


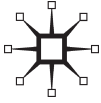


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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN AFRICAN PRINCESS

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## CHAPTER I

# MY BIRTHPLACE, ETHNICITY, AND PARENTS

It was in Gendema, then the capital city of the Gallinas, that I first saw the light of the world. The Gallinas is a territory inhabited by the Vai people, who occupy territories in south-eastern Sierra Leone and western Liberia (see figure 1.1). The term Gallinas, which applies only to that portion of the Vai country that is situated in Sierra Leone today, is derived from the Portuguese word *gallinha* (hen), and the name was probably given to the territory because of the great number of guinea fowl found there by Portuguese sailors.<sup>1</sup> The original inhabitants of the country themselves call this territory Massaquoi, and this name was chosen because a member of the Massaquoi family played the most important role in its founding, and a Massaquoi has sat on the throne of the country since its foundation. Another name by which it is known is Jayalɔɔ (Jayaloh), a contraction of Jayalɔɔɔ which means Jaya's country, after one of the kings.

According to Vai traditions of origin,<sup>2</sup> there lived a great king in the Mande land whose name was Kamala,<sup>3</sup> nicknamed Jomanni, who was very adventurous and enterprising, always looking for new places to conquer. It happened that one day a group of the king's special hunters, who had made their way deep into the forest after traveling several years, heard a great roaring noise, to investigate which they climbed up to the top of a mountain. They discovered that from this summit they could see a great distance over the surrounding area. In one direction they saw a large body of water so expansive that there was no visible land beyond it. They hastened to return to their homeland to tell King Kamala that they had seen the "end of the world." Thereupon the king sent them back with more hunters to obtain more information concerning what they had seen. The spot on which the hunters stood when they beheld the ocean they called Kɔiji (salt water), where grew a town by the same name and even to this day is in existence.

The people with whom the hunters came in contact were the Gola people,<sup>4</sup> who lived near that body of water and scraped salt from the rocks that had been left there by the ocean. With these Gola, the hunters

exchanged some dried meat for salt and departed. When the hunters had reported all that had happened on their journey, the great Mande king Kamala assembled all of his people and asked the hunters to narrate their experiences. Then the leader of the hunters stood upright and recalled

