

IN THE HONORABLE SUPREME COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
SITTING IN ITS MARCH TERM, A.D. 2026

BEFORE HIS HONOR: YAMIE QUIQUI GBEISAY, SRCHIEF JUSTICE
BEFORE HER HONOR: JAMESETTA H. WOLOKOLIE..... ASSOCIATE JUSTICE
BEFORE HIS HONOR: YUSSIF D. KABA..... ASSOCIATE JUSTICE
BEFORE HER HONOR: CEATNEH D. CLINTON JOHNSON.....ASSOCIATE JUSTICE
BEFORE HIS HONOR: BOAKAI N. KANNEH.....ASSOCIATE JUSTICE

Sadia Kutu-Acquoi of the City of Monrovia, Liberia.....Appellant)

Versus

) APPEAL

Satta Sumo and Adekola Pedro of the City of Monrovia, Liberia)

.....Appellees)

GROWING OUT OF THE CASE:

Satta Sumo and Adekola Pedro of the City of Monrovia, Liberia)

.....Plaintiffs)

Versus

) ACTION OF EJECTMENT

Sadia Kutu-Acquoi of the City of Monrovia, Liberia...Defendant)

Heard: March 25, 2026

Decided: May 21, 2026

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE GBEISAY DELIVERED THE OPINION OF THE COURT

This appeal comes before us growing out of an action of ejectment filed by Satta Sumo and Pedro Adekola, appellees herein against Sadia Kutu-Acquoi, appellant herein before the Sixth Judicial Circuit Civil Law Court. The appellant herein is seeking to have us overturn the ruling of the lower court which adjudged them liable in ejectment to the appellees for a disputed parcel of land situated in the Township of Johnsonville, Montserrado County. The appellees have averred that they hold lawful ownership and the immediate right to possession, and that the appellant's occupancy of the property is without legal justification. The appellant on the other hand sharply contests the appellees' title claim and asserts an independent right to remain in possession of the said property.

Accordingly, this Court is called upon to determine the parties' competing claims for ownership and possession, to assess the sufficiency of the evidence presented, and to decide whether the appellee has met the burden required to displace the appellant from the premises.

For this Court to arrive at a fair and legally grounded conclusion it is incumbent upon us to restate the pertinent facts that provide the factual basis for the determination that follow.

The appellees, on October 22, 2021, filed an action of ejectment against the appellant for a parcel of land measuring one acre, located in the Township of Johnsonville, Montserrado, claiming that they purchased the land from the administrators of the Intestate Estate of Mabamgar Dirulu and Vorr, on November 4, 2016; that upon purchase of the said land, the appellant pleaded with them to permit her (appellant) to use portion of the land, particularly the front part to be molding her blocks while at the same time keeping watch of the property, to which request they reluctantly consented; that the appellant, while being on the land by their consent, surreptitiously and criminally negotiated with the same administrators that sold to them and asked them to sell the front portion of the land to her (appellant). That upon discovery of this and with the appellant claiming the said land, they (appellees) decided to file an action of ejectment to have the appellant ousted and ejected from their property and they further prayed the court to compel the appellant to pay Twenty-Five Thousand United States Dollars (US\$25,000.00) as damages for illegally, wrongfully and deliberately withholding their property.

The appellant on the other hand filed her answer and contended that she purchased the disputed property from the administrators of the Intestate Estate of Mabamgar Dirulu on July 4, 2014 and duly probated and registered the property; that assuming without admitting that the appellees purchased the property in 2016, why they did not probate or registered the said property; that the appellees deed is fraudulent and defective; that the appellees are on a spree to tarnish her reputation and are jealous because her business is making profit. The appellant then prayed the court to dismiss the said ejectment action and compel the appellees to pay her (appellant) Twenty-Five Thousand United States Dollars (US\$25,000.00) as damages for the pain and suffering that the appellees have caused her.

The appellees filed their reply, averring that the appellant's claims are false and misleading and her alleged title instrument is a product of fraud as the Intestate Estate from which the appellant is alleging to have gotten her administrator's deed in 2014 was never on sale in 2014; that the said administrators' signature that the appellant has on her purported deed are false and fake; that the purported letters of administration and court's decree of sale that the appellant attached to her answer are all products of fraud. The appellees further reiterated the averments in their complaint along with the prayer thereof.

