

Black –African Women Leadership in Pre-Independence Africa: The Case Study of Liberian Women’s Political Empowerment and Post-Civil Conflict Presidential Leadership in Liberia; A 21st Century Alternative for Liberia’s Redemption:

Abstract:

Conflict is an increasing threat to national and international security and a major challenge to development. It is significant to acknowledge that civil conflict has impoverished countries in every major region of the world, with specific emphasis on Africa. Civil Conflict has wiped out the achievements of decades of economic and social development. In case of Liberia which is the main objective of this project, the 14 years civil conflict not only wiped out the achievements of decades of economic and social development, but destroyed thousands of lives, the physical assets of the country, and disrupted trade links which devastated the fabrics of the Liberian society. The Liberian violent conflict leaves a legacy of militarized, guerilla warfare predominant male leadership culture, predominant male divided political Liberian societies, widespread predominant displacement of women, and predominantly decimated women institutional capacity. For many Liberians, dealing with devastation of war is a bitter experience that will never be forgotten and Liberian women must be the alternative reconstructive political mechanism in Liberia, as a prelude for Liberia’s redemption in the 21st century

Introduction.

A Chinese saying observes that “Women Hold Up Half the Sky.” Yet for many years scholars, Third World governments, and Western development agencies appeared strangely oblivious to women’s role in the modernization process. Early studies of political and economic change in the Less Developed Countries usually said little or nothing about women’s issues. A case study of Liberia.¹ In the past two to three decades, however, two factors have contributed to a new understanding of women in developing nations: the emergence of feminist or gender-related social science research, and the growing recognition by policy planners that women play a distinct and important role in national development. Gender-related economic and political analysis is instructive in the same way that analysis of ethnic groups or social classes is. To begin with, Third World women are often relegated to particular occupations. In most Less Developed Countries, most women work primarily in agriculture or the semi-legal, underground urban economy known as the “informal sector” Those who work in industry are disproportionately employed in labor-intensive and lower-wage industries such as apparel

¹ See Howard Handelman, The Challenge of Third World Development, Third Edition. Strayer University, Pearson Custom Publishing, Prentice Hall, 2003

and electronics in the Far East and Southeast Asia and assembly plants in Mexico and the Caribbean. Like their counterparts in industrialized nations, professional women are over-represented in nurturing professions such as nursing and teaching. Divisions between “women’s work” and “men’s work” have obvious economic and political implications, with women’s jobs invariably earning lower wages or salaries and wielding less power. At the same time, women are also very underrepresented in the political arena. Not only do they hold far fewer government positions than men do, but women share also diminishes for positions of greater political power.

As I live in a relatively reclusive scholarly life, I have always imagined Black-African Women, specifically Liberian women strongly spear heading political leadership from a 21st century dimension.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The present study looks at the Black-African Women Leadership in Pre-independence Africa, specifically Liberia, as a by product of Eurological Masochism, predomination, and Egotistical marginalization of the world’s gift to humanity Women. It is safe to say that due to the involuntary and voluntary relationships between Black-African people and Europeans, an adaptation of leaderships through emulation was transferred during the struggles for Black African self-determination.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

There are five precipitating and inspirational objectives of this study. 1. The inspiration of this study comes from the realization that Why Black African Women have been marginalized and alienated from all major aspects of political decision making and spearheading political institutions of legitimacy? (a) To undertake and provide an in-depth study of Women in general, with specific emphasis on Black-African Women Leadership; A Case study of Liberian Women. (b) To study other Women’s role in other nations and make some conceptual and comparative analyses on Liberian Women, (c) To address Liberian Women’ issues of political legitimacy from the end of the Cold War and the Post-Cold War as it represents a 21st century watershed in how African Women especially Liberia Women view and interact with (1) the world community in the areas of marginalization, (2) Underestimation, (3) (Devaluation, and (4) The struggles for self empowerment, specifically Liberia’s cultural-historic reaction with Women Leadership prior to the 1920.s feminist movement in the United States and Europe. (5) To articulate Women Empowerment, specifically Black-African Women, with specific concentration on Liberian Women Political Empowerment from a 21st century perspective. By the early 1990s, it had become clear that domestic conflicts in many parts of Africa, and other parts of the world specifically Liberia, could spill over and cause problems for regional, even global security. Outside actors appeared less interested in a close relationship with Africa and therefore could not be relied upon to act as third party resources when conflict became intensified: Like the Liberian 14 years civil conflict. In my personal assessments, objective analysis, and writing, the Liberian women suffered the most from every aspect of Africa’s civil conflicts specifically the Liberian civil conflict. This study therefore, grew out of a consciousteous objective analysis of the Liberian Women’s Post-Cold War circumstances; The Liberian Women’s role in the Liberian civil conflict in the

