

A HISTORY OF THE RIO PONGO: TIME FOR A NEW APPRAISAL?

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Forty years ago (1963), when some of us were beginning our studies of the history of the Upper Guinea coast, there existed only a few published general histories of Guinea/Conakry or region-based models to guide us. André Arcin's substantial works provided an original but awkward structure from which we could commence our work, but his monographs tended to be heavily based on a European colonial presence, a necessity to make sense of a complex colony, and a reliance upon oral traditions or other uncited sources, few of which could be tested a half century after his works were published.¹ Christopher Fyfe's important history of Sierra Leone had just come into print in 1962. Fyfe's foremost emphasis was to chronicle the development of the Sierra Leone settlement and chart that colony's progress, but his extensive documentation was extraordinary in that it identified the clear link between the "Northern Rivers" and British enterprise from Freetown and opened Britain's archives as sources of information in new and profound ways.²

Important earlier works by Famechon, Machat, Berenger-Ferand, Bour, and others centering upon the peoples, economies, and terrain of the rivers of coastal Guinea continued to be instructive, but these authors were writing at the turn of the last century, and they tended to treat the histories of indigenous peoples as interesting but relatively unimportant to the French colony's regional development. Only a single overview, seventy pages in length and written by St. Père, had been produced on the history of the Rio Pongo. Only three studies, by Demougeot, Corre, and Méo, had been written for the Rio Nunez. Little if anything had been done with respect to pre-colonial development within the Konkouré, Morebaya, Forékariah, or Melicouri rivers, and where those did exist, they tended to focus upon events that detailed aspects of colonial conquest, pacification, or economic transformation.³ In effect, those of us then carving

¹ André Arcin, *La Guinée Française* (Paris, 1907); André Arcin, *Histoire de la Guinée Française* (Paris, 1911).

² Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London, 1962).

³ Lucien Marie François Famechon, *Notice sur la Guinée Française* (Paris, 1900); Jules Machat, *Les Rivières du Sud et le Fouta-Diallon* (Paris, 1906); Laurent Jean B. Berenger-Ferand, *Les Peuples de la Sénégambie* (Paris, 1879); Jules Hubert Saint-Père, "Petit Historique des Sossos du Rio Pongo," *Bulletin du Comité d'Étude Historiques et*

out for ourselves sections of coast or particular ethnic groups for analysis and historical reconstruction found it necessary to begin almost from scratch and generally with only a vague notion of where our research might lead us.⁴

My early exploratory efforts upon this section of coast were not focused originally on the Nunez and Pongo rivers. Indeed, political events helped to shape my research when it became evident, by the mid-1960s, that tensions existing between the Republic of Guinea and the United States would make it highly unlikely that an American could expect to conduct research within Guinea or perhaps even visit it. Norman Bennett and George Brooks' work on American merchants trading in Africa and Fyfe's documentation with respect to Sierra Leone and circumstances within its "Northern Rivers" were sufficient to suggest, however, that an archive-based study of trade and politics in the coastal rivers would be possible, even if that were inadequate.⁵ In any case, it was clear that archival sources would need to be mastered before other resources could be investigated. John Davidson's important thesis of the Sherbro and its hinterland (finished in 1969) provided a useful model, one that might be adapted to fit different conditions and events in coastal Guinea. Joseph Harris' thesis on the Fuuta Jalloo, completed in 1965, perhaps would suffice to place events upon the coast within a larger context of interior history.⁶

In the winter of 1965, I spent five months combing archives and libraries that, at least then, were mostly located within London.⁷ My only boundaries were the current borders of

Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, 12 (1929): 484-555; Antoine Marie Jean Demougeot, "Histoire du Nunez," *Bulletin du Comité d'Étude Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique occidentale française*, 21 (1938): 177-289; A. Corre, "Les Peuples du Rio-Nunez," [*Revue d'anthropologie*] *Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, 30 (deuxième série) (1888): 42-73; Docteur Méo, "Études sur le Rio-Nunez," *Bulletin du Comité d'Études de l'Afrique occidentale française*, (1919): 281-317; Ch. Bour, "Les Dépendances du Sénégal: Géographie -- Population -- Productions -- Commerce -- Colonisation" *Revue Maritime et Coloniale*, 85 (1885): 26-82. See also the works of Maurice Houis, Denise Paulme, and Claude Rivière, many of whose works were printed in the *Bulletin de l'IFAN*.