After pleadings were rested and all other formalities followed, the appellant filed a motion for investigative survey, contending that her property is separate and distinct from the appellee's

property and as such an investigative survey will be the proper remedy to distinguish the parties' properties. The motion was assigned for hearing during which time the appellees lawyers interposed no objections thus ruling the matter to investigative survey.

The investigative survey team was set up and the Liberia Land Authority, upon request from the trial court, nominated MacArthur Z. Beyan to conduct the survey with each party naming a technical representative as observers to the investigative survey.

The survey was conducted and the report was filed with the court on August 10, 2022, with the conclusion that:

1. The defendant (appellant) was the first to acquire 1.0 lot out of the 4.0 lots.
2. The grantors wrongfully conveyed the defendant (Sadia) 1.0 lot to the plaintiffs (appellees).
3. Out of the total 4.0 lots of disputed land, the appellees (Satta) own 3.0 lots, while the appellant owns 1.0 lot.

Based on the outcome of the survey report, the report recommended that:

1. The court place the appellees in possession of 3.0 lots of land and also place the appellant in possession of 1.0 of land.
2. The parties should correct their deeds to conform with the current ground measurement.
3. The grantors must be held liable for wrongfully conveying 1.0 lots of land to the appellees.

The appellant objected to the said survey and filed its objections, but the records show that the objections to the said report were denied based upon the failure of the moving party to show up in court for the hearing of the motion and the case was then ruled to trial by a jury on May 10, 2023.

During the trial, the appellees produced three regular witnesses and two rebuttal witnesses, while the appellant produced three witnesses. After the conduct of the trial, the jury returned a unanimous verdict of liable against the appellant. The appellant excepted and thereafter announced an appeal to this Court.

The appellant thereafter filed a motion for new trial averring in her motion that verdict is against the weight of the evidence adduced at trial; that the jurors failed to pass on the fact of the testimonies given by the appellees' subpoenaed rebuttal witness, Issac Quaye, when he testified that the co-appellee is a Nigerian, thereby clearly admitting that the co-appellee is not legally qualified to own a land in Liberia; that the jurors erred when they failed to consider the fact that the Liberia Land Authority was established by an act of Legislature and given the authority to among other things, adjudicate all land disputes within the Republic of Liberia and when findings are made as to the facts which are supported by substantial evidence are binding and conclusive and may not be disputed or set aside by court in the absence of fraud or bias; that the National Archives was not the right entity in accordance with law to subpoena for its personnel to come and testify on land matters, as since the Land Authority establishment in October of 2016, it has been handed such authority. The appellant that prayed the court to reverse the jury's verdict and order a new trial.

The appellees filed their response to the appellant's motion for new trial averring that the said motion should be dismissed because the jury's verdict is consistent with the evidence adduced at trial; that the property in question is owned jointly by both parties who are husband and wife, and that the wife is a Bonafide Liberian citizen, born in Liberia to Liberian parents, and that the co-appellee (Adekola Pedro) is a naturalized Liberian citizen and can therefore own land in Liberia, but assuming without admitting that the co-appellee is ineligible to own land in Liberia, the issue is now moot as the appellant did not raise same or any citizenship issue in her answer or in her evidence presented, therefore, same cannot lie; that the Liberia Land Authority was ignored by both appellant and appellees because it (LLA) was clearly bias and conducted a flawed investigation because during the conduct of the survey, the Intestate Estate of Mabamgar Dirulu and Vorr by and thru its administrators appeared and testified in court that they did not sell any land to the appellant in 2012 and were clear when they told the court appointed surveyor that they were not appellant grantors but rather appellees grantors, but the chairman of the investigative survey, Mr. MacArthur Z. Beyan ignored all these assertions by the administrators of the intestate estate from which the appellant claimed to have purchased her land and conducted a flawed and bias survey and presented a fraudulent survey report that was never testified to or identified during the trial and never presented to the jury; therefore, the LLA personnel couldn't not have been subpoenaed. The appellees then prayed the court to deny and dismiss the said motion for new trial.

After arguments were heard on the motion for new trial, the trial court ruled denying the motion on grounds that the evidence adduced at trial was in harmony with the verdict returned by the jury.