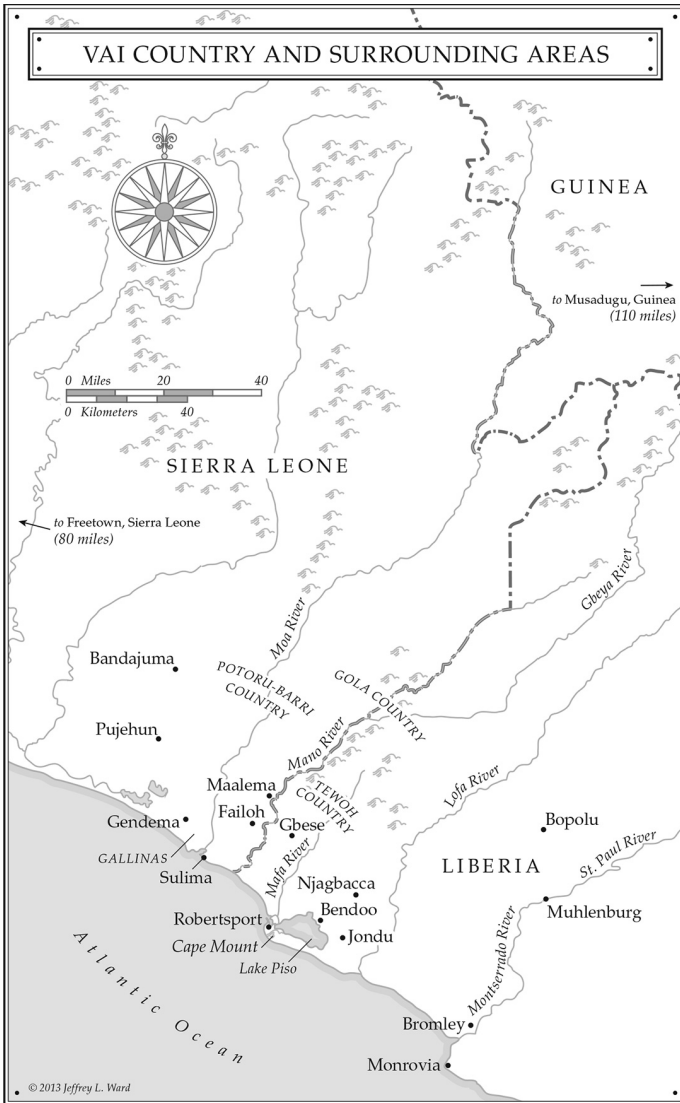


Figure 1.1 Map of Vai country

their fights with crocodiles, leopards, and other animals, in which many of them died, leaving only seven to return to the Mande country.

Perceiving fear in the eyes and faces of his people, King Kamala immediately asked: “Who is going to open the road leading to sundown (the west)?” But no one spoke. Then, Kamala the Younger looked in the direction of his father and seeing that his father wanted him to do one great deed that would show that it was he, indeed, who had begotten him (for with the Vai the children of great people are known by their deeds), stood up and said: “Father, I am going to lead the way to the shores of the great water to the west.”

Thereupon rose the sons and nephews of the other Mande kings, eleven in all, and they spoke one by one: “We are also prepared to follow Kamala the Younger in opening the way to the ocean.” Then Kamala the Great ordered: “Let the head of each country [territorial division] supply ten cavalries equipped to carry provisions for the trip. Each cavalry must consist of twenty-five warriors.” The outfit of Kamala the Younger consisted of 3 cavalries with 50 horses. There were in all 13 regiments, making a total of 316 warriors with 140 horses.

On the following day at dawn they assembled all the horses, provisions, and equipment for the trip. Then Kamala the Great took his *banjalo* (warrior sword) and a big spear and gave them to his son saying, “if in truth it is I who begot thee, then go straight to the shores of the great body of water in the west allowing nothing to stop you or cause you to turn back until you have reached your destination.” He turned to his nephew and said, “You are going to be the leader of these people. Stand at the head of all these warriors and lead them until you have reached the ocean.” And his nephew accepted the challenge, or, as the Vai say “laid his hands under them.”

The Mande people departed in two batches; the first comprising one regiment with ten horses and their riders left on the first day including Kamala and his cousin. Their journey led them into a great forest called Kambo. If one stood at its foot and looked up, one would gain the impression that the mountain extended all the way to the skies. On that mountain lived all kinds of fierce animals that fought the traveling Mande, and many of the people perished in the struggle. Besides, the paths in that forest were very narrow, and the hunters knew only one path. Consequently, the travelers became greatly disturbed and said to Kamala: “We cannot enter deeper into this forest. We are not willing to die in such a wicked manner. Therefore we are going to sit at what seems to be the entrance to this dense forest and find another way to the west. Whichever side of the mountain we find to traverse we shall pass by that way.”

There they stopped, at the foot of the mountain, where they built a big town. They spent four years there, during which time other Mande

men and women, apart from the warriors, joined them. It was during that period that children were born to them by the women who had come there. The people living not far from the foot of the mountain had also given them wives, who also bore them children. When the feet of those children became strong and able to carry little things, the group left that town to continue their journey.

During all this time Kamala the Great had heard nothing of his son, so he sent people in search of his son saying, “Go in search of my son, and when you hear of him, please return and clear my head (i.e., let me know); go straight to him before returning to me.” Those messengers traveled long and far before they reached Kamala the Younger. They spoke to him saying, “Your father Jomanni is worrying very much about you because he has heard no news of you.” When the traveling comrades of Kamala saw the messengers, some of them wanted to return to the Mande country. But Kamala the Younger told them that he could never return to the Mande country before reaching the sea. Then he turned to the messengers and said, “Return and tell my father that on the fourth day of the new moon, I shall enter the forest. If God be willing I shall see the ocean before returning to the Mande country.” Then he assembled all of his people and told them that he would be departing when the new moon appeared. They all showed great fear, but Kamala paid no attention.

