

The Lebanese Immigrants in Sierra Leone: A Market Dominant-Minority and Revisiting the Constitutional Statute for Naturalization and Citizenship

Mohammed B. Sillah

Department of Political Science and History
Hampton University
Hampton, Virginia 23668
USA

Abstract

The study investigates the Lebanese historic action to immigrate to Sierra Leone and examines their contribution to economic development and local culture, which among other things, has made the immigrants an integrated part of the fabric of the Sierra Leonean society. The study further reveals the Lebanese ultimate desire to become full citizens of Sierra Leone, and the call to deliberate on their citizenship case through constitutional amendment.

Keywords: Retention, scale, factor analysis, validity, reliability and research.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine the Lebanese emigration to Sierra Leone and its contribution to economic development and the local culture; working on the assumption that collective efforts on the part of the Lebanese are the primary means by which they can achieve security, economic welfare, and a common identity. The first part of this article throws light on the following: the declining Ottoman power; a circumstance that served as a prelude for the Lebanese to emigrate to Sierra Leone as a haven for their financial success; an appraisal of the Lebanese immigrants in Sierra Leone; interstate relations between Sierra Leone and Lebanon; the local traders' resentment against the Lebanese entrepreneurs; and the civil war that erupted from 1990-2000 and its impact on the political elites and the entrepreneurial Lebanese. The second part highlights the amendment of the constitutional statute for the naturalization and full citizenship of those Lebanese who are willing to adopt Sierra Leone as their second permanent home, including the optimist and pessimist views on the issue of Lebanese citizenship. The final part gives an assessment and the conclusion.

The Ottoman traced the foundation of its powerful military state from Anatolia (now Turkey). The founding father of that state was their "chief" Osman. Hence, the name Ottoman denotes or means followers of Osman.¹ The Ottoman Turks conquered different societies in Europe, Asia, North Africa, as well as the Middle East, and succeeded in establishing a powerful empire in the world. However, like other great empires, the power of the Ottomans would decline.

Indeed the declining Ottoman Empire, coupled with the rising Western power, had impact on the Ottoman-ruled Arab provinces, most notably, Syria and Lebanon. The Ottomans governed these states as a single provincial unit. However, its decline would affect the two Arab nations, namely, Syria and Lebanon. They were multicultural societies of different religious backgrounds, such as Arab and Armenian Christians, Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs and Sunni Kurds. However, all these religious and multicultural communities had lived in peaceful co-existence under Ottoman rule. The Ottoman Turks did succeed in fostering a remarkable degree of religious and social tolerance. It is reported that a British writer who had visited these nations in the 1700s was impressed with "the general stable conditions and social harmony"ⁱⁱⁱ he saw in those Arab societies.

However, in the 1850s this social order and tranquility changed for the worse. The societies had experienced acute poverty as a result of economic malaise. The situation fermented "occasional" social unrest in Syria and Lebanon. The Western powers who had developed keen interests in the region decided to act. The highly demographic area "around Mount Lebanon came under the influence of several Western powers, such as the French."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ

The French succeeded in bringing the Maronites to their spheres of influence. The Maronites were Arab Christians who had allied themselves with the Roman Catholic Church. The other denominational groups were the American Protestant missionaries who had built a college in Beirut in 1866. The purpose was for the institution to facilitate the dissemination of “modern ideas.”^{iv}

The economy, however, continued to falter in the late 1800s which ultimately worsened the situation by creating an atmosphere of uncertainty. The result was emigration from Syria and Lebanon. The Lebanese emigrants outnumbered all others in search of green pasture elsewhere in the world. For instance, an exodus of Lebanese Christian and Muslims and their families came to the United States. As one Africanist scholar summed it best: “Arab immigration from the Ottoman Empire began to settle along the eastern seaboard and into the heartland of America in the mid-west.”^v According to sources, by 1914 about 350,000 Arabs from Syria and Lebanon had relocated to the Americas.^{vi} Others immigrated to countries in the Middle East and West African States, such as Sierra Leone.