Thereafter, the appellant excepted and announced an appeal to this Court of last resort. The appellant filed a seven-count bill of exceptions in which she primarily argued that: the trial judge erred when he allowed an employee of the National Archives to testify to the authenticity of her title instrument rather than allowing a personnel from the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) to testify; that the trial judge committed reversible error when he failed to take cognizance of the falsehood made by the appellees' second witness in person of Alvin S. Passawe who mentioned in his testimony that they (appellees) went to court without letters of administration and only later obtained one in the year 2015; that the trial judge erred when he neglected to instruct the jury on the important constitutional issue of land ownership in Liberia as provided by Article 22 (a) of the Constitution of Liberia, when the appellees witness in person of Issac Quaye testified that co-appellee is a Nigerian by nationality, an admission which automatically disqualified the co-appellee from owning land in Liberia.

After stating the salient facts of this case, we now proceed to examine the oral and documentary evidence presented by both parties and the facts gathered from the records to make a determination.

We start with the appellant's argument that the trial judge erred when he allowed testimony of an employee of the National Archives to testify rather than personnel from the Liberia Land Authority. We find it hard to agree with this argument of the appellant. The appellant alleged all through the trial that she purchased her land in July of 2014 and allegedly registered and probated it in the same year (2014), at that time, the Liberia Land Authority was not yet established and therefore, it was the National Archives that was in charge of land registration during the period prior to the creation of the Liberia Land Authority (LLA), therefore, if the appellant ever purchased a land and registered it in the year 2014, the custodian of said document and information would be the National Archives. The records show that a writ of subpoena decus tecum was issued by the trial court on April 6, 2023, to confirm the existence of the title instrument of the appellant. The National Archives through its Registrar of Legal Instruments, Mrs. Fanny M. Greaves, issued a communication to the court informing the court that after a diligent search within their records, there was no evidence of the existence of the appellant's deed within their records and that the tracking number on the appellant's deed was different from the page number on the deed. This search report effectively established that the appellant never registered any deed for the said property with the National Archives. This shows that if the appellant ever purchased the said land, it was not registered in accordance with our laws, thereby effectively making the said allegation of ownership void and illegitimate.

We move to the appellant's second major contention of the appellant as raised by her in her bill of exceptions. The appellant argued in her bill of exceptions that the trial judge err when he failed to instruct the jury as to the issue of land ownership in Liberia as provided for under Article 22 of the Constitution of Liberia and the law of admissibility as provided for in Civil Procedure Law Rev. Code 1:25.8, when the appellees own witness testified that the co-appellee, Adekola Pedro was a Nigerian by nationality.

We affirm that Article 22 of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia is the guiding principle of land ownership in this Country, also, it is evident that the issue of land ownership or non-ownership is a law issue and not issue for the jury; moreover, assuming it the matter was an issue for the jury, our laws are settled that a party must object to a judge's instructions to the jury and state its objections before the jury goes into their room of deliberation. Civil Procedure Law Rev. Code 1:22.9 provides that: *"The court shall instruct the jury on every issue of law arising out of the facts even though no request to charge thereon have been submitted by counsel. No party may assign as error the giving or the failure to give an instruction unless he objects thereto before the jury retires to consider its verdict, stating distinctly the matter to which he objects and the grounds of his objection. Opportunity shall be given to make the objection out of the hearing of the jury."*

The above cited statute is law is clear and has been upheld by numerous holdings of this Court and we reaffirm that if there is any objection to be made to the court's instructions to the jury, the said objection must be made during the delivery of the instruction to the jury by the trial court and not after. From the records, it is evident that the appellant at no time objected to the judge's instructions to the jury and this failure of the appellant to object to the court's instruction to the jury, amounts to waiver and laches and therefore, appellant is barred from now claiming any deficiency in the said instruction.

