

## **Displacement, Belonging and Land Rights in Grand Gedeh, Liberia: Almost at Home Abroad?**

Ingunn Bjørkhaug (Fafo/Noragric), Morten Bøås (NUPI) and Tewodros Kebede (Fafo)

**Ingunn Bjørkhaug** is a researcher at Fafo (Oslo, Norway) and a PhD-fellow at Noragric, NMBU (Ås, Norway). She has conducted a number of studies in conflict and post-conflict settings on displacement, gender-based violence, children and youth, and ex-combatants in Colombia, Liberia and Uganda. The focus of her PhD is on displacement economies in Nakivale, Uganda and on the Liberian side of the Liberian-Ivorian borderlands. In this context she contributed to the edited volume *Displacement Economies in Africa—Paradoxes of Crisis and Creativities* (2014). E-mail: [inb@fafo.no](mailto:inb@fafo.no)

**Morten Bøås** is Research Professor at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). He works on violent conflict in West and Central Africa and in the Middle East. His main publications include, *African Guerrillas: Raging against the Machine* (2007), *The Politics of Origin in Africa* (2013), *The Politics of Conflict Economies: Miners, Merchants and Warriors in the African Borderland*, and *Africa's Insurgents: Navigating an Evolving Landscape* (2017). E-mail: [mbo@nupi.no](mailto:mbo@nupi.no)

**Tewodros Kebede** is a researcher at Fafo. His area of expertise includes program evaluation, statistical survey methods and development economics. He has worked on state of the art methods on Fafo's projects "Impacts and Costs of Forced Displacement" and "Disaster Risk Management in Ethiopia" financed by the World Bank. E-mail: [tak@fafo.no](mailto:tak@fafo.no)

**Abstract:** Local land rights conflicts between groups considered as "sons of the soil," and newcomers such as refugees, can trigger autochthony-inspired violence. However, such conflicts are not always manifested, even when the conditions for manifestation are in place. The question we explore in this article is whether such conflicts are less likely to emerge if the "other" is from a group with a longstanding bond of interethnic allegiance. Based on ethnographic data from Grand Gedeh, Liberia, we attempt to explain economic and social relations between majority and minority groups. Our main finding is that no prior special status will fundamentally alter the established ways of incorporating strangers in this part of Africa.

Keywords: Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, refugees, sons of the soil, autochthony

## **Introduction**

People have always felt a need to belong. This can be in the form of belonging to land, religion, a flag, an institution, or anything else that makes one feel more secure (see Bøås & Dunn 2013). Having such a sense of security becomes particularly salient during periods of immense social change. This can be triggered by many different events, but an obvious example is the experience of unexpectedly being displaced, or of being suddenly confronted by a huge group of refugees arriving on one's doorstep. In the absence of effective state interventions or legitimate state institutions, such situations can create social nervousness which may bring about social unrest and violence. This may be in response to a perception that the old way of life is no longer to be maintained. In order to make sense of the new situation, new narratives might arise to provide an explanation and a solution.

One powerful narrative evoked in a situation such as this is the claim to autochthony, which implies that a person is entitled to belong, simply because that person or their ancestors were "here first." Thus, tales of autochthony promise to restore a sense of belonging, often by articulating an implicit political agenda in the form of narratives and discursive constructions that shape perceptions and inform people's actions by linking identity and space in very specific ways. Such tales have become manifest in many contemporary African conflicts, and their expression has led to several violent episodes (Bøås & Dunn 2013; Geschiere 2009; Jackson 2006).

Our approach in this article is to suggest that the movement towards autochthony-based discourses should be understood as a strategy rather than as a fact. Proving claims of indigeneity is a difficult task almost everywhere, but particularly so in an area with vast and constant population movements. However, in the absence of legitimate state institutions and interventions, there may be much to be gained by making such an assertion. This is why the employment of autochthony discourses is not simply a top-down strategy applied by elites to manipulate the lower strata of society, nor is it a bottom-up strategy—a weapon of the weak. It is employed by different actors for different reasons (see Bøås & Dunn 2013), but in this article we mainly focus on how it is employed in poor refugee-receiving local communities.

Autochthony-inspired violence can be brought about by various crises. Economic crisis is one possible trigger; political transformation (e.g. from authoritarian rule to multiparty democracy) is another (see Bøås & Dunn 2013; Geschiere 2009; Kuba & Lentz 2006; Ménard 2017; Richards 2005; Sakti 2017; Shack 1979; Shack & Skinner 1979). Local conflict over land rights between majority and minority groups is yet another potential trigger

for autochthony-inspired violence, or it can be caused by an influx of refugees who do not return home. What these situations have in common is that one group is singled out as an “other” (understood as an intruder, an enemy, or simply as guests who have overstayed the hospitality of the host). Such a group should either leave or be brought under specific social control for order to be restored (Bøås 2009). This always leads to a dynamic situation of varying degrees of conflict, collusion, and constantly negotiated collaboration between groups considering themselves to be autochthonous to the area in question, and the group(s) these people see as newcomers or strangers. As such, we agree with Brauchler and Ménard (2017) that the legitimation of rights and access to various forms of citizenship must be understood in relation to established mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion (in this case, in relation to the “stranger–father” institution, as discussed below). We are not convinced, however, that this automatically leads to a renegotiation of social identities. Whether such a renegotiation takes place will depend on the circumstances. In cases involving refugees and host communities, determinants can include how the control over land, resources, and populations is affected by the emergence of a displaced population among local host communities, as well as how established norms of land and labor allocation are affected by this situation (see for example Bøås & Bjørkhaug 2014; Hammar 2014; Hammar & Rodgers 2008; Kibreab 2004; Werker 2007). The relationship between host communities and refugees is an issue that has received scant attention in the displacement economy literature (see Hammar 2014) in terms of research as well as policy. We seek to contribute to this literature by focusing on the issue of autochthony and how it can be used as a strategy on behalf of poor host communities.

Autochthony-based conflicts do not always manifest, even if almost all the conditions for such conflicts are in place. The generic question we explore in this article is whether such conflicts are less likely to emerge in their most violent and destructive form if the group in question has a longstanding bond of interethnic allegiance and solidarity that cuts across national borders.

This is precisely the situation we observed along the Liberian–Ivorian border in the county of Grand Gedeh in Liberia in 2014. In the aftermath of the Laurent Gbagbo crisis in Côte d’Ivoire (see Banégas 2015; McGovern 2011), a large number of Ivorian refugees crossed the border to Liberia in 2011. Peaking at almost 150,000 in 2011, the number of refugees had been reduced to about 50,000 at the time of our study in 2014. Many of those remaining were of Guéré origin, which were often collectively identified as Gbagbo loyalists, making them much less inclined to return home than other groups of refugees such as the Yacouba who also had fled across the border from Côte d’Ivoire to Liberia in large numbers

in 2011.<sup>1</sup> Owing to the ethnic alliances and allegiances in the Ivorian crisis, most people of Gueré origin ended up siding with then President Gbagbo, whereas the overall majority of the Yacouba were seen as supporters of Alassane Ouattara who became the new president when Gbagbo was finally forced to leave the presidency (see Banégas 2015; Bøås & Dunn 2013; McGovern 2011).