⁴John Davidson, "Trade and Politics in the Sherbro Hinterland, 1849-1890," thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1969; Allen Howard, "Big Men, Traders, and Chiefs: Power, commerce and spatial change in the Sierra Leone-Guinea plain, 1865-1895," thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1972; David Skinner, "Islam in Sierra Leone During the Nineteenth Century," thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1971; Bruce Mouser, "Trade and Politics in the Pongo and Nunez Rivers, 1790-1865," thesis, Indiana University, 1971/2; Gustav Deveneau, "The Political and Social Impact of the Colony in Northern Sierra Leone, 1821-1896," thesis, Boston University, 1973; Winston McGowan, "The Development of European Relations with Futa Jallon and the Foundation of French Colonial Rule, 1794-1897," thesis, University of London, 1978.

⁵Norman Bennett and George Brooks, editors, *New England Merchants in Africa: A History through documents, 1802 to 1865* (Boston, 1965); Fyfe, *Sierra Leone*.

⁶Davidson, "Trade and Politics"; Joseph Harris, "The Kingdom of Fouta Diallon," thesis, Northwestern University, 1965.

⁷Church Missionary Society, London Missionary Society, Royal Geographical Society, National Maritime Museum/Library, Public Record Office, British Museum/Library, Royal Commonwealth Society, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.

Guinea/Conakry, which meant that my search covered all the rivers of coastal Guinea. At that time, there was yet no chronology of events or trends either in my mind or published with sufficiency anywhere to my knowledge. The volume of material found in records of the Colonial Office, War Office, and the Admiralty, and in missionary archives was indeed daunting, and nearly all of it was in primary hand-written sources. Fyfe had provided direction to data within those archives, but he had described events as covered there only peripherally and only sufficiently with respect to Sierra Leone history. It was in those archives that I met Winston McGowan and Gus Deveneau; all of us happened to be ordering up the same material, and, to put it plainly, we learned to share documents, leads and insights. I still recall fondly the surprise on Winston's face when I told him that Joe Harris had just completed a thesis on his topic.

My focus upon commercial and political trends in the Nunez and Pongo rivers came gradually and only when it became clear that the history of peoples in the region south of Conakry would be inevitably invested with a history of canoe trade with Freetown, with prominent Mandingo and Susu lineages, and with rapidly expanding Islamic penetration of the coast. None of the latter could I cover adequately without reshaping my own interests and without conducting research in Freetown or northwestern Sierra Leone. Luckily, mine was a good choice, for unknown to me at the time, David Skinner and Allen Howard were engaged with those topics, and they would continue to publish on those matters to the present. In contrast, the Nunez and Pongo rivers segregated themselves as separate centers of significant Atlantic-based enterprises, whether those be in the slave trade or its suppression, in missionary efforts, or later in emerging legitimate commerce. I prodded McGowan to complete his work quickly - he took forever to finish (1978).⁸

Three works completed in the early 1970s profoundly influenced our view of events in the Rio Pongo. In 1970, George Brooks' study of the activity of Yankee traders upon the west African coast and Walter Rodney's original and impressive synthesis respecting the history of Upper Guinea were published, and these were important in providing new insight regarding the mechanics of the slave trade and the character of Europeans, Eurafricans, and Africans who were so involved. Both authors placed events in the Pongo within a larger landscape of Atlantic-basin and coast-specific history, and they identified trends or patterns that could be tested within the context of more specific locational events.⁹ Two years later, Stiv Jakobsson important and comprehensive study of early British missionary efforts in West Africa was published, and in this work, Jakobsson reached conclusions about Church Missionary Society efforts in the Pongo

⁸See my thesis, p.302, for a list of Fula rulers provided to me by McGowan during this period.

⁹George Brooks, *Yankee Traders, Old Coasters and African Middlemen* (Boston, 1970); Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast* (Oxford, 1970).