On the fourth day the new moon arose, Kamala’s herald announced to all that they would depart the following day. Then Kamala called all the heads of the various countries together and asked them: “Who is going with me into the forest tomorrow?” Whereupon, his brother Ngolo, who had followed him, and his cousin, who had been entrusted with leading the armed men, stood up and said that they would continue to follow him. But the other heads said that they were afraid and could not go if they were to enter the dense forest.

Kamala felt hurt, but he said nothing. Hastily he mounted his white horse, and before leaving, turned to his comrades and said: *won kono mbe taala fai* (wait here for me; I shall go forward). Turning his back on them he made his way into the forest. Those who remained became the *Kono moenu* (waiters), and those who advanced became the *Fai moenu* or *Vai moenu* (the forward goers). Thus originated the names for the Kono and the Vai peoples, who to this day remain separate ethnicities.<sup>5</sup>

There were several adventures with wild beasts in the forest, Kamala himself reportedly slaying thirteen leopards while his younger brother earned the sobriquet Fangaloma because he was stronger than a chimpanzee. The valor of Kamala’s spear-bearer also earned him the name Kiyatamba. When they came out of the forest, Kamala changed his bearing and did not continue in the direction of Kojji.

On their arrival at the coast, the inhabitants of the country appeared intimidated, for they had never before seen so many people coming out of the forest at one time. The rulers then asked of Kamala, “Have you come to declare war on us or have you come to trade?” Kamala replied, “I have not come to declare war, nor have I come to trade or to seek anything whatsoever. I have come to see the ocean.” The kings of the land thereupon accepted Kamala (i.e., they put their hands under him) saying, “Then this land has nothing evil for you.” The kings then gave them guest houses and had food prepared for them.

While talking to the kings of the land, Kamala heard the roaring noise and surmised that someone was bringing war upon him. He quickly instructed his spear-bearer to get all the warriors to follow him, leaving the rest behind. As he mounted his white horse, Fangaloma and Kiyatamba and their officers all followed him. They traveled a day and a half before reaching the ocean. At the moment just before the sun stood directly over their heads, Kamala’s horse ran straight into the ocean. Since Kamala was still sitting on that horse, it turned back to the shore. It repeated this action seven times. So did the other horses which had been following. Then Kamala threw up his spear and planted it in the ocean sand, shouting “*kalalase... kalalase*” (the spear has reached). Kamala had reached the object of his journey. The Mande people built their first town where Kamala thrust his spear. That town remains to this day and the Vai people still call it Kaase, a contraction of the Mande *kalalase*.

Kamala himself remained in Kaase and sent for his carriers and bearers of burden baskets. As soon as they arrived, they went to the lakes. It was at that same time that he crossed the Kee and Kpaale rivers and reached the spot where his father’s original messengers founded the town of Koiiji, which still exists in the Gbema section of the Vai country.

After sometime in Gbema country, he crossed the Gbeya river, known today as the Mano river, where he met people who honored him by giving him all kinds of animals, wives, and a place to live in. This place was called Telebo (sunrise) by our father Kamala, because he himself had come from the place where the sun rose. It is from this town that the entire Teewoh country (morphed from Telebo by locals) received its name. The Teewoh country is situated exactly between the Gbema (Gbeya) and Mafa rivers.

Kamala’s younger brother Ngolo, who acquired the name Fangaloma, settled in Teewoh, and he and Kamala founded the town of Gbese in that country. Gbese then became the capital of the Teewoh and the seat of the Fangalomas, who later became the Fahnbullehs, for Fangaloma’s nephew, was Fahnbulleh, the very first of the Fahnbullehs. Our fathers have told us that Kiyatamba also settled in Teewoh. Many of the Mande



people first settled in Teewoh, but many of them left and spread throughout the rest of what is known today as the Vai country. The other countries<sup>6</sup> that they first settled in were Gawula, Tombe, and Mofe.