When a large number of people of Gueré origin fled their homes in Western Côte d'Ivoire, most of them went to Grand Gedeh, where the Krahn are in the ethnic majority. Not only does an ancient bond of ethnic allegiance exist between the Krahn and the Gueré, leading them to identify each other as “ethnic cousins,” but their respective languages are also so similar that they can easily understand each other (Holsoe & Lauer 1976). This ancient bond between these two groups was reconstituted when the Gueré hosted Krahn refugees in Côte d'Ivoire during an earlier part of the war in the Mano River Basin (Bøås 2015).<sup>2</sup> These previous relationships suggest that the relations between hosts (e.g., Krahn) and refugees (e.g., Gueré) have the potential to be quite cordial and even collaborative in Grand Gedeh. However, the question is whether this makes the Gueré refugees in Grand Gedeh into something more than just special guests who should leave when the immediate crisis is over. Will the refugees eventually exhaust the hospitality of their host communities, or are they perceived as local citizens in the making, in this borderland of the Mano River Basin?

Based on analysis of data from ethnographic fieldwork (qualitative and quantitative) among host–refugee communities in Grand Gedeh,<sup>3</sup> this article will revisit previous attempts (see Azevedo 1994; Bøås 2009; Bøås & Dunn 2013; Chauveau 2006; Chauveau & Richards 2008; Fairhead 2010; Højbjerg 2007; Murphy & Bledsoe 1987; Shaw 2002) to explain economic and social relations between minority and majority groups with differing degrees of belonging to land in the Mano River Basin. In particular, we investigate the extent to which the Krahn–Gueré relationship differs from the customary Liberian institution of the stranger–father (see Bøås 2009; Bøås & Dunn 2013),<sup>4</sup> an institution that traditionally regulates the allocation of land resources to newcomers (non-citizens; anybody not born in the community in question) in local Liberian agricultural communities. An additional concern of this article is to analyze the degree to which the Krahn–Gueré relationship is regulated according to standard Liberian practices and how the customary stranger–father institution has informed the reception of Gueré refugees in Liberia. What does it mean to be a “good guest”? How does the refugee relate to the autochthon “father”?

### **The Krahn-Gueré relationship – a special kind of bond?**

Several studies have noted the highly structured relationships between hosts (the autochthons) and strangers in the tropical forest belt along the West African coast. Grand Gedeh of Liberia is no exception (see Azevedo 1962, 1989; Bøås 2015; Bøås 2009; Bøås & Dunn 2013; Cutolo 2010; Højbjerg 2007; Kopytof 1987; McEvoy 1979; Murphy 1980). In Liberia, the structuring of such relationships is generally managed by a customary institution known as the stranger–father. This institution structures the relationship between those who are seen as the firstcomers, the autochthons and latecomers/newcomers—people defined as strangers simply because they were not born in the village in question. It is a mechanism for inclusion, but it also excludes the stranger from participating in substantive decisions concerning land and labor in the village.

The right to own or use land is shared among a small number of lineages considered to be the autochthons of that particular area (Bøås & Dunn 2013; Chauveau et al. 2006; Chauveau 2006; Chauveau & Colin 2010; Colin, Kouamé & Soro 2007; McGovern 2011; Richards et al. 2005). What this means is that people can be guests who are hosted politely for a time—but this does not alter the basic fact that such people are still strangers if not born in that village. If the guest does not leave after a while, other ways must be established to arrange the relationship between the guest or stranger and the autochthonous community. One solution is to invoke the stranger–father institution to give the stranger a father: a figure of authority who takes upon himself the responsibility of ensuring that the stranger behaves in accordance with the rules of the community. In basic terms, this means that any stranger who seeks to settle in, as opposed to visit a village or community, needs to be adopted by an autochthonous father. This gives the newcomer the right to a place to live and to a plot of land to cultivate. As such this is a mechanism with an integrative purpose. However, it also means that the newcomer enters into a subordinate position with the father, locking himself and his lineage forever into a subordinate position with regard to decisions about land and land use. The stranger–father institution therefore provides for the integration of newcomers, but only up to a certain point. All major decisions concerning land and land use will remain in the hands of those seen as autochthonous to the area in question, and as much as the newcomer in this arrangement will have the right to land for cultivation, the stranger and his family will never earn the right to plant tree crops (cash crops such as cocoa and coffee). This will remain the privilege of the autochthon (see also Bøås & Dunn 2013). This has important implications for the relationship between the Krahn hosts and the Gueré refugees.

This combination of measures of inclusion and exclusion is still the main way in which strangers are incorporated into rural communities in the Mano River Basin. The name of the social practice and how it is practiced differs across time and space; these customary institutions are not static, but evolve. They have been affected by colonialism and colonial administrative boundaries, by independence, by modernity, and by the wars and international interventions that followed in this area. Although they are not practiced exactly as they were twenty years or a hundred years ago, these types of social arrangements are still functioning, and regulate social and economic affairs between those considered autochthons and those who are not. This is the case in Liberia with the stranger–father institution, but also in Côte d’Ivoire where a similar arrangement is known as the *tutorat*. In Liberia, the stranger must find a “father,” in Côte d’Ivoire a *tuteur* (see Chauveau 2006; Colin, Kouamé & Soro 2007). These arrangements are similar in most respects, while the main difference concerns tree crops. In the Liberian stranger–father practice, planting tree crops will never be a right given to a newcomer or his lineage, whereas under the Ivorian *tutorat*, a newcomer can enter into an arrangement that includes a tree crop such as cocoa. In the Ivorian version, the newcomer also owes the *tuteur* gratitude, which is expressed through gifts, labor, and money. These gifts do not conclude a land rights arrangement, but rather perpetuate it; the agreement continues, being transferred to the heirs, and in principle is never-ending (Colin, Kouamé and Soro 2007).

The result of this practice is, in both cases that notions of political alignment in local everyday politics have become relatively fixed, creating a hierarchical political system that is supposed to regulate titles to land (Bøås & Dunn 2013).<sup>5</sup> We now examine whether the inclusion of Gueré refugees in Krahn communities has been governed by this logic, or if the special relationship between the two groups has made other arrangements not only possible, but also more feasible. We will briefly describe the contours of the relationship between the ethnic groups of Krahn (Liberia) and Gueré (Côte d’Ivoire) before discussing our empirical data.