(1808-1816) that still need to be tested.¹⁰

Other but unpublished materials that were unknown to me at the time, included the research being carried out by Bela Vassady upon missionary activities from the West Indies that maintained schools and missions in the Pongo after the mid-century.¹¹ Additionally, six Guinean scholars, Mahawa Bangura, Mamadou Diallo, Charles Sorry, Georges Sorry, Boubakar Ba, and Aliu Wann at the University of Conakry in the early 1970s were completing theses on aspects of Pongo history. Most of the latter relied heavily upon published French materials and upon oral traditions collected along the coast. None of these have been tested for accuracy.¹² Indeed, I would place my own thesis, completed in 1971/72, in the same category - there has yet to be a systematic test given to its conclusions. In the twenty years that followed these original works, there seems to have been no serious attempt to integrate existing research or to produce a new synthesis of Pongo history. I assume that most of us were busy making a living. Indeed, there seemed to have been little interest in the Rio Pongo at all. I nibbled at the edges of Pongo history occasionally, but my primary interests during those years lie, in addition to maintaining a 12-hour teaching load, with detailed transcriptions and annotations of several lengthy reports written by missionaries and colonial officials with respect to circumstances and events in the "Northern Rivers," especially in the period when they were most under British influence and observation.¹³

The last decade-plus beginning in 1990 has brought a flurry of curiosity to events within the Rio Pongo. Victoria Coifman expanded her Senegal-based interests southward to the Pongo, as did Daniel Schafer, one of her students; both of these authors were primarily focused upon

¹⁰Stiv Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man and a Brother?* (Uppsala, 1972).

¹¹Bela Vassady, Jr., "The Role of the Black West Indian Missionary in West Africa, 1840-1890," thesis, Temple University, 1972.

¹²Mahawa Bangura, "Contribution a l'Histoire des Sosoe du 16^e au 19^e siècle," *Memoire de fin d'études supérieures*, Institut Polytechnique Gamal Abdel Nasser, Conakry, 1971-1972; Mamadou Diallo, "Implantation Coloniale a Travers le Vestiges au Rio Pongo," *Mémoire de Diplôme de fin d'étude supérieurs*, Institut Polytechnique Gamal Abdel Nasser, Conakry, 1970; Charles Emmanuel Sorry, "Monographie Historique du Rio Pongo du XV^eme à Fin du XIX^eme S," *Memoire de Diplome de fin d'études supérieures*, Institut Polytechnique Gamal Abdel Nasser, Conakry, 1973-1974; Georges Pascal Sorry, "Le Christianisme, instrument d'intrusion et d'implantation coloniale au Rio-Pongo du XIX^eme au XX^eme siècle," *Mémoire de Diplôme de fin d'études supérieures*, Université de Conakry, 1975; Aliu Wann and Bubakar Ba, "Les relations entre le Futa-Kyalo théocratique et les principaux royaumes de la Basse-Côte des origines à l'implantation coloniale," *Mémoire (option Histoire Philosophie)*, Institut Polytechnique Gamal Abdel Nasser, Conakry, 1973-1974.

¹³Bruce L. Mouser and George E. Brooks, "An 1804 Slaving Contract Signed in Arabic Script From the Upper Guinea Coast," *History in Africa*, 14 (1987): 341-347; Bruce L. Mouser, edited, *Guinea Journals: Journeys into Guinea-Conakry During the Sierra Leone Phase, 1800-1821* (Washington, D.C., 1979); Mouser, "Moria Politics in 1814; Amara to Maxwell, March 2," *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire*, 35, sér. B no. 4 (1973): 805-812; Mouser, "Théophilus Conneau: The Saga of a Tale," *History in Africa*, 6 (1979): 99-107; Mouser, "The Voyage of the Good Sloop *Dolphin* to Africa 1795-1796," *The American Neptune*, 38 no. 4 (1978): 249-261; Mouser, "Women Slavers of Guinea-Conakry," in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, edited by Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein (Madison, 1983); Mouser, edited, *Journal of James Watt, Expedition to Timbo, Capital of the Fula Empire in 1794* (Madison, 1994).