Kamala's own son remained in Kaase until he founded Jayaloh. His descendants became the Massaquois, because when his horse first reached the ocean, his herald cried out, *mansa mu i la goi, mansa mu i la goi* (you are a great leader, yea, a great leader). From this has derived the present form, Massaquoi.<sup>7</sup>

The Massaquois became kings of Jayaloh, which expanded westward as far as Fuendu wu, and is variously known as Jayaloh, Massaquoi, the Gallinas, even Jaiahun in British colonial records.<sup>8</sup> It is situated between the Mabesi Lake and Vinja and the Kpaale (Moa) rivers. The territories that exclusively belong to the Vai country are the following: Jayaloh, at first ruled by the Massaquois alone, but following a split later in the Massaquoi family, became divided into two kingdoms or families, Massaquoi and Kpaka; Peli Sowolo, ruled by the Jadoibes; Gbema and Teewoh, ruled by the Fahnullehs; Sombo Daa, Gola and the Daseni Konee, and Gawula governed, respectively, by the Kiya Solus, the Kiya Howo, and the Mofes.

All of these countries were family kingdoms. When the leader of one of these kingdoms became stronger than the rest of his colleagues, he would be elected head of the combined kingdoms. Thus the strongest of the kings became king of the whole of the Vai country, a position frequently held by the Massaquoi family.

Since the days of Kamala, the route between the coast and the Mandé country has been through Gonwolonama, Gonwolo, Jondu, Bopolu, and finally Musadugu, which is the beginning of the Mandé country. Important metropolises grew in Vai country. Gendema is capital of Jayaloh.<sup>9</sup> Failoh<sup>10</sup> and Maalema are the capitals of the Sowolo<sup>11</sup> country. Ngalinga is the capital of the Gbema country. Gbese is the capital of Teewoh, while the capitals of Gawula are Gonwolonamalo and Jondu. Finally, the Tombe country has Mandé and Towoso as capitals.<sup>12</sup>

From the time of the coming of the Mandé to the present day, some 600 to 800 years are estimated to have gone by. This number my people have estimated by the redwood, the *kpato*, and the cotton trees. These trees are planted for the purpose of determining centuries, since their branches die at fairly regular intervals.<sup>13</sup> The trip from the Mandé country to the coast must have taken place before the year 1200 AD. This assumption is based partly on the fact that those who came could not have already been acquainted with Islam, otherwise they would have given some of the towns and countries they founded Islamic names, since they have the habit of basing events on phenomena with which they are acquainted.<sup>14</sup> Vai is one of the few languages of Africa with its

own indigenous writing system. The Vai script was invented by Dualo Bukele, a spiritual chief of the nation, and completed and compiled by my father between 1911 and 1926. It is a syllabic script capable of representing objects as well as words in almost any language. Each syllable of a word is represented by a symbol.<sup>15</sup>

The foregoing is one of several legends that the Vai tell of their origin. No claim is made here that it is the authentic one. I myself happen to know two others, one of which is very similar to the one I have given, and the other resembles it in several aspects. These legends were told to me in childhood, first by my father's oldest sister, Mother Jassa Kpaakpaa of Njagbacca, later by my uncle, Dr. Lamini Massaquoi, at one time physician at the government hospital in Monrovia, Liberia, and a little prior to that medical advisor and teacher at the Muhlen-Mission in Liberia, which is under the auspices of the Lutheran Church of America. When I visited Uncle Lamini's home he would always quench my thirst for stories. A very old man in Jondu, whose name was Boakai, also told me the story. Finally, my father and brothers related to me the narratives. Aside from these, the story is contained among those recorded by Herr Professor Dr. Klingenberg<sup>16</sup> of Hamburg University, whose sources were my brothers and father.<sup>17</sup>

At the time of my birth, my father, Momolu IV, wore the Gallinas Crown.<sup>18</sup> My grandfather was King Al-Haj or Lahai. His wife, my grandmother, was Queen Sandimanni, a name she acquired on account of the great things she did for the *Sande* society.<sup>19</sup> Of her valor, the late Honorable G. W. Ellis, secretary to the American Legation in Liberia had this to say:

Taradoba was the favorite wife of King Arma, who died from a wound received in battle. The Capitol of his kingdom was at Bendoo. King Arma had a very ambitious brother who was king over a large number of people northwest of the Vai country, and upon the death of the former he usurped his throne and made himself king over the Vais. Taradoba with five or six hundred warriors of her dead husband took possession of a southern province. By the new king of the Vais three attempts were made to subdue her, but she successfully repelled each invasion. It is said that she commanded her troops in person, distinguishing herself with such valor and success that one might fittingly refer to her as the Jeanne d'Arc of the Vais. She ruled for many years, and her son, Momolu Massaquoi, educated at Central Tennessee College, is now king over the Gallinas.<sup>20</sup>

The neighbors of the Vai, the Gola, gave her the nickname of Taradogba (Taldogba), which means "brave" in their language. Grandmother Famata (Fatima Sandimanni) is said to have learned the art of warfare from her own father. Many of the elders of the tribe, whom it was my

good fortune to meet, were delighted to relate what pleasure they had in the bravery and ability in the art of warfare that she demonstrated.

She fought many wars, some say eight altogether. Her youngest son, my father, was born on a battlefield at a place called Kpassalo, which Büttikofer writes as “Passawo.”<sup>21</sup> The town is thus named because of this event, since *kpa* means mark, trace, spur, and *lo* means inside. It is unusual for a woman to have a baby on a battlefield when she herself is fighting and leading her army. Legends about her are widely told in the Vai country. One contribution that grandmother made to the Republic of Liberia as a whole was (according to my father’s accounts) the introduction of the tax system, which the Liberian government later adopted and uses even to this day for the taxation of the native elements of the population.

My paternal grandfather King Al-Haj or Lahai, was grandmother’s junior in age. She was his first wife, and he, her third husband. It is said that grandmother never followed him to the Gallinas where he lived, because her duties were to administer the Liberian side of the Vai country, and, he, the Gallinas country. She respected and admired his art of warfare so much that she married him. Grandfather Lahai was the son of King Jaya (spelled also as Jaia and Jaiah) of the Gallinas and grandson of King Siaka (also spelled Ciaka), whose fame is still legendary in the Gallinas.<sup>22</sup>

My father, Momolu IV, as he is popularly known in the Vai country, was the first of my grandfather’s, and the youngest of my grandmother’s, children. The positions of my grandfather and grandmother thus made my father the inheritor of two thrones, that on the Liberian side of the Vai country as well as the Gallinas. Both grandparents, therefore, were desirous of giving my father a fitting education. Since the vast majority of Vai people are Muslims, one can easily understand their disinclination toward seeing him receive a Christian training. Grandmother herself had taught my father the Koran as well as the Vai script.<sup>23</sup> Her intention was later to train him in the art of commerce and warfare that he would need to govern his people.

Fate, however, has a way of interfering with plans of parents for their children. As my father narrated to me, Bishop Penick<sup>24</sup> of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America was appointed bishop of Liberia, and in soliciting the aid of African monarchs for his work in Africa, he and Mrs. Penick visited grandmother. Both father and the Penicks immediately loved each other. Mrs. Penick brought some candy to Njagbacca, where grandmother was living, and gave father one or two pieces every day. Father enjoyed being on hand every morning to receive this precious gift from his new foreign friend.

Thus, when the bishop and his wife left, he missed them greatly, but even greater was his curiosity to know where this beautiful woman lived

and where she acquired the sweets from. So, on subsequent visits, father, still not being able to persuade his mother to let him go to the mission in Cape Mount, simply ran off. He was between eight and ten years of age when he entered St. John's school. Thus was the beginning of the bishop's ambition to "save the boy's soul." One missionary gave this account:

An important feature of missionary work in Africa is the influence of Christian schools on African royalty. . . . A few influential African monarchs have been converted to the Christian life; but thousands of their sons have become Christians through the Church school. . . . One of these, Momolu Massaquoi, comes from a line of powerful African rulers. His father was Prince Lahai, son of the great King Jiah. His mother was Queen Sandimani. As is customary among the Vai nobility, Massaquoi's parents spared no pains to prepare him for an influential position. At the age of six he began the study of Arabic as well his own Vai language. When, at the age of ten, he entered St. John's School, Cape Mount, he could read and write his own tribal language and was fairly well grounded in the Koran.<sup>25</sup>