Grand Gedeh County, together with its surrounding areas in Liberia, has never been an isolated tribal setting; rather, it is a “dynamic theatre” where people have been coming and going for centuries (Azevedo 1989; Richards et al. 2005). The county has a history of warfare referred to as “rolling wars” by some groups in their own historical narratives (Bøås 2008), of shifting alliances, and competition for control over trade routes. It has always been a multicultural and politically diverse region, which suggests that, in objective terms, the current ethnic groups are more a consequence of the state-building practice of the Liberian

government than of historically coherent groups with a clearly defined distant past (Bøås & Dunn 2013; Holsoe & Lauer 1976; McEvoy 1979).

Seeing the Krahn as a political entity is a new phenomenon. Before the coming of the modern Liberian state, the Krahn were not a clearly defined ethnic group; instead they were recognized as several small groups of people (clans) whose dialects belonged to the same type of language (Kru), and who lived within the same geographical space. Lineage, clan, and place of belonging were important aspects of traditional life, but the ethnic identity of being Krahn was more elusive (Holsoe and Lauer 1976). This changed during the establishment of the modern Liberian state, and the ethnic belonging of the Krahn achieved a new national status during the presidency of Samuel Doe (a Krahn) and the civil war that followed (Bøås 2005). Even though it is important to acknowledge that the constitution of the Krahn and the Gueré in their contemporary forms is tied to the creation of the modern Liberian and Ivorian state and to the West African state system, there is a familiarity between them that precedes this historic watershed. Their languages are fairly similar), and there is an acknowledgment of their closely related ethnic kinship. Marriages across the border are common and have strengthened this sentiment (Bøås 2005). However, the fact of frequent cross-border marriages does not fundamentally alter the relationship between hosts and strangers. It is women who marry into new communities; their local citizenship is tied to that of their husbands and does not include the wife's family. If the husband dies, the woman will either remarry in his community or move back to her original village. The only exception to this occurs if the woman remains and lives with her children, who are considered citizens.

When the Liberian civil war reached Grand Gedeh in 1990, a large number of Krahn refugees crossed the border to Côte d'Ivoire and found assistance and sanctuary among the Gueré population. Here, they lived in and among local communities, and were provided with different types of assistance from local Gueré communities, ranging from food to shelter and land. However, the politico-military alliances that were established in western Côte d'Ivoire between Liberian refugees and different Ivorian groups in the 1990s also provided for a different relationship. These alliances were situational, but strongly built on previous ethnic affiliation, support and solidarity. According to Human Rights Watch (2003) between fifteen hundred and two thousand Liberians fought for the Ivorian government army and its support militias, whereas about a thousand Liberians were enrolled into the ranks of Ivorian rebel forces. During the 2010–11 crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, the Yacouba supported Alassane Ouattara and the Gueré supported Laurent Gbagbo, and ethnic belonging came to shape the backbone of most militias, including the Front for the Liberation of the Great West (FLGO) militia that

recruited through locally elected Gueré leaders, mostly mayors supported by the presidency and in particular, the president's wife, Simone Gbagbo (see also International Crisis Group 2003). On the other hand, almost a thousand Liberian Gio fighters from Nimba County in Liberia constituted the avant-garde when the Ivorian rebel group *Mouvement Populaire du Grand Ouest* (MPIGO) attacked Toulépleu at the end of November 2002. This was a significant event: Toulépleu is not only a Gueré town south of the ethnic border that divides the Ivorian Yacouba and the Gueré, but it is also close to the border between the Liberian counties of Nimba and Grand Gedeh. In order to counter the rebel offensive, the Gbagbo government recruited Liberian refugees, almost exclusively from the Krahn group. Thus, by pitting Liberians against Liberians on Ivorian soil the situation intensified and ethnic cleavages from the Liberian war was reinforced in Côte d'Ivoire.

Krahn refugees joined the government counteroffensive for various reasons. Some saw the war as an opportunity for personal enrichment, but it appears that most joined for security reasons. Fighting for the government was a way of proving that the refugees were “good strangers” who took up arms to defend the local Gueré communities. It was a tactical move to ensure goodwill from the host communities in Côte d'Ivoire (Bøås 2005; Bøås & Utas 2014; Chelpi-den Hamer 2011).

The situation in 2014 was exactly the opposite of what it was in the 1990s. As one of our informants expressed it: “We gave them then; now we receive their help.” But the shift from having been the host to suddenly a guest depending on the goodwill of a host was clearly a transition for the Gueré refugees: “If you leave your country, the conditions change. When the Liberian refugees came to Côte d'Ivoire we were friends with them. Some were living in our community; some were living in the camp. It is difficult to be a refugee in a country that we used to host refugees from.” (Male respondent in PTP camp March 2014). The Ivoirians used to be the providers for what they perceived as the poor Liberians, but now they have to depend on their hospitality. They used to be tuteurs (stranger–fathers) but have now become the strangers themselves. Not only have the Ivoirian refugees become the strangers, but the way their new hosts use the soil is different from what they were used to in Côte d'Ivoire.

The main source of livelihood and income in Grand Gedeh is agriculture. As is the case for much of the tropical forest belt of the Mano River Basin, Grand Gedeh is also divided between lower tropical forests and mid-sized hills composed of valleys, rivers, and streams. In the upland, the main source of cultivation is rice production, while agriculture in the low lying areas produces yams, plantains, potatoes, sugarcane and a variety of vegetables. Here, cocoa, coffee, and rubber are also cultivated. The main products are, however, rice and cassava. The



cocoa, coffee, and rubber plantations that exist are small household-size fields. Although they are very important to the individual households, these plots are few and small, compared to what the Gueré were used to in Côte d'Ivoire. Arrangements similar to the Ivorian tutorat with regard to cash crops such as cocoa are therefore not feasible. This has been a major challenge to local integration for the benefit of both groups, because although the Gueré are experienced cocoa farmers, plantations in Grand Gedeh are not of sufficient size for their experience in cocoa farming to be of any use.

The events described above have important implications for questions concerning peace and reconciliation in the Mano River Basin area at large (see Bøås & Utas 2014). However, for the purpose of this particular article, the question is to what extent the stranger-father institution has an impact on host-refugee relations in eastern Liberia, in particular focusing on the evolving refugee situation. In order to investigate this further, we will unpack the roles and the relationship between the hosts and the refugees in Grand Gedeh.

