents to convey their views, which would legitimize the decisions taken. In leveling their criticisms, they immediately laid claim to well-established republican ideas of citizenship and self-government that they had seen in the United States, had read about concerning European nations, and had instituted in their own churches and organizations. From their perspective, legitimate authority flowed from the consent of the people, as was done in their own churches, and they therefore could not see the actions of the Agent as legitimate. The Agent, again based on his correspondence to the ACS and his speeches and decrees to the residents of the Cape, considered himself to have the right to exercise absolute power. He reminded them, "you swore to the Society that you would obey their government."[57]

Members of the emerging community laid claim to citizenship by their very act of opposing Ashmun. They asserted a particular kind of relationship between the state and civil society. First, they posited that the state was or

[57] Ashmun speech to the colonists of March 22, 1824. See ACS Correspondence.

should be their instrument, not the other way around. The ACS Agent should be their servant and respond to their wishes. In this, they were repudiating the Elizabeth Compact and recalling the relationship between the state and society in the Chesapeake and other parts of the Atlantic world. Second, they were claiming for themselves the ultimate authority as arbiters of official behavior. It was they, not the ACS or its Agents, who lent legitimacy to state action. State action was to be carried out in their name and in pursuit of their interests, which they defined. Finally, in regard to control over the land distribution process, who decides, the state official or the citizens? From the perspective of the Chesapeake free blacks, if the state decided on land distribution, the citizens would not have control over their own destinies. Their independence would be compromised.

At a broader philosophical level, the Chesapeake blacks eagerly established their legal claims to land and the real property and citizenship rights that they felt accompanied property ownership. In claiming ownership and the legal titling of the land, the Chesapeake blacks transformed land into private property. Land became a commodity, something it had not been up until this point in the history of Cape Mesurado. Land that had been held communally was turned into capitalized property or landed capital and would serve as an important element in the development of the Liberian state.[58]

[58] For discussions of the development of capitalism in West Africa, see, for example, Jean Suret-Canale, *Essays on African History: From the Slave Trade to Neo-colonialism* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1988).

The conflict between the ACS Agent and the Chesapeake blacks formed an important part of a broader realignment of political power in the region. That process began in earnest when some local African rulers – King Sao Boso of Condo and King Zolu Duma of the Vai – agreed to cede some territory to the Chesapeake free blacks, who enjoyed the support and protection of the U.S. Navy. Other local African rulers like King Long Peter with deep interests in the transatlantic slave trade were opposed to this new arrangement. This other conflict – between those Africans supporting and those Africans opposed to the agreement with the Chesapeake blacks – would also inform the subsequent development of the Liberian state.[59]

It matters not if the land at Cape Mesurado was occupied or unoccupied. The forest was the common patrimony of the peoples of the region, like the rivers and the sea. No one among the Africans claimed exclusive legal title to it; no one claimed exclusive and permanent ownership which could be passed on in perpetuity. It was the custom that any hunter could hunt, any family could forage, or trees could be felled for fuel because no one (in the Western capitalist sense) owned them or the land they sat on. Families living off the land did not pay rents or taxes on the land, although there were obligations attached to land being occupied. Indeed, the widespread use of slash-and-burn agriculture, with its practice of shifting cultivation, made it impossible, unrealistic, and useless to claim one parcel of

[59] See Holsoe "Slavery and Economic Response among the Vai," in Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979).

land as being available to be permanently alienated. Traditionally, land in this part of West Africa was not property. Various polities over time may have claimed and asserted control over the land, but it was not a commodity like enslaved people were in West Africa at the time. Land was not capitalized property, which is something very specific.[60]

What the Chesapeake blacks did was to put aside this African system and practice of land holding – including slash-and-burn techniques. They took possession of the land and in the process introduced a new system of private property ownership in land. However, the intention of the Chesapeake and other blacks was not to create a system of large private landholders. They were quite content to be small independent property-owning farmers exporting cash crops to the wider Atlantic world of which they were a part. In an account of a conversation with a local African ruler a few miles from Monrovia, the Reverend Colston Waring, who had arrived on the *Strong* from Petersburg, recalled how, in response to the ruler's informing Waring that he had just sold some people, Waring told his interlocutor that rather than engage in the slave trade, it would be more beneficial to the local ruler to grow cash crops for export. After being told by the ruler about cutting down coffee trees, Waring asked him "not to cut anymore, for if he would have it gathered and

[60] For a discussion of the economic anthropology of West Africa, see the essays in David Sedon, ed., *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology* (London: Frank Cass, 1978). For a larger discussion of land, see Andro Linklater, *Owning the Earth: The Transforming History of Land Ownership* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

sent to us, he should be paid a good price for it."[61] When they began constructing their state, the Chesapeake blacks' constitutions placed legal limits on how much property one individual could own. Their first constitution restricted each family to ownership of ten acres. A smallholder agrarian capitalism seems to have been their objective at this stage.

The Chesapeake free blacks, through their actions and words, asserted a connection between republican citizenship based on property-holding and Christian belief. The Chesapeake free blacks took it as axiomatic that an independent existence required ownership of property: that property stood at the very base of modern society. This was the republican credo, even if it was not yet expressed in those terms. From the perspective of the Lott Carys, Colston Warings, the Payne, Brander and Teague families from Richmond, and the Warner and Benson families from Baltimore, they were in West Africa to implant a modern or, in the idiom of the era, civilized society, hence the need to own property.

The ACS claimed in its reply to the Remonstrance that Ashmun had acted out of a sense of fairness. In accordance with his instructions from Washington, he simply wanted to ensure that new arrivals from North America had a chance to earn a living by being allocated good spots of land. The ACS and Ashmun had acted from disinterested motives and were concerned for public health and military considerations when they suggested how the land should be divided up. Ashmun had ordered the settlers not to

[61] Waring to Ashmun, October 3, 1824, reprinted in *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, May 1825, 83-87

occupy space on the river bank after some of the free blacks had settled on land at the river bank, seeing its potential commercial value.[62]

On the other hand, Ashmun's Chesapeake free black opponents felt that they had first claims on the land, had been involved in the land's clearing, had taken the risks, and had informally reached an understanding among themselves (the Chesapeake blacks) that the land was going to be distributed in a certain way, and that Ashmun, in imposing his plan, had insulted them and violated their rights as free men and women.

The Chesapeake free blacks scoffed at the ACS's and Ashmun's claims to be disinterested, suggesting that the ACS involvement in the project was a pretense, maybe a ruse. Fueling that sentiment was the fact that Ashmun himself, alongside other ACS interests, was engaged in commercial activities between the colony and the U.S. The ships bringing free blacks were owned by individuals with connections to the ACS, and ACS-connected merchants bought, shipped, and sold the food, provisions, supplies and weapons sent to the colony. For the Chesapeake free blacks then, the behavior of the Agents proved the lack of sincerity of whites, would prove blacks' need to be cautious about depending on whites, and would prove the importance and indeed the necessity of creating their own self-governed state. Ultimately, it exposed the gap between their agenda and that of the ACS.

Challenging Ashmun was also the first step in turning the Chesapeake blacks into Liberians. The events of 1823-1824 – which brought clarification and illumination – were an occasion for self-definition. They showed to the

[62] See ACS reply to the Remonstrance of the colonists. ACS Correspondence.

free blacks that regardless of their common interests, the ACS was ultimately more concerned with, and its policy more informed by, the ebb and flow of American national politics, whereas the Chesapeake blacks in Liberia were focused on permanently entrenching themselves and establishing their own state in West Africa. In this situation, making it plain how the new system of land holding would proceed was critical to the blacks from the United States.

The events that generated the 1823 Remonstrance shaped the ideological structure of the Liberian state. Approaching the subject of the Elizabeth Compact and the Chesapeake black response to it from this perspective foregrounds their thought when discussing Liberia's origin, recognizes their agency, and recovers their contribution. Chesapeake blacks subscribed to a basic republican tenet: self-government. But it was not just self-government, but property-based citizenship as the basis of self-government. In their ideal, state power would be limited power from the bottom to the top. This was the cardinal idea in the version of republicanism embraced by the free blacks as they sought to construct their state.

This core belief drove their opposition to ACS rule, reflected in the Remonstrance, which would oblige the ACS to come up with the 1824 Plan of Government. The ACS, in its patronizing and self-satisfying style, might have thought that it was tutoring the Chesapeake blacks. The Chesapeake blacks however had their own ideas, which though concurring with the views of the ACS at some points nevertheless clashed with ACS ideas at other key points.

Disputes over land raised issues about property, and in republican thought, going all the way back to John Locke, property was paramount, including the proposition "that men have a natural right to property, a right prior to or independent of the existence of civil society and government."[63] From the beginning, the property issue took center stage in Liberia, and it would remain there throughout the twenty-five year colonial period. The principal sign of the new status and perhaps the new independence of the free blacks was their ownership of land. The understanding that quickly developed, that in fact pre-dated their arrival on the shores of West Africa, saw private property as the organizing principle upon which land tenureship would be based. There is no evidence, for example, that common or community property was even contemplated among the Chesapeake free blacks. The Remonstrance apparently did not complain about the principle and primacy of private property, which they took as a natural condition of existence.

What emerged during the rest of the decade was a legal-juridical framework that recognized the sanctity of private property. A state apparatus would be constructed to enforce this recognition, and an ideological consensus would need to be reached to support this framework. Specific laws would be developed and promulgated in the colony outlining more precisely how land-holding would be administered. But at the start, the basic premise established was that private property-holdings would be the basis of land tenureship. This meant that once land was assigned and then possessed, the sale of land and the uses to which the property were put, became sources of recurring tension and

[63] MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism,* 198.

conflict. The free blacks took it as an article of faith that by arriving in West Africa, they had the right to property, landed property. Possession of land was what transformed them from being merely restless and ambitious men into *independent* men, in control of their own lives and those of their families, masters of their fate and destiny.

The meaning of property ownership in free black thought stood in contrast to the meaning it held to the local Africans they encountered. The Chesapeake free blacks brought with them to Africa a well-understood meaning of private property ownership. As opposed to an understanding of property that posited corporate or customary use, one that envisioned property as something that was used for consumption of natural resources, the Chesapeake free blacks defined and understood property as both a commodity and something that was bestowed through title, something that had fixed boundaries, and something that was privately owned. In other words, property was a case of sole dominion.

The conflict and tension between the Chesapeake blacks and the ACS and Ashmun went on for a full two years before what turned out to be a temporary solution was reached. At every turn, Ashmun had to threaten to withdraw crucial U.S. military and financial support for the entire colonization project. In the end, it was probably this overriding consideration that would keep the Chesapeake blacks in line. If Chesapeake blacks had alternative or independent means of mobilizing weapons, they would have rid themselves of Ashmun quickly. However, U.S. military and financial support was crucial,

as it provided the critical advantage in fighting and eventually defeating King Long Peter's faction of the local Dei and Gola forces who had mounted a sustained campaign of resistance to the African Americans.

Nonetheless, the Chesapeake blacks continued to challenge Ashmun's authority after the explosion in 1823, the dispatch of the Remonstrance, and the ACS's reply. Ashmun even felt threatened enough by the Chesapeake blacks that early in 1824 he fled the colony by boat for the safety of Cape Verde where he spent several months waiting for the ACS Secretary, the Reverend R. R. Gurley, to arrive and accompany him to Monrovia to try and restore ACS authority. The attempt to restore ACS authority and the compromises necessary to obtain that authority began the subsequent stage in state formation and the colony's constitutional development.[64]

[64] For Gurley's account of his meeting with Ashmun in Cape Verde, see Gurley, *Life of Ashmun.* 47-52.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### "We are the proprietors of the soil": Chesapeake Free Blacks, and the Making of the Liberian Colonial State, 1824-1839

The origin of the Liberian state and national identity of the Liberian people was specific to the development of early nineteenth century Chesapeake free blacks, in particular their republican ideas respecting property-based citizenship which they tied to black race consciousness and evangelical Christianity. The 1824 Plan of Government illustrated this unfolding process and relationship. The ideas and actions of the Chesapeake free blacks, conceptually but more importantly in terms of its implementation, shaped the 1824 Plan of Government, which helped establish a framework for the Liberian colonial state.

The 1824 Plan had its genesis in the events of 1823, especially the rebellion against the American Colonization Society's Agent Jehudi Ashmun's attempt to assert his authority over the settlement at Cape Mesurado. The Plan was a direct response by the ACS to the Remonstrance of the Chesapeake free blacks who resided at the Cape. The rebellion caused a crisis for the ACS but it also marked a turning point for the free blacks. For the ACS, the main problem became finding a way that would allow their colonization project to continue. In practice it meant finding an arrangement on how the colony would be governed that was acceptable to the free blacks. For the free blacks, the crisis created an opportunity for them to define and shape the type of state they desired.

After ACS Agent Eli Ayres's departure from Cape Mesurado on December 12, 1823 with the Remonstrance in hand, the Chesapeake and other blacks continued their agitation and refused to acknowledge Ashmun's authority over the colony. Ashmun appealed to them to cooperate with him but without success. He then threatened to deal harshly with them but his threats proved futile. The untenable situation was only resolved with Ashmun's April 2, 1824 flight from Cape Mesurado to Cape Verde, aboard the *Recorder*. Elijah Johnson, with the support of Reverend Lott Cary and the Chesapeake black leadership, took charge of the colony once again.[1]

In the interim period between Ayres's and Ashmun's departures, another boatload of Chesapeake free blacks arrived on the *Cyrus* on February 13, 1824, reinforcing the weight and influence of the Chesapeake immigrants. One hundred and two of the one hundred and three passengers on board the *Cyrus* were free born blacks from Virginia, Richmond in particular. Included in that batch were the Reverend Colston Waring's wife Harriet and their children, including Jane, their four year old daughter who would become the future Mrs. Joseph Jenkins Roberts; and Susannah, their ten year old daughter who would later be credited with designing, alongside a committee of women, the Liberian flag. Colston Waring, who had arrived at Cape Mesurado a year earlier on the *Oswego*, had been well known in Richmond's free black

---

[1] See Cary to Gurley, ACS *Correspondence*; Gurley, *Life of Ashmun*, 63-5; Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History*, 370-71.

community. He had quickly become one of leaders in the colony upon his arrival at Cape Mesurado.[2]

Another individual who arrived with his parents and siblings on the *Cyrus*, the thirteen year old John N. Lewis, also from Richmond, would later become one of the key leaders in the move towards independence. John would go on to marry Colston and Harriet Waring's elder daughter Susannah. These pre-existing ties, reinforced in the common experience forged during trans-Atlantic travel, and in their struggle with the ACS to assert their independence and rights, created a cohesive core group of Chesapeake free blacks. This, in addition to their Christian evangelical outlook, and their experience of racism in the Chesapeake, would inform their growing republican consciousness.

In Washington, Ayres reported back to his superiors and conveyed to them his impressions of what had taken place at Cape Mesurado that led to the Remonstrance. He was critical of Ashmun. The ACS dispatched its Secretary, the Reverend Ralph R. Gurley, to Monrovia to find a solution to the problem they now faced. The main point Ayres made to the ACS was that the blacks wanted respect, a formal recognition of their power, and their right to at least share in the governance of the colony.[3]

Gurley, unaware that Ashmun had been forced to leave Cape Mesurado, left Washington with a new proposal and a draft Plan of Government for the colony. By mere coincidence, the two men encountered

---

[2] See *The Census*.

[3] Gurley's Report to the ACS Board, *Minutes of the ACS Board of Directors, Sept 1824.*

each other in Cape Verde, and travelled together from Cape Verde to Cape Mesurado on the *USS Porpoise*, which the ACS had arranged to be made available for Gurley's three weeks trip to Cape Mesurado. Gurley, during his visit, acknowledged the power of the Chesapeake free blacks and he invited them to share in full partnership of the colonization project. Quoting their Remonstrance, Gurley acknowledged the Chesapeake blacks' claim that "we suffer: if the society has means and does not apply them to our relief, it is without benevolence; if it have not means, it wants [lacks] power, and in either case is unworthy of our confidence." Conceding the Chesapeake free blacks' claim, Gurley noted that "even the ignorant" could have understood their argument.[4]

As part of the ACS strategy, Gurley brought with him to Cape Mesurado a proposal by the ACS Board to name the colony Liberia and the emerging town Monrovia. General Robert Goodloe Harper of Baltimore, a Whig grandee and leading figure in the ACS, was credited with identifying the name Liberia – formed from the Latin *liber* – meaning land of the free. By all accounts, the proposal was greeted with approval by the blacks in the colony. The naming of Liberia and Monrovia in 1824 held some practical significance. For one thing, it established a clear new national identity. The Chesapeake immigrants would no longer be Americans or Virginians but now Liberians. The naming of the town Monrovia after U.S. president James Monroe had symbolic appeal, and could be seen as a mark of gratitude for Monroe's assistance in getting the project funded and supported, especially

[4] See Gurley's Report to the Board, *Ibid*.

the critical military support provided by the U.S. navy. As Chesapeake blacks, they could not have been unaware that Monroe, who was governor of Virginia when many of them had been born, was a large Virginia plantation and slave owner. But he was now president of the United States whose past and continued support to their colony was important. Their survival in West Africa took precedence over the argument that Monroe and his friends in the ACS were trying to rid the U.S. of its free black population, as the critics of the ACS in the free black communities in the U.S. had charged. This is a claim the new Liberians would respond to in the years to come. For now, the Liberians were prepared to overlook that detail, given the importance of U.S. military support. They were trying to survive and build a new nation in West Africa where they enjoyed and exercised full citizenship rights with property ownership as a core value, having concluded that such a possibility had been foreclosed on black people in the U.S.

Reverend Gurley also brought with him to Cape Mesurado the draft of the new Plan of Government and he negotiated the final version with the Chesapeake blacks. The key new clauses in the Plan, which radically departed from the thinking that stood behind the Elizabeth Compact, were anti-slavery and black governance. These clauses were not in the original Elizabeth Compact. It took the 1823 rebellion to force the change. The new Plan accommodated the key grievances and complaints of the free blacks, by essentially acknowledging the link between citizenship rights, property holding and self-government. The Plan also provided a powerful ideological

justification for Liberia's existence by including a clause that explicitly outlawed slavery in the colony.

More specifically, the Plan, while retaining the office of Agent, created a new office of Vice Agent, an Executive Council, and a number of other new offices. Under the new dispensation, although the Agent, a white man, continued to be appointed by the ACS in Washington, the Vice Agent and two additional persons would be selected annually by the Liberians themselves – property holding men – to serve on the Executive Council guiding the affairs of the colony. The Agent would serve as Chief Magistrate, along with two Justices of the Peace, selected by the citizenry, in a Court of Monthly Sessions, with a Clerk and Constable. Four citizens committees were formed. These committees were responsible for Health, Public Works, Agriculture and the Militia. A citizen's militia was created, with the militia Captain and Lieutenant elected by the men in the militia. There were other officers appointed by the Agent and paid by the ACS. These were the Colonial Secretary, the librarian, the instructors for schools, a superintendent of the Africans liberated and repatriated by the U.S. navy, a court crier, an auctioneer, a commissary of the ordnance, and a manager of the colony's store and warehouse. This basic architecture of the colonial state would undergo several revisions. For now, the Plan achieved the result of reconciling the interests of the ACS and the interests of the Liberians. More specifically, it handed power over to the group who had organized the rebellion and written the Remonstrance of the previous year. The Liberians elected Reverend Lott

Cary as Vice Agent while Reverends Colston Waring and Colin Teague – all merchant clergymen – were elected to serve on the Council. Elijah Johnson was elected Captain of the militia. A new leadership group thus consolidated its rise.

The Plan was accompanied by a Digest of Laws, with twenty-five articles or provisions, which established among other things the procedure for land titling. It allowed some of the people who had occupied and claimed town lots to keep them. It also agreed to reimburse others if they moved to new town lots. The law also forbade individual Liberians from buying land from the neighboring African communities. Strong penalties were established for trespassing on other people's property. All land transferred from the local African communities to the colony was owned by the colony, to be then divided into smaller parcels and allocated to the new Liberians upon their arrival from the U.S. Each immigrant family, by means of a draw, was assigned two acres town lots and could further apply for up to eight acres for a farm. By virtue of their numbers, their early arrival, and their prior small holder experience, the Chesapeake immigrants occupied the choicest spots in the new town and became the dominant influence in the colony.

The Plan and Digest of Laws was specific about the physical layout and look of the town. It was organized facing the western side of the Cape, facing the river with ten feet wide streets. A Martello tower was constructed at the highest point of the Cape where their canons were located. The law required houses to be built of stone, brick, or weather boarded logs and

covered with tiles. It also required property owners to fence their property and to keep the streets in front of their property clean. Property owners were required to donate several-days labor each month to communal tasks like road building and land clearing. Space was also reserved for public squares. The regulations governing the use of public space and in particular public behavior, which were stipulated in the new laws, resembled in important ways the regulations that the new Liberians had in their former self-governing Chesapeake religious and other institutions.[5]

The Plan laid the framework for a wage labor system. One of the first things the new Council did was to set wage rates in the colony – "common laborers in general" at fifty cents; "lime burners, coal makers and others requiring some skill" at seventy-five cents; and "proper mechanics" at one hundred cents.[6] In addition, the council established a schedule of prices for essential commodities; a payment and credit system; an exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the local "bars" or currency used by the Africans; and port charges for vessels arriving at Monrovia. While the immigrants from the U.S. were required to give two days of free labor a week to the colony for public works, the remainder of the labor needs was supplied by wage labor from the Africans recaptured and repatriated from U.S. naval ships and Africans from neighboring communities. Labor relations would change as

---

[5] See *Digest of the Laws of the Colony of Liberia in* Huberich*, Political and Legislative History, 1010.*

[6] See Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*, 87.

time passed but during the initial years of settlement, a rudimentary system was established.

The Plan however did not explicitly address the issue of agricultural production beyond setting the framework by establishing property rights and limiting the size of property holdings. In fact, an immediate impediment to the colony's economic development was its small size – about 200 people in 1824. This was compounded by the low productivity typical of labor intensive family farms geared towards achieving self-sufficiency. Thus, for the first few years of its establishment, the colony necessarily depended on the importation of goods and food from the larger Atlantic world market. Food crops grown in the colony supplemented some of the imports, while local African communities supplied the rest. For the first group of Liberians, it was never a choice between pursuing agriculture versus pursuing trade. The two activities were intertwined.[7]

In 1824, the Reverend Colston Waring travelled from Monrovia to Bassa and made a plea to the local king to refrain from cutting down or destroying the king's coffee trees. His encounter with the king illustrated this situation. Men like Reverend Waring began searching for ways to insert themselves into the international Atlantic market, by supplying that market

---

[7] There has been a longstanding debate on the trade versus agriculture issue in colonial Liberia, starting with George Brown, *The Economic History of Liberia.* (Washington, DC: Associated Publisher, 1941) and continuing with Akpan, Sawyer and others. The authors' thesis is that the free blacks disdained agriculture because it reminded free blacks of their days in slavery in the U.S. As this dissertation demonstrates, the founders of Liberia were neither enslaved in the U.S. nor were they employed in farming in the Chesapeake. Nonetheless, free blacks actively pursued farming in Liberia. See William Allen, "Sugar and Coffee: History of Settler Agriculture in Liberia." Ph.D. diss., Department of History, Florida International University, 2002.

with commodities like coffee, camwood (used for red dye), and palm oil. In pursuit of this specific goal, as well as the overall goal of establishing their colony, the new Liberians forged a complex set of relations with their neighbors at and around the Cape built around four interconnected pillars: labor, land, trade and war.

The 1824 Plan acknowledged the presence of local Africans within the colony and regulated the relations between the Liberians and the neighboring Africans. Besides setting wage rates for laborers and forbidding Liberians from purchasing land from their African neighbors, it also defined citizenship in the colony, restricting it to anyone born in the colony or immigrating there. Thus the colonial state at its very origin created categories of inhabitants on the Cape. There was abundant evidence though that local Africans lived in the colony, or at a minimum, worked in the colony. Before one of the battles that year between the colony and King Long Peter's forces, Ashmun noted that local Africans working for the Liberians had given the Liberians prior notice of Long Peter's plans. There was also the case of John Mill, a mulatto slave trader who played a crucial role in supporting the establishment of the colony. Not only had Mill provided the Americans with translation services in 1822 when they first arrived, his community, which was situated across the Mesurado River, provided the Liberians with food and labor, as well as political support against Long Peter. There was also the Kru speaking community of mariners and fisher folk located adjacent to John Mill's village. The Kru mariners provided the Liberians with all manner of stevedoring and

ship piloting services. The local Africans supplied the colony with a vital source of labor, but this was done outside a formal political framework. During the first decade of the settlement, there was no talk about the use of slave labor in the colony or participation by colonists in the slave trade. Those accusations would only begin to appear in the 1830s.[8]

The new Plan of Government did not change the fundamental attitude the Liberians had towards land appropriation. What the establishment of the Council and a regular militia supplied by the U.S. navy did was to make the process of local African land dispossession more orderly and systematic. A Liberian wrote at the time that they were legitimately entitled to ownership of the land because they had come into its possession through "a just war."[9] Foremost in their minds was territorial expansion to accommodate the increasing new arrivals from the U.S. Between 1826 and 1828, the pace of immigration from the U.S. picked up as eight ships brought over 700 new immigrants, which accounted for a threefold increase in their population. The Chesapeake continued to be place of origin of most of the arrivals and the majority of these recent arrivals were born free in the U.S.[10]

The round of wars, conquests and defeats of 1822 and 1823 had shifted the balance of power around the Cape and allowed for the territorial expansion of the Liberian colonial state to take place. Some African polities,

---

[8] See Jehudi Ashmun, *History*; for the story of John Mills, see Gurley, *Life of Ashmun*, and Alexander, *History of Colonization*; for the Kru mariners, see George Brooks, *The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century: A Compendium (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1972).*

[9] Quoted in Huberich, *Political and Legislative History*. 236.

