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Geza Teleki and the Emergence of Sierra Leone's Wildlife Conservation Movement

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Abstract: This paper details Geza Teleki's contributions in the development of a wildlife conservation movement in Sierra Leone in the late 1970s to early 1980s. Teleki, a primatologist researcher and an animal rights activist, arrived in Sierra Leone in 1979 to find an inactive government wildlife conservation program and a thriving primate export sector. Shocked by what he saw, he worked with local and international environmentalists to build a wildlife conservationist movement in Sierra Leone. From capricious negotiations with presidential dictator Siaka Stevens to theurgical conflicts with local communities, Teleki helped to lay the groundwork for transforming wildlife conservation in the small West African nation. In this paper, I explore these contributions, reconstructing Teleki's position as a historical actor in Sierra Leone as well as providing some reflection on how the legacy of his work has been inscribed upon Sierra Leone's contemporary wildlife conservation landscape.

Key Words: Africa, history, Geza Teleki, Outamba-Kilimi National Park, Sierra Leone, wildlife conservation

Introduction

After a long and distinguished career of primatological research, environmental conservation and animal rights activism, Dr Geza Teleki passed away on 7 January 2014. One of his more notable accomplishments came from his work in the West African country of Sierra Leone in the late 1970s to early 1980s. During this period, he helped to form a nascent Sierra Leonean wildlife conservation movement, and subsequently became a central figure in eliminating the country's chimpanzee export trade as well as being a driving force behind the establishment of its first national park. This work included Teleki negotiating directly with the country's president, a (sometimes conflictive) working relationship with forest-edge village communities, as well as countering individuals in the wildlife export trade. Despite this prominent role, however, and although a number of histories of wildlife conservation have been written on Sierra Leone (for example, Jones 1998; Oates 1999), there has been surprisingly little analysis of Teleki's time there and how the broader legacy of his work has been inscribed upon Sierra Leone's contemporary wildlife conservation landscape and movement. In this paper, I address this gap, reconstructing Teleki's position as a historical actor in Sierra Leone as well as providing some reflections on his broader influence.

To do this, I draw data from a number of interviews with wildlife conservation actors in Sierra Leone, including one with Geza Teleki in 2012, and with a number of staff of Sierra Leone's Outamba-Kilimi National Park, who worked with Teleki in the 1980s. I also draw upon archival data which was collected from Sierra Leone (i.e., Fourah Bay College Library, Sierra Leone National Archives, Njala University College Library, the Outamba-Kilimi Office) and the United Kingdom (British Library, the UK National Archives, and the Harrison Institute), as well from private collections and online sites. I also made field visits to relevant conservation sites across Sierra Leone, including the Outamba-Kilmi National Park, where Teleki was based for much of his time in Sierra Leone. This data was collected in 2011 and 2012.

The remainder of this article is divided into three sections. The first provides a history of wildlife conservation in Sierra Leone prior to Teleki's arrival, contextualizing the political economy and challenges that Teleki encountered upon arriving in the late 1970s. The subsequent section provides a history of Teleki's time in Sierra Leone, detailing his efforts in curtailing wildlife exports and establishing Outamba-Kilimi

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National Park. The final section of the article provides some reflection on Teleki's legacy in Sierra Leone.

Early Wildlife Conservation in Sierra Leone

Although wildlife conservation legislation had been passed as early as 1901 in Sierra Leone, the British Colonial government that administered Sierra Leone until 1961 made only limited efforts to enact wildlife conservation programs across the country (Jones 1998; Munro 2015). Early on, the colonial government largely considered it to be a peripheral issue and tended to assume there were no major threats that would cause a significant decline in wildlife population numbers (Granville 1931; Stanley 1933a, 1933b; Stocks 1931). This situation changed marginally towards the end of the colonial period, and a Committee for the Preservation of Flora and Fauna was set up in 1960 (Hill, 1963). Subsequently, after the country's independence, the work of this committee translated in 1967 into the establishment of a Wildlife Branch under the Forestry Department and the passing of the *Wildlife Conservation Act* in 1972 (Lowes 1970; Jones 1988).