### **Who are the hosts and who are the guests?**

When this study was conducted in March and April 2014, fifty thousand Ivorian refugees remained in Liberia and the overall majority of them lived in refugee camps in Grand Gedeh. Our study is based on a representative sample of 399 households in the PTP refugee camp, in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh. The sample population consists of 1,655 refugees, with children and youth representing more than half of the population (see Table 1). Our quantitative survey was supported by qualitative interviews with refugees in the PTP camp, Liberians living near the camp and in Zwedru, and with representatives of involved government organizations as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

[Table 1 here]

The response to the Ivorian refugee crisis along the border is led by the UNHCR working with the Government of Liberia through the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC). The LRRRC gives the refugees access to basic social services, whereas the UNHCR coordinates the refugee camps. All refugees must be registered by the LRRRC in order to access the services provided by the UNHCR and its implementing partners. The refugees were each allocated a small plot of land where they could build a house, but they were not allocated any land for farming. Unofficial refugees (those who have not been registered by LRRRC) are also living in Grand Gedeh in local communities. Ideally we would have also approached this group of refugees systematically, but this was not

possible as the inclusion of these people would have entailed resources to conduct a separate study based on a different methodological approach for elusive populations.

At the time of our study, the majority of the Ivorian refugees lived in refugee camps. In the initial emergency phase before the refugee camps were established, the LRRRC and the UNHCR received the first influx of refugees and worked with the local communities. However, when the refugee camps were established, the refugees were encouraged to move to the camps in order to continue to be under the protection of the UNHCR and to access services. By the end of 2016 approximately 18,500 refugees from Côte d'Ivoire remained in Liberia (UNHCR 2016). Currently in 2017, the government has started to pursue repatriation for those remaining refugees who still live in the camps.

Our data shows that the majority of the refugees (87 percent) arrived in 2011, as one would assume for a group of refugees predominantly of Gueré origin, because this was when it became obvious that President Gbagbo would lose the conflict with Alassane Ouattara. Just as this happened, the western part of Côte d'Ivoire bordering on Liberia fell to an amalgamation of rebel forces (the Nouvelle Force and their allied hunter-militias) from the northern part of the country. By and large it was the blitzkrieg offensive of these groups that created the 2011 exodus of people from western Côte d'Ivoire to Liberia. The majority of the refugees had hurriedly left their homes without managing to bring many possessions with them. The result was that, after fleeing through the bush and crossing the border, they came to Liberia in much need of assistance. Most of the initial humanitarian help was provided by local communities before the humanitarian organizations entered the scene.

In terms of ethnicity, 86 percent of the Ivorian refugees are of Gueré origin, while the remaining 14 percent come from many different ethnic groups. As expected, the majority of refugees residing in the PTP camp are of Gueré origin. Many people of Yacouba origin also fled to Liberia, but sought sanctuary with their cross-border ethnic allies, particularly the Gio of the neighboring Nimba County. Both groups were initially welcomed by their respective hosts who opened their communities to the refugees.

[Table 2 here]

As reflected in table 2 below most of the Ivorian refugees were experienced farmers, and the few who did not have such knowledge had other skills as seasoned traders or public sector employees. Almost all of the refugees had been employed in Côte d'Ivoire; many harbored skills that enabled them to earn a little money from land they were able to access

around the PTP camp through different varieties of the stranger–father institution. But even the few who succeeded in this regard felt that they were caught up in a bad situation.

In Côte d’Ivoire, I was a big man. I made money and I provided for my family: I had a car, I had a motorcycle, I had everything, I slept anytime. Now I eat Cassava leaves without oil. Here, the land is big, but they have no cocoa, no rubber, and no coffee plantations. In Côte d’Ivoire, there were large farms with palm trees, cocoa, coffee and rubber, but now the Burkinabe occupy the land. I have never returned back there. The last time I was there was in March 2011. I took part in the political conflict. I am too afraid to go back; they know I was a Gbagbo representative. If Gbagbo’s son wins the election I will be happy to go back there. (Interview with Ivorian refugee, PTP camp, April 2014).

The PTP camp is the largest refugee camp in Grand Gedeh. Its name comes from a timber company—Prime Timber Products—that used to have a logging concession in the area. It is close to Zwedru, the capital city of Grand Gedeh, but the area is still quite isolated. The PTP company had been out of business for many years when the Ivorian refugees started to arrive in huge numbers in 2011 and the concession area was therefore idle. The reason for the creation of the PTP camp was the government of Liberia’s concern that the presence of refugees in local communities might constitute a security threat in the tense pre-election environment that prevailed at the time (see Bøås & Utas 2014). The refugees were then moved out of local Krahn communities into the supervised environment of this refugee camp, positioned in an isolated unused area. The aim was to eventually relocate all refugees into one camp. Still, in order to avoid local confrontations, the Liberian government made an agreement with the local Krahn clan known as the Kannah, who claimed ownership to the land. In return for the Kannah’s agreement to use the PTP concession area to set up a refugee camp, the Liberian government built new houses and structures for the local Kannah community on land belonging to the clan. Their new houses were built next to the PTP camp, producing a social landscape where the host population and the refugees live next to each other. Some members of the Kannah clan also secured employment in the PTP camp as security guards, or with the NGOs that were responsible for camp management or other services to the refugees.

Some of the refugees were also able to use the few opportunities available to them, whether this was small business agreements with local partners or access to land through the father–stranger institution. They also made use of their already established social connections with local Liberian communities. For instance, some refugees in the camp deliberately

divided their household, leaving a few of their family members behind in the original Krahn community which had taken them in. This was done in order to secure the relationship between the local community and the family members in the PTP camp. An attempt to continue small-scale business or land agreements with local communities after the refugees had moved to the camp was seen as a crucial coping strategy to supplement the handouts they received in the camp.

In general, both the local community and the refugees described their relationship as good. There were few open conflicts between the communities, but the relations were often acknowledged as being based on non-transparent connections and arrangements. “It depends on who you are dealing with. If you know them, it is different.” (Interview with Ivorian refugee, PTP camp, April 2014). In other words, very much in line with the logic of the stranger–father institution, these relationships were built on a system of both inclusion and exclusion. Without any local connections, it was much more challenging to get an income in addition to food rations from the UNHCR and the LRRC. Thus, although it was clearly possible for the refugees to obtain land to cultivate, the size, amount of rent and access to the plots differed widely depending on the ability of refugees to navigate the social landscape of the stranger–father institutions. In the next section, we return to these interactions and their underlying logic.

### **How do they live and who do they interact with?**

The unexpected nature of the sudden Ivorian refugee situation coupled with the pre-established bond between Liberian and Ivorian ethnic groups meant that both hosts and refugees had to find ways of coping with the immediate crisis. When the Gueré refugees fled across the border in 2010–11, 92 percent of them first arrived in local Krahn communities along the border, for example along the axis from Toe Town to Zwedru.