The Lebanese started arriving in West Africa in the 1880s and the region continued to attract them from that period to the present. In the case of Sierra Leone, the first wave of Lebanese arrived in that country in 1895^{vii} by sea. Those Lebanese who later settled in Port Loko (north), Moyamba (south), and Pujehun (east) arrived in those areas by passing through seaports of Freetown (the capital and the main seaport). Some arrived in Sierra Leone through the seaport of Bonthe, the biggest island in Sierra Leone. Other Lebanese groups disembarked in the seaports of the neighboring countries Guinea (Conakry) and Liberia.

In Sierra Leone, most of the new immigrants rented accommodations from the Mandinkas, a local business community in the east of Freetown. They belong to a larger ethnic group found in several West African states. Perhaps that is one of the reasons a large concentration of the Lebanese community resides and trades in the eastern part of Freetown today. The Mandinka Muslim community in Freetown was the first to recognize that the immigrants, despite their “white color” were not Europeans. They based this observation on the Arabic language these settlers were speaking.

The immigrants were divided into two groups, by virtue of ethnicity, that is, Lebanese and Syrians, respectively. The first immigrants who arrived in the various seaports of Sierra Leone identified their nationality as Syrians because they came from the Province of Syria in the Ottoman Empire. There were some Syrians, however, who came from Mount Lebanon. But when the Lebanese government appointed its own representative in Sierra Leone in 1954, the name “Lebanese” became popular among the settlers.^{viii} However, since Sierra Leone was under the British Crown as a colony, the Lebanese diplomatic representative was conducted within the framework of the British colonial policy. The British themselves had encouraged the Lebanese immigrants to conduct their business enterprises in Sierra Leone. However, the ethnic identities between the Lebanese and Syrians were still confusing to some Sierra Leoneans. For instance, while the educated Sierra Leoneans called the settlers “Lebanese,” many locals continue to refer to them as “Syrians.” In Freetown, one often hears the words “Syrian man” uttered by some indigenous petty traders and customers.

The majority of the Lebanese who came to Sierra Leone were relatively poor. They found it extremely difficult to secure employment because they lacked experience and skills, and could not communicate in the local languages, nor could they speak English very well. As a result, they chose trading as their profession, selling cheap imported goods on the streets of Freetown. It was at this juncture that Sierra Leoneans began to take note of them as another kind of “white people” different from Europeans, particularly the British who were seen as administrators in offices.

Further, the Lebanese took full advantage of the establishment of the railway system which had linked one town or village to another and made it easier for traders to conduct their business in the interior. The construction of the railway in West Africa began in 1895. Through this means of transportation the Lebanese took their merchandise up-country, and brought rice, kola nuts (used for stimulant and other purposes), and other commodities in return. Before the arrival of the Lebanese, the Creoles were the dominant trading community in Freetown and its neighboring areas. But they did not operate their commercial activities nation-wide. The Creoles are a descent group of former Africa slaves who were repatriated from Britain and the Americas to Freetown and its environs after the abolition of the institution of slavery and its human cargo. Their language, Krio, is now a lingua-franca in Sierra Leone.

Even the British, who had reservations about the Lebanese presence in the country, did not doubt the important economic role the latter was playing in Sierra Leone. When the Lebanese eventually became influential businessmen, they began to build their own shops and others rented from the indigenous people. They expanded their commercial activities in the 1920s and when the government constructed feeder roads in order to facilitate the railway transportation system, the Lebanese again took full advantage of the new infrastructure by buying Lorries (or vehicles) to transport goods and people.^{ix}

Notwithstanding that, the relationship between the Asians and the Africans was not as cordial as one may have anticipated. Seemingly, the foreign nationals and the local people had held deep-seated suspicions toward one another. A reason quite understandable, for both had to compete over the scarce resources of Sierra Leone. Coupled with that, the financial success of the Lebanese was perceived by local traders as a threat to the success of their own enterprises. Thus, on July 18, 1919, an anti-Lebanese riot broke out in Freetown. The demonstrators attacked Lebanese shops with stones, sticks and other instruments. Some shops belonging to the Lebanese were looted and, according to the report, “[O]ne Lebanese was killed.”^x The riot later spread to the interior of Sierra Leone. As the situation became more intense and dangerous, and the safety of the Lebanese community was at stake, the colonial government intervened and brought the situation to normal. The government appointed a commission to look into the causes and damages of the riot. Through the recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry, the government awarded the Lebanese monetary compensation for damages sustained during the riot. The action of the Colonial Office in London to safeguard the interest of the Lebanese won the latter a political victory in Sierra Leone. As Van Der Laan, a former Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Sierra Leone puts it:

The Government assurance of 1919 meant in effect that the right of long-term residence was granted to the Lebanese...The intervention from London was a bitter disappointment for many Africans, and in particular, for the Creoles..., [who] were further disheartened by the knowledge that many British officials suspect them of having instigated the riots. They were worried that the Lebanese would make further inroads into their long established economic positions. Thus, bitterness and frustration marked Creole attitudes towards the Lebanese in the years that followed.^{xi}

It was indeed obvious that with the rapid growth of the Lebanese economic strength, the Creoles and other citizen traders would eventually find themselves behind their foreign counterparts. Indeed, when peace was restored, the Lebanese picked up the tempo of their business enterprises. The British had given them the confidence to stay and operate their business in the country. Some of them began to bring their wives and children to Sierra Leone. The 1930s gold mining scheme in the country opened new economic avenues for them. The Great Depression in the 1930s did reduce the rate of Lebanese immigration, and this continued until after the Second World War, but from the mid-1940s onward, the diamond business boomed in the country and the Lebanese began to extract lucrative profits and wealth from this gem enterprise.

By 1954, the year in which independent Lebanon appointed Asad Yazbeck of J. Milhemand Sons as an honorary Consul in Sierra Leone, many Lebanese had begun traveling to Lebanon and back to Sierra Leone. These visits attracted other young and better trained men from Lebanon. As a result, a new wave of immigrants to Sierra Leone took place.^{xii} In the 1950s and 1960s, the Lebanese financial success became increasingly visible or noticeable. They established automobile dealership agencies, motor garages, cinemas, hotels, and restaurants. Some of them became shipping agents and others developed interests in the export sector. Some went into poultry business, while others established a number of factories.^{xiii}

In 1976, the then widely read newsmagazine, *West Africa*, reported that before Sierra Leone became independent in 1961, there were about 3,200 “full Lebanese” of whom 1,700 were “aliens” and 1,500 were naturalized British and perhaps 2,000 Afro-Lebanese.^{xiv} The population had also become diversified in their professions. For example, some Lebanese decided to enter the active politics of the state, such as the late career diplomat, John Akar, who was himself an Afro-Lebanese. He served as an Ambassador of Sierra Leone to the United States during the premiership of Albert Margai. Akar wrote the Sierra Leonean national anthem. Besides him, several Afro-Lebanese also arose to political prominence. Through a gradual process, the Lebanese had become an integral part of the Sierra Leonean society. Their financial success story had also resonated in Lebanon and captivated the attention of the decision-makers of the Lebanese state who decided to formalize diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Sierra Leone.

These pragmatic foreign relations became a reality when Sierra Leone became independent in 1961. The Lebanese Ambassador to Liberia was also appointed Ambassador to Sierra Leone. The consulate in Freetown was later changed into an Embassy and Jean Hazon became Charge d' Affaires. This policy on the part of Lebanon was meant to establish cordial ties with independent African states, particularly West Africa, a region that has the presence of a large contingent of Lebanese traders even today. In addition, Lebanon wanted to protect the interests of its citizens in Africa; it was also trying to discourage any large-scale exodus of Lebanese from West Africa, taking into consideration the difficulties in dealing with the thousands of returning emigrants. Before the civil war broke out in Lebanon in the early 1980s, the Lebanese government gave technical aid including scholarships to Sierra Leonean students and invited Sierra Leonean political and religious dignitaries to Lebanon.^{xv} Back in 1963, the Sierra Leone government appointed Anis Milhem as Honorary Consul in Beirut. The Consulate in Beirut was responsible for the issuing of visa to those Lebanese interested in traveling to Sierra Leone.^{xvi}