Despite these administrative and legislative achievements, there was limited enthusiasm within the Government for wildlife conservation initiatives during this period (Tuboku-Metzger 1979; Jones 1998). Sierra Leone at the time was being run by the authoritarian government of President Siaka Stevens (the country's effective head of state from 1967 until 1985), who governed through a system of acute patrimonialism, whereby key influential individuals were appeased with strategic favors and payments (Bøås 2001; Richards 1996). In this context, a 'shadow state' emerged, revolving predominantly around Sierra Leone's rich mineral resource extraction, with only a small elite minority ever profiting substantially from it (Reno 1995).

The implications of this for conservation were that forests were largely viewed as sources of timber and revenue, and as such the establishment of controversial large-scale logging concessions was common (Tuboku-Metzger 1983; Munro and Hiemstra-van der Horst 2011; Hiemstra-van der Horst *et al.* 2011). Concomitantly, the Forestry Department had more of an interest in wildlife's commercial potential, rather than its overall protection. Joshua Sawyerr (the head of the Department from 1963 to 1975), openly supported foreign hunters coming to Sierra Leone: "We aren't bothered by the hunter from abroad, who does it for sport. He shoots one elephant, for which he will pay in hard currency and then go away. It's [sic] our own people who are the danger" (Sawyerr cited in: FAO Release, 1971); while Musa Feika (Sawyerr's successor, who headed the Department until 1983) personally signed off and approved wildlife export shipments, even after the activity was officially banned (Anonymous 1983b, 1986; Peterson and Goodall 1993). As Grainger and Konteh (2007, p.54) noted, during the Siaka Stevens' era, Forestry Department operations became highly concentrated in the Head of the Forestry Department (i.e., Sawyerr and Feika), a figure tied by personalized neopatrimonial connections to the president, which ensured "that the Forestry [Department] literally spoke with a 'single voice' in policy formulation." Thus, Sawyerr and Feika were very much able set the tone for formal government wildlife conservation policy during the 1960s and 1970s.

This governmental emphasis on wildlife as a commercial commodity was perhaps unsurprising as the exportation and trade of animals, and chimpanzees in particular, had emerged as a lucrative enterprise in Sierra Leone. As early as the 1920s, Henry Trefflich, a famed animal dealer from New York, set up an animal export outpost in Freetown, where he then proceeded to export hundreds of chimpanzees, among other animals. One of Trefflich's biggest customers was NASA, with many Sierra Leonean chimpanzees reportedly being used in the Agency's flight testing programs (Trefflich and Anthony 1967). Building upon this early trade, during the 1950s two men emerged as the main agents of Sierra Leone's animal export trade: Suleiman Mansaray and Franz Sitter. Mansaray, a Sierra Leonean national, appears to have taken over Trefflich's old animal export business, while Sitter, originally an Austrian national, arrived in Sierra Leone sometime during the 1950s (Teleki 1980a). Sitter's history prior to his arrival has been the center of much debate, with a number of people alleging that he was a former Nazi who fled to Sierra Leone after the fall of the Third Reich (Peterson and Goodall 1993; McGreal 2014). Although this claim could never be fully substantiated, Sitter's unknown, potentially dubious, past helped in typecasting him as a prominent villain in the eyes of the wildlife conservation movement (see Peterson and Goodall 1993; McGreal 2014).

Mansaray specialized in birds, while Sitter specialized in reptiles, but both men dealt in primate exports which proved to be the most lucrative trade of all (Anonymous 1961; Teleki and Baldwin 1981). Teleki (1986), drawing upon government records, estimated that between them, Mansaray and Sitter exported around 2,000 chimpanzees during the 1970s alone (see also Teleki and Baldwin 1981). Most of them were destined for medical testing laboratories in the United States, meaning that the vast majority of chimpanzees used in medical testing during this period would have originated from Sierra Leone (Anonymous 1978; Peterson and Goodall 1993; Sawyerr 1963; Teleki 1986).