More than half of the refugees in the PTP camp reported that they had already known someone in the first village they arrived at in Liberia. This evidence of a pre-existing cross-border relationship suggests that they did not randomly approach a village, but strategically went to villages where they had contacts. Hence, they were utilizing cross-border networks in their search for safety and sanctuary, and they were provided with shelter and food upon arrival. Those refugees who did not have personal connections still navigated in a fairly well known social terrain and managed to establish contact with people who helped them when they clearly needed assistance. The majority of the refugees came empty-handed to Liberia;

many of them had been sleeping in the forest for weeks before their arrival. After a lengthy journey on foot, one of the female respondents spoke of her first time in Zwedru as follows:

When I first escaped to Zwedru I felt lost. I did not know anyone where I could seek shelter. When I arrived at Zwedru I went to the parking lot in the middle of the town and asked someone for help. A crowd of other refugees were gathered together. I met Mary. Mary said she could take care of me and my two children in her home for a while. Mary provided lodging and food in return for help in the household. The pressure on the Liberians was tremendous in the start of the influx. After one month Mary asked me for rent. This was not possible for me to pay, so I found another household that was willing to take care of me. In this household I was able to stay for longer. We developed a good friendship. (Interview with female respondent, PTP camp, April 2014).

This interviewee had only moved to the camp when the LRRRC ordered the refugees to move out of local communities into the PTP camp. However, she kept contact with her second host family. The contacts she established during her first months of living in Zwedru have become her long-term friends as well as business partners after her move to the PTP camp. Although she initially had not known anyone in the area, she benefited from the ties of cross-border solidarity and therefore navigated in fairly familiar terrain even as a refugee.

Among those refugees who already knew someone upon arrival, many reported that these were kin members across the border, or someone they had known from the time when the Krahn themselves were refugees in Côte d'Ivoire (Table 3). Thus, almost 27 percent of refugees knew people who had previously been refugees in Côte d'Ivoire; almost 30 percent knew distant family members, or tried to fix an arrangement for an entry into local communities through other Ivorian refugees with connections to local communities. Basically they were searching for a tuteur: a stranger–father to facilitate their entry into local communities, and 90 percent of their first contacts were of Krahn origin. When the refugees crossed the border into local communities, they used their connections to obtain permission to stay in the village. For most of the refugees, a person they knew facilitated their inclusion into the local village, very much in line with the logic of the stranger–father institution.

[Table 3 here]

Although it was important for refugees to be registered with the LRRRC for basic rations and services, having a local connection was equally important in order to access other opportunities such as land for cultivation. Almost half (48 percent) of the refugees in the PTP

camp with access to land had obtained it through someone they knew; 13 percent contacted the chief of the village themselves, and only 11 percent were provided access to land through an organization (Table 4). The stranger–father institution provides a set of unwritten rules and regulations that are implemented by the hosts and the refugees. The benefits are connected to a collective bond that becomes stronger once a relationship of trust has been established. For those without a stranger–father bond (or a similar type of arrangement), vacant land nearby can represent an enticing resource within reach, but which they are prohibited from using. Those who try to access land without a local agreement risk reprisals. Young Gueré men sometimes collect firewood without permission in order to make charcoal for sale, but this is risky if the landowner catches them, and the more distant the relationship between the landowner and the refugee, the more difficult it is to develop an arrangement that allows for such permission. This is illustrated by the following story:

One boy who was a newcomer to PTP camp had attempted to collect firewood that he planned to use for sale. The owner of the forest [where the boy picked the firewood] caught him in the bush, asked him who gave him the permission to collect firewood. He [the boy] replied that ‘for a long time you have not come this way, so we decided to fetch wood.’ The landowner told them to get out of there and not to touch anything. He also took the machete from the boy. Now the young boy was idle, just waiting for the bush owner to make dialogue. His plan was to beg for permission to continue the work by offering the landowner some money. (Interview PTP camp, April 2014).

The point is that without a stranger–father, the uncertainties involved in such relationships are very high. Access to land must be built on some sort of trust established in an institution that can give as well as sanction, and trespassing is seen as an abuse of the established traditional customs.

[Table 4 here]

### **The autochthon father and the stranger**

The autochthon father’s acceptance of the stranger depends on previously established relationships as well as individual agreements. To be a good stranger is to respect the rules given by the father. Previous references or kinship ties facilitate access to land for the refugees, but they also have to adapt to the local environment. As mentioned, the type of cocoa farming and crop-sharing arrangements that refugees were familiar with in Côte d’Ivoire are not feasible in their current situation. Although 93 percent of the refugees had

been food crop producers, the main reason offered when asked why they did not grow perennial crops, was that they are considered temporary guests and such crops are only for the “sons of the soil” (see also Bøås & Dunn 2013). This is something that will not change, even if they become part of the village through a stranger–father relationship. This separation is one of the cornerstones of the customary institution—which integrates through the provision of land on which the stranger may live, and a plot to cultivate. But the right is never given for the cultivation of perennial crops, as the option to permanently to alter the physical landscape belongs only to the autochthonous inhabitants.

In response, the refugees have had to adapt their practices from large-scale cocoa farming to rice production for own consumption, plus any small surplus that can be sold at the local market. As large tracts of land surrounding the PTP camp had not been previously cultivated, some of this land was made available. Plots had to be cleared before they could be cultivated—referred to as “brushing” the land. A common arrangement was for a refugee or group of refugees to brush one acre of land for a local farmer with rights to the land. These refugees were thereafter granted one acre that they could develop to produce their own crops. In addition, the refugee or refugees had to pay the landowner four thousand LD (approximately fifty USD) to rent the land for one year. These arrangements are open-ended and variable. If the relationship between the landowner and the refugee remains positive, a more mutually beneficial arrangement can materialize; but it can also become more exploitative or simply end. It is a system of constant negotiation and renegotiation. Each refugee therefore has to find their own way of attempting to make individual arrangements with those who control land. A refugee spoke of these challenges:

I feel that the Liberians are making life difficult for the refugees; they make us brush the land for them, even me. I am sixty-five years old and even I have to brush land for them. At the end of the season I have to give them fifty kilos of rice. They benefit from our presence. This is very different from the African tradition. In the Ivory Coast we welcomed them good. However, we can accept the conditions, because Liberia is so poor. It is God’s way of doing things. (Interview with male respondent, PTP camp, March 2014).

Nonetheless, payment (or gratitude) towards the stranger–father is indicative of a sealed deal between two parties, and thus perpetuates the arrangement. Thus, even if the actual arrangements differ, this system is not unlike the *tutorat* system of Côte d’Ivoire. Both systems have prevailed over time, and are flexible in terms of the actual labor input from the stranger, and in terms of the rent which may differ from year to year. It seems that even if

bonds of cross-border reciprocity exist, these arrangements are largely founded on the ancient practices of incorporating strangers, where the strangers never achieve the full status of local citizens (see Bräucher & Ménard 2017; Bedert 2017; Geschiere 2006; Ménard 2017; Sakti 2017).