The 1967-Arab-Israeli War had adverse effects on Lebanon, because of the proximity of certain Lebanese towns or villages to Israel. Many Lebanese parents sent for their children to join them in Sierra Leone. This situation consequently reduced the rate of monetary transaction between the Lebanese in Sierra Leone and those at home.^{xvii} The intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict into the heart of Lebanon, especially Beirut, coupled with Lebanese civil war, and the occupation of their land by the Israeli and Syrian military forces from the late 1970s to the early 1990s all resulted in a large immigration of Lebanese to Sierra Leone. They seemed to be more protected than ever before, for the simple fact that politicians and intellectuals were quite aware of the nature of their political, social, and economic plight. Despite the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states, the indigenous business communities in the civil society continued to resent the large number of Lebanese presence in the country. In particular, they envied the Lebanese dominance of the national economy. A prime example is the late Mohammed Saeed Jamil, who had become a successful business tycoon. His wealthy status gained him a place in the inner-circle of the state. But he also had a setback when he left the country on self-imposed exile in Britain for his alleged involvement in a coup d'état against the government of former President Joseph Momoh. Many Sierra Leoneans believed that Jamil had regarded the country as his personal "estate" and was seen as a person who was partially responsible for draining the economy of Sierra Leone. The fact remains that before President Momoh took over the country's leadership as a result of the voluntary departure of President Siaka Stevens from active politics, Jamil had already received support from Stevens. The late Jamil was an Afro-Lebanese, thus based on the then constitutional amendment, he was a citizen.

The bottom line is, success is something we all have to strive for. According to Samadu Sesay's report, a Lebanese diamond dealer, F.J. Basma was very assertive when he defended the Lebanese economic success in Sierra Leone. He states: "We deserve what we have. We have not stolen anybody's goods but worked hard for them."^{xviii} Business enterprise has brought not only money to the Lebanese community, but it has also enhanced their social status. They understand the African social settings and are quite knowledgeable on the customs and cultural values of Sierra Leone. In fact, "they have been more receptive"^{xix} to the Africans than most Europeans. Their understanding and appreciation of African social and cultural norms have helped them gain a tremendous degree of economic prosperity. The Lebanese are not only in the business of constructing private homes in the country but, as much as they are investing their resources abroad, they are also making significant contributions to the country's financial sector.

However, the question is, did the Lebanese attain this economic power through hard work and honesty alone? Those Sierra Leoneans who have transacted business with the Lebanese have accused them of certain economic malpractice. According to these accusations, the Lebanese have been cheating individual consumers or producers by using false scales to weigh the produce, be it rice or palm kernels, or bag of imported flour as well as a bag of onions. The Lebanese are also accused of exploiting consumers by charging exorbitant prices for commodities that are scarce on the local markets, and that they sometimes caused shortage of commodities.^{xx} In short, the general notion is that Lebanese traders are "cheaters." Despite the suspicion and accusation levied at the Lebanese, the general assumption is that there are very few Sierra Leoneans who could compete with the Lebanese in the realm of transnational business transactions, such as securing hard currency for the importation of consumer goods. Additionally, the Lebanese have played a significant role in social areas, such as sponsoring football (soccer) leagues in Sierra Leone. They have established first class primary and secondary schools in Freetown where children from different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds as well as religious faiths are admitted. The Lebanese Secondary School in Freetown is among the best institutions of learning in the country.

Regardless of local opposition, Lebanese business strength will continue to thrive side by side with other indigenous entrepreneurial groups. However, this promising business atmosphere was interrupted by the outbreak of the civil war in 1990 against the government forces and their local and foreign supporters. The guerilla insurgents were led by a former disgruntled junior army officer, Foday Sankoh. The war was neither an ethnic nor a religious conflict. It was a war of greed, a situation in which the warlords fought against each other and against the state for control of political power and the diamond and gold fields as well as other precious resources. In fact, the rebel leader Foday Sankoh, was a nominal Muslim from the Temne clan but had a large number of both Muslim and Christian as well as other ethnic group fighters (outside his clan) in his guerilla insurgent squads. Thus, the “New World Disorder” that emerged following the end of the Cold War, did not spare Sierra Leone, where a bloody civil war raged for a decade (1990-2000). Before the war erupted, unemployment rate had gone beyond control coupled with inflation, corruption, and economic mismanagement. The jobless, particularly the youths, had become disenchanting. In a desperate search for means to survive with decent life the disgruntled elements of the Sierra Leonean society resorted to taking up the implements of war, in the hope that their conditions would change once the war was over in their favor. The disintegration of the country's social fabric was the result of the state's inability to govern with accountability, and to deliver the basic social amenities to its people. In other words, the government failed to administer the affairs of the state with political flexibility and transparency. The protracted conflict ravaged the nation and disconnected families. The state itself was near collapse if foreign forces, that is, the Nigerians, the British and others had not intervened to rescue the nation-state from the abyss.