This vast trade, however, did not occur without opposition, and in 1976 Freetown resident Daphne Tuboku-Metzger, who had an interest in wildlife conservation since her school years (Tuboku-Metzger 1999), established Sierra Leone's first environmental NGO – the Sierra Leone Environment and Nature Conservation Association (SLENCA) (Anonymous 1977; Polunin and Curme 1997). The organization quickly succeeded in gaining a profile in the local and international media, and focused on curtailing the country's wildlife exports and setting up wildlife sanctuaries (Anonymous 1978; Tuboku-Metzger 1979, 1991). SLENCA had some early success in lobbying Siaka Stevens, with the President establishing a moratorium on chimpanzee exports in 1978. The declaration of the moratorium, however, proved to be largely symbolic, and within months of the export ban, eight

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Figure 1. Sierra Leonean chimpanzees seized at Amsterdam Airport in 1979 (Anonymous 1979).

chimpanzees shipped from Sierra Leone were confiscated at Schipol Airport in Amsterdam because of a lack of import permits (see Fig. 1). The chimpanzees had been shipped by Franz Sitter, and the incident ultimately helped to focus international attention on Sierra Leone's trade in wildlife exports, indirectly resulting in the commissioning of Teleki's first visit to Sierra Leone (Anonymous 1979; Teleki 1986).

Geza Teleki Arrives

Amid these growing international concerns surrounding the live animal trade, in 1979 Geza Teleki was asked by the United States' Government to provide advice on the trade of chimpanzees being imported into medical laboratories. Teleki had a background in primate protection activities. He sat on the board of the International Primate Protection League (IPPL), and had previously worked on chimpanzee conservation programs with Jane Goodall in East Africa. After some desk-based research, Teleki was surprised to find that almost all of the chimpanzees being used for medical testing in the US were not only coming from "one small country in West Africa," Sierra Leone, but also from one dealer, Franz Sitter (Teleki 1980a; Teleki pers. comm. 2012). He therefore proceeded to secure funds to finance a fact-finding mission, and travelled to Sierra Leone in late 1979, where he teamed up with Tuboku-Metzger and SLENCA to conduct a survey of the chimpanzee population in the country and to evaluate the impact of the primate export industry (Teleki pers. comm. 2012). The findings were designed to influence Sierra Leone's policy and feed into broader international campaigns for primate protection (Anonymous 1980, 1983).

Teleki's findings painted a dismal picture of wildlife conservation in Sierra Leone. From his surveys of the country's forest reserves he deduced that there were only 2,000 chimpanzees left in the country, and that the operations of Sitter, along with those of Mansaray, had decimated the primate population (Teleki, 1980a): "it was a very dismal experience in those six months. I must have travelled close to 10,000 kilometres around the country, I visited all the forest reserve areas, and found virtually nothing remaining" (Teleki pers. comm. 2012). Teleki took these findings to President Siaka Stevens, and a process of negotiation to improve the conservation of the country's wildlife ensued. Despite Siaka Stevens' notorious reputation as a dictator, Teleki reflected jovially on his conversations with the President:

> He was a character. He was an exploiter, but he did it with charm. You knew you were talking to a crook, but at the same time it was an enjoyable conversation. He used analogies all of the time. [I would say] "Don't you think you could shut down some of Sitter's operations because I can't raise money in America if you let all these chimps go." He would respond with something like "well Mr Teleki my bucket has a hole in it, and I need you to help me plug up the hole" … [thus I requested that he should] do what he could to shut down the export of wildlife from Sierra Leone, and in return he requested that I go back to the United States and raise money to set up the nation's first national park (Teleki pers. comm. 2012).

The negotiations thus reached a discreet compromise, Siaka Stevens would enforce an overall ban on animal exports, if Teleki was able to source overseas funding to make up for the loss in governmental revenue, and to finance the establishment of Sierra Leone's first national park. Critical for these negotiations was Sierra Leone's upcoming hosting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) conference in 1981/1982 (Kandeh 1999). Prior to the OAU conference, Stevens' government had been criticized both internationally and regionally for its human rights abuses, its undemocratic reforms, and overall poor governance. Stevens needed to construct some 'positive' aspect of his government to present during the conference. Teleki noted the fortunate timing of the event:

> His support was purely mercenary … For the upcoming OAU meeting, he badly needed to promote [his government] in a positive way, because he was constantly getting kicked for illegal diamond exports and other bad things going on in Sierra Leone at the time. So he wanted a flag that he could wave, so he could say, "we are not so bad. We are trying to make

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> a national park." So it was simply fortunate timing on my part (Teleki pers. comm. 2012).

Teleki continually appealed to Stevens' hubris to gain further support for the national park (Teleki pers. comm. 2012), as his letters to the President reveal:

> Perhaps the suggestion that Your Excellency makes the announcement of an Outamba-Kilimi National Park at the upcoming OAU conference would not be out of order, as I am sure that such a statement would be applauded by many world leaders (Teleki 1980c).