[10] The Census.

including those led by Kings Bob Gray and Sao Boso, sued for peace and accommodated themselves to the new emerging Liberian power in the region. Witness to the bloody efficiency of the cannons and modern armaments of the Liberians, and the willingness of the Liberians to use their superior fire power, some Africans agreed to put themselves under the protection of the Liberian colonial state. Yet others like Sao Boso and Condo, who were based further inland at Bopolu, forged alliances with Liberia to gain the upper hand in their long standing rivalry with King Long Peter and his allies on the coast. Many intensive rounds of negotiations and treaty signings ensued with these neighboring African communities. The Reverend Lott Carey, who took over as Acting Agent upon Ashmun's death in 1828, negotiated up to that point the largest land transfer when he, Elijah Johnson and Frederick James convinced King Long Peter, now probably willing to accommodate himself to the decisive shift in the military balance of power, to make peace and to turn over sovereignty of a large swath of land on the banks of the St Paul River to the colony.[11]

By 1828, the communities living in the environs of Cape Mesurado – which some of the local population called Ducor – had already been engaged in a three hundred years old trading link with the Atlantic world. The trans-Atlantic slave trade had been the key but not the only component of that trade and Cape Mesurado, on the Grain Coast as it was called by mariners and slave traders alike, had long contributed to the trade in human flesh. King Sao Boso,

---

[11] See text of the treaty in Gurley, *Life of Ashmun*; and Carey to Gurley, May 24, 1828, ACS Correspondence.

the Condo ruler and a key ally of the black Americans, in his younger days even served as a Boatswain on a British ship – the black American colonists called Sao Boso, King Boatswain.[12] Another powerful rule, the Vai king Zolu Duma also served on slave ships and lived in Europe for a part of his life.[13] Both of these men had longstanding knowledge of, familiarity with and connections to the slave trade. The transatlantic slave trade dominated the local African economy and it structured how power was organized within and between various polities.

The 1822 arrival of the Americans disrupted the local infrastructure of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. One of the early skirmishes between the colony and King Long Peter's forces took place in August 1825 when the Liberians raided a slave factory operated by Spanish slave traders and their local African agents in a place called Digby, five miles from the Cape. The slaves were liberated and the structures burnt to the ground. Three years later, at the same location, another defining moment occurred. Local African traders, not taking kindly to the disruption of their links to slave trading and being put out of business, raided the Liberian state's warehouse at this frontier post and turned it over to a European slave trader for his use. Reverend Lott Cary and the

[12] There are several versions of the history of the life and times of King Sao Boso Kamara. See for example S. Jangaba M. Johnson, "The Warrior King Sao Boso" in Doris Banks Henries, ed., *Liberian Writing* (Tubingen:Horst Erdman Verlag, 1970) for a particular oral tradition of the Sao Boso story. Kamara, a Mandingo king of Condo, an early nineteenth century Gola-speaking entity based in Bopolu, some 75 miles northwest of Monrovia, was an indispensible ally of the Afro-American settlers. See also Warrem D'Azevedo, "A Tribal Reaction to Nationalism," *Liberian Studies Journal* 1, 2 (1969):99-116, for a highly nuanced and complex anthropological consideration of Gola traditions and history.

[13] See Holsoe, "Slavery and Economic Response among the Vai" in Miers and Kopytoff eds, *Slavery in Africa*.

Council in Monrovia decided to respond and prepared a military assault to retake the warehouse. Unfortunately for Reverend Cary, while preparing cartridges for the assault, an accidental explosion took place and he was killed. Reverend Colston Waring took the reins after Carey's death and prosecuted the campaign to a successful conclusion.

The Liberian war against the slave trade and its network of relations was a major factor in the growth of the colonial state and in the establishment of Liberia's legitimacy. Indeed Article Five of their 1824 Plan of Government was explicit: "there shall be no slavery in this settlement."[14] Liberians began to identify their embryonic state as an anti-slavery state of small freeholders. The resistance and accommodation of the local people, their new African neighbors, also shaped the formation of this colonial state. The wars against the slave trade also assisted in the development of the ideological justification for the state, as it became the overarching umbrella that bound the disparate groups of immigrants from the U.S. together, that went beyond region, color and class. The war against the slave trade imbued the Liberian state with a higher purpose, and in the eyes of its founders, ennobled it. Anti-slavery defined what it meant to be a Liberian, and it also obscured important gender, color, religious and other social differences and antagonisms that existed beneath the surface of the colony. At the same time, war against the slave trade obscured the native land dispossession which occurred. War was a way the territorial extension of the colony took place, even when the Liberians participated in war to protect their local African allies. As more immigrants

[14] *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, 1825, 193.

arrived, new settlements were established along the St Paul River as the colony expanded to the north and west. By 1827, there were 224 plantations, half of them located on the Cape, another third of them located along the St Paul River and the remainder on Bushrod Island, situated between the Cape and the St Paul River. The extent of the colony was limited to a few miles although the reach of its influence now went beyond the Cape and its immediate environs.[15]

On August 27, 1827, the Liberians published an open letter entitled "Address of the Colonists to the Free People of Colour in the U.S." The letter was the product of a committee of five of the colony's leading men – James Barbour, Francis Devany, W. L. Weaver, Reverend Colston M. Waring and George R. McGill – all of whom were born in the Chesapeake region of the United States. The committee had been chosen by the colonial citizenry after consultation and discussion among themselves and given the task of composing a letter to free African Americans in the U.S. The letter, in seeking to defend the African American colonists' decision to migrate to West Africa and to make the case for further African American emigration to Liberia, stressed a few significant themes – like political rights and citizenship – that would recur in the nineteenth century debates among free blacks throughout the Atlantic World regarding issues of race and national identity.[16]

---

[15] See Huberich *Political and Legislative History*, 402, for the number of plantations. Although labelled plantations, the parcels of land were never more than 20 acres. They were more yeomen than planters. See Allen, "Sugar and Coffee."

[16] The open letter was first published in the *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, but was subsequently reprinted in several newspapers in the United States.

The perspectives reflected in the letter were not marginal to how the colonists defined themselves. Rather, it formed their core beliefs of politics and power. The African American colonists thought it important to remind their free African American counterparts who they left behind on the other side of the Atlantic, that in Liberia "we are proprietors of the soil we live on; and possess the rights of freeholders." This idea was a reformulation of the classic republican conception of politics and citizenship of the early nineteenth century. It was the essence of the claims of property owners to citizenship and thus a share in political power. [17]

In the open letter, they spoke in the language of rights. What did they see as the rights of freeholders? "The first consideration which caused our voluntary removal to this country, and the object which we still regard with the deepest concern, is liberty – liberty, in the sober, simple, but complete sense of the word – not a licentious liberty – or a liberty without government – or which should place us without the restrain of salutary laws. But that liberty of speech, action and conscience, which distinguishes the free enfranchised citizens of a free state. We did not enjoy that freedom in our native country: and…we were certain it was not there attainable for ourselves or our children…Our Constitution secures to us…all the rights and privileges enjoyed by the citizens of the U. States: and these rights and these privileges are ours."[18]

---

[17] See "Address of the Colonists to the Free People of Colour in the United States," the *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, Volume 2, Number 10 (December 1827): 300-307.

[18] *Ibid*.

From their perspective, it is their possession of property, "the rights of freeholders" that stands as the basis of their claims to other rights – such as the freedom of "liberty of speech, action and conscience." However, the main and prior right and privilege, the one that allows them to establish their citizenship claims, is the right to own property freehold, with the right to buy and sell and mortgage and collateralize as the market would allow; the ability to enter into and enforce contracts, etc. Thus property is the basis of citizenship, indeed, "enfranchised citizen[ship]," just in case anybody got the wrong idea. Property symbolized their freedom.

Freedom did not only mean the absence of slavery or the freedom of the individual to own themselves as Coker had argued almost twenty years earlier. It meant more than that. It also meant freedom to think and talk and act. This more profound freedom in Liberia differed from the narrow and restrictive freedom experienced by some African Americans in the United States. And this more profound freedom which they enjoyed and exercised was based on property. It was property holding or property ownership, widespread and more or less in roughly equal size of units, that facilitated citizenship and the exercise of political power. In America, black people, even the nominally free ones, were not the substantive proprietors of the soil on which they lived and thus were unable to enjoy or exercise the rights of citizenship. Their property ownership was fragile, fleeting, and insecure, always under threat. Due to being restricted from property ownership, they were restricted from citizenship. True, there were blacks who owned property,

including some of those who were now Liberians, but substantial African American property holders were an extremely tiny sliver of the free black population. Indeed their proportion was so small that free black property holders in the U.S. had no impact or effect on politics, no political power, even or especially at the local level.[19]

The open letter is significant not only for the themes that it addresses but also for its representativeness. Being the product of a committee of mostly Chesapeake-born leading men, the perspectives reflected those of the property-holding Chesapeake free blacks in the colony, and their growing self-confidence which thrust them into an ideological trans-Atlantic battle. This salvo, from the representatives of the now expanding Liberian colonial state, anticipated David Walker's *Appeal*, which was published the following year and which specifically singled the Liberians out for criticism. Although Walker's ideas, which forcefully and unequivocally rejected colonization and its connection with the ACS, reflected the majority of free black opinion in the U.S. at the time, other African American intellectuals were more ambivalent. The most significant voice from this latter quarter was that of John Brown Russwurm, a founder of *Freedom's Journal*, the first African American newspaper, who switched sides from being against colonization to being for colonization and by emigrating from the U.S. to Liberia at the end of 1829. The extent to which he would have been influenced by the arguments in the open letter from the Liberians is unknown. What is clear is that Russwurm had soured on the idea that blacks could ever know meaningful and

[19] See Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South,* 134.

substantive freedom in the U.S. In announcing his decision, he wrote in *Freedom's Journal* that "we consider it mere waste of words to talk of ever enjoying citizenship in this country."[20]

Russwurm's arrival in Monrovia was a fillip to the growth of the Liberian colonial state. Although initially recruited to be the superintendent of schools, once he arrived in Monrovia, it quickly became obvious that someone with his enormous talents was better suited for more. One of the first things Russwurm learned about was an unused government printing press. This government printing press, which had been donated by Rhode Islanders and had sat idle, was available for use. It was brought to Liberia in 1826 by a Rhode Island free black named Charles Force, who started an earlier version of a newspaper but Force had died and no one knew how to operate the press. Russwurm was eager to re-start a newspaper, and he speedily agreed to do it when asked by the colonial government. He was elected Colonial Secretary and in that capacity became the publisher and founding editor of the government owned newspaper, which he named the *Liberia Herald*. Its first issue appeared on March 6, 1830.[21]

Liberia in the early eighteen thirties went through a stage of state expansion that coincided with and reinforced the growth of a merchant layer within the Liberian community, mostly composed of Chesapeake blacks. The

---

[20] *Freedom's Journal*, February 14, 1829. Also see *David Walker's Appeal*; and Peter Hinks, *'To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren': David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

[21] See James, *The Struggles of John Brown Russwurm*, 26; and Carl Patrick Burrowes, *Power and Press Freedom in Liberia, 1830-1970* (Newark: Africa World Press, 2004), 23.

*Herald* did much to expand the state's reach and influence of these merchants and Russwurm as editor found himself in a pivotal position. Under Russwurm, the *Herald* amplified the Black Nationalist views of the colonists and defended the colonial state, thundering in the *Herald* that "before God, we know of no other home for the man of color, of republican principles, than Africa." What Russwurm did not expect was to be thrust into the maelstrom of emerging colonial politics, for although they welcomed him to their side, the Chesapeake free black leadership class and within it the Teague family in particular, which had gained in influence and power, turned out to be his chief adversaries.[22]

By 1828, Liberian merchants had already expanded their operations beyond the Cape. That year alone, they built four schooners in Monrovia to transport goods along the coast, the Reverend Colston Waring owning one of them. Others, like the young Joseph Jenkins Roberts and his mother Amelia, arrived on the scene from Petersburg in early 1829. Prior to departing for Liberia, mother and son formed a partnership with Petersburg barber William Colson and established a trading firm, Roberts and Colson, which traded between Virginia, Maryland and Monrovia. Within the next two years, there were five major trading firms, including Roberts and Colson, established by Chesapeake blacks: those merchant houses were Gardner and Herring, McGill Brothers, Payne and Yates, and Warner and Cooper with an estimated $25,000

[22] *Liberia Herald*, February 6, 1831; Russwurm to Gurley, Nov, 1829, ACS Correspondence.

in property, stocks and commissions.[23] The Reverend Colin Teage and his son Hilary were also prominently engaged in trade. Teague, a former Richmond saddle and harness maker had been, along with the Reverend Lott Cary, a member of the First Baptist Church in Richmond and together they co-founded the Providence Baptist Church prior to their departure for Liberia. After Cary's death, Teague became the senior pastor of the Providence Baptist Church, the colony's oldest and largest congregation, and therefore a powerful figure among the Chesapeake black immigrants. Russwurm too went into trade. He partnered with Virginia-born Joseph Dailey to establish a firm and further deepened his ties with the Chesapeake blacks when he married the daughter of Maryland-born trader George McGill. These merchants all came together and subscribed to a St Paul River Navigation Company to dredge the river and open up the interior to their businesses but this venture did not meet with success.[24]

The rise of the merchants was also reflected in the changes made by the Council to the original regulations regarding landholding. The 1824 Plan of Government had, besides restricting the amount of land a citizen of the colony could own, also forbade putting up land as security for loans. This became a problem as a small but increasing number of Liberians began going into debt for a number of reasons and began offering their land as security. The merchants were the most obvious beneficiaries of such a change because

[23] Dwight Syfert, The Origins of Privilege: Liberian Merchants, 1822-1847," *Liberian Studies Journal*, 6, 2(1975):109-28.

[24] See James, *The Struggles of John Brown Russwurm*, 72.

they had money readily available and increased their landholdings through recovery of debt obligations. The Council also at this time created new land purchase rules, lifting the limit on the amount of land that could be purchased, setting a price of a dollar an acre for land within 3 miles of town and fifty cents beyond 3 miles. These changes caused great consternation, and some citizens accused the political leadership of pursuing an "un-republican" policy.[25]

Table 4.1
Leading Free Black Men in Colonial Liberia, 1820s-1840s

| No | NAME | City/State of Origin | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Stephen A Benson | Baltimore MD | |
| 2 | Nathaniel Brander | Petersburg VA | |
| 3 | Lott Cary | Richmond VA | |
| 4 | John Day | Emporia* VA | |
| 5 | Anthony Gardiner | Southampton County VA | |
| 6 | Desserline T. Harris | Alexandria VA | |
| 7 | Amos Herring | VA | |
| 8 | Elijah Johnson | ? | |
| 9 | John N. Lewis | Petersburg VA | |
| 10 | George McGill | Baltimore MD | |
| 11 | David Payne | Richmond VA | |
| 12 | James S. Payne | Richmond VA | |
| 13 | Joseph Jenkins Roberts | Petersburg VA | |
| 14 | Colin Teage | Richmond VA | |
| 15 | Hilary Teage | Richmond VA | |
| 16 | Colston Waring | Petersburg VA | |
| 17 | Daniel Warner | Baltimore County MD | |
| 18 | Anthony D Williams | Richmond VA | |
| 19 | Beverly R. Wilson | Norfolk VA | |
| 20. | Beverly P. Yates | Norfolk VA | |
| *Formerly known as Hicksford | | | |

Source: *African Repository and Colonial Journal*

[25] A. D. Williams to Gurley, March 1832, ACS Correspondence.

It did not help that the ACS Agent at the time, Joseph Mechlin, had a reputation for arrogance as well as being too closely aligned with the Teague family. During Mechlin's tenure as Agent, a series of new laws which expanded the scope of the colonial state were pushed through the Council without much debate. These included giving single adult female immigrants full land ownership rights, the creation of a real estate tax, which was set at twenty-five cents per one hundred dollars of assessed value and which would be earmarked for education, stricter laws on the importation and sale of alcohol, and the expansion of the colonial bureaucracy to now include customs collectors, licenses and revenue collectors, a real estate valuator, a land surveyor, a colonial treasurer and warehouse managers in the new settlements established along the St Paul River.[26] Furthermore, some on the Council sought new regulations to restrict alcohol sales which created tension between evangelists and merchants, especially since rum and brandy were among the most valuable imports as they were in high demand, including by the neighboring African populations. However, merchants like Colston Waring and Colin Teage were also clergymen, which complicated matters. Reflecting pressure from its temperance supporters in the U.S., the ACS Board tried unsuccessfully every year to ban the importation and sale of alcohol, but the merchants paid them no heed.[27]

[26] ACS Correspondence; Huberich, *Political and Legislative History*, 204. The property rights first won by Liberian women in 1832 would be reconfirmed in the 1847 constitution.

[27] A. D. Williams to Gurley, March 4, 1832, ACS Correspondence.

Liberian merchants at this precise moment were also the unintentional beneficiaries of the ACS's own financial and political problems in the U.S. The rise of independent state colonization outfits, combined with the appearance of a robust abolitionist movement that was vehemently anti-colonizationist, robbed the ACS of funds at a critical time. The vacuum was quickly filled by the Liberian merchants who supplied goods and services to the colonial state on credit terms that were very generous to the local merchants. This sometimes also included funds to transact land transfers from neighboring African polities. This policy of supplementing the income the colony received from Washington remained that way for the rest of the colony's existence.

Nonetheless, many citizens rallied against Agent Mechlin and his allies like Reverend Colin Teage. Led by Joseph Shepherd, aggrieved citizens appealed to the ACS in a petition. Vice Agent Anthony Williams and Joseph Jenkins Roberts, who had been elected to the newly created post of Sheriff of Liberia, paid a visit to the U.S., to lobby for support for the Council among colonizationists *and* free black communities, and to explain the situation in the colony and limit the damage of Shepherd's complaint.[28]

In 1833, the ACS brought enough pressure to bear on the Council to rescind the land as collateral for debt policy. The Council did not however, restore the restriction on the size of land ownership. This moment marked a small but significant turn away from the original utopian ideal of the

[28] See Joseph Shepherd petition in ACS Records.

independent republican small holder and exposed early fissures in Liberia. The political fallout from the land problem and the new laws was reflected in the annual Council elections in 1833, with trader George McGill winning the Vice Agency. McGill's victory exposed cracks within the merchant community and shifting political alliances. It marked the beginnings of partisan politics, where citizens began voting not on the basis of personal character but in terms of defined factions and interests. In the following year's election, Nathaniel Brander returned to the Vice Agency, ousting McGill.[29]

Linked to the complex and fluid political nature of the colony in the early eighteen thirties was the steady expansion of the Liberian colonial state in the midst of a robust Grain Coast slave trade tied to a vast and vibrant network of European and African slave suppliers in the greater Atlantic. Posing a danger to the colonial state's existence, the trans-Atlantic slave trade shaped not only the policies and actions of the colony's leaders but their perspectives. State consolidation, the expansion of territory and the incorporation of neighboring African communities became the Liberian leadership's focus. Those running the colonial state were drawn more and more into local events, with Washington being less and less determinative. The Liberians were obliged to learn more about their African neighbors: their histories, their politics, their sociology, and their culture. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the source of much of the conflict between African societies along the Grain Coast, those conflicts invariably drawing in the colonial state.

[29] Mechlin to Gurley, September 1833, ACS Correspondence.

Writing in 1830, Vice Agent Anthony Williams stated that he was looking for "more effectual measures for suppressing the slave trade within the territory of Liberia. Since the death of Don Miguel of Bassa, Peter Blanco, a Spanish slave trader, for some years a resident of Gallinas, has opened a slave factory at Grand Cape Mount. Such a thing ought not to be, as it is only 45 miles from here.—I am sorry to remark that this abominable traffic is carried on with the utmost activity all along the coast."[30] Joseph Jenkins Roberts, a young merchant who had recently arrived in the settlement, wrote a letter to the ACS in 1830 that accused prominent Liberian merchants, of associating with known European and African slave traders. His detractors accused Roberts of jealousy against his rivals.[31]

In 1834, the Council elections brought even more changes, and a new Agent, the Reverend J.B. Pinney, was sent from Washington after Mechlin had been forced by the Liberians to resign and return to the U.S. in disgrace.[32] Pinney too quickly got pulled into the local politics. Yielding to popular pressure, the size of the Council was increased from three to six members, to reflect the additional St. Paul River settlements and the larger population of the colony. The bureaucracy was increased with the addition of a Sheriff, a Registrar, a Colonial Treasurer, a Board of Health, a Commissioner of Agriculture, and two Censors to monitor the standards and behavior of

---

[30] A.D. Williams to Gurley, February 1830, *ACS* Correspondence.

[31] J. J. Roberts to Gurley, September 1830, ACS Correspondence.

[32] In addition to his unsuitable temperament, he was accused of fathering a mulatto child with the wife of a Liberian. See *Liberian Herald* July 11, 1834.

citizens. The Council affirmed the right of all property owning "colored males"[33] to vote and hold office. The Council also now claimed the right to override the Agent's veto by unanimous vote and it expanded the purview of the Council to all matters in the colony. Anthony Williams, Abraham Cheeseman, John Lewis, Francis Devany, Elijah Johnson, and Colston Waring, all except for Johnson leading merchants, sat on this Council, with Nathaniel Brander, also a merchant, elected as Vice Agent.[34] Most of these changes had for some time been demanded by various groups of Liberians but the Agents and the ACS had resisted them, especially the laws giving the Liberians more autonomy. On the other hand, those colonists who now found themselves in a more favorable position were sympathetic to the idea of a stronger state apparatus.

In an attempt to strike a balance and respond to the demands of their situation, the 1834-1835 council created a new system of local government in Monrovia and the new settlements to satisfy the republicanist ethos that pervaded the citizenry or at least its leadership, and an Appeals Court to consolidate its authority. The new local government ordinance devolved some power to towns. Monrovia was given its own Town Council and the St Paul River settlements their own Boards of Selectmen to run their local affairs. The Monrovia Town Council passed ordinances for a poll tax, firearms

[33] Note the use of the word "colored" which had also become by this time the preferred new self-identifier among the African American intelligentsia. This is also the first time a gender is specified and women are explicitly excluded from voting and holding political office in the legal instruments. See ACS Correspondence*; Liberian Herald,* July, 1834.

[34] Pinney to Gurley, October 1834, ACS Correspondence.

regulations, and liquor sales. However, it was the Council's decision to create an Appeals Court that caused unease among the population, mainly because the justices of the peace who had presided as magistrates in the courts of monthly sessions were elected offices. The new Executive Council Act stipulated the appointment of the judges on the Quarterly Appeals Court, with the ACS Agent sitting as the Chief Judge. This meant that unelected judicial officers could overturn the decisions of elected officers and therefore place justice beyond the reach of the citizenry. The change provoked the ire of the Monrovia citizenry who protested and demanded that the new arrangement be rescinded due to its "unconstitutional" and "anti-republican" nature.[35] The Council further inflamed matters by voting on April 18, in response to protests, to give the Agent sweeping powers including the power to arrest without prior consultation with the Council. Having failed to convince the Council and the Agent to change their course, a large group of citizens assembled on April 26, 1835 in Monrovia and after a public meeting vowed to block the holding of the first session of the appeals court. Having prevented the Court from meeting, the citizens then moved to seize various government properties, in the process calling for Pinney to resign. Pinney refused and ordered the Colonial Secretary, John B. Russwurm, to publish a proclamation to the citizens that they were in rebellion. The enraged mob marched to the offices of the printing press and seized the equipment. Pinney's and the members of

[35] See Pinney to Gurley, March, 1835, ACS Correspondence.

the Court's immediate resignations restored calm. Vice Agent Nathaniel Brander assumed power.[36]

The colonial state used a variety of strategies during the eighteen thirties to acquire land. This included purchase, perpetual lease, and war. The main force that drove this expansion was the rapidly growing population. In 1835, about 3,000 inhabitants (including liberated Africans and local Africans) lived in Monrovia and the new settlements that had been established along the St Paul River, and further east along the coast in Grand Bassa, to absorb the new intake of some 1,700 that arrived in the half decade between 1830 and 1835.[37] More and more of the arrivals during this period were freed slaves, not free born blacks; and fewer of them were from the Chesapeake. In the middle of the 1830s, a Quaker-sponsored colony, Port Cresson, was organized in Grand Bassa, ninety miles east of Monrovia.[38] Reflecting Quaker principles, the colonists of Port Cresson had no weapons. Although the local African King, Joe Harris, had signed a treaty ceding territory to the colony, he calculated that his continued interests in the slave trade overrode the deal he had made with the Americans. The small settlement was raided by King Joe's forces, several colonists were killed, and others kidnapped. Goods

---

[36] Brander to Gurley, June 1835, ACS Correspondence.