A Nobel Prize winner in economics, Joseph E. Stiglitz, describes Sierra Leone as a mineral rich nation, but that these resources became a source of conflict that “fueled corruption and spawned privileged elites that engaged in internecine struggles for control of ... [the] country's wealth.”^{xxi} Amy Chua posed similar argument in her World on Fire (2004) that, even before Sierra Leone attained self-rule in 1961, the Lebanese in particular had already dominated the economy of the nation, and their collective interest was protected by the political elites and their “cronies.” Having access to international markets, the Lebanese became the financial brokers between the state and the market in Sierra Leone. The indigenous majority saw their country's wealth being monopolized and “siphoned” by the privilege few, who continued to amass the riches of the nation.^{xxii}

The class cleavage and financial asymmetry eventually led to exploitation during President Joseph Momoh's leadership, a high ranking military officer who President Siaka Stevens himself had hand-picked to succeed him as president of the fragile republic. This transfer of power became a memorable landmark event, for Sierra Leone became the only African state where a democratically elected civilian leader handed over the presidency to a military officer, his fellow tribesman. Political analysts have suggested that Stevens distrusted his vice-president S.I. Koroma, as to what would have happened to him following his retirement from active politics. Stevens-Koroma's government was plagued with corruption and murder. So, between the two despots no one was honorable. Both of them were predatory elites, a clique of ruthless masters who never hesitated to crush their political enemies.

However, before the civil war broke out in 1990, President Momoh was already working with the framers of a new constitution, designed to return the country to a multiparty state system which his predecessor, Stevens, had overturned when he declared a one-party state in 1978. The new constitution was ratified on the 24th day of September 1991,^{xxiii} the date President Momoh signed that very supreme law of the land. However, the constitutional process was interrupted by the outbreak of the civil war. In the midst of the turmoil, President Momoh's government itself was overthrown by Valentine Strasser's led-military coup.

Prior to these compounded problems, the “majority of Sierra Leoneans blamed their plight on the wealthy Lebanese”^{xxiv} and the state officials who had become utterly corrupt and inept to the sufferings of the general population. Indeed, the “hampering [of] political and economic expression in civil society”^{xxv} could very well generate conflict internally, according to Alex Thomson. The “mind-numbing” attitudes of the political and economic elites toward the people degenerated the country to the abyss of anarchy. As the civil crisis intensified, the Lebanese “Plutocrats” found that the diamond mines they once controlled were now in the hands of the ruthless and merciless rebels. As Craig A. Lockard summed it best: “the dark night of bloodshed and death”^{xxvi} forced many Lebanese to abandon their properties and flee the country. However, some Lebanese did stay at their own risk because of the fear of totally losing their belongings. When peace was attained between 2000 and 2001 and the country finally returned to normalcy, many of the Lebanese returned to resume their business operations.

The Lebanese Case: Revisiting the Constitutional Statute for Naturalization and Citizenship

Many Lebanese born and raised in Africa have yet to be considered full citizens, even though they had lived and worked in Africa for centuries. Because they are good at business enterprises, they continue to play a leading role in domestic markets and international trade. Some legal theorists have argued that individuals who desire to change their nationality “may actively do so by the process of naturalization.”^{xxxvii} We further learn from legal theorists that “[M]arriage by a citizen of one nation to the citizen of another is a common basis for seeking naturalization so as to unite the spouses and any children they may have.”^{xxxviii}

When Sierra Leone became independent in 1961, the presence of the Lebanese community particularly became an issue within the new African government. Questions such as who was a citizen and who was a foreigner in the country became critical in the new political dispensation. The issue was resolved when the new constitution stated that all those who were citizens of Sierra Leone in 1961 would continue to be under that citizenship status. Those British subjects who chose to be citizens would also be granted citizenship status henceforth.^{xxxix} The same 1961 constitution granted citizenship to people of mixed-descent.^{xxx} Another provision in the constitution provides that children of a Lebanese father and a Sierra Leonean mother were citizens as of the day of the final adoption of the constitution.