> I therefore urge Your Excellency to extend a total ban to exports of *all* wildlife until an adequate number of Game Reserves and National Parks have been established and developed with financial aid and expert advice from overseas organizations … I respectfully submit that Your Excellency considers a formal statement to this effect being made at the upcoming OAU conference in Freetown, as I am sure such a step would bring praise from the leaders of other African nations where wildlife is strictly protected, and also from overseas governments and conservation organizations backing wildlife protection throughout Africa (Teleki 1980b).

The national park was to be in the Tambakha Chiefdom in the northeast of Sierra Leone. It was the site that had been identified as promising as early as 1963, but progress in converting it into a national park had, for the previous decade and a half, been limited to a few pronouncements in the *Government Gazette* and the occasional survey (Teleki and Bangura 1981; McGiffin 1985b; Teleki 1986; Waugh 1986). Politically, it was a safe site for a national park as far as Siaka Stevens was concerned; the area had few people and low soil fertility and therefore limited large-scale agriculture potential (Teleki pers. comm 2012). It was also well outside the country's forestry and mining operations, and would not as such compromise government revenue—formal and informal (Teleki pers. comm. 2012). During the 1970s, the site of the proposed park had become the focus of Sitter's animal hunting and operations, while missionaries had also been involved in regular elephant hunting expeditions in the area (Teleki 1980a, 1986; McGiffin 1985a); and therefore, for Teleki, the "conservation of Outamba and Kilimi [was] a matter of life and death" (Anonymous 1980, p.14). Teleki continued to pressure Stevens and, using his international contacts, he obtained support from IUCN and World Wildlife Fund-US. WWF-US played a major role in Teleki's efforts to create the national park, particularly through its President, Russell Train, a Vice President, E. U. Curtis "Buff" Bohlen, and Russell Mittermeier, then Director of the organization's Primate Program. Bohlen was especially important to the project, and was responsible for allocating a large chunk of funding to it in those early days. Indeed during that period, Outamba-Kilimi was one of WWF-US's largest programs worldwide and the organization was likely the biggest supporter of Teleki's efforts at that time. Teleki subsequently acted as the director of the park between 1981 and 1984, and research on wildlife was initiated in the area during this period (for example, Harding and Harding 1982; Harding 1984; Zug 1987; Happel, 1988; Teleki *et al.* 1990).

Teleki, along with other wildlife conservation activists in Sierra Leone, appeared to have some success in influencing the President. Stevens approved all of the OKNP proposals and in 1982 a ban on all wildlife exports was (re)enacted (McGiffin 1985b). The latter had some effect, and the wildlife exporter Mansaray went out of business around this time. Sitter's operations, however, persevered, albeit on a much more limited scale (Teleki 1986; Teleki pers. comm. 2012). Teleki personally worked on establishing Outamba-Kilimi until 1984; however, he fell short of being able to have the area declared a national park. The main issue delaying its formation was the financing of the resettlement and compensation of several hundred people living within the Park's proposed boundaries (Harding and Harding 1982; Teleki 1986). While Geza recalled that he had a good relationship with most communities around the Park, he detailed that some hostile resistance emerged with one chief and his community that were to be moved as a result of a Park's gazettement: "He [The Chief] spent a great deal of time trying to use black magic on me and only stopped when I started using it on him, and then he became scared enough to not do it anymore" (Teleki pers. comm. 2012). Despite the conflict (and Teleki's somewhat controversial response to it), Teleki ascribed the lack of progress to the central government that did not want to provide any form of compensation (Teleki pers. comm. 2012).

Teleki left Sierra Leone in 1984 due to frustrations with local politics that slowed progress in achieving conservation outcomes, along with deterioration in his health.[1] He reflected that his wildlife conservation efforts would be best utilized at the international level: "When you get into a situation like I did in Sierra Leone, the people who do the nasty stuff always find another market. I found that it was kind of useless to do this at the source end" (Teleki pers. comm. 2012). He thus returned to the United States where he continued to work, campaigning to improve the lives of both wild and captive chimpanzees (Harding 2014).

Geza Teleki's Legacy in Sierra Leone

Teleki thus left Sierra Leone with chimpanzee exports still occurring and with Outamba-Kilimi still not formally declared a national park. His two main wildlife conservation

1 Teleki's experience of River Blindness (Onchocerciasis) infection, likely contracted during his time in the Outamaba-Kilimi region, was examined in the documentary series "Monsters Inside Me" (2009), produced by Animal Planet.