American, AfroEuropean, and European families that were active within the Atlantic-basin, whether in Africa or in America.¹⁴ Odile Goerg's important contributions respecting the slave trade and its connection to circumstances within the Fuuta Jaloo furthered our understanding of that commerce. Martin Klein's work respecting slavery, the slave trade, and slave insurrections upon the coast added significantly to our consideration of underlying social forces at work in the rivers. New work being conducted by numerous persons up and down the coast and that focused on changes within stateless societies prior to imperial conquest or with resistance to slavery have advanced our respect for new methods of analysis. Within the Pongo region, the original research conducted by Ramon Sarro on the Baga peoples, Odile Passavant on the Naloe people, Edda Fields on linguistics and rice culture, and Judith Carney on black rice have all helped to increase our knowledge of trends in the river, as also have the works of Paul Hair and Frederick Lamp.¹⁵ My own work in recent years has continued to focus mainly upon transcription and annotation of texts that improve our own understanding of underlying forces operating within the slave trade and of descriptions of Pongo peoples as described by travelers and missionaries who visited the rivers in the early nineteenth century.¹⁶

¹⁴Daniel Schafer, "Family Ties that Bind: Anglo-African Slave Traders in Africa and Florida, John Fraser and his Descendants," *Slavery and Abolition*, 20 3 (December 1999): 1-21; Schafer, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African princess, Florida slaves, plantation slaveowner* (Jacksonville, 2003); Victoria Coifman, "The Background and Preliminary Results of Research at Three Trading Sites on the Rio Pongo," paper, Fifth International Conference on Mande Studies, Leiden, Netherlands, June 17-21, 2002; Coifman, "Implications of a Unified Though Shifting Boundary: Where West Africans met Europeans, African-Europeans and (later) African-Americans," paper, African Studies Association 1995 Annual Meeting, Orlando; Coifman, "The Western West African and European Frontier: Contributions from Former Archbishop of Conakry Raymond-Marie Tchidimbo's Autobiography for West African History," in *Paths Toward the Past*, edited by Robert W. Harms (Atlanta, 1994), 273-292; Coifman, "The People of the African-European Frontier: From the Sahil to Sierra Leone, the Rio Nunez and Rio Pongo of Lower Guinea," in *Migrations anciennes et peuplement actuel des Côtes guinéennes*, edited by Gérald Gaillard (Paris, 2000), 487-516.

¹⁵Ramon Sarro-Maluquer, "Baga Identity: Religious Movements and Political Transformation in the Republic of Guinea," thesis, Department of Anthropology, University College London, University of London, 1999; Edda Fields, "Rice Farmers in the Rio Nunez Region: A Social History of Agricultural Technology and Identity in Coastal Guinea, CA.2000 BCE to 1880CE," thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2001; Odile Hanques Passavant, "Une Histoire des Nalou, XIV^e-XIX^e Siecle: Nissance d'un groupe et appropriation d'un nom," in *Migrations anciennes et peuplement actuel des Côtes guinéennes*, edited by Gérald Gaillard (Paris, 2000), 385-401; Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2001); P.E.H. Hair, "The History of the Baga in Early Written Sources," *History in Africa*, 24 (1997): 381-391; Frederick Lamp, *Art of the Baga: A Drama of Cultural Reinvention* (New York: Museum of African Art, 1996).

¹⁶Mouser, "Iles de Los as Bulking Center in the Slave Trade, 1750-1800," *Revue Française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 83, no. 313 (décembre 1996): 77-90; Mouser, editor, *Journal of a Missionary Tour to the Labaya Country (Guinea/Conakry) in 1850*, by Rev. John Ulrich Graf (Leipzig, 1998); Mouser, editor, *A Slaving Voyage to Africa and Jamaica: The Log of the Sandown, 1793-1794* (Bloomington, 2002); Mouser, editor, *Account of the Mandingoes, Susoos, & Other Nations, c.1815*, by the Reverend Leopold Butscher (Leipzig, 2000); Mouser and Ramon Sarro, editors, second edition, *Travels into the Baga and Soosoo Countries in 1821* by Peter McLachlan (Leipzig, 1999); Mouser, "Who and Where were the Baga? European Perspectives from 1793 to 1821," *History in Africa* 29 (2002), 337-364; Mouser and Nancy Mouser, *Case of the Reverend Peter Hartwig, Slave Trader or Misunderstood Idealist? Class of Church Missionary Society/imperial objectives in Sierra Leone, 1804-1815*

By far, however, the most important new synthesis of history of this section of coast, especially with respect to its interpretation of the Pongo as a part of a larger regional history, is that put forward by Boubacar Barry in 1988, a work that was translated into English in 1997.¹⁷ I recall traveling to Decorah, Iowa, in the early 1980s to attend a lecture delivered by Barry, and I was surprised and later amused when he kept mentioning an author named Musa, whom I had never heard of. Indeed, Musa seemed to be writing precisely on topics that I had covered in my thesis or publication.¹⁸ After an embarrassing lapse of perhaps ten minutes, it became clear that Musa was me, with an understandable mispronunciation that I had encountered frequently elsewhere on the African coast. When studying Barry's 1988 work and the 1997 translation, however, I was struck by the fact that Barry had reached conclusions from my own reconstruction of events upon the coast that varied significantly in places from my own.

