



International Boundary Study

No. 131 – December 15, 1972

Guinea – Liberia Boundary

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GUINEA – LIBERIA BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Guinea–Liberia boundary is approximately 350 miles long. It follows numerous straight-line segments and the Liberian bank of various rivers including the Makona, Nianda, and Mani. The straight-line segments are demarcated by pillars or monuments.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1822, the first of a number of groups of freed slaves to be settled by United States colonization societies on the west coast of Africa was landed at the present site of Monrovia in the territory later named Liberia. Several colonization settlements joined with Liberia in 1838 to form the Commonwealth of Liberia which became an independent republic in 1847 with a constitution modeled after that of the United States. The colonization settlement adjacent to the Cavalla (Cavally) river, known as the African State of Maryland, was annexed by the Republic of Liberia in 1857, and Liberian administration was gradually extended inland from the coastal areas.

In 1891 the French territory of Les Rivières du Sud was separated administratively from Senegal and a governor was assigned to the colony. Two years later the name of the colony was changed to French Guinea, and Ivory Coast and Dahomey, both formerly attached to Les Rivières du Sud, were afforded their own colonial governments. On June 16, 1895, a decree constituted the Government of French West Africa, and placed French Guinea under the Governor of Senegal as *ex officio* governor general. The office of governor general was separated from the governorship of Senegal in 1902, and the capital of French West Africa was moved from Saint-Louis to Dakar.

A Franco–Liberian convention of December 8, 1892, delimited a boundary between the possessions of France (Ivory Coast and French Guinea) and Liberia inland from the mouth of the Cavalla to the tripoint with Sierra Leone. To the north of the present Guinea–Liberia boundary, the 1892 boundary consisted of two straight-line segments: (1) a line extending northward from the point of intersection of the 7th parallel north and the 10th meridian west of Paris¹ to the point of intersection of the parallel based on the latitude of Timbekundu (approximately 9°06'N.) and the 11th meridian west of Paris and (2) a line extending westward along the parallel of Timbekundu from the 11th meridian west of Paris to the 13th meridian west of Paris.²

A Franco–Liberian agreement of September 18, 1907, stated that it was physically impossible to apply the theoretical lines of the 1892 convention and that natural topographical lines should be used as much as possible. Providing for future detailed delimitation, the agreement completely redrew the French Guinea–Liberia boundary and

¹ The Greenwich longitude of the Paris prime meridian is approximately 2°20'E.

² An Anglo–French treaty of June 26, 1891, previously had indicated that the boundary between the spheres of influence (Sierra Leone and French Guinea) of the United Kingdom and France followed the 13th meridian west of Paris from the 10th parallel southward to Timbekundu.

transferred a large strip of Liberian territory to French Guinea eastward from the 13th meridian west of Paris³ to the Nimba Range. Article I of the agreement delimits this sector of the boundary as follows:

1. The left bank of the Makona River, from the point where that river enters Sierra Leone to a point to be determined, approximately five kilometers south of Bofosso;
2. A line beginning with the last-mentioned point and extending southeastward, leaving to the north the following villages: Koutoumai, Kissi-Kouroumai, Soundebou, N'Zapa [Nzappa], N'Zebela, Koiama [Koyama] and Banguedou [Bangoueta], and extending to a source of the Nuon River....

In implementation of the 1907 agreement, a mixed commission delimited the boundary as approved by a Franco–Liberian agreement of January 13, 1911. The boundary followed the Liberian bank of specified rivers which were connected by line segments. Conflicting claims to territory in the Zinta (Zigida) area continued after the agreement because of contradictory measurements of the meridian of 11°50'W. of Paris (9°30'W. of Greenwich). An Anglo–Liberian convention of January 21, 1911, transferred the Liberian Kailahan area, east of the 1903 meridian between the Makona and Mauwa rivers, to Sierra Leone; this moved the tripoint with French Guinea eastward to the junction of the left bank of the Makona and the center of the Dundugbia.

In accordance with the boundary delimited by the agreement of January 13, 1911, a Franco–Liberian commission surveyed and demarcated the French Guinea–Liberia boundary between 1926 and 1929. The decisions of the commission were included in a series of proces verbaux, but the composite work of the commission was never published in a formal treaty by the governments of the respective states.

The commission in several proces verbaux agreed to the use of the mid-channel or thalweg for river boundaries rather than the Liberian bank, but the French delegation later withdrew its approval and insisted on strict interpretation of the 1911 agreement. Although the alignment of the boundary is known from the survey of the commission, some uncertainty exists on stream terminology because the rivers are often known by several names or different rivers have the same name. A proces verbal of October 30, 1926, arranged for an exchange of territories with the Zigida area becoming a part of Liberia and the Mani River Loop (north of the parallel of 7°41'44.7"N.) being transferred to French Guinea.

Following World War II, French Guinea became an overseas territory and a member of the French Union. On October 2, 1958, the Republic of Guinea emerged as the first entity of former French West Africa to become independent.

III. ALIGNMENT

³ An Anglo–Liberian proces verbal of June 25, 1903, defined the 13th meridian west of Paris as 10°39'46. 5"W. of Greenwich.