[37] See *The Census.*

[38] They named their colony Port Cresson, in honor of Elliot Cresson, a wealthy Quaker from Philadelphia who was a strong supporter of the colonization project. For more on Elliott Cresson and the African colonization issue in Pennsylvania, see Beverly Tomek, *Colonization and Its Discontents: Emancipation, Emigration and Anti-Slavery in Antebellum Pennsylvania* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

and material were looted and the stores turned over to European and African slave traders operating in the area.[39]

All of this took place in July 1835, shortly after the upheaval in Monrovia that had led to Agent Pinney's resignation. The Council met and after sending a fact finding delegation to Grand Bassa, it declared war on King Joe Harris upon the delegation's return and report. A one hundred man force was mobilized under the command of Elijah Johnson, now General of the militia forces. The colony secured the allegiance of another Bassa King, Bob Gray, who was Joe Harris's principal rival. Joe Harris's forces were routed and he sued for peace, and territory along the St John River thereby passed into the hands of the colony.

At the same time in Monrovia, the Council postponed to the end of the year the annual Council elections which were due in July. Worse still Vice Agent Brander proposed that the Council's length of tenure be extended from one year to two years. Opposition in Monrovia to the proposal was loud and swift. The Council rescinded the proposal and the elections were held as usual in July. However, the new ACS Agent, Ezekiel Skinner, who arrived at the end of August, quickly found himself enmeshed in the politics of the colony. Faced with the political divisions of the colony, Skinner, like Mechlin before him, sided with the Teage-Waring,-Brander faction on the Council. Russwurm, who, due in part to his alliance with his father-in-law, the former Vice Agent George McGill, had been fired as Colonial Secretary by the Brander-led council, entered the 1835 race for Vice Agent and received a

[39] Skinner to Gurley, October 1835, ACS Correspondence.

plurality of the votes. Agent Skinner refused to recognize this as a victory for Russwurm, and in his role as the presiding officer for the elections, determined that Russwurn needed a majority, not a plurality. Russwurm protested but to no avail. A second round was held but Russwurm withdrew his name and Anthony D. Williams, who had first served in the office between1829 and 1833, was elected for his second stint as Vice Agent. Russwurm and his father-in-law George McGill left Monrovia shortly thereafter to live in the new Maryland-in-Liberia colony further along the east coast, Russwurm eventually serving as that colony's governor.[40]

Skinner lasted only eleven months as Agent before he too departed for the United States. By then, the Liberian merchants were driving the direction of the colony and the growth of its state reflected their perspectives and their priorities. Skinner estimated that at least two of the colonists were worth at least ten thousand dollars and that another five were worth at least five thousand each. Reverend Colston Waring, probably the wealthiest of them, was not only a merchant. He was also the colony's most successful farmer, owning the largest coffee farm. In many ways he came closest to attainting the ideal of the gentleman farmer that these men from the Chesapeake had pursued. George McGill and Joseph Jenkins Roberts also thrived during this period. Francis Devany, the only one from the top group of merchants not

---

[40] See James, *The Struggles of John Brown Russwurm*, 76-77; Skinner to Gurley, October 1835, ACS Correspondence.

from the Chesapeake, began his adult working life as an apprentice to James Forten in Philadelphia. He owned several schooners.[41]

By the end of the eighteen thirties, this group had begun to stamp their imprint on the Liberian colonial state. They were successful in getting the restrictions on agricultural holdings in the colony lifted, thereby allowing themselves to accumulate land and expand their property holdings to various locations, not just Monrovia. A wave of bankruptcies by small property holders in the latter half of the thirties also allowed them to further consolidate their new found wealth. But this growing commercial strength also placed them directly into competition with British traders along the West African coast. That new challenge would lead to new pressures on the merchants and their colonial state and they would seek adjustments to the state framework once again, especially as this coincided with the precipitous drop in support from the ACS in Washington. Likewise, a new wave of challenges to the Liberians growing authority in the region from the new or continuing resistance of local African polities further shaped the new paths the state's formation would take. The way the Liberians responded to those challenges put them squarely on the road to independence.

[41] See Syfert, *Origins of Privilege*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

"This Rising Nation:" Chesapeake-born Liberians on the Road to Independence, 1838-1848

In 1839, the leaders of the Liberian colony formally declared it to be a Commonwealth, a hybrid political structure, midway between a colony and a full-fledged independent state.[1] In explaining what they thought they were doing and what they believed they had accomplished thus far, the Chesapeake-born founding fathers of Liberia expressed no doubt that they were implanting a self-governing black commonwealth on African soil. Hilary Teage, who emerged as their leading ideologue, wrote:

> We…invite an examination of our social, civil, and political order, our legislature and our halls of justice. This state of things is the result of early habits of self-government – of laws made and executed by men whose last hope was involved in the experiment. Society here has never been (and God grant it may never be) split into two orders – one to govern, the other to be governed; the one dominant, the other suppliant. Political equality elevates and expands the mind and nerves the arm, servility enervates both. That people will be most incapable of self-government that is longest debarred from it.[2]

Teage in that essay recalled how their path to creating a society of free and equal black citizens went through several stages, beginning with their

[1] The Commonwealth idea has an old lineage in the Atlantic World starting from seventeenth century England. The idea that power ought to be vested in the people would transfer into eighteenth century North America and come to be known as republicanism, which emphasized self-government and individual liberty to protect and defend against absolute power. The philosopher John Locke had argued that the proper role of government was to protect the liberty and property of its citizens. After U.S. independence, Virginia (from where many of Liberia's founders hailed), Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts would adopt the commonwealth form of government. See Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development, and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961); and Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*. For another perspective on the rise of republicanism in England and its complex relationship with religion, see Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1979).

[2] *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, 1844, 258-261.

remonstrance against the ACS, with whom they had forged a political marriage of convenience and under whose aegis they had gone to Liberia. This was followed by their struggles to forge a colonial government and polity that could secure their freedom and independence against the backdrop of unreliable and unskilled Agents sent by the ACS, men wholly unsuitable to the tasks at hand, the Liberians' war against the slave trade, and the determined resistance of some local African rulers to the territorial encroachments of the Liberian state. He then contrasted Liberia to British-ruled Sierra Leone, to highlight the benefits of self-rule.[3]

The development of the Liberia colony had given rise to a new class of small property owners like the Teage family, hailing primarily from the free black communities of the Chesapeake and within that group the emergence of a layer of merchants and clergymen who dominated the political scene. This chapter analyses the events and ideas that shaped the Liberian colonial state during this decisive commonwealth period which laid the groundwork for the creation of the republic in 1847.[4]

---

[3] Hilary Teage was born free in 1805 outside Richmond Virginia (probably in Goochland County), the son of Reverend Colin Teage a saddler, and Frances Teage. The family moved to Richmond the following year and immigrated to Sierra Leone in 1821 on the *Nautilus* with Reverend Lott Cary. Frances and the children moved to Monrovia in 1826 to join Colin who had gone ahead. Colin Teage and Lott Cary were the founding pastors of the Providence Baptist Church, and the senior Teage served as the Senior Pastor after the death of Cary. Hilary Teage became pastor following his father's death in 1839. He was also the author of Liberia's Declaration of Independence, and the owner and editor of the *Liberian Herald*. A poet and successful merchant, he served at different points in time as Colonial Secretary, Secretary of State of Liberia and as an elected Senator. See Carl Patrick Burrowes, *Black Christian Republicanism: The Writings of Hilary Teage, Founder of Liberia*, (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, (forthcoming) 2017.

[4] Liberty, *Historiography of the Liberian State* still remains the only work that attempts, albeit partially, to address in a scholarly fashion the role of the Chesapeake founders of Liberian state in its colonial setting.

The decision to reconfigure the political relations of the colony and claim formal commonwealth status in 1839 was the culmination of changing and interwoven economic, demographic and political factors. The colony's changing economy in the late eighteen thirties combined with its geographic expansion and demographic growth to create new conditions. These new circumstances facilitated the development of the Liberian state and the consolidation of the power of its Chesapeake-born leadership which appeared together and were mutually reinforcing. The path of state formation favored the Chesapeake-born leaders and their rise to power shaped the emerging state. This could be seen especially during the decade after 1838, when Liberia formally declared itself a commonwealth.

Two political events, the writing of the Monrovia Draft of the commonwealth constitution in 1838 and the colony's 1840 Council elections illustrated this development. The new commonwealth constitution increased the Chesapeake-born leadership's power and the elections consolidated that power. However, those two events emerged from larger processes. The revival of an anti-slavery humanitarian movement in Britain after the 1834 abolition of slavery in the British Empire had a practical effect on Liberia's growth. So too did emerging alliances between African polities in the vicinity of Cape Mesurado and the Liberian colonial state. Furthermore, the growing self-confidence and assertiveness of this first generation of the Chesapeake-born Liberian leadership, was manifested in the rise in the colony of Joseph Jenkins Roberts, and expressed in an ideology – Black Christian

Republicanism.  This set of ideas elaborated their principles and legitimized their claim to rule; it extended their hegemony over the disparate communities and groups that formed the colony.  These ideas provided the intellectual framework upon which the Liberian republic would be constructed.[5]

By 1838, the relations between the American Colonization Society and Liberia had reached a new stage, with ACS influence in decline.  The colony had to a large extent become self-financing and less dependent on ACS benevolence.  In addition, missionaries sent from various U.S. based religious organizations continued their work of establishing schools in Liberia.  These religious educational activities were independent of the ACS.   Moreover, the ACS had experienced a sharp decline in its own fundraising and support in the United States after the rise of the Garrisonian abolitionists in 1832.  In fact, the ACS had little to give Liberia in terms of direct funds and not much interest in doing so.  Funds were often so scarce that the ACS had to borrow from Liberian merchants to meet its obligations in the colony.[6]

William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization*, first published in 1832, was a scathing attack on the ACS and the colonization movement in the United States. The appearance of the book marked a turning point in the fortunes of the ACS for Garrison successfully discredited the ACS in the eyes of liberal northern opinion by tying the ACS to its southern

---

[5] Burrowes, *Black Christian Republicanism,* in his introduction to this collection of Hilary Teage's writings, explores Teage's ideas.

[6] For standard histories of the American Colonization Society in the second half of the twentieth century, see Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution;* and P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

slaveholder patrons and notables like Henry Clay. The main ideas of the book, a critique of the ACS and a call for abolition, would be repeated continuously in Garrison's newspaper, *The Liberator*, over the next three decades. Garrison attacked the ACS policy as something that ended up strengthening slavery and the planter class in the U.S. Garrison's attack took off where David Walker and the black abolitionists left off.[7]

Garrison had begun his career in the 1820s as a colonizationist, under the influence of Benjamin Lundy but then changed his position. Garrison's evolution in many ways reflected the changing evolution of colonization itself in the U.S, going from initially being seen as a moderate and gradualist abolitionism through its advocacy of colonization. In the 1820s, under pressure from attacks on it from the right (Calhoun) wing of the plantocracy and from the left (free blacks), the ACS began to lose its reputation as a credible opponent of slavery. Garrison's entry into the fray, into the politics of abolitionism, gave radical anti-slavery in the U.S. a jolt in the arm. His first major national foray into the arena was the publication of *Thoughts*.[8]

One of the unintended consequences of *Thoughts* was that Garrison characterized the African American emigrants with a broad brush, painting them as useful dupes of the ACS. Subsequent scholarship was greatly influenced by the Garrisonian portrayal. At the time of the controversy, in the contemporary record, the voices of the Chesapeake and other free blacks in

---

[7] Discussed in Chapter 4 above.

[8] See Henry Mayer, *All on Fire; William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998).

Liberia was silenced. Yet they had a lot to say. Indeed, a delegation of Liberians travelled to Washington DC to provide testimony to the U.S. Congress to plead their case. Their mission was not limited to appearances before white people. They also made their case to the free black communities whenever the opportunity presented itself.

The radical abolitionists welcomed to their ranks emerging black abolitionists like Frederick Douglass, and built their recruitment campaign around a condemnation of the ACS. It was central to their propaganda efforts to show that there was no third way to abolition, no gradual or moderate approach to end slavery. The ACS stood in the way of ending slavery because it was really a tool of the slaveholders of the south, who were using it as a smokescreen to entrench themselves in power and undermine American democracy. The ACS had to be exposed for the fraud that it was and it had to be condemned and shunned by all God fearing and freedom loving Americans. To drive the point home, Garrison had to show Liberia as a failure on all counts. The impact on the fortunes of the ACS was dramatic and immediate. The Society was denounced from pulpits and in newspapers. As the radicals gained ground in the battle for public opinion in the north, the ACS lost ground. Or perhaps the ground they were both standing on shifted. The steady growth of the Northern United States into a new type of market economy and society where the ideas of free labor – tied to republican values of citizenship – had gained stronger force made it fertile ground for the ideas of the radical abolitionists to flourish – indeed the very type of republican

values that the Chesapeake Free Blacks took with them to West Africa. The ACS never recovered from the beating it took from the powerful rhetoric employed by Garrison.[9]

Chesapeake-born merchants in Liberia filled the void left by the ACS decline. The tenure of A.D. Williams as Vice Agent and then Vice Governor illustrated this trend. First of all, it showed the decline and limits of ACS influence over the colony and it recognized the dominant position of the Chesapeake-born blacks like Williams and his protégé Joseph Jenkins Roberts. The ACS, who effectively lost its financial power at the start of 1830s, never effectively recovered their financial clout. This development had a large impact on the Liberians in terms of shaping how the leadership went about planning the expansion of their colony, as they developed an awareness that they were on their own and would have to fend for themselves.

Secondly, Williams' appointment as Acting Agent after ACS Agent Ezekiel Skinner's departure in 1836 solved the problem of having someone in the Agent office for long enough to lend some stability to the affairs of the colonial state. In the entirety of the colony's existence, Williams had been the longest serving Vice Agent. If his years and months of service as Acting Agent were totaled, he served in that (Agent) capacity longer than anyone else. Williams was the leader of the colony longer than white ACS Agents Ashmun,

---

[9] For an inquiry into a reconfigured republican ideology in the years preceding the American Civil War, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

Randolph, Mechlin, Pinney, and Skinner, and longer than the latter four combined.[10]

Yet the ACS refused to appoint Williams to the substantive post and give him the title of Agent, so he remained Acting Agent. Obviously, racism played a role in this exclusion. He and everyone else would have known this. The ACS muddled through and came up with a compromise that saw Williams promoted to the rank of Vice Governor, as a kind of concession. The ACS thus created a new title – Vice Governor – with no Governor present, no one serving in that titular role. On the one hand, those in the ACS who could not countenance a black man as Agent or Governor were pacified. On the other hand, the ACS had to acknowledge that Williams was the best man for the job, and that he was in charge. The compromise was to begin calling him – referring to him as – Vice Governor, with him conducting ACS business in Liberia and reporting to the ACS in Washington while leading the Executive Council in Monrovia.[11]

Another factor in the decline of ACS influence was the formation of breakaway state colonization societies, especially those of Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York, who established their own colonies down the coast from Monrovia. The establishment of these colonies, in Grand Bassa, Sinoe, and Maryland in Africa, posed a dilemma for the government in Monrovia. On the one hand, the new non-ACS colonies were not under the

[10] See Huberich, *Political and Legislative History* for a list of the colonial Agents and Governors, 1054.

[11] A review of the correspondence between Washington and Monrovia reveals this racial dynamic. See ACS Correspondence.

formal authority of Monrovia, yet in reality they depended on Monrovia for trade and defense. The cases of the Bassa Cove and Edina settlements were instructive. The Liberian militia had to be called out several times to render assistance to the colonists in Bassa. Yet, the Bassa colonists did not have representation in the Council nor did they pay taxes to the Liberian colonial government. This made for an untenable relationship, exacerbated by the presence and assertiveness of mainly British traders along the Bassa coasts who refused to recognize the authority of the Liberian colonial government in those settlements.[12]

Hence there were growing demands from various quarters in Liberia for changes in the political arrangements governing the colony, changes that would lead to the incorporation of the new settlements and take into consideration new demographic and geographic expansion. These demands gained steam over time and calls were made to form a committee to draft a new constitution, the argument being that the relationship with the ACS needed adjustment. The colonists met in several meetings and eventually in August 1838 formed a committee of leading citizens who were given the task of drafting a new set of governing documents. The committee consisted of Providence Baptist Church pastor and Monrovia merchant the Reverend Colin Teage, who served as the committee's president, and it included W. H. Taylor, Nathaniel Brander, J. Eden, A. Bartlett, J. Palen, Beverly R. Wilson and J. C. Barbour, with Teage's son Hilary serving as the committee's secretary. While

---

[12] This was a recurring theme in the letters for the Agent and later Governor to the Board of Directors in Washington. See for example Williams to Gurley, September 1837, ACS Correspondence.

the committee's membership represented the nine settlements in Liberia at the time, including the New York and Pennsylvania settlements – Monrovia, New Georgia, Caldwell, Millsburg, Marshall, Bexley, Bassa Cove, Edina, and Sinoe/Greenville – most of the committee's membership consisted of men who were born in the Chesapeake and who had lived in Liberia for at least a decade or more. The men met in Monrovia and carried out the work over a two month period.[13]

The committee's proposed new constitution recognized in law what had been indeed the reality in practice. It united all the colonies, except Maryland in Africa, under the umbrella of a commonwealth. It defined citizenship by property and gave the citizenry more power over and autonomy from the ACS appointed governor. It restricted citizenship to only people of African descent and prohibited slavery in the commonwealth. As an editorial in the *Liberian Herald* put it at the time, it felt that they were fit to rule and possess full control over their own affairs. However, the question of Liberia's political independence was not broached. Instead, the all male committee settled on a middle ground – commonwealth – as the preferred political vessel rather than continue on as a colony or declare full independence.[14]

The drafting of the new constitution by this committee of leading men in the colony reflected two important things. First, an examination of the actual draft of the document illuminates the political ideas and thinking

---

[13] A. D. Williams to Gurley, November, 1838, ACS Correspondence.

[14] *Liberia Herald*, October 1838. A copy of the Monrovia draft commonwealth constitution was also published in the *Liberian Herald*, March 15, 1839.

behind the Liberian state's development and points to the stage at which the Chesapeake-born founders had arrived. This draft constitution had its origins in the colonists' 1823 Remonstrance, in their series of protests, complaints and letters of the prior two decades, and was a forerunner of their 1847 constitution making process. It reflected an analysis they had developed in the face of their unique challenges – a perspective that centered on republican ideas that was tied to race and evangelical Christianity.[15]

Secondly, the 1838 draft constitution shows that the Liberians themselves, not the ACS, were the primary drivers of the process of state building. Although the ACS would later submit its own constitutional proposal, the Liberians had already initiated the process independently. There were important differences between the two drafts – in particular, the role of the executive – which suggest that the Liberians had their own firm ideas of how they wanted to define their state – limited government, protections against runaway governmental executive power.[16]

The draft of the document prepared by the committee in Monrovia was submitted to the ACS in late 1838 for the Society's consideration but that draft was never published by the ACS. The ACS did however prepare a separate and different draft several months later, in January 1839, and sent it to Monrovia in the spring of 1839. Although the ACS version of the new constitution was apparently written by Thomas Buchannan, the new governor of the colony, and vetted by an ACS committee, there is no evidence that the

---

[15] *Liberian Herald,* October 1838.

[16] A. D. Williams to Gurley, November 1838, ACS Correspondence.

ACS officials read the Monrovia draft before composing theirs. Hence there is no evidence that the official ACS draft was a response to the Monrovia draft. It can only be speculation. The two draft versions differed in essential details – the most important being the veto powers of the Governor. The Monrovia draft gave the colonial council final say in all legislation and policy-making. However, the ACS draft vested the highest power in the office of the governor, including the right to veto any decision of the council.[17]

The ACS appointed a young white Pennsylvanian, Thomas Buchannan, to reconcile and minimize the differences between the two drafts. After taking up his position in Monrovia in 1839, Buchannan was told by the colonists that the council's independence was un-negotiable. Buchannan and the council compromised, and he advised the ACS to make a concession. The Governor retained a veto but the veto could be overridden by the eleven-person council with a two-thirds vote. Buchannan's appointment as Governor had been seen by the ACS as a way to heal the division within the colonization movement in the U.S., as he had already served for a year as the Governor of the Pennsylvania and New York colonization societies' colony in Bassa prior to being appointed Governor of Liberia. He arrived in Monrovia, age 31, in April 1839.[18]

---

[17] Archibald Alexander's *History of Colonization*, following Gurley's accounts of these events, completely ignores the Monrovia draft and thereby silences the voices of the Monrovia draft's authors. See Williams to Gurley, November 1838, ACS Correspondence.

[18] See Buchannan to Gurley, July 1939, ACS Correspondence.

This further exercise in state building was an attempt by the Chesapeake-born leadership of the colony to strengthen their power and influence in the colony even while they recognized the constraints under which they worked. Their goal was to organize the state to meet their domestic and international challenges beyond the continued loss of influence of the ACS. Aware of the decline of the colonization movement in the U.S., British moves in Sierra Leone, and the increasing assertiveness of European traders and their local African allies, Liberians, according to Hilary Teague, "looked not merely at temporary advantages but chiefly at permanent results."[19]

In trying to secure their power, the Liberians were operating in and reacting to a global environment which although placing constraints also provided opportunities for them. This was after all a period when global Atlantic-wide events, such as the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, would have had an immediate impact on the Liberia colony's political development. The British abolition of slavery in 1834-1838 fueled the revival of a humanitarian anti-slavery movement in Britain, dedicated to the abolition of slavery in Africa. The activism of the Exeter Hall movement had an impact specifically on British colonial policy in Sierra Leone, Liberia's next door neighbor and a source of much tension. The British Foreign and Anti-Slavery Society, informally known as Exeter Hall, was formed in 1839 by men from the old anti-slavery trade movement like Thomas Clarkson and Thomas Buxton. Having achieved success with the abolition of slavery in the British

[19] Teage, *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, 1838, 178.

Empire, the mostly middle class Quaker, Baptist and Methodist reformers meeting at Exeter Hall turned their attention to the problem of slavery in Africa. They lobbied the British government successfully to pursue a robust policy of intervention to protect the "natives" of Africa. The rhetoric of "free trade" and "legitimate commerce" accompanied their anti-slavery positions.[20]

It was the prosecution of the free trade idea that would set the Liberian merchants in conflict with the British traders plying the Liberian coast, for customs duties on exports and related fees were the single major source of Liberian government revenue. Whenever British traders refused to pay duties, citing free trade privileges, the Liberians would pursue them and the traders would seek protection from the British governor in Freetown, Sierra Leone or British naval ships plying the coast. This was a constant irritant in the relations between Sierra Leone and Liberia.[21]

Although the British parliament and U.S. Congress had outlawed the transatlantic slave trade three decades earlier and had committed resources to its suppression, it took a long time for the action of the British and U.S. navies to begin to have a demonstrable impact. But by the middle of the nineteenth century, as British traders with West Africa completed their shift from slave trading to "legitimate commerce," they provided a formidable challenge to the commercial aspirations of the Chesapeake-born Liberian merchants.

---

[20] For the history of the Exeter Hall movement, see Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, 1833-1870 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972) . For the history of the new rhetoric of free trade and legitimate commerce, see Robin Law, ed., "*From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth Century West Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[21] See Buchannan to Gurley, July 1839, ACS Correspondence.