Most of the refugees perceived this as a temporary solution and did not experience the subordination to the stranger–father as a problem. Although they were effectively living as stateless citizens in a limbo between borders, they tolerated their subordinated position because it was perceived to be a temporary situation (see also Skinner 1963). The Ivorian refugees who live in Liberia longed for home, to send their children to what they call a “proper school,” and to cultivate cocoa instead of rice. Therefore, to become part of a Liberian community on a permanent basis was rarely a preferred option. In Liberia they were subordinate to the local government, to the UNHCR, to the stranger–father institution, and to the landlord who limited their harvest choices to rice and vegetables. The temporary aspect made it easier for them to accept life in a refugee camp. Living in the camp, they were surrounded by their kin, and could still pursue a relationship with the stranger–father. This enabled a type of autonomy which they might not have had within the local communities. However, what is intriguing is that the stranger–father institution was still in operation, even when the refugees moved into an established refugee camp, with fences surrounding them. This is the case because—camp or no camp—access to land was as important to refugees living in the camp as it was to those who resided in the local community.

The establishment of the PTP camp was beneficial for many of the Liberians living in and around the camp. The stranger–fathers benefited from the arrangement as a stranger would clear an area that had previously been only bush. One of the refugees explained his transition from being a farmer in Côte d’Ivoire, to life as a refugee:

I used to have twenty acres of land back home. To be a farmer was a predictable life. I could build a house for my family and made good money. I provided education to my children. Here I rent land to do some farming, but I plant rice instead of cocoa. I met the landowner through his children, but I negotiated directly with the father. The rent has changed some because the relationship has developed. The first year I had to brush two acres and pay two thousand LD [approximately twenty-five USD] for half an acre of land. The next two years I only had to brush two acres of land for rent, but this time I brushed it together with the father. The last year I also brushed, but this time we were fifteen people who shared the work of brushing the land. Every year the conditions improve some, and each year we are able to harvest about two hundred bunches of



rice. I do not feel that the relationship to the landowner is challenging, however, not everybody welcomes you. They do not understand the situation. (Interview with Ivorian refugee, PTP camp, April 2014).

The arrangement between the father and the stranger is one of unequal reciprocity. The stranger has access to land, while the father receives rent and has his land brushed. Both parties have mutual obligations in a relationship of interdependence, informed by reciprocity within certain frames that both parties must respect. Because much of the land surrounding the PTP camp is still wild bush, the arrangement enables the land to be productive for farming. The hosts who control land also benefit from the arrangement, even after the stranger returns home. However, not all refugees find a stranger–father, and others who do not know how to use the land, do not seek such a father.

Inside the PTP camp there were no large-scale businesses that well-connected refugees could profit from. Each household did its best to generate some kind of income, in addition to inadequate food rations. The PTP camp has a market where businessmen and women sell petrol, clothes, cookies, oil, and other commodities. Zwedru inhabitants would travel to the PTP camp on market days and purchase vegetables, clothes, and other small items. The arrangements for people involved in small businesses involved different degrees of interaction with the national population. Others made arrangements with Liberian businessmen in Zwedru, such as this single mother, responsible for two children:

I was able to establish a small business that enables me a more stable income. Someone I got to know when I first arrived to Zwedru comes to the camp with a jerry can of oil. In return for the jerry can I will have to pay eighteen hundred LD (approximately USD20). Whatever surplus I make, is mine. Last month I was able to make a surplus of twenty-five hundred LD [approximately USD30]. (Interview with female respondent, PTP camp, April 2014).

One of the households in the PTP camp adapted to camp conditions without dependence on the land. They were among the first refugees to arrive at the camp, and the husband secured a contract with one the NGOs building the camp. This provided a small startup capital that they could invest in kitchen utilities that enabled the wife to make pastries for sale, both in the local market and in the camp. The extra income helps them in everyday life, but the husband who used to be the breadwinner in the family now finds himself idle. While his wife is busy preparing and selling the pastries, he does some laundry and sends his children to school, but it is not enough. It is difficult for him to adapt to life in Liberia:

I feel that every day has many hours to kill. I worry a lot. I am not in a good place. If you leave your country, the conditions change. It is difficult to be a refugee in a country we used to host refugees from. Now I have to learn how to farm. (Interview with male respondent, PTP camp, March 2014).

This respondent did not have a stranger–father to rent land from, and found it challenging to negotiate with the local landowners, illustrating the importance of local connections. He was an outsider, a stranger without an autochthon father, dependent on the income provided by his wife. His feeling of exclusion is reflected in his perception of the community: “I am afraid of going into the community. Liberians accuse us of doing bad, meaning we were involved in rebel activities. . . police accuse us and tell us that you treated us bad, now we do that to you. It is better to stay in the camp.”

### **Always a stranger?**

At the time of the study, most of the refugees in Grand Gedeh had moved into the PTP camp. The main reason for the relocation from the local community to the camp was the policy of the LRRRC, as instructed by the Liberian government, to bring the refugees out of local communities and into the established refugee camps. As time passed, more refugees were also repatriated back to their homes. When smaller camps closed, the UNHCR relocated the refugees to the PTP camp. Those who remained in Liberia mainly argued that it was not safe enough for them to return home. However, they were then obliged to find additional income to supplement food rations. At the time of the study, the food rations had been reduced to rice and salt, making it necessary for a higher degree of refugee self-reliance, and stressing the importance of relating to an autochthon father to provide the land needed for self-sufficiency.

As smaller camps were closed down, the PTP camp expanded, establishing two types of refugees: those who were relatively settled having first arrived in this camp and those who were newcomers having been transferred from other camps. Increasing numbers of refugees created new challenges with regard to access to land. Refugees relocated from other camps were obliged to find new stranger–fathers, as their kinship ties and access to land were connected to their original camps. One of the refugees, who had been transferred from Dougee camp to the enlarged PTP camp, claimed that land in his original camp used to be easily available, even free, while here they had to pay. He continued:

The Krahn in Dougee town was different. We have some relatives there, we speak the same Krahn. Krahn here in PTP do not speak the same Krahn. The Krahn in PTP are Kannah, whereas the Krahn in Dougee is Kahowlue. Kin ties are important, if you

have friends and family nearby, there will be no problems. (Interview with male respondent PTP camp, April 2014).

Close proximity to kin members had disappeared when they were relocated. These refugees became strangers once again, and had to start searching for new stranger–fathers.