However, some members of the Sierra Leone national assembly disagreed on the article based on marriage as a process of qualification for citizenship. In view of this disagreement, the Parliament adopted an amendment to the constitution in January 1962 which nullified Afro-Lebanese citizenship, but only to be reversed again in 1965. However, in the 1973, the decision was reversed again making Afro-Lebanese full citizens. This amendment did not include the Lebanese whose parents are both foreigners.^{xxxi} In short, the 2006 amendment to the constitution to change the 1973 provision states:

Being an Act to amend the Sierra Leone Citizenship Act, 1973 so as to grant the right of dual citizenship and citizenship by birth directly through the mother.^{xxxii}

Thus, the 2006 constitutional amendment favors the Afro-Lebanese but does not apply to the Lebanese whose parents are foreigners. Even though the 1991 Constitution that provides the legal mandate to transform the country from a one-party state to a multi-party politics addresses the issues of “Fundamental Human Rights and Freedom of the Individual and Protection from Discrimination”^{xxxiii} in Chapter III (of the 1991 Constitution), it refrains from amending the restriction on citizenship. Unfortunately, the 1991 Constitution excludes the issue of Lebanese citizenship. This omission continues to create an atmosphere of uncertainty for those Lebanese born and raised in Sierra Leone. They speak the local languages fluently as any other African citizen and have been an integrated part of the African culture. By denying them the rights and privileges of citizenship contradicts the very fundamental principles of human rights, which provisions the country has concurred and signed, and endorsed them in the nation’s constitution.

Some individuals in the Lebanese community have tried to take drastic measures as a way to gain the attention of government officials, including the law makers. For instance, in 2010, one Nasser Ayoub “threatened to go on hunger strike if he is not granted full citizenship.”^{xxxiv} He claimed that his grandfather and father were born in Sierra Leone, but the law of the state denied him citizenship because he is not black. He termed his situation as “racial discrimination.”^{xxxv} He urged President Ernest Bai Koroma to live by his words. To validate Ayoub’s appeal, President Koroma had promised at his inauguration in 2007 that he would “maintain and nurture democracy, equality, and justice for all Sierra Leoneans.”^{xxxvi} Yet, to-date, this policy declaration remains meaningless to the Lebanese who are in dire need of citizenship status.

As much as much as Sierra Leoneans recognized the pivotal role of the Lebanese in the nation’s economic development, two schools of thought would eventually emerge in the scene concerning the question of Lebanese citizenship. They constitute the pessimists and the optimists. Some pessimists postulate the view that the Lebanese are arrogant and racist. Among the social aspects of this negative depiction of a people is the individual Sierra Leonean’s perception and general assumption that Lebanese parents do not allow their daughters to marry Sierra Leonean men. To black men, such discrimination on the social front is a manifestation of Lebanese prejudice. Yet the marriage between Lebanese men and Sierra Leonean women is common. The argument against the Lebanese goes further that Lebanese parents “have made it a taboo and even a curse for a noble black man to marry their daughters, while almost all the bi-racial Lebanese are from black mothers and Lebanese fathers.”^{xxxvii}

However, as the saying goes: "It is better to light the candle than to curse the darkness." The assumption that Lebanese parents disapprove black suitors for their daughters is not entirely true. For, it is reported that a Lebanese man Afif Nehme approved the marriage between his daughter Randa Nehme and Sierra Leonean Morrison Conteh, a former employee of the Standard Chartered Bank in Freetown.^{xxxviii} This saga implies that besides those who are prejudiced, there are also those who are liberal-minded.

With regard to Lebanese-African relationship in Lebanon, it is reported that many Africans "complain" about the way black people are treated in Lebanon; in that Africans could not secure decent work, except menial jobs such as domestic servants. We must however make it categorically clear that foreigners in any country constitute skill and non-skill workers, and the former may have affected the fate of some Africans in Lebanon. Another complaint is that Africans who are born in Lebanon are not recognized as citizens.^{xxxix} Comparatively, it is equally unjust for the laws of the State of Lebanon to deny citizenship to those Africans born and bred in Lebanon, including Sierra Leoneans.