Notwithstanding, assuming arguendo that the appellant properly and timely challenged the judge's instructions to the jury raising the said issue, it would still not work in his favor because the land is owned jointly by the appellees, with one of the owners citizenship being without question; going further, even if it was clearly established by the facts and the evidence that the land was individually owned in fee simple by a foreigner, it would still not amount to ownership or proof of ownership by the appellant. The subject of this controversy is not whether the appellees or co-appellee has a right to own property in Liberia, the controversy here present is which party legally owns the land subject of this dispute and to prove

ownership of land in our jurisdiction, a party must provide evidence of honorable and legitimate purchase from the rightful owner and said land must be registered and probated in accordance with the procedure and requirements as provided by our laws controlling on the subject. The appellant has, however, failed to fully convince us that the subject land is owned by her legally and legitimately based upon the records, facts and evidence as shown in the certified records. Therefore, any other latent claims made by the appellant, no matter how legitimate, cannot amount to proof of ownership by her to warrant this Court awarding the property to her. We, therefore, do not find this assertion of the appellant as raised in her bill of exceptions persuasive.

Ejectment as has been said times without number by this Court and law writers is a contest of title of the parties, and the party whose chain of title is so strong as to negate the adversary's right of recovery effectively must be awarded the property. *Tula v. Salvation Army*, 41 LLR 262 (2002). Therefore, parties to an ejectment action must prove by the preponderance of the evidence that either of them is the legitimate and lawful owner of the property subject of the ejectment action.

For the appellant to properly and legally prove that she is the legitimate owner of the said land, she must prove that she acquired the said land from the original owners through honorable and legal purchase. The appellant has claimed to have purchased the land from the administrators of the Intestate Estate of Mabamgar Dirulu and Vorr, in 2014 and this is evident from the deed pleaded by the appellant which shows that the appellant purchased the land from one Oldpa James, Tonny B. Allen, Akin Passawe, J. Brutus King, and Worloh B. Deah.

We deemed it necessary to examine the testimonies of the said witnesses to further enforce our decision.

Akin Passawe was called as a subpoena witness on behalf of the appellees. He provided the following testimony on the witness stand:

Q: Mr. Witness, do you know Madam Satta Sumo and Adokola Pedro, if so, tell the court what relationship you bear with them?

A: Yes, I know Madam Satta and Pedro, they bought property from the Intestate Estate of Mambagar, Dirus and Voll.

Q: Mr. Witness, do you also know Sadia Acquoi and Mark K. Acquoi?

A: Yes, I know Sadia Kutu-Acquoi but I do not know Mark K. Acquoi.

Q: Mr. Witness, who are you in the administration of the Intestate Estate of Mambagar, Dirus and Voll?

A: I am one of the administrators of the Intestate Estate of Mamagar, Dirus and Voll.

Q: Mr. Witness, Sadia Acquoi and Satta Sumo, both of whom you claim to know are fighting over a piece of land sold by the Mamagar, Dirus and Voll Estate, I now present to you the deeds for the two of them. Tell this court between the two of these deeds, which one of them was signed by you and your co-administrators and who did you and your co-administrators sold the property to?

A: Yes, the administrators of Mambagar, Dirus and Voll sold one acre of land to Satta and her husband in the year 2015, and then we signed her document in 2015 because we were fighting over rubber plantation in Mount Barclay and all those who give us money were told to wait, that after the land issue is settled with the estate, we will issue them deed and sign it. The deed owned by Sadia shows my name, but we did not sell property to Sadia and the signature on Sadia's deed is not my signature while the signature on Satta's deed is mine.

Q: Mr. Witness, tell this court which year did the administrators of the said estate started issuing deeds for land in Mount Barclay?

A: Our letters of administration was for the first time issued in 2015 with a court decree of sale.

Q: Mr. Witness, Sadia Kutu-Acquoi proffered Extended Letters of Administration on February 14, 2012 and also court decree of sale February 23, 2012, I present said documents to you, please tell this court whether you petitioned the Monthly and Probate Court and obtained Letters of Administration and Court decree of sale for the Mamaagar Estate in the year 2012?

A: No. As I said earlier, the first time we petitioned the probate court for Letters of Administration was in 2015. We never obtained Letters of Administration and Court's decree of sale in 2012, 2013 or 2014. I am not aware of this.

On the cross, the witness was asked the following questions:

Q: Mr. Witness, the letters of administration in the name of the estate obtained in 2012 was not of your making, am I correct?

A: Yes, I have been an administrator of this estate since its opening and the first time we obtained letters of administration was in 2015.

The appellees second rebuttal witness took the stand and provided the following testimony:

Q: Mr. Witness, what is your name and where do you live?

A: My name is J. Brutus King, and I live in Paynesville City.

Q: Mr. Witness, please, for the benefit of this court and the jury, state which estate you are an administrator of.