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Figure 2. Geza Teleki at Outamba-Kilimi National Park (OKNP) in 1983 The photo was published in the *Solarex Current* (1985) magazine for an article discussing Teleki's and OKNP's pioneering use of solar power at the main campsite (Anonymous 1985). Photograph provided by Geza Teleki in 2012.

objectives—ending animal exports and establishing a national park—although having progressed, had not been fully realized. Nevertheless, he had helped to provide a critical foundation for future conservation and, after a number of vicissitudes, both objectives would eventually be realized, thanks to wildlife conservationists that followed and built upon and expanded his work.

Teleki's attempt to eliminate the export of chimpanzees was mainly frustrated by the persistence of Franz Sitter's operations. In 1983, despite the animal export ban, Sitter shipped 50 Sierra Leone chimpanzees to a Japanese pharmaceutical company. It appears that the exports were allowed in exchange for an aid shipment of rice from the Japanese Government (Anonymous 1983b, 1986; Kabasawa 2011). When the Forestry Department's Chief Conservator of Forests, Musa Feika—who signed off on the export (and all previous animal exports for the past decade)—was challenged by the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), he reportedly replied that "to every rule their [sic] is an exception" (cited in Peterson and Goodall 1993, p.110).

In 1986, 20 infant chimpanzees were shipped from Sierra Leone to Vienna to be used for medical testing by the Austrian pharmaceutical company Immuno (McGreal 2014). Immuno had developed an interest in using Sierra Leonean chimpanzees as early as 1983, when it had formulated plans to set up a medical testing station there that would conduct research on 60–80 chimpanzees. The plan, it appears, was a strategy to circumvent Austria's recent signing of CITES, which would have stymied chimpanzee imports for Immuno's research station in Vienna. Klaus Bieber, the honorary Austrian consul in Freetown and former business partner of Franz Sitter, was a central figure in negotiating an agreement with the Sierra Leone Government on behalf of Immuno, with Sitter being earmarked as the potential supplier of chimpanzees (Anonymous 1983b; Heneson 1983). Later documents revealed that Immuno was planning to provide "expensive gifts", such as chandeliers and grand pianos to Siaka Stevens to, presumably, curry favor (McGreal 2014; Young 2014).[2] The Sierra Leonean Government initially responded positively to the proposal, although it was evidently mindful of the potential international reaction to the enterprise (Anonymous 1983b; Heneson 1983).

At the end of his time in Sierra Leone, Teleki blew the whistle on the Immuno scheme and sent the incriminating documents to the International Primate Protection League (IPPL) (McGreal 2014). IPPL's director Shirley McGreal subsequently published a letter to the editor in the *Journal of Medical Primatology* criticizing the initiative (McGreal 1983; see also Moor-Jankowski 1983). A large-scale campaign against Immuno was subsequently enacted by a variety of animal rights organizations (Anonymous 1983a, 1983b, 1986). Immuno reacted aggressively, suing McGreal and many others for libel. The case was finally settled in 1989, against Immuno, and was seen as a landmark case of upholding first amendments' rights in the United States, where 'letters to the editor' were enshrined to be part of the right to free speech (Anonymous 1990, 1993; Peterson and Goodall 1993; Mukerjee 1997). Immuno never established its research facility in Sierra Leone, finally giving up on the project in the early 1990s. Franz Sitter left Sierra Leone around the same time, and Sierra Leone's role as a global supplier of medical testing chimpanzees came to an end (Kabasawa 2009; Peterson and Goodall 1993). Teleki's campaign of eliminating Sierra Leone's chimpanzee export trade had finally succeeded, nearly a decade after he had left the country.