On the political front, some Sierra Leoneans harbor the fear that the Lebanese may end up taking over the politics of the country, just as they succeeded in dominating the national economy. The pessimists entertain a preconceived notion that a national leader of Lebanese descent will be a terrifying experience for them. To amend the situation for the purpose of continual peaceful co-existence, the skeptics suggest that Lebanese-Sierra Leoneans should stay in the business field and stay out of politics.^{xl} Despite this suggestive plea, if the 1961 citizenship law is amended, it will dramatically alter the old landscape of politics and law in Sierra Leone and open a new chapter with the Lebanese as an inclusive member of the nation's citizenry.

Furthermore, to maintain peace and justice in the country, the laws should grant them full citizenship. This will make the richest and industrious among them and their forthcoming generations to accept Sierra Leone as their permanent home.

Furthermore, the Bullom and Sherbro ethnic groups, the aborigines of the land we call today Sierra Leone, as well as other ethnic communities are immigrants from somewhere else in the world, including the African continent. For example, the Temnes, the Mendes, the Limbas, the Fullahs, the Susus, the Mandinakas, and the Konos, to name but a few, came to the territory "between one to three hundred years ago."^{xli} Similarly, thousands of former African slaves from England and the Americas were repatriated to the territory about two hundred years ago. Sierra Leone indeed is a land of immigrants, an American in Africa. We cannot therefore afford to overlook this African country's melting pot or salad bowl nationalism.

Assessment and Conclusion

The Lebanese who came to Africa and chose Sierra Leone as their new home have contributed to the nation's economic development and local culture. With hard work as well as individual and collective efforts, they have succeeded in achieving economic welfare and a common identity. The essence of politics is to serve the country, the people, and guarantee the provisions of peace and security as well as social justice. In our view, the issue of the citizenship of the Lebanese community in Sierra Leone must be revisited. Sierra Leone is now their adopted home. They have adapted to the country's social environment, which militates against the possibility for their return to their original homeland. They are now part of socio-economic and cultural mosaic of Sierra Leone. No human community can boast of being entirely self-sufficient. Everyone's livelihood requires a variety of contributions from both indigenous and foreign nationals. The Lebanese have been part of the financiers and employers in the country's economy. Some of them have been in the country for two and three generations now. Many of the Lebanese have dreamed of becoming citizens of the country they have served in various social and economic capacities. The law-abiding individual Lebanese must be given the opportunity to naturalize. The Lebanese children born to foreign parents should be accorded with the status of full citizenship. Sierra Leone should join ranks with other African nations like Nigeria, in conferring citizenship to foreign nationals who apply to adopt the country as their permanent home.

Sierra Leone is blessed with good climate and abundant natural resources, including strategic energy (oil) for industrial development. With these finite treasures at the country's disposal, naturalization and citizenship will give the Lebanese more confidence and stake to invest in the country and work for its economic development. The legislative body should therefore revisit the constitution once again and amend it to create a new statute of citizenship for the Lebanese in the country. Multiculturalism is a fact of life and the Lebanese are now an integrated part of the melting pot reality of the country's socio-economic and political nationalism.

