

At a remote runway, Clayton exited his bush plane next to a pile of 20,000 human skulls. Red ants emerged from beneath his feet. They had been feeding on human flesh. Near the pile a man stood nervously. Finally he confesses, "You know, we ate people during this war; not because we were hungry, but because we were scared, and to eat your enemy makes you strong." Blood stains the altar of a nearby church where young children were forced to scream, "There is no God," just before their throats were slit. A traumatized woman tells about soldiers at road blocks who after placing bets on the sex of unborn children would slice open the expectant mothers to see who'd won.

## History

Clayton's runway experience happened in 1992. Most of Liberia's ethnic groups migrated to this tropical region from other parts of Africa in the 1400s. In 1822 an American charity established Liberia as a colony of refuge for freed American slaves. In 1847 these settlers proclaimed independence, and Liberia became Africa's first sovereign nation. Immigrants from America dominated the democratic government until a coup in 1980. The new military government became corrupt and repressed the Mano and Dan tribes. In 1989 Charles Taylor started a rebellion which led to intertribal atrocities and his struggle for power against three enemies: 1.) forces supported by the Economic Community of West African States (ECWAS), 2.) the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia sponsored by Sierra Leone, and 3.) a remnant loyal to the ousted President Samuel Doe. Charles Taylor emerged victorious in 1996, and he won rigged presidential elections in 1997, but the struggle for power and intertribal atrocities have continued.

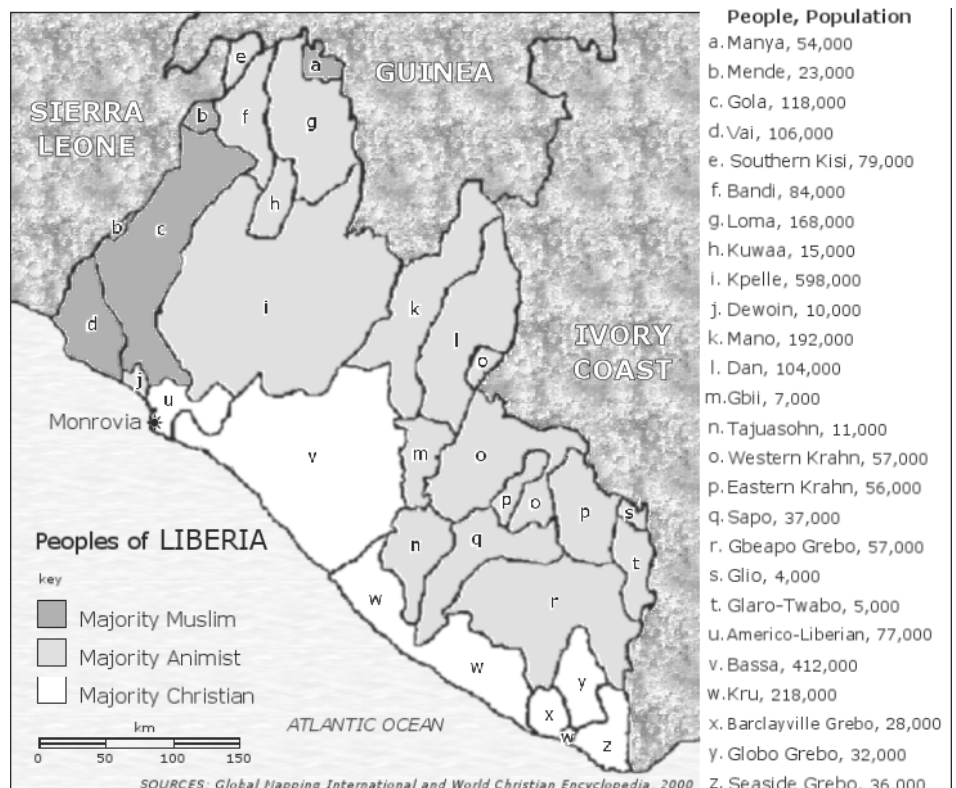
## Religions

Religious diversity complements Liberia's ethnic diversity. Tribal religions known collectively as Animism are prominent throughout nearly all of the tribes. These hold primary allegiance for 43% of the population. In Animism, supernatural elements in a spirit world "animate" all of the forces, objects, and cause and effects that we experience in the natural world. Practitioners seek safety, power, and blessing by appeasing or manipulating a supernatural system that they perceive undergirds physical reality. Features of animism include: witch doctors (shaman), charms, magic potions, spells, ritual dances, divination, fortune telling, necromancy, ancestor veneration, secret societies, superstitions, taboos, animal sacrifices, and sometimes even cannibalism. The Loma have a secret society called Poro for men and one called Sande for women.