Chimpanzee conservation activities have continued in Sierra Leone. Most prominently with the setting up of the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary near Freetown in 1995, the overall objective of which has been to rescue and provide a sanctuary for chimpanzees in Sierra Leone, as well as raising awareness about their conservation (Kabasawa *et al.* 2008; Kabasawa 2009). While the live chimpanzee export trade had largely ceased during the early 1990s, there was still a widespread domestic trade in chimpanzees—notably in the form of pets for expatriate workers (for example, Peace Corps volunteers) living in Sierra Leone. Interestingly, Tacugama conducted a nation-wide chimpanzee survey in 2010 (Brncic *et al.* 2010), the first since Teleki's 1980 survey (Teleki and Baldwin 1981). The survey results indicated that the number of chimpanzees remaining in the wild exceeded 5,500, much higher than the 1,500–2,500 estimated by Teleki in 1980 (Brncic *et al.* 2010). While the difference in numbers between the surveys may well have resulted from methodological dissimilarities, it nevertheless indicates that, despite ongoing challenges, Sierra Leone is home to one of the largest chimpanzee populations in West Africa. This was a particularly positive result, given Teleki's dire predictions for the future of chimpanzees in Sierra Leone in 1980 (Teleki pers. comm. 2012). While the report noted a number of challenges in regards to chimpanzee

2 This is also discussed in the Austrian documentary *Unter Menschen/Redemption Possible* (2013), which focused on the plight of 40 chimpanzee survivors of the former Immuno laboratory in Austria.

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conservation (hunting, land-use change, human-animal conflicts), the large-scale commercial exportation of chimpanzees was notably no longer an issue in the country.

Progress on establishing Outamba-Kilimi as a national park was also slow. Before leaving Sierra Leone, Teleki set up a partnership between the Forestry Department and the United States volunteer program The Peace Corps (Teleki pers. comm. 2012). Thus, after Teleki left Sierra Leone, a string of Peace Corps volunteers were put in charge of managing the park and securing its formal government gazettement. Financing and the organization of the resettlement for communities within the Park, however, remained a perennial issue. The park's management and infrastructure were gradually upgraded throughout the 1980s; however, funding sources dried up with the outbreak of Sierra Leone's civil war in 1991. Peace Corps volunteer Pam Seiser, who was working in the park at the time, formally became a volunteer of the Forestry Department (as The Peace Corps had left the country) to try and finalize the park's establishment. After 12 months, in 1993, however, Seiser left due to a lack of funding and the escalation of the conflict (P. Seiser pers. comm. 2012). The national park was finally (formally) declared in 1995, thanks to funding from a newly established *coup d'état* government in Freetown; however, it was a Pyrrhic victory as rebels would later pass through the area destroying the park's infrastructure (Squire 2001; Manson and Knight 2013; OKNP staff pers. comm. 2012). For most of the 1990s, Sierra Leone was in a state of civil war, and this proved to be a major setback for wildlife conservation programs in the country (Oates 1999). During the latter part of the 1990s, field trips by NGOs and government officials outside of Freetown became near impossible to conduct, and all field conservation activities came to a halt (Munro and van der Horst 2015).

Nevertheless, when the civil war ended in 2001, conservation programs returned with gusto in Sierra Leone. Facilities have now been rebuilt in Outamba-Kilimi, and it has been formally reopened as a national park and tourist site. A recent guide book noting "If you've ever dreamed about waking up to the patter of monkey pee on your tent, … then the country's oldest national park is for you ... In Outamba, a sighting or two of hippos, chimps and monkeys is pretty much guaranteed" (Manson and Knight 2013; p.261). USAID and the US Forest Service program are also currently funding a large-scale conservation initiative in the Outamba-Kilimi National Park region (USAID and US Forestry Service 2012).

After years of challenges and setbacks, Teleki's opportunistic negotiations with Siaka Stevens in the early 1980s, finally resulted in the gazettement of the country's first national park. Conservationists have built upon this achievement and Sierra Leone now has two more national parks—the Gola Forest National Park created in 2010 in the east of the country, and the Western Area Peninsula National Park, created in 2013 near the capital city of Freetown.

Conclusion

Geza Teleki's time in Sierra Leone developing wildlife conservation initiatives, provides some interesting reflection for counterfactual histories. Would Outamba-Kilimi exist as a national park if Teleki had not been able to appeal to Siaka Stevens' hubris with the approaching OUA summit in Freetown? Would Immuno have succeeded in setting up a chimpanzee testing station in Sierra Leone if Geza Teleki had not blown the whistle early on regarding their escapades? Whatever, Teleki certainly left his mark in Sierra Leone, providing a critical foundation for future wildlife conservation activities in the small West African nation. From capricious negotiations with the presidential dictator Siaka Stevens to theurgical conflicts with local communities, besides affrays with wildlife exporters, he helped to carve out a nascent Sierra Leonean wildlife conservation movement.

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