A: I am one of the administrators of Mamagar, Voll and Dirus intestate estate.

Q: Mr. Witness, you talked about youth selling land that you people have already sold to people to the extent that you have to write a complaint, can you list their names, if not all, some?

A: Some of them are: Michael Louise, Tonny Allen, Abraham Chea, (he was one of our surveyors, but he left), Elijah Toby, (one of the youth head) and Dukuly to be identified.

Q: Mr. Witness, how many of you are serving this estate as administrators?

A: We are three.

Q: Mr. Witness, between 2012 upto and including 2016, how many administrators did the estate had?

A: There was no administrator of the estate in 2012 or 2014 or 2014.

Q: Mr. Witness, please for the benefit of this court and the jury, the names of your administrators in 2015, if you can recall?

A: In 2015, we had J. Brutus King, Wollor B. Deah, Akin Passawe, James Willie, Tonny Allen and the late Oldpa James. These were the administrators at the time.

On the cross, the witness was asked the following questions and provided the following answers:

Q: Mr. Witness, you mentioned that you people (administrators of the estate) are three as of today's date, am I correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Mr. Witness, when did the other administrators drop, resigned or left the estate?

A: The other three dropped by themselves because they were involved in fraudulent activities and when we decided to advise them, they got angry and left the estate.

These testimonies, which were never rebutted prove that the appellant, if she purchased the land as she is claiming, did purchase same from the wrong people who did not have authority to sell, as the land could not have legally being sold in any year before 2015, as the estate had not been issued Letters of Administration yet, as evidenced by the testimonies supra.

Moreover, the people whom the appellant is claiming to have purchased the land from or whom the appellant is claiming to be some of the people who signed her deed clearly testified that they did not sign the said deed and that the signatures of them on the appellant's deed are not their genuine signatures. This clearly establishes fraud and establishes that the appellant did not legally and properly acquire the said land. The mere fact that the appellant is claiming that these people signed her deed and these same people testified that they did not sign the said deed shows that there is an element of fraud that was present when the appellant procured her deed for the said property which works against the appellant as the people who are supposed to be her grantors testified to say that they did not sell any land to her but instead sold to her adversaries.

The records show that the administrators of the said estate from which the appellant is claiming to have bought the land appeared and testified that they did not sell any land to the appellant as they did not have letters of administration at the time the appellant is claiming to have purchased her land and therefore, they could not have sold any land to her in that period.

This shows that the appellant deed are products of fraud, because the grantor that the appellant is claiming that she bought the land from testified in court that they did not sell the land to her as at the time she is claiming to have purchased the land, they did not have the authority to sell.

To further drive home our conclusion, we now review the evidence from the National Archives and the testimony from its representative thereof.

The trial court issued a writ of subpoena duces tecum on April 6, 2023, to the Director General for the Center for National Documents Records and Agency (CNDRA) or the National Archives for short to appear and confirm the existence of a title instrument (the land deed proffered into evidence by the appellant), in its registry.

The National Archives on April 17, 2023, sent a special search report result to the trial court in which it stated: *"This is to certify that the above captioned instrument is herewith issued, in keeping with a subpoena issued by the Sixth Judicial Circuit, Civil Law Court Annex and under the signature of the Honorable Clerk of Court, Alfred N. Morris as per attached, that after a diligent search into our holdings (registry) as regard a Title Instrument bearing the tracking number 1226914, Volume number 08-14 with Page number 226914, which is said to be registered and filed on the 28th day of August 2014, there is no evidence of the existence of the herein Title Instrument bearing the aforementioned tracking, volume and page numbers respectively. Besides, the tracking number is different from the page number. Therefore, the*

said Title Instrument was never registered according to law at the Center for National Document and Records Agency/National Archives."

Besides this report, one Ebenezer Barbar, an employee of the National Archives, who works in the registry department of the said agency, was subpoenaed to testify and he provided the following testimony:

Q: Mr. Witness, the National Archives was subpoenaed by this court to research and submit a report on defendant's Sadia Acquoi and Mark Acquoi, to verify the deed's tracking number, you complied with this mandate, tell this court what your finding was.