In recent years, a cooperative research project from a Conakry-base and being led by Maladho Baldé and Aboubacar Touré of the History Department of the University of Conakry, with the collaboration of Coifman and funded in part by the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, has been formed and has carried out preliminary research in the lower Pongo. The number of participants collecting data and investigating historical sites is indeed impressive.¹⁹ Of concern, understandably, is the impact that future non-research activities in the area might have in destroying or altering existing historical and archaeological sites and perhaps in encouraging a new mythology surrounding events that occurred there. In a sense, the project's objectives are to identify, inventory, protect, and salvage existing sites and materials and to collect data and traditions/stories/genealogies before they are corrupted or removed/lost.

The question at hand, however, is whether we are ready to produce a new synthesis of Pongo history. My answer, at this time, is that we should begin to work toward a synthesis, if only to avoid the error of doing nothing and missing an opportunity encouraged by recent interest. As we make that attempt, several topics come to mind that need research, however, and that could be done contiguous to this synthesis. This list of topic suggestions (the 10 most

(Madison, 2003); Mouser and Nancy Mouser, editors, *The Reverend Peter Hartwig, 1804-1815: A sourcebook of correspondence from the Church Missionary Society Archive* (Madison, 2003); Mouser, "African Academy - Clapham, 1799-1806," forthcoming in *Journal of the History of Education Society (UK)*; Mouser, "Continuing British Interest in Coastal Guinea/Conakry and the Fuuta Jalloo Highland," forthcoming in *Cahiers d'études africaines*.

¹⁷ Boubacar Barry, *Le Sénégal du XV^e au XIX^e siècle: Traite Négrière, Islam et Conquête Coloniale*, (Paris, 1988); Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1997).

¹⁸ Boubacar Barry, "The Expansion of the Fuuta Jallon Towards the Coast and the Social and Political Crises in Southern Senegambia During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," unpublished paper, 1983.

¹⁹ Maladho Baldé, "Quatre vingt dix jours de recherches Historiques au Rio Pongo: Constat, Impact et Perspectives," paper, Fifth International Conference on Mande Studies, Leiden, Netherlands, June 17-21, 2002; Aboubacar Touré, "Faringhia selon les traditions orales: état de la recherche," paper, Fifth International Conference on Mande Studies, Leiden, Netherlands, June 17-21, 2002.

important in my estimation) might also encourage younger (and older) scholars to invest in the history of the Pongo.

1. Family histories - Many important or influential families in the Rio Pongo date back to the eighteenth or early nineteenth century, and their genealogies cross both the British and French periods. Many of these lineages are well recorded in foreign archives; but often there is a lack of connection in records, partly a consequence of changing names and methods of recording. Coifman, for instance, suggests on the basis of an observation made by Marie-Yvonne Curtis, a Guinean art historian, that few AfroEuropean families are able to trace themselves more than three generations into the past. In effect, lineage reconstruction (through use of British, French, and family traditions) should be possible, although the latter part needs to be approached cautiously to avoid coaching respondents to forcing linkages in existing archival data. From a personal perspective, I would prefer that these family reconstructions not be put into printed forms that likely would lead to general acceptance of authenticity, whether those be correct or not. Ideally, someone with experience in data collection of this sort should be identified, and guidance should be sought to avoid pitfalls, preferably before mistakes are made.