Islam grips 16% of Liberians and predominates in the northwest. Missionaries of the Ahmadiya sect have been coming from Egypt and Pakistan.

## Peoples

Liberia's warring factions generally align themselves by ethnicity. Nearly 20 different ethnic groups speak over 30 different languages which can be grouped into three language families: 1.) Mande (47%), traced to the upper Nile region, 2.) Kru (41%), traced to Northwest Africa, and 3.) West Atlantic (8%), native to this coast. Immigrants from America comprise less than 4% of the population. Most of these live in Monrovia and in other cities along the coast. The Kpelle, Mano, Loma, Vai, Bandi, and Mandingo are major Mande tribes. The Bassa, Grebo, Kru, and Krahn are the major Kru tribes. The Kissi and Gola are the main West Atlantic tribes. Over one million of Liberia's 3.2 million people live in the capital, Monrovia, and half of these are refugees, many of whom are from Sierra Leone. Around 700,000 Liberians live as refugees in other countries.



Christianity claims 40% and thrives more along the coast than in the interior. Nearly half of Liberia's professing Christians belong to churches that are not affiliated with any denominations outside of Liberia. Also, nearly half the

professing Christians are either Pentecostal, Charismatic, or Evangelical. Prominent internationally affiliated Christians in Liberia include Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans.

## Ministry

Liberia's Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience, expression, and worship. It creates opportunity for all religions.

### Bible Translation

Besides English, the whole Bible is available in only one other native Liberian language – Mende, but only half of Liberians can speak English, and, for most of them, English is not their native language.

### The JESUS Film

Film showing teams move around freely. So far over 3 million people have seen this cinema version of the Gospel of Luke.

### Christian Broadcasting

Christian radio programming airs on local stations in many Liberian languages.

### Christian Education

Many churches and denominations run educational institutions. These include everything from primary and secondary schools to seminaries and nursing schools.

### Relief and Development

Ravaged by over a decade of civil war, Liberia needs the kind of relief and development that will facilitate spiritual changes necessary for widespread forgiveness and reconciliation.

| Agency  | Ministry  | Contact Information                               |
|---|---|---|
| ACCTS   | Facilitates Christian Military Fellowships.   | www.accts.org<br>1-303-985-8808                   |
| Assoc. of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE)                    | Partners with Liberian Baptist churches. Sends medical workers and aid, school teachers, seminary professors, agri-business professionals, and Bible college teachers.                        | www.abwe.org<br>1-717-774-4400                    |
| Baptist Mid Missions (BMM)  | Sponsors Baptist churches, Bible institutes, day schools, and literacy programs.  | www.bmm.org/fields/Liberia.html<br>1-440-826-3930 |
| Baptist International Missions Inc. (BIMI)                        | Sponsors Baptist churches, building projects, and a Bible institute.  | www.bimi.org<br>1-423-344-5050                    |
| Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)                     | Sends dentists, health care workers, medical doctors, medical technicians, nurses, nurse trainers, and pharmacists in its Global Health Ministries branch.                                    | www.elca.org/dgm/globalhealth<br>1-800-638-3522   |
| Foursquare Missions International (FMI)                           | Sponsors Foursquare churches. Funds scholarships for education of church leaders.   | http://fmi.foursquare.org<br>1-888-635-4234       |
| Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)                             | Sponsors Lutheran churches, primary schools, theological education and leadership training, curriculum development, Bible translation, and literacy programs.                                 | www.lcms.org<br>1-800-433-3954                    |
| Samaritan's Purse   | Partners with Liberian churches. Sponsors elementary education, counseling, vocational training, and evangelism. Facilitates refugee resettlement and rehabilitation. Sends medical supplies. | www.samaritan.org<br>1-828-262-1980               |
| SIM International   | Facilitates church planting, education, health care, relief and development, and multi-media development.   | www.christianmissions.net<br>1-800-521-6449       |
| Southern Baptist Convention International Mission Board (SBC-IMB) | Sponsors Baptist churches. Supports evangelists, agricultural projects, home industries, schools and seminaries. Sends humanitarian aid.  | www.imb.org<br>1-800-999-3113                     |
| WEC International   | Sends evangelists and church planters.  | www.wec-int.org<br>1-215-646-2322                 |
| World Relief  | Partners with the Assoc. of Evangelicals of Liberia to provide food, water, sanitation, trauma counseling, and child protection in refugee resettlement programs.                             | www.wr.org<br>1-443-451-1900                      |
| Wycliffe International  | Sends and supports Bible translators and literacy programs  | www.wycliffe.org<br>1-800-992-5433                |