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- ⁱ Craig A. Lockard, Societies, Networks and Traditions (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008), p.294.
- ⁱⁱ Ibid., p.650.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., p.650.
- ^{iv} Ibid., p.650.
- ^v Sulayman S. Nyang, Islam in the United States of America (Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.: ABC International Group, Inc., 1999), p.161.
- ^{vi} Lockard, op.cit., p. 650.
- ^{vii} L. Van Der Laan, The Lebanese Traders in Sierra Leone (The Hague:Mouton and Co., 1975), p.1.
- ^{viii} Ibid., pp. 2-3.
- ^{ix} For the beginning of the automobile transportation in Sierra Leone, see AlusineJalloh and David Skinner, eds., Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone (Trenton, New Jersey, U.S.A.: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992), p. 121.
- ^x H.R. Van Der Laan, op.cit., p. 4.
- ^{xi} Ibid., p.5.
- ^{xii} Ibid., pp.8-9.
- ^{xiii} "What Future for the Lebanese," West Africa No. 3057 (2 February 1976), p. 137. Also, for automobile industry, see Jalloh and Skinner, op.cit., p. 121.
- ^{xiv} Ibid., p.121.
- ^{xv} H.R. Van Der Laan, op.cit., pp. 309-310.
- ^{xvi} Ibid., p.310.
- ^{xvii} Ibid., pp.310-311.
- ^{xviii} "In Sierra Leone, talk of Asians generally includes people from the Middle East." See SamaduSesay, "A Different Situation," African Concord: The Premier Pan-African Weekly, No. 161 (8 October 1987), p.12.
- ^{xix} Laanop.cit., p. 313.
- ^{xx} Ibid., p.315.
- ^{xxi} Joseph E. Stiglitz resigned from the academic field to serve on the Council of Economic Advisers Under President Bill Clinton. He took a job in the World Bank in 1997 where he served in the capacity of chief economist and senior vice-president for about three years and left the establishment in January 2000. As a World Bank specialist he knew about the economic deterioration in Sierra Leone. See his work Globalization and Its Discontents (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2003), p.37.
- ^{xxii} "Being an Act to make Provision for a new Constitution of Sierra Leone, and for Connected Purposes [1 October 1991]," See The Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 1991).
- ^{xxiii} For the Lebanese dominant role in the Sierra Leonean economy, Amy Chua gives a succinct analysis of "Symbiotic alliances between indigenous leaders and market dominant minority." See her work World on Fire (New York: Anchor Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., 2004), pp. 147-151.
- ^{xxiv} Alex Thomson, An Introduction to African Politics Second Edition (New York: Routledge Publishing Co., 2004), p.44.
- ^{xxv} Craig A. Lockard, Societies, Networks and Traditions (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008), p.955.
- ^{xxvi} William Slomanson, Fundamental Perspectives on International Law Sixth Edition (Boston, MA,U.S.A.: Wadsworth Engage Learning, 2000), p. 204.
- ^{xxvii} Ibid., p.205.
- ^{xxviii} "Are people born and bred in Sierra Leone Whose Skin color are 'white'...citizen of Sierra Leone?" See Oswald Hanciles "Colour in Sierra Leone," The Patriotic Vanguard (Freetown, December 2011), p.2.
- ^{xxix} H.R. Van Der Laan, op.cit., p. 9.
- ^{xxx} Ibid., p.9.
- ^{xxxi} "Sierra Leone Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2006," Supplement to the Sierra Leone Gazette Vol. CXXXVII, No. 60 (28th December 2006), p.6.
- ^{xxxii} "Being an Act to make Provision for a new Constitution of Sierra Leone, and for Connected Purposes [1 October 1991]," See The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 Chapter III, p.1.
- ^{xxxiii} "The Lebanese community in Sierra Leone usually try very hard to stay out of the news headlines but an old citizenship law has recently forced one of the them to speak out." See GibrilKoroma, "Sierra Leone: Upper Roar Over Citizenship," Digital Journal: A Global Digital Media, <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/297077> (September 4, 2012), p.1.

^{xxxiv} *Ibid.*, p.1.

^{xxxv} *Ibid.*, p.1.

^{xxxvi} Oswald Hanciles, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

^{xxxvii} *Ibid.*, p.2.

^{xxxviii} *Digital Journal*, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

^{xxxix} *Ibid.*, p.3.

^{xl} *Ibid.*, p.3.

^{xli} Oswald Hanciles, *op.cit.*, p. 3. See also the following studies concerning the original composition of ethnicities in Sierra Leone: J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, *History of West Africa*, Vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp.53 and 267; and “The Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone: People and Characteristics,” in Allister Macmillan, *The Red Book of West Africa* (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1920:1968), p. 234.

Notes

Joseph E. Stiglitz resigned from the academic field to serve on the Council of Economic Advisors under President Bill Clinton. He took a job in the World Bank in 1997 where he served in the capacity of Economist and senior vice president for about three years and left the establishment in January 2000. As a World Bank specialist, he knew about the economic deterioration in Sierra Leone (Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2003).

For the Lebanese dominant role in Sierra Leonean economy, Amy Chua gives a succinct analysis of “Symbiotic alliances between indigenous leaders and market dominant minority” (Amy Chua, 2004). The Lebanese community in Sierra Leone usually tries very hard to stay out of news headlines but old Citizenship law has recently forced one of them to speak out (Gibril Koroma 2011).

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