During the time father was at St. John's School in Cape Mount, he proved so diligent that Bishop Penick made special arrangements for his further studies in America. But grandmother opposed these plans. She then took him to Monrovia, to live with a highly respected and cultured Americo-Liberian family,<sup>26</sup> and to attend Liberia College. As Liberia College at that time did not accept children of indigenous parentage, the family made father work as a house servant, in spite of the fact that grandmother from time to time brought such goods as rice, ivory, palm oil, chicken, cattle, etcetera. My aunt Jassa, grandmother's oldest daughter, often told me how utterly shocked they were when they visited Monrovia once and found father in rags among pots and casseroles in the kitchen. This story is not being narrated out of prejudice as many children from the indigenous population have lived in and been brought up by Americo-Liberian families with excellent results. Grandmother, however, took father home. But he did not remain with her for long as he ran away a second time. On finding out he was leaving for America (in 1892) she told him that he would never see her again, and he never did. But while he was in America, she still contributed to his support by sending him ivory and other commodities, which he converted into money.

In America, father first attended schools in Boston and New York. But he was desirous of becoming better acquainted with Negro America, and Bishop Penick assisted him in entering the then Central Tennessee College, which later became Walden University. It was under the North American Methodist Mission Board.

He traveled widely, from Canada to the Pacific Coast, lecturing about Africa. Some of these tours were with Dr. Hubbard, who was at the time soliciting funds for the Meharry Medical College.<sup>27</sup> He told me several times how much time he spent in Dr. Hubbard's home in Ohio. Father also lectured under the auspices of the Episcopal Board. He was chosen in 1893 to give the opening address at the World Exhibition held at Chicago under the auspices of the Congress of African Ethnology, choosing as his topic "The Evangelization of Africa." This address was so well received that it opened possibilities for further study. For example, he was offered a scholarship to attend Oxford University by an English clergyman who heard him. He later took the opportunity, studied for a while at Oxford and London, and toured through Europe.

Shortly before the beginning of the year in which father was to complete his studies at Central Tennessee College, the situation in Liberia called for his return to Africa. The *Sofa* war<sup>28</sup> came to his mother's territory, and accompanying her army, she was mortally wounded. Momolu felt he could reach home in time to defend his homeland, and so left abruptly before graduation only to discover on arrival that his mother had died and the territory had been devastated. He did not take over rulership of the territory immediately, but preferred to take over his old school, St. John's, at Grand Cape Mount as principal. He was the first African to hold that position, and he stayed there for six years. During that time, he tried in vain to contact his American girlfriend Maude, believing he needed her assistance to advance Western culture in ruling his people.<sup>29</sup>

While at Cape Mount, father wrote many articles about the school, how the surrounding communities saw it, and what the school was capable of doing for the Vai nation in general. Here is a typical quotation of the progress made in those days:

In 1877 there were not five men in the Vai territory who spoke decent English; to-day hundreds of young men and women express themselves well in that language. In that year there was not a single man who could read the Roman character; to-day nearly all business letters, petitions and other diplomatic documents from Vai Kings and merchants are written by Vai boys and girls in civilized language. In 1877 there was not a single Christian among us; to-day we have hundreds in the fold of Christ.<sup>30</sup>

It was at Cape Mount that father conceived of plans for better roads, industrial schools, etc., for the interior of the nation. The untimely death of grandfather Lahai, however, ended father's career as teacher, principal, and missionary, for the affairs of the Gallinas fell upon his shoulders.<sup>31</sup> (Thus, after six years at the school, he took the Gallinas Crown in

Sierra Leone in about 1903. But his efforts to reclaim all the traditional Vai state the British had fragmented led to a serious rift, resulting in the British removing him in 1906. He returned to Liberia and for the next 25 years, held several important government portfolios).

Because African social customs and organization are very different from those of the West, it is possible for a man to inherit a wife, and in some circumstances the relationship will be purely social. Besides, all the wives of a person's father are "mothers." Thus, my father's wives, (my mothers) are and were, in chronological order: Mother Soko Sando, Mother Zoe, Mother Yaawaa, Mother Massaa Barlo, and Mother Beendu. My biological mother was Massaa Barlo.