[Table 5 here]

Table 5, the final table in this article, shows the perception of refugees in the PTP camp concerning how they were received when they first arrived. The majority of refugees (73 percent) reported that they were initially welcomed by the local community. However, sometime later, after others had returned to Côte d’Ivoire, the remaining refugees believed they were perceived as having stayed too long in Liberia. Most did not consider themselves a burden to the local community (reflecting the fact that they currently lived in a managed refugee setting, the PTP camp). However, a considerable number of refugees (33 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that they were considered a burden by local communities. It appears that in Liberia, they will remain outsiders, strangers, despite the cultural and ethnic ties they share with their neighbors. This reflects Peil’s (1979:125) observation from Ghana:

He may speak the local language . . . he may have many friends from various groups, including the hosts, and be indistinguishable in dress or behaviour from others in the neighbourhood; but there is almost always a reserve, an attitudinal and emotional distance which makes it clear that he remains at least partly a stranger.

## **Conclusion**

These Ivorian refugees are not “almost at home abroad,” nor are they local citizens in the making. Initially they were generally well-received, and, we would argue, much better received than if they had belonged to another ethnicity. The special bond between these two groups may have substantially reduced the likelihood of immediate conflict and violence. However, because the refugee situation turned from being an immediate crisis into a protracted problem with no immediate end in sight, local Liberian perceptions may have changed. The relationship between these two groups has centered on the principles of the integration of strangers in terms of the stranger–father institution. Even though the refugees of Guéré origin were seen as special guests—refugees of a different social status to that of any other stranger—they were still guests in the local communities. Any guest, no matter how special they are, should also eventually leave.

Based on the perception of having stayed too long and having become a burden to local host communities (see Table 5), it may appear that many of the Gueré refugees also believe that their Krahn hosts have fulfilled their part of the bargain of cross-border alliance, support, and sanctuary. Many Krahn sought refuge in Côte d'Ivoire during the Liberian civil war, and they were grateful for the support they had received. However, when the war ended, they returned to their home of origin. The sentiment among many of the Gueré refugees is that their Krahn hosts believe that as the war in Côte d'Ivoire is over they should do as the Krahn did and return to their home of origin in Côte d'Ivoire and no longer exhaust the receiving capacity of the hosts.

Thus, we suggest that even if the stranger for a time may be almost at home, they are not very likely to become citizens in this part of Africa. As long as the dominant mode of production is based on access to land, and land is seen as the essential commodity that represents a link to previous generations, and to current as well as future survival, the integration of strangers and the question of local citizenship will continue to be based on the old practices of the stranger–father institution. This is an institution that integrates but simultaneously excludes, because it effectively locks strangers and their relatives into a permanent position as second-class citizens without full rights in relation to the most important economic asset: land. Currently, no special relationship appears able to alter the status quo, even if the relationship is built on a well-established cross-border alliance of support and sanctuary.

## References

- Azevedo, Warren d'. 1994. "Phantoms of the Hinterland: the Mandingo 'presence' in Early Liberian Accounts, Part 1." *Liberian Studies Journal* 19: 197-242.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1989. "Tribe and Chiefdom on the Windward Coast." *Liberian Studies Journal* 14 (2): 90-116.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1962. "Some Historical Problems in the Delineation of a Central West Atlantic region." *Annals of the New York Academy of Science* 96: 512-538.
- Banegas, Richard. 2015. "France's Intervention Policy in Africa Seen from Below: Some Thoughts on the Case of Côte d'Ivoire." *European Review of International Studies* 2 (3): 60-79.
- BBC. 2014. "Ebola Crisis: Ivory Coast Closes Land Borders." London: BBC, 23 August, 2014.
- Bedert, Maarten. 2017. "The Complementary of Divergent Historical Imaginations: Narratives of Mobility and Alterity in Contemporary Liberia." *Social Identities* 23 (4): 430-445.
- Bräuchler, Birgit and Anaïs Ménard. 2017. "Patterns of Im/mobility, Conflict and the Re/making of Identity Narrative." *Social Identities* 23 (4): 379-395.
- Bøås, Morten and Ingunn Bjørkhaug. 2014. "The IDP Economy in Northern Uganda: A Prisoners' Economy?" In *Displacement Economies in Africa- Paradoxes of Crisis and Creativity*, edited by A. Hammar, 187-206. New York: Zed Books.
- Bøås, Morten. 2015. *The Politics of Conflict Economies: Miners, Merchants and Warriors in the African Borderland*. London: Routledge.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. "New Nationalism and Autochthony – Tales of Origin as Political Cleavage." *Africa Spectrum* 44 (1): 19-38.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008. "Funérailles pour un ami: des luttes de citoyenneté dans la guerre civile Libérienne." *Politique Africaine*, 112: 36-51.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2005. "The Liberian Civil War: New War/Old War?" *Global Society* 19 (1): 73-88.
- Bøås, Morten and Mats Utas. 2014. "The Political Landscape of Postwar Liberia: Reflections on National Reconciliation and Elections." *Africa Today* 60 (4): 47-65.
- Bøås, Morten and Kevin C. Dunn. 2013. *Politics of Origin in Africa: Autochthony, Citizenship and Conflict*. London: Zed Books.

- Chelphi-den Hamer, Magali. 2011. *Militarized Youths in Western Côte d'Ivoire: Local Processes of Mobilization, Demobilization and Related Humanitarian Interventions (2002-2007)*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.
- Chauveau, Jean-Pierre and Jean-Philippe Colin. 2010. "Customary Transfers and Land Sales in Côte d'Ivoire: Revisiting the Embeddedness Issue." *Africa* 80 (1) 81-103.
- Chauveau Jean-Pierre and Paul Richards. 2008. "West African Insurgencies in Agrarian Perspective: Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone Compared." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8 (4): 515-552.
- Chauveau, Jean-Pierre, Jean-Philippe Colin, Jean-Pierre Jacob, Philippe Lavigne Deville, and Pierre-Yves Le Meur. 2006. *Changes in Land Access and Governance in West Africa: Markets, Social Mediations and Public Policies*. Nottingham U.K.: Russell Press.
- Chauveau, Jean-Pierre. 2006. "How does an Institution Evolve? Land, Politics, Intergenerational Relations and the Institution of the *Tutorat* amongst Autochthones and Immigrants (Gaban region, Côte d'Ivoire)." In *Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa*, edited by R. Kuba and C. Lentz, 213-240. Leiden: Brill.
- Colin, Jean-Philippe, Georges Kouamé and Débégoun Soro. 2007. "Outside the Autochthon-migrant Configuration: Access to Land, Land Conflicts and Inter-ethnic Relationships in a Former Pioneer Area of Lower Côte d'Ivoire." *Journal of Modern Africa Studies* 45 (1): 33-59.
- Cutolo, Armando. 2010. "Modernity, Autochthony and the Ivorian Nation: The End of a Century in Côte d'Ivoire." *Africa* 80 (4): 527-552.
- Fairhead, James. 2010. "Kouankan and the Guinea-Liberian Border." In *The Powerful Presence of the Past: Integration and Conflict*, edited by Jacqueline Knörr and Wilson Trajano Filho, 75-99. Leiden: Brill.
- Geschiere, Peter. 2009. *Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship and Exclusion in Africa and Europe*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Geschiere, Peter and Stephen Jackson. 2006. "Autochthony and the Crisis of Citizenship: Democratization, Decentralization and the Politics of Belonging." *African Studies Review* 49 (2): 1-7.
- Hammar, Amanda, ed. 2014. *Displacement Economies in Africa- Paradoxes of Crisis and Creativity*. London: Zed Books.
- Hammar, Amanda and Graeme Rodgers. 2008. "Introduction: Notes on Political Economies of Displacement in Southern Africa." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 26 (4): 355-370.

