Liberia forms, as a quick glance on a map will show, a part of the West Coast of tropical Africa, and specifically, Upper Guinea, as the coastal stretch from Sierra Leone down to Cameroon is called. In earlier times, before the establishment of the republic, the land was commonly known by the name of the Pepper Coast, after the Guinea pepper (*Amomum*...
granum paradisi Afzel) growing there.\textsuperscript{1} To the northwest it borders on the English colony of Sierra Leone, to the southeast on the Ivory Coast, whereas towards the interior its boundaries are marked on the map, but in reality have been determined with less than certainty.

The fairly straight coastline, running in a northwesterly—southeasterly direction, generally consists of a sandy beach, lying no more than a few meters above sea level, behind which runs a mostly quite low, often rocky rise. The coastline is interrupted by the many rivers coming down from the interior, as well as by several promontories which are quite similar to each other in shape and composition. All of these project into the sea in a westerly or northwesterly direction, and form more or less significant bights along their northern slopes, and which offer good anchorage for ships. The larger of these promontories have steep southern and western slopes, in front of which lie masses of rocks, on which the heavy surf breaks with a loud roar. Within the bights formed by each of these promontories, one regularly finds the mouths of several rivers crowded together (usually three).\textsuperscript{2}

Directly behind the mentioned rise, lies a broad belt of swampland, which is here and there interspersed with grass savannas of often considerable expanse. These swampy regions, lying at, or only slightly above sea level, and separated from the sea by only the rise of the beach, are, apart from the rivers, traversed at all angles by deep and often quite broad, quiet and black waterways, the so-called creeks. These often widen out into considerable expanses of water. At high tide, and at all times during the rainy season, these are largely filled with water; they are covered with dense Mangrove forests, which, through their aerial roots hanging down from the branches, offer the impression of a forest standing on millions of stilts.

Uplands forming peninsulas and islands are common in these swampy areas, and these are inhabited by natives, either throughout the year or at least during the dry season. Here, they cultivate their rice, prepare palm oil and engage in fishing.

As one progresses inland the land rises up steadily, the swamps and grass savannas disappear, and are replaced by fertile agricultural soils, consisting mainly of ferruginous clay, which is especially suited for the cultivation of coffee trees. This stretch of land, whose expanse is fairly flat

\textsuperscript{1} [\textit{Aframomum melegueta}, also known as Grains of Paradise or Melegueta pepper, will be discussed more extensively in Chapter IV, Volume 2.]

\textsuperscript{2} An attempt to explain this peculiarity is presented in Chapter XIV.