context of intervention and conflict management and peacekeeping initiative and family sustainability.

Theoretical and Historic Background:

This study intends to research on Black-African Women's leaderships prior to contemporary marginalization of Black African Women. Therefore, this study will approach and analyze the lives of the first twelve pre-historic Black African women leaders in Black African history. This is absolutely essential so as to demonstrate to the world that Black African Women were once political leaders of nations that need to be made explicit. There are many books with men leaderships and empowerment in human history. Because the world is controlled by men. For instance, *The Black Women Leaders in Southern African History* dealt specifically with nine Black African Women Leaders. This study will increase Black Women Leaders from traditionally nine to contemporary hundreds Black African Women unmentioned and talked about. It must be pointed out many nineteenth-century, male personalities about whom considerable information exists. But it had not been possible to give such uniform treatment to Black African women. The most unorthodox chapter, on Candace, is actually an account of the present state of our knowledge concerning the Black African Women Leaders of Meroë. It was felt that it was important to include Meroë, even though no single individual stands out. The first Black African Woman Leader in this study is Queen Nzinga of Angola is of immense importance in the history of her time and region and yet we know far less about her than we do of, say, Ranavalona of Madagascar, in pan-African terms a lesser figure but of undoubted significance in her country's recent history. Although the information for this book came from secondary sources the interpretations and opinions about the personalities are directly mine and I am responsible for its implication. I am optimistic that this book will bring the Black African Women Leadership out once again to compete and win this male dominating world so as to restore peace for humanity. It must be mentioned that in Black African History and tradition, is helpful to remember that the most warlike and suppose male-oriented societies as they are, sometimes had female rulers. There several factors which contribute to that. Among them are (a) male leaders are frequently away on war front fighting, (b) he leaves the lands and possessions in charge of those he can trust, specifically his wives (female partners) kins. Ironically the rise of powerful male rulers often led to establishment of a matrilineal system. This, of course, was not willingness to introduce wives' kin into the centre of power. Black African Rulers in many segments of pre-history African ruler preferred to inheritance pass through his sister. Or again, in order to maintain his authority, the leader would take wives from each 'clan' or group. Upon his death one of his sons would be chosen to succeed with the boy's mother assuming a position of power as a counsel to the new ruler.