British traders were not the only ones doing business in the environs of Cape Mesurado. The official end of the slave trade by Britain, the ban on importing enslaved Africans into the United States and the subsequent suppression of the African slave traffic in the North Atlantic heralded yet a new phase in the transatlantic slave trade. For one thing, it marked a shift in trade from enslaved humans to so-called "legitimate commerce" by the middle of the century, reducing the overall volume of the transatlantic traffic in human flesh. On the other hand, the end of the Anglo-North Atlantic traffic also opened the door wider to Spanish, Portuguese and French traders supplying African slaves to Brazil and Cuba. In the case of Liberia, the insistent practices of European merchants of slave trading on the coast of the territories adjacent to the Liberian colony were perhaps the major aggravation to the colonial state. A reliable estimate of the exact number of persons enslaved and exported from that region during the eighteen thirties and forties does not exist. But the colony spent an enormous amount of time and resources combating the traffic in slaves.[22]

In November 1838, A.D. Williams, then acting as Governor, had ordered a slaver to depart from Little Bassa but the demand was ignored and the European slaver continued to do business. However, in August of the following year, the Liberians pursued another slaver on the North banks of the St Paul River and destroyed their factory. The freed Africans fled to safety in the colony. One of the Liberians most impressive victories against the slavers

[22] Buchanan to Gurley, July1839, ACS Correspondence.

came in December 1840 when the Liberians raided and destroyed the slave factory at Gallinas and freed the slaves there.[23]

The non-British merchants plying their trade on the Liberian coast included in particular a pair of notorious slave traders, the Spaniard Pedro Blanco[24] and the Franco-Italian Theodore Canot[25]. However, they traded in more than slaves. Palm oil, camwood and ivory formed the major legitimate items of export from the Liberian coast. Duties levied on the export of these commodities accounted for a substantial part of the Liberian colonial government's revenues. Several Liberian merchants – including the J.J. Roberts, the Reverend Teage, and A.D. Williams (all from Virginia), and S.A. Benson and the McGill brothers (all from Maryland) – were engaged in the legitimate aspects of trade. Thus, to call men like Blanco and Canot slave traders is correct but they were more than that which meant the Liberians were therefore enmeshed in a complex web of relations with these European traders. For these traders were also financiers, agents of major European firms and importers of European goods. To illustrate, on one occasion in 1840, Theodore Canot was a witness in a court case in Monrovia having nothing to

---

[23] *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, 1841, Appendix; Buchanan to Gurley, March 1841, ACS Correspondence.

[24] See Adam Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of the Gallinas Country, 1730-1890*; and Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870*. Blanco gained global notoriety during the infamous *La Amistad* case in the United States.

[25] Canot (born Theophile Conneau in 1804 in Alessandria, Italy to an Italian mother and a paymaster in Napoleon's army) published a memoir, *Captain Canot: or Twenty Years of an African Slaver* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1855), which was edited and republished in 1969 as *Adventures of an African Slaver*. See also Daniel Mannix and Malcolm Cowley, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1865* (New York: Viking Press, 1969); and Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin, 2007).

do with slavery, but it involved a British trader named John Jackson. The case was presided over by Joseph Jenkins Roberts sitting as the appellate judge in Monrovia. Canot at this point already had a well established reputation as a slave trader but there he was in a Liberian court giving testimony. In fact, Canot also had legitimate business relations with some people in the colony, his gregarious personality documented by officials and private citizens alike. John Day, the Chesapeake-born Baptist missionary, merchant and colonial magistrate in Bassa, noted that Canot had even married a local Bassa woman.[26]

To illustrate further the complicated matter of the slave trade in the colony, there was the case that alarmed acting Governor A.D. Williams when some Liberian mechanics were induced by good pay to go and work for the slavers. Williams explained that the men were motivated by a mistaken desire to gain great wealth.[27] Then there was also the case of Dr. David Bacon, a former ACS physician in Liberia, who had once accused Joseph Jenkins Roberts of complicity in the transatlantic slave trade in a letter to the *New York Day Book*. The charge was repeated in the *Edinburgh Review* a decade later. Roberts responded to the charges with a full throated rebuttal, also published in the *Edinburgh Review*.[28] Dr. Bacon was not the first or last person to accuse the Liberians of being complicit in the slave trade, even if the

[26] See Janie Leigh Carter, "John Day: A Founder of the Republic of Liberia and the Southern Baptist Liberian Missionary Movement in the Nineteenth Century," M.A. thesis, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., 1998; and *Africa's Luminary,* August 23, 1840.

[27] Williams to Gurley, November 1838, ACS Correspondence.

[28] See *Edinburgh Review,* April, 1858.

evidence used by the accusers was always sketchy. In this particular case, Bacon did not provide evidence beyond what he claimed to personally know. There is no documentary evidence or corroboration by anyone else. Roberts, in his defense, pointed out that he and his government spent considerable resources and time destroying slave factories and barracoons owned and operated by European slave traders on the coasts of the Liberian colony's neighboring environs.[29] The Liberians' actions were responsible for liberating hundreds, perhaps thousands, of enslaved Africans who were being held pending shipment to the Americas, principally to Brazil and Cuba. Furthermore, Bacon's claim originally appeared in the *New York Day Book*, owned by N.R. Stimson, an ardent pro-slavery editor/publisher and unapologetic racist, which raises questions about the credibility of the claim itself. Yet, this same Dr Bacon was fulsome in his praise of the Liberians in a letter he wrote while he was in Liberia.[30] One of the ironies of the charge against Roberts was that Roberts himself a decade and a half earlier had accused some prominent Liberians of engaging in the slave trade.[31] Accusing your enemy of being complicit in the slave trade, a hallmark of the era, with or without producing evidence, was a surefire way to discredit someone.[32]

[29] Which then also became justification for the Liberians annexing the territory: to suppress slave trading.

[30] Bacon, *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, 1839, 297.

[31] See note 199 above.

[32] See for example the case of Thomas Brown of Charleston South Carolina, whose story about his disappointing sojourn in Liberia was published to the delight and encouragement of the anti-colonization forces. His most explosive claim was that Liberians were engaged in slavery. Sidbury, *Becoming African in America,* 195, repeats the story, "the settlers were

The Liberians' struggle against the slave traders loomed large to them and consumed much of their energy, time and resources. They saw themselves as a vanguard against slavery and the anti-slavery struggle affirmed their identity. Anti-slavery was a foundational element of their identity.

By the 1840s, the generation of Chesapeake-born Liberians who arrived in West Africa in the early eighteen twenties had been in Liberia for near twenty years. With their new commonwealth constitution, this first generation was now entrenched in the colony's affairs. As they began to develop a more coherent identity in this period, in the act of struggling against the British traders, against the ACS, against the resistance of some of the indigenous population and against the international slave traders, this first generation developed and shared an outlook unique to themselves – an outlook that was not necessarily bequeathed to posterity. Put another way, outcomes did not necessarily match intentions. More immediately, new council elections provided an opportunity for them to consolidate their power following the introduction of the new commonwealth constitution.

The December 1840 elections in the commonwealth represented another defining moment in the development of the state and the consolidation

---

inclined to buy slaves," without subjecting the evidence to any serious critical analysis or context. How typical was that activity? How widespread? In Monrovia? In 1834? Did the authorities and the society just look the other way? On the other hand, there were many flaws and weaknesses and contradictions in the set up of the colony. One of the complex problems in the colony was the question of labor and the various labor systems that emerged. For example, the system of pawning, in which Africans brought their children or dependents to settler homes to be "reared" or "fostered" by the Liberians. This was not an American institution but a West African institution, which the Liberians adopted. No historical study has yet been done to seriously examine this issue. Scholars have mostly relied on what amounts to hearsay and anecdotes. The voices of the "wards" have remained silenced in Liberian history although they were a critical part of the development of Liberian society in the nineteenth century. A history of eighteenth and nineteenth century labor and slavery in Liberia (and the area that is now Liberia) is waiting to be told.

of the Chesapeake-born leadership's grip on power. The result of the colony's demographic growth coupled with its geographic expansion during the thirties brought new political players, institutions and relations to the forefront in the 1840 election. Party or factional politics, which made a tentative appearance in the 1834 election, became more robust. The 1840 election also marked Joseph Jenkins Roberts' entrance into electoral politics.[33]

The colony had expanded northwest along the St Paul River and east along the coast to Bassa and later Sinoe with two new settlements built, bringing the number of settlements to nine. The new influx of Africans recaptured by the U.S. Navy from slave ships coming from the Bight of Biafra and Congo River basin; and the addition of local Africans supplemented the reduced number of immigrants, mostly freed slaves, from the Chesapeake but now also from North Carolina and Kentucky in the Upper South, and from the Carolina Low Country and the Lower Mississippi Valley of the United States.

Two important and intertwined non-state institutions grew alongside this geographic and demographic expansion: churches and schools. By 1843, there were twenty-three churches in Liberia: thirteen Methodist, eight Baptist, and two Presbyterian. The combined membership of the three churches was 1,474. Recaptured Africans comprised 116 of this number. Local African converts numbered 353 among the adherents.[34]

---

[33] Roberts had been appointed to the office of Sheriff and later served as a magistrate.

[34] *The Census*

The U.S. Navy's 1843 census recorded sixteen schools in the commonwealth. Eleven schools were run by the Methodists, two schools were operated by the Baptists, and one school was operated by the Presbyterians. The government operated two schools. All the schools combined had an enrollment of 562 students and 16 teachers, a 35 to 1 student-teacher ratio. One hundred and ninety-two students or 34 percent of the children enrolled in the schools were the children of indigenous Africans.[35]

One consequence of the fragile pecuniary circumstances of the colonial state was the policy of the state ceding control of education to religious groups. The building and operation of schools fell under the purview of the churches, although the government operated a couple of schools. This gave the churches great influence in the society. The schools received the bulk of their financial support from missionary societies in the United States, which provided them with autonomy from the state and provided those who controlled them with an independent base.[36] The two dominant and most active religious communities in Liberia were the Methodists and the Baptists, reflective of those two denominations' influence among free blacks in the Chesapeake. While most of the Virginia-born Liberians tended to be Baptists and most of the Maryland-born tended to be Methodist, again reflecting the historic breakdown in the Chesapeake, this was

---

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] See Eunjin Park, *White Americans in Black Africa: Black and White American Methodist Missionaries in Liberia, 1820-1875* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 78.

not always or exclusively the case in Liberia. And despite the influence of Presbyterians in the ACS, that church attracted a very small slice of adherents in Liberia. Episcopalians and Catholics were even fewer, again, a reflection of the small number of adherents they attracted among the free black population of the Chesapeake. The African Methodist Episcopalians would only become a sizable population in Liberia toward the end of the nineteenth century but they were not present in colonial Liberia, largely due to Reverend Daniel Coker's decision to put his roots down in Freetown, Sierra Leone instead of Monrovia.[37]

Both Baptist and Methodist religious communities in colonial Liberia shared much in common, in particular the idea and practice of evangelization although there were important distinctions. The Baptists emphasized the intensity of the conversion experience which meant that their rate of conversion was slow while the Methodists practiced a more rapid, widespread conversion, viewing the declaration of faith as sufficient. Organizationally the Baptists were more decentralized and their congregations enjoyed autonomy. In their worship they were more ecstatic and tended to be more secular in their outlook versus the ecclesiastical bent of the Methodists. The Baptist leadership was black and they received less support from their U.S. benefactors. The Methodists at this point had white leadership, for most of this

---

[37] See Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*, 35.

period in the person of Reverend John Seys who served as Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal church mission.[38]

The Methodists were more stringent on personal behavior, were in the vanguard of the temperance lobby, campaigned forcefully against polygyny, and frowned on practices such as baptism by immersion in the river. Reverend Seys warned his charges against shouting when worshipping. The Baptists however, steeped in the Afro-Baptist tradition practiced in the Chesapeake, were relatively tolerant of these practices.[39] Yet, the Methodists were generally willing to adapt to certain local African practices, such as bartering goods for services; giving "dash" or a tip in return for access to powerful persons; officials of the church being carried in a hammock by young men, probably slaves, on foot; and enrolling mainly the sons of African kings and prominent local Africans in Methodist schools. The Methodist authorities explained that this concession to the class and gender norms of powerful Africans sped up recruitment and conversion of local Africans. Thus while the Methodists focused on converting local Africans, the Baptists instead turned their conversion attention to the recaptured Africans from the Congo. But the major political cleavage between the two denominations lay in their financial arrangements. The decentralized structure of the Baptists reinforced the lack of mission support from the U.S. and therefore necessitated the Baptists' accommodating approach towards the local colonial

[38] The Methodist church published a newspaper in Monrovia, *Africa's Luminary,* from 1839 until just before independence.

[39] See Sobel, *Trabelin On.*

state while the strong financial support received from the U.S. by the Methodist lent itself to independence and to the challenging of state authority.[40]

This challenge to state authority by the Methodists boiled over in 1840 when the Collector of Customs in Monrovia levied the Methodist Church for goods they had imported. Church officials refused to pay, citing duty free privileges that they had enjoyed. The customs officials argued that the imported goods were not being brought into the country to be used for personal effects or in a personal capacity by church officials but rather were being used as payment for services or salaries to third parties, which was not allowed by law.[41]

The escalation of the conflict prompted the beginning of factional or party politics in colonial Liberia. The government took the Methodist church to court where the Methodists lost their case. Disappointed, the Methodists then took their complaint to the general public and launched a political party – actually, a slate of candidates – to fight the 1840 elections. The leadership of the Methodists resided in its church hierarchy, principally around the character of Reverend Seys, but it included other leading Methodists. The Baptists came to the defense of the government and rallied around Governor Buchannan. When the votes in the 1840 elections were counted, the pro-

[40] *Africa's Luminary*, June 19, 1840.

[41] *Ibid*.

government party had comprehensively defeated the Seys anti-Administration party.[42]

The anti-Administration party, campaigning against Governor Buchannan and the general tariff policy of the government, only garnered enough votes to win three seats – Beverly Wilson, Daniel Johnston and J.B. Gripon. On the other hand, the pro-Administration party – Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Hilary Teage, L. Ciples, James Brown, Louis Sheridan, John Hansen, Nathaniel Harris and John Woodland – won the other seats with Roberts being appointed Vice Governor. The anti-Administration party had also opposed the policy of allowing the importation of liquor into the Commonwealth. They favored a ban on liquor imports, arguing that it would sap the "moral and intellectual capabilities of the colored race." The pro-Administration party had passed a law allowing the importation of liquor and the levying of a substantial import duty on liquor and a high license fee for merchants who sold liquor, to discourage consumption but also to earn revenue for the government.[43]

Both parties however, were unanimous on the question of who constituted a citizen. The electoral law restricted citizenship to property holding people of African descent but disenfranchised "native African, except recaptured Africans, unless they have remained in the colony more than three years and exhibited an uniform course of civilized life and have abandoned all

---

[42] *African Repository and Colonial Journa*l, 1840, 312. See also Buchannan to Gurley, September 1840, ACS Correspondence,

[43] *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, 1840, 114-116.

the forms and customs and superstitions of heathenism."[44] The recaptured Africans, settled in Monrovia and in the some of the new settlements to the northwest of Monrovia, became an important addition to the immigrants from the United States, forming a social layer that provided political and military support to the colonial state and its leadership. They served in the militia and in the homes of the Chesapeake-born merchants, and filled the pews in the churches.

The emerging political configuration had five main social elements: first, the mass of Liberian small property holders in the colony, mostly occupied with farming and artisanal pursuits in Monrovia and the eight other settlements; within this strata were the merchants. This group was dominated by the Chesapeake-born church, educational, commercial and political leadership; they were concentrated in Monrovia but not exclusively based in Monrovia; second, there were the small holder farmers tied exclusively to the land – this included both African-Americans and repatriated Africans; third, there was the body of African laborers, servants and dependents living in the colony; fourth, there were the local African chieftans, along with their dependents, and fifth, independent farming or fishing communities, who formed an alliance with Liberia.

Outside of this configuration would have been the African polities beyond the immediate environs of the colony, where the colony had not reached formal treaties of friendship or agreements of mutual defense. They

[44] See Huberich, *Political History*, 724. ACS, *Annual Report*, 1841, 21.

existed outside of the territories claimed by the colony and were not yet recognized as part of Liberia. Most of these lands were 50 miles or more beyond Monrovia and the other coastal settlements in Bassa, and Sinoe. In today's terms, this area lying outside of colonial Liberia would equate to the vast majority of Liberia. Colonial Liberia in the late 1840s, on the eve of independence claimed less than a quarter of today's Liberia and occupied a tiny fraction of that, but only because they did not have the capacity to occupy more territory. The remit of the colonial state was limited to a few dozen miles surrounding Monrovia, the settlements along the St Paul River, and the five settlements around the mouths of the Farmington, St John and Cestos Rivers. Monrovia, with close to a thousand residents and more than one third of the colony's population, and where pro-administration sentiment was strongest, had three seats on the council. Each of the other settlements was allotted one representative. The three St Paul River settlements were also solidly pro-administration while anti-administration support was strongest in the five down coast settlements.

It was during this 1840 election that Joseph Jenkins Roberts, a Methodist but a leading figure among the pro-administration forces rose to political prominence. His rise signified the political control that the Chesapeake-born free blacks had assumed in Liberia and, with the sudden death of Buchannan in 1841, and Roberts' succession to the Governorship, represented the consolidation of an all-black leadership. Roberts had by the time of the 1840 election already emerged as a successful merchant and had

gained significance influence during his leadership of the military campaign known as the Gatuumba War against a local African chieftain. Roberts had arrived in Monrovia from Petersburg Virginia in 1829, a twenty year old free black small trader. He and his family, including his mother Amelia and his two brothers Henry and John, were passengers on the *Harriet*, the last large self-financed voyage to Liberia from the Chesapeake.[45]

The 1840s also witnessed emerging alliances between African polities and the Liberian colonial state. These alliances were forged through war, resistance, collaboration and diplomacy between the neighboring African polities and the colonial state. A key facilitator of the system of alliances was the munitions and military hardware regularly supplied to the colonial authorities by the U.S. government. One benefit for the allied Africans was that they fell under the protection of the Liberian cannonball umbrella. In addition to the superiority of their weaponry, which had allowed the Liberians to push the original inhabitants of Cape Mesurado to the north and west, the Liberian state benefitted from the decentralized non-state systems of the Dey and Gola forces who had occupied these lands, most of whom by 1840 had sued for peace. Governor Buchannan, encouraged during his very brief tenure by the Chesapeake-born merchants and clergymen, had pursued a very aggressive policy of expansion, extending the authority of the state to a wide swath of coast and inland through a series of battles and skirmishes, ostensibly under the mantle of suppression of the slave trade. Roberts continued, indeed

[45] See Marie Tyler-McGraw, *An African Republic: Black and White Virginians in the Making of Liberia*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) 79.

intensified, the aggressive policy upon his assumption of the Governorship in 1841. He remarked to the Council in his 1844 annual message that his guiding principle with regards to military relations, security and defense of the colony was: “if we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, it must be known to our neighbors, that we are at all times prepared for war.” This perspective, most likely confirmed by his military experience, which achieved its greatest success in the battle he led against the forces of Gatuumba in 1839, catapulted Roberts into the front rank. It sealed his reputation as a man of action[46]

A sign of the growing military hegemony of the Liberian state in the 1840s was the intervention of the Liberian state in the dispute between two rival neighboring African entities, one group of the Gola and the Condo in Bopolu. Roberts offered his services as mediator in the dispute. Roberts took this to mean that Liberia’s influence had spread, and its power recognized by local African polities. Roberts took advantage of Liberia’s military dominance to engage in an aggressive policy of treaty-making and alliance formation. In 1843, his sights clearly set on controlling the entire 350 mile coastline from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas, he embarked upon several trips and visits to neighboring polities for discussions and negotiations. In reporting to the Legislative Council, he informed them that “I have not failed, in my intercourse with the native chiefs, particularly those on the seaboard, to

---

[46] Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Address to the 6th Session of the Legislative Council, 1844, ACS Correspondence.

introduce to them the subject of colonial jurisdiction, and to obtain from them an expression in regard to the purchase by the Colonization Society, of the entire coast from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas." One obstacle, from Roberts' perspective, was raising the funds to purchase and transfer the ownership of the land. It was clear in Roberts' mind at least, that all Liberia had to do was come up with the money and the local African leaders who he interacted with would be prepared to cede sovereignty to Liberia. He turned to the ACS for help but despite promises, nothing was forthcoming, not because the ACS did not want to help, but because the ACS was practically bankrupt financially.[47]

Another major challenge to the legitimacy of the Chesapeake-born leadership was the sheer diversity in the backgrounds, social origins and class status of its citizenry. The union of the settlements into a republic was never a foregone conclusion. The Chesapeake-born leadership thus had to work hard to convince its disparate audience and constituencies of the practical benefits of independence. Independence came in the teeth of serious opposition and skepticism. In finding a workable ideology, an outlook and perspective that could serve as a unifying theme, the leadership came up with a formula that emphasized and married together race, religion and republican citizenship.

In a series of addresses over the next few years, Governor Roberts, facing the imperatives of statehood, articulated the growing sense of black nationhood, linking that aspiration together with ideas of republicanism,

[47] Roberts, Address to the 6th session, 1844, ACS Correspondence.

commercial development and Christianity. In the dispute with the British traders for example, some of whom had claimed that they had purchased the land they traded on from African leaders and had enjoyed "undisturbed trade" in the area prior to the arrival of the Americans, Roberts argued that the right to own land is not the same thing as political power (jurisdiction) over that same piece of land. Liberia now had jurisdiction, passed (transferred) into their hands from the Africans. Roberts felt that the British government would see the correctness of the Liberian claims and side with Liberia in its dispute with the British traders. For one thing, Roberts felt it important to mention that, reflecting the zeitgeist of the age, Liberia's ports were "where vessels of all nations [engaged in legitimate trade] are permitted to enter and carry on a peaceable and undisturbed traffic…[and] impose no hard duties." In other words, Liberia did not impede free trade. It only outlawed slavery and sought to enforce anti-slavery on territory under its sovereignty.[48]

Moreover Roberts argued the stakes in this dispute were very high. It went to the core issue of the existence of the Liberian state. In the particular case of the dispute at Bassa Cove, a minor port, the actual amount of potential customs revenue being lost was insignificant. It was the principle and the precedent. "Nor that we wish to exclude British more than other traders, from any intercourse with the natives of that place for the purpose of trade. This is not the case. But carry out the principle. Let it once be established that these men are admitted into our territory above the law, beyond our judicial control,

---

[48] Roberts, Address to the 4th Session, 1842.

and the axe is laid at the root of the tree. Our political existence is at an end."[49]

Roberts asked the Council to consider the consequences of the state's inability to control its maritime borders. First, there would be unfettered and unmonitored entry of goods into Liberia. Roberts reminded them that "the small remittances from America will not meet our demands when scarcely a foreign vessel leaves the colony without taking away more or less a quantity of specie, which is exchanged for merchandise." Second, it would make it impossible to suppress the slave trade, which would empower the state's enemies. Third, what would stop the British merchants from also claiming Cape Mesurado as theirs as well, since they were trading there for decades before the arrival of the Liberian state? Unfettered and unrecorded entry, besides blowing a hole in government revenue, would put merchants like Roberts out of business. The unimpeded importation and delivery of weapons to the state's rivals would change the military balance of power in the region. If the British traders were not challenged, they would also lay claim to Cape Mesurado.[50]

Roberts frequently made the case for intertwining trade and Christianity, seeing one as promoting the other and as being the basis for expanding Liberia's influence and authority over their African neighbors.

---

[49] Roberts, Address to the 4th Session; see also *Liberia Herald*, April 1842

[50] Roberts, Address to the 4th Session, 1842. Sawyer, *Emergence of Autocracy*, 81, argues that these were mere trade disputes, not the types of lofty reason people fought for their national independence.

“Our civil and religious institutions,” he argued,“ are exerting a most happy influence over the natives around us. They acknowledge our superiority and are daily adopting our customs.”[51] Roberts later informed his Council that the local Africans in Garraway, near Cape Palmas, who were once in negotiation with the French to transfer sovereignty over their land, were now amenable to negotiating treaties of cession with Liberia, which would allow for the transfer of sovereignty over large tracts of land.[52]

But most often he laid emphasis on embedding a republican ethos among the citizenry by building republican institutions. “If…Liberia is destined at some future day to take a stand among the nations of the earth-we must educate our children, the rising generation must be informed, for on them depend the erection of the fabric-the foundation of which you are now commencing, a right education alone can raise man to his true and proper dignity, and without it we [will] ever remain cast out and degraded. Our peculiar situation demands that we too should make a strong and vigorous effort to improve our own minds, if we expect to maintain and hand down to posterity unimpaired the purity of our ***republican*** institutions. You know gentlemen that in an ignorant community, ***republicanism*** will soon regenerate into a wretched democracy which must end in anarchy. The condition of our race too in other parts of the world and especially of the inhabitants of this

---

[51] Roberts, Address to the 5th Session, 1843. It seems Roberts and his society interpreted the fact that Africans brought their children and dependents to live with Liberian families as an indicator that the Africans acknowledged Liberians’ superiority. It probably did not occur to the Liberians like Roberts, that by agreeing to take and keep the children, the Liberians were adopting a ‘native’ custom, and therefore acknowledging ‘native’ superiority..