Mother Massaa was the daughter of the chiefs of the Bali district.<sup>32</sup> Maternally, her mother's home is in Dia on the Liberian side of the Vai country, making her a Vai on her maternal side. Grandmother Jassa, my mother's mother, is supposed to be maternally a Gola, and on her paternal side a Vai. Grandfather Barlo was from Bandajuma. I do not know much about my maternal relatives because I left them when I was quite young, but I shall discuss my contact with them in a following chapter. The fact that a child belongs to the patriarchal line has hindered me from discovering much about my maternal family and from being able to write about them with very much accuracy as I can about the Massaquois.

I don't know when my mother was born or the date of her marriage to my father. But she and her older brother, Mbimba, now in Pujehun, were born in the Bali District of Sierra Leone. Both were children and Mother Massaa had not joined the *Sande* during the time of the *Gulu Gutu War* (the Hut Tax Rebellion in Sierra Leone) in 1898. The above reference is made only because we Africans do not as a rule keep records, but approximate dates by the association of events. Mother Massaa and Uncle Mbimba, then, were old enough children during this period that when the war came to their section, they were able to flee with the women into the forest without being carried, while the men did the fighting.<sup>33</sup>

My mother spoke both Mende and Vai and she could also read and write the Vai script. As a Muslim, she also knew Arabic. She had joined the *Sande* women's society because it was the traditional school for girls to receive training that would prepare them for the responsibilities of African womanhood and for motherhood.

## Notes

1. For a brief history of the Gallinas country: see S. M. Despicht, "A Short History of the Gallinas Chiefdoms," *Sierra Leone Studies*, Vol. 21 (January 1939), pp. 5–13. [Also Adam Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of*

- the Galinbas Country (West Africa) 1730–1890* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983). *Eds.*]
2. [A part of the “Mande Diaspora,” in which interior Manding peoples moved coastward, via trade and warfare; known alternatively as “Mani Invasions.” *Eds.*]
  3. [Anglicized to “Kamara the Great.” *Eds.*]
  4. [A West-Atlantic, Mel-speaking people, who were the indigenous inhabitants of the region prior to the arrival of the Vai. *Eds.*]
  5. [The Kono people are today found primarily in neighboring Sierra Leone and they tell a similar story about how they “waited” while their brothers (later, Vai) ventured to the coast in search of salt. Linguistically, the Kono and Vai languages are “a dialect pair” that are mutually intelligible. *Eds.*]
  6. [Traditionally, a country is a distinct territorial unit of a larger ethnolinguistic space. Today, following colonial practice, they are called chiefdoms. But they still translate from the local languages as countries. *Eds.*]
  7. [Another tradition relates that on reaching the sea, one of the followers shouted in excitement “*Mansa, koi!*” meaning, “King, behold the sea.” *Eds.*]
  8. [*Massaquoi* later became the title for the Vai kings of the Gallinas. *Eds.*]
  9. Since about 1917, the capital was moved further inland to Blama Massaquoi, which is about 15 miles inland.
  10. [Today Anglicized to Fairo. *Eds.*]
  11. [Today Anglicized to Soro. *Eds.*]
  12. If any important names of families and cities have been omitted in this connection, it is not done intentionally. It is hoped here also that any Vai person reading this and not finding his or her family name and capital city mentioned will pardon me, as it is impossible to give in this narrative all the names and towns in detail. I personally still consider them a part of the unit of the Vai people and would never intentionally leave out any of them, for we are all one. The difficulty, however, is that it is impossible for one person to retain too much data without a written document. Besides, there is no one on this side of the globe who can be used as a source for supplementary names and data. I have therefore contented myself with such materials that I am measurably certain of.
  13. I have this assumption and reasoning from my late father, who was partially responsible for my becoming acquainted with the story, and since he was considered an authority on Vai life and culture, I have thought it necessary to use his impression.
  14. [Although there have been several estimates of the time of Vai arrival on the coast, it is now generally accepted by historians of the Upper Guinea Coast that the Vai were already settled on the coast before the mid-fifteenth century, before the first European adventurers reached there. *Eds.*]
  15. [For information on the Vai script and Momolu Massaquoi’s relationship to it, see chapter 5, endnote 13. *Eds.*]