For purposes of this study, the alignment of the boundary in the river sectors is considered to follow the Liberian bank in accordance with the Franco–Liberian agreement of January 13, 1911. Available information indicates that the Guinea–Liberia boundary as surveyed and demarcated by the mixed Franco–Liberian commission of 1926–9 eastward from the Sierra Leone tripoint at the junction of the left bank of the Makona and the center of the Dundugbia is as follows:

1. The Makona upstream to its junction with the Sodia, and the Sodia upstream to its source at Monument A.
2. A line eastward from Monument A for about 205 meters to Monument B at the source of the Galayea.
3. The Galayea downstream to its junction with the Baisia, and the Baisia downstream to its junction with the Nedia.
4. The Nedia downstream to its junction with the Mossakoridia, and the Mossakoridia upstream to Monument C between its source and that of the Bakiteboya (Botikebeia), which are within 50 meters of each other.
5. The Bakiteboya downstream to Monument D about 70 meters north of the Voinjama–Sakonomi road crossing.
6. A line eastward from Monument D for about 360 meters to Monument E on the right bank of the Zeliba (Seriba) at approximately 125 meters northeast of the Voinjama–Sakonomi road crossing.
7. The Zeliba upstream to its junction with the Lokazia, and the Lokazia upstream to its source at Monument F.
8. A line northward from Monument F to Monument G on Diaoula Mountain, and then a series of lines from Monument G passing successively through Monuments H, I, J, K and L to the source of the Boedia.
9. The Boedia downstream to its junction with the Nienteko, and the Nienteko upstream to its source at Monument M.
10. A line eastward from Monument M for about 420 meters to Monument N on Mount Seriba, and then a line southeastward from Monument N for about 2,222 meters to Monument O on the Maidairo–Sakonomai road.
11. A line southeastward from Monument O for about 1,975 meters to Monument P at the source of the Womba (Ouoma), and the Womba downstream to its junction with the Tedia.
12. The Tedia upstream to Monument Q on its left bank about 1,140 meters from the junction of the Tedia and Tediako at an azimuth of 194°, and then a line

southeastward from Monument Q for about 1,120 meters to Monument R on the summit of Mount Bouadou-Fara.

13. A series of lines from Monument R for about 4,605 meters passing successively through Monuments S, T, U, and V to the Lousoudia river 700 meters from Niaorassou.
14. The Lousoudia downstream to its junction with the Loffa, and the Loffa downstream to its junction with the Lakpalaya.
15. The Lakpalaya to its source at Monument W, and then a line southward from Monument W for about 188 meters to Monument X on the summit of Mount Bidi.
16. A line southward from Monument X for about 402 meters to Monument Y at the source of the Lawa (Laoua), and the Laoua downstream to its junction with the Bourou.
17. The Bourou upstream to a point at about 9°27'45"W.,⁴ and then a line south-southeastward from the point on the Bourou to the headwaters of the Gabaye river at approximately 8°07'47"N. and 9°27'10"W.
18. The Gabaye downstream to its junction with the Via (Ve), and the Via upstream to its junction with the Uwenziye.
19. The Uwenziye upstream to its source on Mount Gabigisi, and then a line to the summit of Mount Gabigisi.
20. A line from the summit of Mount Gabigisi to the source of the Mounie (Mourie) on its lower slopes, and the Mounie downstream to its junction with the Niandi (Diani).⁵
21. The Niandi downstream to its junction with the Oule at Ile Tinsou, and the Oule upstream to its junction with the Djoule (Diaoule).
22. The Djoule upstream to the so-called Lagbarra–Penata Monument which is located between its source and that of the Seya (Se Ya), and the Seya downstream to its junction with the Neye (Nie).
23. The Neye downstream to its junction with the Mani, and the Mani upstream to the parallel of 7°41'44.7"N.
24. The parallel of 7°41'44.7"N.⁶ eastward to the Mani which forms a northward-

⁴ The point on the Bourou apparently is marked by a monument designated as Roman Numeral I by the Daves–Neverierre Zinta (Zigida) Region Survey of 1921–22.

⁵ The Niandi (Diani) is known as the Saint Paul in its lower course through Liberia.

⁶ This parallel, from the left bank of the Mani on the west to the left bank on the east, is demarcated by 12 monuments. The first and 12th monuments are 13,530.2 meters apart.

bending arc in this sector of its course, and the Mani upstream to its source on Guereto (mount).

25. A straight line from Guereto to the Ivory Coast tripoint on Mount Nuon⁷ in the Nimba Range.

DOCUMENTATION

1. Convention between the Government of France and the Republic of Liberia. December 8, 1892. British and Foreign State Papers (BFSP), Vol. 85 (1892–3), pp. 639-41.
2. Agreement between France and Liberia defining the Boundaries between French West Africa and Liberia. Signed at Paris, September 18, 1907 [Ratifications exchanged at Paris, February 28, 1908]. BFSP Vol. 101 (1907–8), pp. 1013–5 (French).
3. Agreement between France and Liberia for the Delimitation of the Frontier between the Possessions of the two Countries. Signed at Paris, January 13, 1911. BFSP Vol. 107 (1914, Part 1) pp. 797–800 (French).

⁷ The tripoint at Mount Nuon is located in an area of high-grade iron ore deposits which have been mined in Liberia since 1963. Mount Nuon also is the source of the Nuon river which demarcates the northern sector of the Ivory Coast–Liberia boundary.

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