[52] Roberts, Address to the 6th Session, 1844.

heathen country should be motives to rouse us to greater diligence, that we may show to the world that the African race is as susceptible of mental improvement as any other."[53]

Roberts articulated a small property holder ethos and objective: "farmers in Liberia, if industrious, frugal and persevering, may become not only independent but rich." He propounded a theory of agricultural development, advocating animal husbandry but concluded that the chief obstacles to its development included the lack of farm enclosures, title deeds for such farms and nurseries for lime plants sold to farmers at a subsidized price.[54] And adding a recurring trope in Liberian letters, he observed that "the greatest hindrance to successful agriculture in Liberia is the ruinous desire of most of our people to become wealthy in a very short period of time, therefore they are not willing to trust a slow but sure means of becoming so, but prefer to employ their little capital in speculation, becoming traders, and in nine cases out of ten, from their unaquaintance with a system of which they have had no previous knowledge – in a few years they become bankrupt."[55]

Speaking two years before independence, Roberts expressed his regret "that our position as a people, struggling to establish for ourselves and our children…an asylum that is denied us elsewhere, – cannot be properly defined or understood." He then laid the issue of independence on the table. "The

[53] Roberts, Address to the 5th Session, 1843.

[54] Roberts, Address to the 6th Session, 1844.

[55] Roberts, Address to the 5th Session, 1843.

time has arrived" he said, "for the people of these colonies to give this subject [independence] their serious consideration; it should be no longer a matter of indifference: questions are daily arising that should cause us to reflect, and if possible understand our present, and what is likely to be our future position."[56]

The immediate daily arising questions centered mainly on the non-compliant British traders who had intensified their defiance of the Liberian laws after what had seemed initially as a backing away by them. However, the larger issue before the Liberians was the business of establishing a "sovereign and independent government, composed of **people of color from the United States,** ***and elsewhere"*** – here it is clear that Roberts and the leadership regard the Liberian state, are conceptualizing the Liberian state, as a state for the African Diaspora, and that they intend to establish a state for the African Diaspora in Africa. They make it plain that they want to lay the foundation for a modern – civilized, in the language of the time – African state that will, of necessity, be composed in its first phase as an African Diaspora state. From their perspective, it would have to begin this way because there are no realistic alternatives. Or this is the best alternative considering all the other options. There are no Africans immediately available with certain necessary modern skills, for example literacy skills. Over time, the African Diaspora would be able to transmit its skills and enlightenment to the Africans, in other words, civilize the Africans. The African Diaspora would be the agents of modernity, or civilization – that was their project.[57]

---

[56] Roberts, Address to the7th Session, 1845.
[57] Roberts, Address to the 7th Session, 1845.

Speaking to a gathering of Liberians at the Liberian Lyceum which had convened in Monrovia on August 6, 1845, Roberts used the occasion not only to make the case for independence but also to continue a debate about black identity that had started some sixty years earlier in the aftermath of the American Revolution on the other side of the Atlantic.[58] Roberts wanted to "vindicate the race from scandal" and he tried to do this by expanding upon and weaving together ideas of black identity, Christianity, and property-based citizenship. He argued that contrary to what Thomas Jefferson had once concluded, black people were indeed "fit to rule," had the intellectual and moral capacity to organize themselves into a republic and furthermore were part of a lost tradition of civilization that only needed to be reclaimed. That

---

[58] "Mr. Jefferson, sir, drew his conclusions from false premises and at a time when, scrupled at no falsehood, however gross, to sustain a system so congenial to their feelings: the abominable system of slavery. About that time, it was strenuously attempted to be established as fact that not only a moral but a physical difference existed between white and colored men, in the construction of the head. And to bolster up this absurd and impious theory, anatomical examinations — authorized by government — were resorted to. But, in every instance, the result was the same: that the Almighty hath made of one blood all nations of men and that there is but one species of the whole human family.

It may be, however, that Mr. J[efferson] was not warped by any such influences and that the sentiments he gave publicly too — respecting the African race — were really his honest opinions. But if that is so, they were evidently founded upon very casual observations and, therefore, as rash as unfounded…

I remarked, Mr. President, that Mr. Jefferson. drew his conclusion from false premises. Now this, to my mind, is very clear and to every observing mind must be evident. For if we turn our eyes to the U.S. — the land of our nativity, the boasted land of liberty, equality, and the rights of man — and what do we behold the condition of the people of color there, especially in the south? It is precisely the same now as in Mr.J.'s days: the objects of the most abject and cruel slavery both of body and of mind. Every avenue stopped that is likely to lead the colored class — even those of them who are termed free — to education and eminence. The aspiring colored man sins against the whole white politic and, like the innocent hare, is soon hunted to the death. And still, like the persecuted Israelites, they are required to gather straw for themselves 'wherein to make brick' and, yet, 'tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon.' The statesman and philosopher J. — in the kind spirit of Egyptian taskmaster — would 'lay upon them a full tale of bricks.'" *Liberian Herald*, October 5, 1845.

was the task he set before the colony's leadership class, his audience that day, in the run up to Liberia's independence. Most of the group included men like him, who had come a long way from their days operating in the Chesapeake region of the United States as free black property-holding Christians without political rights.[59]

The Liberia Lyceum address was part of a series of lectures delivered by Roberts and two other luminaries of colonial Liberia, Hilary Teage, and John N. Lewis, in their strategy to prepare public opinion and build support for independence. Whereas Teage, who was also the author of the Liberian declaration of independence, in his peroration, had enthusiastically sketched out the contours of a new state, Lewis had cautioned his fellow Liberians about making hasty or rash moves towards independence. Roberts staked out a middle ground between the two. These men faced a series of obstacles in their path as they tried to navigate between the contending expectations of their fellow immigrant constituents, the demands of their benefactor, the ACS, who despite its loss of influence they still needed, and the requirements of nation-state building on the West African coast in the middle of the nineteenth century.[60]

---

[59] The entire speech was carried in the *Liberia Herald*. The *Herald* began publication in Monrovia from 1830 and continued irregularly throughout the colonial and early republican period. It ran articles and advertisements for all manner of things and served as the official voice of the colonial authorities. Its views more closely reflected those of the dominant faction of the colony's black leadership after its control passed into the hands of Hilary Teage in 1835. For an excellent history of the *Herald*, see Carl Patrick Burrowes, *Power and Press Freedom in Liberia, 1830-1970* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004).

[60] The Lyceum was conceived as a forum to air out the issues the colony faced. Its founding coincided with the growth of similar institutions in the US (see for example the Alexandria, Virginia, Lyceum, established in 1839). The Liberia Lyceum, which was formed in 1845, had

Roberts tried to provide a convincing rationale for independence. By placing Liberian independence within the broader sweep of history, Roberts was able to frame Liberia as the fulfillment of a destiny: the creation of a free black Christian republic. A more critical assessment might be that he tried to marry the economic accumulation project of a nascent bourgeois class to a specific social identity.

The Liberian founders thus created a ruling ideology, let us call it Black Christian Republicanism**,** which privileged property ownership and linked it to citizenship, which made property the core value of republican citizenship, and which provided a coherent set of hegemonic principles under which to constitute a governing bloc. What this action did was to assign to property owners responsibility for control of society. It made Liberia, and it set as its foundation, a private property holders' republic. They did this constitutionally, in the organic laws of the state. They did this also in terms of race, restricting citizenship not only to property holders but also to people of African descent. These two actions by the Chesapeake-born leadership did several things: First, it provided race cover for the bourgeois project of modernity that the Chesapeake-born leadership had embarked upon in the 1820s. In other words, it sublimated the social divisions and antagonism within the African-American immigrant population. In that sense, it had an immediate practical purpose. The calls for black power, the appeal to a black racial identity provided the ideological basis for unity. The ideology was that

---

begun meeting monthly in Monrovia. Its members included the current leadership of the colony and the future leadership of the republic. They discussed all issues.

their shared and common racial heritage was more important than the social divisions that might have divided them. In this formulation, race trumped class, gender, religion, etc.

At yet another level, the emphasis on private property in land, its assigned centrality in constituting power and republican citizenship, and the concomitant rejection of property in persons, placed this idea in direct conflict with competing notions of property in persons but not land held by some of the African polities in the region. The contested ideas about property formed the basis of continuous clashes between the newly forming Liberian state and older African political entities and actors. The struggle was not based primarily on individual idiosyncrasy or prejudice but rather on core ideological differences.

The appeal to racial solidarity in the colony therefore did not only provide a further ideological basis for unity, it also gave the Chesapeake-born leadership a powerful tool for control and for mobilizing support behind their project of modernity; viewing the world primarily through the lens of race gave the aspiring leaders legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens and obscured the leaders' class rule and privileges. They claimed to speak for and on behalf of all people of African descent – mostly in the colony but by implication the rest of Africa and the world. The Chesapeake-born leaders wanted to construct a modern state but they needed to first build a social base of support based upon a secure system of private property relations. Race justified the

leaders' claims to leadership. Race met or filled that requirement, a pre-condition of state formation: a mass popular base.

Republicanism on the other hand further cemented this form of class rule, under the cover of race, even while it justified and restricted rulership to men of property. In conclusion, this chapter examined how a social identity's transformation and consolidation was shaped by the business activities and political ideas of a particular group of property-holding free black men from the Chesapeake who were pursuing an economic accumulation strategy rooted in a larger trans-Atlantic historical context in the first half of the nineteenth century.

# CHAPTER SIX

## "LIBERTY DWELT THERE:" CHESAPEAKE-BORN LIBERIANS IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY ATLANTIC WORLD

On January 19, 1869, Joseph Jenkins Roberts addressed the 52nd Annual Meeting of the American Colonization Society in Washington DC at the Society's headquarters building on the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Fourth Street near the U.S. Capitol. His retrospective address took place amidst the backdrop of Ulysses Grant's recent ascendency to the presidency of the United States of America. Roberts, who was two months away from his sixtieth birthday, had already served as the last Governor of the Liberia colony and as the first president of Liberia. The Richmond, Virginia born James Payne was serving as president of Liberia during Roberts's visit to Washington and the trip would have been seen by both the Liberians and their ACS allies as an opportunity to solidify ties with Washington powers brokers and to win financial support from the United States government. Official diplomatic relations between Monrovia and Washington were only established in 1865, at the end of the Lincoln administration. At the time of the speech, Roberts was serving as the president of Liberia College, of which he was the founding president. So he spoke in his capacity as wise man and his words carried weight, prestige and influence. Roberts had, over his career, gained praise from many quarters. The famous German geographer and one of the founders of modern geography Carl Ritter, came away impressed after listening to Roberts speak on several occasions in London. Ritter wrote that Roberts was "noble, highly educated, experienced, wise, with the speech of a

very knowledgeable statesman. We have repeatedly attended his speeches which would full in the first circles in London."[1]

Although the influence of the ACS had significantly waned by the 1860s, in both Monrovia and Washington, the Society nonetheless served a useful role for the Liberian state and its officials. The ACS acted as a sort of lobbyist for the government of Liberia and as a public relations outfit, which is why among other reasons it provided Roberts with this platform. This speech can and should be seen as Roberts' valedictory of his experience and his evaluation of the Liberia project, a retrospective – where the Liberia project fit in the flow of world history.

Roberts began his speech by outlining the colonization project. After paying tribute to the ACS and calling it "the offspring of a great Christian idea," Robert proceeded to summarize the purpose of Liberia. He said that Liberia was conceived first and foremost as a refuge, an "asylum" for "Africa's scattered children;" that it was intended to demonstrate the African's capacity for "self-government" and "maintenance of free political institutions." Liberia was also created to contribute to the destruction of the slave trade on the west coast of Africa; to "introduce and bring the blessings of Christianity" among the "native" "heathen" "tribes;" to launch the "founding of an empire with Negro Nationality;" and to begin the

---

[1] Karnga, *History of Liberia,* 85. Roberts and his wife Jane Waring Roberts were well-travelled and frequent visitors to England, including their famous reception by Queen Victoria in 1848. Jane Roberts, born in Petersburg, Virginia in 1820, moved to London and lived there after her husband's death in 1876. She died in 1911. See Johnston, *Liberia*, 363.

“redemption of a continent from pagan superstition and idolatry.”[2] In outlining the purpose of Liberia, Roberts provided a succinct expression of Black Christian Republicanism including its pan-Africanist themes, its civilizationist rhetoric, and its African American centeredness. In constructing this history, he defined the Liberian national identity.

Roberts, whose lecture topic was entitled simply, “The Republic of Liberia,” sketched a history of Liberia’s founding that placed it in the mainstream of the nineteenth century Atlantic world. After perfunctorily discussing the formation of the ACS in Washington DC and nodding to its charity and benevolence and the Christian virtue of its founders and members, he quickly proceeded to his main focus which is the history of the specific group of African Americans and their struggles to found the colony.

Roberts said he was basing his rendering of the early history on the testimony of the Reverend Elijah Johnson, not only a participant but the leader of the initial group of African Americans who landed at Cape Mesurado in 1822. Here was the summary of Roberts’s version of the history of the founding of Liberia: In 1820, 86 persons from the American states of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and New York, what might be called the

---

[2] Joseph Jenkins Roberts, *Address to the 52nd Annual Meeting of the American Colonization Society*, January 19, 1869, 4-5. Here lies a major problem in the historiography of Liberia. Roberts’s description of the Africans as composed of heathen tribes is similarly expressed in all of the contemporaneous accounts, by both supporters and opponents of colonization; by both black and white writers, observers and participants. Roberts is not unique in that regard. But Roberts makes it clear in the same speech that he does not regard the Africans’ “heathenism” as a disqualification from becoming civilized and joining the civilization train in the future and eventually joining the new nation. In fact, the whole purpose of the founding of Liberia was to make the Africans a civilized people. Twentieth century conventions ought not to be applied although it usually is applied when analyzing the Liberian founders.

Mid-Atlantic region, departed New York City on February 6 on the good ship *Elizabeth*. He stated that the African Americans went to Africa because "liberty dwelt there," and that they had "resolved to flee a country which repudiated their manhood."[3]

The African American "colonists," as Roberts referred to them, first landed in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which was never intended as their ultimate destination. They then moved to Sherbro Island, some 200 miles further east along the coast but conditions were unsuitable and the colonists met tremendous difficulties. A new location – Cape Mesurado – further east along the coast was found by the joint U.S. Navy/ACS team scouting the area. Roberts claimed that Cape Mesurado was "purchased" from the local chiefs by U.S. Navy Captain Robert Stockton and ACS Agent Dr Eli Ayres. On January 7, 1822 according to Roberts, the first band of African American colonists landed on Providence Island (Perseverance Island was the name initially given by the Americans to the narrow piece of land in the mouth of the Mesurado River) to take possession of the land "purchased" in their behalf.[4]

---

[3] Roberts, *Address to the ACS*, 6. Themes of masculinity run through many of the speeches and writings of the Liberian founders. A scholarly historical critique of masculinity in the formation of Liberia is needed. It is also interesting that Roberts goes out of his way to point to Elijah Johnson's testimony, and to claim Johnson's authority, not Alexander's or Gurley's, and certainly not Ashmun's, to establish the facts of the 1822 landing. But in making sure that the voices of the founders of the state are not silenced, he nonetheless also engages in his own silencing of the past, eliding the voices and identities of the Africans even while including them in the story. For more on this problem in history, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

[4] "Colonists" and "purchase" both deserve further commentary. The African American founders saw themselves as colonists and called their initial settlement a colony. Yet the term colonialism, especially as it pertained to Africa, came into use at the end of the nineteenth century with the establishment of formal European colonial rule on the continent. The

According to Roberts, European ("foreign" was the term Roberts used) and mulatto slave traders then "incited the natives to hostilities against the newcomers[5]" because the slavers feared that the colonists would interfere with and threaten the slave trade by increasing the colonists' influence among the native African population. So the fresh water supply to the colonists on the island was cut off. However, the colonists were saved *twice* by "a friendly

---

meaning of the term, first in the wake of the new post-Berlin European colonial rule in Africa, and then after the Second World War, also changed. Lord Frederick Lugard's influential *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922) advanced a favorable interpretation of colonialism. Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, (New York: Monthly Review, 2000); Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965); and Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1952)*; The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963)*;* and *Towards the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), were all originally published in the 1950s and early 60s in the heat of the anti-colonial post-war revolt, and shaped the intellectual landscape out of which emerged the critique of Liberia's founding as primarily a colonialist project. While aspects of Liberia's founding may appear like colonialism (whether in the Lugardian or Cesairean sense), the fact remains that the founders of Liberia, deeply marked by their experience of racist exclusion in the United States, never saw the Africans they met as destined to permanently remain in "heathenism" and therefore to be excluded from eventual citizenship in the new nation they were constructing. Furthermore, it was only at the end of the century that the Liberian state effectively extended its authority over the vast majority of the territory it had claimed. It was the Barclay reforms of 1904 that was more akin to colonialism, with the creation of the Liberian Frontier Force, the reorganization of the native African populations into clans, chiefdoms and districts, the appointment by the central government of chiefs and commissioners to preside over these new units, the institution of the notorious hut tax, with the chiefs responsible for collecting taxes, recruiting labor for state projects, and maintaining order with the backing of the Frontier Force. See Amos Sawyer, "Proprietary Authority and Local Administration in Liberia," in James Wunsoh and Dele Olowu (eds.), *The Failure of the Centralized State: Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990): 157-158.

Regarding Roberts's claim about "purchasing" land, a major antagonism between Americans and Africans on the West African coast at the time were their conflicting ideas and conceptualizations of property. Customary access to land defined the African peoples of the area as a basically free peasantry. Part of that custom was access to communal land that was inalienable to private individuals or persons outside the polity. In those customary land tenure systems, land was relatively plentiful and local rulers were custodians of the land, not its private owners. Land was not a commodity to be bought or sold. See Andro Linklater, *Owning the Earth: The Transforming History of Land Ownership* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

[5] Roberts, *Address*, 8.

chief:"[6] Once to sneak drinking water to them at night on Providence Island; the other time was this chief's timely intervention which led to a partial re-conciliation between the colonists and the more "hostile natives," which then allowed and authorized the colonists to establish themselves on the mainland (i.e. on the Cape), and to come on shore on April 25, 1822.

Roberts added that shortly after the landing on the Cape, new attacks by the "natives" on the colonists began. The ACS agent, Dr. Ayers counseled the colonists to pack their bags and depart and return to the U.S. Elijah Johnson's response to the advice was "no, I have been two years searching for a home in Africa, and I have found it, and I shall stay here." The ACS agent left for America, leaving Johnson behind and in charge. Roberts narrated the story of how a British navy ship's sudden and unexpected appearance in the harbor briefly pacified the "natives" but that Elijah Johnson declined the British offer of help with these immortal words: "it might cost more to pull down that [British] flag than to whip the natives."[7]

Roberts continued: on August 9, a ship from America bringing military reinforcements and bearing many new colonists and the new ACS agent Jehudi Ashmun arrived. The next few months saw the preparations being made for war and for the defense of the colony. King George of the Dei, after convening a Council of Chiefs, declared war on the African American colonists. The first battle between the natives and the colonists took place on November 11, 1822 (The Battle of Crown Hill). Roberts claimed that the

---

[6] Roberts, *Address*, 8.

[7] Roberts, *Address*, 9.

Africans assembled an 800 man warrior army. But a "friendly native" had revealed the "natives" war plans and thus forewarned, the "natives" were defeated.

The entire arc of Roberts's narrative was the intervention of divine providence; that the way events unfolded must have been a result of a divine plan. Just when things seemed hopeless and bleak, at a breaking point, deliverance appeared in one guise or the other. A recurring motif running through the speech was that the colonists were able to snatch victory from the proverbial jaws of defeat. The second native "invasion," (Dec 1, 1822) was again led by the Dei King George, except that this time, the Bassa King Bob Gray informed on his confederates. The subsequent intervention of King Boatswain (Sao Boso Kamara), of the Condo Confederation headquartered in Bopolu, who prevailed upon King George not to undertake a third war, brought about a peace settlement. Interpretive questions remain about King George's motives. King George may have been an ally of the slave traders, as Boatswain once was. But King George could also be seen as the leader of a peasant resistance movement. Maybe he was both.[8]

The King Boatswain mediated peace agreement settled the question of control over Cape Mesurado for good. There were no more wars fought over control and possession of Cape Mesurado thereafter. Roberts then explained that the tropical climate and the disease environment killed off many African American colonists, and European slave traders further along the coast

---

[8] See Killingray, "Black Atlantic Missionary Movements," 5-9, and Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*, 238-249, for a larger discussion of the idea of divine providence among African American missionaries in Africa.

continued to incite chiefs against the colony. However, more immigration from the U.S. restored the numbers of the colonists and Monrovia began to grow as a port of call as the harbor rendered efficient service to foreign cruisers. A consequence is that a legitimate trade began to develop between colonists and the "natives." New African American settlements – Junk River, Grand Bassa, Sinoe, and Cape Palmas – were founded, and several more religious and educational institutions were established by American missionaries.

Roberts listed the successes the colonial government had in destroying the slave trade. "The slave barracoons at Mama Town, Little Cape Mount, Little Bassa, New Cesters and Trade Town were demolished, and thousands of slaves liberated, solely by the power of the Little Commonwealth; and no, there was no relaxation of this purpose until every slaver had been expelled from the whole line of coast now comprehended within the territorial jurisdiction of Liberia."[9]

From Roberts' perspective, the most pleasing development was the territorial expansion of the colony. He stated that more and more native chiefs willingly and happily brought their polities into the orbit of Monrovia and recognized the authority of the Liberian colonial state. "[Liberian] territorial limits increased by purchases from native chiefs, who were glad to place themselves and their people under the protection of the colonial

[9] Roberts, *Address*, 12.

government."[10] He neither enumerated who they were, how many they were, or where they were exactly located. Nor did he explain if those polities formed a majority of the surrounding polities. But the question arises as to the credibility and validity of Roberts's claim. That the colonial state expanded on the basis of war is indisputable. At the same time, it is also true that Roberts forged durable alliances with several neighboring African polities, many of whom sought the colony's support and sometimes protection in their disputes with other African polities.

Roberts also pointed to the profitable trans-Atlantic trade in African products that emerged alongside the rise in the frequency of foreign vessels calling at Liberia's ports. But this increasing economic activity in the colony was challenged by the presence and activity in the area of British merchants. Specifically, some British merchants refused to recognize the sovereignty of the colony and its right to charge customs duty and as such refused to pay customs duty to the colonial government. In this they were supported by their government in London, and even more aggressively by the British Governor in Freetown, Sierra Leone. To complicate matters even further, some British traders claimed that they had purchased land from the natives prior to Liberia's formation, on some of the same land the colonial government was now claiming as theirs.[11]

---

[10] Roberts, *Address*, 13.

[11] For more background to this history, see, for example, Everill Bronwen. *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Gibril Cole, *The Krio of West Africa: Islam, Culture, Creolization and Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013); and Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*, 110-138.

This was a source of friction between Britain and colonial Liberia. Roberts explained to his audience the implications of the Anglo-Liberian trade dispute. "For two years or more the subject [of independence] was under constant and earnest consideration; when in January, 1846 the [ACS] by a formal vote, recommended that the colonists 'take into their own hands the whole work of self-government'" and declare their independence. The colonists had gained in confidence. The colonial state was more frequently called upon to settle territorial and other disputes between native chiefs. "The majesty of the laws [were] eventually maintained." In effect, according to Roberts, the colonists showed their capacity for self-government and their readiness for independence and they had debated the issue among themselves for two full years before the ACS made a formal approach to them.[12]

By that point, according to Roberts, 600 miles of West African coastline was claimed as under Liberian jurisdiction, an estimated 600,000 Africans lived under their claimed jurisdiction, while some 15,000 American immigrants and 4,000 recaptured Africans lived in the colony. The colony was divided administratively into four counties, and thirteen civilized (or modern) towns and villages had been established.

In summing up, Roberts reiterated the objectives of Liberia, which were to serve as an asylum for blacks that was "free from political oppression and the disabilities of racial prejudice," to carry out "the extirpation" of the slave trade along the coast of West Africa, to introduce Christianity and

---

[12] Roberts, *Address*, 14.

Civilization (modernity) to this part of Africa, and to demonstrate the ability of black people for self-government and the management of their own public affairs. That last objective was reflected, Roberts argued, in the successful diplomacy he had pursued with Britain and France after Liberia declared its independence, which resulted in Britain and France's recognition of Liberia's sovereignty; and the lack of any civil unrest in Liberia.[13]

Roberts then turned to address racial issues. He acknowledged that there had been critics of the so-called "negro clause" in the Liberian constitution. The aforementioned clause explicitly restricted Liberian citizenship to persons of African descent. According to Roberts, "this provision was not prompted by any feelings of prejudice against white men…but was desirable more especially for the reason that the colonists would retain in their own hands the whole control of the Government until they should fully demonstrate the problem as to their ability to conduct the affairs of a state….And this I suppose may now be accounted as settled."[14]

Roberts made references to several of the new categories which would come to form part of the Liberian national identity. He referred to "Americo-Liberians," and to "native" Christian missionaries and teachers, in a reference to Africans (non-American) who grew up in and became part of the colony. In this can be found early evidence of the Liberian ethnic identities that would

[13] Roberts, *Address*, 15.