- Holsoe, Svend E. and Joseph J. Laurer. 1976. "Who are the Krahn/Gueré and the Gio/Yacouba? Ethnic Identification along the Liberia – Ivory Coast border." *African Studies Review* 19 (1): 139-149.
- Human Rights Watch. 2003. "The Regional Crisis and Human Rights Abuses in West Africa." New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Højbjerg, Christian K. 2007. *Resisting State Iconoclasm among the Loma of Guinea*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
- International Crisis Group. 2003. "Liberia: Security Challenges." Brussels: ICG.
- Jackson, Stephen. 2006. "Sons of Which Soil? The Language and Politics of Autochthony in Eastern DR Congo." *African Studies Review* 49 (2): 95-123.
- Kibreab, Gaim. 2004. "Pulling the Wool over the Eyes of the Strangers: Refugee Deceit and Trickery in Institutionalized Settings." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 17 (1): 1-26.
- Kopytoff, Igor. 1987. "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture" In *The African Frontier: the Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, edited by Igor Kopytoff, 3-84. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Kuba, Richard and Carola Lentz, eds. 2006. *Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa*. Leiden: Brill.
- Ménard, Anaïs. 2017. "Interpreting Conflict and Integration through the Reciprocity Lens: Mobility and Settlement in a Historical Perspective on the Sierra Leonean Coast." *Social Identities* 23 (4): 413-429.
- McEvoy, Frederick D. 1979. "Understanding Ethnic Realities among the Grebo and Kru Peoples of West Africa." *Africa* 47 (1): 62-80.
- McGovern, Mike. 2011. *Making War in Côte d'Ivoire*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Murphy, William P and Bledsoe, Caroline H. 1987. "Territory and Matrilineal Kinship in the History of a Kpelle Chiefdom" In *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, edited by Igor Kopytoff, 121-147. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Murphy, William P. 1980. "Secret Knowledge as Property and Power in Kpelle society: Elder Versus Youth." *Africa* 50: 193-207.
- Peil, Margaret. 1979. "Host Reactions: Aliens in Ghana." in *Strangers in African Societies*, edited by W.A. Shack and E.P. Skinner, 123-141. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Richards, Paul. 2005. "To Fight or to Farm? Agrarian Dimensions of the Mano River Conflict (Liberia and Sierra Leone)." *African Affairs* 104 (417): 571-590.

- Richards, Paul, Steven Archibald, Beverley Bruce, Watta Modad, Edvard Mulbah and James Vincent. 2005. "Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-war Rapid Social Assessment." Washington DC: UNDP/World Bank.
- Sakti, Victoria K. 2017. "Im/mobile Subjects: Identity, Conflict and Emotion Work among East Timorese Meto Diaspora." *Social Identities* 23 (4): 462-477.
- Shack, William A. 1979. "Introduction." In *Strangers in African Societies*, edited by W.A. Shack and E.P. Skinner, 1-20. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Shack William A. and Elliot P. Skinner. 1979. *Strangers in African Societies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Shaw, Rosalind. 2002. *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Skinner, Elliot P. 1963. "Strangers in West African Societies." *International African Institute* 33 (4): 307-320.
- UNHCR. 2016. "Liberia Update" <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/53542>
- Werker, Eric D. 2007. "Refugee camp economies." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20 (3): 461-479.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Even if some of them may have been more willing to return to Côte d'Ivoire, this was not possible, owing to the Ebola outbreak in Liberia. The government of Côte d'Ivoire closed the border from August 2014 to April 2015 and policed it quite effectively (see BBC 2014).

<sup>2</sup> The Mano River Basin refers to the states of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

<sup>3</sup> The research we carried out in Grand Gedeh, together with colleges from the University of Liberia, is part of a larger project on the "Economic Conditions of Displacement" financed by the Norwegian Research Council.

<sup>4</sup> The name of this "institution" varies between different counties and communities, but the practice is by and large the same across Liberia as well as in Côte d'Ivoire.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, in practice this was less often the case, as people locked into this position had constantly tried to renegotiate their relationship with host communities, either through economic arrangements (as traders having the possibility to offer credit) or through more violent means. See for example Mike McGovern (2011:73) who states that Yves Person's three volume tome on Samory Toure could be summed-up in the following sentence: "Samory was the product of a collective decision by the Mande-speakers living along the forest-Savannah frontier to renege on their bargain with their hosts and add political domination to their economic predominance."



---

**Table 1 Age and sex distribution of Ivorian refugees**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>0-14</b>	48	52	835
<b>15-29</b>	56	44	380
<b>30-44</b>	53	47	251
<b>45-59</b>	49	51	137
<b>60 +</b>	50	50	52
<b>Total</b>	51	49	1,655

---

**Table 2 Household head's livelihood activity before displacement**

<b>Livelihood activity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Farming</b>	181	45
<b>Agribusiness</b>	24	6
<b>Public sector</b>	36	9
<b>Trade</b>	78	20
<b>Student</b>	52	13
<b>Other</b>	21	5
<b>Unemployed</b>	7	2
<b>Total</b>	399	100.0

---

**Table 3 Relationship with the first contact person**

<b>Contact person is....</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>A family member</b>	33	30
<b>A distant relative</b>	8	7
<b>A friend</b>	19	17
<b>Other refugees from Côte d'Ivoire</b>	17	15
<b>They were Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire</b>	30	27
<b>Other</b>	5	4
<b>Total</b>	112	100

---

**Table 4 Who provided the land that your household uses for cultivation?**

<b>Land for cultivation provided by</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Village chief</b>	16	13
<b>The person I know</b>	57	48
<b>A local caretaker person</b>	33	28
<b>Others</b>	14	11
<b>Total</b>	120	100

---

**Table 5 Perceptions of Ivorian refugees**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b>Neither (%)</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Strongly agree (%)</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
<b>We were welcomed by the local community when we arrived initially</b>	8	8	11	65	8	392
<b>We are perceived as having stayed too long</b>	7	29	22	40	2	389
<b>We are a burden to the local community</b>	11	40	16	29	4	392