2. Missionary history - Three missionary groups were active in the Rio Pongo during the nineteenth century. a) Records of the Church Missionary Society's activities at the beginning of that century are particularly rich in data about families, economy, and political transformation. Someone or persons need to search through that data for information of several distinct types. The story of the mission, its activities/success/failures, and its impact upon local peoples needs to be evaluated in itself, as a separate topic altogether. That has not yet been attempted, although Jakobsson made an admirable first effort in the early 1970s. Children belonging to important families in the Pongo, and some subordinate branches as well, attended CMS schools. Their families interacted in significant ways with the Society, and often CMS records detail family connections, genealogies, and activities. Another topic from CMS reports would include a description of local economy at a time when the Pongo was undergoing a significant transformation when slave trading became illegal. b) A second missionary group, the West Indian Church (Barbados), arrived in the river in the mid-1850s. Hand-written reports from that missionary effort no longer exist, but published notes in that society's magazines and journals contain detail, although not to degree available in CMS records, that should be digested more systematically than has been attempted. Vessady's thesis should be sufficient as a guide to that material. c) A third and certainly the most enduring missionary effort was that carried out by the Congregation du Saint Esprit, an order which established its main center at Boffa, the region's administrative center, at the beginning of the French period. The records of that society are

extensive, are only now being used, and surely deserve thorough study.²⁰ It is clear, however, that persons associated with that mission were active in historical site preservation and description and in genealogical reconstruction, among other things. By looking closely at the records of these separate missions, it should be possible to track lineages and lineage transformations, commercial transformation, and political trends. The history of each missionary effort also is a worthy topic for investigation.

3. Fula connection - Barry's synthesis demands testing. That may require the involvement of someone well-versed in Fula history and major trends between the interior and the coast, perhaps Barry himself. Barry's treatment, and indirectly that of McGowan's, suggests a strong Fula presence within the Pongo from the end of the eighteenth century. That interpretation seems logical and convincing, but it remains uncertain to me that that view can be substantiated by documented evidence from the coast. Barry's interpretation needs to be verified sooner rather than later, before it becomes accepted as an indisputable and integral part of Pongo history. My fear is that we may soon miss that window of opportunity, if we do not act quickly. On the other hand, his synthesis may be correct, but we need to know that for certain also.

4. LusoAfricans - From the eighteenth century, important LusoAfrican families have played significant roles within the Rio Pongo, and more particularly in that part of the river extending southward toward Bouramaya on the Konkouré River. These families, who still reside in the area, set a model for integration with local Baga and Susu peoples and formed ruling dynasties that survive in church, economy, and politics. The Gomes and Fernandez families interlocked through marriage with the Ormonds, Lightburns, Wilkinsons, and Harrisons (I suspect many more) and formed large corporations of interest that continued into the colonial period and, even now, exercise vast influence within coastal Guinea. A thorough study of these LusoAfrican families is crucial to our understanding of power within that section of the Pongo. Brooks' recent work on EuraAfricans provides a beginning, and we trust that he carries that study to the present.²¹ In any case, data collection and analysis must proceed swiftly, before it is lost.

5. Oral tradition collection - Someone with training in collection and use of oral data needs to look closely at traditions recorded by Arcin and St. Perè, the Spiritan Fathers in the 1860-1930 period, and Guinean writers in the 1970s to determine where to begin systematic collection and

²⁰ Archiv du Saint Esprit, Chevilly-Larue. Sarro, Coifman, and Curtis have used these archives, and select documents have been published in Pere Gérard Viera, *Sous le Signe du Laïcat: L'église Catholique en Guinée* (Dakar, 1992).

²¹ George Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, social status, gender, and religious observance from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century* (Athens, 2003).

preservation. I am likely the last person to consult on how to proceed in this matter. Nevertheless, it seems to me that there now exist sufficient material, already in print, that needs to be reconciled or interpreted, and new avenues of research established for filling gaps or dealing with contradictions where those do occur. In effect, oral traditions ought to be useful and used. While they need not be discarded outright, they need nevertheless to be understood and explained, before they are firmly planted as definite history and confuse historians in the future.

6. Town histories - Many towns in the Pongo region date to the eighteenth century and to the slave trading past. Suffice it to say here that there is ample room for town histories. Ideally, the cooperative research project should identify someone with experience in researching and writing town history and who would participate perhaps in an advisory role to suggest a methodology to be considered by those working in the field. Such projects could be commenced/perhaps completed by single persons planted in communities for the purpose of data collection. Whether town residents would cooperate on the short term with outside data collectors is another matter that needs to be resolved before such research should be undertaken. Certainly town history would include a comprehensive study of terrain and soil types, and the impact of rivers, tides and inundation, elevation, wildlife, economy, and other considerations that might impact on town location and its development. A side benefit may come with identification of voluntary associations, town quarters, and religious groups. It will be difficult to guide informants away from a natural tendency to justify control by particular families or lineages.