[14] Roberts, *Address*, 17. Although the issue of a citizenship restricted to persons of African descent usually took pride of place in the first generation of Liberians' justifications and defense of their independence, the question itself, a key aspect of Liberian national identity, is elided in most of the scholarship although the issue and its implications needs a fuller and more thorough historical examination.

grow in significance in the later nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century. Roberts specifically singled out a "native" African who was "an influential member of the legislature of the Republic" as evidence of several things: that integration and assimilation of "natives" was taking place – as long as these "natives" had shown themselves capable of adopting or adapting to "civilized" and Christian norms and of embracing the modern; and therefore that it was possible for the "natives" to be transformed, respected and embraced by the colonists.[15]

On the same theme, Roberts continued, "it is no uncommon thing even now [1869], and at all times a most pleasing spectacle, to see so many of these people, once the blind victims of heathenish superstition and idolatry, bowing side by side with their American Liberian brethren at the same Christian altar, and worshipping the only true God." The objective was not conquest but assimilation.[16]

As for Liberia's economy, "I can remember" Roberts recalled, "when not more than thirty or forty tons of palm oil, and perhaps as many tons of cam-wood, would be collected in a year, for export…last year, though I have not at hand the official statistics,…not less than 600 tons of cam-wood, 1,200 tons of palm oil, and 200 tons of palm kernel" were exported. And, "last year, 3 Liberian [owned] vessels, foreign built, were despatched to Liverpool" full

---

[15] The identity of this individual remains unknown. However, Roberts's revelation shows that the founders had given thought to this issue and that they welcomed integration. Put another way, constructing an apartheid-type system was not their objective.

[16] Roberts, *Address*, 17.

of palm oil, camwood and ivory. It was a hopeful vision, seen from his vantage point.[17]

"What, then," Roberts concluded, "may we not hope and reasonably expect as to the future? My own convictions are that Heaven has great things in store for Africa, to be conferred doubtless through the instrumentality of Liberia...a divine purpose, looking to the redemption and elevation of a people long enchained in the shackles of cruel barbarism."[18] It is reasonable to assume within the context of the speech that Roberts was referring to all black people, the Americans and the Africans. "In the ordinary course of human affairs, there seems to me no reason whatever why Liberia may not continue to prosper and go on to distinguish herself in all that adorns civil society and tends to national greatness." The future depends on God, but "of course much also depends upon additional help from the United States."[19]

Roberts concluded by explaining the reason why Liberia needed more aid. This aid is needed to "bring the other tribes within the scope of Christian civilization and incorporation into the republic" thus forming an African nationality that would command the respect of the civilized world. He advanced the case for trade and foreign investment in Liberia, and ended with

---

[17] Roberts, *Address*, 17.

[18] Roberts, *Address*, 18. We see here again the marriage of Christianity and African redemption.

[19] Roberts, *Address*, 20.

the Ethiopianist refrain of the era, "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God."[20]

The story of Liberia's origins is usually centered on the problem of slavery in the United States with a focus on the activities of the American Colonization Society. Liberia was seen by its many nineteenth century white sympathizers as a well intentioned experiment. Its white critics thought it was a misguided experiment at best. African Americans, including those who actually migrated there from the Chesapeake in the 1820s and 30s, had an even more complicated relationship with Liberia. The perspective of the Chesapeake free blacks being studied here was different, their issues were different and the outcomes of their actions were not always as intended. This is their story: the founding generation of the Liberian state, not their successors, who, coming from another generation and faced with new problems that were barely discernible or non-existent at the time of the country's founding, took Liberia in a different direction in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Another problem in properly situating the history of Liberia's origin is that social science terms, borrowed from anthropology, sociology and political science, and deployed in the examination of the Liberian state's origin, are generally ill-defined and operate at a purely empirical and descriptive level.

[20] Roberts failed to mention perhaps the most innovative feature of their 1847 Constitution, (Article V Section 10), which was its clause that gave women the right to independently own property, putting the Liberians ahead of most of their contemporaries in the Atlantic World. The history of Article V Section 10 of the original Liberian constitution also deserves more in-depth scholarly attention.

Yet scholars rely on theoretical generalizations that are so indeterminate as to sometimes be of questionable utility. Discussions of Liberia have tended to take categories like 'indigenous' and 'Americo-Liberian' for granted. However, the research evidence shows that once you try to pin these terms down with reference to any of their supposedly determinate characteristics, it becomes wasted effort. What has happened is that a series of social outcomes has been taken to constitute a unitary empirical object, given the labels 'indigenous' and Americo-Liberian', and then presumed to explain the phenomena in question rather than being something that demands an explanation of how these identities were formed in the first place.

There are usually three inter-related models for explaining the origins of the Liberian state: cultural diffusion, dualism and ethnic determinism. All three models were combined in a recent work of scholarship by a noted historian that included a discussion of the origin of the Liberian state.[21]

The first model Davis draws upon is a version of the cultural diffusionist model in which cultural influence, on the one hand, flows only in one direction (uni-directional), from the "superior" culture to the "inferior" culture. In addition and contradictorily, on the other hand, this model assumes that cultures begin as self-contained, fixed, unchanging and

---

[21] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2014), 105-125. Interestingly, Davis is aware of how the abolitionist narrative of the middle nineteenth century in the ante-bellum U.S. with its strident and one-sided anti-colonizationist rhetoric, has distorted subsequent more complete, more nuanced understandings of the complicated colonization issue. He admits as much. In the case of the chapter in which Liberia is discussed, he mentioned this aspect in relation to the white colonizationists and the ACS. But he shows no similar awareness, subtlety or historical objectivity when it comes to the black colonizationists; i.e., he repeats wholesale and uncritically, the simplistic (crude, really), one-dimensional canards of the anti-colonizationists, compounded by the bias and reliability of his sources.

unchangeable un-dynamic mutually exclusive entities, with no fluidity. Change would have to come from without, from external influences, although change is supposed to be impossible or near impossible.

Further embedded in this model is dualism – the existence of two mutually exclusive and most likely hostile/antagonistic forces that drive the workings of the relationship; or determine the dynamics of the system. This is the lens that Davis employs to explain the origins of the Liberian state. In the U.S., it is black versus white; in Liberia it is settler colonial versus the native Africans – the actual identities are never subject to historical analysis and there is no need to explain how those identities came about. They are assumed to already exist unproblematically.

Finally, there is ethnic determinism – where ethnic identity takes precedence over everything else; or is prior to and independent of everything else – to round out the trio of inter related models for explaining historical change as it relates to the origins of the Liberian state. Davis does not interrogate the conceptual framework he adopts, which leads to contradictions in his argument and which limits his explanatory power.[22]

The cultural diffusionist and affiliated models, echoing mid-nineteenth century antecedents, posed the problem as one of either a) the civilized African Americans civilizing the Africans (the ACS position) or b) the African Americans being swallowed back into the barbarism of the Africans

---

[22] This three-legged interrelated framework, best expressed in the case of Liberian studies in the work of both Holsoe and Liebenow, relied on an adulterated application of the Herskovitsian "culture contact" model, and on modernization theory and Parsonian structural-functionalism of the 1950s. With a few exceptions, most of the scholarship on Liberia takes Holsoe and Liebenow as the jump off point: the great theoretical and methodological advances in history and the social sciences of the past 50 years seem to have passed over Liberians studies.

(the Wm Lloyd Garrison position).[23] There is no allowance, no space for inter-mingling or cross fertilization. Davis adheres to a model shared by all of his secondary sources who adhere to the triple-headed hydra of diffusionism, dualism, and ethno-determinism.

A counter interpretative lens of Liberian history would look at the fusion, the synthesis of traditions, cultures, etc. Thus the real historical outcome was the emerging basis of a new hybrid – identity, culture etc., with many layers intertwined. My model of cross fertilization, hybridization, mixture, fusion, and synthesis applies to both the political/economic and cultural/social spheres. That legacy stretched into the twentieth century, in content if not in form (law); in practice if not in theory. For example, there are many examples today (2017) of community/family property in which a parcel of land is privately owned in common by hundreds of persons who are descendants of an original African American owner. The point here is that the Chesapeake Free Blacks may have come with the notion of individual private property but over the ensuing decades, and century, a hybrid of collective private property ownership was practiced by subsequent generations of Liberians. That practice of collective ownership or claims to the land originated from traditional African practice.[24]

Similarly, how did Americo-Liberians become Americo-Libeians? They were not Americo-Liberians in America; they couldn't be. And Americo-Liberians were definitely not Americans. They were a new type of African,

---

[23] See Gurley *Life of Ashmun*, and Alexander, *A History* for the former and Garrison, *Thoughts*, for the latter.

[24] This specific practice is another area that awaits further study and analysis. For more on the idea of hybridity and creolization of African-descended people in the Americas and the Atlantic World, see Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

just like the Afro-Portuguese and Afro-English of West Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or the Sawo of Sierra Leone were new types; just like the post-independence African bourgeoisies of the late twentieth century are a new type. Americo-Liberians were a part, were products, of the age of emancipation. The Americo-Liberian identity was a hybrid that emerged from a very specific set of historical circumstances – the drawn out ending of the transatlantic slave trade, and the intersections of various slavery abolitions in the Atlantic world. It formed as a post-emancipation identity in what was in effect a post-emancipation society.[25] Accompanying that new identity was the emergence of Liberian English, the most obvious marker of the Liberian national identity that was to form. The real name for the identity that scholars are trying to define is not "Americo-Liberian" or even "congo" but "*kwee*." What is needed now is a proper investigation into the history and relationship of the three terms.[26]

Although Davis mentioned the importance of slavery to African societies and ruling classes along the coast, he did not acknowledge or explore how important slavery's vanquishing may have been to the black American settlers; how slavery's existence might have shaped African American perspectives on the Africans they met. African American attitudes to local Africans were simply dismissed as feelings of superiority that came from

[25] For more on post-emancipation societies in the nineteenth century, see Frederick Cooper, Thomas Holt and Rebecca Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

[26] In the Liberian English vernacular, a *kwee* person is one who has the attributes of a western educated, modern identity in the Liberian context, independent of pre-Liberian ethnicity; for example someone who eats with a knife and fork and speaks standard English. The origin of the term is indeterminate. "Congo" and "Americo-Liberian" are ethnic identities in which meaning of and membership in has been contested and reconstituted over time.

being civilized Christians from America. A closer re-reading of Davis's documentary evidence – the Skipwith letters – yields other types of understanding.

The Skipwith letters[27] provide deeper insight into the dynamics of the relationships between the African American immigrant settlers and the local populations and polities with which they came into contact than is usually provided in the histories of the period. Peyton Skipwith, a settler and former slave from the Chesapeake who arrived in Liberia in the 1830s, implied in several of his letters to his former master in Virginia that the immigrant settlers had developed apparently flourishing trade relations with their African neighbors. For example, in his May 9, 1838, letter, Skipwith bemoaned the curtailment of trade in the colony due to military hostilities between the colonial government and some African communities on the one hand and hostilities between two neighboring African communities on the other hand.[28] Between the hostilities, trade obviously took place, and for trade to take place, it would mean the parties involved in trading had an understanding among themselves and had established a relationship. It suggests, on the surface at least, an equal exchange. It suggests at a minimum that the parties acknowledged each others' usefulness.

---

[27] In Randall Miller, ed. "*Dear Master": Letters of a Slave Family* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1978.

[28] Peyton Skipwith to John Hartwell Cocke, May 9, 1838, in Miller, 64. It is important to emphasize here as well that Skipwith's Virginia experience was unlike that of the Chesapeake-born Liberian leadership, who were free people in Virginia.

Another Skipwith's account[29] of the trade relations between settler David Logan, a native of Richmond Virginia, a Mr. Harris, and the local African community, further confirms the depth and complexity of the relationships. The Logan story is particularly interesting because Logan and Harris were captured along with a Gola man and a Bassa man, and the four men were taken away by their Mandingo captors. This story, like many others, defies any easy explanation of events and motives; for example, that actions were driven by the antagonism between the immigrant settlers and homogenous 'native' African populations.

Peyton Skipwith in the same letter also discusses the affair regarding Green Hoskin, an immigrant settler who travelled to Bassa from Monrovia and attempted to or actually sold an African child into slavery.[30] First of all, Hoskins tricked the parents of the two children (one child ran away, presumably back home), promising to teach them English if they were put under his care and jurisdiction. The fact that the parents complied with Green Hoskins' request needs some analysis. Why did the boys' parents do such a thing? A good surmise would be that they saw promise, that they thought the immigrant settlers had something to offer that was beneficial. The parents were not initially hostile to Hoskin. Neither were they fearful. My assumption is that the practice of the Africans giving their children to the Americans had begun to become common. Moreover, that there were larger

---

[29] Skipwith to Cocke, *Ibid,* 64.

[30] Skipwith to Cocke, *Ibid, 64.*

and larger numbers of so-called native children who were actually being educated. This is based on other evidence.[31]

In the Green Hoskin story, the citizens of Edina, an immigrant settlement in Bassa located where the St John River empties into the Atlantic Ocean, alerted apparently by the children's family, had Green Hoskin arrested and pressed charges against him for slave trading. Clearly, the settlers took the side of one of the natives against "one of their own." A Monrovia court later freed and acquitted Hoskins due to lack of evidence.[32] This case showed several things. The immigrant settler residents of Edina had a relationship with their African neighbors that went beyond just trading with them. A certain level of trust existed between the two communities otherwise why would they have cooperated with each other to attempt to bring Green Hoskin to justice? A rudimentary justice system was also in place and they followed the prescribed procedures.

Another dimension of the relationship was the one having to do with the legal fostering of native children by settler families, like Skipwith's.[33] Skipwith had two young men, John Faulcon and Harrison Story, bound to him

---

[31] See *The Census*, conducted by the U.S. Navy, which specifically counted the number of African children in schools in the colony.

[32] Skipwith to Cocke, *Ibid*, 64.

[33] Skipwith to Cocke, May 20, 1839, *Ibid*, 70-71.

as apprentices. This type of relationship blended the native practice of pawning to the American practice of indentureship/apprenticeship.[34]

Later on, Skipwith warned about the threat or danger of wealthy merchants ("the richest of the men" in his words) losing their property and thus freedom due to the mortgaging of their property to "foreigners" (irony), by whom he meant English traders mostly.[35] They were mortgaging because they had no money, times were hard, and they needed the cash. On the other hand, he displayed *schadenfreude* towards them and was pleased that "they are oblige to go to farming (sic)." Skipwith expressed the Jeffersonian ideal of the self-reliant farmer-republican, although in the same letter he asked his former master to send him tobacco, nails and other items.

Reverend Colin Teage took Skipwith's letter to John Hartwell Cocke in Virginia on Skipwith's behalf.[36] It should be noted that Skipwith had enough confidence in Teage, pastor of the Providence Baptist Church, and that Teage not only knew who Cocke was, but was quite confident about being able to deliver the letter to the prominent Virginia planter and slave owner. One wonders how that meeting went. It shows that the leading persons of the Liberia colony returned to the U.S. on a not infrequent basis and seemed to be able travel within the U.S.A. Joseph Jenkins Roberts would visit the U.S. at least 4 times after his initial arrival in Liberia in 1828.

---

[34] Evidence for this and much more apparently exists in the record of indentures of the Commonwealth Court of Monthly Sessions for the period 1838-1842 held in the Liberian Government Archives.

[35] Skipwith to Cocke, *Ibid,* 72.

[36] Skipwith to Cocke, Nov 11, 1839, *Ibid*, 72.

Roberts' last meeting in the U.S. included an audience with U.S. government officials during his January 1869 visit.[37]

From the vantage point of the middle of the nineteenth century, Joseph Jenkins Roberts in that Washington speech could look back over the preceding fifty years with satisfaction and disappointment. Based on the benchmarks and standards they had set for themselves, they could claim a measure of success, even while acknowledging their failures and mistakes. Roberts and his fellow founding fathers had opened up new pathways for expanding black freedom in the Atlantic World of that era. They could and did claim that the "natives" were not oppressed by the Liberians – the notorious hut tax and Frontier Force would come fifty years later – and that their African neighbors maintained their independence of action and ran their own affairs. At mid-century, consolidation of Liberians' freedom and independence through the expansion inland of their state's authority and incorporation of the neighboring African polities was high on their founders' agenda. But the future, which they could not know, would bring new challenges and transform old ones.

---

[37] Benjamin Quarles, *Lincoln and the Negro,* claimed that Roberts met with Abraham Lincoln on a previous visit. See Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society*, (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 2005) for the reference.

# CODA

> "A nation of colored people on the soil of Africa adorned and dignified with the attributes of a civilized and Christian community [was] the grand object which at first brought us to Africa." – Hilary Teage[1]

> "I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name." – William Morris[2]

In studying how the Liberian state's origins were specific to the rise of an aspiring free black petty-bourgeoisie that emerged from the peculiarities of black Chesapeake society during and after the American Revolution, the dissertation addressed several issues. The free blacks' exposure to the republicanism of the American Revolution, and their embrace of evangelical Protestantism had deeply marked them and raised their expectations in the post-revolutionary Chesapeake. However, their forward social and political advance was blocked by a counterrevolutionary backlash against what was seen by the Chesapeake planter class as the excesses of the American Revolution, thereby excluding the free blacks, on the basis of race, from full participation in Chesapeake civic life. With their citizenship claims rejected and political life curtailed, some of these property-owning free blacks turned their gaze more firmly to Africa in the hope of redemption.

Once in West Africa, there were three important things to consider about the developing political and social outlook the free blacks shared: first, they organized their political and social thought around a set of key republican ideas that focused on notions of individual as opposed to collective citizenship; limited government to secure the liberty of the citizenry; and on the link between citizenship and property

---

[1] Hilary Teage, *Liberian Herald*, August 1847.

[2] E. P. Thompson, *Williams Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary* (Oakland: PM Press, 2011), 297, quoted from the mid to late nineteenth century Victorian's 1886 novel, *A Dream of John Ball,* about the English peasant revolt of 1381.

ownership. These republican ideas shaped the founders' conception of the state which they applied in the case of Liberia.

Secondly, embedded in these republican ideas was a conception of capitalist property relations, in particular the category private property. The Chesapeake founders of Liberia would make this idea – private property – one of the bedrock founding principles of the Liberian state, assigning to its ownership inalienable rights. The idea of tying citizenship to property ownership was based on a republican theory that saw private property ownership as a means of independence. This independence would serve as a check on the power of the state, as an indicator of social responsibility and as the best guarantee for a commitment to the common welfare of the citizenry. It complemented the founders' project of inserting and entrenching themselves as a successful commercial bourgeoisie in the global Atlantic world of their time. This aspiration was tied to and dependent upon their need to accumulate capital and create a state that would be able to operate in their interests.[3]

Third, in West Africa, economic and political events seen through the lens of their republican ideas led the founders to reconfigure a social identity: the black race. The Chesapeake free black founders of Liberia aspired to the creation and institutionalization of a separate and distinct black nationality – a black identity – that covered the entire spectrum of people of African descent, that held out the prospect of solidarity for all black people in republican equality and citizenship, and that subsumed all classes and categories of black people under the tent of the imagined

[3] These ideas had their roots in classical antiquity but were revived and updated in the early modern era and influential during the American Revolution. See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* and C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism.* It would be interesting to explore concepts and traditions of governance held by the Africans in the areas around Cape Mesurado.

black nation. Of more practical and immediate import was the need to wield together a heterogeneous African Diasporic population into a unified nation.

In this way the Liberian founders contributed to race making, giving concrete expression to a powerful idea – that black people constituted their own nation, shared a common past, faced a culturally homogeneous destiny, and that Africa was their refuge, their homeland that beckoned. Yet, faced with concrete realities in West Africa and the larger Atlantic economy in which they operated, they remained enmeshed in their own contradictions, caught between the hierarchies intrinsic to their property-bound conception of citizenship and the egalitarian impulses behind their anti-slavery views.[4]

Obviously, many factors went into Liberia's founding. However, it is long past due to reassess the various contributions to its creation. In this case, the reassessment being carried out in the dissertation was of the Chesapeake free black founding fathers, whose political ideas have been mostly overlooked and misunderstood. They were aware of the international dimensions of their project; that it was Atlantic in scope and tied to the struggle against slavery. They sought the validation of a global Atlantic community. They labored mightily to construct an anti-slavery reputation and made it a key part of their identity. Anti-slavery was a defining feature of their thought. In their publications, speeches, and letters they were aware of audiences on all sides of the Atlantic. They knew that they were being watched and evaluated, and they vigorously defended themselves and advocated for their cause.[5]

---

[4] For a discussion about race making, see Thomas Holt, "Marking: Race, Race-making and the Writing of History," *American History Review* 100, 1 (February 1995): 1-20.

[5] An incident involving Joseph Jenkins Roberts in 1858 after he had left office captures well this problem. An article had appeared in the *Edinburg Review* which accused the Liberians of practicing

Hence at another level this was a study of historical agency. It should not be surprising that it was under the leadership of Chesapeake free blacks that Liberia came together. But in order to recover the agency of the free blacks, their story had to be moved from the margin to the center of the story of the Liberian state's origins. Their experiences and achievements in the Chesapeake had to be emphasized, for what they had accomplished before they left the United States was no small feat. A proper historical accounting of them required a start in the Chesapeake in the eighteenth century because they were a product of the American Revolution – its liberalism, its republicanism and its idea of race. Half a century later, Joseph Jenkins Roberts still felt the sting of Jefferson's pen and the need to reply to and critique Thomas Jefferson, in order to lay the ideological basis of the Liberian state.

Liberia was never another America nor did its founders intend for it to be such.[6]Liberia and the United States were organically linked but not in the way typically depicted in the scholarship. The big American legacy in Liberia was not

---

slavery. The incident involved a ship called the *Regina Coeli* and it was claimed when the ship was seized that prominent Liberians had captured slaves on board with the intention to sell them. Anti-colonizationists in the U.S., spear-headed by James Henry Hammond, the influential South Carolina planter, raised a very loud voice in the matter, denouncing the Liberians and the ACS (and illustrating divisions within the planter class as well). A slew of letters flowed between Hammond and John Latrobe of the ACS. Roberts joined the fray after his friend, the Pennsylvania Quaker businessman Benjamin Coates asked him for a rebuttal to Hammond. Roberts went through the accusations and painstakingly rebutted them point by point. The letters were subsequently reprinted by the ACS. "Liberia is not so degenerate," Roberts wrote to his friend. He wondered why Liberia's opponents seized on every flimsy rumor to vilify Liberia. Roberts believed that the genesis of the problem lay in the attempt by the Liberian state to end the slave trade and the corresponding response by some Africans and their resistance to that specific Liberian state policy. Roberts argued that the fundamental basis of the antagonism between the American settlers and some of the original inhabitants of the coast lay in the problem of the slave trade, not in cultural differences between them. See Roberts to Coates in Emma J. Lapsansky-Werner, Margaret Hope Bacon, eds, *Back to Africa: Benjamin Coates and the Colonization Movement in America, 1848-1880*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005). The correspondence was also published as an appendix in *The Regina Coeli: Correspondence between the Hon James H. Hammond and John H. B. Latrobe*, (Baltimore: John D. Toy, 1858): 39-47.

[6] That is a central thesis of James Ciment's *Another America: The Story of Liberia and the Former Slaves who Ruled It.* Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 35, and Ben Schiller, "US Slavery's Diaspora: Black Atlantic History at the Crossroads of 'Race,' Enslavement and Colonization." *Slavery and Abolition*, 32 (June 2011): 199-212, arrive at the same conclusion.

men's top hats and tail coats and ladies can-can frocks, or Lower Mississippi Valley antebellum plantation style houses, or even the black southern dialect of the U.S. or a cuisine based on cured pork. Some nineteenth century visitors to Liberia were keen to discuss the church buildings they saw and the people dressed to attend services but had very little to say about the content of the sermons from those pulpits. Writers in the nineteenth century for example made much of the design of the Liberian national flag and its close similarities to the American standard without asking the founders why they chose that design.[7] Nineteenth century narratives and their twentieth century echoes had the effect of portraying the Liberian founders as men engaged in mimicry. The adoption of a national flag similar in design to the American flag was not any more an exercise in mimicry than the Liberians' race thinking, their protestant evangelicalism, or their republicanism. It was these latter three that were the historically significant American legacy.