16. [Klingenheben was a well-known Africanist scholar and close family friend of the Massaquoi. *Eds.*]
17. The above-mentioned persons varied very little in relating details of the story. That is probably why I remember it almost literally.
18. [A missionary report says Fatima was born about 1911 or 1912, but this is unlikely as Momolu was a Liberian government official at that time. He ruled Gallinas from about 1902/3 to 1906 when he fell out with the British colonial administration in Sierra Leone and was forced from the throne. He then crossed into Liberia and for the next quarter of a century held important government positions. If Fatima was born when Momolu was ruler of Gallinas, and if she was about two years old when her father sent her away because of the problems he was having with the British colonial administration, then the more likely year of her birth is ca. 1904. A point repeatedly raised by Fatima Massaquoi throughout her narrative is her uncertainty concerning her birth date. *Eds.*]
19. *Sande* will be discussed at length in another connection.
20. G. W. Ellis, *Negro Culture in West Africa* (New York: Neale Publ. Co, 1914), p. 74.
21. [Johan Büttikofer, *Reisebilder Aus Liberia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1890). *Eds.*]
22. [King Siaka, the most famous Vai king, consolidated the Vai state in the early nineteenth century, a task continued admirably by his son, Mana. Jaya was Mana's brother, but he was old and blind when he inherited the throne. He proved to be weak and effete, which provided ample opportunity to fuel political rivalries. Momolu Massaquoi's attempt to reassert the old power of the Vai state led to serious friction with the British colonial administration and his subsequent deposition in 1906. See A. Abraham, *Mende Government and Politics Under Colonial Rule* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, and London: Oxford University Press, 1978); Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*. *Eds.*]
23. [The Vai script is today primarily a male prerogative, and it is uncommon for a woman to write the script. However, the script has at times appeared in connection with the female initiation society, with inscriptions on society masks. *Eds.*]
24. [Charles Clifton Penick (1843–1914) was the third missionary bishop of Cape Palmas and Parts Adjacent from 1877 to 1883. *Eds.*]
25. Walter H. Overs, "Momolu Massaquoi: An African Prince," in *Sketches in Ebony and Ivory* (Hartford, CT: Church Missions Publishing Company, 1928), p. 8.
26. [The descendants of freed slaves from the United States who founded Liberia in 1822 under the auspices of the American Colonization Society are called Americo-Liberians. *Eds.*]
27. [George Whipple Hubbard (1841–1921), the founder and first president of Meharry Medical College. *Eds.*]
28. [The *sofa* were mounted warriors of the great Mandinka empire builder Samori Toure, who in the latter part of the nineteenth century created an empire from the Ivory Coast west to the Atlantic Ocean in Guinea. The French imperialists wanting the same territory fought him for seventeen



- years with the collaboration of the British and he finally surrendered in 1898. *Eds.*]
29. Letter in care of Mrs. Maude P. Stewart, formerly Miss Mansfield, of Chicago, Illinois, to whom I am deeply indebted for letting me use it. [See also, C. O. Boring, “Massaquoi and the Republic of Liberia: An Echo of the Parliament of Religions,” *The Open Court* No. 3 (March 1913), pp. 162–168. For a slightly garbled report of Massaquoi’s return, see “Two African Monarchs Summoned Home from Their Studies in America,” *The New York Sun* (July 29, 1894), p. 7. *Eds.*]
  30. Momolu Massaquoi, “Africa’s Appeal to Christendom,” *Century Magazine* (April) 1905.
  31. [The records show that Lahai died in 1890, and Lahai’s “small father” (father’s brother, i.e., “uncle” in Western culture), Momoh Fofi, Jaya’s brother, ruled until about 1902 or 1903 after whom Momolu Massaquoi took the crown. *Eds.*]
  32. [Present-day Bari Chiefdom, Pujehun District, Sierra Leone. *Eds.*]
  33. [The Hut Tax War is known by several names in different parts of the country—Bai Bureh War in the north of Sierra Leone, after the warrior who led the resistance, and the *puu-goi* (white man’s war) in southern Mende areas, etc. *Eds.*]



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