7. Historical site identification and preservation - It is my understanding that much of the work commenced by the cooperative project has been involved in this effort. From my vantage, this should include towns or town sites (even if they no longer exist), forts, baracoons, wharfs, trade paths, and physical remains. One of the challenges in this regard may be to convince town elders of the importance of such sites, whether to attract visitors to their towns or for historical preservation of aspects of their own heritage. Of concern, of course, is the instance that once items are identified as having historical value, that value may be marketed in other ways, such as souvenirs to tourists.

8. Impact of ethnic reconstruction - Lamp's and Sarro's separate observations with respect to a revival of Baga identity, whether for ethnic reasons or as a rationale for claiming land-holding rights, needs to be considered thoroughly. Ethnic reconstruction may be based in fact or in fancy. That is not to say that our task should be to keep such efforts true to a historical base, but it does seem apparent that historians bear some responsibility to keep tabs on these efforts and bring some awareness when those efforts go astray, at least to a degree. In any case, it is hoped that the historian will not be shy or fail to note discrepancies when they do occur.

9. British/French transition - Without question, a significant change occurred in the Rio Pongo when the French imposed colonial rule in the 1860s. The transition, in political/social/economic terms, from a period of independence and/or British influence and from one in which political elites had only recently warred against each other, to a period in which political mastery was vested formally by the French authority upon the Kati family at Thia brought profound change to the river. That period has not yet been studied in detail. With imposition of French rule came French commerce, French missionaries, French schools (old/new boy networks), a primary connection to Dakar/Saint Louis instead of Freetown, and a gradual shift of power to Conakry, a new administrative center created at the tip of Cape Sangara and on the Island of Tumbo. This may have been the most profound event to occur in Pongo history during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and it needs to be studied thoroughly.

10. Slavery as an institution - To my knowledge, there has been no systematic study of slavery in the Rio Pongo, other than that contained in Martin Klein's study of resistance on the coast.²² In my thesis, I dealt with the slave trade as it existed in the early decades of the nineteenth century, but nowhere did I focus on slavery as an institution or the types of subalterns (subordinate relationships) that existed within that society. Studies by Richard Rathbone on the nature of resistance, more recent work by Ismail Rashid with respects to slavery in northwestern Sierra Leone, and an earlier study by Bronislaw Nowak on plantation slavery/rebellion in the Forécariah River suggest models that may be applied in the Pongo with some utility.²³ To be sure, early forms of slavery or subordination were complicated and likely differed from master to master, although it would be expected that certain modes would have been followed. Some slaves were clearly considered as domestic slaves and some fused into lineages as slave-branches, while others were destined for sale to buyers in the Atlantic-basin, while still others enjoyed nearly free status, with the exception that they paid a portion of their wages to their patron. Those relationships changed as the region shifted economically from one focused on the slave trade as a primary source of income and enterprise, to production of coffee, groundnuts, and other products for the primarily French market. Much of that transformation is surely described in French records, for plantation labor was crucial to the colony's financial success.

²²Martin Klein, "Slave Resistance and Slave Emancipation in Coastal Guinea," in *The End of Slavery in Africa*, edited by Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts (Madison, 1988), 203-219.

²³Richard Rathbone, "Some Thoughts on Resistance to Enslavement in West Africa," *Slavery & Abolition*, 5/6(1985/6): 11-22; Ismail Rashid, "Escape, Revolt, and Marronage in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Sierra Leone," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 34 3(2000): 656-683; Nowak, Bronislaw, "The Slave Rebellion in Sierra Leone in 1785-1796," *Hemispheres: Studies in Cultures and Societies* (Poland), 3(1986): 151-169.

Of these topics, several clearly will require a physical presence in Guinea for that research to be fruitful. Some, however, and especially those involved with missionary records or missionary efforts, can just as easily be conducted from afar. In the latter instance, for example, Church Missionary Society records are now available on film in the United States, and most of the publications of the West Indian Mission are available on film through interlibrary loan. Some topics, especially those involving families and towns, can be nibbled at during short residence in Guinea. In effect there is plenty to do, and opportunities for younger scholars are significant.