This study was also an exploration of how social identities are formed and reconstituted. The Chesapeake free blacks went from being Americans to being Liberians and from being Virginians and Marylanders to being Americo-Liberians, a brand new hybrid invention. The exigencies of state building obliged them to attempt to bind together a heterogeneous group of people, what were quite distinct African American regional traditions, no easy accomplishment, but usually overlooked in the historical narratives. Thus, being black would have carried a different meaning in the Chesapeake, in the Northeastern United States, in the Low Country, and in the Lower

---

[7] Nineteenth century British imperialist Sir Harry Johnston was the most notorious, and likely earliest source of the now accepted rationale behind the flag's design. In his book, *Liberia*, 4, he claims, without citing any source, that the flag was so designed because the Liberians saw themselves as a 'little America.' There is no shame to that nomenclature but nowhere in the records do we find the Liberian leaders referring to themselves as such. The truth may be more straightforward and shrewd: a flag similar to the American flag, which would have been the Liberian standard when it was still a colony, probably provided protection to Liberian settlements and properties on the coasts and to Liberian ships plying along the Atlantic littoral.

Mississippi Valley, than it would in Liberia, just as the marker "African" would have been different on the two sides of the Atlantic. The Liberian founders had rejected America and embraced Africa by moving there but they, in the process of doing so, also redefined and racialized Africa which they intended to remake in their image as bourgeois, Christian and black. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to reduce the process of Americo-Liberian identity formation solely to the activities of the African-Americans. Because identities are fluid, a social construct, the formation of the Americo-Liberian marker was a product of contestation between and among Americans, Africans and Europeans at Cape Mesurado at the time.

Liberia's founding should also be seen as a product of the African American Diaspora, which the Chesapeake free blacks remade with their intervention. Thus another way to conceptualize Liberia's founding is to locate it as the contested outcome of the African American longing for freedom. In contributing to the establishment and development of an African American tradition of migration in the Atlantic world, the Liberian founders' emigration from the United States was not unusual or peculiar. Beginning at the end of the American Revolution and continuing to the end of the nineteenth century, thousands of African Americans scattered around the Atlantic rim – to Nova Scotia and Ontario in Canada, to Haiti and Trinidad in the Caribbean, to the Bahamas, Bermuda and England in the North Atlantic, to Sierra Leone and Liberia in West Africa, and further afield.[8]

The 'Back-to-Africa' idea, originating among people of African descent in the Americas, took a major leap forward with the establishment of Liberia, and the

[8] Cassandra Pybus highlights some very interesting stories that illustrate the breadth of the African American Diaspora in her *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty*. (Boston: Beacon Books, 2006). Also see Earl Lewis, "To Turn as a Pivot: Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," *American Historical Review* 100, 3 (1995):

country's founders were bearers of that ideology, collectively one of its nineteenth century pioneers. Through their actions, as much as through their writings, they reflected what an aspiration of black freedom could have meant at the time. Their state offered black citizenship to all people of African descent. They were precursors of the pan-African idea that would gain coherence and win widespread acceptance among the intelligentsia of the African Diaspora around the Atlantic at the end of the century, although at that point the Liberian founders had long disappeared from the scene.[9]

The founders, the first generation, left behind a mixed legacy. The adoption of Black Nationalism as the official ideology of the state did not solve the problem of inequality or exploitation. In part, this was because Black Nationalism itself was anchored in capitalist property relations. Neither did national independence solve the problem of social inequality. The Liberian state was never neutral nor was it intended as such. The Chesapeake free black founders of Liberia created a political community that initially excluded the native inhabitants of the land, but not because they were Africans. The Americans excluded the Africans more for convenient and contingent reasons (not all Africans were excluded from political participation) than due to feelings of superiority as some scholars have argued.[10] The Africans may have also been excluded because they did not subscribe to or participate in a system that tied citizenship to the contested idea about inalienable individual rights to property in land. This ideological difference would have been compounded by the fact that powerful Africans subscribed to the contested idea of property in persons. The

---

[9] Wilson Moses follows the story of the subsequent generation of this African American Diaspora to Liberia in Moses, *Liberian Dreams.* See also Wilson Moses, *The Wings of Ethiopia*: *Studies in African-American Life and Letters* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990).

[10] See for example Sawyer, *Emergence of Autocracy*, and Liebenow, *Evolution of Privilege*.

property issue – in land and in persons – would remain at the center of Liberian politics and economy.

According to the founders of Liberia, they wanted to build a modern pan-African nation. Their vision for building the modern nation had space for the local Africans they met. Roberts in his 1869 Washington DC speech to the ACS boasted about the African native son of the soil who was elected as a member of the national legislature in the 1860s. Roberts held him up as a model. The Liberians founders never conceived or planned to build and segregate Africans on reservations or the equivalent of South African Bantustans. Nor did they pursue a policy of genocide, extermination or ethnic cleansing as it is called today. They had no hut tax to transfer wealth from the peasantry to the state or a standing army to enforce their rule – policies that would come at the start of the twentieth century. On the contrary, the free black Chesapeake founders planned to turn the so-called uncivilized natives into Liberians through example, trade and evangelizing.[11] That was their plan. In theory they envisaged a nation of civilized or modern blacks who understood and were pledged to a particular black nationalist Christianist republican creed. In reality, the Africans served as a type of surplus labor force, a source for producing additional domestic food and export cash crops, and a market for goods made in the North Atlantic which the Liberians brokered.

Based on the archival records, it is difficult to say that the Chesapeake free black intelligentsia unambiguously saw themselves as superior to the local Africans, or that they looked down their noses at the Africans, and failed to see their common

[11] Intention, no matter its ardor, does not guarantee expected outcome. But for similar processes unfolding in other parts of their contemporary world, see for example Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914.* The 1847 Constitution of Liberia also forbade Liberians from purchasing land from the Africans.

humanity, as their legion of detractors have claimed. In considering this issue, it is important to also pose this question: did some Africans look down on other Africans? The issue of relations among the various groups of people involved in the politics of the Cape Mesurado and surrounding regions was never simply a matter of some individuals thinking they were superior to others. The following case illustrates the point. In December 1842, Amurah, a formerly powerful Vai chieftain was killed by his rival, Manah. Hilary Teage, writing in the *Herald*, paid glowing tribute to Amurah. He wrote about Amurah's "indomitable spirit," and his "nobility."[12] Teage'e eulogy suggests something of the complex nature of the relationships that existed, the knowledge the Americans and Africans had acquired from and about each other and the range of feelings and emotions they might have held, some contradictory. Teage was analyzing the geo-political terrain in Cape Mount with the departure from the scene of a powerful figure. The Liberians did not see the Africans as an undifferentiated mass of ignorant savages in the jungle, indeed they could not afford to do that.

Yet, the rhetoric of 'civilization' as utilized by the founders is a problematic issue. Critics of the Liberian Chesapeake founders have seized upon this word and its frequent usage by the founders to argue that the founders of Liberia demeaned the Africans they met, and considered the Africans as their inferiors. In fact, that the Liberian founders' use of civilizationist rhetoric made the Liberian founders no different from the racist imagery employed by many European writers of the time. References to "civilized" were often accompanied by use of terminology such as

[12] *Liberian Herald*, 23 December, 1842. Teage also provided a bit of the political history of Amurah's fall from power, remarking that it was probably the same "indomitable spirit" that was partly to account for his demise.

"heathen," and "barbarous." In most cases though, it is clear the term was used to refer to "order." And the greatest indicator of disorder was the slave trade which had disrupted the lives of the Africans and threatened Liberia's existence.

Civilization came to refer even more, as time went on, to progress, or modernity, in its nineteenth century sense, to the vanquishing of the slave trade. To be "civilized" then was to live in orderly society on its way to modernity. In that regard, they had no doubt about theirs and by extension Africa's capacity and readiness to claim the mantle of civilization. As Teage argued, "the stale prediction of those who oppose our elevation has been – that we would be found incapable of self-government. Pausing here only to remark that Africa with its hundred millions, (everywhere possessing a government and laws) has ever been a standing refutation of this malignant vaticination."[13]

The civilizationist rhetoric notwithstanding, Liberia's founders were critical of western culture – in particular its racism – and Christianity as practiced by some white men in the United States. The founders generally tried to portray or interpret African history as one of past greatness followed by a fall which was now in need of redemption – something that the Chesapeake-born leaders saw themselves as being well placed to bring about.[14]

Liberia in the second half of the nineteenth century also weighed on the minds of the African American intelligentsia in the U.S. After all, Liberia's founding and its place in the African American Diaspora said something about African American life. Its founding was part of the growth of Black Nationalism and the two – Liberia and

---

[13] Hilary Teage, *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, September 1844, 258-61.

[14] The classic formulation of this narrative can be found in J. J. Roberts's 1845 address to the Liberia Lyceum, quoted above.

Black Nationalism – maintained a dialectical relationship throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. Liberia attracted the interest of the foremost black intellectuals of the era. At one point or the other, Liberia was home to John Brown Russwurm, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Alexander Crummel, Thomas Morris Chester and Henry Highland Garnet.[15] Martin R. Delany had a longstanding and fluctuating relationship with his Liberian friends and visited several times. Frederick Douglass noted the death of Hilary Teage in his newspaper upon Teage's death in 1853, despite Douglass' known antipathy to colonization. Liberia's founding then, illustrated both the possibilities and the limitations of the black Atlantic world in the middle of the nineteenth century. But perhaps one of the potent legacies of the African American Diaspora is that it formed and shaped Liberia and in doing so – in the process of making Liberia – the Chesapeake blacks brought American race consciousness to Africa.

This incipient Liberian ruling class in many respects anticipated future African post-independence comprador bourgeois classes in the neo-colonial era of the second half of the twentieth century. There were several historical parallels including external obstacles to their drive to accumulate capital and internal obstacles to modernizing within the framework of a new nation state under challenge to create a national identity from disparate identities. The most obvious challenge facing leaders in any new state is to fashion an ideology, a national identity to unify the nation. The Liberian founders and their successors, as they consolidated their power and made the transition from petty bourgeois traders and artisans to a full-fledged bourgeoisie,

[15] Garnet is buried in Liberia.

should be characterized as among the oldest in Africa although the precise path taken to that destination requires further research.[16]

What is less doubtful is that the Liberian state's establishment is a pre-history of pan-Africanism, African nationalism and independence in the twentieth century. It was no surprise therefore that both Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois would be attracted to Liberia and would engage it in their thinking. Consideration of the Liberian experience shaped both men's intellectual development. Garvey found a place for Liberia in his grand vision of a united Africa.[17] Du Bois visited and defended Liberia's bourgeoisie during its greatest crisis – the Fernando Po labor scandal of the late nineteen twenties.[18]

In tallying the balance sheet of the legacies of the Chesapeake black founders of Liberia, the country maintained its political independence against great odds, but the republicanism they envisioned failed under the pressure of European colonial rivalry and territorial expansion at the turn of the century. The idea of limiting the size of farm plots had failed early. So although Liberia became a nation of property holders, it did not become a nation of yeomen or small capitalist farmers who could serve as a check against excessive governmental power. Instead the state became dependent on surplus extraction from petty commodity producers (the Liberian peasantry) in the countryside. Then the aftermath of World War I brought the Firestone Rubber Company to Liberia which divorced the producers from the means

---

[16] See Mahmoud Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) for a discussion on the African state in the late colonial and immediate post-independence periods in the twentieth century.
[17] See John Henrik Clarke, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011).

[18]For a general history of the Fernando Po crisis, see I. K. Sundiata, *Black Scandal: America and the Liberia Labor Crisis, 1929-1936.* For Du Bois's role in defending the Liberian government, see David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*. New York: Henry Holt and Co. 2000.

of production, began the proletarianization of the peasantry, deepened inequality, and reinforced the power of the Liberian ruling class. The idea of term limits for public office holders which had held firm for almost a century eventually buckled under the pressure of the Second World War, de-colonization and the Cold War that came in its wake. Therefore perhaps the most disappointing result from the perspective of the Liberian founders would have been the expansion of the size and scope of government and its authoritarian character.

On the other hand, Black Nationalism has remained the Liberian state's national ideology. Liberia is the only state in the world today whose constitution uses an explicit racial standard for citizenship, restricting citizenship to black people. This is one legacy of the founders that has endured, even through years of civil war. In addition, the implanting of Christianity has succeeded spectacularly, if the measurement was solely on the basis of numbers of adherents. Yet, Liberia's Christianity is a cultural hybrid, and by no means homogeneous. It also invites more study.[19] On the other hand, the entrenchment of capitalism and private property remains a mixed bag.

These legacies were contested as the successor generations to Liberia's Chesapeake founders grappled with the challenges of maintaining control of the state in the face of great opposition, foreign and domestic and the results were often not what the founders would have expected, wanted or imagined. A fuller accounting of the course and outcome of the origins of the Liberian state would require more research foregrounded in the experiences of the Dei (or Deiwon) people during this

---

[19] Liberia has no scholarship that rises to the level of, for example, J.D.Y.Peel's *Christianity, Islam and Orisa-Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015). Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Roots of an African Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999) presents a largely ahistorical analysis.

same time period.  A history of the Dei and the Americo-Liberian identities, and their reciprocal influences, as well as the significance for that history of the development of the city of Monrovia in that encounter, is yet to be written.  When that history is written, it will be important to go beyond dualism and place the reciprocal influences that produced these hybridized identities at the center of the analysis.

Seen from a much longer view of history and the broader frame of the overlap of the African and Atlantic worlds, Liberia's founding, it's very coming into existence – as state and national identity – was not only a product of the post-revolutionary contestation of American national identity in terms of race, Christianity and Republicanism with free black property holding men from the Chesapeake playing the lead.  It was also part of the longer trajectory of African people fleeing religious persecution and forced Islamic conversion.  The region of the windward coast of West Africa between Cape Mount and Cape Palmas was the area that supplied the smallest number of people to the transatlantic slave trade.  Much of the reason had to do with its inhospitable rocky coastline.  One implication is that no powerful political and military entity tied to the transatlantic commerce of the era emerged on that coastline or its interior similar in size and influence to other such entities between Senegambia and Angola.[20]

The region between Cape Mount and Cape Palmas was the exception.  People who had fled south from the convulsions of the old Mali Empire, who settled inland and along the coasts beginning in the fourteenth century and who made the area a place of refuge, had created a space that allowed small non-state communities to

[20] The standard general histories to consult, especially as their interpretations differ, are John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970).

exist; a space which then also enabled the Americans to find refuge. As the disastrous experience with the aborted settlement on Sherbro Island near Sierra Leone indicated, most likely no other area along the West African coast at the time would have had the enabling environment that would have accommodated the peculiarities of the African American project – free blacks largely on their own initiative and without the substantial support of a colonial power like Britain or Portugal – like the areas that became Liberia. The African societies inland also served as a buffer between the nascent Liberian state and the state forming Islamic jihadists inland, while the new Liberian state served as a buffer between the African societies inland and the transatlantic slave traders stationed on the coast and the ravages of the subsequent European colonial encroachment. African Americans – represented here in the form of Chesapeake free blacks – were an integral part of this history of the origins of the Liberian state just as the Diasporas of various West African peoples – from the Mande, Kru and Atlantic speaking cultures – shaped the prior and subsequent histories of this branch of the African American Diaspora and the state that emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Addressing the specificity of the role of the Chesapeake free blacks and their centrality in the Liberia state's conceptualization and construction therefore adds more nuance to the story of the country's founding and yields a deeper, richer understanding of the complex origins of the state beyond the tangential recognition the Chesapeake free blacks typically receive in the scholarly literature.

The Liberian state's history intersects many others. The influences on the state's initial formation and the bases of that formation were manifold. The impact of the state's formation was large and expansive as it operated on multiple levels. Although the Chesapeake free blacks can be seen as prime movers in this specific history, this assessment of them recognized that they were bounded by time and space. The Chesapeake free blacks did not create the Liberian state by themselves or operate in isolation. Their American influence and the support provided by the American Colonization Society is well documented and acknowledged. Unacknowledged however is the deep influence of the African environment, the pre-American history of Cape Mesurado and the trajectory of African historical forces, in shaping the outcomes. In fine, the Chesapeake free blacks and the state they founded should be seen first and foremost through the lens of Atlantic history rather than a nationalist or dualist interpretative frame, for the state and its founders were, properly speaking, part of a combined Atlantic history centuries in the making.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## PRIMARY SOURCES

### *Archives and Manuscript Collections*

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, DC
Records of the American Colonization Society, 1792-1964.
Joseph Jenkins Roberts Papers

Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Washington DC. Joseph Jenkins Roberts. *An Address Delivered at the Fifty-Second Annual Meeting of the American Colonization Society, Held in Washington D.C., January 19, 1869*. [Washington, DC: American Colonization Society, 1869].

### *Government Documents*

U.S. Congress. Senate. U.S. Navy Department. "Tables Showing the Number of Emigrants and recaptured Africans Sent to the Colony of Liberia by the Govt. Of the U.S., Together With A Census of the Colony, and a Report of its Commerce, Sept., 1843." *Senate Document* No. 150, 28th Cong., 2nd session, 1845.

U.S. Congress. Senate. "An Act in Addition to the Acts Prohibiting the Slave Trade." Approved March 3, 1819. *Senate Document* No. 101, 15th Cong., 2nd session.

### *Newspapers and Periodicals*

*African Repository and Colonial Journal*
*Africa's Luminary*
*Colored American*
*Edinburg Review*
*Frederick Douglass's Paper*
*Freedom's Journal*
*Liberian Herald*
*Niles' Register*
*Washington Intelligencer*

### *Books, Pamphlets, Articles, and Edited Collections*

Alexander, Archibald. *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of*

*Africa*. Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1846.

Ashmun, J[ehudi]. *History of the American Colony in Liberia, from December 1821 to 1823*. Washington: Way & Gideon, 1826.

Bayard, Samuel John. *A Sketch of the Life of Com. Robert F. Stockton*. Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1856.

Bell, Howard H., ed. *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864*. New York: Arno Press, 1969.

Blassingame, John, ed. *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977.

Brown, Isaac. *Biography of the Reverend Robert Finley, D.D., of Basking Ridge N.J., with an Account of His Agency as Author of the American Colonization Society.* Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1819.

Carey, Lott. "Circular Addresses to the Colored Brethren and Friends in America: An Unpublished Essay by Lott Carey, Sent from Liberia to Virginia, 1827." Edited with an introduction and notes by John Saillant. *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 104 (1996): 481-504.

Clay, Henry. *The Papers of Henry Clay.* Volume 2*, The Rising Statesman, 1815-1820,* edited by James Hopkins and Mary Hargreaves. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961.

Coker, Daniel. *Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister.* Baltimore: Benjamin Eads, 1810.

________. *Journal of Daniel Coker, a Descendant of Africa.* Baltimore: Edward J. Coale, 1820.

Cuffe, Paul. *A Brief Account of the Settlement and Present Situation of the Colony of Sierra Leone as Communicated by Paul Cuffe (a Man of Colour) to His Friend in New York: Also an Explanation of the Object of His Visit, and Some Advice to the People of Colour in the United States.* New York: Samuel Wood, 1812.

_________. *Captain Paul Cuffe's Logs and Letters, 1808 to 1817: A Black Quaker's Voice from within the Veil,* edited by Rosalind Cobb Wiggins. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1996.

Cugoano, Quobna Ottobah (John Stuart). *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evils of Slavery,* edited by Vincent Carretta. New York: Penguin Classics, 1999.

Equiano, Olaudah (Gustavus Vassa). *The Interesting Narrative and Other*

*Writings,* edited by Vincent Carretta. New York: Penguin, 1995.

Fairhead, James, Tim Geysbeek, Svend E. Holsoe, and Melissa Leach, eds. *African American Exploration in West Africa: Four Nineteenth-Century Diaries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.

Garrison, William Lloyd. *Thoughts on African Colonization*. Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832.

Gurley, Ralph R. *The Life of Jehudi Ashmun, Late Colonial Agent in Liberia*. Washington, DC: James C. Dunn, 1835.

Hammond, J. H., and J. H. B. Latrobe. *The Regina Coeli: Correspondence between the Honorable James H. Hammond and John H. B. Latrobe, Esq., President of the American Colonization Society*. Baltimore: John Toy, 1858.

Heinegg, Paul. *Free African Americans of North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina: From the Colonial Period to about 1820*. Volume 1, 5th edition, Baltimore: Clearfield Co., 2005.

Henries, A. Doris Banks. *The Life of Joseph Jenkins Roberts (1809-1876) and His Inaugural Addresses*. London: Macmillan, 1964.

Hodges, Graham Russell, and Alan Edward Brown, eds. "*Pretends to Be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*. New York: Garland, 1994.

Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the State of Virginia*, edited by David Waldstreicher. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.

Lapansky-Werner, Emma J., and Margaret Hope Bacon, eds. *Back to Africa: Benjamin Coates and the Colonization Movement in America, 1848-1880.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005.

Lugenbeel, James W. *Sketches of Liberia: Comprising a Brief Account of the Geography, Climate, Productions, and Diseases, of the Republic of Liberia.* Washington DC: C. Alexander, 1850.

Mayer, Brantz. *Captain Canot; or Twenty Years of an African Slaver*. London: George Routledge, 1855.

Miller, Randall, ed. "*Dear Master": Letters of a Slave Family*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Moses, Wilson, ed. *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey.* New York: New York University Press, 1996.

Newman, Richard, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds. *Pamphlets of Protest:An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Paine, Thomas. *The Rights of Man*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. Reprint, London, 1791.

Porter, Dorothy, ed. *Early Negro Writing, 1760-1837.* Boston: Beacon, 1971.

Raynal, Abbé (Guillaume-Thomas Francois Raynal). *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*. Translated from the French by J. Justamond. London: T. Cadell, 1776.

Richardson, Marilyn, ed. *Maria W. Stewart, America's First Black Woman Political Writer: Essays and Speeches*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Robertson, G. A. *Notes on Africa: Particularly Those Parts Which are Situated between Cape Verde and the River Congo*. London: Sherwood, Neeley, and Jones, 1819.

Ryland, Robert. "Reminiscences of the First African Church, Richmond, Va., by the Pastor." *American Baptist Memorial* 15 (September 1855): 262-265.

Spring, Gardiner. *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel J Mills*, *Late Missionary to the South Western Section of the United States and Agent of the American Colonization Society, Departed to Explore the Coast of Africa.* New York: Evangelical Missionary Society, 1820.

Walker, David. *David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World,* edited by Peter Hinks. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Wiley, Bell, ed. *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869*. Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 1980.

Woodson, Carter G., ed. *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written during the Crisis, 1800-1860*. Washington, DC: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926.

***Online Primary Sources and Databases***

Petition of African Blacks of the African Lodge to the Massachusetts General Court. Massachusetts Archives Collection. Records, 1629-1799, accessed January 4, 2017. http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arccol/colmac.htm.

Transatlantic Slave Trade Database. http://www.slavevoyages.org

Online tax, court and census records of free African Americans, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. http://www.freeafricanamericans.com

**Secondary Sources**

Adeleke, Tunde. *The UnAfrican Americans: Nineteenth-Century Black Nationalists and the Civilizing Mission*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998.

Ajayi, J. F. Ade, and Michael Crowder. *History of West Africa*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

Akinbade, Harrison O. “The Settler-African Conflicts: The Case of the Maryland Colonists and the Grebo, 1840-1900.” *Journal of Negro History* 66 (1980): 93-109.

Akpan, M. B. “Black Imperialism: Americo-Liberian Rule over the African Peoples of Liberia, 1847-1964.” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 7 (1973): 217- 236.

Akyeampong, Emmanuel, ed. *Themes in West Africa’s History.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006.

Allen, Theodore. *The Invention of the White Race: Volume Two, The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America.* New York: Verso, 1997.

Allen, William. “Sugar and Coffee: A History of Settler Agriculture in Nineteenth-Century Liberia.” Ph.D. diss., Florida International University, 2002.

Amin, Samir. *Eurocentrism: Modernity, Religion, and Democracy: A Critique of Eurocentrism and Culturalism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 1983.

Anderson, Perry. *Lineages of the Absolutist State*. London: New Left Books, 1974.

Appleby, Joyce. *Capitalism and the New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s*. New York: New York University Press, 1984.

_________. *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Arrighi, Giovanni, and John Saul. *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973.

Azikiwe, Nnamdi. *Liberia in World Politics*. Westport, CT: Negro University Press, 1970.

Bailyn, Bernard. *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

_________. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Banaji, Jairus. "Modes of Production in a Materialist Conception of History." *Capital and Class* 3 (1977): 1-44.

Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, 2014.

Barkley Brown, Elsa. "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of St Luke." *Signs* 14 (1989): 610-633.

Barnes, L. Diane. *Artisan Workers in the Upper South: Petersburg, Virginia, 1820-1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008.

Barry, Boubacar. *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Bay, Mia. *The White Image in the Black Mind: African American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Vintage, 2015.

Beckles, Hilary. *History of Barbados*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Berlin, Ira. *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

________. *The Long Emancipation: The Demise of Slavery in the United States.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.

________. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

________. *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*. New York: Random House, 1974.

________. "Time, Space and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on

British Mainland North America." *American Historical Review* 85 (1980): 44-78.