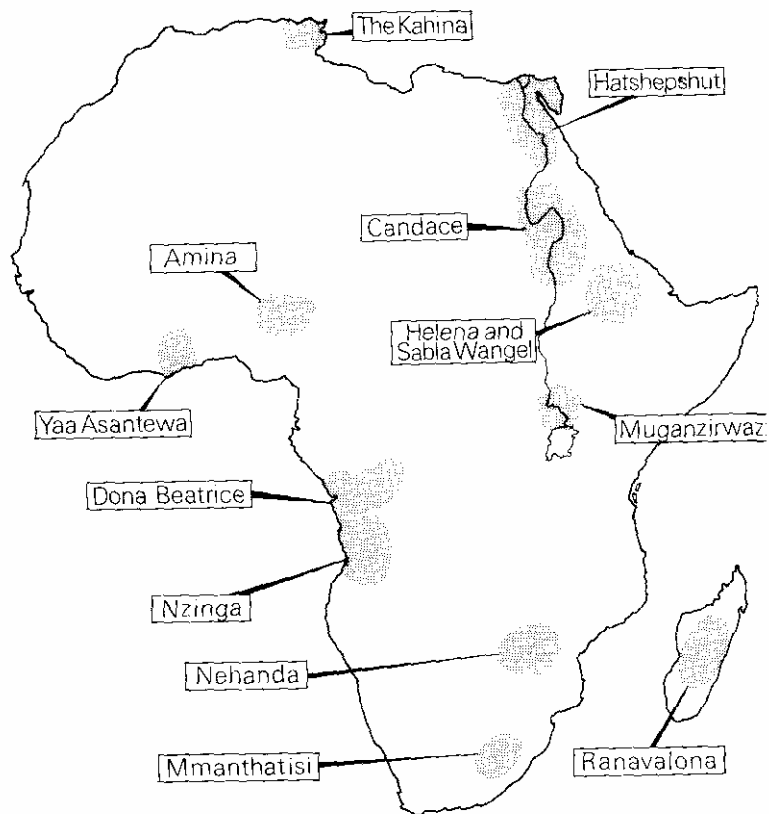
It is also essential to elucidate our minds of theories about matriarchal societies. Certainly many historians reveal in their writing an unlying assumption that there was a time when women were dominant in Black African societies. Over and over again when reading about the remote history concerning pre-historic Black African people, one learns that their legendary first ancestor was a woman. And often the author will remark that this probably indicates that the society was dominated by women in those days. This assumption found its fullest expression in the nineteenth century when a theory known as

'The Golden Age of Matriarchy' was formulated. According to this theory, the earliest human societies were ruled by women, but men gradually asserted themselves and 'conquered: their female counterparts. The evidence most often quoted for

theory was religious, since in many parts of the world there are myths in which a goddess, often a female fertility figure. is replaced by a god, usually a warlike male. There is no reason to interpret these myths as records of actual events or as straightforward truthful accounts. It is more like that such stories were meant to emphasize the fact that man acquired a superior status to woman rather than implying that there had been a period of superior status for women. For instance, looking at recent times, historians have pointed out that many societies have senior female figure as a sort of second-in-command to the head male, usually a queen-mother or royal sister and they claim that is evidence that women have been displaced and pushed down from the leading position. And I agree.²

It is however, true that there is a remarkable similarity in the status of:queen-mother and king's-sister in many different societies across the whole of Africa. But the theory of **'The Golden Age of Matriarchy'** is really only a baseless assumption, a hangover from the last century, with no concrete evidence to support it due to, in many instances Eurological intervention and interpretations. In this contemporary periods, Eurological anthropologists have insisted that the theory is false and that all evidence available indicates that since the earliest time, man has always ruled. I say these are lies. These Eurological Anthropologists insisted that no true matriarchal society has ever been known to exist anywhere on earth. I once again say these are lies. These are only true in Europe and the Western Hemisphere by virtue of the recent history of feminism (women Movement in 1920s and was intensified in the 1980s to the year of the women in the 1990s..

² For more information, see David Sweetman; Women Leaders in African History, published in 1984 by Oxford Printed and bound in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn.



Map of Africa showing the locations of each chapter

Post Conflict Peace Building and Reconstruction of Liberia: The Significance of Liberian Women's Political Empowerment with African-American in this development:



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We are now on the thread hole of post conflict development that could become a major sea change in Liberia since the departure of warlord leader Charles Taylor to exile in Nigeria. There is tab in the affairs of man, which, taken, in the flood, leads to fortune; omitted, in all the voyage of their life, is bounds to shallows and miseries...therefore this is a great opportunity for The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), The African Union(AU), HBCU, African-Americans, and the international community in general, and Liberians in particular to use the present peace by virtue of the U.S. and the international attention on the Liberian situation, for the first time since the Reagan Administration support to the Military regime of Samuel K.Doe Military in 1980; to address constructively, the political, economic, and social stabilization in the first place, and develop a consensus through a national and conference involving Liberians of all economic groups, ethnic groups, cultural groups, women movement, and religious groups on keys elements of meaningful post conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction, reconciliation and peace building programs.