A: In keeping with the mandate of this court, as per a title deed bearing volume number 08-14 with tracking number 1226914 and page number 226914, the National Archives, after diligently searching issued a search report that provided that there was no evidence of the said instrument with the tracking number and page number within the registry of the National Archives, which means the instrument was never registered according to law.

On the cross, the witness was asked the following questions:

Q: Mr. Witness, will I be correct to say that the result of your findings can also mean that this deed does not exist at all?

A: The said deed was never registered at the Archives and yes said deed information does not exist within the holding of the National Archives.

Q: Mr. Witness, by that answer, had there being any other time at which you did research and without finding the deed on which the research was done and the archives making a letter of non-discovery of such deed?

A: When an applicant requests the conduct of a search of their title deed having met the requirement thereof, a search is conducted and a report is given, we have letter of confirmation and letter of non-discovery, but in the case of the request for the honorable court, as pertained in the aforementioned title instrument, a special research report was issued, and the content thereof shows that indeed such instrument has no trace of been preserved by the National Archives.

Q: Mr. Witness, all of us in this court may not understand the term use by you i.e., confirmation and non-discovery, for the good of all of us and the purpose understanding of this case, by these honorable men and women will determine the right from wrong in this case, please say to this court what a letter of non-discovery is and what is the purpose to that letter?

A: The letter of non-discovery details the non-existence of the record that the said letter asked to verify whether it is registered with the National Archives.

Q: Mr. Witness, you said that you conducted a diligent search, but you did not have a copy of the title deed, so was it by miracle that you got the volume number, page number and tracking number? Please tell this court how then you obtained those numbers without a title deed to form a part of this so-called letter of non-discovery?

A: As per the information of the volume number 09-014, tracking number 1226914 and page number 226914 given, they form part of the subpoena that was issued by this honorable court, so it was not like they were manufactured by the National Archives or miraculously obtained.

On the redirect, the witness was asked the following question:

Q: Mr. Witness, the defendant title deed has a tracking number of 1226914, but the page number is 226914. Tell this court whether a tracking number can be different from a page number in a thousand?

A: A tracking number could be different when that instrument was registered prior to digitalization, that is to say, that record was manually registered prior to digitalization and in order to have those records digitized, we placed a tracking thereto with the existing page and volume number, so you will find out that the tracking number will be different. But in the case of digitizing of newly registered deed, during the year 2013 onward upto the taking over of deed registration by the land authority in 2018, all deeds that were registered during that period has the same tracking number and page number, if there is difference from the tracking number placed at the heading of a deed, which is also used as the page number, is different, then, that amounts to fraud, because the tracking placed at the heading of the deed is the same number used as a page number. If it is different, then it is a fraud and said document was not registered by the National Archives.

The appellant has argued that she acquired the land before the appellees as evidenced by her deed and therefore, she must be awarded the property in line with our law on superior title. If we were to hold this argument of the appellant and consider it, the appellant would still not be entitled to the land as per the records in this case and the laws controlling in this jurisdiction. We affirm that our law provide that the oldest deed is superior and is controlling in ejectment suits, but proving that a deed is older is determined according to our law from the date of probate and registration.

Our law provides that: *"If any person shall fail to have any instrument affecting or relating to real property probated and registered as provided in this Chapter within four months after its*

execution, his title to such real property shall be void as against any party holding a subsequent instrument affecting or relating to such property, which is duly probated and registered." 1956 Code 29:6.

So, assuming for the sake of argument that the appellant validly acquired the said land, she would still not be entitled to the said property as she did not register the said land as evidenced from the special search report from the National Archives, which means, legally, the appellant is not entitled to the said land.

Ejectment as stated earlier being a title of contest, and based upon the facts and evidence herein, we hold that the appellees have proven with the preponderance of the evidence that they possess superior title over the appellant; therefore, we are inclined to confirm the jury's verdict.

WHEREFORE AND IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, the ruling of the trial court is hereby affirmed. The Clerk of this Court is hereby ordered to send a Mandate to the court below commanding the judge presiding therein to resume Jurisdiction and give effect to this Judgment. Costs are ruled against the appellant.

WHEN THIS CASE WAS CALLED FOR HEARING, COUNSELLOR KPOTO K. GIZZIE APPEARED FOR THE APPELLANT. COUNSELLOR AMARA M. SHERIFF APPEARED FOR THE APPELLEE.

Affirmed.