Bethel, Elizabeth Rauh. *The Roots of African American Identity: Memory and History in Antebellum Free Communities.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Beyan, Amos J. *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991.

Blackburn, Robin. *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800*. London: Verso, 2000.

________. *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*. London: Verso, 1988.

Blackett, Richard. *Building an Anti-Slavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolition Movement, 1830-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.

Bloch, Marc. *The Historian's Craft*. Translated by Peter Putnam. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992.

Blumrosen, Alfred, and Ruth Blumrosen. *Slave Nation: How Slavery United the Colonies and Sparked the American Revolution.* Napierville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2005.

Blyden, Edward Wilmot. *Islam, Christianity, and the Negro Race*. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994. Reprint, London, 1887.

Blyden, Nemata. *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse.* Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000.

Bogger, Tommy L. *Free Blacks in Norfolk, Virginia, 1790-1860: The Darker Side of Freedom*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997.

Bogues, Anthony. *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Bolster, Jeffrey. *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Bracey, John H., Jr., August Meier, and Elliott Rudwick. *Black Nationalism in America*. New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1970.

Brathwaite, Cecelia Karch. "London Bourne of Barbados (1793-1869)." *Slavery and Abolition* 28 (2007): 23-40.

Brathwaite, Edward. *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005.

Braudel, Fernand. *On History*. Translated by Sarah Matthews. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Breen, T. H., and Stephen Innes. *Myne Owne Ground: Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Brekus, Catherine. *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013.

Brenner, Robert. "The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism." *New Left Review* 104 (1977): 25-92.

Brereton, Bridget. *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783-1962*. London: Heineman, 1996.

Bristol, Douglas. *Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

Bronwen, Everill. *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Brooks, George. "Ecological Perspectives on Mande Population Movements." *History in Africa: A Journal of Method* 16 (1989): 23-40.

_________. *The Kru Mariner in the Nineteenth Century: An Historical Compendium*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1972.

_________. *Landlord and Stranger: Ecology, Society, and Trade in West Africa, 1000-1630*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993.

Brooks, Joanna. "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic." *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (January 2005): 67-92.

Brooks, Joanna, and John Saillant, eds. *"Face Zion Forward": First Writers of the Black Atlantic, 1785-1798.* Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002.

Brown, Christopher L. *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Brown, George. *The Economic History of Liberia*. Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1941.

Brown, Kathleen M. *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Brown, Robert. “Simon Greenleaf and the Liberian Constitution of 1847.” *Liberian Studies Journal* 9 (1980): 51-60.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009.

Burin, Eric. *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society*. Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 2005.

Burrowes, Carl Patrick. “The Americo-Liberian Ruling Class and Other Myths: A Critique of Political Science in the Liberian Context.” *Institute of African and African American Affairs Occasional Paper* 3, No 3. Philadelphia: Temple University, Department of African American Studies, 1989.

________. “Black Christian Republicanism: A Southern Ideology.” *Journal of Negro History* 86 (2001): 30-44.

________. *Black Christian Republicanism: The Writings of Hilary Teage*. Bomi, Liberia: Know Your Self Press 2017.

________. *Power and Press Freedom in Liberia, 1830-1970*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004.

Butler, Jon. *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Campbell, James T. *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006.

Canney, Donald L. *Africa Squadron: The U.S. Navy and the Slave Trade, 1842-1861*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2006.

Carlisle, Rodney. *The Roots of Black Nationalism*. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1975.

Carney, Judith. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Carretta, Vincent. *Equiano the African: The Biography of a Self-Made Man*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005.

Carter, Janie Leigh. “John Day: A Founder of the Republic of Liberia and the Southern Baptist Liberian Missionary Movement in the Nineteenth Century.” M.A. thesis, Wake Forest University, 1998.

Cassell, C. Abayomi. *Liberia: History of the First African Republic*. London: Fountainhead Publishers, 1970.

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Myth of the State*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1946.

Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review, 2000.

Chapelle, Suzanne, and Glenn O. Phillips. *African American Leaders of Maryland: A Portrait Gallery*. Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2004.

Ciment, James. *Another America: The Story of Liberia and the Former Slaves who Ruled It*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2013.

Clarke, John Henrik. *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011.

Clarke, Simon. "Capital, Fractions of Capital and the State: 'Neo Marxist'Analysis of the South African State." *Capital and Class* 5 (1978): 32-77.

Clegg, Claude. *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003.

Cohen, David, and Jack Greene, eds. *Neither Slave nor Free: The Freedmen of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.

Cohn, Bernard S. *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1994.

Cole, Gibril R. *The Krio of West Africa: Islam, Culture, Creolization, and Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013.

Cooper, Frederick, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott. *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Crosby, Alfred. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003.

Curtin, Philip D. *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Dain, Bruce. *Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Davis, David Brion. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*. New

York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014.

_________. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975.

d'Azevedo, Warren. "The Setting of Gola Society and Culture: Some Theoretical Implications of Variation in Time and Space." *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 21 (1959): 43-125.

_________. "A Tribal Reaction to Nationalism." *Liberian Studies Journal* 1 (1969): 99-116.

Degler, Carl. *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971.

Dill, Bonnie Thornton. "The Dialectics of Black Womanhood." *Signs* 4 (1979): 543-55.

Dorjahn, Vernon B., and Barry L. Isaac, eds. *Essays on the Economic Anthropology of Liberia and Sierra Leone*. Philadelphia: Institute for Liberian Studies, 1979.

Dorsey, Bruce. "A Gendered History of African Colonization in the Antebellum United States." *Journal of Social History* 34 (2000): 77–103.

Douglass-Chin, Richard. "Liberia as American Diaspora: The Transnational Scope of American Identity in the Mid-Nineteenth Century." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 40 (2010): 222–30.

Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Dubois, Laurent, and Julius Scott, eds. *Origins of the Black Atlantic.* New York: Routledge, 2010.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1994. Reprint, Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1903.

Dunn, Richard. "Black Society in the Chesapeake, 1776-1810." In *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution,* edited by Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, 49-82. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983.

Egerton, Douglas. *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

__________. "'Its Origin is Not a Little Curious': A New Look at the American Colonization Society." *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (1985): 463-80.

Ellis, Stephen. *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Roots of an African Civil War*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

Eze, Emmanuel, ed. *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader.* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1952.

_________. *Toward the African Revolution*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

_________. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

Fehrenbacher, Don E. *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Fields, Barbara Jeanne. *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985.

_________. "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America." *New Left Review* 181 (1990): 85-118.

Fields, Karen E., and Barbara J. Fields. *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life.* New York: Verso, 2012.

Finley, Moses I. *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*. New York: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998.

Fischer, David Hackett. *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Fisher, Miles Mark. "Lott Cary, the Colonizing Missionary." *Journal of Negro History* 7 (1922): 340-418.

Foner, Eric. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

_________. *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth, and Eugene D. Genovese. *Fruits of Merchant Capitalism: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. 3rd edition. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

Frazier, E. Franklin. "The Negro in Bahia, Brazil: A Problem in Method." *American Sociological Review* 7 (1942): 465-478.

Fredrickson, George M. *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate over Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

Frey, Sylvia. "Between Slavery and Freedom: Virginia Blacks in the American Revolution." *Journal of Southern History* 49 (1983): 375-398.

__________. *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Frey, Sylvia, and Betty Wood. *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Fulton, Richard. "The Kpelle of Liberia: A Study of Political Change in the Liberian Interior." Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1979.

Garrigus, John, Christopher Morris, and Franklin Knight, eds. *Assumed Identities: The Meanings of Race in the Atlantic World.* College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010.

Gaspar, David Barry, and Darlene Clarke Hine, eds. *Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Genovese, Eugene D. *In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971.

_________. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

George, Carol V. R. *Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and the Emergence of Independent Black Churches, 1760-1840.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Gershoni, Yekutiel. *Black Colonialism: The Americo-Liberian Struggle for the Hinterland.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1985.

Gerzina, Gretchen Holbrook. *Black London: Life before Emancipation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1995.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1993.

Glaude, Eddie, Jr. *Exodus! Religion, Race and Nation in Early Nineteenth Century Black America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Glymph, Thavolia. *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Gomez, Michael. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Goveia, Elsa. *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969.

Graham, Leroy. *Baltimore: Nineteenth-Century Black Capital*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983.

Green, Toby, ed. *Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in Pre-Colonial Western Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Greene, Jack P., and Philip D. Morgan, eds. *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Greene, Ousmane Kirumu. "Against Wind and Tide: African Americans' Response to the Colonization Movement and Emigration, 1770-1865." Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2007.

Grivno, Max. *Gleanings of Freedom: Free Labor and Slavery along the Mason-Dixon Line, 1790-1860*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

Guha, Ranajit. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Gutman, Herbert G. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.

________. *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class.* Edited by Ira Berlin. New York: Pantheon Books, 1987.

Guyatt, Nick. "'The Outskirts of Our Happiness': Race and the Lure of Colonization in the Early Republic." *Journal of American History* 95 (2009): 986–1011.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* Translated by Thomas Berger. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.

Hahn, Steven. *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the*

*Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Hair, P. E. H., ed. *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712*. Vol. 1. London: Hakluyt Society, 1991.

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.

Hall, Richard. *On Afric's Shore: A History of Maryland in Liberia, 1834-1857*. Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2003.

Handlin, Oscar, and Mary Handlin. "Origins of the Southern Labor System." *William and Mary Quarterly* 7 (1950): 199-222.

Harding, Vincent. *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1981.

Harley, Sharon, and Roslyn Therborg Penn, eds. *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images.* Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1978.

Harris, Sheldon H. *Paul Cuffe: Black America and the African Return*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

Hatch, Nathan O. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

Henries, A. Doris Banks, ed. *Liberian Writing: Liberia as Seen by Her Own Writers*. Tubingen: Horst Erdman Verlag, 1970.

Herskovits, Melville J. "The Negro in Bahia, Brazil: A Problem in Method." *American Sociological Review* 8 (1943): 394-402.

Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race." *Signs* 17 (1992): 251-274.

Hill, Christopher. *Milton and the English Revolution*. New York: Viking Press, 1978.

Hilton, Rodney, ed. *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism.* London: Verso, 1978.

Hinks, Peter P. *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

Hinks, Peter P., and Stephen Kantrowitz, eds. *All Men Free and Brethren: Essays on the History of African American Freemasonry*. Ithaca: NY:

Cornell University Press, 2012.

Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Revolution*. London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1962.

Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terrence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Hochschild, Adam. *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005.

Holsoe, Svend. "The Cassava-Leaf People: An Ethno-Historical Study of the Vai People with a Particular Emphasis on the Tewo Chiefdom." Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1967.

Holt, Thomas C. "Marking: Race, Race-making, and the Writing of History." *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 1-20.

Holton, Woody. *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution.* New York: Hill and Wang, 2007.

Horn, James, Jan Ellen Lewis, and Peter Onuf, eds. *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002.

Horne, Gerald. *The Counterrevolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

Horton, James Oliver, and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Huberich, Charles Henry. *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia*. 2 volumes. New York: Central Book Co., 1947.

Hunt, Alfred. *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988.

Irons, Charles F. *The Origins of Pro-Slavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Isaac, Rhys. *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

Jackson, Luther Porter. *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860*. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1942.

________. “Free Negroes of Petersburg.” *Journal of Negro History* 12 (1927): 371-372.

________. “Manumission in Certain Virginia Cities.” *Journal of Negro History* 15 (1930): 281-305.

________. *A Short History of the Gillfield Baptist Church of Petersburg, Virginia*. Petersburg: Virginia Print Co., 1937.

Jackson, Maurice. *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolition*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

James, C. L. R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Vintage, 1963.

James, Winston. *The Struggles of John Brown Russwurm: The Life and Writings of a Pan-Africanist Pioneer, 1799-1851*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.

Jasanoff, Maya. *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the R evolutionary World*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011.

Johnson, Charles S. *Bitter Canaan: The Story of the Negro Republic*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1987.

Johnson, S. Jangaba M. “The Warrior King Sao Boso.” In *Liberian Writing*, edited by A. Doris Banks Henries, 79-89. Tubingen: Horst Erdman Verlag, 1970.

Johnston, Harry. *Liberia*. London: Hutchison & Co., 1906.

Jones, Adam. *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of the Galinhas Country (West Africa), 1730-1890*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983.

_________. “Who are the Vai?” *Journal of African History* 22 (1981): 159-178.

Jones, Adam, and Marion Johnson. “Slaves from the Windward Coast.” *Journal of African History* 21 (1980): 17-35.

Jordan, Winthrop D. *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

Karnga, Abayomi W. *History of Liberia*. London: D. H. Tyte, 1926.

Kelley, Robin D. G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.

Keyssar, Alexander. *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy*

*in the United States.* New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Kidd, Colin. *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Killingray, David. "The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s – 1920s." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33 (2003): 3-31.

Knight, Franklin. *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974.

Konneh, Augustine. *Religion, Commerce and the Integration of the Mandingo in Liberia*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996.

Kulikoff, Allan. *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

_________. "Uprooted Peoples: Black Migrants in the Age of the American Revolution, 1790-1820." In *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, edited by Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, 143-171. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983.

Landau, Paul. "Political Systems, African." In *The Princeton Companion to Atlantic History*, edited by Joseph Miller, 375-379. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

___________. *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400-1948*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Landers, Jane G. *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

__________, ed. *Against the Odds: Free Blacks in the Slave Societies of the Americas.* London: Frank Cass & Co. 1996.

Law, Robin, ed. *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Lebsock, Suzanne. *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860.* New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1984.

Legassick, Martin. "South Africa: Capital Accumulation and Violence." *Economy and Society* 3, (1974): 253-291.

Levine, Lawrence. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Levy, Andrew. *The First Emancipator: The Forgotten Story of Robert Carter, the Founding Father Who Freed His Slaves*. New York: Random House, 2005.

Lewis, David Levering. *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*. New York: Henry Holt and Co. 2000.

Lewis, Earl. "To Turn as on a Pivot: Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas." *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 765-787.

Liberty, C. E. Zamba. "The Historiography of the Liberian State." Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1978.

Liebenow, J. Gus. *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969.

Lindsay, Lisa A. *Atlantic Bonds: A Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from America to Africa*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

Linebaugh, Peter, and Marcus Rediker. *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2000.

Linklater, Andro. *Owning the Earth: The Transforming History of Land Ownership*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

Litwack, Leon F. *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Logan, Rayford W. *The Betrayal of the Negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson*. New York: Collier Press, 1965.

Loomis, Sally. "The Evolution of Paul Cuffe's Black Nationalism." In *Black Apostles at Home and Abroad: Afro-Americans and the Christian Mission from the Revolution to Reconstruction*, edited by David W. Wills and Richard Newman, 191-202. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982.

Lott, Eric. *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Lovejoy, Paul E. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa.* 3rd edition. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Lugard, Frederick. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922.

Lynch, Hollis R. *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan Negro Patriot, 1832-1912*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Lynd. Staughton. *Class Conflict, Slavery and the American Constitution: Ten Essays*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1967.

Macpherson, C. B. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.

Mafeje, Archie. "The Ideology of Tribalism." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9 (1971): 253-261.

Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton. NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Mann, Kristin, and Edna Bay, eds. *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Mannix, Daniel, and Malcolm Cowley. *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518-1865*. New York: Viking Press, 1969.

Marable, Manning. "African Nationalist: the Life of John Langalibalele Dube." Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, 1976.

Markwei, Matei. "The Reverend Daniel Coker of Sierra Leone." In *Black Apostles at Home and Abroad: Afro-Americans and the Christian Mission from the Revolution to Reconstruction*, edited by David W. Wills and Richard Newman, 203-210. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982.

Mason, Matthew. *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Matory, J. Lorand. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

__________. "The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yoruba Nation." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41 (1999): 72-103.

Mayer, Henry. *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

McCormick, Richard P. *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966.

McDaniel, Antonio. *Swing Low: The Mortality Cost of Colonizing Liberia in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

McNaughton, Patrick. *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power, and Art in West Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Mehlinger, Louis R. “The Attitude of the Free Negro toward African Colonization.” *Journal of Negro History* 1 (July 1916): 276-301.

Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965.

Miers, Suzanne, and Igor Kopytoff, eds. *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977.

Miller, Floyd J. *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975.

Miller, Kelly. *Radicals and Conservatives and Other Essays on the Negro in America*. New York: Schoken Books, 1968.

Mintz, Sydney W. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin, 1986.

Mintz, Sydney W., and Richard Price. *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective.* 2nd edition. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

Moran, Mary. *Civilized Women: Gender and Prestige in Southwestern Liberia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Morgan, Edmund S. *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1975.

___________. “Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox.” *Journal of American History* 59 (1972): 5-29.

Morgan, Philip D. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. *Alexander Crummell: A Study in Civilization and Discontent*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

__________. *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1978.

__________, ed. *Liberian Dreams: Back to Africa Narratives from the 1850s*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

Mudimbe, V. Y. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Nadelhaft, Jerome. "The Somerset Case and Slavery: Myth, Reality, and Repercussions." *Journal of Negro History* 51 (1966): 193-208.

Nash, Gary. *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America*. New York: Viking, 2005.

Newman, Debra L. "The Emergence of Liberian Women in the Nineteenth Century." Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 1984.

Newman, Richard. *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*. New York: New York University Press, 2008.

Newton, Melanie J. *The Children of Africa in the Colonies: Free People of Color in Barbados in the Age of Emancipation*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008.

Nicholls, Michael L. "'The Squint of Freedom': African-American Freedom Suits in Post-Revolutionary Virginia." *Slavery and Abolition* 20 (1999): 47-62.

Okpewho, Isidore, and Carole Boyce Davies, eds. *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Onuf, Peter S. "Every Generation Is an 'Independent Nation': Colonization, Miscegenation, and the Fate of Jefferson's Children." *William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (2000): 153–170.

Osterhammel, Jürgen. *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Painter, Nell Irvin. *The History of White People*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010.

Palmié, Stephan. *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

_________, ed. *Slave Cultures and Cultures of Slavery.* Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999.

Papenfuse, Eric Robert. *The Evils of Necessity: Robert Goodloe Harper and the Moral Dilemma of Slavery*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2007.

Park, Eunjin. "*White" Americans in "Black" Africa: Black and White American Methodist Missionaries in Liberia, 1820-1875*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Parkinson, Robert. *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Patterson, Tiffany Ruby, and Robin D. G. Kelley. "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World." *African Studies Review* 43 (2000): 11-45.

Peabody, Sue. "*There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Regime*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Peel, J. D. Y. *Christianity, Islam, and Orisa-Religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015.

Person, Yves. "States and Peoples of Senegambia and Upper Guinea." In *General History of Africa, 19th Century to 1884,* Vol 6, edited by J. F. Ade Ajayi, 636-661. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

Phillips, Christopher. *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Pocock, J. G. A. *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Poe, William A. "Lott Carey: Man of Purchased Freedom." *Church History* 39 (1970): 49-61.

Polgar, Paul. "'To Raise Them to an Equal Participation': Early National Abolitionism, Gradual Emancipation, and the Promise of an African American Citizenship." *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (2011): 229-258.

Porterfield, Amanda. *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Pulis, John, ed. *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World.* New York: Routledge, 1999.

Pybus, Cassandra. *Epic Journeys of Freedom*: *Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quests for Liberty*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.

Quarles, Benjamin. *Black Abolitionists*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

________. *The Negro in the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961.

Raboteau, Albert. *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Rael, Patrick. *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Rediker, Marcus, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. New York: Penguin Books, 2007.

Richardson, Nathaniel R. *Liberia's Past and Present*. London: Diplomatic Press & Publishing Co., 1959.

Rigsby, Gregory U. *Alexander Crummell: Pioneer in Pan-African Thought.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987.

Robbins, Caroline. *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development, and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961.

Robinson, Cedric. *Black Marxism: The Making of a Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

Rodney, Walter. *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

________. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1981.

Rothman, Adam. *Slave Country*: *American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Rucker, Walter. *Gold Coast Diasporas: Identity, Culture, and Power.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.

Russell, John H. *The Free Negro in Virginia, 1619-1895*. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

Sanneh, Lamin. *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Sawyer, Amos. *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy and Challenge*. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1992.

_________."Proprietary Authority and Local Administration in Liberia." In *The Failure of the Centralized State: Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa*, edited by James Wunsoh and Dele Olowu, 157-182. Boulder: Westview Press, 1990.

Schama, Simon. *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution.* New York: Harper Collins, 2005.

Schiller, Ben. "US Slavery's Diaspora: Black Atlantic History at the Crossroads of 'Race,' Enslavement, and Colonization." *Slavery and Abolition* 32 (2011): 199-212.

Schweninger, Loren. *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Scott, David. "On the Very Idea of a Black Radical Tradition." *Small Axe* 17 (2013): 1-6.

Scott, Joan Wallach. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 1053-1075.

_________, ed. *Feminism and History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Scott, Julius S. "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution." Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1986.

Seddon, David, ed. *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*. London: Frank Cass, 1978.

Sensbach, John. *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Shepperson, George. "Notes on Negro American Influences on the Emergence of African Nationalism." *Journal of African History* 1 (1960): 303-

Sherwood, Henry Noble. "Early Negro Deportation Projects." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 2 (March 1916): 484-508.

__________. "Paul Cuffee." *Journal of Negro History* 8 (April 1923): 169-193.

__________. "Paul Cuffee and His Contributions to the American Colonization Society." *Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association* 6 (1912 - 1913): 370-402.

Shick, Tom. *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settler*

*Society in Nineteenth-Century Liberia*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Shumway, Rebecca. *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*. Rochester. NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011.

Shyllon, F. O. *Black People in Britain, 1555-1833*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Sidbury, James. *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

__________. *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Sobel, Mechal. *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.

__________. *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.

Sparks, Randy J. *The Two Princes of Calabar: An Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Odyssey*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

_________. "*Where Negroes Are Masters": An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Staudenraus, P. J. *The African Colonization Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.

Sundiata, Ibrahim K. *Black Scandal: America and the Liberia Labor Crisis, 1929-1936*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980.

Suret-Canale, Jean. *Essays on African History: From the Slave Trade to Neo-Colonialism.* Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1988.

Syfert, Dwight. "The Origins of Privilege: Liberian Merchants, 1822-1847." *Liberian Studies Journal* 6 (1975): 109-129.

Tabili, Laura. "Race Is a Relationship, and Not a Thing." *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003): 125-130.

Tate, Gayle T., and Lewis A. Randolph, eds. *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in the United States: Made in America*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Taylor, Alan. *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*.

New York: W. W. Norton, 2013.

Temperley, Howard. “African-American Aspirations and the Settlement of Liberia.” *Slavery and Abolition* 21 (2000): 67-92.

_________. *British Anti-Slavery, 1833-1870*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1972.

Thomas, Lamont. *Rise to Be a People: A Biography of Paul Cuffe*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Thompson, E. P. *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978.

Thornton, John K. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Tomek, Beverly C. *Colonization and Its Discontents: Emancipation, Emigration, and Anti-Slavery in Antebellum Pennsylvania*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Tyler-McGraw, Marie. *An African Republic: Black and White Virginians in the Making of Liberia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Vail, Leroy, ed. *The Creation of Tribalism in South Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

Valls, Andrew, ed, *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Waldstreicher, David. *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2009.

Walker, James W. St. G. *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976.

Warner-Lewis, Maureen. *Guinea's Other Sun: The African Dynamic in Trinidad Culture*. Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1991.

Weber, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976.

Weisbord, Robert G. *Ebony Kinship: Africa, Africans, and the Afro-American.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973.

White, Ashli. *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

Whitfield, Harvey Armani. *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860*. Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006.

Whitman, T. Stephen. *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake: Black and White Resistance to Human Bondage, 1775-1865.* Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2007.

_________. *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997.

Wilentz, Sean. *The Rise of American Democracy*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2005.

Wilkes, Ivor. "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest." In *The History of Islam in Africa,* edited by Nehemiah Levtzion and Randall Pouwels, 176-201. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000.

Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. London: Andre Deutch, 1947.

Williamson, Chilton. *American Suffrage: From Property to Democracy, 1760-1860.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960.

Winch, Julie. *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Wise, Steven M. *Though the Heavens May Fall: The Landmark Trial That Led to the End of Human Slavery*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2005.

Wolpe, Harold. "The Theory of Internal Colonialism: The South African Case." In *Beyond the Sociology of Development,* edited by Ivar Oxaal, Tony Barnett, and David Booth, 229-52. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1975.

Wood, Betty. "For Their Satisfaction or Redress: African Americans and Church Discipline in the Early South." In *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, edited by Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, 109-23. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Wood, Ellen Meiksins. *Citizens to Lord: A Social History of Western Political Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. New York: Verso, 2008.

Wood, Gordon. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.

Wyse, Akintola J. G. *The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History*. London: Hurst, 1989.

Yancy. Ernest Jerome. *Historical Lights of Liberia's Yesterday and Today.* London: H. Jaffe, 1954