It must be pointed out that the study of the Liberian wars, however, cannot be complete without reference to post-conflict peace building and reconstruction. This is because the post-conflict peace building and reconstruction provides opportunities measures to be taken to consolidate the peace and to ensure that the root causes of the conflict are properly addressed in order to prevent a recurrence. African-American and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) will be significant key players in the Post-Conflict Peace Building, Reconstruction, and Capacity Building process.

As articulated in the Washington AFRO-American newspaper Volume 112 No. 4 in the September 6-12- 2003, "Africare: Stepping up to help Liberians". Mr. Julius Coles, Africare President is asking African-Americans to offer financial assistance to the people of Liberia. I enthusiastically join Mr. Coles to cry on the shoulders of Howard University, Morehouse, Tuskege, and Prairie View A&M University in particular to encourage other HBCU to assist Liberia in its dying needs of reincarnation of Liberia political, social, educational institutions, health care facilities, and its human resources to modern nation-state development. The four HBCH mentioned above had strong historic academic relations with Liberia from 1920-1980. Many civilians and Americo-Liberian political leaders graduated from these institutions. Based upon this background, I wish to draw African-Americans and HBCU to the following significant and first phase Liberian concerns:

- (a) Basis Characteristics of post-conflict Peace Building and Reconstruction**
- (b) Basic Proactive Approaches to the management of post-conflict issues and problems with specific reference to Disarmament and Demobilization of boys and girls rebel soldiers.**
- (c). Basic general outline of priority plan of actions and policies that are imperative for the rehabilitation, reconstruction, peace building, and recovery of Liberia political, social, education, health care, and resettled Liberian communities.**

Therefore, the significance of reexamining priorities in Liberia's economic and social rehabilitation in light of current international development policies and strategies which have been formulated by multinational/multilateral development institutions like the World Bank, UNDP, and by regional development banks like the African Development Bank (ADB), as well as by major bilateral donors like (USAID) must be asked through African-American political, religious, businesses, and HBCU leadership and Liberians home and abroad to assist countries emerging from protracted and often very violent genocidal civil conflict like Liberia from 1980-1997, and from 1997-2003, to help lay the foundations not only for Liberia's economic reconstruction and recovery, but also for the

restoration of civil society and democratic rule. This, of course, is a proactive and strategic and workable technique that is intended to motivate Liberians and friends of Liberia to bring some mutually beneficial awareness to f Liberia's official position or strategy on post-conflict management at the political, military, economic, and social levels. This is important in our consideration of the necessary conditions for the restoration of peace building, stability, security, development, and democracy in Liberia, which are essential conditions for the prevention of further new civil conflict.

The author considers this approach to be more pro-active and relevant to conflict management in Africa in general and Liberia in particular, since it attacks the roots of the problem and has the potential to unite both combatants (boys and girls rebel soldiers) in Liberia and friends of Liberia and the donor community, under an agreed priority program of resettlement, disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, reconstruction, reconciliation, peace building and recovery.

The mistakes and, or the reluctance of the ECOWAS/ECOMOG through the United Nations and the international community, to structurally and logistically analyze causes and effects of proliferation of weapons in Liberia from 1989-2003 must not be repeated in post Charles Taylor Peace Building and Reconstruction of Liberia. Because the demobilization of combatants, following their encampment at assembly points designated by ECOMOG prior to and after the so-called Charles Taylor 's 1997 elections, was never initiated nor completed or even started according to my personal visitation to Liberia as a Liberian and my personal observation of the situation. As the final analysis, the impacts of proliferation of weapons in the hands of our baby boys and girls rebel soldiers have been one of the most marketable commodities and employment of baby rebel fighters during the Charles Taylor regime. Post Conflict Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Reconciliation, Peace building, and Recovery must go hand in hand with the demobilization of combatants as an essential prerequisite to the improvement of Liberia's security environment. This must be one of the major areas of concerns that African-African-Americans and HBCU must suppo